Getting ready for a supplier sustainability assessment

A guide for the company being assessed: how the EcoVadis assessment process runs, what the questionnaire asks for, how a simple materiality screen helps, and how to answer a customer's emissions request.

This guide goes with the **Supplier Assessment Workbook**. Each section below matches a tab in the workbook, so you can read a section and then fill in the tab that goes with it.

Why the questionnaire arrived

Large buyers now count their suppliers' emissions as part of their own. Under the GHG Protocol, your scope 1 and 2 emissions fall inside your customer's scope 3, usually in the purchased goods and services category. A customer with a scope 3 target cannot hit it without data from its suppliers, and many cannot report at all without it.

So the request reaches you in one of two forms. Some customers send their own supplier sustainability questionnaire. Others ask you to take an EcoVadis assessment and share the scorecard, which saves them building a questionnaire of their own. In tenders, either can decide whether you make the shortlist.

Treat the first request as the start of a yearly cycle. The scorecard expires, customers raise their thresholds, and the documents you gather now will be asked for again.

How the EcoVadis assessment process runs

The steps are the same for every company. The content of the questionnaire is not, because EcoVadis tailors it to your industry, size and country.

Stage	What happens	What to have ready
Registration	You create a profile and confirm your activity, size and locations. This decides which criteria are activated for you.	An accurate headcount, sites and a description of what you sell
Questionnaire	You answer the tailored questions and upload supporting documents. EcoVadis accepts up to 55 files per assessment. Consultancies that work with the platform report a submission deadline of about six weeks once the questionnaire is created.	Your evidence library (workbook Tab 1)
Analyst review	Analysts check each document for eligibility and content, and add findings from news and stakeholder sources (the 360° Watch). The same consultancies put this stage at six to eight weeks.	A named contact to answer queries quickly

Stage	What happens	What to have ready
Preview and publication	You can preview the results for 48 hours before the scorecard is released to the customers who requested it.	Time set aside to check the result
Scorecard	You get an overall score and theme scores from 0 to 100, with strengths and improvement areas. The scorecard is valid for 12 months from publication.	A reassessment date in the diary (Tab 4)

Sources: EcoVadis Sustainability Rating Methodology disclosure document, June 2026. Timings marked as reported come from consultancies, not from EcoVadis, so check the deadline your own platform shows.

What the questionnaire asks for

EcoVadis scores 21 criteria grouped under four themes: environment, labour and human rights, ethics, and sustainable procurement. Not every criterion applies to every company. A small software reseller will see a different set from a logistics firm.

Within each theme, the score looks at your management system in layers. Policies are what you commit to. Actions are what you do about it, including certifications such as ISO 14001 or ISO 45001. Reporting is the results you publish. A company with a good policy library and no reported figures will score unevenly, and so will one with plenty of activity and nothing written down.

The rule that catches most first-time suppliers is that the assessment runs on evidence. EcoVadis puts the burden of proof on the company being assessed, so a true answer with no supporting document earns little or nothing. That is why the workbook starts with an evidence log rather than a list of questions.

Theme	Criteria	Evidence that often goes missing
Environment	Energy and GHG emissions, water, biodiversity, air pollution, materials, chemicals and waste, product use, product end-of-life, customer health and safety, environmental services and advocacy	Published energy and emissions figures, waste data by stream
Labour and human rights	Employee health and safety, working conditions, social dialogue, career management and training, child and forced labour and trafficking, discrimination and harassment, external stakeholder human rights	Training hours, a written stance on forced labour, an equality policy that is dated and signed
Ethics	Corruption, anticompetitive practices, responsible information management	Proof that staff were trained, not only that a code exists
Sustainable procurement	Supplier environmental practices, supplier social practices	Any evidence that you assess your own suppliers

Workbook Tab 1 lists all 21 criteria. Mark the ones that apply to you, then rate the policy, action and reporting evidence for each as Have, Partial or Missing. The summary shows where you are thin before an analyst does.

A materiality screen for suppliers

Assessors expect you to know which sustainability topics matter to your business, and many customer questionnaires ask outright. A materiality assessment answers that. Large companies reporting under the EU's CSRD carry out a full double materiality assessment. A supplier preparing for a questionnaire needs something lighter that still looks both ways.

Tab 2 scores each topic on your impact (how severe, how widespread, how likely) and on its effect on your business (customer and tender demand, cost, risk or revenue). Anything that reaches the threshold on either side is flagged as material. You can quote the one-line reason in the questionnaire, and Tab 4 uses the result to rank your fixes.

Keep the record of how you scored. A short, dated note of who took part and why each topic landed where it did is itself evidence.

Answering a customer's emissions request

Emissions questions come up whether or not the customer uses EcoVadis. The first few are nearly always the same: your scope 1 and 2 figures, your base year, whether you have a reduction target and whether anyone has validated it.

Some customers then ask for the emissions attributable to their account. A common method is to multiply your scope 1 and 2 total by that customer's share of your revenue. Tab 3 does the arithmetic. If the customer sets out a method of its own, or asks for product carbon footprints instead, use what it asks for. For resellers, those footprints usually come from the manufacturers whose products you supply.

If you have not measured yet, say so and give a date. A clear plan with an owner is a better answer than an estimate you cannot support.

Turning gaps into a plan

Tab 4 pulls the gap count for each criterion from Tab 1 and raises its priority when the same theme holds material topics in Tab 2. Sort by priority, add an action, owner and date to the top rows, and work from there. The key dates block works out a typical submission deadline, the scorecard expiry and the point three months before expiry when reassessment preparation should start.

A practical order for the first 90 days: in the first month, collect the documents you already hold and register; in the second, write or update the policies that are missing and get them signed; in the third, publish a short set of figures, even a single page, so the reporting layer has something to score.

About Channel Institute

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Sources. EcoVadis, Sustainability Rating Methodology disclosure document for the public, rating users and rated items (June 2026), ecovadis.com. GHG Protocol, Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard, ghgprotocol.org. Questionnaire deadline and analyst review timings as reported by consultancies that work with EcoVadis (Nexio Projects, Mannaz), 2025 to 2026.