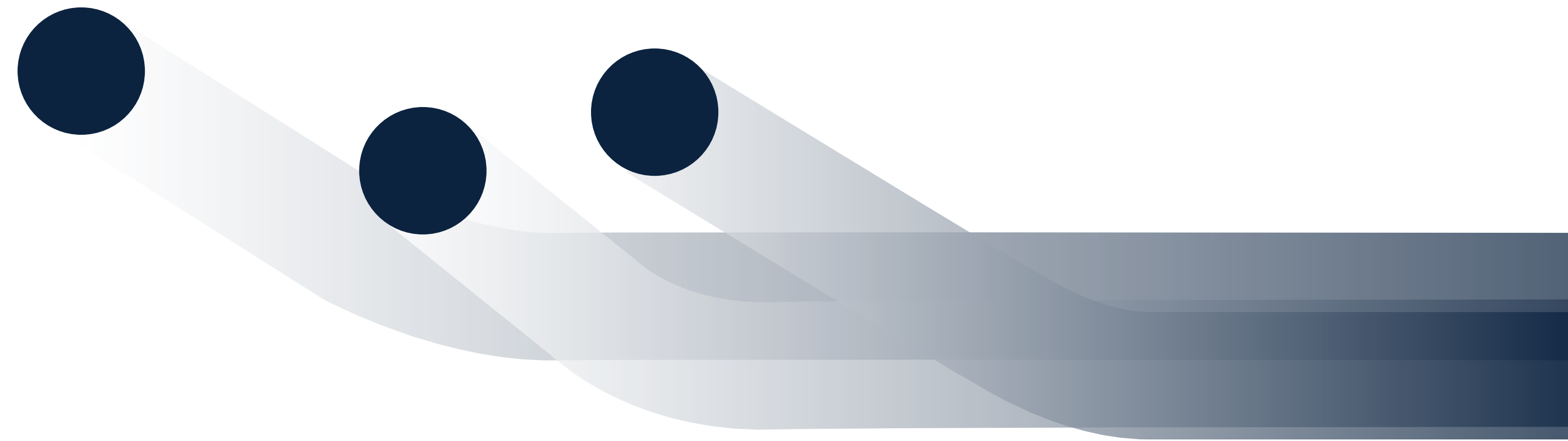


Beyond organisational **boundaries**

Three opportunities to drive sustainability
impact across the patient care pathway

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A note on this report

This report draws on practitioner-led insight from a range of interviews and discussions carried out over the course of a year. It brings together insights from senior leaders across the pharmaceutical, life science, and digital health sectors.

The aim is to explore what whole-pathway sustainability looks like in practice and discuss some of the challenges faced by the industry.

It's focus is specifically on the opportunities and challenges relating to environmental sustainability, referred to as 'sustainability' throughout the report.

About BIP.Verco

We help companies create value from tackling complex sustainability challenges.

How do we help life sciences?

Integral to a more environmentally sustainability patient care pathway is the proactive management of sustainability impacts by organisations across the value chain.

Our expertise is grounded in the delivery of measurable decarbonisation that translates into quantified cost and resource savings.

Across BIP.Verco and BIP, we work with leading life science and healthcare companies globally, helping them to:

- Set the strategic direction for climate and sustainability
- Deliver decarbonisation projects that deliver impact
- Support engagement and storytelling to drive engagement and buy-in
- Leverage AI and digitalisation to optimise processes and create resource efficiencies
- Implement organisation-wide and product-specific data platforms to model pathways, reduce energy and water consumption, and consolidate data sources

Sustainability and the patient care pathway



James Edney
Head of Sector

Healthcare's environmental sustainability challenge is well documented. There are lots of targets, commitments – and action – to evidence it. The purpose of this report isn't to argue the importance of environmental sustainability in life sciences and healthcare, but to make the case for a different way of thinking about the sustainability challenge.

The patient care pathway is a system that doesn't respect organisational boundaries. At systems level, the challenge to deliver a sustainable healthcare system is impossible if we only approach it organisation by organisation and target by target.

There is still a need for brilliant innovation at an organisation level and the tireless work of sustainability practitioners to champion sustainability

in their organisations and drive progress. But when we focus on only one part of the system or one process, we risk reallocating emissions rather than reducing them, or missing the opportunity to amplify positive impact by thinking more holistically.

As you read this summary report, we encourage you to reflect on how your work and organisation interact with the wider patient care pathway.

Use that as a starting point to have fresh conversations with colleagues across different functions and peers from outside your organisation. Then you'll see what a difference it can make when you began to frame sustainability as a systems challenge.

Three opportunities to drive sustainability

The choices available across a care pathway are only as sustainable as the options that organisations bring to it, and the ambition for sustainability across life science and healthcare companies is only increasing.

