

# Sustainability at Work Green Team Guide



**Sustainability at Work**

[sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov)

[www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork)

503-823-7037

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The Sustainability at Work program is made possible thanks to our partners:  
Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Metro, Energy Trust of Oregon and Portland Water Bureau.

# START A GREEN TEAM

Green teams are instrumental in creating positive environmental change within an organization. This guide will provide you with the tools you need to set up and implement a successful green team in your business.

## Tip

*Not every green team will have management support via official status, budgets, or endorsed initiatives. Even on a volunteer status, a team can accomplish no-cost, easy actions such as setting up basic recycling and educating coworkers about behaviors that save energy or resources.*



## Defining the Value of a Green Team and Gaining Management Support

Gaining the support of management for your green team is important to ensure the team has the resources it needs to be successful.

Before meeting with management, prepare a strong value statement to articulate the green team's benefit to the organization. Your value statement should define why being green is meaningful to the business and its employees. Use examples that will resonate with management and clearly define the benefits a green team can offer, such as:

- **Cost savings** – reducing costs associated with waste, energy, transportation and water.
- **Attracting and retaining talent** – employee morale and satisfaction.
- **Customer expectations** – strengthening brand and increasing market share.
- **Regulatory compliance** – staying ahead of legislation.
- **Aligning practices with values** – walking the talk.

Be clear about the time (volunteer or paid) that will be needed, and define the role you see management playing. Include plans to communicate team goals, needs and successes.

## Building Your Green Team

### Team Members

Recruit team members from all levels and departments within your company. Look for team members who:

- Can regularly attend meetings.
- Are able to take on project work responsibilities.
- Are knowledgeable about the area of the organization they are representing.
- Can serve as a resource for others in the organization.
- Are enthusiastic about the green team's mission.
- Can be recruited from key areas: operations, procurement, management, and office managers.

## Team Meetings

A kick-off meeting is a great way to build excitement around your green team. Here are some suggestions for agenda items:

- Discuss the group's purpose and allow each participant to explain why they want to be a part of the team, what they bring to the team, and what they hope the team will accomplish.
- Develop a mission statement to help team members stay focused and articulate reasons for having a team.
  - ▶ See example to the right.
- Brainstorm potential actions the team could take and then rank them.
  - ▶ See Set Goals for Your Green Team, (page 5).
- Decide how the team will collect baseline information such as: energy and water use, transportation use, garbage generated, etc.
  - ▶ See Measure Your Success, (page 7).
- Consider having a Sustainability at Work advisor conduct a free assessment of your facility.
  - ▶ [www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork)

### Example Mission Statement and Objectives

This Green Team promotes environmentally sustainable operating practices by:

- reducing waste
- conserving energy and water
- promoting sustainable purchasing practices
- encouraging the use of alternative transportation

Members distribute information, attend meetings and presentations, and organize projects, events and outreach. The team provides a place for employees to share ideas and accomplish goals.



# SET GOALS FOR YOUR GREEN TEAM

Establishing and prioritizing clear goals will help keep the team focused and motivated, and provide the team, coworkers and management with a clear picture of what the team accomplishes.

## Making a Plan

Write a simple sustainability plan that incorporates focus areas, baseline information, goals and prioritized action items. The plan will act as a road map for your green team.

- Focus areas could include waste prevention, recycling, composting, water, energy, social sustainability, transportation, and purchasing.
- Measure your baseline usage in the focus areas. Some easy places to start include energy, water and natural gas, purchasing patterns and volumes of waste (garbage and recycling). See *Measure Your Success*.
- Set goals, both long and short term. A good goal is specific, contains actions, and can be measured and accomplished in a reasonable timeframe. Choose goals that green team members, staff and management can stand behind and be excited about.
- Prioritize actions within each focus area to help achieve your goals.



**Tip**

Contact Sustainability at Work for example sustainability plans from Portland-area businesses.

[sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov)

## Setting and Prioritizing Goals

Prioritizing goals will help guide the direction of your green team's activities and initiatives. Below are three different exercises for developing and prioritizing goals.

### Impact/effort analysis

This method is used to identify action priorities. As shown on the next page, draw a four-part matrix with high/low and effort/impact labels.

- Effort can mean financial costs, employee time, and/or organizational challenges.
- Impact can be in regards to the natural environment, the impact on your organization or external stakeholders, and/or human health.

As a group, fill in each of the four boxes with the focus areas and activities that were identified in your plan, discussing where they should be most appropriately placed as you go.

