

2018 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey FAQs

What is the Survey all about?

The Survey benchmarks organisations against both their sector peers and leading Northern Ireland organisations, on the basis of their environmental management and performance in key areas.

The Survey is a voluntary exercise that helps organisations identify environmental impacts, measure progress, drive improvement and raise awareness of the environment as an important, strategic and competitive issue at board level.

A business-led initiative, the Survey is recognised as the principal environmental benchmarking exercise in Northern Ireland, encouraging environmental competitiveness among those taking part.

Which organisations are eligible to take part?

The NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey is open to all organisations in Northern Ireland; however, you must be registered to take part. If you would like to take part and have not received an invitation from Business in the Community, please contact Keelin McCone – keelin.mccone@bitcni.org.uk, or call (028) 9046 0606.

Why should I take part?

The Survey allows organisations to benchmark their performance against their peers and against their own performance year-on-year. It also allows them to demonstrate that they are taking environmental issues seriously and helps them to identify areas where environmental improvements could be made. Participating organisations are also able to use Survey branding to promote their dedication and achievement in the Survey.

What does the Survey look at?

The Survey is made up of four sections that measure how well organisations manage environmental issues and challenges, how this translates to action on the ground, performance improvement and the robustness of their sign off/approval process. The four sections of the Survey are:

- Corporate Strategy
- Environmental Management
- Environmental Performance
- Assurance

How does the process work?

Participants are invited to complete an online questionnaire. All submissions are then analysed and reviewed. Please note, 10-15% of Survey submissions are verified by a third party (Carnstone Partners LLP), including interviews to ensure that the information provided is accurate.

Who is the best?

Business in the Community believes that all participants should be recognised for taking part in the Survey regardless of the position achieved. Organisations that score over 90% will achieve Platinum status, however, organisations that achieve under 90% will achieve either Gold, Silver, Bronze or Green Awards.

Why does Business in the Community continue to invest in the Survey?

The aim of the Survey is to raise awareness of environmental issues across Northern Ireland. It encourages organisations to improve their environmental performance and identifies areas where more effort is required. In publishing the results of the Survey each year, Business in the Community is bringing further transparency to corporate environmental issues.

Completing the Survey

How long will it take to complete the Survey?

The Survey is made up of 15 scored questions. Once the data required to complete the Survey has been compiled, completing the online questionnaire should take approximately one to two hours.

The Survey has a 'Save and Exit' feature on each page of the online version, allowing the respondents to save answers and return to the Survey at a later time. You can also move between sections if you need to wait for data to complete a specific question.

What does the Survey include?

The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

1. Corporate Strategy

This section looks specifically at leadership, stakeholder engagement and stewardship within your organisation.

2. Environmental Management

This section relates to the environmental management arrangements in place within your organisation.

3. Environmental Performance

This section aims to measure how well your organisation is tackling its most significant environmental impacts. These questions seek to review actual performance data from individual participants and assess their ability to measure and monitor performance across the organisation.

You must complete all four questions in this section. There are five core impact areas; **energy, waste generated, waste recovered, water and transport**. You must then select a further additional impact area that is relevant to your particular organisation. This allows the freedom to provide information on an impact that is most significant to your organisation and where the most progress has been made. You are not permitted to submit duplicate information used in one of the other impact areas as your additional impact area. For example carbon emissions would not be allowed as an additional impact area because this information would be covered in energy use and transport.

4. Assurance (Question 16)

This section requires you to provide assurance that management processes are in place within your organisation to ensure that environmental information provided is accurate and of an acceptable quality. We also ask that any information supplied is reviewed and 'signed off' by a senior manager within the organisation.

What is the deadline for this year's Survey?

Survey launched	Tuesday 24 April
Closing date for submissions	Friday 29 June
Survey results launch	Thursday 22 November

What do you mean by verified figures? Who can verify figures?

Verified figures means data has been reviewed by an independent third party. These figures may be reviewed as part of your Environmental Management System (EMS) accreditation.

Does my organisation's Environmental Management System audit count for external verification of figures?

Yes, if your EMS is accredited and valid. 'External certification' refers to independent third party certification such as BS 8555 or ISO 14001 standards. An Environmental Management System (EMS) provides a formal approach to the management of environmental issues and implementation of the environmental policy. This should clearly define the processes and procedures for the management of environmental issues, identify those with key responsibilities, and provide clear objectives and targets for improvement. An accredited EMS is an integral part of managing an organisation's environmental impacts and performance. An EMS will greatly improve Survey performance and this will be reflected in the organisations Survey score.

How do I make an environmental policy or policies publicly available?

Organisations that publicly report environmental policies and data will make the information available. Examples could include on the company website, in an Annual Report, Sustainability Report, Environmental Statement or Report etc. Organisations that provide data to a regulatory body (for example to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) when applying for a PPC Permit; can have their data made public through that regulatory body. Having environmental policies and data available on request will be considered publicly available but not sufficient for public reporting.

What support can Business in the Community provide?

Business in the Community can provide support and assistance to improve environmental management within your organisation. We can provide Survey participants with a breakdown of their score and further clarification as necessary.

For more information, please contact Business in the Community on (028) 9046 0606, or email keelin.mccone@bitcni.org.uk