

Getting the AI Lab covered by your employer

Professional development reimbursement guide

Most employers have a training budget, and most of it goes unused. Getting the AI Lab covered takes one conversation and one email. This guide gives you both, plus the answers to the questions your manager will ask. Invoices, supplier forms and calls with HR, SustainOS handles for you.

BEFORE YOU START

What you need

- ☐ **This guide**
Steps, talking points and a sample email. You are reading it.
- ☐ **The Employer Support Letter**
The formal four-page program summary written for managers and HR. Attach it to every request. Sent with this guide.
- ☐ **A quote or invoice (only if your company asks for one before approval)**
Email support@sustainos.io with your company name and address; you get it within one working day.

THE PROCESS

Five steps, in order

1 Find your budget Check the employee handbook or HR portal, or ask HR: "Do we have a training budget, what is the limit per person, and do I need approval before I book?" Budgets often reset at year end; a November cohort sits inside that window.	ASK HR Annual limit, pre-approval needed, request window
2 Apply to the AI Lab Fill in the two-minute form at ailab.sustainos.io and book the 30-minute fit call, where you settle your path (Guided or Open) and what you would build. Run this in parallel with the approval; admission does not commit you to paying before your budget is confirmed.	YOU GET A confirmed seat or an honest no, and a clear idea of what to build first
3 Talk to your manager (page 2) Ten minutes, before you send anything. Lead with the task you would take off your desk, not with AI, and say that the program ends with the documentation IT needs. Page 2 has the framing and the answers to the questions you will get.	AIM Verbal yes, or the one objection you still need to answer
4 Send the request (page 3) Use the sample email on page 3 or your company's formal form. Attach the Employer Support Letter. If a quote is required first, we send one the same day.	ATTACH Employer Support Letter, plus quote if requested
5 After approval, hand it to us Email support@sustainos.io with the approval and your company's billing details. We send the invoice, complete supplier or PO forms if needed, and provide an enrolment confirmation for HR and a confirmation of participation after Week 6.	WE HANDLE Invoice, supplier forms, PO, confirmations

STEP 3

Talking to your manager

Open with this

"This is not a course about AI. It is six weeks in which I take **the task**, which I currently do by hand, and turn it into a working tool the team can use, with a practitioner reviewing my build every Friday. I hand back the documentation IT needs to run it."

THEY MIGHT SAY	YOU CAN SAY
"We already have AI tools."	A chat licence lets me ask questions. The AI Lab teaches me to specify, build and deploy a working tool and document it so IT can take it over. The method carries over to whichever tools we standardise on.
"Can't you learn this on your own?"	I could watch tutorials. What kills self-taught builds is no scope, no method and no one checking the architecture. The program fixes the order: design first, then build, then production, with a practitioner reviewing my work every Friday and an office hour on Thursday when I get stuck. A Friday deadline beats six months of evenings.
"EUR 2,000 is a lot."	It costs about as much as one conference trip, and it produces a working tool we keep, plus the ability to build the next one without a developer. Certifications at twice the price teach concepts; this ships a tool.
"Is it relevant to your role?"	On the Open Path I build for our own process from Week 2, after the Week 1 materiality matrix everyone builds. The Guided Path uses sustainability workflows throughout: a materiality matrix, a supplier engagement portal with a dashboard, access rules for suppliers and reviewers. Previous participants built environmental reporting, emissions accounting, EUDR, CBAM and PPWR tools.
"Can you do this outside work hours?"	Live sessions are 2.5 hours a week: Mondays 16:00 to 17:00 and Fridays 16:00 to 17:30 Central European Time, plus an optional Thursday office hour and 1 to 2 hours of build time I schedule myself. About 4 hours a week on the Guided Path, 6 to 8 if I build for our own process.
"What about data privacy?"	The guided build uses a synthetic case company. If I build for our own process, I use anonymised or sample data during the cohort, on my own accounts; nothing is installed on a company computer. Week 6 documents hosting, data protection and the IT handover before it touches real data.
"Why not ask IT, or buy a tool?"	Off-the-shelf software is priced for enterprises and built for the average company, and sustainability sits at the bottom of the IT list. After the program I hand IT a spec, a working tool and a handover package, which is how a small tool gets adopted instead of parked.
"What if it doesn't work out?"	There is a completion guarantee: if I attend the live sessions and by Week 6 the tool still does not meet the scope locked in Week 2, SustainOS keeps working with me in the Thursday office hours until it does, at no extra cost.
"What if you leave?"	The tool comes with a handover package (spec, access rules, repository, deployment steps, running cost) written so someone else can run it or rebuild it internally. That is the Week 6 deliverable, not an afterthought.

