BRINGING 4 RETURNS LANDSCAPE RESTORATION TO SCALE THROUGH INSPIRING PARTNERSHIPS!

Commonland 2018-2022
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SUMMARY

Commonland was founded in 2013 with the ambition to kick-start a landscape restoration economy based on the 4 returns framework. With the support of the COmON Foundation, Commonland was able to develop landscape restoration projects in four countries, to start educating the next generation of business leaders and to build a core team. Within this short period Commonland has earned an international reputation as an innovative change maker. In the coming five years Commonland will enter a new phase as a mature organization that demonstrates that the 4 returns framework can be implemented at scale, by inspiring and working together with others. Commonland aims to further realize its project activities on the ground, increase its client-based partnerships, continue business education, and work on outreach and acquisition of funding for all our activities. The Commonland Foundation is the engine to make this all happen. We aim to further build and strengthen the organisation, creating resilient teams, structures and processes to optimize all of our partnerships.
“I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us. I ask nothing of the nation except that it so behaves as each farmer here behaves with reference to his own children. That farmer is a poor creature who skins the land and leaves it worthless to his children. The farmer is a good farmer who, having enabled the land to support himself and to provide for the education of his children, leaves it to them a little better than he found it himself. I believe the same thing of a nation.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT IN THE NEW NATIONALISM SPEECH, 1910
01 INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Commonland was founded with the ambition to kick-start the development of a landscape restoration economy. With the 4 returns – 3 zones – 20 years framework for ecosystem restoration published by IUCN and the Erasmus University and the firm commitment of the COMON Foundation, we aimed to provide a practical framework to realize a transition towards an economy that is based on the restoration of natural and production landscapes, instead of on their further degradation.

Since the start, significant progress has been made to directly implement the four returns framework in four countries and to develop the ‘proof of concept’ of this holistic approach. So far, our efforts are resulting in an increasing number of hectares under restoration, the start of the first 4 returns companies, the launch of 4 returns leadership education, and the inspiration of the public via our communication efforts. Importantly, the projects are starting to demonstrate that it is indeed possible to restore degraded landscapes while providing inspiration and new economic opportunities for the people.

Based on this progress, Commonland has earned recognition from farmers, peers and from international institutions as a key player in the world of landscape and community restoration, as well as for its critical niche to make landscape restoration economically viable.

We recognize that it is still early days for the restoration economy. Many more efforts are needed from farmers, companies, investors and governments around the globe to realize the necessary shift away from ongoing degradation. To achieve the 4 returns at scale, we need smart ways to raise awareness and understanding, to inspire new collaborations and to realize more investable restoration activities. Commonland is well-positioned to provide the missing link and its role as a change maker will remain very important in the years to come.

Over the last four years Commonland has gone through a steep learning curve: in the landscapes, as an expanding network organization, and through our partnerships. Based on these lessons and organizational adjustments, we are prepared for the next steps. In terms of our goals and mission we aim to stay on the course: ‘to realize large-scale landscape restoration with local farmers, land-users and experts, based on sustainable 4 returns business cases’. Likewise, we will stick to our mission ‘to contribute to a large-scale landscape restoration economy, aligned with international policies and guidelines’.

The results so far have been achieved by a passionate and diverse team of feet-in-the-dirt professionals, in close collaboration with the farmers, entrepreneurs and many other parties in the landscapes.

THE 4 RETURNS, 3 ZONES, 20 YEARS APPROACH

- RETURN OF INSPIRATION
  Giving people hope and a sense of purpose.

- RETURN OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
  Bringing back jobs, business activity, education and security.

- RETURN OF NATURAL CAPITAL
  Restoring biodiversity, soil and water quality.

- RETURN OF FINANCIAL CAPITAL
  Realizing long-term sustainable profit.

THE 4 ZONES APPROACH

1. NATURAL ZONE
   Designed for restoring the ecological foundation and biodiversity

2. COMBINED ZONE
   Designed for restoring the topsoil and delivering low and sustainable economic productivity

3. ECONOMIC ZONE
   Designed for delivering high and sustainable economic productivity

A long-term approach is important as it takes approximately 20 years – or one generation – to restore a landscape.
ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Many things were achieved in a short time thanks to our model, a dedicated team, our committed board and an increasing group of external experts, funders and supporters. Within three years we have been able to transform the ‘Theory of Change’ into a ‘Practice of Change’ and established a position within the traditional world of conservation and ecological restoration. Our holistic approach, using the U-curve, a key role for business development and collective leadership, is increasingly recognized by peers.

BOX 1

OUR LICENSE TO OPERATE: A FLAVOUR OF OUR PEERS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Our project partners and Commonland built positive relationships with peers and expert organisations, like:

- The Nature Conservancy, Red Cross, IUCN, WRI, WWF, Peace Parks Foundation, Wetlands International, Charles Darwin Foundation, Natuurmonumenten, Greening Australia, Switch Africa Green
- Dutch Ministry Economic Affairs, and Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment
- GIZ, European Union (DG AGRI and DG ENV)
- FAO, UNEP, UNCCD, CIFOR, ICRAF, UNCDF, UNICEF
- Rotterdam School of Management, Wageningen University, ENABLE partners
- Worldbank, European Investment Bank
- Coca Cola, Heineken, Santam, Rabobank, ASN Bank, DSM, National Australia Bank, Triodos Bank

HOW WE ARE ORGANIZED

Commonland is increasingly well established as a network organization, applying collective leadership principles to make sure we are aligned amongst each other and all activities in the field. The different entities increasingly function as an integrated whole, the ‘4 returns engine’.

