



BLUEPRINT FOR CREDIBLE ACTION ON PLASTIC POLLUTION

May 2024



About WWF

WWF is one of the world's leading conservation organizations, working in nearly 100 countries for over half a century to help people and nature thrive. With the support of more than 5 million members worldwide, WWF is dedicated to delivering science-based solutions to preserve the diversity and abundance of life on Earth, halt the degradation of the environment and combat the climate crisis. Visit www.worldwildlife.org to learn more.



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FOREWORD

Plastic waste is choking our planet—polluting the air, water, and soil that all people and wildlife need to survive. Every year, more than 11 million metric tons of plastic flow into our natural environment, entering our oceans at the rate of one dump truck of plastic pollution every minute.

Our current waste management and recycling infrastructure are overwhelmed by overproduction, unable to handle the sheer volume of new material entering the system. Urgent action is required to fix this broken system that has gotten us here and to shift to a new approach to plastic use that will be sustainable for generations to come.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) aims to realize a world with no plastic in nature. This requires a transition to a circular economy in which we reduce, reuse, and recycle plastic. In a circular economy, we use less resources and ensure the materials we do take are continually reused and effectively recycled to create new products. As a result, we can reduce impacts on all people and nature from overproduction and waste generation and, at the same time, recapture the value of materials already in circulation.

In the United States, WWF is advocating for holistic solutions and strong public policies to tackle the problem of plastic pollution and set up pragmatic systems that hold us accountable for our waste.

We cannot solve this crisis alone. We are calling on businesses to act now to halt the flow of plastic pollution into our environment once and for all. With this [step-by-step Blueprint for Credible Action on Plastic Pollution](#), your business can start taking immediate actions that support the transition to a just and circular economy.

Join us in the fight for a world with No Plastic in Nature.



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INTRODUCTION

Facing a Plastic Pollution Crisis

The plastic pollution crisis has become one of the most pressing environmental issues, with major adverse impacts on ecosystem health, food supply integrity, and our livelihoods. The crisis is severe in both scope and scale—and it is getting worse as plastic flows into nature at an unprecedented rate.¹

While estimates are still emerging, we know that the negative impact on humans comes from every stage of the plastic life cycle—from the extraction of oil to the mismanagement of plastic waste. Toxic additives, microplastics, and hazardous fumes risk causing cancers when they enter the body through inhalation, ingestion, and direct skin contact—potentially damaging the immune, reproductive, endocrine, and nervous systems.² The health consequences of plastic pollution often disproportionately impact vulnerable communities living in proximity to plastic manufacturing factories, overflowing landfills, or incineration centers.³

Our climate also bears a heavy burden: greenhouse gas emissions associated with plastic production are projected to reach 15% of the global carbon budget by 2050.⁴ Although the most acute effects of plastic pollution are localized, the crisis is a result of a broken global system. Plastic takes hundreds of years to degrade and is detrimental to our

environment, climate, and wildlife in ways we are just beginning to understand. For instance, over 2,000 species are impacted by plastic pollution in the ocean through ingestion, entanglement, or habitat effects. Approximately two-thirds of all plastic ever produced has been released into the environment and remains there in some form—as debris in the oceans, as micro- or nanoparticles in the air and agricultural soils, in water supplies, or in the human body.⁵

Plastic waste is choking our planet—polluting the air, water, and soil that people and wildlife need to survive.

Every year, [an estimated 11 million metric tons](#) of plastic enter our oceans—that's more than one dump truck every minute.

Eighty percent of plastic pollution in our oceans originates on land—driven largely by the proliferation of low-recyclability plastic products and packaging; insufficient waste sorting, collection, and infrastructure; illegal dumping; and a linear economy that incentivizes the production of virgin plastics. The remaining 20% comes from ocean-based

sources, including abandoned and derelict fishing gear. A recent Pew Charitable Trusts study found that if we continue under a business-as-usual scenario, we will be generating twice the amount of new plastic by the year 2040; this will lead to triple the amount of plastic leaking into nature, and four times the amount of plastic stock flowing into our oceans.⁶ The US generates the largest volume of plastic waste per capita globally, at 287 pounds per person per year.⁷ Addressing this enormous challenge requires coordinated action, both globally and nationally.

A World with No Plastic in Nature

As plastic pollution spreads to every corner of the globe, WWF is leading the charge to reimagine how plastic materials are sourced, designed, reused, and disposed. WWF's [No Plastic in Nature](#) initiative aims to stop the flow of plastic into nature. To do this we must tackle the root cause of the crisis: a broken material system. We do this by:

1. eliminating the single-use and problematic plastic that we do not need,
2. shifting to sustainable sources for the plastic that we do need, and
3. improving our material systems to collect, reuse, recycle, or compost all plastic that is produced.

Achieving these goals requires engaging across multiple intervention points, scaling efforts, and building a better system with no missing or broken links. WWF drives action by aligning businesses, governments, and individuals with a common vision: Take less and be smarter with the resources we do take.



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DID YOU KNOW?

- Single-use items—including plastic bags, wrappers, bottles, food containers, and cutlery—make up the largest share of litter across nearly all aquatic environments.⁸
- The US generates the largest volume of plastic waste per capita globally, at 287 pounds per person per year.⁹
- Of the estimated 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic produced between 1950 and 2015, it is estimated that less than 10% has been recycled.¹⁰



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THE CASE FOR BUSINESS ACTION

Addressing plastic pollution is not only an ethical responsibility for companies but also a smart business decision—improving long-term viability in an evolving business landscape where authentic action on social justice and environmental issues is increasingly expected.

In recent years, many influential businesses have been expanding and accelerating efforts to fight plastic waste through voluntary initiatives. Increased interest from stakeholders, including investors and individuals, encourages more companies to measure their plastic footprints and provide inputs into established frameworks for disclosure.

In addition to reducing costs and fostering innovation, proactive measures to reduce plastic pollution help companies:

- comply with new regulations,
- align with stakeholder expectations and consumer preferences,
- stay resilient and relevant, and
- support critical ecosystem services.

For a detailed [Case for Business Action](#) that covers these four topics, see Appendix A.

The Global Treaty to End Plastic Pollution

In March 2022, the UN Member States agreed to start negotiating the content of a new legally binding, global framework to end plastic pollution, set to be finalized before the end of 2024. This provides a unique opportunity to unlock systemic change across the global plastics economy by ensuring that states around the world abide by common high-impact measures—as well as by holding states accountable if they fail to do so. Read about the latest update [here](#).



