



Green Team Guide - July 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In this guide, we outline some of the key benefits and practical steps required when establishing a Green Team for your business or organization.
- 1.2 You can think of this guide as being like a camera lens; providing a mechanism through which to positively frame your projects, sharpen your skills, and focus your organization's vision and mission in line with its broader sustainability goals and objectives.

2.0 What is a Green Team?

- 2.1 Green Teams can be described as self-organized, cross-functional, and grassroots-led groups of employees - which come together to identify and implement specific solutions to help their organization operate in more environmentally sustainable ways.
- 2.2 Green Teams typically apply within a traditional workplace setting; however, in the post-pandemic economy - with many people still either working from home, or subject to a hybrid-style work arrangement - Green Teams might now also involve a collaboration between different team members, with the goal of reducing an organization's total carbon emissions.
- 2.3 In practice, this could involve a combination of workplace, and work-related transportation and/or material consumption within the home.

3.0 Why are Green Teams Important?

- 3.1 Green Teams can positively affect your organization by improving your standing and credibility on a range of social, economic, and other sustainability-led factors.
- 3.2 The benefits of creating and implementing a Green Team within your organization could lead to:

a) An enhanced external reputation

Businesses and organizations that view Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a sound investment will have increased engagement among their clientele and/or customer base. Green teams provide an authentic way to identify and clearly present the actions required to ensure benefits that go beyond the organization itself.

b) Increased employee engagement.

Surveys of employees who work for 'green' organizations have revealed they are generally happier, more productive, have a greater sense of purpose, and increased loyalty.

- 3.3 Tailoring your initiatives towards your employees' passions also enhances personal motivation. Organizations can demonstrate their commitment to engage with employees by asking them for their opinions, suggestions, and ideas for the next steps.

4.0 Stakeholder Value and Cost Savings

- 4.1 Green Teams help your organization demonstrate its commitment to the environment, while achieving real cost savings, for example by increasing:

a) Market value

Ernst and Young's **Future Consumer Index Survey** found, in 2021, that sustainability is now quickly climbing to the top of consumers' priorities, as most Canadian consumers (**61%**) plan to pay more attention to the environmental impact of what they consume.

In 2019, a study by Nielsen IQ found **73%** of global consumers are willing to change their consumption habits to lessen their negative impact on the environment. It also found sustainable product sales have grown by nearly 20 percent since 2014. The report also found that millennials are more willing to pay more for products which contain sustainable ingredients, or products that have social responsibility claims.

Therefore, if your business commits to more sustainable products and practices - it could gain market share and value - by converting sustainability-minded people into customers.

b) Productivity

Greener workplaces typically have features that are prized by employees - for example increased access to natural daylight, improved thermal comfort, air quality, and extra personal control over the environment in which they operate. These features not only lead to happier and healthier employees - but more productive employees.

c) Operational Efficiencies

Operational efficiencies allow organizations to do more with less. For example, an eco-efficient company will reduce its energy inputs, its material requirements, and the waste production per unit of production. In turn, the company will retain more revenues, which it can put towards alternate projects and initiatives. These can have a further positive impact on the organizations' triple bottom line.

- 4.2 By investing in your Green Team, you can not only help reduce your Total Carbon emissions, but positively demonstrate other savings and benefits associated with your water and waste consumption.
- 4.3 Through a new applied approach to research and development, you can also eliminate harmful materials, choose better alternatives, or perhaps adjust a product's existing design - to make it last longer.
- 4.4 Successful businesses are also finding ways to reduce the material intensity of a product, while encouraging its reuse, repair, refurbishment, and repurposing as a new value-added product.

