COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

Business Development and Sustainability

Supported by CLYDE&CO

Global Compact Network UK

Sustainability Essentials for Core Functions

WHY THIS LANDS ON YOUR DESK

As the business development function, you're measured on pipeline, win rates, revenue, and long-term client relationships. Sustainability now influences all four: buyers scoring sustainability in tenders, larger clients vetting suppliers' sustainability data before they sign, green claims rules covering what you say in a pitch, and new market opportunities for lower-carbon products and services. As the company's front line with its customers, you feel these pressures first.

The good news: you don't need to become a sustainability expert. Your sustainability team can keep the data and certifications, prepare the evidence clients ask for, and help you quantify the value of sustainability in the client's own terms – you keep the relationships and the commercial decisions. However, it benefits both business development and sustainability to collaborate.

30 - 40%

of a tender score can be sustainability, for leading clients

88%

of CEOs say the case for sustainability is stronger than five years ago (Accenture)

Apr 2027

NHS suppliers must report Scope 1, 2 and relevant Scope 3 emissions to keep selling

THE BENEFITS TO YOU

More tenders won

Sustainability can be worth as much as 30 to 40% of a tender score for leading clients, so strong, ready credentials help you stand out.

Faster, better responses

Data prepared in advance turns client requests from a cost into a differentiator; answering faster and more accurately than competitors is itself a proposition.

Revenue protected

Credible sustainability data, such as product carbon footprints (PCFs), is becoming a condition of selling to some buyers, including health systems.

New markets

Demand is growing for lower-carbon products, sustainable packaging, retrofit services, green finance, and solutions that help clients meet their own procurement rules, and you're often the first to hear about it.

Long-term client relationships

Clients look for partners who share their goals over many years, and working on collective targets can lead to co-investment and multi-year agreements that competitors find hard to displace.

Claims that add credibility

Evidenced, verified claims keep pitches within green claims rules and give you something compelling to say when competitors go quiet.

A stronger commercial case

88% of CEOs say the case for sustainability is stronger than five years ago (UN Global Compact and Accenture CEO Study 2025). Quantified operating savings, lower cost of capital, and protected revenue give you numbers to sell.

WHERE SUSTAINABILITY SHOWS UP IN YOUR WORK-WINNING CYCLE

Sustainability isn't a separate offer. It sits inside steps you already run.

Your process step	Why it matters to you	What it looks like in practice
Opportunity scoping	The point where work is scoped is where sustainability commitments are either protected or traded away. It's also where ESG risks might become apparent.	Involve sustainability from the first conversation, and add sustainability flags and go/no-go gates for the most sensitive work, such as at protected sites.
Proposition and pitch	Sustainability supports lower operating costs, a lower cost of capital, higher revenue, and resilience: the drivers a client cares about for their bottom line.	Start every pitch with the client's business problem, link it to sustainability, and quantify the value of the solution.
Tenders and RFPs	Buyers use ESG scorecards, carbon disclosures, supplier codes, and social value commitments to choose suppliers. The Procurement Act 2023 requires public buyers to consider social value and environmental sustainability, and PPN 006 requires a Carbon Reduction Plan for major central government contracts.	Know the company's credentials well enough to respond quickly, and review sustainability scoring after every lost bid.
Client due diligence	Larger clients ask for emissions data, PCFs, packaging data, and certifications before they sign deals. The NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap requires suppliers to report Scope 1, 2, and relevant Scope 3 emissions from April 2027.	Know which credentials you may be asked for, such as B Corp, Science Based Targets initiative validation, ISO 14001, or Living Wage accreditation, so sustainability can prepare them in advance.
Claims in pitches	The CMA can fine businesses directly for misleading claims, and the EU's Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive bans generic claims and uncertified labels from September 2026.	Work with sustainability to gather evidence behind every claim in a pitch, and use third-party verification to tell the story.
Client regulation	The EU CSRD and EU CSDDD push sustainability requirements down through client-supplier relationships, even under their narrower post-Omnibus scope.	Build enough fluency to discuss what these rules mean for your clients and partners.
Deal approval and finance	Investors and boards increasingly ask about the ESG alignment of new partnerships, and sustainability-linked loans tie the cost of debt to performance.	Have the value-at-risk and value-creation numbers to hand when justifying a larger deal.
Account management	Many client commitments take years to deliver, and shared goals deepen relationships beyond one-off wins.	Share goals, data, and progress openly, and explore working on shared targets with key clients.

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SUSTAINABILITY TEAM

Integrating sustainability in business development turns compliance into a source of competitive advantage, so the value comes in early collaboration and considering commercial drivers together.

1. **Bring them in at scoping**
   Involve sustainability from the first conversation, so they can help decide whether to pursue an opportunity and shape commitments before pricing.
2. **Get the evidence ready in advance**
   Share the requests clients typically make, so sustainability can prepare emissions data, certifications, and policies before the next tender lands.
3. **Ask for the numbers**
   Ask sustainability, with finance, to quantify the operating savings, cost of capital, and revenue at stake in the client's own terms.
4. **Review every lost bid together**
   Look at how sustainability scored alongside cost and delivery, and agree what to improve next time.
5. **Ask for it in your language**
   Expect sustainability to translate credentials and metrics into commercial value. Training should run both ways: business development on sustainability metrics, sustainability on what wins business. The UN Global Compact Academy can help.