BLUEPRINT FOR CREDIBLE ACTION ON PLASTIC POLLUTION

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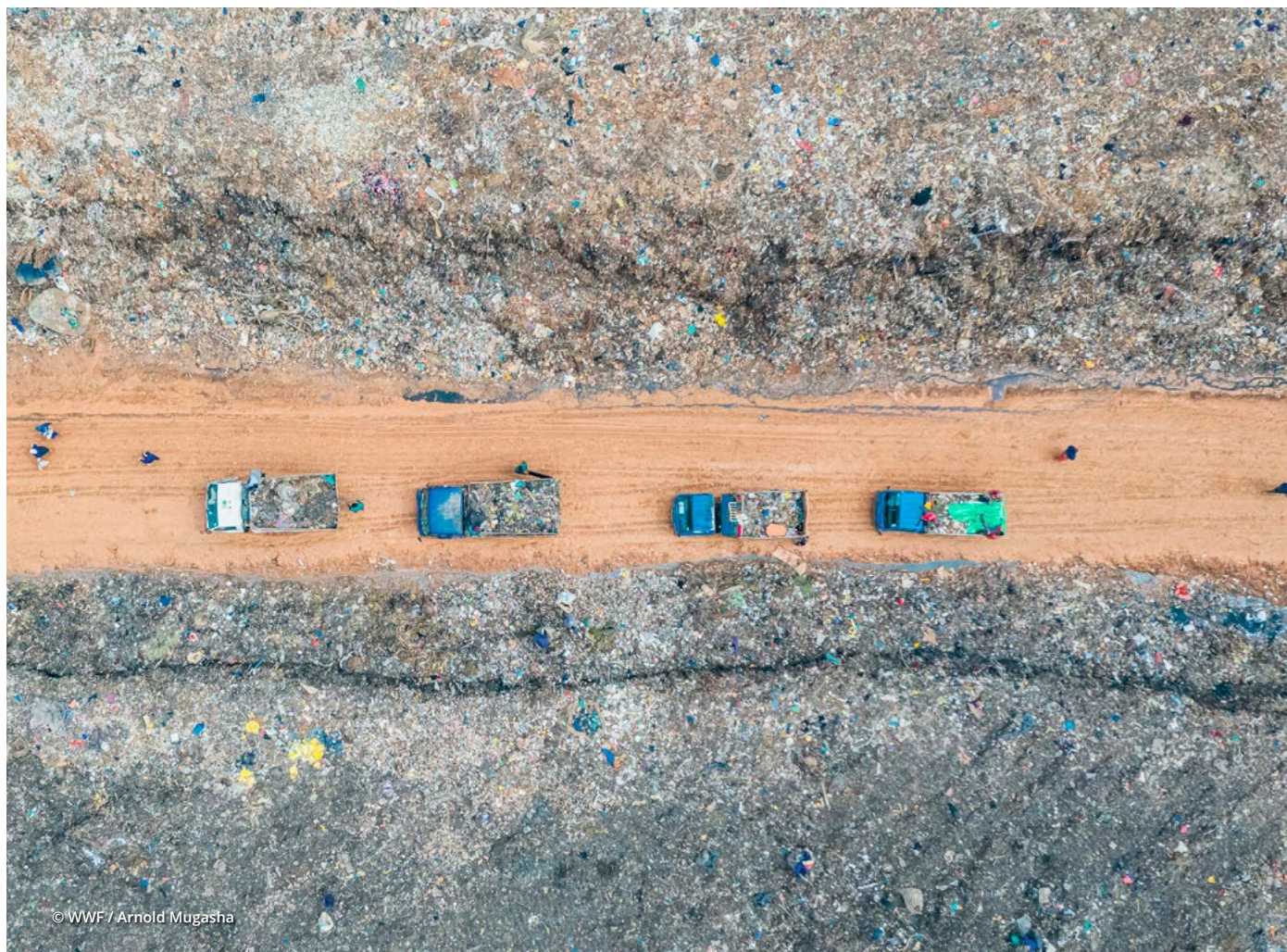
What the Blueprint Will Help Build

Widespread, credible private sector action on the plastic pollution crisis invigorates the urgent cross-sector response needed at scale. The Blueprint for Credible Action on Plastic Pollution is a tool for companies as they set priorities to achieve maximized, measurable impact on the journey toward circularity. By following this stepwise approach, companies can move from awareness and commitment to measurable progress backed by science-based recommendations.

Outcomes of following this step-by-step guide include:

- better plastic footprint calculations and global waste data harmonization for easier collaboration with regulators and investors;
- targeted plastic pollution impacts and mitigation actions within your direct business control;
- readiness to advocate alongside stakeholders, policymakers, and other companies; and
- product portfolios that are envisioned and designed for a just and equitable future with no plastic in nature.

Company actions that get us closer to our vision of no plastic in nature include addressing impacts inside and outside your fence line such as quantitative disclosures, source reduction through product design, sustainable sourcing of alternative materials like paper and biobased plastic, coalition building and advocacy for system change, and innovation and investments.



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Whom the Blueprint Is For

The Blueprint for Credible Action on Plastic Pollution is a helpful tool for companies initiating a new plastic strategy or seeking to maintain leadership or expand existing strategies and plans. Companies with strategic plans in place to address plastic pollution can use the blueprint to identify gaps in existing programs and pinpoint opportunities for expansion and collaboration. While focused on plastic pollution, much of the guidance outlined here is applicable in addressing impacts for other material and waste streams. The intended target is primarily medium- and large-size companies operating within the food, beverage, consumer packaged goods, and retail industries. However, the approach remains applicable to other sectors and smaller businesses. For additional guidance for the [finance](#), [tourism](#), [retail](#), and [seafood](#) industries, see WWF's Industry Call-to-Action [publications](#).

4-Step Blueprint

As shown in the following graphic, the Blueprint is a stepwise sustainability journey.

We recommend that your company take the following steps:

- Step 1:** Understand the plastic crisis and set ambitious goals.
- Step 2:** Transform your plastic footprint.
- Step 3:** Advocate with others for system change.
- Step 4:** Invest in circularity outside of your direct operations.

THE 4-STEP BLUEPRINT



STEP

1

Understand the Plastic Pollution Crisis, Measure Your Impact, and Set Ambitious Goals

- A. Build Internal Awareness
- B. Map and Measure your Value Chain and Footprint
- C. Scope the Business Case for Action
- D. Set and Commit to Realistic yet Ambitious Goals



STEP

2

Transform Your Plastic Footprint

- A. Develop and Execute Strategy to Achieve Targets
- B. Get Innovative: Adapt and Revise Portfolios and Test New Models
- C. Inform Stakeholders and Communicate Ambitions
- D. Track, Disclose and Communicate Progress



STEP

3

Collaborate and Advocate for System Change

- A. Collaborate with the Right Partners
- B. Advocate for Systems-Level Change



STEP

4

Invest in Circular Solutions and Mitigation Outside Corporate Operations

- A. Connect Investments to Material Impact
- B. Identify the Most Effective Method of Investment
- C. Make Investments Proportional to the Problem
- D. Make Additional Considerations for Quality Investments





THE BLUEPRINT: STEP BY STEP

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STEP 1

UNDERSTAND THE PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS, MEASURE YOUR IMPACT, AND SET AMBITIOUS GOALS

Start the journey by exploring your business's role in the global plastic pollution crisis and potential solutions.

