



REGIONAL & NATIONAL RESOURCES for NEBRASKA BUSINESSES



NEBRASKA
RECYCLING
COUNCIL

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About Nebraska Recycling Council

The Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) is a statewide, member-based, nonprofit organization headquartered in Lincoln. NRC’s mission is to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska. Our great wish is to protect Nebraska’s good life for future generations.

Programming

We fulfill our mission and goals through a variety of outreach and educational programs that provide recycling and materials management education, best management practices, instructional publications, waste assessments and audits, municipal and regional recycling system design assistance, and recycling equipment grants. NRC is the only recycling organization in Nebraska that serves the entire state with on-the-ground consultation, technical assistance, and collaboration.

Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant



NRC was awarded Waste Reduction and Recycling grants from the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy to assess recycling resources in multiple Nebraska regions and develop hub and spoke recycling systems. Through this funding, we can provide regional and national resources to schools, large businesses, and healthcare facilities at no cost to the industries.

SUSTAINABILITY IN BUSINESS

As practices are becoming more transparent, consumers are putting an increasing amount of pressure on organizations to exercise sustainable practices.

Sustainability will benefit your organization in many ways: become more efficient, improve your reputation and brand value, provide a platform for innovation, help attract and retain staff, gain certifications, achieve better growth, reduce costs, and strengthen stakeholder relations. The following includes resources, examples, and testimony on improving sustainability efforts within businesses.

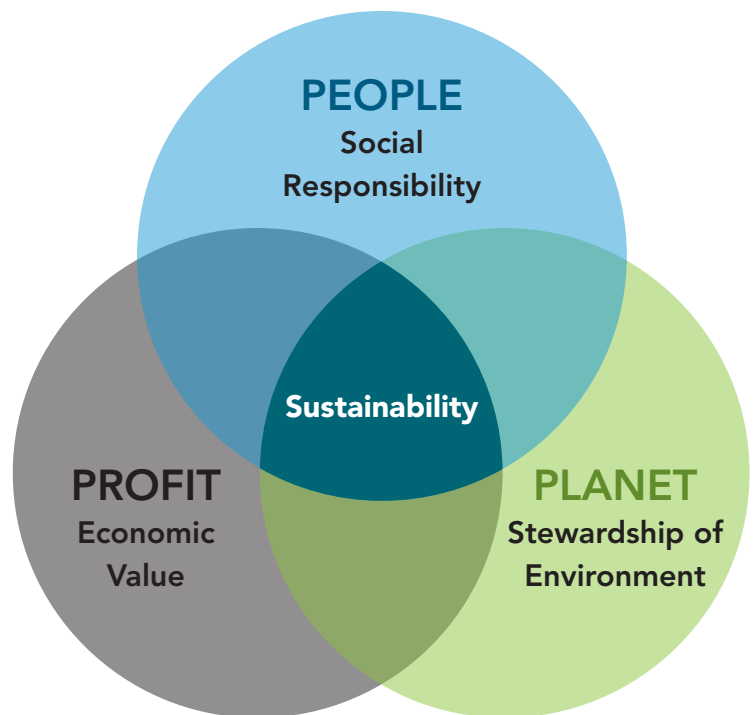
This packet is designed to assist and guide your sustainability efforts. General topics and strategies are explained within the document, and more specific resources and additional readings are located at the end. Contacts from various organizations and agencies are also included for your use when your organization is ready to take the next steps.

People, Planet, Profit

The University of Northern Florida Center for Sustainable Business Practices explains the relationship between the three main sectors of sustainable business. While there is no universal definition of sustainability, there is broad consensus that sustainability can be viewed as a holistic system that needs to be regenerative and balanced in order to last a very long period of time. In the business-world, sustainability is viewed as a form of triple-bottom-line reporting system that a business enterprise communicates to their stakeholders.