5.0 The Five-Step Process Involved in Creating a Green Team

5.1 Green Economy North has produced a Five Step Framework to guide you as you create and build a Green Team that is tailored to your organization. These Five Steps include:

- 1. Identifying Priorities and The Vision**
- 2. Defining Roles, Responsibilities, and the Structure**
- 3. Team Formation**
- 4. Setting Goals and Projects; and**
- 5. Establishing an Implementation Plan**

5.2 These five Steps are covered in the following sections:

6.0 Step One: Identifying Priorities and The Vision

- 6.1 Assessing your organization's needs will help you gain an understanding of its primary environmental impacts.
- 6.2 When evaluating your organization, try to seek input from all employees, and especially consult with those who have a strong understanding of the organization's history, its current operations, and public relations.
- 6.3 Only by taking the time to meet with staff and learn more about organizational issues and challenges will you be able to select appropriate environmental initiatives and actions to help you achieve those broader operational goals and objectives.
- 6.4 Environmental projects are more likely to be successful when they are directly related to an organization's core competencies and values.
- 6.5 The prevailing corporate culture will shape and influence how the company's various stakeholders embrace green team projects. Some organizations may feel more comfortable with initiatives that are high-tech in nature. Other companies may prefer behavioral-based environmental projects.
- 6.6 It is also important to consider the following questions when seeking to understand your organization's readiness to succeed with a Green Team:

- **Is the Green Team new and just started?**

If so, then you may want to consider beginning with some simple initiatives.

- **Does your Green Team have buy-in from upper management?**

If so, then you may be able to launch more complex initiatives.

- **Is your organization comfortable with using new technologies?**

Technologies refers to both smart building technologies, and technological solutions that enable more efficient ways of operating.

6.7 When forming a New Green Team, it is important to assess your organization's culture, and its capacity to engage in this work, before allocating time and resources towards activities that help staff identify the various priorities and projects that could work best.

6.8 It is also important to determine whether your green team projects can be done internally or need external assistance. Some projects may be done internally (i.e., conserving energy, or enabling organizational policy); and some may require external communications (i.e., changing procurement plans, and the use of teleconferencing to reduce the need for travel, etc.). It is further important to identify the degree to which your organization is interested in becoming more sustainable.

6.9 As another best practice, it is also important to articulate your organization's environmental impact up-front to your Green Team, which will allow you to focus your efforts moving forward. Teams can sometimes be overwhelmed with trying to address all environmental problems at once. It is better to focus on the projects your organization has the most opportunity to control.

6.10 Another factor to consider is the need to create a sustainability-led vision for the Green Team, and the organization as-a-whole. Sustainability Vision statements articulate direction, clarify the decision-making process, and act as a base for a team to build upon.

6.11 In order to create enthusiasm, support, and buy-in, it is important to obtain varied input for the vision statement from members of the Green Team, and all other representatives from different areas of the company. Ultimately, the vision should be personal enough to inspire the team and be specific enough to be relevant to your organization.

6.12 To implement the green team and the potential ideas while working remotely, schedule a virtual or hybrid meeting to brainstorm potential ideas and get everyone's opinion on what can be improved. This can also involve formal conversations that analyze supply-chains, and other operational areas from the sustainability lens.

7.0 Step Two: Defining Roles, Responsibilities, and the Structure

7.1 The next step is to identify who should be on your Green Team, and what their individual roles and responsibilities should be. At this stage, it is important to include individuals who are empowered, engaged, and aware of how their actions are enabling a larger environmental goal. Such Green Team Champions will be necessary to help guide future projects to success.

- 7.2 Organizing your Green Team is also important when it comes to ensuring actions can be completed in a timely manner. Depending on the number and range of participants and your organization's priorities - there are several different ways to organize your team.
- 7.3 Your team could select a centralized approach, or even be further subdivided into smaller project-based groups. Consider the personalities of the members of your team when deciding your structure and think about how these personalities will behave in a team-based setting.
- 7.4 Some of the components involved in a successful Green Team are listed as follows:
- Strong communication channels
(Between the team members, the organization at large, and upper management).
 - Project management skills.
 - Resource / budget management
(Time, money, staff, etc.).
 - Technical expertise and/or research skills.
 - The ability to create a task completion / lesson learned document.
- 7.5 In this context, it is also important to consider how individuals might be able to demonstrate their professional skills. As and when projects are completed, take the time to evaluate everyone's performance. This may reveal some hidden and useful skills!
- 7.6 Non-Green Team members can also be helpful in identifying additional areas for improvement using front-line knowledge. Inviting their input through sub-committees, etc. can further create a sense of ownership while encouraging more engagement.
- 7.7 A functioning Green Team might alternately comprise a small team with complementary skills, committed to a common purpose, with a mutually defined set of performance goals. A minimum of 4-6 people is recommended where possible, but this will vary according to your organization's size, its priorities, projects, culture and needs.
- 7.8 Team members working remotely can also be drawn upon to encourage collaboration and communication that may be missed when previously working in the office. Through active conversation, the Green Team can identify and gather a diverse range of examples to improve a businesses' sustainability performance.