STEP 4

Sample email to your manager

Replace the highlighted parts. Attach the Employer Support Letter.

To: Manager's name · **Subject:** Professional development request: SustainOS AI Lab (November 2026)

Hi Manager's name,

Following our conversation, I would like to request professional development funding for the SustainOS AI Lab, a six-week live online program in which sustainability professionals design, build and deploy a working software tool for their own work, with Claude Code as the developer. No coding background is required.

What I would build: a tool for

the task, for example our supplier data collection, which currently runs in Excel. Weeks 1 and 2 are a first MVP, scoping and design; Weeks 3 to 6 add the database, login, access rules and security. By Week 6 the tool is live, documented and handed over in a package IT can evaluate, host or rebuild.

The details: the next cohort starts in November 2026. Live sessions are 2.5 hours a week (Mondays 16:00 to 17:00 and Fridays 16:00 to 17:30 Central European Time), plus an optional Thursday office hour and 1 to 2 hours of build time I schedule myself, more if I build for our own process. The investment is EUR 2,000, invoiced to the company. I would use anonymised or sample data during the cohort, on my own accounts, and nothing is installed on a company computer. SustainOS guarantees completion: if I attend the live sessions and the tool does not meet its Week 2 scope by Week 6, they continue with me at no extra cost.

What we get back: a working tool for the task, the documentation IT needs to evaluate or host it, and someone on the team who can specify and build the next one in-house.

I have attached the program summary. Happy to discuss, or to set up a short call with the program lead if that helps.

Best,

Your name

Frequently asked questions

What is the budget called?

Look for Professional Development Fund, Training Budget, Learning & Development Budget, Tuition Reimbursement, Education Assistance, Continuing Education, Skills Development Allowance or Weiterbildungsbudget.

Do I need approval before I enrol?

That depends on your policy. Admission is by a short fit call, so apply first and run the approval in parallel; tell us your deadline. We can provide the program summary and a quote or invoice in advance.

What if my company covers only part of the cost?

Partial coverage is welcome. Many participants combine employer funding with a personal contribution. Write to support@sustainos.io to arrange it.

What documentation can SustainOS provide?

An invoice in euros addressed to your company, the program summary, an enrolment confirmation, and a confirmation of participation after Week 6. Supplier registration, purchase orders and standard supplier documents can be completed.

Is this eligible for tuition reimbursement?

Many tuition policies also cover professional development, skills training and continuing education. Check for those words; they usually have broader eligibility than degree programs.

Can I watch the sessions on demand?

No. The live sessions are the program. Mondays are recorded and a self-paced library covers the details, but Fridays are live only and there is no recorded-only track. Check that the times work for you before applying.

Does the company have to buy anything else?

No. You need a Claude subscription (Pro is sufficient, about EUR 20 per month, usually held personally) and free GitHub, Supabase and Netlify accounts.

Which path should I pick?

Open Path if you already know the task you want off your desk: you build your own tool from Week 2, after the Week 1 materiality matrix everyone builds. Guided Path if you want to learn the method on a known case first. Both follow the same six weekly steps; you decide on the fit call.

What if my request is denied?

Ask for the reason. Timing (try the next budget cycle and the next cohort), category (try a different fund) and business case (use the talking points on page 2) are the usual ones. We are happy to speak with your manager or L&D team directly.

Need help?

Write to support@sustainos.io for an invoice or quote, supplier forms, an enrolment confirmation, or a short call with your manager or L&D team. Program details: ailab.sustainos.io

Your knowledge is the product. The AI Lab turns it into a tool.