Green Team Guide

Penn Sustainability
University of Pennsylvania
December 2017
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**What is a Green Team?**
A Green Team refers to a group of individuals in an office or department who are interested in minimizing the environmental impacts of their workplace and teaching fellow co-workers about sustainable practices. Staff and Faculty Eco-Reps are encouraged to participate in Green Teams in order to share knowledge gained from the Eco-Reps program with the rest of their workplace. Additionally, it can be difficult for an individual Eco-Rep to effect change on their own, so a Green Team acts as a support group for implementing sustainable practices. Finally, forming a Green Team also helps offices participating in the Green Office Program divvy up tasks among multiple staff members and engage a larger portion of their office in sustainability.

**How can I start a Green Team and recruit members?**
It is important to first note that Green Teams can be formed at the school-wide level, or at a localized office level. To start a team, you should first seek approval and buy-in from senior leadership in your office, department, and/or school. While Green Teams are grassroots in nature, coordinating with higher-level managers can ease the formation process. Successful Green Teams generally have representation from many, if not all, groups within their department or school — for example, administration, finance, building management, IT, and purchasing. Engaging with senior leadership is instrumental in bringing these representatives to the table, as it creates buy-in and recognition for people to take time out of their schedules.

You should check the Penn Sustainability website to see if there are any other Eco-Reps already in your area who may want to join your Green Team. You can also send an email note to members of your office in order to gauge interest in the program from co-workers. A sample Green Team letter can be found at the end of this guide. Finally, you can recruit members by posting an interest form in common areas, like in a kitchen or by an office printer.

**What roles should I have in my Green Team?**
The distribution of roles and tasks is up to your team, as each department will vary in structure, size, and other logistics. Depending on the size of your team, you may want to create co-chair positions, as well as other needed roles like treasurer and secretary. In general, we recommend assigning at least two people to each of your team’s projects and initiatives. This ensures that if one person is bogged down in work and is unable to contribute, there is another person who can keep the initiative moving forward.
Can I get a budget for my Green Team?

Budgets are not always necessary for Green Teams. However, should your team want to implement projects that require funding, money should come from within your department. If a green project requires funding and is associated with a cost-saving opportunity, make that clear with the request and provide information on the return on investment. For example, if a team wishes to replace old lightbulbs with more energy-efficient lamps, the proposal should include the initial cost for buying and installing the lamps, the energy cost savings associated with the project, the expected life of the product, and the return on investment.

Another way to develop a budget for your Green Team is to tie Green Team projects into existing budgets. For example, if your team wants to make events greener by purchasing compostable bin liners, recyclable plates, and other more sustainable products, see if you can get an increase in your office’s events budget rather than creating a separate sustainability budget.

Current Green Team Examples

If you have any additional questions about forming or running a Green Team, or would simply like advice and best practices, the following Green Teams at Penn can serve as good examples.

- Business Services
- Wharton Operations
- School of Arts and Sciences
- School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
- School of Medicine

Potential Barriers

Having worked with several Green Teams, a consultant for the Penn Sustainability Office provided some feedback on barriers that teams have faced in the past:

1. Sometimes, managers and/or key partners (housekeeping, facilities, etc.) may not understand the importance of sustainability work. There can be a lack of feeling supported from above.
   - **Overcoming this barrier:** Build credibility by formalizing the team process, making public agreements about roles and responsibilities. Be thoughtful and listen to concerns.
2. Finding metrics to support why sustainability is important can be difficult.

- **Overcoming this barrier:** Get clarity about the specific problem you are trying to solve and why it is important to your team. This can help metrics fall into place.
  - **Example:** *Reducing paper use.* What exactly is the problem? Where and why is paper waste occurring? At printers? Filing duplication? Answering these questions can help automatically generate metrics.

3. It is often difficult to delegate so that one person does not feel over-burdened.

- **Overcoming this barrier:** Focus your energies. Only tackle what is realistic, and do it as a team. Be clear about what you want to accomplish and how you will know you are successful.

4. It can be challenging to keep all members engaged and participating.

- **Overcoming this barrier:**
  - For meetings, prepare an agenda, record action items, assign responsibilities, and distribute minutes.
  - Build in a “buddy system” to break down action steps and have members report back on their progress to the larger group.
  - Take time to acknowledge progress – celebrate both small and big steps.
Dear __________,

As you know, environmental sustainability has become one of the most critical issues of the 21st century.

Penn has long recognized the importance of sustainability and has been working in many areas to reduce its environmental impacts. From educating the students in the dorms, instituting sustainability principles, developing green building guidelines, and establishing a comprehensive sustainability office, Penn is earning a reputation as a leader in campus sustainability.

In September 2009, Penn took a major step forward when President Gutmann launched the University’s Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan 2.0 was released in 2014 to build on initial successes from the first plan and frame new goals and strategies. Furthering Penn’s commitment, President Gutmann signed the American Campuses Act on Climate Pledge in June 2017, reaffirming Penn’s commitment to carbon reductions consistent with the Paris Agreement.

In the context of this exciting program and ambitious goals, I am spearheading an effort to make ______ a showcase building/department/school.

This cannot be done without the help of each and every one of you. The first step will be to form a Green Team. I encourage you to join this team and help craft a plan for making ______ a more environmentally friendly place.

Thank you in advance for participating in this important initiative and for taking actions to reduce the impact of our building and the rest of the campus.

Sincerely,

__________
Team Charter

**Team Identity** *(school, department, center, floor)*

Purpose:
Our mission as the ______________________ Green Team is to:

[What do we want to accomplish (big picture)? Who and how many people will we influence or involve?]

Membership & Roles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Role:</th>
<th>Responsible for:</th>
<th>Contact:</th>
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[Who will be involved, and how will they impact the team’s success? Who will be responsible; does the leadership rotate? Who needs to be consulted and informed, and who is ultimately accountable?]

Operating Guidelines:

- What resources may be needed? What approvals may be needed?
- Who may need to be engaged to move the project forward?
- When and how often do we meet?
- How do we communicate with each other and with those we will influence? (frequency, form)
- How will we record meetings and progress?

Goals & Actions:

- What are the specific goals we want to take action on?
- Why are these particular goals significant to us?
- What are the planned activities/action steps we can take to meet our goals and measure them?
- How will we learn what's working and what isn't?
- What small steps can we recognize and celebrate?
- What barriers do we foresee? What are strategies for overcoming them?
# Tracking Green Team Progress

**Team Identity** *(school, department, center, floor)*

[Outline the specific Goals or Activities that you would like to accomplish over the next year.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal, Initiative or Activity</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
<th>Who is taking the lead?</th>
<th>Collaborators</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Complete?</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
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