- The Commonland Foundation
  guards and promotes the 4 returns restoration approach and has an important networking function. The foundation enables and supports the work of 4 Returns Projects, 4 Returns Partners and the 4 Returns Academy.

- 4 Returns Landscapes
  where we are learning-by-doing in the field with our partners and farmers, with the goal of realizing large-scale landscape and community restoration with business cases;

- 4 Returns Partners
  advises and works with third parties on developing landscape restoration activities based on business cases, building on the increasing track-record of the Commonland group;

- 4 Returns Science and Education
  works with 4 Returns Projects and Partners on joint monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge management. The 4 Returns Academy educates the next generation of business leaders and developers, as well as policy and decision-makers on sustainable landscape restoration through collaboration with Rotterdam School of Management (RSM);

- 4 Returns Facility Fund
  a grants fund to enable and speed up progress in the projects, through tailor-made grants, loans and equity;

- 4 Returns Lab
  facilitate, train and mobilize practitioners of landscape restoration.
WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON

The Commonland Foundation guards and develops the 4 returns restoration approach, maintaining close cooperation with businesses, scientific institutions, business schools, and experts from NGOs, governmental and private organizations. That way, the foundation secures the license to operate for Commonland as a whole and promotes the 4 returns to the wider public. The foundation enables and supports the work of 4 Returns Landscapes, 4 Returns Partners and the 4 Returns Academy.

Under 4 Returns Landscapes four projects are up and running to demonstrate the potential of landscape restoration resulting into 4 returns. We have developed our approach for landscape scouting and development (box 2). Each landscape is based on trusting and mutually beneficial partnerships with local and international organizations. Increasingly, funding is raised from local and global sources for all the activities needed in the large landscape areas. Commonland is assisting where needed. To-date three companies were established in our landscapes as an economic motor behind the restoration activities. These companies are now ready to attract (impact) investment funding. To track our progress monitoring and evaluation framework in each of our four landscapes.

APPROACH FOR LANDSCAPE SCOUTING AND DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with our partners and experts, we have developed an approach for landscape scouting and development. This approach is presented below as nine sequential steps however the process of landscape restoration is non-linear and iterative. It is our ability to learn and to feed those learnings back into this approach at various stages, that we believe will give us the greatest chance of success.

STEP 1
The landscape scouting and development plan starts with a set of practical criteria based on which each potential landscape is assessed. This looks not only at the extent of willingness among direct stakeholders, whether they understand the importance of landscape restoration, and how successful steps towards restoration that a landscape has already taken (with local organisations) have been, if also includes a critical look at the essential enabling conditions for a good result, such as political stability in the region, the land ownership situation, and the presence of local entrepreneurship. These criteria are continuously refined based on lessons learnt throughout the process.

STEP 2
Landscape scouting happens in countries that, based on a risk assessment, have been found to be suitable for restoration activities, while Commonland makes intensive use of an international network for such scouting activities. When a landscape has come through the extensive scouting process and assessment based on the criteria, actual development of the landscape starts.

STEP 3
An essential aspect of step 3 is the development of a shared vision with all stakeholders. To find the right context for implementation of the 4 returns approach, workshops are organised to have all existing local parties observe the status quo of the landscape together, and jointly assess what everyone needs separately to achieve the targeted result. In this phase, Commonland fulfils the role of unifier, facilitator, and co-creator, based on Theory U.

STEP 4
Based on a shared vision, an initial holistic 4 returns plan is designed. This plan lays down (an outline of) what needs to be done across the entire area to restore the landscape to where all stakeholders want it to be. This includes interventions in all three zones – both commercial and non-commercial. This plan can then serve as a reference point as projects grow and mature, and can be revised as needed as challenges and opportunities present themselves.

STEP 5
After identification of potential investable propositions in the 4 returns holistic plan, business cases are developed for the proposition. In this phase, Commonland provides expertise (in areas such as ecology, forestry, sustainable agriculture, finance, and entrepreneurship), while business developers start their collaboration with the teams in the field. A similar process is undertaken for non-commercial interventions in the landscape.

STEP 6
This is when the action starts. Together with local parties, companies are set up and initiatives are organised that lead to actual restoration work in the landscape.

STEP 7
For all restoration activities that do not produce any financial returns, funds and grants are raised from private investors, foundations, and governments. The business cases are presented to potential financial backers and investors. In this phase, Commonland is an active fundraiser and finder of funding.

STEP 8
This is the phase when long-term implementation by local organisations and farmers starts, as Commonland gradually steps back.

STEP 9
The last step involves monitoring and evaluation of developments in the landscape based on the 4 returns, and following on from that: the Sustainable Development Goals. Funding of both the development stage and the implementation stage of these landscape restoration programs are obtained by raising funds, grants, and investments, as well as by generating revenue from services to third parties.
With the recently established 4 Returns Partners, we build on the increasing interest from companies and other organizations in the field to get involved in landscape restoration. Based on an impact consulting model, we support these companies to implement restoration activities integrated in their core business. With our new team, we developed a strategy and approach; we are working on several projects and reviewing new leads.

