



CLIMATE ACTION FOR  
**ASSOCIATIONS.**

# GREENING YOUR SUPPLIERS *GUIDE.*

Prepared for  
Membership Organisations



## Background and *OBJECTIVE*

Today, consumers are more inclined to support responsible and sustainable companies. This shift in consumer behaviour places pressure on businesses of all sizes, including membership organisations, to adopt sustainable practices and ensure transparency within your supply chains.

Sustainability isn't just about meeting consumer demands; big companies are also setting high standards for their suppliers. Since 77% of small businesses in the UK are part of supply chains, and many membership organizations are small businesses, your environmental impact can affect the larger companies you work with. So, it's important to share your emissions data and work with your suppliers to make real improvements.

To navigate these demands, focus on evaluating and improving the environmental credentials of your suppliers. This process not only enhances your understanding of the sustainability of the products and services you rely on but also helps communicate your commitment to reducing environmental impact. By verifying the sustainability of your supply chain, you can gain more accurate insights into your own carbon footprint.

## CLIMATE ACTION FOR *ASSOCIATIONS.*

### *Aim.*

We have developed a guide to help you identify the things to ask and look for when sourcing and working with suppliers and determine how to reduce your emissions, while demonstrating you are a forward-thinking supplier to others.

### *WHO IS IT FOR.*

This guide is for those in your membership organisation responsible for reducing emissions by making your supply chain more sustainable.

### *CAN I SHARE THIS WITH MEMBERS*

- This resource was designed specifically for associations.
- It is not intended for public distribution.
- Content may be quoted with reference to CAFA.
- The PDF version may be shared with your members.
- For business-specific or sector-specific adaptations, please refer to CAFA's content commissioning service.



It is also crucial to recognise that your organisation is part of a larger supply chain and may be subject to scrutiny from the companies you supply. Integrating sustainability measures into your operations and maintaining high standards is essential for aligning with broader expectations.

By focusing on these areas, you can enhance your organisation's sustainability and transparency, positioning yourself effectively in a marketplace that increasingly values responsibility and environmental stewardship.

Here are some of the areas to look for when sourcing and working with suppliers. You do not have to do everything on this list, however it's a strong starting point.



## Greening Your *SUPPLIERS*

### Assess your supply chain:

Assess your existing supply chain contracts and talk with your suppliers to pinpoint environmental impact sources, such as resource consumption and emissions.

### Introduce policies:

As a result of your supply chain assessment, establish policies and criteria and requirements that your suppliers need to meet moving forward. Once determined, transparently communicate your objectives to key stakeholders.

### New supplier ethos:

Do your (prospective) suppliers have the same values as you in relation to climate change? Investigate more about them, and genuinely consider whether you share the same values. You can begin by asking them about their existing sustainability initiatives, emissions data and where they stand in relation to net zero, science aligned targets. For longer term supplier relationships, start to incorporate sustainability and ESG questions into your annual review process.



**Ask for evidence:**

Ask to see your suppliers/prospective suppliers emissions reports, policies and commitments to climate change and sustainability (similar to what your organisation has undertaken). This could include a climate certificate or pledge to the Race to Zero, SBTi, carbon footprint report, targets and action plans.

