

Guidelines for the Sustainable Business Model Canvas

BlueRev Project



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The transition toward sustainable business models requires a collaborative and inclusive approach that integrates diverse perspectives, knowledge systems, and stakeholder expertise. Co-creation plays a fundamental role in this process by fostering collective innovation, shared ownership, and adaptability, ensuring that sustainability is embedded into business strategies rather than treated as an external obligation. The Sustainable Business Model Canvas (SBMC) may serve as a structured framework to guide this process by enabling companies to visualize and refine their business models with a holistic sustainability perspective. Unlike traditional models that primarily focus on financial and operational components, the SBMC integrates economic, environmental, and social dimensions, helping businesses align their value propositions with sustainability principles and embed sustainability into their core operations, rather than a mere add-on. By leveraging this tool, companies can systematically explore opportunities for sustainable innovation, assess replicability across different regions with similar characteristics, and align their business strategies with broader social and environmental goals.

The BlueRev SBMC (Figure 1) was a key component of the training and workshops conducted in each pilot region under WP5. The following guidelines serve as a reference for companies on how to apply the SBMC effectively during their co-creation sessions, ensuring that sustainability is an integral part of business model development.



Customer Segments: Defines the target customers for whom the organization is creating value, identifying primary and secondary customers or any niche audiences.

Guidelines to follow: Identify your **target customers** and their characteristics. Think about the different groups of people or organizations your business aims to serve.

Ask: *Who are your most important customers? What are their needs, preferences, and behaviours?*



Value Proposition: Articulates the unique value the business provides, addressing customer needs or solving specific problems through tailored solutions.

Guidelines to follow: Define what makes your product or service **unique** and valuable. Specify the **problem you're solving** or the **need you're fulfilling** for your customers. Assess competitors offering and position in the market.

Ask: *Why would customers choose your solution over others?*



Channels: Outlines the mediums through which value is delivered to the customer, focusing on efficient, cost-effective, and integrated methods for reaching target segments.

Guidelines to follow: Determine how you will deliver your product or service to your customers. Include both physical and digital distribution methods (e.g., retail, e-commerce, social media, etc.). Evaluate the costs and benefits of different communications and channels.

Ask: *How do your customers want to be reached?*



Customer Relationships: Details the nature of the relationships established with each customer segment, considering retention strategies, acquisition costs, and customer engagement methods.

Guideline to follow: Decide how you will engage and maintain relationships with your customers. Consider how you will **attract**, **retain**, and **grow** your customer base.

Ask: *What type of relationship does each customer segment expect?*



Revenue Streams: Identifies how and where the business generates revenue, exploring customer payment preferences, pricing strategies, and the contribution of each revenue stream to overall profitability.

Guideline to follow: Identify how your business will **earn money**. Consider different pricing models (e.g., subscription, one-time sales, licensing).

Ask: *What are customers willing to pay for? How will they pay?*



Key Resources: Specifies the essential resources, including physical, intellectual, human, and financial assets, required to deliver the value proposition effectively.

Guideline to follow: List the **assets** required to deliver your value proposition. Include physical, intellectual, human, and financial resources.

Ask: *What do you need to operate effectively?*



Key Activities: Highlights the critical activities that must be undertaken to produce, deliver, and sustain the value proposition and ensure seamless customer interactions.

Guideline to follow: Define the most important **actions** your business must take to succeed. Include activities like production, problem-solving, platform/network management.

Ask: *What does your value proposition require?*



Key Partners: Identifies essential partners, suppliers, and networks that support core operations, providing access to resources and enhancing efficiency.

Guideline to follow: Identify the **partners** and **suppliers** you'll need to rely on. Think about strategic alliances, joint ventures, or external suppliers.

Ask: *Who can help you achieve your goals more efficiently?*



Cost Structure: Breaks down costs integral to the business model, identifying the most significant expenditures linked to resources and activities.

Guideline to follow: Understand **costs** associated with running your business. Distinguish between fixed costs (e.g., rent) and variable costs (e.g., production expenses).

Ask: *What are the most significant expenses, and how can they be optimized?*



Eco-Social Cost: This component evaluates the **ecological** and **social costs** associated with business activities, examining non-renewable resource dependency, environmental impacts, and potential social drawbacks of the business model. Unlike the traditional Business Model Canvas (BMC), which primarily focuses on financial and operational cost structures, the SBMC incorporates eco-social considerations to ensure long-term sustainability and accountability.

Guideline to follow: Identify the **environmental resources** your business relies on and assess the sustainability of their use. Evaluate **pollutants** or **by-products** from your operations and determine ways to minimize or neutralize them; Investigate if your activities could negatively affect the health, safety, or livelihoods of any stakeholders. Consider the depletion of non-renewable resources, carbon footprint, and ethical concerns related to labor and supply chain practices.



Eco-Social Benefit: This element assesses the **ecological** and **social benefits** generated by the business model, identifying specific beneficiaries and examining if these benefits could be leveraged as part of the value proposition. Unlike the traditional BMC, which centers on financial gains and customer satisfaction, the SBMC highlights how businesses can contribute positively to society and the environment.

Guideline to follow: Outline how does your business promotes environmental sustainability. Describe how your business improves community well-being or social equity. Highlight initiatives in place to educate stakeholders on eco-social issues. Provide evidence of measurable impacts, such as reductions in emissions, biodiversity conservation, or improved livelihoods for marginalized communities.

UNDER REVIEW

Final notes

The BlueRev project is dedicated to revitalizing local communities across Europe by introducing innovative bio-based business models, governance frameworks, and social innovations within the blue bioeconomy sector. It also aims to raise awareness of the widespread benefits that the adoption of bio-based solutions can offer.

To achieve these objectives, the project analysed various value chains, including the use of fish by-products, marine bioactive compounds, and red algae biomass. This analysis focused on identifying both social and economic barriers and opportunities in three pilot regions: Denmark/Greenland, Italy, and Estonia. By leveraging advanced monitoring systems and indicators, the project assessed the effectiveness of these value chains. The insights derived were then used to propose improvements to governance frameworks and sustainable business models in these regions, with the overarching goal of revitalizing local communities and promoting environmentally responsible practices.

For additional information, please visit the homepage at <https://www.bluerevproject.eu/>

This document has been originally drafted in English; it is an extract from “D4.4- A best practice guideline including the best practices coming from the 3 pilot regions”, made by UIA team.

The translation into the other languages has been produced using the AI tool DeepL. Please note that not all the versions were double-checked, so always refer to the original English version in case of doubts.



Bio-based revitalisation
of local communities

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