

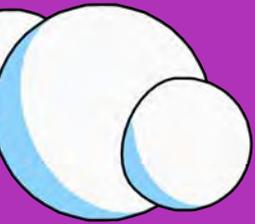
# ESG Software Buyers' Guide



SWEEP

The smarter way to evaluate ESG tools

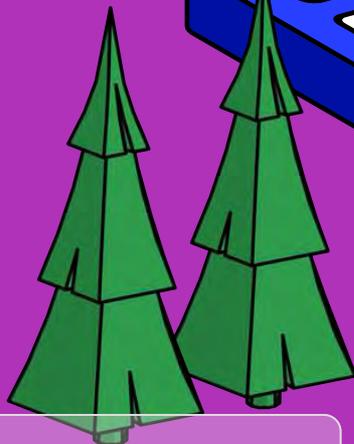
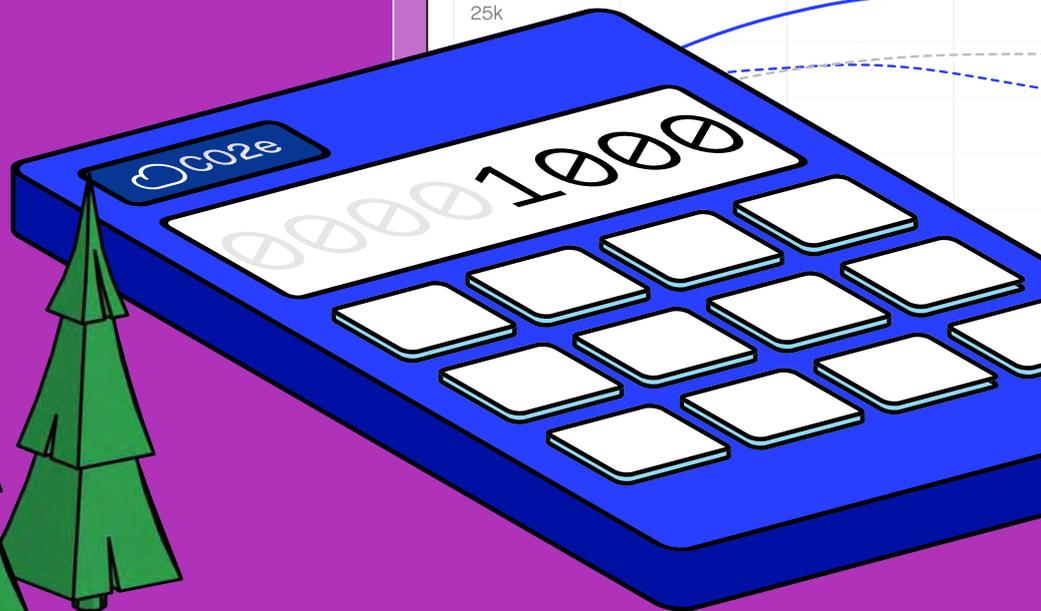
GUIDE



\$ Budget

Actual Forecast Initiatives Trajectory

30k  
25k



CO2e

2025

Activity growth **627k** tCO2e

Initiatives **470k** tCO2e

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# 01 The smarter way to evaluate ESG tools

**ESG software should help you go beyond reporting: giving you the insights and controls to reduce risk, optimize operations, and drive change.**

In a world where every claim is being scrutinized, by investors, regulators, customers, and your own employees, you need proof that your efforts are real, tangible, and value-driven. ESG software gives you that proof, and the best platforms go further: **they help you find hidden risks, unlock efficiency, and turn sustainability into a genuine business advantage.**

Disclosure is one part of the job. But the real value lies in what you do with the data, and how confidently you can act on it.



“We talk about climate data, emissions data—but in reality, we're talking about pieces of information that help us navigate a changing world.”

**David Carlin**  
Global ESG expert

## Purpose of this guide

This is a buyer's guide to ESG management and analytics software, which is also known as ESG reporting software, ESG data platforms, or sustainability performance management tools.

It's designed to help you navigate the fast-growing market of ESG solutions, understand what to look for, and make an informed decision that aligns with your business goals and sustainability strategy.

# 02 Who this guide is for

This guide is for teams who want to turn ESG from a reporting requirement into a business advantage.

Whether you're driving sustainability strategy or enabling it behind the scenes, ESG software can help you unlock measurable value, and go beyond compliance needs.

# It's for:

- **Chief Sustainability Officers and ESG teams** proving the ROI of sustainability and aligning it with business goals
- **Finance teams** that need reliable ESG data for investors and long-term value creation
- **Legal and compliance leads** navigating disclosure requirements while minimizing risk
- **Operations and supply chain teams** managing ESG risks and performance across networks
- **IT leaders** ensuring ESG tools are secure, scalable, and well-integrated
- **Executives and boards** who see ESG as central to competitive strategy

No matter your role, this guide will help you choose ESG software that delivers more than reports — it drives results.