4 Returns Science and Education educates the next generation of business leaders and developers, as well as policy and decision-makers on sustainable landscape restoration via the 4 Returns Academy. We started an educational business programme, culminating in the first massive open online course (MOOC) on landscape restoration and business. We are also implementing the monitoring and evaluation approach and increasing our work on knowledge management and learning as a group including monetization of the 4 returns at landscape level.

To provide the right types of finance for these developments we have set up a 4 Returns Facility Fund, and recently agreed to open this up for more individual private funders.

**PARTNERSHIPS ARE VITAL**

Long-term partnerships (20 years) with our core landscape partners are critical for all the work Commonland is doing. We are learning our lessons in building mutually trusting relationships, especially on expectations and communications, while reaching out to funders and institutions on behalf of our partners. Another lesson that we have learned is to use the power of being well-connected to networks of peers and others. It has brought us a strong license to operate, while it also requires a lot of time to maintain these relationships.

**OUR PRINCIPLES AND CORE COMPETENCIES**

The coming years the Commonland group needs to fulfill the highest standards of trust and transparency. Commonland’s 4 returns principles will provide us with a strong, common purpose and direction. They serve as a foundation for our relationships with each other and the action we take in the world.

**OUR 4 RETURNS PRINCIPLES**

- **OPENING UP OUR NETWORK IS OUR NICHE**
  Commonland operates out of an international network, which is the basis of its unique position and has access to proven restoration technologies, international support from partners in business, finance, NGOs, science, governments and multilateral institutes.

- **OUR APPROACH IS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND HELPS REALIZE THESE AGREEMENTS**
  Commonland’s approach is in line with international agreements such as the Bonn Challenge, UN Conventions, World Business Council on Sustainable Development and the Economics of Land Degradation.

- **WE ARE INDEPENDENT**
  Commonland is a science-based, independent hybrid organization of non-profit and impact companies with no political agenda. The governance consists of a management team and Board, supported by an international Advisory Council.

- **WE ARE IMPACT-DRIVEN**
  Commonland has the ambition to create as much value as possible for everyone based on the restoration of ecosystem functions.

- **WE ARE TRANSPARENT**
  Transparency and accountability are two essential elements of ‘good governance’ that are central to Commonland’s culture. It is reflected in its activities, reports and agreements and ambition to share.

- **WE WORK IN A COOPERATIVE WAY WITH OTHERS**
  Commonland strives to have good trustworthy cooperation with parties who share its vision and have similar goals. This can be profit, non-profits, governments or individuals. This way, we bring in practice Sustainable Development Goal 17 on partnerships.

- **WE CARE ABOUT OUR PEOPLE**
  We aim to build a culture where people feel listened to and are stimulated to grow. We value and reward our people in line with the ‘4 returns’.

- **Our characteristics of our work are captured by our ‘4 returns core competencies’**
  - Inspirational project management including stakeholder mobilization, orchestration & building teams
  - Co-creation of holistic master plans & landscape designs
  - 4 returns business development & implementation
  - Bringing in expertise in fields like:
    - Restoration agriculture, forestry, water, ecosystems and biodiversity
    - Business and market development
    - Financial structuring and fundraising
  - Management or support of on-the-ground implementation
  - Spreading lessons learned and contributing to training others

In general, executing these 4 returns core competencies requires local presence in the landscape. Within the Commonland Group the core competencies can be executed by different actors, such as the Commonland staff in our own or third party initiated projects. We also work with partner organizations, such as local consultancies. We always aim to delegate or transition the Commonland role to external partners at some point in time. We continuously work on the further development and branding of our core competencies.

**TEAM WORKSHOP BASED ON THEORY U IN ALTIPLANODE ESTEPARIO IN SPAIN.**
Commonland achievements

2009 SUMMER
- Mieke Ferwerda (then IUCN NL) and John D. Liu meet, resulting in collaboration focusing on landscape restoration in South Africa in partnership with Living Lands.
- Ecosystem Return Foundation established in South Africa in partnership with Living Lands.

2010 WINTER
- Ecosystem Return Foundation established in the Altiplano (highplains) region with support from COmON.
- Dropping Tree Organic Lavender Farm established as a successor to the Ecosystem Return Foundation.

2011 SPRING
- Willem Ferwerda (then IUCN NL) and John D. Liu meet, resulting in the establishment of the Ecosystem Return Foundation.
- Start development of Baviaanskloof landscape restoration project.

2011 FALL
- COmON Foundation established by Wijnand Pon with the purpose of promoting the development of the Ecosystem Return Foundation.

2012 SPRING
- Ecosystem Return Foundation receives European Commission grant.

2012 SUMMER
- Commonland moves to our permanent home in Baviaanskloof, representing a step forward in professionalising the organisation.

2012 FALL
- Commonland’s work receives European Commission grant.
- Commonland establishes advisory council.

2013 SPRING
-共 the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs agreed to fund restoration of the hill slopes for its water benefits.

2013 SUMMER
- Commonland is established as an international foundation, with support from COmON.

2013 FALL
- Several business cases evaluated with the farmers in the Baviaanskloof, as an alternative to the degrading soil farming.