Start with the focus areas and activities with high impact/low effort (box 1), then follow to the items in the low impact/low effort and high impact/high effort boxes (box 2) and save the areas and activities in the low impact/high effort box (box 3) for last or not at all.

### Impact and Effort

	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	2	3
High Impact	1	2

## Brainstorm and vote

This is a more democratic style of establishing goals. Ask green team members and others to participate in a brainstorming session.

- Write down all suggested actions, improvement areas, and potential goals so that everyone can see them. You may need to consolidate similar ideas as well as tease apart complex ideas before moving onto voting.
- Allow participants 3-5 votes (use stickers or markers) to designate their priorities. Those ideas with the most votes become priority areas.
- Tally and discuss.

## Vote Tally

Subject	Votes
Recycling	12
Energy	12
Transportation	6



*Look for green recognition or certification programs that have specific criteria. These criteria can provide clear check-lists for you to follow. Some examples include Sustainability at Work certification, Green Seal Certification for hotels, or LEED certification for buildings.*

## Backcasting

This method is a way to think through steps, first starting with a vision of the end goal and working backward to lay out an incremental plan. Draw a diagram like the one below to help document the discussion.

- Define what it would look and feel like to have arrived at your goal.
- Set a time frame that you would like the goal accomplished in.
- Set up baseline information.
- Work backwards from the goal to identify actions that you will need to take to be successful.
- Identify potential risks/roadblocks and opportunities that are uncovered during the conversation.

**This exercise is intended to help lead a discussion and organize priorities. This chart also works well showing cost-benefit analysis.**

Focus area	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Recycling goal	40%	60%	70%	75%
Recycling and Waste Prevention actions		Set-up recycling containers and posters	Install hand dryers and dishwasher	Purchases - reduce materials that cannot be recycled
Waste hauling costs	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$850	\$750
Energy goal	100,000 Kwh	95,000 Kwh	85,000 Kwh	75,000 Kwh
Energy actions		Program all computers to energy savings settings	Adjust HVAC settings for energy savings	Install all low-energy lighting
Energy costs	\$9,500	\$9,025	\$8,075	\$7,125
Transportation goal (alternative commuting)	10%	15%	20%	25%
Transportation actions		Install bike parking in or next to building	Participate in Bike Commute Challenge	Provide cash incentives for bike commuters
Parking costs	\$3,600	\$3,420	\$3,240	\$3,060
Savings	\$0	\$1,155	\$2,435	\$3,665

# MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

Measuring the success of your goals is important in tracking the success of the team's actions. Taking the time needed to track progress will provide returns when it's time to report to management, educate and engage employees, and evaluate what is and is not working.

## Materials and Waste

Sustainability at Work has several free recycling related measurement and tracking tools available.

**Do it yourself waste sort kit and report** – Conducting a waste sort is an important first step in identifying where there are waste reduction opportunities. This kit provides the equipment needed to help green teams take a close, critical look at what the organization is throwing out and conduct your own waste sort.

- ▶ Check-out this kit for free from Sustainability at Work:  
503-823-7037 or [sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov)

**Waste sort data analysis spreadsheet** – After entering weight and volume results from a waste sort, this spreadsheet will calculate relative percentages of garbage, missed recycling, and potential compostable materials. The charts generated can be cut and pasted into a sort report.

- ▶ Contact Sustainability at Work for a spreadsheet template:  
503-823-7037 or [sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov)



## Paper Purchasing and Use

Paper use is one of the largest resource flows through an office next to energy. Purchasing and using less paper has a considerable environmental impact. Paper use reduction campaigns can be tracked through office supply company invoices or through the organization's purchaser. The EPA's WARM model will calculate energy and green house gas savings through paper and other material reduction.

- ▶ [www.epa.gov/warm](http://www.epa.gov/warm)

**Environmental Defense Fund, Paper Calculator** – Shows the environmental impacts of different papers across their full lifecycle.

- ▶ [www.edf.org/papercalculator](http://www.edf.org/papercalculator)

## Energy and Water

**EnergyStar, Portfolio Manager** – Developed to track a building's energy and water use and calculate greenhouse gas emissions.

