



# GREEN BUSINESS LEADERS



## Green Business Certification Guide

Washington County’s Green Business certification recognizes an organization’s efforts in sustainable materials management, toxics reduction and water and energy conservation. This guide accompanies the [office/retail sector application](#). Use our tips, tools and references to earn as many points possible towards certification.

1. Must meet *all* required actions in the Requirements for Eligibility section (no points awarded).
2. Complete *at least* one practice in each section.
3. Complete enough total practices to reach one of the two certified levels: Gold or Silver.

### Requirements for Eligibility

Your workplace is located in Washington County, excluding the City of Beaverton. If you are unsure if your business is in the City of Beaverton limits, check [this map](#) to confirm the jurisdictional boundary. If located within Beaverton city limits, call **503-526-2665** or email [recyclingmail@beavertonoregon.gov](mailto:recyclingmail@beavertonoregon.gov).

Your organization recycles [paper, metal, plastic](#) and [glass](#). These materials are required by [Oregon law](#) to be recycled properly.

Your organization complies with applicable [waste and recycling ordinances and regulations](#), including:

- [Proper disposal of electronics and hazardous waste](#).
- **Compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs)** are safely stored and properly recycled. Fluorescent lighting, including tube-style, have mercury in them so it’s very important to store and dispose of them safely. They should **not** go into your mixed recycling or garbage. If your facilities manager or lighting contractor doesn’t handle burned-out bulbs, use Washington County’s [What to Recycle & Where search tool](#) for recycling locations where you can drop them off. Mercury is a hazardous heavy metal that harms the brain, liver, and kidneys, and can cause developmental disorders in children. Improperly sending burned-out CFLs to the landfill instead of to a hazardous waste facility can lead to contaminated air, water and soil. Careless clean-up of a mercury spill can put you at risk, so learn how to [safely handle mercury](#).
- **Potentially hazardous products like paints, solvents and cleaners are stored safely and recycled properly.** Employee safety starts with eliminating exposure to hazardous and toxic materials. Safely storing such materials reduces the chances of accidents, spills and ongoing exposure. It also protects your employees and prevents costly clean-ups. The materials your business generates every day may be considered hazardous waste. Check

the [What to Recycle and Where tool](#) for recycling and disposal options. Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) also provides assistance in determining what is and what is not regulated as hazardous waste in Oregon, as well as whether businesses qualify as Conditionally Exempt Generators (CEGs). DEQ's [fact sheet](#) is a handy resource.

Your organization complies with all other applicable [city](#), [county](#) and [state](#) ordinances and regulations. Check with your city, county and state websites for more info on compliance.

Your organization commits to meet with a Green Business Advisor at least once a year. In order for your business to stay on track with sustainability goals, you and your Green Business Advisor will meet annually to review progress and prepare for the next certification by identifying areas to improve on and implement new, additional practices.

Your organization subscribes to the Green Business Leaders [quarterly e-newsletter](#).

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Practices

- 1. Recycling receptacles are clearly labeled and regularly monitored, and employee education is provided when needed.** All businesses in Washington County are [required to recycle at their workplace](#). Your garbage and recycling company provides you or your property owner with external roll carts or dumpsters for recycling, garbage, and compost collection. The Green Business Leaders program can supply you with [free durable recycling bins](#) for inside your business or organization.
- 2. Paperless alternatives are used whenever possible (paystubs, invoicing, meeting agendas, onboarding materials, etc.).** Share and edit documents electronically rather than printing multiple versions. Limit or eliminate mailed, printed reports and publications in favor of emailing electronic versions. Convert to electronic payroll, invoicing and new employee orientation materials.
- 3. Centralized printers are used. (No more than one per 10 employees.)** Eliminate as many personal printers as you can. Use centralized, multi-function printer/copiers instead. Take advantage of mailbox or PIN features to confirm print jobs and keep confidential documents secure until ready to print.
- 4. Computers, copiers and printers are set to print double-sided by default.** If your equipment doesn't allow for this, set up a collection area near the printers for extra or outdated single-sided print jobs. Use the blank side for scratch paper or save up enough to create notepads in-house or through your printing service.
- 5. Copier/printer paper contains at least 30% post-consumer recycled (PCR) content.** Help close the recycling loop! Post-consumer products are the reason we recycle. The recyclables you collect are processed into raw materials for manufacturing new products, reducing the demand for virgin materials. Think about the paper that you use the most, e.g., printer/copier paper, and ask your supplier/vendor for products that contain at least 30% [post-consumer content](#). Note: Paper can have certifications, such as [FSC-certified](#), that do not include post-consumer content. Paper made with recycled content uses less energy, water, and chemicals to produce because the fiber has already been extracted from trees.
- 6. At least one additional material (batteries, plastic bags, Styrofoam, etc.) is recycled beyond basic recycling.** Some materials that are not allowed in your curbside recycling bins can still be recycled if dropped off at recycling locations throughout the region. Use Washington County's [What To Recycle and Where search tool](#) to search options.