8.0 Step Three: Team Formation

- 8.1 Once the team members have been selected, and the general structure created, it is important to produce a series of guiding principles to guide your work moving forward.
- 8.2 Here are some suggested tips on ways to foster a greater sense of Team:
- Explain why the Team needs operating principles.
 - Brainstorm those principles as a group.
 - Describe the relationships between individual team members during its operation.
 - Emphasize that individuals should speak up if they feel a principle has been breached.
 - Review and reword these principles on occasion - to ensure they embody the full intent of the team.
 - Understand that the Green Team leader should be able to easily reference those principles when reinforcing a positive workplace culture - without negative side effects.

- 8.3 It is further important to identify motivating factors and communicate those activities clearly. Motivating factors might include:
- 1 - A general interest in environmental issues.
 - 2 - The opportunity to derive other social benefits.
 - 3 - Providing ways to include new training and skills development; and
 - 4 - Seeing the benefits of improvements - communicating success and being recognized.
- 8.4 Although a Green Team may be more efficient when smaller, a green team should still seek to engage the organization at various points. One of your green team's responsibilities should be to reach out to, and engage with, the wider organization - in addition to communicating internally about sustainable goals, initiatives, policies, and events, etc. The green team should strive to foster a culture of sustainability within your workplace.
- 8.5 The following provides some brief examples of ways organizations are integrating sustainability objectives within their operations in the Province of Ontario:
1. Executives and Management at AET Consulting have incorporated the organization's sustainability objectives into all new and existing policies.
 2. A monthly green team blog is written by green team members at Sun Life Financial.
 3. United Way includes updates from its Green Team at all regular staff meetings; and
 4. TD Bank provides an entire week of environmental events to educate and inform its employees and customers around Earth Day.

9.0 Step Four: Set Goals & Projects

- 9.1 Next, it is important to choose some project-based opportunities based upon your organization's identified needs and goals.
- 9.2 Initially, your list of potential projects may be quite extensive; however, as you start to evaluate and identify projects that align with your organizations' needs, it will become increasingly important to consider how those project-based opportunities can improve your environmental performance in ways that reflect your organization's culture.
- 9.3 Green Teams should continue to refine and update their team's strategies and initiatives as you continue to learn what is possible. In this regard, it is important to consider the challenges you have encountered along the way, and the actual benefits you have gained for the organization. It is also important to seek new project-based ideas and propose suggestions on how to improve communications among team members and other employees.
- 9.4 Pilot programs can make it possible to evaluate new initiatives, helping you identify unforeseen difficulties before significant investments of time and money are made. It may be easier for large, multi-location organizations to pilot sustainability programs, by implementing the program at just one location in the first instance. Successful pilot programs will gain buy-in from the participating group and make it easier to achieve support for full-scale implementation.

9.5 In choosing which projects to implement, try to select those that have varying resource demands and timelines - to assess their overall effectiveness. Consider selecting short and longer-term plans, ranging from simple ones to more elaborate ones. Also infuse some behavior-led projects and consider how new technologies might further support your work.

9.6 A diverse portfolio of projects could result in several benefits, including:

1. Varying the demands across different aspects of an organization - to share the work.
2. Staggering success stories, while maintaining momentum.
3. Ensuring different individuals remain active and engaged; and
4. Allowing the Green Team to learn from past initiatives.

9.7 It is also important to monitor, measure and review your projects to ensure you are achieving your project-based goals, and to communicate progress with other staff and upper management.