2014 SPRING
- Company identity and communication strategy developed.

2014 SUMMER
- Ecosystem Return Foundation established in South Africa in partnership with Living Lands.

2014 FALL
- Advisory Council established.

2015 SPRING
- Start project scouting with support from the DOEN foundation.

2015 SUMMER
- Start development of Baviaanskloof landscape in South Africa in partnership with Living Lands.

2015 FALL

2016 SPRING
- Kick-off a rewilding movement of farmers, landowners and entrepreneurs in the high plains of Andalusia, resulting in the establishment of the Avilal Association.

2016 SUMMER
- The Dutch Ministry of Economics Affairs asked Commonland to identify 4 returns opportunities in the Netherlands.

2016 FALL
- Co-organized a visit to the Lowes Robins in Chatsworth, South Africa, with Willem Alexander.

2017 SPRING
- Co-organized a visit to the Laeys Robins in Chatsworth, South Africa, with Willem Alexander.

2017 SUMMER
- Wide Open Agriculture purchases its first property, with the view to converting it to a 3 zone demonstration farm.

2017 FALL
- The 4 Returns Facility fund is established, with an initial commitment of EUR 2 million for 2.5 years.

2018 SUMMER
- Academy for Business and Landscapes initiated by Commonland.

2018 FALL
- Over 1000 people participated in the MOOC online course on business and landscape restoration starting May 1st.

2019 SPRING
- International landscape teams come together in learning week to connect learn from each other and have fun.

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2020 SPRING
- Commonland to present at UNCCD in China.

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- Monitoring & Evaluation guidelines developed.

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2022 FALL
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OUR AMBITION FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS
Commonland’s role as a change maker to create the restoration economy will remain very important in the years to come. We want to be the driving force of the restoration movement through smart ways to raise awareness and understanding and inspiring existing and new partnerships, and realizing investable restoration activities.

COMMONLAND AIMS TO ‘TRANSFORM THE SYSTEM’ AND WE INSPIRE OTHERS TO TRY AS WELL.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR 2022:

- Commonland inspires and works with thousands of land managers and other stakeholders to create a holistic, systemic approach to restoration through the development of inspiring restoration concepts.
- By 2022, the landscape restoration economy is a booming movement, with partnerships across many value chains.
- The rapidly growing 4 Returns Academy is facilitating this new economy and delivers a new generation of restoration business leaders, interacting with our to-be-established 4 Returns Lab for practitioners.
- Commonland's lobby has contributed to governments subsidizing and mainstream financial institutions investing in many restoration projects around the world. The financial industry increasingly adopts 4 returns criteria.
- A dedicated 4 Returns fund for landscape restoration makes landmark investments using grants and impact investments.
- Commonland is a highly professional international network organization of passionate co-workers, jointly living, enjoying, spreading and accelerating the 4 Returns.

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”
— ALBERT EINSTEIN

“Companies that are willing to share, to withhold in order to further the growth of the company, willing to try to get a better atmosphere through a demonstration of democratic principles, fairness and cooperation, a better product, those will win in the end.”
— EDWARD OSBORNE WILSON, TWO-TIME PULITZER PRIZE WINNER, AUTHOR, AND ECOLOGIST AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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— ALBERT EINSTEIN
“The good news is that systemic change is fractal in nature: it implies, indeed it requires, action at every level of society. We needn’t wait for a cathartic global or national sea change. And even if our efforts cannot “save” consumerist industrial civilization, they could still succeed in planting the seeds of a regenerative human culture worthy of survival.”

— RICHARD HEINBERG, AUTHOR AND SCIENTIST, (PUBLISHED BY RESILIENCE.ORG, AUGUST 2017)
04 GOALS 2018 - 2022

In order to realize its ambitions, Commonland has set the following goals:

**FOUNDATION**

The foundation continues to guard the 4 returns framework, serving as the glue between all entities, while providing knowledge, network connections, funding, science & education and back-office support. Commonland staff is eager to demonstrate, cooperate and transition the work to others, while staying connected. Across the network, tools for 4 returns landscape restoration are developed and made available.

A diverse strategic and operational management structure is in place that allows for focus, while catalysing people to develop, grow, perform and enjoy, all based on our 4 returns core competencies.

A lean central organization and back office support the local implementing entities as needed, providing project & financial administration, legal and partnership skills and HR and other support. The communication takes place on a global scale, and evolves from brand awareness to content sharing and thought leadership.

Commonland maintains good relationships with the network, creating a unique form of communication. A lobby/advocacy function will be developed to promote the integration of landscape restoration via the 4 returns in policy and subsidy schemes.

Commonland establishes a professional and effective fundraising capacity and financial governance for its activities via the 4 returns framework fund, unlocking a magnitude of EUR 100m in the 4 Returns Facility Fund (grants) for early stage process funding, landscape grants and investments. Furthermore, the establishment of an (order of magnitude) EUR 500m investment fund is under preparation.

The creation of a 4 Returns Lab aims at linking, inspiring and equipping restoration practitioners and other professionals. It acts as a gateway to fuel the movement of the restoration economy.

The Science and Education team facilitates the emerging restoration economy with a practical body of knowledge and by delivering trained business leaders and restoration practitioners through the 4 Returns Academy.