7. **Internal office supplies and packaging materials are reused, and employees are encouraged to seek out used products before purchasing new ones.** Cardboard boxes, bubble wrap and packing peanuts are reusable. If your business ships and receives products regularly, consider setting up an area to store these materials for reuse. In addition to the environmental benefits of reuse, this practice can reduce the amount of materials disposed of and reduce the need to purchase new materials, ultimately saving money. Many shipping companies will also take back clean packing peanuts and bubble wrap for reuse; ask next time you visit a shipping store.
8. **Only reusable dishware is available for day-to-day office use.** Eliminate disposable, single-use plates, cups and plastic utensils from your break room or kitchen and provide washable, reusable dishware and utensils instead. Reusables are the best environmental option and almost always cheaper in the long run since they eliminate the cost of purchasing and discarding single-use items. If budget is a restriction, ask staff to bring in dishes that they are not using at home to stock the employee break room.  
  
If your business has conference rooms or hosts a lot of meetings, you can use reusable dishes instead of disposables. Keep a set of dishes for meetings in an easily accessible spot and set up a system for them to be washed and put away. If your business is interested in comparing sustainable options, check out [this purchasing guide](#).
9. **Food scraps are commercially composted or used as animal feed.** In addition to garbage and recycling, your garbage company can add compost pickup to your service. Visit [our webpage](#) for more information. To get started, [contact the Green Business Leaders program](#) for support initiating a program that works for your business. We offer [free internal collection containers, posters and decals](#) and options for purchasing compostable bags. Plus, we provide knowledge of systems that work for different business types and training for staff. A Green Business Advisor can also contact your hauler on your behalf to set up the collection service.
10. **Caterers follow sustainable practices (reusable dishware, buffet style serving, minimal packaging, etc.).** Choose caterers that support your sustainability efforts. Ask questions about reusable dishware, family or buffet style serving, minimal packaging, regional and organic food choices, donating or composting leftovers, and more. Create a list of caterers that know your office's preferences and consider developing a list of do's and don'ts for your employees to reference when working with caterers.
11. **Rechargeable batteries are used in most devices that require batteries.** Rechargeable batteries can be used over and over, saving you money and conserving non-renewable natural resources. The amount of materials and resources that go into manufacturing a single battery can be significant, and repeatedly buying single-use batteries only amplifies this problem. Rechargeable batteries are easily available, affordable and reliable. It's also a lot easier and cheaper to recycle rechargeable batteries when they expire through the product stewardship take-back program that includes thousands of [free recycling locations](#).
12. **Surplus items such as furniture, electronics and supplies are reused or donated to charitable organizations.** Designate a space to store surplus office equipment such as binders, keyboards, staplers and filers so employees have the opportunity to shop reused before purchasing a new product. Large items or quantities of surplus that you're unable to store may be accepted for donation. Check Washington County's [What to Recycle and Where search tool](#) for options.

13. **High-efficiency electric hand dryers are used in restrooms *rather than* paper towels.** High-efficiency electric hand dryers are the best environmental option for hand-drying, above paper towels and standard-speed hand dryers. They reduce paper waste, use far less energy than older models and can save money. Reinforce the benefits of hand dryers over paper towels with employees using [this guidance](#).
14. **Art made with reclaimed or reused materials is displayed in public areas.** Support local or regional artists that are repurposing, reusing or upcycling materials into art pieces that illustrate the importance of waste reduction and protecting the environment. Shop around for unique salvaged and repurposed art at shops like [ReStore](#) and [SCRAP](#).

## Toxics Reduction & Hazardous Waste Practices

15. **Third-party certified green cleaning products are used by employees in bathrooms, kitchen spaces and other common areas.** Ingredients found in many commercial cleaning products are potentially harmful to human health and the environment. Some employees may have adverse reactions to fragrances and colored dyes commonly used in soaps or other cleaners. The most hazardous cleaning products may be associated with higher risks of cancer, reproductive disorders, skin and eye irritation and respiratory ailments. Effective products with safer impacts on health, safety and the environment are more readily available than ever before. However, it can be difficult to distinguish between truly green products and simple [greenwashing](#). The three most credible independent certification programs for green cleaners are [Green Seal](#), [Safer Choice](#) and [EcoLogo](#). Look for one of these logos on all the cleaning products used in your business or by your janitorial company. Each of these has a searchable database that will help you find alternative products.  
**Note:** Health code regulations sometimes dictate the use of cleaners that may not have third-party certified green alternatives. In such instances, [less toxic alternatives](#) may still be available.
16. **Third-party certified green cleaning products are used by janitorial staff.** If you use a janitorial service, ask them about the products they use and whether they offer non-toxic alternatives. If your business leases its space and does not have control of the janitorial contract, consider talking to your building property manager about making a change. We can also help by talking to your property manager about the need for this action as part of your Green Business certification.
17. **Recycled-content or Green Seal-certified paint, such as [MetroPaint](#), is used.** Use [this guide](#) to store leftover paint and to prepare leftover paint for recycling and disposal.
18. **An [EcoBiz-certified](#) landscaping company (or certified internal program) provides landscaping services.** EcoBiz is an environmental certification program that recognizes Oregon businesses and agencies that work hard to protect the environment by preventing pollution and conserving resources. EcoBiz promotes Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a set of practices that works to reduce or eliminate harmful pesticides, save water, and find the right plant for the right place. [Use this map](#) to find local landscaping companies that have been trained and are third party-certified. You will protect the environment and the health of your landscaping professionals – while saving money on utility bills as well.