- ▶ [www.energystar.gov/buildings/facility-owners-and-managers/existing-buildings/use-portfolio-manager](http://www.energystar.gov/buildings/facility-owners-and-managers/existing-buildings/use-portfolio-manager)

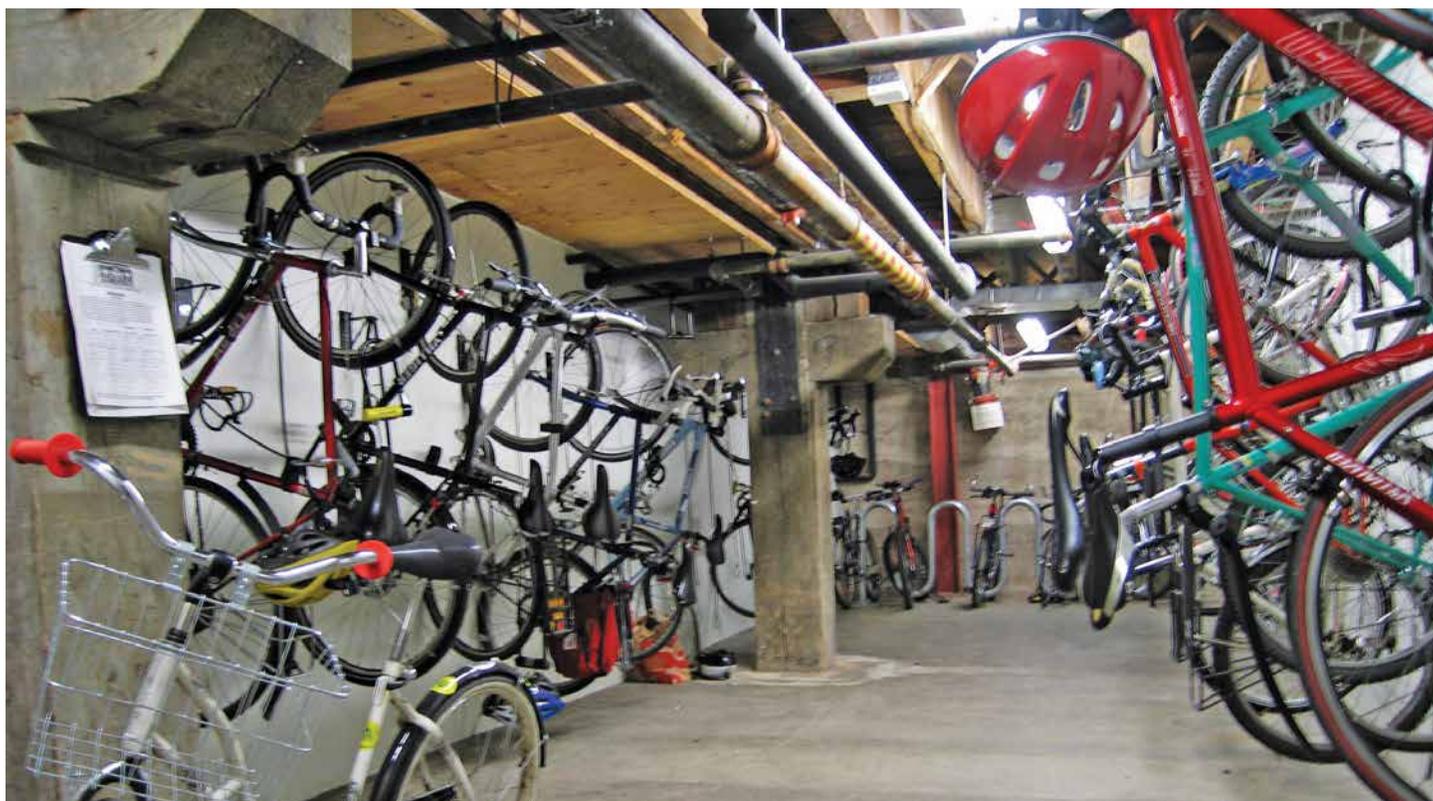
## Transportation

**Bike More Challenge** – A friendly annual workplace vs. workplace competition during the month of September. Online trip tracking tool provides calculations and reports.

- ▶ [www.bikecommutechallenge.com](http://www.bikecommutechallenge.com)

**Oregon DEQ Employee Commute Options (ECO) Program** – Organizations larger than 100 people are required to survey their employees. A copy of the survey and commuter tips/resources are here.

- ▶ [oregon.gov/deq/aq/programs/pages/eco.aspx](http://oregon.gov/deq/aq/programs/pages/eco.aspx)



# KEEPING GREEN TEAMS AND STAFF ENERGIZED

There are many easy steps you can take to ensure both your green team and your coworkers are engaged and excited about the work you are doing.

