

Cradle to Cradle Certified® and UN Sustainable Development Goals

A Transformative Pathway for Product Manufacturers to Achieve the SDGs 2026

The Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program offers an actionable pathway for product manufacturers to make measurable progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) associated with natural resource stewardship, social fairness and sustainable production and consumption.

Owned by the Cradle to Cradle Certified Products Innovation Institute, the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program is the leading certification for products that are designed for circularity and are healthy for people and planet. For more than a decade, leading brands, designers, retailers and manufacturers across the value chain have relied on the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Product Standard to innovate and optimize materials, products and systems to achieve ambitious sustainability goals.

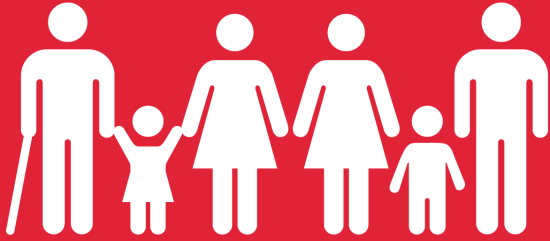
Cradle to Cradle Certified® verifies the sustainability performance of products across five categories: Material Health, Product Circularity, Clean Air & Climate Protection, Water & Soil Stewardship, and Social Fairness. To promote the continuous improvement of product sustainability over time, the certification is a multi tiered program, with four ascending levels of achievement (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum) depending upon a product's achievement in each assessment category. Products must be re-certified every three years and show measurable progress towards the next level of achievement.

By setting forth rigorous parameters for product sustainability across the product life cycle from ingredient material through to material reuse at the end of a product's useful life, the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program provides a meaningful framework for addressing many UN Sustainable Development Goal.

Meeting the goals

Goal 1: No poverty

1 NO POVERTY



Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes modestly to achieving this goal and to target 1.1. by encouraging applicants to be aware of manufacturing facilities and direct suppliers of input materials for certified products that are associated with a high risk of paying poverty level wages. This is determined by industry- and location-based risk identification. Applicants are asked to develop a strategy for identifying and addressing high risk facilities and suppliers within their supply chain each time they re-certify a product. All applicants are also expected to meet legal minimums as a baseline.

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

Goal 3: Good Health & Well

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to achievement of this goal and target 3.9 by requiring a comprehensive approach to identifying, assessing, and optimizing the safety of chemicals that are used to manufacture certified products. If all chemicals used in manufacturing are optimized for safety using the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program, negative human health effects resulting from exposure to hazardous substances, either directly, or through environmental contamination, could be avoided. At the Gold level of certification, chemicals and materials intentionally added to the product and/or released with effluent during the product manufacturing stage must be known as safe for human health and the environment during the final manufacturing, use, and end-of-use stages of the product life cycle. Hazardous chemicals may not be used, or alternately, exposure to any hazardous chemicals that are used during these stages must be unlikely or expected to be negligible.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope, C2C Certified® Circularity, C2C Certified® Material Health

Goal 6: Clean Water & Sanitation



Through requirements in the Water Stewardship certification category, Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to the achievement of this goal and targets 6.3, 6.4, and 6.6. The Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program requires manufacturers to take actions to reduce water use where water resources are stressed, to provide clean drinking water to employees, and to verify that no toxic chemicals exist in the sludge or effluent leaving the facility. The Soil & Water Stewardship category encourages manufacturers to treat water as a precious, shared resource through successively demanding requirements focused on ensuring that manufacturing effluent does not contain substances that are problematic for human health or the environment (including aquatic species).