19. An [EcoBiz-certified](#) auto maintenance company (or certified internal program) provides auto maintenance services. [Use this map](#) to find local automotive companies that have been trained and are third party-certified to ensure they are following the best practices. If you are a fleet shop, or if you maintain your own vehicles, you can [download an application or request a free on-site meeting](#).
20. Employees are made aware of the dangers associated with the hazardous products and/or wastes.
21. A chemical assessment has been conducted within the past 2 years to identify and eliminate hazardous or toxic materials on-site and/or in the supply chain.

## Water Practices

22. **Only tap water or a plumbed bottle-refill station is provided; no water delivery service or single-serve plastic bottles are provided onsite.** You're already paying for high-quality water each month to come through your taps. Are you also paying for bottled water on top of that? Perhaps having it trucked in, or offering it in single-serve bottles? If so, encourage everyone to instead use refillable bottles filled at the sink or a bottle refill station. If there's any concern about water quality (due to aging pipes, for instance), don't make assumptions. Instead, call your water provider and request a free kit that will test for lead, copper and iron. If you decide water straight out of the tap isn't for you, there are a number of local companies that can provide directly plumbed, filtered water dispensers. These enable you to eliminate single-use plastic bottle production, transportation and waste.

23. **Kitchen faucet aerator has a flow rate of 1.5 gallons per minute or less.** Find the gallons per minute (gpm) number stamped into the outer edge of faucet aerators. Does your kitchen faucet use 2.0 gpm or greater, or bathroom faucet uses 1.5 gpm or greater? If so, installing low-flow aerators is an easy and inexpensive way to reduce water use without needing to replace fixtures.

Aerators can be found for most faucet sizes if the faucets at your business are standard fixtures rather than custom-made. This simple change can limit the flow rate on bathroom and kitchen faucets to less than half of what standard faucets use.

24. **Restroom faucet aerator has a flow rate of 0.5 gallons per minute (gpm).** Can't find a gpm number stamped on the aerator? Fill a container with a known volume and time it. With a little math, you can [calculate the flow rate of your aerator](#) and change them out if necessary.

25. **Toilets are WaterSense-approved or use 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf) or less.** Replacing old, inefficient toilets and urinals can reduce the amount of water used by 20-60%. The EPA maintains a listing of [WaterSense branded](#) plumbing fixtures and many manufacturers provide that information on their own websites as well. To find out gallons per flush or check if your fixtures are the WaterSense brand, lift the lid on the tank or [follow these tips to check the listing](#). Check out the [Tualatin Valley Water District website](#) to receive commercial rebates for replacing toilets or urinals.

26. **Urinals are WaterSense-approved or use 0.5 gallons per flush (gpf) or less.** Check listing on top of urinal near flush handle for gpf info.

27. **At least four different plants, shrubs or trees from our landscaping are northwest native and drought tolerant.** Planting [native](#) and drought-tolerant plants conserves water and reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers that can pollute local waterways. Using native plants in landscaping also brings the beauty of our region's natural areas closer to home. Many native plants have additional positive impacts, including helping [native wildlife and pollinators thrive](#).

28. **A water conservation audit was performed by a third-party water conservation program in the last three years.** Tracking water use gives your organization the ability to raise staff awareness about the financial and environmental impacts of your actions and your building's fixtures. Having a water audit performed is helpful information to set a baseline and then track progress toward goals. Contact your water utility to see if they offer an audit. Check out Tualatin Valley Water District's [webpage](#) for helpful water conservation tips.

## Energy Practices

29. **Computers, computer monitors, printers and copiers are set to sleep after 15 minutes of inactivity.** Use the [sleep and/or hibernate commands](#) on your equipment to make this a standard practice. If initiating this for the first time, see if your IT staff can set this up for everyone at the same time.

Of course, it's okay not to put this in place for specific workstations that need to be accessed after hours by accounting, IT, or other staff. If company-wide software upgrades are made after hours on a regular basis, establish certain days of each month that these happen. That way, computers can be left on when necessary but still turned off most evenings.

