

The B Corp Assessment Driving the Growth of a Social Business



08.04.2023

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Changemaker Summer Fellowship

B Corp 101

B Lab was created in 2006 with the mission of encouraging positive social and environmental business practices and providing recognition to businesses that are excelling in associated categories. To become B Corp Certified, a company must complete the intensive B Corp Assessment, scoring at least 80 points, and the review/certification process. The first companies were B Corp Certified in 2007. Since then, the B Corp movement has spread around the world, with around 5,600 companies being certified in 82 countries (as of 2023). Below is more information on B Lab, the assessment, and the certification process.

- What is B Lab and the B Corp certification
 - [About B Lab](#)
 - [About the Certification](#)
 - [Find a B Corp](#)
- Understanding the legal requirements of being a certified B Corp (as opposed to a Benefit Corporation or other formal structures) → Company needs to be willing to take legal action during the certification process
 - [B Corp Legal Requirements](#)
 - [B Corp Vs. Benefit Corporation](#)
- Breaking down the B Impact Assessment
 - [Categories](#): Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, & Customers
 - [Impact Assessment Tool Hub](#)
 - [Impact Business Models \(IBM\)](#)
 - Note: IBM's can be unlocked to represent unique, honorable aspects of a company's mission and operations. B Lab has stated companies generally have 0-2 IBM's.
 - [Accuracy in Completion](#)

Determine Company Specifications

Prior to beginning the Impact Assessment, a company must identify operational factors including the market, size, sector, industry category, & industry.

- These factors determine the assessment structure, point values, and applicable questions, catering questions to make sense to the specific company
 - [Assessment Track](#)

- Note: It is important to determine which categories the company falls into **before** beginning to explore assessment growth because the questions are generated based upon these parameters

Become Familiar with Operations

To answer the questions on the Impact Assessment and determine the most applicable areas for growth, all company operations will need to be understood. The following actions may be taken to help with this understanding:

- Sit in on every company meeting (internal and external)
 - Operational, management, sales, and partner meetings
- Shadow every position at the company, in every location of operations possible, to develop a well-rounded understanding of operations
 - Important to know who in the company to go to with specific questions throughout the project, understanding department structures
 - Arrive to shadowing with goals and questions
- Review all internal documents
 - Know where to go to find specific information

Considerable amounts of time should be spent with various departments, the potential assessment -> department breakdown is below:

- Governance - Company founders, leadership/management
- Workers - Human resources
- Community - Supply chain management, DEI, human resources
- Environment - EHS
- Customers - Marketing

Establish Goals in Each Section

After reviewing the section, identify ways the company would be able to grow in each category.

- Based on the potential of growth, establish a timeline
 - Identified which sections the company is already excelling in, could see major growth in the short term or long term (especially with documentation), and which they likely wouldn't be focusing on in the near future

- Plan to spend more time on the categories that are most representative of company values AND the categories that most directly correspond with the educational/career goals

While initially going through the assessment it can be beneficial to create a document with every category and subcategory noting the above details. View an example of this documentation [here](#). Then, one should formally outline initial goals/ideas in one document and establish a timeline.

Organizing Documentation & Tracking Performance

While working through each of the categories, it will be helpful to maintain consistency in tracking work and the resources created.

- Does the company already have a preferred online platform (ie. Google tools, Microsoft tools)? Created documentation/resources should be uniform
 - Review company's existing tools to identify any format that should be followed
 - The assessment refers to written documents, metrics tracking, company websites → internal and external resources
 - Helpful to create "how to" or organization documents so work is easy to track and implement after the internship

"Documentation Hubs" can be created for each of the sections. The documentation hubs should be one-stop shops that connect each question to associated documentation/infrastructure, if applicable. The hubs can also list potential growth relating to each question and the timeline for this growth. Click [here](#) to view a portion of a Community section documentation hub (answers/points removed for confidentiality), for example.