The Goal: Create strategies that preserve the long-term viability of People, Planet and Profit. Sustainability requires that we see the world as a system which connects businesses to society and the environment across long distances and for many years. For example, pollution from one place can travel thousands of miles away. Socially responsible corporate strategies impact communities not only today, but also leave lasting impressions for generations to come.¹

In a national survey conducted by The Recycling Partnership and SWNS, 78% of consumers state they are more conscious of supporting sustainable companies than they were 5 years ago. 70% of Americans stated they would go out of their way to support an organization that makes strong efforts to be sustainable, and 84% expect products and packages to be easy to recycle and made with recycled content.²



¹ <https://www.unf.edu/coggin/csbp/>

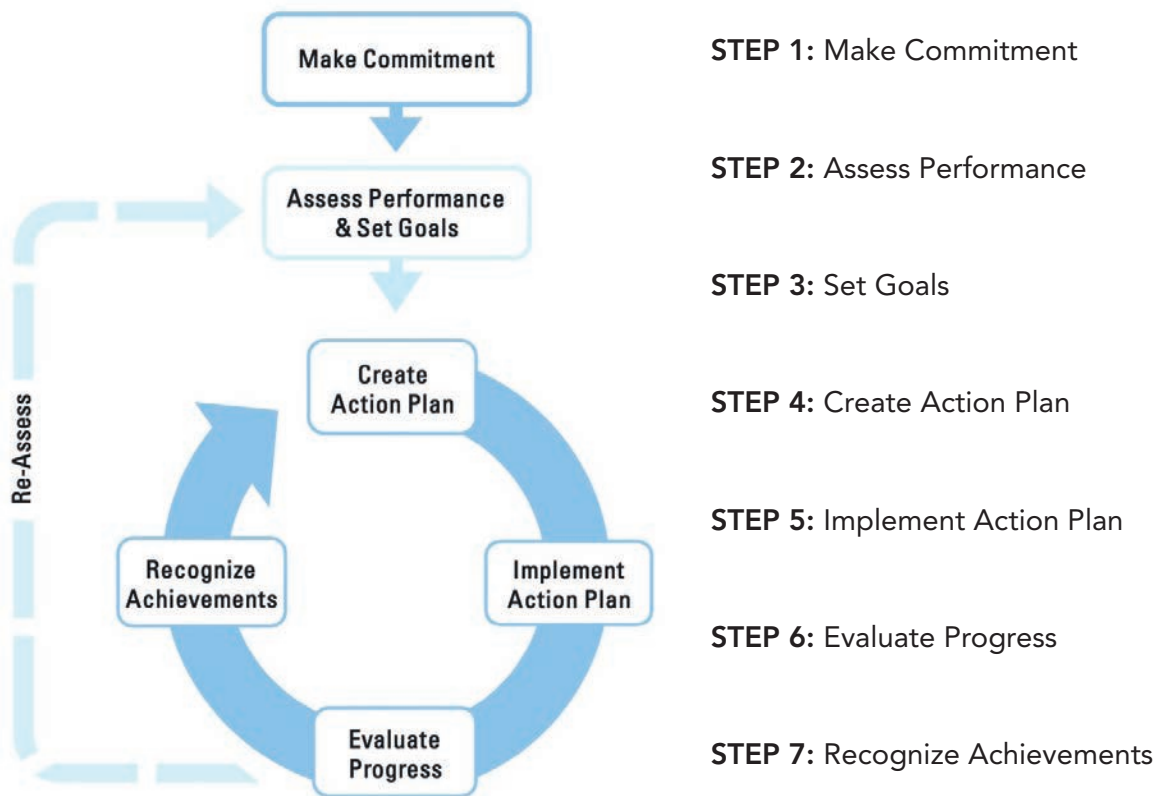
² <https://recyclingpartnership.org/americas-prefer-sustainable-companies/>

ENERGY

A building cannot be “green” if it is not energy efficient. Many new buildings are designed to be energy efficient but that does not mean they are. The way a building operates needs to ensure efficiency. This requires understanding and participation from all internal aspects of a business.



The 43-page ENERGY STAR Guidelines for Energy Management contains a step-by-step road map for continuous improvement, based on best practices from the nation’s leaders in energy management. The document is broken out into the guidelines’ seven main steps:³



Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)



Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, is a rating system that is used worldwide. LEED is a beacon for sustainability and leadership and provides a framework for healthy, highly efficient, and cost saving green buildings. The value of LEED is immense.