A. Build Internal Awareness of the Global Plastic Pollution Crisis

Building internal organizational awareness and understanding the root causes of the problem is the first step toward creating real change. The plastic pollution crisis is a result of a broken system—a linear economy that promotes single-use plastics, lacks proper waste management, and contributes to a throwaway culture where incentives for circularity and reuse are almost completely absent. Understanding these systemic issues empowers us to make informed decisions and create effective strategies for change.

WWF's [No Plastic in Nature](#) website is a helpful place to start. To build awareness inside your company, consider hosting a webinar for internal stakeholders using information from our website.

B. Map Out Your Company's Value Chain and Measure Your Plastic Footprint

Surface how and at what stages plastic is being used throughout your value chain and where it finally ends up. Account for all aspects of your plastic consumption and production. A company's plastic footprint extends beyond

direct plastic use from pre- and postconsumer activities. It also includes indirect plastic use from upstream and downstream activities, including organizational supply chain, transportation, and distribution.

Do a materiality analysis using a standardized credible methodology like that of the [ReSource Footprint Tracker](#) or the [Plastic Footprint Network](#) (both of which are aligned on the underlying mismanaged waste data) to measure your plastic footprint and gain insights into the scale of your impact. Tools like this help you identify areas for improvement and understand how material these issues are to your company.

Blueprint in Action:

All [ReSource: Plastic](#) members have committed to measure their plastic footprint annually—read about their findings in WWF's [Transparent](#) report series.

C. Scope the Business Case for Action

With your plastic footprint information and materiality analysis in hand, scope the business case for action. Beyond typical performance indicators like cost savings, profit opportunities, and retention rates, consider which of the following motivators (discussed in detail in [Appendix A: Case for Business Action](#)) will incentivize your company to take and sustain credible action on plastic pollution:

- complying with new regulations
- meeting stakeholder expectations
- staying relevant and resilient
- supporting ecosystem services

Every company plays a role in the plastic crisis, directly or indirectly. Defining your unique motivations is crucial in fostering internal accountability, authentic commitment, and action.

D. Set and Commit to Realistic yet Ambitious Goals That Maximize Impact

Use your plastic footprint as a guide and set goals that are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Design goals that frame your company's strategy in proportion to the global effort to reach No Plastic in Nature. Align those goals with the timelines and

targets outlined in regional and national plastic pollution policies, along with the [Global Commitment](#) facilitated by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in conjunction with the UN Environment Program, and strive toward the following WWF-recommended objectives:

- **Eliminate the Usage of Unnecessary and High-Risk Plastics**

Identify and eliminate single-use plastics that are unnecessary or that pose risks to the environment by ending up in nature more easily or causing significant harm when they get there. Seek alternative solutions that are more sustainable, reusable, or compostable. Read more about high-risk plastic waste [here](#) and unnecessary and problematic plastics [here](#).

- **Shift from Virgin Plastic Sourcing to Sustainable Inputs**

Transition from virgin plastic sourcing to sustainable alternatives and source materials that are recycled or made from renewable resources, taking environmental impact trade-offs into consideration.

- **Operate with 100% Recyclable, Reusable, or Compostable Plastic**

For any remaining plastic in your supply chain, commit to using only plastic that is 100% recyclable, reusable, or compostable in practice and at scale. Encourage and educate customers about proper waste disposal to ensure effective end-of-life management that results in the best environmental outcomes.

- **Formalize Accountability by Committing to a Credible Collaboration**

Sign the [EMF Global Commitment](#), join a national/regional [Plastics Pact](#) or [Plastic Action Partnership](#), and report packaging and circularity as material issues in your annual sustainability reporting (see more in [Step 2D](#)). Join industry forums and initiatives where you can learn from your peers in a collaborative space.

Blueprint in Action:

The Coca-Cola Company announced an industry-leading goal to have at least 25% of its beverage volume worldwide sold through reuse systems by 2030; it delivered 14% of its total beverage volume in reusable packaging in 2022.



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STEP 2

TRANSFORM YOUR PLASTIC FOOTPRINT

The global plastic crisis demands urgent and concerted action from organizations worldwide. Embark on a comprehensive internal transformation that redefines your approach to plastic sourcing and use.

A. Develop and Execute a Strategy to Achieve Targets

Once your organization has defined and agreed on goals to combat your company's contribution to the plastic pollution crisis, create a robust strategy to deliver on them. Work backward from your target deadline, creating a strategy that outlines clear objectives with actionable steps, interim milestones, and responsible stakeholders. Align those with relevant national and regional plastic pollution policies and their timelines.

Consider forming a cross-functional team that is accountable for the development and execution of the plastic pollution strategy, assigning a responsible corporate board member, and tying progress on plastic goals to C-suite performance metrics and other sustainability goals.

When possible, incorporate plastic strategies into existing procedures and internal policies within your company rather than creating new processes. This will look different at every organization, but some examples include:

- referencing plastic goals in policies on sourcing, climate, and environmental justice;
- incorporating an assessment of packaging as a deliverable in project management processes or as requirement for projects' stage gate approval;
- requiring approvals for packaging for new products that does not meet requirements set by your sustainability strategy;
- ensuring that all employees complete annual training to understand and comply with the strategy and apply it in their role, including training packaging engineers as well as members of operations, labeling, procurement, project management, product development, and marketing departments;
- training or hiring staff subject matter experts on different topics that apply to your strategy in order to have champions of your strategy at various levels and departments within your organization; and
- tying both development of new products and updates for existing products into your new strategy.

B. Get Innovative: Adapt and Revise Portfolios and Test New Models

Evaluate your business model and product portfolio to identify areas where plastic use can be reduced or substituted to turn off the tap of plastic pollution flowing into nature. Work closely with your R&D, product development, and procurement teams to identify the best ways to address sustainability goals alongside other business priorities. We encourage you to operate according to WWF's waste [mitigation hierarchy](#) to maximize your impact.