## Using the guide

We'll walk you through a practical framework for evaluating ESG software — based on what matters to your business. Whether you're aiming to strengthen governance, cut costs, hit climate targets, or simply keep regulators happy, this guide helps you find the right fit.

Learn how to assess platforms based on real-world outcomes:

- **Competitive advantage:** Can it help you make smarter, faster decisions?
- **Operational impact:** Will it reduce risk, rework, and wasted time?
- **Compliance confidence:** Does it support your current obligations? Does it prepare you for what's next?

In short: what's the ROI for your business — and is the platform built to grow with you?



What's the ROI for your business — and is the platform built to grow with you?

# 03 Common ESG software use cases

This section breaks down five of the most common ESG software use cases.

For each, you'll find what to look for, what to avoid, and how leading solutions enable success — so you can choose a platform that meets your needs today and evolves with you tomorrow.

# 1. Ensure regulatory compliance

**Why it matters:** From CSRD and SFDR in Europe to California's SB 253/SB 261, staying compliant is essential to avoid legal and reputational risks. But compliance is just the beginning. Smart companies go beyond the basics. With the right approach, reporting can drive growth, not just be something to check off a list.

**What to look for:** Pre-built reporting frameworks, audit-ready records, automated updates to reflect new rules, and user-level access controls.

**What to avoid:** Tools with rigid templates, limited jurisdiction coverage, or opaque data structures that hinder auditability.

**What great software does:** It centralizes your data once and maps it across multiple standards. Built-in controls highlight gaps before they become liabilities.

# 2. Drive Net Zero with real action

**Why it matters:** Setting a climate goal is easy. Hitting it — and proving progress — requires data, structure, and follow-through.

**What to look for:** Target setting aligned with climate frameworks, emissions forecasting, initiative tracking, and scenario analysis.

**What to avoid:** Tools that only track emissions without supporting planning or progress monitoring.

**What great software does:** It connects emissions data with action plans, assigns ownership across teams, and lets you model trade-offs before making investment decisions.

## 3. Future-proof the tech stack

**Why it matters:** ESG is evolving fast. Your systems should be able to handle what's next without needing a rebuild.

**What to look for:** Configurable data models, robust APIs, integrations with finance, HR, and supply chain systems, and user-friendly customization.

**What to avoid:** Closed platforms, dependency on consultants for basic changes, or disconnected tools that create ESG data silos.

**What great software does:** It flexes to fit your business, integrates smoothly with existing systems, and scales as ESG demands grow.

## 4. Transform the supply chain

**Why it matters:** For most companies, Scope 3 emissions and ESG risk sit with suppliers — making transparency and engagement essential.

**What to look for:** Supply chain mapping, Scope 3 data collection, performance tracking, and collaborative tools for supplier onboarding.

**What to avoid:** One-way surveys with no feedback loop or insights into supplier behavior and progress.

**What great software does:** It gives you visibility into supply chain impact, helps engage suppliers in improvements, and supports risk and compliance tracking.

# 5. Manage ESG risks in finance and investment

**Why it matters:** Investors, insurers, and lenders are integrating ESG into decision-making — and expect the same from you.

**What to look for:** Climate risk modeling, emissions attribution, financial linkage, and reporting aligned with ISSB, TCFD, or EU Taxonomy.

**What to avoid:** ESG platforms that can't support asset-level insights or portfolio-level analysis.

**What great software does:** It ties ESG data to financial metrics, enabling better risk visibility, capital allocation, and compliance with evolving disclosure standards.

# 04 11 Must-have capabilities in ESG software

When selecting ESG software, you're investing in a platform that should not only support your current needs but scale with your business as regulations evolve and sustainability goals shift.

Here are 10 key capabilities to look for that will ensure your ESG software delivers real business value and future-proof compliance.

# 1. Centralized data management

**Why it matters:** Efficient decision-making requires a unified source of truth. Data silos across departments can slow progress and undermine trust in ESG reporting.

**Look for:** A platform that centralizes all ESG data in one place, consolidating emissions, waste, water usage, and other critical data from across your organization and supply chain.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Ensures consistency, improves reporting accuracy, and allows for a seamless overview of your entire ESG landscape.

# 2. Customizable reporting templates

**Why it matters:** Different stakeholders and regulations require different reports, but manual reporting can be time-consuming and error-prone.