30. **"Smart" power strips are used at workstations that have three or more peripherals (monitor, speakers, etc.) or power strips are placed in easy-to-reach locations (on or near a desktop) and switched off at night.** When electronics are in standby mode, they can still draw some power even though they appear to be off. This is called "phantom energy". At workspaces, plug your devices (computer monitors, computer peripherals, etc.) into ["smart" power strips](#), which can reduce your energy usage by shutting down power to items that have gone into standby mode. Another increasingly common option are power strips with a motion sensor on them, which automatically power down devices when staff are gone for the day.

31. **Programmable thermostats automatically reduce heating and air conditioning during closed hours.** If your thermostats and HVAC systems aren't overseen by facilities management, a [programmed or smart thermostat](#) can be great options. If using a conventional programmable thermostat, check periodically to confirm settings are where they should be. An *incorrectly* programmed thermostat can waste more energy than it saves! Smart thermostats are better than simple programmable thermostats since they can be automatically set to adjust for when staff are present, on holidays, and other irregular closure days. To prevent staff from overriding thermostat settings, install an inexpensive lock box over the thermostat to ensure settings do not get disrupted or set a timer so that the heat/air comes on 15-20 minutes before the first employee arrives. That way it will be at a good temperature at the start of the day. Then program the thermostat to revert to your off-peak temperature 20-30 minutes before the last person leaves. Most workplaces will stay perfectly comfortable for that half hour, and you will offset the earlier start time.

32. **Blinds are closed at night to maintain building temperature.** Help your air conditioner help you. Implementing simple best practices that reduce the work for your AC can significantly reduce your electric bill. You can lower window blinds to prevent the sun from heating up your space and set ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise in the summer to help keep temperatures down. Using passive methods to cool indoor spaces doesn't take much effort or investment, and they are practices we are all familiar with.
33. **Maintenance checks are regularly conducted on HVAC and other energy-intensive equipment.** This is an obvious one that is often overlooked. Be sure someone is scheduled to check your heating and cooling equipment at least for winter and summer. Coils and intakes on equipment need to be cleaned, fluids need to be checked and leaks may need to be repaired. Set a change-out schedule for filters to allow proper airflow and to reduce stress on the motor that pulls in air to be filtered.
34. **Water heaters are set to 120 degrees.** Most water heaters work by holding water in a tank at a specific temperature, 24-hours a day. Many units are initially set to temperatures higher than necessary - sort of a worst-case scenario for a building's hot water demand that winds up wasting energy and money much of the time. Assuming the tank is appropriately sized to your needs, reducing the temperature setting to 120° will still meet even higher-than-average demands, prevent burns, and save you energy. If it's not clear what your water heater is set to, you can run hot tap water over an immersion thermometer to get a fairly accurate reading or inquire with facilities to check the temperature and make changes accordingly.
35. **Windows are double-pane or better.** Switching from single-pane to double- or even triple-pane windows will reduce your need for heating and cooling. By taking these extra measures, this will reduce UV ray impact and street noise, too. You can also make your windows bird safe by following these steps from the [Humane Society](#).
36. **Doors are weather-sealed.** If you can see even a small amount of daylight around the edge of your doors, you're likely losing energy. [Install and replace doorway insulation](#) and door sweeps so that your heating and cooling stays inside.
37. **Occupancy sensors or timers are used for lighting in common rooms, like storage rooms and restrooms.** Occupancy sensors are inexpensive and very effective, especially in storage rooms, small offices, workrooms, and restrooms. Savings vary depending on the area size, the type of lighting, and the use of the space, but estimates range from 35-75% by installing sensors. Energy Trust [offers incentives](#) for several makes and models.
38. **Lighting is dimmed or turned off when adequate sunlight is available.** If you can't install automatic or manual dimmers, establish workplace habits for turning off lights when they aren't needed. Most of us are working in front of computer screens all day, which means that daylight is sometimes the only light that we really need at our desks.