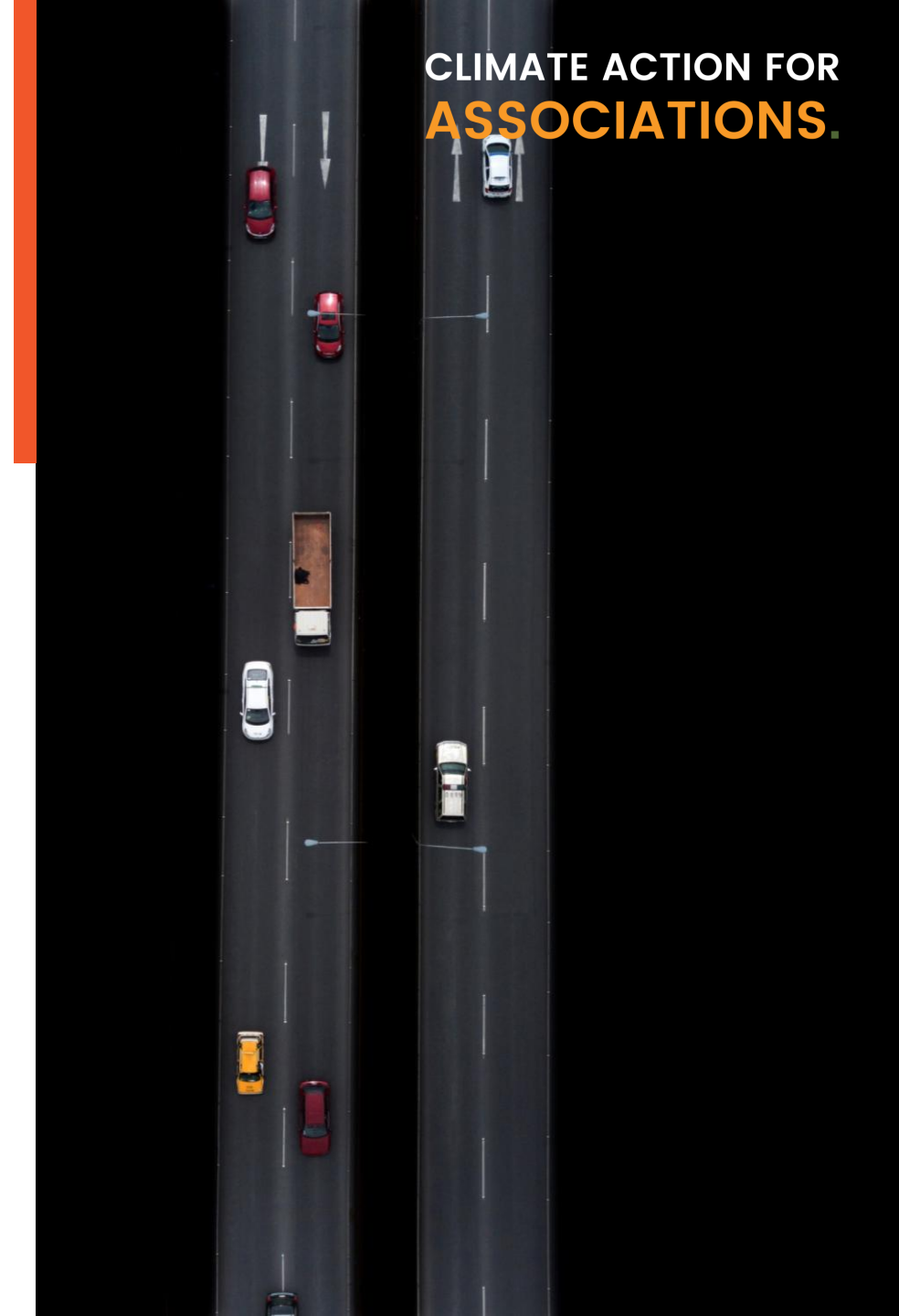
Check if your suppliers are members of relevant and responsible associations, and if they have implemented policies applicable to their organisation (e.g. elimination of plastics or travel policy). Ask to review relevant policies. Demonstrating that your suppliers are meeting sustainable goals should not be an afterthought, it ought to be embedded into your suppliers' approach and ethos.

**Verification:**

Seek confirmation of the supplier's stated climate credentials. Ask for evidence of carbon reduction, as well as any external or third-party validation (e.g. an audit of carbon reduction; green labelling of products or services).

**Take a whole-of-organisation approach:**

It is also important you educate your own employees on sustainability practices and involve them in your sustainable supply chain engagement. Communicating and sharing your supplier approach with employees can drive positive change.





### **Scope 3:**

Be informed on what your suppliers climate actions plans are – for example – if your suppliers are measuring their Scope 3 emissions within their supply chains, find out if are you, as a customer, part of their Scope 3 emission calculations? If they are, there is a good chance that you may already be informed/linked to their climate action plans. See our Guide to Sustainability Jargon to help break down the different Scope definitions, and what falls into each category.

A supplier with a fully integrated approach should have demonstrable climate change policies and targets at board level,

### **Conditional supply agreements:**

Some suppliers may not be so advanced in their climate journey. Consider, as an option, granting them a contract as “conditional”, dependent upon the supplier making specific changes over the term of the contract, either in relation to their own internal organisation or in relation to the products or services supplied to you, or both. Also consider using contracts that include sustainability clauses or incentives for sustainable practices.

### **Digital and paperless (where possible):**

Include within your supplier agreement specifies that your dealings with the supplier are paperless. This will cover basic communications such as the exchange of formal legal communications, digital issuing purchase orders, and invoices and payment notifications. Contracts for the provision of services should also be required to be online/digital wherever possible.

