Toolkit

Impact Trek

Planner's Guide

An Impact Trek is a one- to three-day consulting trip with a group of local businesses which allows students to apply the knowledge they've gained in the classroom to solve real-world sustainability challenges. It's also a chance to give back to the community and make connections with local employers.

Submitted by

NET IMPACT
University of Oregon

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Tour of a production facility, office, or working campus



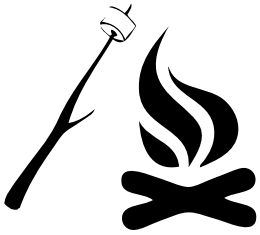
Presentation and Q&A session with employees on the sustainability challenges the company faces



Two to five hours of student brainstorming on a sustainability challenge



Presentation of recommendations and Q&A session



Fun activity with students and employees

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Timeline

5 months before	Create the PLT and determine roles
4 months before	Brainstorm potential companies and begin outreach
3 months before	Decide on fundraising activities; select date of Impact Trek; finalize company participation
2 months before	Execute fundraiser; market Impact Trek internally to determine rough estimate of student participation; book lodging
1 month before	Execute fundraiser; market Impact Trek internally to determine rough estimate of student participation; book lodging
1 week before	Communicate itinerary to Impact Trek participants; send final agenda to participating companies

Roles and tasks

The Program Leadership Team (PLT) is made up of any members interested in spearheading a portion of the Impact Trek; you can integrate these tasks into existing roles on your chapter leadership team or bring in someone new!

- Impact Trek Lead: The Impact Trek Lead oversees the entire planning process and serves as the contact person for members of the PLT. They also report progress of the planning process back out to the rest of the chapter.
- Outreach Lead: This role is in charge of contacting potential companies to explain the purpose of the Impact Trek. They also work with confirmed companies to determine the scope of the project that students will work on during the Impact Trek weekend. Finally, the Outreach Lead serves as point of contact through the weekend and initiates any follow-up with the companies after the Trek is over.
- Fundraising Lead: If your chapter decides that you need to raise money in order to finance the trip, the Fundraising Lead will manage the planning and execution of a fundraising event.
- Logistics Lead: This role manages all of the details regarding transportation and lodging for the Impact Trek weekend. They work closely with the Fundraising Lead to make sure the use of funds doesn't surpass the money raised.
- Marketing Lead: Prior to the Impact Trek weekend, the Marketing Lead serves as an internal liaison to communicate the benefits of the Impact Trek and to encourage students to participate. During the Impact Trek, they're in charge of all external marketing regarding the event, which might involve taking pictures, posting to social media channels, and writing a blog pos

Partner companies

Selecting the right companies starts with identifying the target cities where you'd like the Impact Trek to take place.

Once you've selected your target cities, you can start researching and brainstorming potential partner companies. You can come up with any criteria to help narrow down your list – here are some ideas:

- Brand awareness: will the brand name be a draw to increase student attendance?
- Ease of contact: do you already have a connection within the company?
- Level of commitment to sustainability: will the company be aware enough of sustainability issues to help propose a potential project?
- Location cohesiveness: are there a group of companies in the same area that all fit the above criteria?

Once you've narrowed down a list of companies and identified which students have an established connection, it's time to send emails! It can be helpful to provide background and an overview of the Impact Trek. You can find a sample project proposal in the appendix.

Project scoping

If a company is interested in participating in the Impact Trek, the next step is to work with them to scope a project that your group can work on during the Trek. The discussion can begin by identifying how the company defines sustainability, although you may have to guide them to think outside of the box. Next, discuss what kind of information the company is willing to share with your group (i.e. marketing budgets, logistics details, sourcing specifics). Finally, determine what can feasibly be accomplished within a three-hour window of work. Generally, this allows enough time to thoroughly research potential solutions, but it's probably not feasible to provide fully detailed financial analysis, for example.

The final step in selecting a partner company is to draft up a proposed scope of work. This document outlines the agenda for your time with the company on the Impact Trek weekend, provides details of the sustainability challenge that your group will focus on, and lists any information needed from the company for your research. You can find a sample scope of work in the appendix.

Logistics

One to two months before Impact Trek, reserve lodging for your group. AirBnB and VBRO are good resources if your group wants to stay in a house together. You can also look into hotels in the city that you've chosen and see if they'll offer you a discount as a student group. In order to reserve lodging, you'll want to have a close-to-accurate estimate of how many students will participate in the Impact Trek. Make sure to stress the importance of an accurate RSVP, so that students understand that changing their mind at the last minute may cause extra logistics charges outside of the budget.