## Green Team

### Rotate leadership

Rotating leadership provides opportunities for all team members to lead the team's efforts.

### Form sub-committees

Using sub-committees can be an effective way to distribute responsibilities.

Example: an Energy sub-committee could be in charge of energy measurement and reduction. This could entail requesting an energy review from the Energy Trust of Oregon, asking facilities to upgrade old lights to more energy efficient ones, addressing energy saving computer settings, etc.

Consider organizing through disappearing task forces. Task forces organize around project or team needs, pull from the whole team's skills and disperse when the project is complete or the need is met.

### Recognition

Consult with management about past and present Green Team victories. Ask how they might like to recognize the team's accomplishments.

### Paid time

If possible, attain paid work time for participating in the green team's activities.

### Peer-to-peer Green Team

Meet with other organizations' green teams to brainstorm and problem solve.

- ▶ Contact Sustainability at Work to find peer green teams, [sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov) or 503-823-7037.



## Engage and Energize Staff

Engaging and energizing staff around green team initiatives is key to your team's success—after all, it's your coworkers who implement your great ideas. Every time you communicate with staff, think about it as an opportunity to educate and engage. Below is a list of suggested ways to communicate the team's efforts with staff.

### Staff Meetings

Give short updates at employee staff meetings to discuss latest projects, goals and accomplishments; mention upcoming lunchtime presentations or educational opportunities.

### Employee Blog

Use a blog to share ideas, new information and resources. Commit to offering fresh content weekly on a variety of sustainability topics. Possible topics include:

- What do the chasing arrows and numbers really mean?
- What to do with an old CFL light bulb?
- How to recycle batteries.

### Employee Intranet or Staff Bulletin Board

Post updates, best practices and helpful tips; show reports of waste and recovery over the course of a year. Be sure to identify green team members so employees know who to contact with ideas or suggestions. Consider changing these bulletins monthly to follow seasonal themes.

### Employee Newsletters

Include a regular section for green team project updates or accomplishments. Include a quiz question, where all correct answers get entered into a drawing for a reward (sustainable lunch, coffee, reusable water bottle, etc.). Or include a multiple question quiz and reward all staff who meet a minimum score.

### Annual Sustainability Event

Organize an annual event where you can showcase accomplishments, educate and inspire staff and recruit new people to the green team.

#### Tip

*Keep it simple and concrete, and provide the information multiple times and in multiple ways. Most people need to see, hear and do things several times before it becomes a comfortable habit.*



## Lunch and Learn

Lunchtime gatherings are a great way to raise awareness and engage and educate employees on sustainability issues. Here are some suggestions:

### Film Viewings

- **Story of Stuff** – Learn about the full lifecycle of our “stuff,” before it gets to us and after it leaves us. This is a great conversation starter about consumption, waste prevention and sustainable purchasing.
  - ▶ Available for download or direct viewing at the website, [www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com)
- **Saving Little Pieces of our Earth** – See what happens to recycling after it leaves your office or home: from sorting to production of new recycled-content materials.
  - ▶ Find on YouTube.

### Discussion Groups

The Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) currently offers many discussion guides, any of which can be offered as part of sustainability employee education initiatives. Participation in NWEI discussion groups encourages communication across departments, and can serve as an asset to your company, with increased opportunities to harvest an array of ideas applied to enhancing business.

- ▶ [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org)

### Awards and Rewards

- Present a Green Team MVP award on a monthly or quarterly basis, based on time and effort put into various projects and activities.
- Collect nominations to recognize employee contributions to recycling/waste reduction activities, energy conservation, sustainable purchasing, etc. Provide recognition for the recipients. Announce winner at meeting or event or include an individual profile in the newsletter or website, or provide recognition to an entire department.
- Games, competitions and challenges are some of the best ways to overcome green malaise is to organize an event or competition around your greening goals. Challenges drive employees to come up with best ideas for, or greatest participation in, a Green Team initiative, or challenge your staff to identify the green initiative with the greatest cost savings

### Tip

*Keep it positive. Educate people in a supportive way that won't make them feel defensive. Avoid calling out specific people or departments for doing things wrong. Instead offer examples of more positive actions.*



### Tip

*Tap into people's competitive spirit. There's nothing better than the chance to win glory or a prize to get people engaged.*

### Tip

*Keep it fun. Creative and memorable activities will stick with employees much longer than the contents of a memo.*

## Events, Challenges and Games

Here are activities Portland companies have used to educate and inspire their employees about their greening efforts.