39. **Linear lighting uses LED bulbs.** Check out this [Energy Star guide](#) for energy efficient illumination and energy saving options. PGE can also help with a lighting program that best fits your business' needs with a [free energy consultation](#).
40. **Track and spot lighting use LEDs.** LEDs in particular are improving very quickly in both quality and variety, even as the price per bulb continues to decline. As with all lighting projects, check [Energy Trust incentives](#) to see if you can bring your costs down even further or again, contact PGE for a [free consultation](#).
41. **Emergency EXIT lights use LED bulbs or no-energy glow-in-the-dark signs.** Some older buildings still have EXIT lights that use inefficient lighting. Replace them with new EXIT lights using LED bulbs and you'll save energy 24-hours a day.
42. **Garage or parking lot lighting is energy efficient.** If you haven't updated the lighting in your parking lot or garage in recent years, there are more efficient options available. Check [Energy Trust's website for incentives](#) or PGE to upgrade to a more energy efficient setup.
43. **Janitorial services are scheduled during business hours.** If your cleaning service works after hours, see if they can switch to office hours. Your lights and HVAC won't need to remain on after hours, employees will be more aware of the impacts of their recycling habits and it gives staff an opportunity to get to know the people providing this service.
44. **An energy audit has been conducted in our workplace within the past five years.** This action is intended primarily for businesses larger than 20,000 square feet. Reporting [energy performance to your municipality](#) or conducting an independent energy assessment will count towards meeting this action. Please be prepared to share the results with your Green Business Advisor.
45. **Renewable energy is purchased for a portion of our electric use.** Renewable electric power can be purchased through both [Portland General Electric](#) and Northwest Natural Gas has an offset program called [Smart Energy](#). More and more commercial buildings are looking at renewable energy to reduce long-term operating costs. If your utilities are included in your lease payment, encourage your property manager to purchase renewable power.
- If directly buying renewable energy is a challenge, buying carbon offsets is an alternative. Carbon offsets are also a good option for businesses looking to offset more of their carbon footprint than just from their power usage, such as for travel and special projects. While renewable energy directly offsets carbon emissions from electricity generation or natural gas, carbon offsets are indirect, such as investments in reforestation efforts around the world. One option is the Oregon based organization, [Bonneville Environmental Foundation](#), can help your business assess the best approach to carbon offsets and renewable energy. Look for organizations that provide extensive and transparent reporting on where investments go.

## Transportation Practices

46. **Twenty percent or more of our employees walk, bike, carpool, or take transit as their primary commute method.** If you want to boost the percentage of bikers, make sure you have plenty of secure, rain-protected bike parking. For bikers, walkers, and runners, some lockers could help for storing gear and extra clothes. Has your organization grown large enough that you can offer a discount on bus passes and/or an incentive for cyclists and walkers? The [Westside Transportation Alliance](#) has resources to help employees find the best commute for their lifestyle.

Here are some additional resources to share with employees:



**For biking to work:**

- [Metro Area Bike Maps](#)
- [Bike and Walk Maps](#)
- [Washington County Bike, Hike, Roll, Stroll](#)

**For ride sharing:**

- [C-Tran Vanpool](#)
- [Get There Oregon](#)
- [Enterprise Rideshare](#)
- [Rideshare Online](#)

**47. An annual commute survey is conducted as part of promoting low-carbon commuting.** Knowing how many employees walk, bike, carpool or take transit can help you design incentives and track progress. Create your own survey, find one through a web search, or use [Oregon's DEQ surveys and resources](#). Also, check out [Oregon's Guidance on Conducting Employee Commute Surveys](#). This can be a helpful tool for staff to find a bike-to-work buddy or make a carpool connection. It will also help you achieve and improve on the following action.

**48. Reimbursement, raffles, or other incentives are offered to employees that bike, walk, or carpool to work.** Incentivizing public transit, alternative transportation (biking, walking, etc.) and carpooling can sometimes be just what's needed to get employees to break the habit of driving to and from work alone. Where public transit or alternative transportation is not readily available, facilitate ways for employees to connect with others to carpool. Contributing towards a [monthly TriMet pass program](#), providing basic safety equipment, and designating parking spots for carpools are some examples of how to help reduce employees' commuting carbon footprint.

The Sierra Club [provides some examples](#) that may spur ideas, and the League of American Bicyclists offers [helpful information](#) on bicycle commuter benefits and payroll tax savings when offering cash incentives.

**49. A transit pass program is offered to all employees.** Transit passes are a great addition to your employee benefits package. [Trimet](#) or the [Westside Transportation Alliance](#) can help create a benefits package that works for your business and encourages employees to choose sustainable commute options. Be sure to help new employees plan their commute by including resources during onboarding:

- [Trimet Trip Planner](#)
- [SMART \(South Metro Area Regional Transit\)](#)

**50. Employees participate in a commuter challenge every year ([Bike More Challenge](#), [Oregon Get There Challenge](#), etc.).** Not every change is full of fun and adventure, but this one is! Sign up as an individual or, better yet, as an organization to participate in local commute events. Competitions can be very effective in enticing employees to try alternative commute methods and they're a great way to recognize employees who often get to work by means other than solo trips in their cars.

[The Street Trust](#) (formerly Bicycle Transportation Alliance) hosts the [Bike More Challenge](#) in May of every year. This is a fun competition to support people to get on their bikes. The [Oregon Get There Challenge](#) (previously known as the Drive Less Challenge) is a 15-day statewide challenge to encourage Oregon residents and employees to make trips by carpool, vanpool, walk, bike, ride transit, and telework, and is typically in October.

**51. Alternative travel options (TriMet Trip Planner, bike parking, EV charging station, etc.) are displayed on your website for visitors.** There is no one-size-fits-all method of transportation, and the same is true for the way your customers travel to get to your business. By sharing a variety of travel options directly on your website, such as helping people [plan their trip through TriMet](#), you are helping customers think about ways they can save gas and reduce air pollution in your community. Other customers may simply not be able to drive to your business and must rely on other means to reach your location. And if you have an EV charging station, you may even find yourself attracting new clientele who would have otherwise just needed a place to charge up!