- **Prevent, Minimize, and Eliminate**
Examine areas within your supply chain and value offering where plastic can be avoided or eliminated. Excessive plastic use is prevalent in almost all sectors that require packaging. Question the driver of plastic packaging and consider whether it is truly necessary. Consider how products and packaging can be designed differently for the evolving marketplace. For instance, products sold through e-commerce channels do not have the same marketing needs as those sold in brick-and-mortar stores. Techniques such as bulking, concentrating, reuse (both return and refill models), and packageless can effectively prevent, minimize, or eliminate plastic. Improved resource management not only aligns with sustainability goals but also can offer cost savings in the long run.

World Economic Forum's [Reuse Portal](#) and [Consumers Beyond Waste](#) guidelines for reuse [safety](#), [design](#), and [city implementation](#) are helpful resource for learning how to scale effective business model innovation through reuse.

- **Change Sourcing, Value Offering, and Product Design**

By reducing reliance on virgin fossil fuel-based plastic, companies can improve markets for more sustainable alternatives. Where plastic is necessary for your products, begin sourcing from sustainable inputs including recycled content and responsibly sourced [biobased content](#).

Furthermore, reassessing design practices and making products with recyclable, [reusable](#), or [compostable](#) materials are significant steps toward a [circular economy](#). Designing such that the application, source material, and recovery system are all aligned for the best result is a key step in creating more circular material systems.

The [PlasticIQ](#) decision tool helps companies assess the environmental and economic impacts of changing their current packaging portfolio to achieve their packaging goals. The Recycling Partnership's [Circular Packaging Assessment Tool](#) helps assess the recyclability of your company's packaging.

Design Principles and Guides

Check out these helpful industry resources that all follow the same basic principles to achieve circular packaging outcomes:

[Consumer Goods Forum's Golden Design Rules](#)

[Upstream's Reuse Design Principles](#)

[Association of Plastic Recyclers' Design Guide for Plastics Recyclability](#)

[US Composting Council's and Biodegradable Product Institute's Compostable Product Labeling Legislative Guidelines](#)



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Blueprint in Action:

From 2021 to 2022, Keurig Dr Pepper (KDP) increased its tonnage of postconsumer recycled (PCR) content used by 57%, reaching 17.7% PCR content overall and approaching its 2025 goal of 25% PCR content in its plastic packaging. This was achieved in part by more than 50 KDP team members from R & D, marketing, procurement, supply chain, and sustainability participating in a full-day session hosted by the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) to receive plastic packaging design-for-recycling training and learn best practices in reporting and APR recycling guidance. (See also Build Organizational Support and Buy-In below.)

• **Manage and Monitor Trade-Offs**

Transforming plastic use may involve making trade-offs in various aspects of your operations. There is no silver bullet solution, and as technology and science progress, existing practices compete with emerging ones. When comparing the pros and cons of a variety of issues (e.g., alternative materials, chemical use, and transport emissions), it takes a critical eye to identify the best overall solution.

Carefully assess the risks and benefits of product and packaging options to find the right balance between technical, environmental, and social viability and other organizational priorities. Rely on credible scientific information to inform analyses and avoid shifting the environmental cost to another part of nature.

Understanding Complex Environmental Trade-Offs

WWF has multiple positions with useful guidance that can assist you when considering trade-offs in environmental impact for new material inputs, technologies, or business models. Here are some of them:

[WWF Position: The Role of Reuse in the Circular Economy for Plastics](#)

[WWF Position: Chemical Recycling Implementation Principles](#)

[WWF Position: Biobased and Biodegradable Plastic](#)

[Methodology for the Assessment of Bioplastic Feedstocks](#)



- Build Organizational Support and Buy-in**
 To reach your goals and successfully implement your plastic strategy, continue the work from [Step 1A: Build Internal Awareness of the Global Plastic Pollution](#) by developing organizational support and buy-in. Leadership should encourage flexibility and communicate that the shift toward a more sustainable system holds opportunities and helps mitigate the growing risks associated with plastic use and production. This way, every one of your colleagues knows they have a role to play in meeting targets. Update the entire company on strategic milestones and ongoing plastic pollution mitigation efforts to reinforce commitment and maintain momentum. Many companies also benefit from launching employee engagement initiatives to educate staff on the issue of plastic pollution and aligning them with the company's objectives. We recommend the [WWF employee engagement](#) tools and resources to increase morale and retain high-quality employees.

Blueprint in Action:

In partnership with WWF and Intersectional Environmentalist, Starbucks operates the Greener Apron program—an online course that gives Starbucks employees and anyone wanting to learn more about sustainability the information and tools they need to make small changes that result in big differences at work and in their communities. As of July 2023, there have been 62,000 enrollments in the Greener Apron course, and Starbucks is currently working to translate the course into 10 different languages.

C. Inform External Stakeholders and Communicate Ambitions Publicly

Once you have set goals and developed a strategy, it is time to inform your external stakeholders. Publicly communicating ambitions demonstrates that you are serious and inspires others to join in the collective action.

Launch your goals by posting them on your website. Consider sharing your targets at a public event or in direct communication with your customers and investors through a press release or social media campaign. Avoid greenwashing by balancing your communications and commitment to SMART goals.

D. Track, Disclose, and Communicate Progress Annually

Build trust with stakeholders through transparent reporting. Demonstrate authenticity and accountability in your efforts by tracking and disclosing your plastic use and progress annually. Use results from [Step 1B: Map Out Your Company's Value Chain and Measure Your Plastic Footprint](#) above to input into business sustainability reporting frameworks, such as [CDP's plastic questionnaire](#). Companies should also discuss challenges to and successes in reaching targets openly in industry and multi-stakeholder forums.

Learn more about how experts are working together to develop and advocate for standardized plastic reporting in [Step 3E: Consistent and Harmonized Measurement and Disclosure](#).



STEP 3

COLLABORATE AND ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

While the private sector is a critical point of influence in the global materials system, no single company can stop plastic pollution alone. After setting targets and implementing operational strategy to reach firm-level goals, your company is ready to start collaborating and advocating for broader interventions.

Work with others to amplify your impact and foster knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and the collective commitment to sustainable plastic use. Private sector and public-private collaborative solutions can overcome systemic barriers in the way of your company or industry's progress.

Business coalitions and platforms advocating for change through collaboration and new regulations build momentum for and inform practical mandates at all levels. For

example, the [Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#) brings together over 200 leading companies that are actively advocating for an ambitious legally binding and equitable global agreement to end plastic pollution. Groups like the Business Coalition support effective government regulation and incentives to address the economic drivers causing plastic pollution while simultaneously signaling the private sector's readiness for systemic change to policymakers through voluntary industry commitments and conservation wins.