**4 RETURNS LANDSCAPES**

4 Returns Landscapes aims to further successfully develop the 4 returns framework in the four landscapes that have been co-initiated by Commonland. This will enable us to experiment, learn and demonstrate, how large scale landscape and community restoration can bring farmers, restoration project implementers, funders and governments together. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate 4 returns impact at a landscape level and to inspire others to copy our work and to independently implement business-based landscape restoration initiatives. In the period 2018-2022, the landscapes require further establishment and development funding for both commercial and non-commercial activities from Commonland. Increasingly external funding will be secured, from local and global sources, particularly as landscapes become more mature and ultimately self-sufficient. We may want to start on a fifth landscape in this period, and will consider that based upon a scalable and replicable model of support.

**4 RETURNS PARTNERS**

The goal of 4 Returns Partners is to successfully contribute to the large-scale landscape restoration industry, accelerating the mission of Commonland Foundation. We aim to achieve this by developing innovative landscape restoration projects for, and in close collaboration with, private sector companies, NGOs, governments and financial institutions (clients). All landscape restoration projects have viable business cases at their core. These projects are carried out with our clients in partnership with international/local peer representatives and implementation partners (partnerships). All landscape restoration projects are developed along the 4 returns, 3 zones 20 years approach. Our projects foster millions of investment capital to bankable business cases conducive to landscape restoration, including regenerative agriculture, infrastructure, renewable energy and the environmental services markets. 4 Returns Partners aims to work closely with the other entities of the Commonland group, building on, and contributing to, our collective experience and track record.
OPERATIONALIZATION AND TARGETS 2018 - 2022

The following section details how we aim to organize our goals and the targets we aim to meet:

COMMONLAND FOUNDATION

To achieve its goals, the Foundation focuses in 2018-2022 on the following activities and targets:

ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

In 2022 Commonland is an established, well-known and professionally led organisation that is leading by example and walking the talk by living the 4 returns principles. Commonland’s management team jointly carries the responsibility to achieve the goals. The management team consists of the current managing directors, responsible for the business lines Academy, 4 Returns Landscapes and 4 Returns Partners and has been strengthened with the chief operational officer (COO). All back office and staff type of functions, headed by the COO, will service the business lines. The COO is responsible for organizational development and process management, structuring partnerships, people and management development, communications and the overall back office management, including financial management & control, and legal issues. The management team is reporting to the CEO and COO. Strategy development is a joint responsibility of the management team. The foundation will remain the major shareholder of the building of 4 Returns Landscapes and 4 Returns Partners.

TARGET 2022:
The international Commonland group is established as a recognized and highly professional network organization with regional partner offices (local implementing entities), 4 returns companies, an academy and a lean support structure in Amsterdam.

TEAM BUILDING

Creating an excellent scouting and internal learning environment for teams of 4 Returns Partners, 4 Returns Landscapes, the 4 Returns Academy and 4 Returns Lab, supported by HR.

TARGET 2022:
• Training curriculum to support staff of Commonland group. Including a course that enables new staff to engage based on learned lessons and connecting the three entities.
• Excellent operational staff and human resources group, well embedded in our international network, that helps the different entities with scouting, selecting and positioning of well qualified people.

COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING

In the internal branding, and building the communication of showcases from Partners, Landscapes, Academy and the 4 Returns Lab (see part on Science & Education) as well the landscape partners towards local authorities, governments, international organisations and the wider public. Communication is target group- and content-driven, enabling others to participate and based on openness and vulnerability. Activities entail:

• Website of the group, and the three entities, as well as 4 returns companies
• Active presence on social media: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook
• Internal and External newsletters
• Videos, blogs and vlogs

TARGETS 2022:
• Via lobby, networking, showcases and all forms or outreach, the 4 returns are increasingly adopted in international policy frameworks and subsidy schemes.

FUNDRAISING (4 RETURNS FACILITY FUND):

To enable the projects, we focus on three ways of fundraising: 1) through our own 4 Returns Facility Fund, funded with grants, impact investment and loans, by a range of private individuals; 2) specific fundraising for our project partners targeting foundations, individuals and government subsidies; 3) mobilizing loans and investment capital in the 4 returns companies. To ensure we meet our targets we will have developed a comprehensive overview, database and built relationships with grantees and impact investment funders, and established an excellent fundraising team that is serving a pro-active program to support all entities.

TARGETS 2022:
• EUR 100m in grants or soft funding raised for 4 Returns Facility Fund, to be applied to for early stage process funding and investments.
• Development of a commercial 4 returns impact investment fund of (order of magnitude) EUR 500m euro ready to start

4 RETURNS LAB

The creation of a 4 Returns Lab aims at linking, inspiring and equipping restoration practitioners and other professionals to fuel the movement of the restoration economy. It will function as a joint knowledge and learning platform by stimulating leadership via interaction and collaboration of technical experts, business students and professionals and restoration practitioners based on learning and exchange about (best) practices. The Lab will be connecting activities within the wider restoration network of business, academia, policy making and restoration practices. In this way, the 4 Returns Lab will develop into the meeting, market, education and training platform for the wider restoration and business networks.

