**Project Overview**

The Green Acorn Business Certification Program is a student-run initiative started by the Penn Environmental Group that creates a streamlined certification process for local businesses that use green practices. The broad aims of the project are to lead Philadelphia toward becoming a center for green businesses and assist in reaching the University’s *Climate Action Plan* goals as well as the City of Philadelphia’s sustainability goals.

There are dual benefits from the Green Acorn certification for both businesses and students. Certified businesses gain market differentiation, free advertisements at Penn, increased resource conservation and the reduced operational costs associated with sustainable business operations. Students are educated on local business’ operations and can make informed decisions to support businesses that use green practices. The Green Fund Grant provided initial funding for the organization to provide incentives and promotional resources to students to use at Green Acorn businesses.

Green Acorn provides a list of green practices regarding the areas of waste management and recycling, pollution prevention, resource conservation and environmental awareness. Businesses must meet all requirements to achieve Green Acorn certification. Since its launch in 2009 Green Acorn has certified 29 local businesses, establishing its brand within the Penn community.

[Green Acorn’s Website](#)

[List of Green Acorn certified businesses](#)

**Lessons Learned**

Green Acorn supports the sustainability goals outlined in the University’s *Climate Action Plan* through its continuing and expanding operations. During the one-year reporting period required by the Green Fund, Green
Fund produced a monthly newsletter report for Green Campus Partnership detailing news and latest developments in business certifications, student incentive programs and internal operations.

Green Acorn project leaders report that many local businesses are set in their ways and remain hesitant to change especially when it comes to internal operations like purchasing or employee behavioral practices. However, Green Acorn continues to work to ensure that the certification program is not an elite selection of restaurants or businesses and is accessible to any and all businesses interested in reducing their environmental impact.

Green Acorn remains committed to improving practices at its current 29 certified businesses through recertification and encouraging new businesses to achieve certification. Additionally, Green Acorn seeks to leverage the purchasing power of its certified businesses to decrease costs for specific items. For example, sustainable disposable containers are one specific item of interest for many of the Green Acorn businesses that project leaders hope to provide access to at a lower cost.

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