**52. Alternative transportation is prioritized for work-related trips (walk, bike, transit, car share, carpool, or electric vehicle).** For work-related trips, encourage staff to first take advantage of public transit, bike share, shared cars, electric cars, and carpools. Here are some options to choose from:

- [Biketown](#)
- [TriMet Trip Planner](#)
- [Zipcar](#) (car rental for round trips; hybrids widely available)
- [Turo](#) (turo.com, peer-to-peer car sharing)
- [Getaround](#) (shared car rental)

**53. Sheltered and secure bike parking is available for employees.** Because employee bike parking is long-term, it should be sheltered from rain and it should be secure – in a locked room, enclosed by a fence, or within view of employees, a building attendant, or security guards. There are lots of great examples of innovative bike storage systems to help make the most use of space. Check out [Westside Transportation Alliance's comprehensive guide](#). For even more tips on how to make your workplace bike friendly, check out Bike League's [list of best practices](#).

**54. Emergency ride vouchers or taxi reimbursements are available to employees who commute by foot, bike, transit, or carpool.** Sometimes employees are reluctant to take alternative transportation to work because they worry they might need to suddenly leave work for unexpected personal needs (pick up a sick kid from school, accompany a relative to the doctor, etc.). Knowing their workplace has an emergency ride program in place helps alleviate those concerns. Solutions include offering cab reimbursement, bus tickets and/or rides by coworkers. If your organization participates in one of TriMet's employee pass programs or subsidizes at least \$10/month per employee for alternative transportation, TriMet will supply your organization [with cab vouchers](#). Here's an example of [how an emergency ride policy can be used](#). Feedback we've gotten from businesses indicates that employees are grateful the policy is in place, and that it rarely gets used.

**55. An [electric vehicle charging station](#), for employee and/or customer use, is located onsite or within one city block.** Is there an electric vehicle (EV) station within one block of your workplace? If it's on-site, is it available to the public when employees are not using it? You can learn more about EVs from [Forth](#).

**56. Bicycle tire repair kit, air pump and a spare lock are available for employees and visitors.** Bikers (employees or visitors) occasionally forget to bring a bike lock to your office and sometimes need a loaner. Offering a spare lock or a welcoming, secure space for them to leave their bike will make their day. An air pump and a tire repair kit can be helpful, too. If you're commuting and come up with a flat, check out WTA's [map of public fix-it stations](#) located throughout the county.

57. “No idling” signs are posted wherever trucks or cars tend to stop for long periods (at loading docks, school pickup lanes, etc.).

58. Flex time and/or telecommuting are an option for most employees.

## Employee Engagement and Equity Practices

59. **A written sustainability plan and/or purchasing policy guides decision-making and prioritizes actions that support the triple bottom line.** People, profit and planet - also known as the triple bottom line - is the framework used to define sustainability goals and community impacts. To get started, use a set of guiding questions or a self-assessment ([like this one!](#)) to define areas for improvement. Create a template to track progress and center accountability. Consider becoming [B-Corp certified](#) and joining a growing group of companies that are making sustainability a priority in all operations. It's a good marketing tool while also showing your employees and customers that sustainability is a top priority.

60. **An employee or a Green Team is supported by management in implementing sustainability efforts.** Just one sustainability champion can make all the difference. The larger your organization, the more important it is to consider establishing a sustainability group that includes representatives from throughout the organization. This can spread out the work and decision-making responsibilities while giving you a broader base of people who can identify opportunities for improvement. The Green Business Leaders [Green Team guide](#) is a great resource to learn how to start a Green Team and to keep everyone engaged.

Remember to offer training to your green champions! Consider sending champions to attend a [Master Recycler](#) or [Recycling 101](#) course to gain skills to improve the resource efficiency of your organization. Look for memberships and peer groups at local environmental and trade organizations. You'll increase access to training and information for employees while supporting sustainable practices.

61. **Employees are educated at least once a year about sustainability best practices.** Everyone can benefit from a refresher about how to recycle right. Make it a practice to review sustainability best practices at least annually and feature topics such as recycling or sustainability training opportunities at a staff meeting. Share the [Recycle or Not online sorting game](#) and encourage staff to participate in a [Recycling 101 training](#) every year or so. Create a space in the break room or use employee intranet pages and/or a section of your employee newsletter to post articles and information about sustainability-related facts or events. Contact the [Green Business Leaders](#) program for a training presentation for your employees.