Collaborating with the Right Partners

Join platforms, coalitions, or initiatives that practically address the challenges most relevant to your company. Once you've signed up, actively participate, commit time and resources, and incorporate learning from collaborations into your company's strategy and decision-making. Your input and implementation, through actions like financing research projects and lending in-kind expertise, advances the mission and work of these groups and can help your company meet its own goals. Here are three pathways to considering which coalitions are right for your company:

A. Product and Material Challenges

Collaborating on product and material challenges enables resource pooling and increased access to relevant expertise to tackle shared issues. Building consensus among stakeholders promotes solutions requiring behavioral change and industry agreements from different parts of the value chain. This collective effort consolidates influence to powerfully accelerate systemic change in plastic material practices.

Many leading companies are members of the following platforms: The Recycling Partnership's [Polypropylene Recycling](#), [PET Recycling](#) and [Film & Flexible Recycling](#) Coalitions or Closed Loop Partners' [NextGen Consortium](#).

B. Place-Based Challenges

The impacts of plastic materials are often tied to place-based issues, such as operational markets, sourcing locations, or where your company's plastic waste ends up. This might include concerns about plastic pollution in local waterways, waste management infrastructure, or the environmental consequences of plastic production or mismanagement within a specific community or region. Addressing these issues requires local context and strategies tailored to the unique challenges plastic poses in that place.

Examples of platforms that have a focus on US solutions include [OneSource Coalition](#) and the [U.S. Plastics Pact](#). In other countries, place-based collaboration is available through WWF's [Plastic Smart Cities](#) initiative and the [Plastics Pact Network](#).

C. Knowledge and Perception Challenges

Knowledge and perception challenges are related to market and sector understanding of the environmental and social impacts of material systems, including material sourcing, design choices, and circular systems design and function. They may also include addressing misconceptions and risks

of the same impacts. Private sector collaborators work to improve awareness and knowledge about the life cycle of plastics, the consequences of improper disposal, and the promotion of informed decision-making regarding plastic consumption and waste management.

Examples of platforms that work with this challenge include the [Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance](#) and the World Economic Forum's [Reuse Portal](#) and guidelines for reuse [safety](#) and [design](#).

Blueprint in Action:

Members of the Consumer Goods Forum Plastic Waste Coalition of Action have aligned on Golden Design Rules for packaging design to increase the circularity of their packaging portfolios where appropriate. This set of voluntary, independent, and time-bound commitments, which together reach over 90% of plastic packaging available on the market, will create significant value for the industry and wider system.

Advocating for Systems-Level Change

To end plastic pollution for good and accelerate change, we need a system-wide transformation that prevents plastic waste from being created in the first place. This will require shifting to a circular economy that tackles all steps of the value chain with a high level of ambition. The forthcoming UN Global Plastics Treaty—currently under negotiation through the end of 2024—has the potential to pave the way for this transition, helping stimulate, coordinate, and align national policies and actions toward a common global strategic direction. Companies can join the [Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#) to amplify the call for a just, ambitious, and effective treaty to end plastic pollution by creating a level playing field and preventing a patchwork of disconnected solutions.

Below are additional advocacy issues that drive systems change and help companies overcome barriers to reach targets in support of No Plastic in Nature:

Blueprint in Action:

Colgate-Palmolive is making significant progress in transforming toothpaste packaging through its recyclable tube technology and is freely sharing its new design with other companies and industry stakeholders. Redesigning difficult-to-recycle packaging is a much-needed practice, and collaborative knowledge sharing helps move the entire system forward. Paired with increased access and acceptance in recycling systems, this will be a big win for pollution prevention.

D. Smart Public Plastic Policies

Policies that enable infrastructure for reuse models, deposit-return systems, and extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems are crucial to halting plastic pollution. Companies can lead the charge in advocating for pragmatic and effective plastic policies, which drive circularity, facilitate the development of essential infrastructure, and support human and environmental health. Your company can advocate for and help implement local, national, and global policies. Consequently, the additional issues below could also be advanced by good public policy.

Read the outcomes of WWF’s first-ever Plastic Policy Summit [here](#).

For background on key public policy issues in the US, see WWF’s [Policy Guidance for Circular Economy for Packaging in the United States](#), OneSource Coalition’s [Statement of Solutions](#), and [WWF and ABA Joint Principles for Reducing Materials Footprint and Achieving Circularity](#).

E. Consistent and Harmonized Measurement and Disclosure

Aligned corporate and country-level measurement methodologies result in consistent and comparable data. This alignment, and overall support for measurement and disclosure of plastic waste as corporate best practice, facilitates improved progress tracking, tactic evaluation, benchmarking opportunities, global comparison, and overall accountability. The absence of this common reporting hampers comprehensive problem-solving. Accurate, harmonized measurement will be critical to understanding, and thus solving, the plastic pollution crisis.



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Blueprint in Action:

The Scaling Plastics Disclosure initiative launched in 2022 to advance harmonized measurement through the expansion of CDP’s environmental disclosure platform to include plastic. This is a partnership between The Pew Charitable Trusts, Minderoo Foundation, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and WWF. WWF will lend experience from ReSource: Plastic and the development of the ReSource Footprint Tracker to inform the project.

Alongside this effort, Consumers Beyond Waste (CBW) works to advance more responsible models of consumption for the benefit of business and society. Evaluating the success of reuse is challenging, as there is currently no consensus on how to measure, account for, or report on reusable packaging. CBW is committed to developing a reuse accounting framework, which will help companies understand the impacts of reuse systems on their packaging portfolios and measure progress toward sustainability goals.

F. Sharing and Scaling Upstream Innovation

Encouraging source reduction initiatives can minimize the generation of single-use plastics and reduce the burden of necessary waste collection and processing. Source reduction upstream can cut a sizable portion of plastic waste reentering the production cycle. Upstream solutions include supporting reduction, policies to support circularity, and the development of at-scale reuse systems that deliver maximum impact.

While advocating for increased public awareness regarding the plastic crisis, it is important to not expect individuals to navigate this issue without support or to shift bulk of the responsibility for action to their shoulders. Support policies and programs that make sustainable choices possible, easier, and advantageous for individuals.

G. Enabling Individual Behavior Change at Scale

There is a growing public interest in sustainability, and the public increasingly demands urgent transformative action.¹¹ Despite the demand, expecting individuals to drive behavioral change may be unrealistic when they are constrained by factors beyond their control, such as cost, inadequate collection systems, or a lack of knowledge surrounding environmental trade-offs. For this reason, it is important to ensure that supporting systems and infrastructure—for example, effective reuse/recycling systems—are in place and that resources and investments (such as marketing efforts) are effectively allocated to support individuals in this transition.