**Look for:** Pre-built, flexible templates for common frameworks (e.g., TCFD, GRI, ISSB), along with the ability to customize them to suit your specific needs.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Streamlines reporting, reduces manual input, and increases accuracy and consistency, making reporting quicker and more reliable.

# 3. Version control and audit trails

**Why it matters:** ESG data must be transparent, verifiable, and auditable. Versioning ensures that any changes to the data or reports are tracked and can be referenced when needed.

**Look for:** Built-in versioning systems that automatically track changes, edits, and approvals. Comprehensive audit trails for every data point.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Helps you maintain compliance, simplifies audits, and provides full transparency when verifying ESG reports.

## 4. Scenario planning and forecasting

**Why it matters:** SG is about more than just tracking; it's about proactive planning and managing risk. Scenario planning helps you model future impacts and forecast outcomes based on different strategies.

**Look for:** Tools that allow you to simulate various scenarios for your carbon footprint, sustainability initiatives, and climate risks, with the ability to analyze and adjust.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Empowers your business to plan for multiple futures, helping you allocate resources more effectively and future-proof your strategy.

## 5. Advanced performance analytics

**Why it matters:** ESG efforts need to be measurable, not just aspirational. You need to track progress and pinpoint areas for improvement.

**Look for:** Real-time analytics and performance dashboards that measure progress against goals like net-zero emissions, waste reduction, and employee diversity.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Offers actionable insights and helps ensure that your sustainability strategy is not only being implemented but is effective and evolving.

## 6. Integration with existing systems

**Why it matters:** ESG data doesn't live in a vacuum. Your ESG software needs to integrate with financial, HR, and operational systems to make the most of your data.

**Look for:** Seamless integrations with your existing enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), and other business systems.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Saves time, reduces data entry errors, and ensures that sustainability goals are tracked alongside financial and operational data.

## 7. AI and automation for data collection and validation

**Why it matters:** Manual data entry is inefficient and prone to error. Automation and AI can streamline data collection, validation, and reporting.

**Look for:** AI-powered tools that automatically pull in and validate data, flagging discrepancies and ensuring accuracy across all ESG metrics.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Increases data accuracy, reduces manual workload, and frees up your team to focus on strategy rather than administrative tasks.

## 8. Collaboration tools

**Why it matters:** ESG initiatives require cross-functional collaboration, and you need tools that facilitate teamwork and communication. The best solutions make it easy to involve colleagues, partners and suppliers. So sustainability isn't a siloed initiative, but a common mission with shared benefits.

**Look for:** Integrated collaboration tools like task management, document sharing, and team-specific dashboards that support a coordinated approach across departments.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Encourages alignment across your sustainability team and other departments, ensuring everyone is on the same page and moving toward common goals.

## 9. Customizable dashboards and KPIs

**Why it matters:** Every organization has unique priorities and ESG goals. Your software should let you focus on the metrics that matter most.

**Look for:** A platform that allows you to customize dashboards with KPIs that align with your business objectives and regulatory requirements.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Provides real-time insights that are directly relevant to your priorities, helping your team stay focused on driving impact.

# 10. Cross-disclosure framework reporting and reuse

**Why it matters:** Reporting needs evolve. New standards come along, existing ones change, and stakeholder expectations grow. No one wants to start from scratch every time.

**What to look for:** A platform that lets you collect data once and re-use it across CSRD, GRI, ISSB, CDP, California Acts and beyond.

**What to avoid:** Software with rigid data structures. Customisation limitations when it comes to extracting data and building custom reports. Specialising in only a couple of reports (ex: only GHG and CSRD) and data types (ex: carbon-only).

**What great software does:** Saves time, ensures consistency, and keeps you ready for whatever regulation or stakeholder comes next.

# 11. Scalability and flexibility

**Why it matters:** As your business grows and ESG requirements evolve, your platform needs to scale without losing performance.

**Look for:** A solution that can handle increasing data volume, complexity, and new regulations. Look for flexibility to add new features or frameworks as your business needs change.

**Why it's a game-changer:** Future-proofs your investment, allowing you to adapt to new regulatory environments, sustainability trends, or business growth without needing a platform overhaul.



By prioritizing these 11 capabilities, you'll not only meet the demands of your stakeholders but also unlock the full potential of your sustainability efforts.

Selecting the right platform isn't just about ticking boxes — it's about choosing a tool that helps you meet and exceed your sustainability goals while driving measurable business value.

# 05 Key considerations for selecting ESG software

When choosing ESG software, it's easy to get caught up in flashy features or overly simplified promises.

To truly succeed, you need to be aware of the most common pitfalls that could hinder your progress.