62. **New employees are educated during onboarding about sustainability best practices, including waste reduction, recycling and commuting options.** Educating employees is essential for them to be able to incorporate standards into their daily work. Provide new hires with details and directions on your recycling set-up, alternative commuting options, best practices for reducing paper and energy use, etc. It's helpful to take new employees on a short tour of where certain materials are collected for recycling, where to find bike storage and locker rooms, and other sustainability features on-site. If you have a written orientation packet, include this information there as well. If, however, you don't have enough employees to justify orientation materials, create a flier of recycling FAQs and sustainability best practices for new staff to review.

63. **A system is in place to gather employee feedback and suggestions to improve sustainable business practices and operations.** The best ideas for new sustainability practices often come from employees. They can identify wasteful practices and opportunities for improving efficiencies that help you reach your sustainability goals. Asking for feedback encourages employees to take ownership over sustainability practices and demonstrates that everyone is in it together. This system could be as simple as a suggestion box or something more complex that enables employees to share their honest feedback in a safe space.
64. **There is a stated policy, goal or commitment with concrete actions to advance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the organization.** Has your organization created a policy framework or started working towards developing DEI objectives? If you would like more guidance, check out the resources from [Portland Means Progress](#) to assess your readiness and to gain a better understanding of how to define your mission and policy.
65. **DEI training is offered to leadership, management and employees on paid work time annually.** For your values to be reflected within the organization, your employees should be provided opportunities to advance their knowledge and understanding and the importance of upholding DEI work. Making trainings available and empowering your staff to learn these critical values lets them know you're in it for the long haul.
66. **A living wage, health insurance, childcare assistance, flexible scheduling and/or other benefits are offered.** Providing more than just the minimum wage to workers can help ensure that they will be able to provide for themselves and their families. In real terms, the minimum wage has remained stagnant while the cost of living has increased over the decades and many adults earning minimum wage still fall below the federal poverty level. Such workers oftentimes must rely on public assistance and/or hold multiple jobs. As a result, many employers pay a "living wage" not only to attract and retain talent, but also to help their workers climb out of poverty. There are online tools that can help with calculating what this means. The two most commonly used and reputable tools are MIT's [Living Wage Calculator](#) and the Economic Policy Institute's [Family Budget Calculator](#). These allow you to specify the county or urban area in which your workplace is located and see that area's typical expenses, typical wages, and the estimated living wage.
67. **A formal policy promotes contracting with businesses that are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) owned, women-owned, or service-disabled veteran-owned.** If you haven't already done so, consider creating and publicizing your organization's commitment. Not only can you use this lens when hiring for formal contract work, but you can also apply it to your own internal contracts with janitorial and technician services, caterers, office remodelers and vendors. The [Business Oregon website](#) has a search feature to help you identify businesses that have registered and been certified by the State of Oregon. The [Portland Mercatus](#) is an additional resource, featuring business owners of color throughout the Portland Metro area.
68. **An accessibility checklist or policy is used in the planning and implementation of all meetings and/or events.** When creating agendas or materials for staff meetings or web/social media content, use larger font (size 12 or 14 is recommended). Use readable fonts such as Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica and Calibri. To make text more readable for color-blind users, limit the use of reds and greens and make sure that the text color has a high contrast with the background color. There are several considerations in planning an accessible meeting. [Here's a checklist to help you get started.](#)

69. **A gender neutral, ADA compliant private space other than a restroom is available for all staff (breastfeeding/lactating, personal phone calls, changing area, etc).** [Oregon state law](#) requires that employers with 10 or more employees provide a clean, private space for lactating employees that is not a bathroom. If you haven't experienced lactating yourself, know that it is exhausting and that a comfortable lactation room will make all the difference for your employees. If this room is shared, make a plan to prioritize those who need it for lactation purposes; a comfortable chair, small fridge and power strip will go a long way to show your employees that you value them and their family.
70. **Posted signs and messages encourage employees to take the stairs when possible, instead of elevators.** As an option, there are multiple reasons for employees to take the stairs. Studies have found that climbing the stairs burns more calories than running, so it's a great way to get some exercise in when sitting at a desk daily. Moving your body produces endorphins, which increases your overall health and decreases stress. Plus, some studies suggest that it's actually faster to consistently take stairs instead of the elevator since you'll spend less time waiting and more time moving. Get enough employees to opt-in and you may reduce the amount of energy used within the building!
71. **A healthy meeting policy encourages fresh, healthy food options, smaller portion sizes, walking meetings, etc. for company meetings.** The health and wellbeing of employees are critical for an organization to be sustainable by any definition. People need to thrive; not just get by. Employee wellness programs give employees easy access to resources and information for healthy lifestyle choices: exercise, healthy eating, tobacco cessation, stress management, flu shots, work-life balance, etc. Health care providers oftentimes incentivize these practices already and provide useful information that can be shared with employees. While many health conditions are of course unavoidable, some of the best ways to prevent chronic health conditions are long-term, preventive habits like the ones listed above. By contrast, unhealthy habits negatively affect employees' lives while also costing employers more, whether through insurance costs, more sick days, loss of productivity, or workers' comp claims. Employee wellness programs don't need to cost a lot of money and can start small. And as far as incentives to attract and retain employees go, not many others can match a wellness program's ability to meaningfully contribute to employees' quality of life.