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

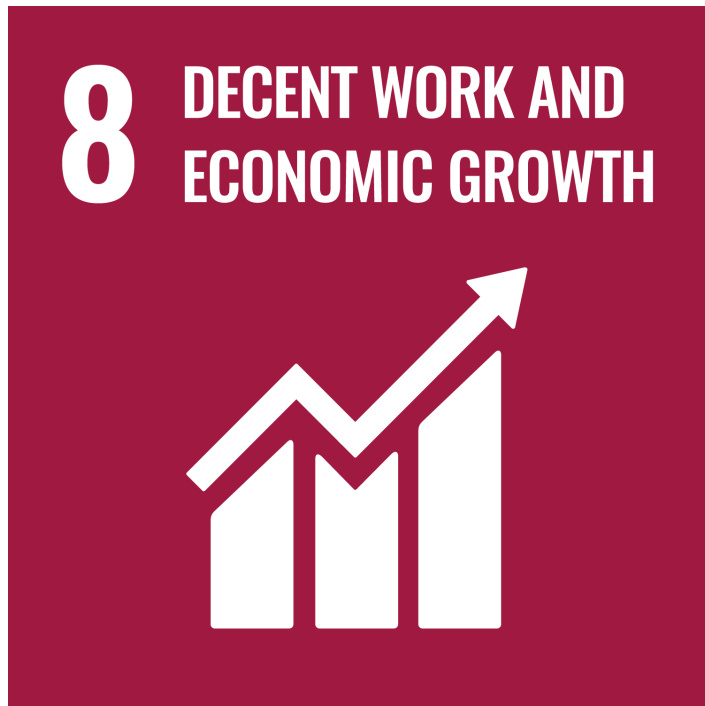
Goal 7: Affordable & Clean Energy

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to achievement of this goal and targets 7.2 and 7.3 through requirements in the Clean Air & Climate Protection Category. The category encourages manufacturers to increasingly contribute to the demand for renewable energy through their energy purchasing choices (including the purchase of carbon credits, offsets and energy from alternative sources), increase their use of renewable energy over time, and with the ultimate goal of producing excess renewable energy that can be released to the local grid, thereby increasing the share of renewable electricity available for others to use.



Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

Goal 8: A Decent Work & Economic Growth



Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to achievement of this goal and targets 7.2 and 7.3 through requirements in the Clean Air & Climate Protection Category. The category encourages manufacturers to increasingly contribute to the demand for renewable energy through their energy purchasing choices (including the purchase of carbon credits, offsets and energy from alternative sources), increase their use of renewable energy over time, and with the ultimate goal of producing excess renewable energy that can be released to the local grid, thereby increasing the share of renewable electricity available for others to use.

Economic Growth

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to the achievement of Goal 8 target 8.4 – the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation in principle and in practice. By eliminating the concept of waste in favor of a circular economic system in which products are designed and made using safe, healthy materials that can remain in cycles of use and reuse through either biological or technical cycles (as appropriate for the material), the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Products Program decouples economic growth from the environmental degradation, especially environmental degradation caused by resource extraction, raw materials consumption and material disposal at the end of a product's useful life. This is one of the foundational principles of Cradle to Cradle Certified®. The standard's requirements for Material Health and Product Circularity, along with the Clean Air & Climate Protection and Water & Soil Stewardship, operationalize this principle: By promoting a system in which safe materials (i.e. that do not use problematic chemicals) can be used over and over and/or made/managed using methods that facilitate the channeling of these materials through a cycle of use and reuse (i.e. the product is made for disassembly so that parts can be cycled and/or a strategy is in place for ensuring maximum usage and return of materials to an entity that is able to reuse or recycle), Cradle to Cradle Certified® sets forth a regenerative approach to economic growth predicated upon a system of responsible production and consumption that avoids the environmental degradation associated with continuously extracting, growing and producing new materials. Products that achieve the Gold and Platinum levels of certification have fully realized these ideals.

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope, C2C Certified® Circularity

Decent Work

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to the achievement of Goal 8, targets 8.7 and 8.8 by encouraging applicants to be aware of manufacturing facilities and direct suppliers of certified product input materials that are associated with a high risk of child labor, forced labor, occupational health and safety issues, excessive working time, and low wages. This is determined based on industry and location based risk identification. At the Bronze level of achievement, a minimum requirement for the program is that child and forced labor be eliminated at the final manufacturing location at least. All applicants are also expected to meet legal minimums as a baseline. At higher levels of certification, applicants are asked to develop a strategy for addressing high-risk issues and report on progress at each recertification.

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to the achievement of Goal 9, target 9.2 and 9.4 by providing a pathway towards fully sustainable manufacturing, a critical driver of economic growth and employment. By setting forth a circular system for manufacturing products using healthy materials that can remain in cycles of use and reuse, the standard provides a transformative framework for resilient, sustainable industrialization that ultimately yields positive social, environmental and economic impact. From an innovation standpoint, the standard is designed to promote the continuous improvement of a product's environmental and social performance through ascending levels of certification. The process of moving products towards higher and higher levels of achievement under the Cradle to Cradle Certified® standard fosters significant opportunities for innovation, particularly in the areas of material health and material reuse, including optimizing existing material chemistry for human and environmental health and safety; the innovation of new materials that are both safe and circular; optimizing product design and manufacturing processes to recoup or reuse materials, and driving infrastructure innovation to close the loop on reclaiming and reusing materials from one product life cycle to the next. The platinum level of certification represents the fullest expression of sustainable manufacturing and innovation.



Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope, C2C Certified® Circularity, C2C Certified® Material Health

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to the achievement of Goal 11, target 11.6 and, more indirectly, target 11.4, by providing a pathway for manufacturers to ultimately produce products in a fully sustainable manner. This was first described in the context of Goals 7, 8, and 9. A transition to sustainable manufacturing in combination with the design and making of healthy materials and products for a circular economy will also reduce the environmental impact of cities because the majority of manufacturing and product use occurs in or near cities. Regarding air pollution (which is explicitly mentioned in target 11.6): energy production is a major contributor to air pollution (footnote 1,2) and manufacturing is responsible for more than one-third of global energy use. Therefore, a transition by manufacturers to using renewable energy will greatly reduce this impact. Regarding waste management (also explicitly mentioned in target 11.6): Cradle to Cradle Certified® provides a pathway for eventually eliminating the very concept of waste. In an ideal scenario, waste management becomes materials management. This was first discussed in the context of Goal 8, target 8.7 which calls for a decoupling of economic growth and environmental degradation.

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope, C2C Certified® Circularity

¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/air-pollution-sources>

² <https://www.iea.org/tcep/industry/>

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption & Production

Cradle to Cradle Certified® directly fosters responsible consumption and production by providing a continuous improvement pathway for manufacturers to produce products in a sustainable way, and by providing a means whereby manufacturers, institutions, and consumers can identify and select sustainably produced materials and products. In this way, the program directly contributes to the achievement of Goal 12, targets 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, and 12.6. As an international product certification program that is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals that are relevant to products, Cradle to Cradle Certified® directly provides a means by which public procurement officials, and other purchasers, can achieve target 12.7 -- by specifying Cradle to Cradle Certified® products.



Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope, C2C Certified® Circularity, C2C Certified® Material Health

Goal 13: Climate Action



Cradle to Cradle Certified® requires that manufacturers measure the climate impacts associated with the products they produce through a Life Cycle Assessment, and requires action to reduce those impacts (use renewable energy and purchase offsets). In this way, the program contributes to achieving Goal 13, target 13.1 (Note: The majority of the specific targets associated with this goal are not directly applicable to the Cradle to Cradle Certified® standard due the focus on adaptation and change management.)

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

Goal 14: Life Below Water - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to achieving Goal 14 target 14.1 through the Water & Soil Stewardship category criteria. The category encourages manufacturers to treat water as a precious, shared resource through successively demanding requirements focused on ensuring that manufacturing effluent does not contain substances that are toxic for human health or the environment (including aquatic species). The standard contributes modestly towards achieving target 14.2 by requiring manufacturers to identify direct negative impacts their operations have on local ecosystems, develop a strategy to address those issues, and report on progress at recertification. The standard supports target 14.3 (which addresses ocean acidification) by encouraging a transition to renewable energy use and offsetting of any emissions that are not avoided (acidification is largely a result of CO₂ uptake by oceans and is tied to release of CO₂ during energy production).



Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

Goal 15: Life on Land - Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss



Cradle to Cradle Certified® contributes to achieving Goal 15 target 15.1, 15.2, and 15.A & B through the Water & Soil Stewardship criteria and Product Circularity criteria. In the Water & Soil Stewardship category, applicants whose activities have a direct impact on sensitive ecosystems through their operations must identify these issues, develop a plan to address the issues, and report on progress made. In addition, the program supports sustainable forest management including biodiversity conservation by requiring that wood in products be certified to a sustainable forestry certification program (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council) at the Gold level. The program contributes modestly to achieving target 15.7 by excluding all materials from endangered or threatened species from the program.

Certifications that fulfil this requirement: Full Scope

	1 No Poverty	3 Good Health and Well-being	6 Clean Water and Sanitation	7 Affordable and Clean Energy	8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	12 Responsible Consumption and Production	13 Climate Action	14 Life Below Water	15 Life on Land
C2C Certified® Full Scope	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C2C Certified® Circularity		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			
C2C Certified® Material Health		✓				✓		✓			

Table 1. SDG Alignment