TARGETS 2022:
• activate, incubate and build capacity of 4 returns practitioners through initiatives such as Community of Practice and Social Impact Labs
• organize landscape leadership events and acts as a central hub on 4 returns landscape restoration together with Academy, Landscapes and Partners.
• establishment of attractive training facility in Amsterdam where meetings, workshops and fundraising events are hosted, eventually combined with a new venue of Commonland.
SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

The main goals of the science & education team, residing under Commonland Foundation, are to facilitate the emerging restoration economy with a practical body of knowledge and by delivering trained business leaders and restoration practitioners. The team is working on a variety of activities, with the following main pillars:

1. Developing business school education related to landscape restoration, in first instance through the ENABLE project which will later develop into the 4 Returns Academy;
2. Setup of smart systems for knowledge & information management (KIM) and for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) in mutual collaboration with the Commonland Group as a whole, including a 4 returns monetization approach to convince investors, governments and other actors.
3. Implement a “meeting place” in Amsterdam to inspire, equip and facilitate the broader restoration network.

To achieve these goals, the team focuses on the following roles and/or activities per target:

4 RETURNS ACADEMY

Setting up of a network for business education for (business) students, (business) professionals, business developers and executives with academic partners:

- European Network for the Advancement of Business & Landscape Education (ENABLE) as a first step toward joint finance/partnerships: 2017-2019
- The Academy for Business & Landscapes (4 Returns Academy): 2019-2022

The 4 Returns Academy (working title: Academy for Business & landscapes) is grounded on the ENABLE-EU project, formally established as a hub of Rotterdam School of Management, and cooperates with other elite business schools and universities, globally.

The Academy provides business schools with a curriculum to educate a new generation of business students and business professionals/executives to become restoration leaders. In addition, an action-research network will be established in order to test the 4 returns approach and further develop it.

TARGETS 2022:

- The self-sustained Academy employs about 10 people as dedicated staff for management, organization and developing curricula to train business leaders and restoration practitioners.
- The Academy’s formal education program contains—amongst others: Case teaching; Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); Experiential learning events (summer schools/labs/boot camps) and a 4 Returns diploma as part of accredited MSc Programs (aim: 100+ graduated business leaders).
- The Academy operates in an action research program network, in which 10 part-time professors and 2 post-docs are continually performing applied research on the 4 returns and related topics from a business perspective

“"The MOOC was an excellent way for me to connect my business experience with the ecological and social aspect of land restoration. The course truly inspired me to focus my impact investing efforts on land restoration and the soil.”

— FERNANDO RUSSO, MERAKI FUND, BRAZIL, IMPACT INVESTOR AND MEMBER OF TONIIC NETWORK.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (KIM) AND MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

The team has developed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning systems jointly with all Commonland group entities (Projects, Partners, Foundation, Academy). Coordinated by the Foundation’s knowledge & research officer, every local Commonland team (4R Projects) and 4 Returns Partners will be represented in a so-called impact team for joint exchange and learning, reflecting on implementation, lessons learned and furher (research) needs.

TARGETS 2022:

- M&E and Knowledge Management systems fully operational and implemented throughout the Commonland Group
- Group learnings (Landscapes, Partners, Academy) are translated into a (in house) training program focusing on the intervention areas as applied in the 4 returns, 3 zones, 20 years approach.
- A 4 returns monetization approach is in place to convince investors, governments and other actors.
4 RETURNS LANDSCAPES

The landscapes under 4 Returns landscapes are defined as those significantly financed and/or developed by Commonland (and its local partners). As of August 2017, this includes the Baviaanskloof-Langkloof (South Africa), the Altiplano (Spain), the Wheatbelt (Australia) and the peat meadows of the Vechtplassen (the Netherlands). It should be acknowledged that landscapes, co-developed by 4 Returns Partners, will have many of the similar characteristics of Commonland’s ‘own’ landscapes.

WHAT DO WE DO IN THE LANDSCAPES?

With our landscape partners (farmers, project implementers, etc.), we aim to support the restoration of landscapes and communities based upon the social, economic, ecological and inspirational leverage provided by sustainable business cases. It is about demonstrating a new way of working, in partnership, with sharing of risk and reward. It is about collaboration and not competition between stakeholders: farmers, restoration project implementers, government agencies, and investors. This is all in line with our 4 returns core competencies. Historically, when we have entered a landscape with our partners, we have made a 20-year commitment to that landscape. However, our role in a landscape is dynamic and changes over that 20-year period from active involvement (e.g. initial sole landscape funder) to a much more passive approach (e.g. as one of many shareholders). As such, in most instances, our most significant financial and operational contributions will occur in the first 5-7 years of this 20-year period.

WHERE DO THE LANDSCAPES FIT WITHIN THE COMMONLAND GROUP?

The landscapes are a demonstration of the practical application of the 3 zones – 4 returns – 20-year framework. They are a place of learning and experimentation and have a crucial role in contributing to the evidence-based approach of Commonland’s science and education arm, as well as 4 Returns Partners’ service offering. They are the practical examples Commonland and our partners can use to raise funding and awareness of the need and opportunities for landscape and community restoration.

The relationship between local country landscape teams and Commonland (all business units) is one of peers. This emphasizes the concept that local landscape teams are working with and not for Commonland. Each local team is responsible for developing their own short and long-term strategic plans with detailed activities, concrete goals and an indication of how the 4 returns will be generated. Commonland supports the development of these plans, ensuring both accountability and that a balance is achieved across all 4 returns.