There is brilliant work already being done within organisations and the efforts to reduce energy and water consumption, drive decarbonisation, and deliver against ambitious net zero targets is essential to a credible vision of a more sustainable patient care pathway.

Framing the sustainability challenge in the context of the patient care pathway creates three opportunities for sustainability leaders and practitioners to amplify the impact of their work and break down the silos that exist to unlock even more success.

Use the patient care pathway framing to:

Enhance your business case for action, positioning decarbonisation and sustainability not as a cost or constraint, but as an expression of what good care looks like.

Create space for dialogue and ideation across teams, between teams and amongst partners, creating a focus on shared outcomes and building the trust that will enable better data to flow and more data to be shared.

Expand the range and scope of wins and stories you can tell through sustainability projects and the impact you can quantify and evidence.

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Opportunity 1:
Align clinical and
environmental goals

Think bigger than organisational sustainability

The choices available across a care pathway are only as sustainable as the options that organisations bring to it. A pharmaceutical company that has decarbonised its manufacturing processes, a medtech business that has reduced the embedded carbon of its products, a digital health provider that has optimised its energy use, these are fundamental to any credible pathway-level sustainability ambition.

Where organisations have direct control over their emissions, that control should be exercised as fully and as urgently as possible. The discipline of measuring accurately, setting targets credibly, and delivering reductions systematically within organisational boundaries is not in tension with system-level thinking, it is a prerequisite for it.

Understanding consequences is essential

Optimising one part of a pathway without understanding its upstream and downstream consequences creates risk. You could end up with a treatment that appears environmentally preferable in isolation but may generate significantly more healthcare resource utilisation downstream. This might take the shape of additional appointments, complications, or hospitalisations.

Pathway thinking changes what becomes possible

However, the most significant opportunities for reducing healthcare's environmental impact do not sit neatly inside any single organisation's boundary. They sit in the touchpoints across the patient care pathway; in the handoffs, dependencies, and shared decisions that define how a patient moves through the health system. Making the patient care pathway, rather than the individual organisation, the focal point for sustainability planning is not simply a change of framing. It changes what gets measured, what gets prioritised, and what becomes possible.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the page. It features three colored circles (red, teal, and dark blue) arranged vertically. From each circle, a thick, semi-transparent line of the same color extends downwards and to the left, overlapping each other to create a layered, tree-like effect. The background is a light pinkish-red gradient.

The opportunity for sustainability practitioners

The most sustainably managed patient is one who is treated early and appropriately, and never needs to escalate. Clinical and environmental goals, viewed through a pathway lens, are not in tension. They are the same goal expressed in different languages.

For sustainability professionals in life sciences and healthcare, this convergence is one of the most powerful arguments available. It reframes decarbonisation not as a cost or a constraint, but as a direct expression of what good care looks like.

The argument this report makes is not that organisational action is insufficient. It is that organisational action pursued in isolation, without a shared view of how individual efforts combine across the pathway, will fall short of what the scale of the challenge requires.

What you can do

Create space to discuss your sustainability projects in the context of your role in the value chain and impact on the patient care pathway.

In order to drive sustainability within your organisation, you must focus on where your sphere of impact and influence is greatest. You must also ensure that you and key stakeholders are aligned on the potential wider impacts of your sustainability decisions on the patient care pathway.

Are there opportunities to bring other partners into the conversation when thinking about systems more widely? Are there benefits you hadn't realised when only framing your projects within the context of your organisation?

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Opportunity 2:
Close the data gap

Building trust and breaking down silos

Data underpins organisational sustainability initiatives and a more sustainable care pathway. It is essential for closing the gap between our ambition and the actions required to realise it. However, the perfect dataset rarely exists.

