The Greenwashing Reality Check

If you are responsible for funding, approving, partnering with, or promoting impact work, you are constantly being asked to trust what brands say about themselves. Sustainability claims. Community promises. Social good narratives that look solid on the surface and feel convincing in a pitch deck.

Greenwashing does not always show up as outright lies. More often, it appears as vague language, selective storytelling, or polished campaigns that are disconnected from how work actually happens.

This checklist is a practical tool to help you slow the process down and ask better questions. It is designed to help you assess whether an impact claim is rooted in **real action** or *built for appearance.*

Use it before signing a partnership, approving a campaign, or backing a project. The goal is clarity, accountability, and impact you can stand behind with confidence.

Use this honestly.
If too many boxes make you uncomfortable, that discomfort is data.

Greenwashing Self-Audit Index

Use this to score yourself honestly on each check. Think of it as a **reflective tool, not a test**.

0–1: No – Your practice or claim is largely missing or unsupported. There is little evidence or follow-through, and action is minimal. Consider this a red flag that needs attention.

2–3: Not Really – Some effort exists, but it's inconsistent or only partially implemented. Claims may be true in parts, but proof and impact are weak or incomplete. There's room to strengthen alignment and transparency.

4–5: Yes – Your actions, claims, and impact are real, consistent, and verifiable. Evidence supports your claims, and your work reflects meaningful, grounded impact. This is where alignment and integrity are clear.

1. Evidence Over Aesthetics

Ask yourself:

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes (4-5)
1.	Can we clearly explain what changed, where, and for whom?			
2.	Do we have verifiable data, not just claims or slogans?			
3.	Can a third party trace or validate our impact?			

If the story sounds good but the proof is thin, **pause**.

2. Core Practice or Cosmetic Add-On

Check the depth.

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes(4-5)
1.	Is sustainability built into how we operate, or added for campaigns?			
2.	Does this impact effort apply across the business or only to a limited edition?			
3.	Would the work continue if the marketing stopped?			

If it lives only in the **campaign deck**, it's probably cosmetic.

3. Follow the Money

Look closely at budgets:

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes (4-5)
1.	Do we spend more on doing the work than talking about the work?			
2.	Is impact resourced long-term or funded just enough to look credible?			
3.	Can we clearly explain how storytelling supports the impact, not replaces it?			

4. Consistency Over Moments

Audit your behavior:

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes (4-5)
1.	Do we show up only during awareness days or all year?			
2.	Is impact reflected in policy, practice, and regular updates?			
3.	Are we still doing this work when no one is watching?			

Impact isn't **seasonal**.

5. Ground-Truth Test

This is the hardest and most honest check:

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes (4-5)
1.	Can beneficiaries speak for themselves about the change?			
2.	Will partners vouch for the work without prompting?			
3.	Are real voices present, not just polished testimonials?			

If the people closest to the work cannot **confirm** it, the story isn't *solid*.

6. Language Check

Listen to your own words:

	Questions	No (0-1)	Not really (2-3)	Yes (4-5)
1.	Do we rely on buzzwords			

	instead of clarity?			
2.	Are we exaggerating scale, speed, or outcomes?			
3.	Would this story still hold if stripped of design and hype?			

Truth survives *simplicity*.

Final Question:

If someone asked you to prove your impact without slides, slogans, or branding, could you?

If that question feels **hard**, that's not *failure*. It's an invitation to **alignment**.

And if you want help telling your story in a way that is grounded, human, and actually believable, IconiQ is here. Less noise. More truth.