The goal within our landscapes is to achieve and demonstrate measurable impact across all 4 returns in each landscape over 20 years. However, and more importantly, the landscapes serve as a source of hope and inspiration for others to implement a 4 returns approach all over the world. Landscapes aim to be copied or replicated. In that way, the landscapes can contribute to Commonland’s underlying goal of creating a global landscape restoration economy. This implies that Commonland’s greatest impact will not come through our (own developed) landscapes. To put this in the context of actual hectares restored: hectares restored are an important measure in each of our landscapes, but more important is that the landscapes demonstrate that we are aiming to ‘transform the system’ and thus we inspire others to try as well. In this way, we contribute towards the creation of a landscape restoration movement.

TARGETS 2022:

- By 2022, each landscape will be fully locally capacitated for both the commercial and non-commercial activities required to deliver larger-scale landscape restoration (with reference to Commonland’s nine intervention areas). Commonland’s support from COnON is a very important source of funding for building this local capacity. It is recognized that it takes time to establish exactly what is needed at different stages of the landscape development process and that at certain times commercial activities will take precedence over non-commercial activities, and vice-versa.

- By 2022, each of the four current landscapes will be largely operationally and financially independent of Commonland (self-sufficient). This includes for both the commercial and non-commercial activities required to implement sustainable landscape and community restoration. This self-sufficiency will be the result of the diversification of landscape funding sources (investments, grants, cash flows generated via business cases), and it also represents a growing awareness of 4 returns landscape restoration, in line with Commonland’s broader mission.

- While after 2022 landscapes will not necessarily need substantial financial and operational support, Commonland may want to continue to co-fund landscapes because of the 4 returns impact the landscapes can have and their importance to Commonland’s overall mission. This includes areas such as monitoring, evaluation, research and shared learning.

- If we are comfortable that the existing four landscapes are sufficiently supported, we may consider a fifth landscape during the period 2018-2022. In developing a new landscape, we will, wherever possible, leverage upon the capacities of 4 Returns Partners, and of existing landscape teams. Furthermore, if we seek to establish a new restoration project, we will develop a replicable and scalable model of support, which draws upon our landscape experience to-date.

- By 2022, our landscape teams and partners will be part of a network of like-minded landscape restoration focused entities with cross-landscape initiatives actively promoted. Commonland and/or its various business units will be part of, without controlling, this network. This network will include entities from outside Commonland’s own landscapes (e.g. clients of 4 Returns Partners).

- At any juncture (2022 or otherwise), success in each of the landscapes will be measured in terms of the 4 returns generated, and the ability to develop investable business models which are highly scalable and/or replicable. Together these factors will provide the evidence of the ability to inspire and transform the system (supporting the creation of a 4 returns landscape restoration economy). As such the real impact will come from the restoration economy which the landscapes have individually and collectively enabled.

- By 2022, each of the landscapes will have demonstrated measurable and meaningful outcomes on each of the 4 returns, in line with Commonland’s impact measurement framework (MEL). However, a 20-year period is the true timeframe against which landscapes will be assessed.

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4 RETURNS PARTNERS

The goal of 4 Returns Partners is to successfully contribute to the large-scale landscape restoration economy, accelerating the mission of Commonland Foundation. We develop high quality, large scale and innovative landscape restoration projects in partnerships with land managers, private sector companies, financial institutions, governments and NGOs. Our projects are developed based on Commonland’s 4 returns, 3 zones 20 years approach and have viable business cases at their core. We work in full alignment with all entities of the Commonland Group.

4 Returns Partners develops solutions for landscape restoration that strengthen the existing businesses of our partners and clients. Our activities focus on:

- Strengthening of existing landscape restoration projects
- Integrating landscape restoration activities into companies’ core business
- Supporting the development of regenerative agriculture (farming based on practices that restore soil, water and biodiversity) and related value chains
- Development of innovative partnerships in food and agriculture value chains for landscape restoration
- Design and implementation of financing mechanisms for landscape restoration based on markets for ecosystem services (carbon, water, biodiversity)

By guiding and assisting our partners in the landscape restoration process from idea to realization, 4 Returns Partners will ensure that all organizations work together in a constructive, transparent and inspiring environment. It should be noted that 4 Returns Partners is in a start-up phase and as such in an ongoing process to sharpen its strategy and value proposition, based on the insights and inputs from our team and colleagues in the Commonland group. This strategic/operational plan below is therefore indicative and subject to change.

The way in which 4 Returns Partners aims to develop as a professional organization to achieve its goals is discussed in the following, from four perspectives: a financial perspective, a customer perspective, an internal perspective and a learning and growth perspective.

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

4 Returns Partners aims to achieve sustainable growth and become self-sustainable and profitable, by providing high quality services to clients and ongoing support during the transformation process. Our earning model consists of fees for services, if appropriate in combination with success fees or other ways to engage in risk- and benefit-sharing.

For the upcoming years we aim to build a track record as a developer of restoration projects/ businesses for development finance institutes as well as (semi-)commercial funds (including Commonland’s fund).

CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE:

4 Returns Partners aims to become a leading consultant organization in the field of business-driven landscape restoration.