Organisations face three data challenges

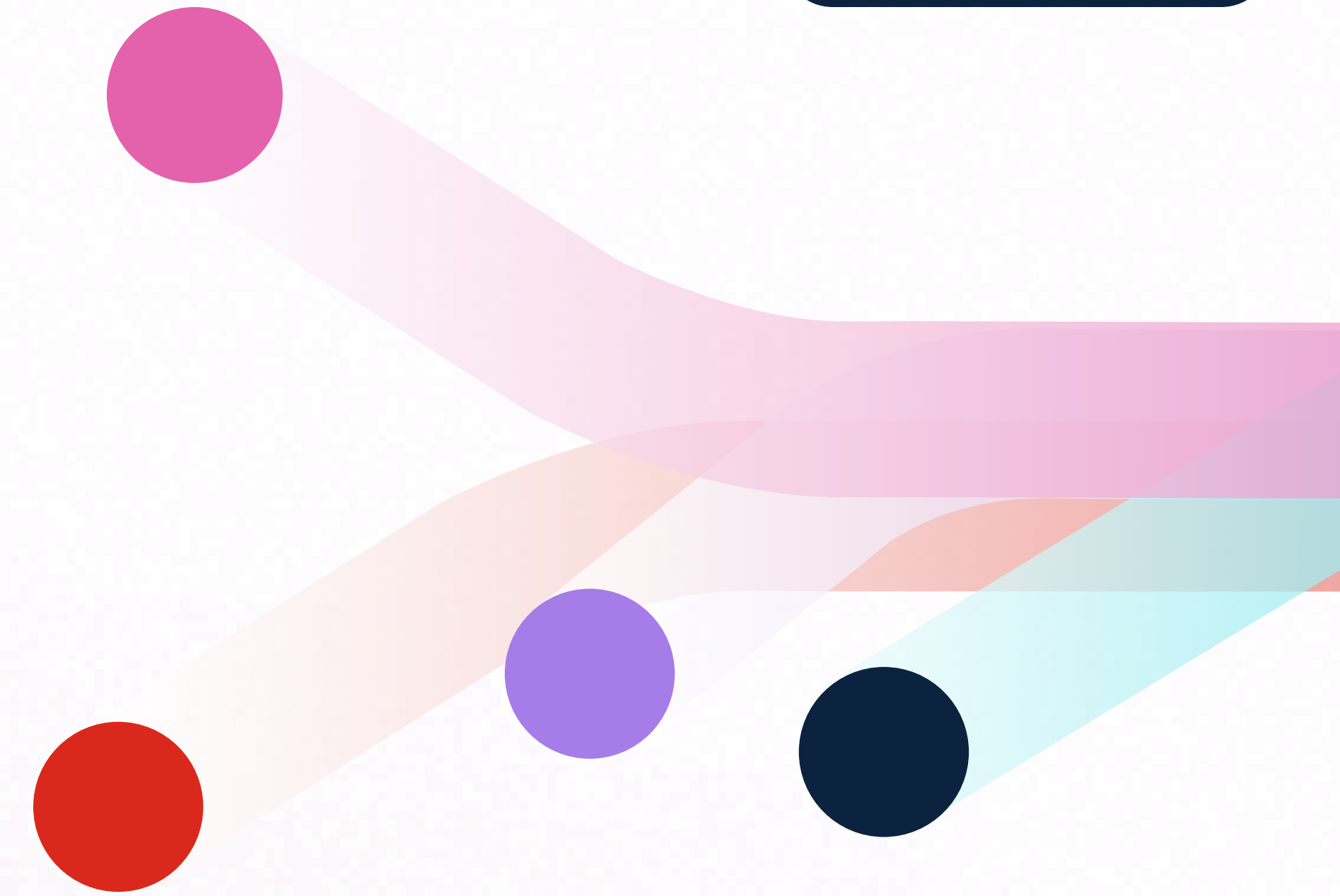
Organisations have to deal with gaps in their data, data platforms that don't connect data or allow for projects and pathways to be mapped together, and gaps in trust that prevent the available data being shared and used to its full potential.

Some of the most material gaps sit beyond the reach of any individual organisation's sustainability function to close. Foremost among these is the absence of granular data on the environmental cost of individual care activities. This includes the carbon associated with a primary care appointment (such as an ambulance journey, a bed-day or a surgical procedure). Without this layer of data, pathway-level carbon analysis cannot move from concept to calculation.

Data sensitivity is a significant barrier

The structure of the value chain also compounds the data challenge.

Organisations across the sector are simultaneously suppliers to some and customers to others. The data that would enable a shared view of pathway-level environmental impact – granular information about processes, sourcing, and resource use – is often the same data that reveals cost structures, sourcing decisions, and manufacturing efficiency.



The opportunity for sustainability practitioners

Data sharing for sustainability purposes cannot be assumed as default. The data that would enable pathway-level sustainability analysis is sensitive by nature. Often, practitioners have data they want to share but that a sourcing leader instinctively wants to protect.

Sustainability professionals need to leverage all their stakeholder engagement capabilities to help release this tension. When the instinct to keep data close is relaxed, sensitivity barriers are worked through, and everyone is clear on how data will be used, trust is built and deeper value is realised.

This is a huge undertaking and progress might be slow, but sustainability practitioners have the perfect skillset and habits of perseverance to succeed.