- **Zero Landfill Lunch** – ADP, a document processing company, took waste reduction to the masses with their **Pack it in, Pack it out** campaign. Disposable coffee cups and plates in the lunch room were replaced with durable plates and silverware. Each employee was given a travel mug and water bottle. Then for one month they challenged everyone to bring durable lunch containers. If staff forgot and generated trash at lunch they had to **pack it home**. They also had a screening of **The Story of Stuff** followed by a discussion to raise awareness about consumption and waste.
- **Paper Hogs** – Law firm Gevertz Menache tackled their paper use with a challenge and a demonstration. First they calculated how much paper they used in the previous year (about 46 reams per person). Green team members then stacked 46 reams of paper into a pyramid to help staff visualize how much they were using. With this image in mind, every employee committed to the company's goal of reducing their paper use by 10 percent in the following year.
- **Recycle It!** – Marketing firm Wieden and Kennedy organized a game show to educate their employees about their recycling system at a staff meeting. The game featured three contestants, a host, judge and DJ. On stage were containers used in the company's recycling system which captured things out of the usual mix, like composting and plastic film. Contestants were shown real materials generated at work, and had to guess which bin they should go into. The host kept the game moving, and employees laughing, while the DJ made positive/negative noises based on the answer. The judge confirmed (thumbs up) or corrected (thumbs down) the answers given by the contestants.
- **Green Olympics** – Adidas got in the competitive spirit during the Olympics and organized their own Green Games at their headquarters office. Each day employees had a particular contest: getting as many people to work by alternative transit as possible; 'flipping your bin' and not producing any garbage for the day; and bringing in a potted plant or coffee mug to the office. Employees were divided into teams and the team with the most points earned a pizza party.
- **Duel to the Green** – Commercial Realty Advisors organized a Green Office Contest during the week of Earth Day. Staff was divided into four teams, and each team awarded points or penalties to the other teams throughout the week. For example, if they found some recycling in someone's trash they would deduct a point. If they saw someone using a reusable coffee mug or turning off the lights when they left the conference room, they awarded them a point.

**If your green team has an example to share, please send it to us at [sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:sustainabilityatwork@portlandoregon.gov).**

# MARKET YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Companies large and small have discovered that informing customers of their sustainable practices can set them apart from their competitors. Whether it's a page of your website devoted to sustainability, or recognition you've received for your green practices, there are many ways to get the word out about your commitment to sustainability.

## Company Website

Many organizations are adding Sustainability or Green Practices sections to their websites as a way to communicate their commitment to sustainability to their customers. These web pages often explain the organizations' goals and current green practices.

## Sustainability Reports

Reports can range from informal quarterly reports to more formal annual reports. Reports can be distributed to staff or the public by email, intranet or website.

Informal reports or simple updates are strengthened by using data you've collected to demonstrate the resources your business has saved. *See Measure Your Success.*

## Recognition Programs

Green awards and certifications are a great way to demonstrate your green actions to customers. Since they're awarded by an outside party, these programs validate the authenticity of your sustainable practices.

Award and certification applications can also be an excellent goal-setting tool for Green Teams as many list criteria that organizations must meet to be recognized.

Achieving recognition

is also a way to demonstrate the value of the green team to management and coworkers.

Sustainability at Work offers three levels of certification:

Certified, silver and gold. For more information go to

[www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork)

Contact Sustainability at Work for additional recommendations or information on industry-specific recognition/certification programs (e.g., Green Seal Certification for hotels or LEED certification for buildings).



## Storytelling

Here are a few ideas to help you tell your green story and get the word out about your green practices:

- **Share achievements** – Discuss your green initiatives, implemented green practices and success stories. Think of this as your organization's green resume. It's okay to share some upcoming projects, but couple these with goals already attained.
- **Highlight innovation** – Did you find an innovative way to reduce energy/water/paper consumption or reuse/recycle something?
- **Talk about the people** – Who initiated your organization's green actions? Who makes up your Green Team?
- **Be specific** – List data you've collected to demonstrate the impact you've made and resources saved. *See Measure Your Success.* This data can be transformed into compelling equivalents such as number of cars removed from the road or number of trees saved.
- **List challenges** – Include some you've overcome and others that you're working on.

### Staff

An organization's staff can be their greatest overlooked marketing asset. Staff interact daily with clients, customers, guests and visitors. Keep your coworkers informed about your organization's green practices and achievements so they can share it with others.