Our services include:

- Collaborative design and pre-development of landscape restoration projects
- Stakeholder engagement, capacity development and movement building at multiple levels
- Business development, financial structuring and commercial assistance
- Fundraising (as an enabler of clients project implementation)
- Project management and support for on-the-ground implementation

Our target clients include:

- Private sector companies: agro, food & beverage and value chain companies, infrastructure, mining and dredging companies;
- Development Finance Institutes and (semi-)commercial funds;
- Governments;
- NGOs.

We aim to create a diverse but balanced portfolio of projects in different regions. We proactively approach prospects and potential partnerships in the Netherlands, Spain and other countries with acceptable risk and ‘ease of doing business’ levels. We prioritize large opportunities and clients with dedicated budgets.

INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE:

We will work to professionalize customer management, operations, innovation and marketing:

- customer management to attract and retain paying clients
- operations management: the further streamlining of processes and formats, cash flow management, effective project team structures with sufficient seniority, expert partnering
- innovation management: the development of our services offering, active portfolio management, research and learning etc.
- marketing & communication, starting with brand development.

4 Returns Partners aims to grow towards a professional organization of around 15 senior staff (including project developers, trainers, experts) with 4 returns core competencies as well as the support of a mature network of experts in all relevant fields. The project managers are working out of local implementing entities, which could be own 4 Returns Partners entities, clients offices or offices of our partners. These local implementing entities create an organically growing network of partnerships with local consultants and dedicated companies.

4 Returns Partners works closely with the other entities of the Commonland group, building on, and contributing to, our collective experience and track record. We do this by:

- Developing innovative concepts that can be applied in Commonland’s 4 Returns Landscapes as well as serving to expand the Partners’ service offering
- Developing new business and restoration concepts that can have global reach, applying for the individual and collective benefit of our projects and other entities / projects
- Building upon the knowledge base of 4 returns landscape restoration and feeding that into the 4 Returns Academy workstream
- Supporting and leveraging upon the fundraising carried out by the Foundation, to ensure more traditional and new funding is ultimately directed towards to landscape restoration.
LEARNING & GROWTH PERSPECTIVE
4 Returns Partners will invest in human capital (skills, training, knowledge) and organizational capital (culture, leadership, alignment, teamwork). This implies that seniors are leading and guiding juniors; that we train and coach staff when needed based on personal growth/development plans; and that we will develop a number of specializations (with practice leaders). Ongoing attention will be given to align teams on mission, values, vision and strategy; create a coherent, complementary and involved team, and to provide people with right challenges and coaching. We plan to install an advisory board (aligned with the Advisory Council of Commonland) and strengthen our network of associate experts.

TARGETS 2022:
• 4 Returns Partners is working through a variety of Partnerships with >20 paying Clients on landscape restoration projects.
• 10 integrated supply chain projects with companies active in the commodity & food sector.
• 4 Returns Partners is profitable. Any profits will be used for Commonland landscapes.
• earned a reputation from our clients and partner organizations as a trustworthy, effective and professional organization.
• Services offering is mature and we strengthen our core skills via effective expertise management model.
• Clear win-wins from collaboration with other entities of Commonland group.
• 15 Senior project managers (including trainers) with core competences
• supported by a network of experts with sector specific technical expertise.
• core team of senior project managers at HQ is limited to 7
• unlocked EUR 5 -10m of Technical Assistance grants from Development Finance Institutions to cover project pre-development and design costs. Unlocked investment money for our projects and business development activities (order of magnitude EUR 50-100m).
• recognized learning environment for employees and great place to work within the wider Commonland Group.

“Most floods are caused by man, not weather; deforestation, levee construction, erosion, and overgrazing all result in the loss of ecosystem services.”

— PAUL HAWKEN, AUTHOR THE ECOLOGY OF COMMERCE
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUD: Australian Dollar
DEME: Dredging International
BDC: Baviaanskloof Development Company
BSR: Business for Social Responsibility
CBEY: The Center for Business and Environment at Yale
CEM: Centre for Environmental Management
CIFOR: Center for International Forestry Research
CISL: Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership
DG AGRI: Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG ENV: Directorate General for the Environment
EIB: European Investment Bank
ELD: Economics of Land Degradation
ENABLE: European Network for the Advancement of Business & Landscapes (Commonland EU project to support the Academy)
ESP: Environmental Solutions through Partnership
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPFLR: Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration
ICRAF: World Agroforestry Centre
IDC: Industrial Development Corporation
IDH: Sustainable Trade Initiative
ISRIC: International Soil Reference and Information Centre
ISWC: Institute for Soil & Water China
IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LPFN: Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MOOC: Massive Open Online Course
NCC: Nature Capital Coalition
NCFF: Natural Capital Financing Facility of the European Investment Bank
NIOO: Nederlands Instituut voor Ecologie
Pymwymic: ‘Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is’, a Dutch based social impact investment network
RSM: Rotterdam School of Management
SER: Social Economische Raad
TEEB: The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
UNCED: United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCDF: United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
UNU: United Nations University
UoL: University of Leeds
USP: Unique Selling Point
Uu: Universiteit Utrecht
UvA: University of Amsterdam
VU: Vrije Universiteit
WBCSD: World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WOA: Wide Open Agriculture
WRI: World Resources Institute
WUR: Wageningen University
YTD: Year To Date
4RFF: 4 Returns Facility Fund