

1: Introduction

If you are reading this guide, you share a passion for sustainability and a belief in the ability of the private sector to help solve some of the major environmental and social problems of our time.² The guide provides an introduction to why and how entrepreneurs can make a difference – no matter how big the environmental or social problem may be. Remember that from little things, big things grow.

The guide provides an overview of things to think about if you wish to start or expand a green business. It explains what “green” entrepreneurship is and describes some key sustainability principles to think about. It also outlines the process of starting a business in Vanuatu, and provides tips and information to help you along the way.

What is an entrepreneur?

An entrepreneur is someone who starts a business. They are generally change-makers and risk takers. Dictionary.com defines an entrepreneur as: *“a person who organises and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.”*³

A green entrepreneur is an entrepreneur with a business idea that addresses an environmental challenge or problem. They can help shape the future and steer society towards more sustainable products and lifestyles. Today, Vanuatu needs green entrepreneurs more than ever!

Vanuatu is facing various environmental challenges – an increasing amount of waste is finding its way into rivers and oceans, forests and mangroves are under pressure from economic development, the energy system is heavily dependent on fuel imports, and climate change impacts are affecting coral reefs, water, and food security.

New and innovative businesses are needed to develop solutions to these problems. Many solutions, such as solar energy, hybrid vehicles, and reusable bags already exist, and are becoming more cost-effective and widespread. Some ideas are in their infancy – and some have not even been thought of yet!

Vanuatu needs you – new and emerging entrepreneurs and business owners – to be part of the solution to solving our planet’s environmental and social challenges.

Here are three suggested steps to get you started, and the rest of this guide provides additional information and resources to support you along the way!

2 This guide focuses on green entrepreneurship and does not attempt to provide an introduction to entrepreneurship/business in general. There are resources in Annex 1 that may be helpful to those wanting to know more about starting a business.

3 Dictionary.com, “Entrepreneur,” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/entrepreneur>.



Step 1: Finding your WHY

All businesses stem from a passion. They arise because someone has wondered why something is not being done, and have decided that they will be the person to do something about it. Or perhaps they have seen something elsewhere and want to bring the idea home.

Have you found yourself wondering why there aren't better recycling programmes, more locally-owned low-impact tourism properties, more cafes that specialise in local food, or why there is so much plastic waste and whether there are ways in which it could be repurposed into something useful? If so, you have taken the first step towards taking the plunge and realising that maybe you are the person to do something about it!

The first things to think about before starting to outline your business idea are:

- **What are you passionate about?**
- **What problems do you want to help solve?**
- **Why do you want to start a business?**

There are plenty of problems to pick – it may be the amount of plastic waste in the ocean, the fact that fresh and healthy food is more expensive than junk food, that coral reefs are under threat, or that clean water and proper waste management solutions are not available to many communities.

It is important to clearly understand the reasons why you are doing this. What are you hoping to achieve by starting a business? Are you hoping to turn a passion or a hobby into your day job? Are you hoping to spend more time with your family? Are you hoping to learn more about a particular subject? This will help you identify what success means for you – and it will likely be broader than just making a profit.



WATCH: [This TED talk](#) by Simon Sinek⁴ discusses how great leaders inspire action. As an entrepreneur, you are a leader and you'll need to inspire action!

Step 2: Deciding to take the plunge

Most business ideas do not just magically appear. They emerge from your experience of the world – from months or sometimes years of wondering why something has not been done – and questioning whether there is a business opportunity there that can be filled. Sometimes the decision to be the one to fill the gap in the market comes easily, and sometimes it takes years.

Whatever your business idea, when you do decide to take the plunge, your business will become your life for the first few years. You had better be passionate about your vision, because you are going to need to draw on that passion during the hard times and celebrate it when things go well. If you don't believe in what you are doing, it will be difficult to convince others that they should believe in it too – whether they are your customers, a bank that you are trying to persuade to lend to you, suppliers you want to do business with, or companies you want to partner with.

⁴ Simon Sinek, "How great leaders inspire action," TEDxPuget Sound, 17:58, September 2009, https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en.

Once you have decided to take the plunge, set yourself some realistic goals for what information you need, what steps you need to take, and how you will go about taking them.



TIP: Starting a business can seem overwhelming. Break the steps down into achievable goals over the next six months. Using a business planning tool can assist with this step (see Section 5). There are also several introductory business training courses available through the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry⁵ and other providers (see Section 6).

Step 3: Getting started – Jack and Jill of all trades

Green business owners are creators, they are managers, and they are motivators. They are also drivers, cleaners, bookkeepers, diary managers, and fundraisers!

During the first few years of operating your business, you will do everything for a while. You will learn more about accounting than you thought you'd ever need to know. You will learn what you are good at – and what you are not so good at. You will learn that surrounding yourself with people that can provide advice is one of the ways you'll succeed.



TIP: Don't be afraid to ask for advice and help from other business owners. Most are more than happy to help others.

Identify your weaknesses and be prepared to contract out support in those areas (e.g., marketing, accounting, etc.). It is often cheaper than you think, and it can save you time to concentrate on other areas. There are also a number of free tools available online⁶ that can help, and other businesses can make recommendations and let you know what tools they use.

Be prepared to do everything for a while – and to be uncomfortable. You will not have all the answers, but still need to have a go at doing what needs to be done. Don't be afraid to start small and build.

5 Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <http://www.vcci.com.vu/>.

6 Examples include Wave Accounting (<https://www.waveapps.com/>) a free accounting platform and Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>) a platform for creating graphics.