

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: GREEN YOUR OPERATIONS

When organizations begin to educate others about environmental issues, they may also want to look at their internal operations and makes changes to be more environmentally friendly. The following tips and resources can help you implement these changes.

Outcomes

- Green your operations within your organization by reducing waste and increasing recycling.
- Encourage employees to get involved with greening the organization by understanding how to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Audience

Organizations leading activities

Time

Variable

Concepts

- Nearly two-thirds of the waste created at businesses and nonprofits is recyclable. Improving recycling within the organization can reduce waste.
- Having a strong recycling program demonstrates your organization's commitment to sustainability and the community, conserves natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Leading by example gives participants ideas for what they can do in their lives to protect the environment.

Supplies

- Hennepin County's Best Practices Guide for Business Recycling available at www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling
- Hennepin County's Event Recycling Checklist available in the Appendix
- Bins for collecting trash, recycling and organics (if you don't have them already)



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Procedure

- Use the following tips to green the operations at your organization and remember that greening your operations is a continuous process that will take time to be fully implemented within your organization.

Reduce

- Preventing waste from being generated in the first place is an easy and effective way to lower disposal costs. Look for creative ways in your day-to-day operations to reduce waste.
- Avoid unnecessary printing and make double-sided printouts and copies. Start a paper reduction campaign in your office to encourage your colleagues to reduce paper waste.
- Use email and telephone for communications and consider using e-newsletters to reduce paper use.
- Reuse scrap paper for notepads.
- Use reusable cups and dishware for meetings. Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable coffee mug.
- Encourage employees to pack lunches in reusable containers.
- Make your own green cleaners that are less-hazardous. Find green cleaning recipes at www.hennepin.us; search: green cleaning.

Reuse

- Set up a system at your organization for reusing office supplies and equipment, such as a central storage area or online database.
- Consider donating office equipment and materials that your organization no longer needs. Go to www.RethinkRecycling.com/business and look under “donation opportunities” for options.
- When shipping items, reuse packaging materials or use shredded paper.
- Use reusable or recyclable nametags at meetings.

Recycle

- Nearly two-thirds of the waste created at businesses and non-profits is recyclable. Having a strong recycling program demonstrates your organization’s commitment to sustainability and the community, can help your bottom line, conserves natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Download Hennepin County’s Best Practices Guide for Business Recycling at www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling for more detailed information about implementing a recycling program at your organization.
- Visit all areas of your building where waste is generated. Look at the contents of your trash and any existing recycling containers to determine how much material is getting thrown away and how well people are recycling.
- Make sure recycling containers are clearly labeled and readily available. Posters and labels are available from Hennepin County for recycling programs.
- To encourage recycling, reduce the amount of trash bins in individual offices or cubicles; put them in the break room and common areas instead.
- Understand which materials are recyclable. Office paper, newspapers and magazines, cardboard, plastic bottles, metal cans and glass are all recyclable.
- Start an organics recycling program. Organic waste, including food waste and food-soiled paper, can be recycled into compost, a valuable resource used in landscaping and road construction projects. Visit www.hennepin.us/organics for more information.
- Gaining support and buy-in from everyone at your organization is crucial to the success of your recycling program. Train your entire staff to make sure that everyone knows what can and cannot be recycled and to ensure that recyclables and organics are sorted, collected and stored properly.

Discussion questions

- What did you learn when greening your operations?
- What was challenging about greening your operations? What could be improved upon moving forward?
- What else could your organization do to green its operations?