Utilize Internal Resources

When creating new resources, it's important to remember documents need to be reflective of company operations and metric-tracking infrastructure needs to be user-friendly among company employees. These sources may make perfect sense to the creator, in the context of the certification, but will only prove useful if employees can easily engage with them and recognize the purpose of doing so. In other words, **create resources with a purpose beyond the certification.**

- Schedule meetings with employees (especially leadership) throughout the process and get their feedback on newly created materials
 - Propose the brainstormed growth; would this change be useful and feasible?
 - Understand projects they're currently working on and goals they've set for themselves (future growth)
 - A lot of times, there will be overlap in what they are hoping to do and areas for growth on the assessment.
- Frequent meetings with B Corp project managers (or involved departments) to ensure work being done is meeting expectations and will be useful
 - Setting goals for the next week/month
 - Asking for specific opportunities

Important takeaway: It is always better to ask someone who knows more about a relevant topic for advice than to try and guess the best approach with limited knowledge. The insights gained from these individuals will likely be far more valuable than anything read online.

Utilize External Resources

The Impact Assessment is dense, and the questions can be difficult to understand with many very specific details throughout (specific terminology or requirements for different questions). That being said, B Lab has an incredible amount of resources online to refer to as well as real-time help emails/phone numbers. Each question on the assessment has a "Learn More" tab that breaks down what the question is looking for and links to helpful websites/articles. The associated [Sustainable Development Goals](#) can be seen in this tab as well.

In addition to B Lab resources, the B Corp community includes a ton of incredible people and companies that can be used as resources during the process. One of the best ways to brainstorm growth for the company preparing for certification is to hear about another company's methodology. Refer to the next section for details on B Local.

- B Lab hosts many informational sessions and similar "webinar" style events. View upcoming events [here](#)
 - For example, they've hosted an "Impact Improvement Series": a series of webinars (one per assessment category) in which leaders explained the goals

in each section, highlighted high-performing companies, and discussed strategies for growth

- Use the "[Find a B Corp](#)" tool to find B Corps in the community and ask to set up meetings

Note: **ALWAYS** take notes during a meeting/events, no matter how formal or whether it's internal/external

B Local - North Carolina Triangle

[B Local Communities](#) create a network between B Certified companies in a geographical area. They are often led by volunteers (from the member companies) and work to raise awareness for the B Corp movement. Companies around Raleigh would be a part of the B Local NC Triangle.

- Good resource to find local B-certified companies and set up conversations
 - Gain insights into the certification and recertification process
- Great opportunity to gain community support
- Often host events for companies working towards their certification or certified companies
- Engage in educational community; providing opportunities for student engagement with B Companies

It is also important to introduce this resource to the company's employees since it is something they will all have access to.

Project Conclusion

Clear instruction and information surrounding **all resources** should be provided at the end of the B Corp project - How will resources be implemented? What further work needs to be done to develop any initiated projects? What further work is required for tracking?

Consider creating the following resources:

- B Corp Calendar
 - Create a B Corp implementation calendar that any employees can add to their displayed calendars. The calendar may show the frequency of maintaining certain resources related to the assessment. It also establishes a

timeline leading up to the company submitting the assessment for certification

- Project Implementation
 - Throughout the project, outline a high-level project implementation document. The document should organize everything created in two ways:
 - Whether it's an internal or external document (who sees it/interacts with it)
 - Which assessment section the resource is associated with
 - This document also addresses what needs to be done to maintain the resource and the expected frequency of maintenance. To see an example section of this document, click [here](#).
- Setting goals in the assessment
 - There is a feature in the assessment that allows one to set a goal for a question (what will the answer be in the future) and the anticipated time to reach that goal.
 - To set a goal, select the star next to the associated question
 - All goals can be reviewed in one area of the user profile and can set up email reminders relating to the timeline.

At the end of the project, it is important to discuss what the B Corp Certification is with all of the company, especially the management. Employees will need to be able to discuss what the certification means internally and with customers. Becoming a part of the B Corp movement, one of the most important things a company can do is publicize the certification and what it means for them. This resource can also be provided to future managers/employees, as a part of training, once the company is certified.