For more information on effective reuse systems that consider behavior change, check out these reports:

- [Unpacking Customer Perspectives on Reusable Packaging](#)¹¹
- [Bringing Reusable Packaging Systems to Life: Lessons Learned from Scaling Reusable Cups](#)
- [Unlocking a reuse revolution: scaling returnable packaging](#)



STEP 4

INVEST IN CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS AND MITIGATION OUTSIDE CORPORATE OPERATIONS

Follow Steps 1–3 of this Blueprint to gain awareness, change your operations, and advocate for durable systemic change—and then, as the last step, make additional investments outside your company’s direct operations.

When faced with stakeholder pressure, do not be tempted to invest in low-quality short-term solutions just to report quick wins in plastic footprint reductions or plastic pollution removals. When you evaluate proprietary solutions and research, consider whether unnecessary gatekeeping will hold back change in the market, hindering your company’s ability to reach its broader goals.

Aim for system change and focus beyond-your-fence-line investments on high-quality solutions that meaningfully close the global funding gap for achieving No Plastic in Nature.

Why Offsets Are Not a Credible Solution for Plastic Pollution

Achieving the goal of No Plastic in Nature requires a comprehensive approach to create systemic change. Offsetting the use of plastic with credits that pay for the collection of plastic waste is generally not a transformative solution, and associated claims such as “plastic neutral” or “net-zero plastic” are misleading to the public and misrepresent the impact of offset activities.

- The collection of plastic waste does not undo the harm that plastic’s sourcing, production, transportation, use, and mismanaged disposal have already done to nature and people.
- To be beneficial, the purchase of plastic credits must be transformational, meaning they catalyze the creation of a more sustainable plastic management system with the end goal to stop the flow of plastic into nature and, in so doing, ultimately render the crediting mechanism to clean up plastic pollution unnecessary.

There is a significant risk that plastic credits facilitate companies in making claims of environmental stewardship without requiring accountability for transformational change to operational practices, thereby perpetuating the current linear system.

The application of plastic credits faces unique challenges compared to carbon credits. Unlike carbon, which is a natural component of the environment and integral to ecosystems, no level of plastic pollution can be deemed safe or acceptable. Plastic pollution’s impact is inherently localized, contingent on the specific characteristics of individual plastic items. WWF does not support terms such as “plastic neutral” or “plastic neutrality,” as they fail to accurately communicate true environmental impact. Additionally, the concept of “net zero” should be avoided in the context of plastic pollution, as it may obscure the urgent need for decisive action to stop the flow of plastic into natural ecosystems.

Read more about the risks of plastic credits and WWF’s position [here](#).

Credible investments create holistic and lasting change by addressing root causes of plastic pollution, raising all boats with their tide. Consider the following when evaluating additional corporate investments:

A. Connect Investments to Material Impacts

When exploring investments to address plastic pollution beyond your company’s fence line, align the investments so that they are material to addressing the environmental and social impacts of your plastic footprint. This could mean choosing investments that further solutions for your product categories, value chain, relevant geographies and communities, or goals. For example, if your company sells products in small-format sachets, an investment in small-format refill models for similar product categories would be material. Ideally, keep your focus on plastics in your portfolio. You can either explore existing investment opportunities or, if you have the resources and capabilities, create new opportunities, either alone or in collaborative spaces with others.

Blueprint in Action:

The American Beverage Association (ABA) is strengthening community recycling programs through its Every Bottle Back initiative to increase the collection of PET bottles and decrease the industry’s use of virgin fossil-based plastic. The Every Bottle Back initiative is investing in improved recycling infrastructure and consumer education in key areas of the country, with commitments to 42 communities to date that are projected to yield 770 million more pounds of PET over 10 years.

B. Identify the Most Effective Method of Investment

Private sector investments can support a variety of different types of interventions. Consider whether the systems barriers for your company are related to operational shortcomings along your value chain, a lack of innovation or solutions available, or local impacts of plastic pollution on people and nature.

- **Operational investments** support efficiencies in existing operations and can include updates to a company's own operations or other businesses along its value chain, such as waste management partners. Aim for investments that will lead to transformations that reduce impacts in and across the systems your company operates in. These investments ensure longevity and financial viability, can put catalytic investments into the implementation phase, and ready companies for long-term changes to the system.
- **Catalytic investments** kick-start systemic change. They encompass initiatives such as pilot projects, technology incubators, innovative business models, collaborative forums, and infrastructure updates. These investments play a vital role in testing novel concepts and facilitating the dissemination of valuable lessons learned. Some new technology and business models that started with catalytic investments are now gaining scale, including reuse systems, blockchain for transparency, plastic waste tracking, materials innovation, consumer engagement platforms, and collaborative initiatives. Ensuring scalability and financial viability is crucial to ensure long-term impact. [Closed Loop Partners](#) and their [Center for the Circular Economy](#) have helpful resources about operational and catalytic investments.
- **Remediation investments** allocate funds to projects or initiatives that mitigate existing plastic waste issues, clean up polluted areas, and implement solutions to reduce the environmental impact of plastic. Without support from the private sector, the burden of cost to clean up plastic pollution is passed to local communities that are struggling under its impacts. Addressing the harm already done to people and nature is critical for these communities, but unless the broken system is addressed, the value of these investments is lost. As per the waste mitigation hierarchy, remediation is the last step in preventing plastic pollution; therefore, while these efforts are important contributions to community health and can be made alongside operational changes and other types of investment, it is good practice that remediation efforts be paired with other system investments aimed at preventing leakage to avoid the risk of greenwashing and support lasting change. Remediation investment examples include [The Ocean Cleanup](#), [Clean Currents Coalition](#), and targeted efforts from the [Ocean Conservancy](#), [NOAA](#), and the [Terracycle Global Foundation](#).

C. Make Investments Proportional to the Problem

The plastics produced in just 2019 represent a lifetime cost of US\$3.7 trillion to our communities, economy, and planet—unless urgent action is taken to change the trajectory of the plastic crisis.¹² While this scope is too large for one company, or even a group of companies, to address, your company's investments should align to the scale of the problem, proportional to the contribution of your plastic footprint. Determining the correct investment amount entails evaluating potential positive impacts of the investment, financial and sustainable return on the investment, and engagement with experts and stakeholders that can support your analysis.

The extent of your company's investment in systems-level solutions should reflect:

- your company's plastic footprint,
- the cost of mitigating your footprint's contribution to plastic pollution,
- the magnitude of the potential reputational risks your plastic use can bring,
- cost savings in avoiding future impacts,
- the social cost of the plastic pollution,
- opportunity costs of switching to more sustainable materials or business models, and
- meaningful contribution to partnerships that address problems at scale.

Make sure your investment counts and that you are prepared to report on the results. Not every company has the same level of financial resources or will land on the same investment decisions. These criteria are thus a foundation to stay focused on results, identify bottom-line resources, and justify the spending.