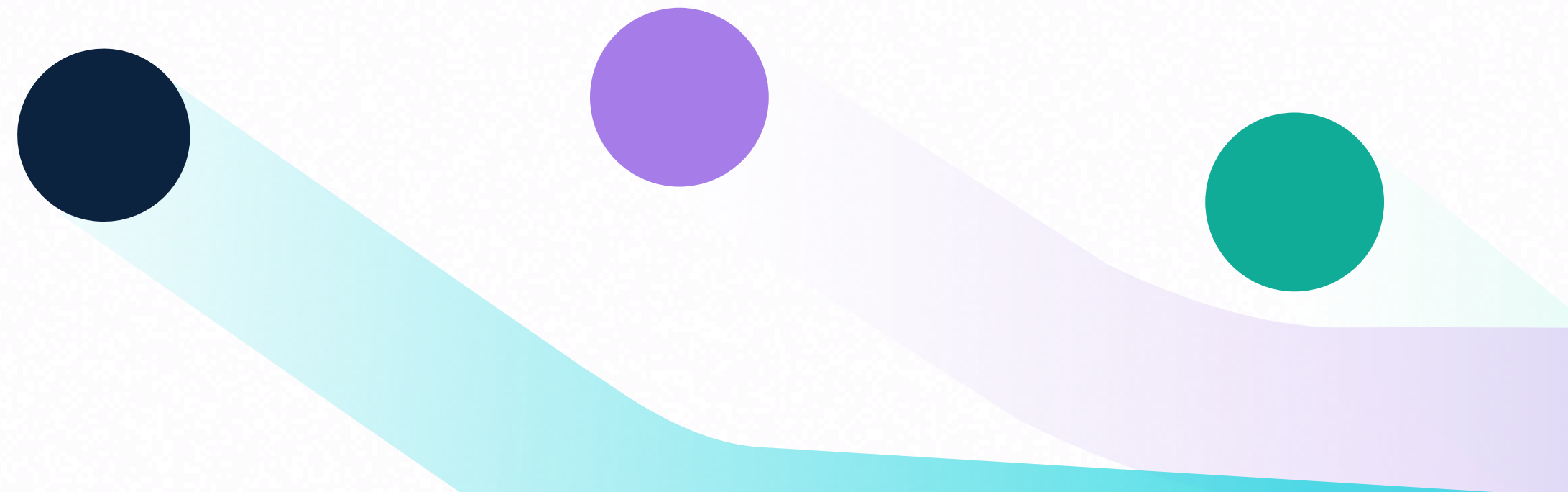
What you can do

Use the patient care pathway framing to take a step back from the immediacy of data privacy and sourcing sensitivity. Establish engagement based on shared outcomes.

Identify the colleagues across functions who are already engaging with sustainability in some form. Connect them. This network does two things:

- surfaces the cross-functional conversations that data-sharing and trust-building depend on; and
- creates a channel for early successes to reach senior leadership, building the case for further investment.

The same logic extends externally. Seek out or create forums where supplier and customer organisations can discuss shared impact, not just individual targets.



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Opportunity 3:
Move from ambition
to delivery

Making system level thinking work internally

There is no shortcut to moving from ambition to action. Progress and impact are built incrementally, through small wins that create stories, and stories that create belief that change is both possible and valued. There are three ingredients essential to closing the gap between ambition and action when it comes to sustainability:

Strategic direction

Without a clear, board-level commitment to a defined and time-bound sustainability target, sustainability teams will face questions about why particular investments or trade-offs are being made. Strategic direction provides a mandate without which everything downstream is harder to justify. But direction without accountability produces well-intentioned reporting rather than operational change.

Accountability

It's essential to position sustainability alongside the financial, quality, and operational metrics that govern performance. The sustainability team's role shifts accordingly: from attempting to drive change single-handedly, to providing the expertise, tools, and narrative that help functions succeed against their embedded targets.

Engagement

Organisations do not change through targets and accountability structures alone. Creating conditions in which the more sustainable choice becomes the instinctive choice requires sustained internal communication, visible recognition of progress, and leadership behaviour that consistently signals that sustainability outcomes matter.



The opportunity for sustainability practitioners

Organisations can be both suppliers and customers, and the commercial dynamics of those relationships do not naturally orient toward the kind of transparency that pathway-level sustainability work requires.

Sustainability provides a novel rationale for closer collaboration across these boundaries. It's grounded not in altruism but in the shared recognition that the emissions reductions required cannot be achieved within any single organisation's boundary. The contractual and procurement environment is rapidly making this a commercial reality rather than a strategic preference.

What you can do

Leverage the wider scope offered by systems thinking. Expand on the wins and stories you can tell through sustainability and the impact you can quantify and evidence.

Regardless of the sustainability maturity of your organisation, a laser-focus on the areas of biggest impact is essential. Driving sustainability is a challenging undertaking, so look for every opportunity to celebrate success and evidence impact that is material to the business. Early wins build credibility and generate the internal stories that extend engagement beyond those already converted to the cause. This creates the momentum needed to sustain more complex, longer-horizon system change.

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