### Consider carbon offsetting:

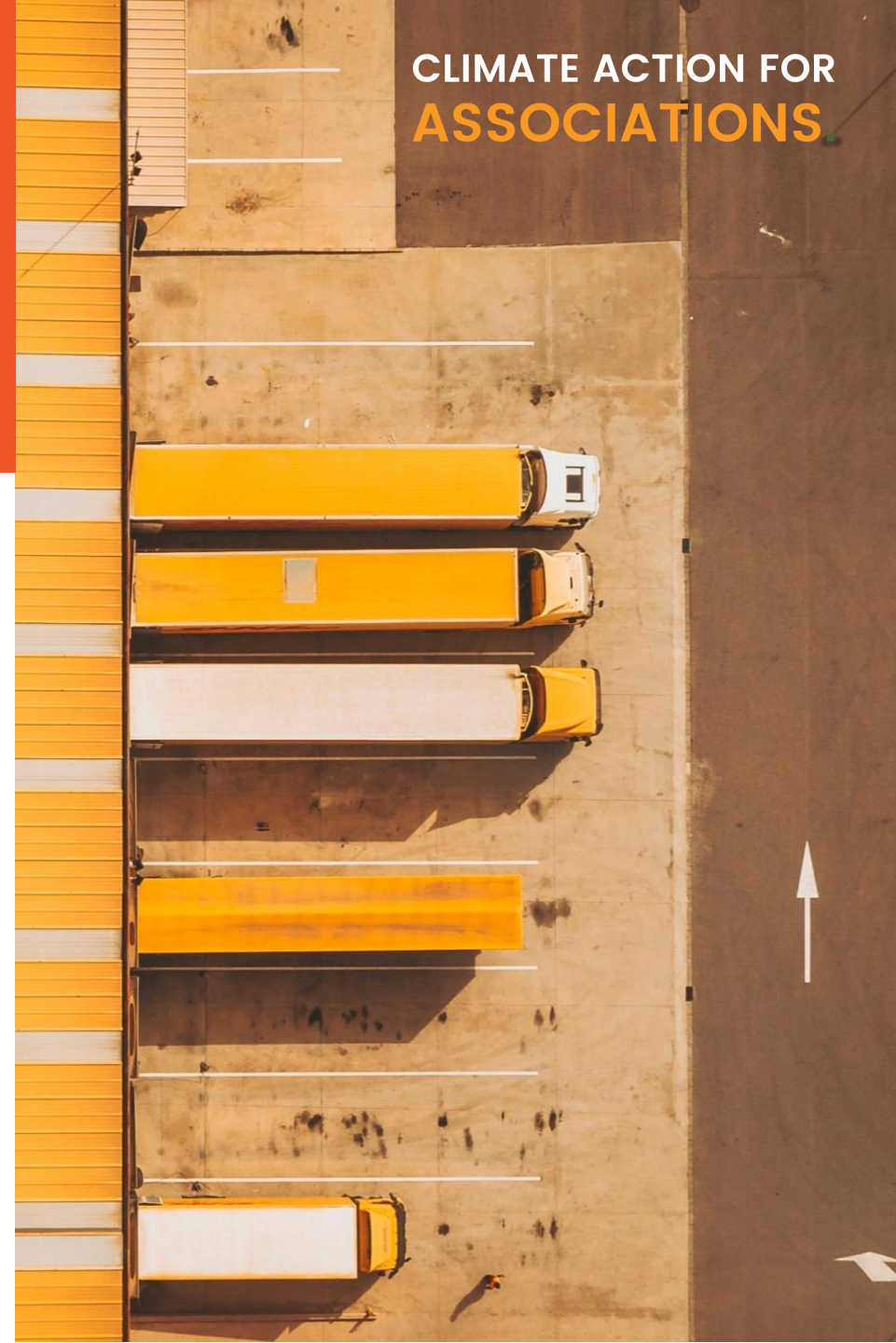
Carbon offsetting should be viewed as only one part of your own net zero strategy e.g. to balance out emissions that cannot be fully eliminated after measuring and reducing your footprint as much as possible. Offsetting is considered a last stage of your action rather than a first port of call for dealing with your emissions. If you do offset your emissions for any given reporting year, only use robust, verified schemes, managed by credible organisations that can be independently tracked and monitored. Offsetting does not replace reductions, and do not result in emission reductions. Offsets can only be attributed to a net zero statement if specific removal credits are used.

### Waste reduction:

Encourage your suppliers to minimise waste and align with circular economy principles mirroring your own practices. Additionally, whenever feasible, prioritise the procurement of biodegradable, pre-owned, recycled, or recyclable products to further reduce unnecessary waste.

### Sustainable transport:

Advocate for suppliers to utilise sustainable freight, transportation and logistics methods. The last mile of every urban delivery causes significant emissions, so request that your suppliers use EV vehicles or other sustainable travel options.





## About Climate Action for Associations (CAFA).

- CAFA is the resource and network dedicated to net zero and sustainability for the membership sector.
- CAFA offers an end-to-end emissions measurement & sustainability support for membership organisations & members. We manage every stage of your organisation's carbon journey: from measurement and reporting to action planning, ensuring you unlock opportunities for growth and cost savings along the way.
- While this resource can be shared as is with members, it was written with associations in mind. For sector-specific content (for industries or professionals) CAFA offers commissioned content as a service.

For more detailed information and guidance visit:  
[climateactionforassociations.org](https://climateactionforassociations.org) or reach out to your CAFA contact point if you are a member.



The background of the image is a large, modern glass and steel dome structure. A winding, elevated walkway with metal railings curves through the space. On the left side, there is a lush green wall covered in various plants and foliage. Several people are seen walking along the path. The overall atmosphere is bright and airy due to the large glass panels.

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BE THE  
*LEADERS*  
YOUR MEMBERS  
EXPECT

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