Blueprint in Action:

The Polypropylene Recycling Coalition has awarded grants to 41 recycling facilities, increasing the amount of polypropylene recovered in the US by an estimated 42 million pounds annually and improving access to polypropylene recycling for over 34 million Americans.



D. Make Additional Considerations for Quality Investments

Uphold Social and Environmental Safeguards: Ensure that the implementation of any additional investment is conducted in a credible manner and does not result in unintended environmental or social impacts. This includes:

- a public stakeholder process and a grievance mechanism in line with IFC's Performance Standards;
- avoiding environmental damage such as climate impacts from processing or transporting waste and damage to wildlife or their habitats;
- paying all persons involved in the implementation—e.g., those collecting and processing waste—a living wage;
- ensuring fair and safe working conditions, including providing necessary personal protective equipment; and
- meeting the needs and expectations of the informal sector, local communities, and other stakeholders whose livelihoods could be affected.

For example, [WWF's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework](#) systematizes good governance practices to achieve human rights, transparency, nondiscrimination, public participation, and accountability, among other goals.

Use Credible Standards and Reputable Sources: WWF encourages these standards to align with the [WWF Principles for Standards and Certifications](#) and ISEAL best practices whenever such a standard is relevant for products, solutions, or interventions. WWF's position papers and other guidance reference relevant standards and certifications wherever they are available.

Match Investments to Geographic Impact: The many externalities associated with plastic pollution (emissions from plastic waste being incinerated; pollution impacts on local fisheries and tourism; microplastics in our air, water, and food; entanglement and ingestion impacts to wildlife; etc.) often occur far away from where plastic is produced, sold, and used. A company's investments should address impacts on the company's entire waste flows and not be isolated to the market where the product is sold.

Plan for Durability and Financial Sustainability: Go beyond piloting and incubation. Investments that matter contribute to holistic and lasting change. This means focusing on root causes; engaging additional partners that can support phased implementation; and ensuring a long-term financing model securing longevity of the investments, continuous impact, and system change.

Prioritize Upstream and Emerging Solutions: A vast majority of investments in plastics circularity has historically fallen to downstream solutions, with \$3.6 billion going to recycling and recovery. This is 87% of the total \$4.1 billion invested from 2018 to 2022.¹³ We must shift the focus of investment to untapped opportunities upstream that prioritize reduction and avoidance.

Overall, use a strategic approach when choosing investments outside your fence line to ensure you are connecting to your company's strategy and material issues; solving the most pressing or relevant challenges; putting in sufficient funding to get the results that match the magnitude of the issue; and ensuring that projects have safeguards in place, leverage credible standards and science, do not simply shift impacts to other geographies, and are designed to last. To find examples of good investments and thought leadership on investments for circularity broadly, read more from [Circulate Capital](#), [Closed Loop Partners](#), and [Perpetual](#).



CONCLUSION

For communities bearing the worst burdens of plastic production and the 2,000 species known to be negatively impacted by plastic pollution, action cannot wait. Plastic pollution continues to be on top of the corporate leadership agenda, which is a tremendous opportunity today and over the next decade.

WWF envisions companies playing an influential role in creating a circular future that supports the well-being of all people and nature. Through a 2018 analysis using data from UNEP, Trucost, and the Plastic Disclosure Project, WWF determined that just 100 companies could prevent 50 million tons of plastic waste—but only if they act now to effectively redesign how we source, use, and dispose of plastics.¹⁴

This Blueprint is complementary to other WWF and partner organization guidance and takes companies through a four-step journey to 1) understand the plastic crisis and set ambitious goals, 2) transform their plastic footprint, 3) advocate with others for system change, and 4) invest in circularity outside of their direct operations.

Champion companies that work through WWF’s step-by-step Blueprint for Credible Action on Plastic Pollution will contribute:

- plastic footprint reporting and global waste data harmonization that investors will use to identify risks and

opportunities and regulators will use to set standards that work for businesses and communities alike;

- product portfolios that are envisioned and designed for a just and equitable society;
- operational readiness for upcoming plastic pollution mandates and related available capital; and
- collaborative approaches to solve the toughest problems alongside peer companies, communities, and governments.

We look forward to partnering with companies on this journey and invigorating companies and industries to end plastic pollution. Together, we can stem the tide of plastic leaking into nature and protect human health and the precious ecosystems that support us all.

Bookmark [this page](#) for updates and companion materials to the Blueprint as they are released.



APPENDIX A: CASE FOR BUSINESS ACTION

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Addressing plastic pollution is not only an ethical responsibility for companies but also a smart business decision that improves long-term viability in an evolving business landscape where authentic action on social justice and environmental issues is increasingly expected.

In recent years, many influential businesses have been expanding and accelerating efforts to fight plastic waste through voluntary initiatives. Increased interest from stakeholders, including investors and individuals, encourages more companies to measure their plastic footprints and provide inputs into established frameworks for disclosure.

In addition to reducing costs and fostering innovation, proactive measures to reduce plastic pollution help companies:

- comply with new regulations,
- align with stakeholder expectations and consumer preferences,
- stay resilient and relevant, and
- support critical ecosystem services.

Complying with New Regulations

Concerns over plastic pollution have motivated governments worldwide, at all levels, to implement a wide range of stricter regulations and policies to curb this growing issue. In recent years, policies that ban single-use plastic products such as plastic bags and straws have grown in popularity, as have regulations around the use of recycled content in new products and, perhaps most notably, EPR.

In June 2022, Colorado enacted the United States' first full EPR model—a statewide initiative that makes producers of plastic and packaging responsible for their collection and recycling.¹⁵ In 2021, the European Union banned single-use

plastic plates, cutlery, and straws from being placed on the markets of the EU member states.¹⁶ Now in 2024, the EU is revising their Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive to reinforce the essential requirements for packaging, ensuring its reuse and recycling, boosting the uptake of recycled content, tackling overpackaging, and improving the requirements' enforceability. At the same time, world leaders are engaged in intergovernmental negotiations to develop a global legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution.¹⁷

While these examples are not exhaustive, they demonstrate a growing popularity of diverse and consequential policies in the plastics and packaging space. Companies can get ahead of national and subnational regulatory compliance by proactively addressing plastic waste, potentially avoiding fines, penalties, and reputational damage. They are also better positioned to provide pragmatic input for upcoming regulations that impact their business and sector.