9.8 By monitoring the results, you can learn from any key strengths or weaknesses, and apply these lessons to the next team project(s).

9.9 It is also important to ask these questions:

- 1. Does your team have experience with similar projects?**
- 2. Is the project too large or risky?**
- 3. Does it need to follow regulatory guidelines?**

10.0 Step Five: Establish an Implementation Plan

10.1 At this stage, businesses should outline the boundaries and limits of their projects and identify ways to achieve their objectives. If the scope changes over the course of the project, the changes should be tracked.

10.2 In producing an implementation plan, it is important to set a clear timetable to ensure your project stays on time, and to identify ways to both track and communicate your progress along the way.

10.3 The implementation Plan should include project milestones and deliverables and be informed by regular meetings.

10.4 When developing an implementation plan, ensure you clearly identify how the project aligns with the team and your organization's overall vision and goals.

10.5 Remember that monitoring and measuring your actions are central to communicating the success of your initiatives. Metrics that could be included within your Implementation Plan include:

- Reducing electricity demand, instead of reporting just '*kwh saved*', consider communicating Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) reduced.
- Initiatives need to be marketed before, during, and after launch.
- Emails, pop-ups, posters, and other communication strategies can be used to remind employees of the existence of programs that affect them.
- Monitor employee and customer commuting if applicable.

11.0 Some resources to get started:

11.1 Here is a great tool to get started on tracking your current transportation-led carbon emissions:

Smart Commute Carbon Calculator:

<https://www.smartcommute.ca/Public/PublicPage.aspx?ItemName=CommuteCost&FileType=ASCX>

11.2 Below is a list of simple list of preliminary actions for a green team:

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Start recycling and/or composting program- Start carpooling program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increase natural light- Add motion sensor technology- Improve building information management system	
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Replace light bulbs- Add preferred parking of hybrids and carpools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Replace outdated building or office equipment- Presort all recycled materials	
		Simple	EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION	Complex

11.3 If your Green Team is working from home, here are some solutions and tips:

- Choose a space with maximum natural light, or the greenest form of artificial light.
- Ditch the printer OR use the printer only when necessary and choose remanufactured ink cartridges.
- Unplug devices when not in use.
- Manage heating and cooling in your home office with a smart thermostat.
- Keep the door shut when the office is not in use and close vents when the room is unoccupied.
- Buy secondhand office furniture.
- Reduce waste - use washable rags instead of paper towels, use a white board instead of sticky notes, get rid of your k-cup machine or use reusable coffee pods.
- Eliminate packaged snacks in favor of bulk items.
- Compost organic waste.

11.4 View this website for more tips on how to make your home more environmentally friendly:

<https://www.techrepublic.com/article/5-ways-to-make-your-home-office-eco-friendly>

12.0 Contact GEN for more assistance with Green Teams!

12.1 Green Economy North is here to support you with any of your Sustainability or Green Team-led questions!

12.2 Learn about Green Economy North:

- Green Economy North (GEN) is a custom-designed membership-based sustainability program of reThink Green.
- We equip organizations with the knowledge, information, and tools they need to pivot & succeed in the new Green Economy.
- GEN functions as a 'hub' within the wider Green Economy Canada network.
- It is designed to be community-led, business-focused, self-sustaining, and target-driven.

12.3 As a program (and organization) we coordinate educational, peer-to-peer based learning, professional networking opportunities, and celebrations of success.

12.4 We produce estimates of our members' annual GHG emissions and develop action plans to help reduce our collective impact on the environment.

12.5 All members of GEN receive annual reports and updates which help them measure their energy consumption, manage their footprint, reduce their emissions, and save money!

12.6 Core member service benefits include:

- Baseline energy walkthroughs
- Target setting & action planning
- Coaching and support
- Access to technical workshops and educational forums
- Green team development
- Networking
- Knowledge sharing
- Celebrations of achievements

12.7 Additional fee-per-service options are available.

12.8 We can also support business planning, media, marketing & communication-led works, when viewed from an environmental lens.

Contact us for more details and membership prices!

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