Extra benefits

The Impact Trek doesn't have to be about all work and no play! There are many opportunities to take your Impact Trek to the next level by incorporating a few added bonuses to participation. Why not include...

- A brewery tour and free tastings after a day of consulting
- Free lift tickets for the afternoon after consulting with a ski area
- Surfing lessons with company employees after consulting with a sports product company
- Unlimited snacks or drinks while consulting for a food product company

Be creative and think of ways to add value to your Impact Trek, and work with your selected companies to see what they're willing to provide in exchange for free consulting. These activities are often excellent opportunities for further networking with company staff.

During

Once you reach the week of your Impact Trek, you're in the home stretch. Remember to:

- Share the itinerary with all student and company participants
- Purchase brainstorming and presenting supplies, such as large 3M Post-its, colorful sharpies, construction paper, etc.
- Provide background reading and links to the websites of the companies you'll be consulting for

During the Impact Trek weekend, your team can decide how you'll best work together to brainstorm and research potential solutions to your companies' sustainability challenges. Whether you make a formal or informal presentation at the end of the consulting session is up to your group.

Following up

Congratulations, you've put on a successful Impact Trek! Keep reading for three important components of the follow-up process.

Finalize findings
The most important action item once you return from the Impact Trek is to finalize and formalize your research into a professional document to send within the week to the company. This will likely be done by the Impact Trek Lead, but everyone who participated in the Trek should contribute to the document. It will likely contain a summary of your recommendations, as well as links to external resources the company can use if they would like more information.

Share your success
Your professors and program staff likely helped contribute to your fundraising efforts, so it's important to let them know that the event was a success! Send them a thank you email that details how many participants went on the Impact Trek, what your main takeaways were, and how their support helped you achieve your goals.

Post-event survey
The final important component of Impact Trek follow-up is to survey your participants to measure your success. A sample survey is available in the appendix.

Impact Trek Proposal
Net Impact Graduate Chapter, University of Oregon

Net Impact is a national nonprofit that brings together students and professionals to solve the business community's toughest sustainability challenges. The University of Oregon graduate chapter is comprised of students from the MBA program in the Center for Sustainable Business Practices. These students have diverse knowledge in finance, accounting, marketing, management, and sustainability strategy. The graduate chapter is reaching out to local businesses to implement an Impact Trek to engage with and advise local businesses on sustainability opportunities.

Proposal
If [your company] agrees to participate in the Impact Trek, we will work with your team to determine the most relevant sustainability metrics you wish to discover more about.

The Impact Trek will take place for a half or full day on Friday, April 8th or Friday, April 15th. On the day of the Impact Trek, a group of 20 students will visit [your company] and work alongside members of your team to understand where sustainability measures could be undertaken. Ideally, the Impact Trek also provides an opportunity for students and your team to engage in a business-specific fun activity.

Our aim is to embody Net Impact's mission of mobilizing the next generation to use their skills and careers to make a positive impact on the world.

Goals
Company:
- Understand how sustainability initiatives can impact the bottom line
- Think of sustainability in new ways
- Recognize opportunities for improvement and receive action plan for implementing changes
- Prepare to capture business from the next generation of sustainability-focused consumers

Students:
- Learn about what sustainability challenges companies are facing
- Gain experience advising and consulting companies on real-life sustainability challenges

Impact Trek Proposal: Company A

Agenda
10 am - 11 am: Tour and Q&A
11 am - 2 pm: Finalize recommendations
2 pm - 2:30 pm: Present recommendations and final Q&A

Problem Overview
Company A has identified a waste problem in their production process that they would like to mitigate. The kombucha brewing process generates waste from scobys and spent tea. Currently, Company A is paying for composting services, but would ideally like to make money off of the waste by selling it to local farms.

Scope of Work
University of Oregon Net Impact will conduct research on potential waste diversion partners that would generate additional income for Company A. We will do background research before arriving at Company A, and will incorporate information gained from viewing the production process and a Q&A session into final recommendations.

In order to do background research before arriving at Company A, it would be ideal to have the following information:

- Estimated volume of waste (weekly, monthly, or annually)
- Current waste mitigation partners (composting company, local farms)
- Estimated amount of money spent on current disposal services for the scobys and tea

Post event survey

1. Please list reasons that you decided to attend the Impact Trek (check all that apply)
- Networking
- Practical application of skills
- Learn about sustainability challenges in XYZ industry
- Free trip to XYZ location
- Other:

2. Did the Impact Trek meet your expectations? Why or why not?

3. What did you like best about Impact Trek? What would you keep the same in future years?

4. What did you like least about Impact Trek? What would you change in future years?

5. Do you have any recommendations to increase participation in Impact Trek?