Meeting Stakeholder Expectations

Consumers, investors, employees, and other stakeholders increasingly expect companies to act on plastic pollution as the negative effects become more visible and severe. In 2024, WWF's consumer polling study highlighted that more than 80% of Americans would support incentivizing companies to reduce plastic waste and make companies responsible for the plastic waste they create.¹⁸ Companies can answer these demands by implementing long-term sustainable practices and highlighting a steadfast commitment to responsible business conduct. Forward-thinking businesses can strengthen their company's reputation and foster trust among their stakeholders, thereby capturing sustainable consumer markets and cultivating customer loyalty. Simultaneously, they can attract employees seeking purpose-driven workplaces that align with their own values.¹⁹ This strategic alignment provides a distinct competitive edge important to investors, showing the capacity to be resilient in a changing landscape of stakeholder expectations.²⁰

Staying Relevant and Resilient

Companies that address plastic pollution are more likely to remain equipped to manage potential disruptions caused by changing regulations, plastic-related reputational issues, and shifts in consumer preferences in the evolving business landscape. Companies that invest in innovation and sustainable alternatives to virgin plastic or participate in circular economy initiatives, emphasizing resource efficiency, innovative reuse and refill models, and recycling can also gain a competitive advantage over companies that lag. This approach can present new business opportunities and foster profitable collaboration with new stakeholders in the circular economy ecosystem. Such innovative practices can lead to new product lines, services, or business models—as well as cost savings overall.

Supporting Ecosystem Services

Nature is crucial to human survival. It provides vital resources such as water, minerals, and food as well as ecosystem services like crop pollination, water filtration, and climate regulation. These resources and services are important not only to humans. Without a healthy environment and balanced ecosystems, business operations would become unviable, supply chains unmanageable, and relationships with employees and customers untenable.²¹ We know that plastic pollution is having a huge negative impact on nature and wildlife. At least 2,144 species around the world so far have been found to encounter plastic pollution in their natural habitats. It is estimated that up to 90% of seabirds and 52% of sea turtle species have mistakenly eaten plastic. Plastic is harming some of the world's most important marine ecosystems, like coral reefs and mangroves.²²

Business will not function if nature continues to decline. Over half of the global GDP is at risk due to nature loss.²³ Urgent action is needed to reduce businesses' impacts on nature and invest in its protection and restoration. The long-term resilience of all businesses depends on bringing nature back into balance, considering the location of their operations, and valuing the products and services they provide. The goal is a future where there is no plastic in nature and a healthy environment continues to foster healthy business.

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES INDEX BY STEP

General

- [Blueprint for Credible Corporate Action on Plastic Pollution Project](#)
- [WWF International No Plastic in Nature Initiative](#)
- [WWF US Plastic Initiative](#)
- WWF's Industry Calls to Action: [Finance](#), [tourism](#), [retail](#), and [seafood](#) industries
- WWF's ReSource Plastic annual [Transparent Reports](#)
- WWF White Paper: [Moving from a Linear to a Circular Economy](#)
- Pew Charitable Trusts' [Breaking the Plastic Wave](#)

Step 1: Understand the Plastic Pollution Crisis, Measure Your Impact, and Set Ambitious Goals

- [No Plastic in Nature](#): Information on the plastic pollution crisis
- Information on the [Case for Business Action](#)
- Information on [High-Risk Plastic Waste](#) and [Unnecessary and Problematic Plastics](#)
- Information on credible collaborations:
 - [EMF Global Commitment](#)

Tools

[ReSource Footprint Tracker](#): Measure your plastic footprint.

- [Plastics Pact](#) Network
- [Plastic Action Partnership](#)

Step 2: Transform Your Plastic Footprint

- WWF's waste [mitigation hierarchy](#)
- WWF's [Employee Engagement](#) Program

Design principles and guides:

- [Consumer Goods Forum's Golden Design Rules](#)
- [Upstream's Reuse Design Principles](#)
- [Association of Plastic Recyclers' Design Guide for Plastics Recyclability](#)
- US Composting Council's and Biodegradable Product Institute's Compostable Product Labeling Legislative Guidelines

Considering complex trade-offs:

- [WWF Position: Role of Reuse in the Circular Economy for Plastics](#)

Tools

PlasticIQ: Assess the environmental and economic impacts of changing your packaging portfolio.

[The Recycling Partnership's Circular Packaging Assessment Tool](#): Assess the recyclability of your packaging.

[CDP's plastic questionnaire](#): Disclose plastic-related impacts and report on progress with transparency.

- [WWF Position: Chemical Recycling Implementation Principles](#)
- [WWF Position: Biobased and Biodegradable Plastic](#)
- [Methodology for the Assessment of Bioplastic Feedstocks](#)

Step 3: Collaborate and Advocate for Systems Change

Collaborative coalitions and platforms

- Policy:
 - [Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#)
- Materials:
 - The Recycling Partnership’s [Polypropylene, PET, and Film & Flexible Recycling Coalitions](#)
 - [Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance](#)
- Reuse and application:
 - Closed Loop Partners’ [NextGen Consortium](#)
 - World Economic Forum’s [Reuse Portal](#) (Application, Reuse)
 - Guidelines for reuse [safety](#) and [design](#)
- Place-based:
 - [OneSource Coalition](#) (US)
 - [U.S. Plastics Pact](#) (US)
 - WWF’s [Plastic Smart Cities](#) initiative
 - [Plastic Pact Network](#)

Policy resources:

- [Outcomes of WWF’s First-Ever Plastic Policy Summit](#)
- WWF’s [Policy Guidance for Circular Economy for Packaging in the United States](#)
- OneSource Coalition’s [Statement of Solutions](#)
- [WWF and ABA Joint Principles for Reducing Materials Footprint and Achieving Circularity](#)
- WWF’s [Global Plastics Treaty Updates and Information](#)

Reuse systems and behavior change resources:

- [Unpacking Customer Perspectives on Reusable Packaging](#)
- Bringing Reusable Packaging Systems to Life: Lessons Learned from Scaling Reusable Cups
- Unlocking a reuse revolution: scaling returnable packaging

Step 4: Invest in Circular Solutions and Mitigation Outside Corporate Operations

- [WWF Position on Plastic Crediting and Plastic Neutrality](#): Risks of plastics credits
- [WWF’s Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework](#): Institutional mechanism to manage the environmental and social risks
- [IFC’s Performance Standards](#): Public stakeholder process and a grievance mechanism

Operational and catalytic investments:

- [Closed Loop Partners](#)
- [Center for a Circular Economy](#)

Remediation investment resources:

- [The Ocean Cleanup](#)
- [Clean Current Coalition](#)
- [Ocean Conservancy](#)
- [NOAA](#)
- [Terracycle Foundation](#)

Guidance on credible standards and reputable sources:

- [WWF Principles for Standards and Certifications](#)
- ISEAL best practices

Examples of good investments and thought leadership on investments for circularity:

- [Circulate Capital](#)
- [Closed Loop Partners](#)
- [Perpetual Partners](#)

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