# Rigid data models

Many ESG platforms come with predefined, inflexible data models that force you to conform to a set structure. While this might work for basic data entry, it can quickly become a barrier as your needs evolve. Every organization has unique goals, reporting requirements, and business structures, and your ESG software should adapt to them, not the other way around. A rigid model may limit your ability to track and manage complex data, such as emissions across different geographies, the nuances of supplier sustainability performance, or the integration of ESG factors into financial forecasting.

**What to avoid:** Complicated onboarding processes and difficult-to-navigate systems that waste time and lower adoption rates.

# Reporting-only platforms

Some software focuses solely on compliance and reporting. While reporting is essential, it's not enough to just check boxes. If you only focus on the report, you miss the value. The best ESG software links disclosure to actions, such as reducing waste, cutting costs, or planning for new products. That's what delivers business results. You need software that helps you identify insights, make decisions, and move forward.

**What to avoid:** Selecting software that limits you to reporting features without offering performance analysis, risk management, or scenario planning tools.

# Poor onboarding and user experience

The best ESG software is intuitive and easy to adopt. If your team struggles to understand the interface or if onboarding takes too long, it will delay your ability to leverage the platform's full potential.

**What to avoid:** Complicated onboarding processes and difficult-to-navigate systems that waste time and lower adoption rates.

# Gimmicky AI

AI can be an asset, but too many platforms overpromise on this front. Flashy AI features that don't provide real, actionable insights can be more of a distraction than a help. True AI should improve data accuracy, automate routine tasks, and enhance decision-making, not just offer flashy, unexplained outputs.

**What to avoid:** Relying on AI features that promise more than they can deliver, without clear explanations of how they contribute to your ESG goals.

## Your RFP – Questions to ask vendors

Below, we've outlined some essential areas to focus on as you evaluate potential vendors. This will give you a preview of the kinds of questions you'll want to include in your RFP.

### 1. Data collection and integration

- How does the platform handle both qualitative and quantitative ESG data?
- Can the software seamlessly integrate with your existing systems (e.g., ERP, HR, etc.)?
- What types of data validation and verification processes are in place to ensure data accuracy?

**Why this matters:** Effective ESG data management is central to any program's success. Ensuring that the platform can collect and integrate diverse types of data while maintaining accuracy is crucial for reliable reporting and decision-making.



**Need a complete checklist?**

Download our **ESG RFP Guide** for the full list of questions to use in your procurement process and the answers you should expect.

## 2. Carbon and environmental data management

- Does the software support Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions tracking?
- How does it calculate emissions, and does it provide multiple calculation methodologies (e.g., activity-based, spend-based)?
- Can it handle other environmental metrics like water usage and waste management?

**Why this matters:** As carbon footprint reduction becomes a major business priority, having a platform that can accurately measure and report environmental data is essential for achieving sustainability goals and regulatory compliance.

## 3. Reporting and compliance

- Does the software support key ESG reporting standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), CDP, or EU Taxonomy?
- How customizable are the reporting templates to meet both mandatory and voluntary disclosure needs?
- Can it generate reports at different hierarchical levels for various stakeholders (e.g., investors, regulators)?

**Why this matters:** ESG reporting is becoming increasingly regulated, and your software must keep pace with evolving standards. Look for a platform that offers flexible, customizable reports that cater to different levels of your organization and external stakeholders.

## 4. User interface and experience

- Is the platform easy to navigate for users with varying levels of technical expertise?
- Does it offer customizable dashboards for different users (e.g., sustainability teams, C-suite executives)?
- What does the onboarding process look like, and is support readily available?

**Why this matters:** A user-friendly interface ensures high adoption rates across the organization. Make sure your team can easily navigate the software, access the data they need, and quickly adopt it into their workflows.

## 5. Vendor stability and product roadmap

- What is the vendor's track record in the ESG space?
- How does the vendor stay updated with evolving ESG standards and legislation?
- What updates and new features are planned for the platform?

**Why this matters:** The vendor's stability and vision for the future are critical. ESG software is an ongoing investment, so ensure the vendor has a proven track record and a clear plan for future enhancements to adapt to evolving ESG requirements.

# Make ESG work for your business

**Don't settle for software that ticks boxes. The right ESG platform helps you operate smarter, not harder—turning data into action, aligning with investor expectations, and driving measurable returns. Your ESG investment should pay off—in impact and performance.**



## See what Sweep can do for you

**Discover how Sweep helps leading businesses turn ESG strategy into real results—efficiently, accurately, and at scale.**

[Book a demo →](#)



“Getting control of your sustainability data is the only way to create value, not only based on your financial figures, but on your extra-financial figures too.”

**Julien Denormandie**

Former French Government Minister and CIO of Sweep



**SWEEP**

The leading sustainability data management platform.

[sweep.net](https://sweep.net)

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