## Community Engagement Practices

72. **Sponsorship, in-kind services or products are donated to community organizations.** Do you sponsor local events, clubs, children's sports teams or activities? Have you donated services or products to nonprofits for their fundraising events? If your organization does any of these, or something similar, check the box!
73. **One or more employees are supported by management while pursuing or serving in a community leadership role (business association, government advisory committee, etc.).** This applies if at least one staff person from your organization serves on a local committee, association, panel, etc. Examples include groups devoted to improving neighborhoods, business districts, schools, or public services (planning, environment, transportation, etc.) This role should be with a public agency or a nonprofit organization.

**74. Employees are allowed to volunteer in the community on paid work time.** It is becoming increasingly common for workplaces to offer paid time off for their employees to do volunteer work. Many employers find that nurturing volunteerism within their organizations leads to improvements in the work environment, employee satisfaction and retention, public engagement, and their relationships with customers. It also enables an organization to become more directly involved in addressing local issues.

#### **Getting Started:**

First, identify any obstacles that could be in the way of starting an employee volunteer program. Lack of employee resources, for example, has been cited by 46% of companies surveyed as the primary hurdle to corporate citizenship. Three approaches that could work for you include:

1. Release time. This provides employees paid time off to volunteer. These policies vary, ranging anywhere from one paid day per year, up to ten paid hours each month. (See [this sample](#) for ideas.)
2. Flex time. This allows employees to adjust their work schedules to accommodate volunteering. For example, an employee could volunteer for several hours on the weekend and “flex” that time off during the work week.
3. Company-wide volunteer day. This can provide team building and employee interaction. Volunteer days are also great opportunities for enhancing your public image. Check out [HandsOn Greater Portland](#) or [Willamette Week](#) for lists of nonprofits to make choosing a volunteer option easy, for Earth Day or any day of the year.

Recognize employees who volunteer so that they stay motivated and excited to continue volunteering! This is an aspect that is often overlooked. For ideas on how to recognize volunteers, see [this sample](#) volunteer recognition guide.

**75. A charitable giving campaign, matching funds or similar program is in place to support charitable donations by employees.** This can be a grassroots effort such as a silent auction, car wash or casino night where all the funds raised are directed to a charity chosen by employees. Or it can be an organizational program that incorporates automatic payroll deductions and possibly matching funds.

**76. Sustainability-related events are scheduled or hosted for employees or the public.** While sustainability is truly a part of everyone’s job, not everyone has the chance to learn as much about it as they might like. Events of all kinds are opportunities for employees and your customers to learn about sustainability practices, including those scheduled outside of the normal work week. Both Green Team members and representatives from outside organizations can educate employees, offer resources for the workplace and home, and share opportunities to get involved. Not only does this help reinforce the sustainability training you’ve already provided to employees, but it also communicates to them that your organization values sustainability and wants everyone to put thought and effort towards working and living more sustainably. When planning an event, use best practices like offering healthy food options, planning for low or zero waste, intentionally selecting vendors that align with your values, and other logistics that signal your organization’s commitment to sustainability.

**77. Organization would like to be a mentor to other organizations working towards the Green Business Leaders certification.** Being able to share ideas and resources is a critical piece of building a sustainable business community in Washington County. Many businesses are interested in being an informal mentor to another business to encourage peer-to-peer support. If you are interested in being connected with another business for this purpose, or if you are willing to be a mentor, [the Green Business Leaders program can connect you.](#)

**78. Sustainability accomplishments are communicated to employees and customers.**

Sharing workplace sustainability goals and achievements with staff, customers and community can be one of the best parts of the experience. Use social media, local ad campaigns, newsletters and internal staff communications to publicize your successes and future goals. Even small steps are worthy of celebrating!

**79. Your mission statement addresses sustainability, guides the work and is shared with the public.**

Determine what sustainability means to your organization. Sustainability is a value-based term. Drill down to the core of the triple bottom line and consider how it relates to your business. For some inspiration, check out some of [these examples](#). Encourage input from employees. A co-created vision helps employees understand how they contribute to the company's success. Gather input that represents different levels and departments within your organization, which will help you create a message that resonates with everyone. Share a draft of the statement. After all employees have had a chance to review and discuss it, use this information to refine your organization's mission statement.

**80. All public-facing materials are translated into at least one language in addition to English.**

Your organization is committed to providing information and services in other languages to reach broader audiences and contribute to the growth and accessibility of the business. Commit to translation services by a local translator and have materials in multilingual formats posted to your website so that customers and clients can find what services you offer. You don't need to have all materials printed, just links readily available for non-English speaking communities.



**WASHINGTON COUNTY**  
**OREGON**  
Solid Waste & Recycling

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