According to their data, 61% of corporate leaders believe that sustainability leads to market differentiation and improved financial performance which gives way to a competitive edge. While LEED encompasses all sustainable practices, not just energy savings, they recognize energy as a very important part. They report 89/100 average ENERGY STAR score for LEED projects and 25% less energy on average used by LEED buildings compared to commercial buildings.⁴

The attached toolkits and guides in the Additional Reading section are available to help make small steps. Not only does energy saving make sense from an environmental standpoint but prioritizing your building efficiency will decrease operational costs, increase asset value, and ensure productivity, comfort, health, and wellbeing for occupants.

³ <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/reference/guidelines>

⁴ <https://www.usgbc.org/leed/why-leed>

WASTE

Waste Sort

Before implementing programs within your facility, assessing the waste stream is vital. There is a good chance you can implement a few changes that will drastically reduce waste. A waste sort is an essential tool for maximizing the effectiveness of waste management programs and improving operational efficiency. It can expose wasteful practices, reveal opportunities for cost-saving improvements, or confirm the success of diversion programs. The data collected can pinpoint specific areas where actions can be taken.

It is important to measure a baseline of current waste generation before any changes are made and bring all stakeholders to the table in the decision making process, from custodial staff, to customers and clients, to managers. See NRC's 'How to Conduct a Waste Sort' for direction on getting started and sample worksheets.

Reducing and Reusing

The best way to reduce waste is to eliminate it at the source. Not only does this take the burden off the environment, but it can significantly reduce the cost of purchasing, management, and disposal cost for the business. Reducing waste includes things like going paperless and eliminating single use material. You can also significantly reduce operational costs and your environmental footprint by investing in quality equipment.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers a waste reduction guide and encourages the reuse of products and packaging because it extends the useful life of these materials, thus slowing final disposal or recycling. Essentially, it is the repair, refurbishing, washing, or just simple recovery of worn or used products, appliances, furniture, and building materials.

The EPA also encourages you to donate. Organizations can donate products or materials to others who need and can use the items. For example, restaurants, hotels, and cafeterias can promptly distribute perishable and prepared foods to hungry people in their communities. Local food banks may pick up food donations free of charge, saving you storage and disposal costs.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Take Back Programs

EPR and Take Back Programs are a growing policy movement that call on businesses and manufacturers to incorporate the end-life of the product into the price of the item and structure of their organization. EPR builds the cost of disposal or reuse into the product price along with developing a system where consumers may return their used or soiled item with a guarantee of reuse. This is most frequently the case with paint, carpet, mattresses, and pesticide containers, among other commonly used items.

Regional Examples of Waste Reduction: Keep Nebraska Beautiful

Keep Nebraska Beautiful offers the Materials Exchange Program. This is a no-cost service helping Nebraska business and industry reduce landfill impact by diverting usable material to schools, nonprofits, and other businesses.

For example, a Nebraska manufacturer, contacts the Exchange generating X amount of product Y each month (ie. cardboard, plastic, rubber etc). The Exchange then connects them with all applicable participants looking to either reuse it in their production processes, or recycle it for use by someone else. The program also facilitates the donation of equipment, furniture and supplies to Nebraska schools, and nonprofit organizations. Businesses looking to redecorate, downsize or go paperless are encouraged to contact the Exchange with gently used but serviceable items like printers, desk chairs, or file folders.

Promotion goes out to 250 organizations across Nebraska. Items are generally spoken for within an hour of being offered, and donation receipts are available upon request. Since its inception in 1994, the Materials

Exchange is the only statewide program in the country reducing landfill impact by facilitating both types of exchanges.⁵

Recycling and Composting

Lastly, once you have exhausted other avenues of waste management, recycling and composting are excellent ways to further reduce the amount destined for the landfill. There are plenty of options when initiating a program or improving your existing one. Commercial composting might be available in your area or you could consider composting your own scraps on-site for use in a community garden. Recycling programs vary, and it is important to select a program that will work for you, whether it is simple cardboard recycling or source separated recycling with an end goal to divert a specified amount of waste.

Regional Examples of Recycling: State Nebraska Bank & Trust

An excellent example of a source separated recycling initiative is State Nebraska Bank in Wayne. Sandy Brown, City of Wayne Green Team Chair, implemented this program within the bank. Below are some of the bins that were customized with labels for varied recyclables and are in the bank's breakroom. Each office and desk area also have a bin with three compartments for paper, trash, and shredding. An employee collects and takes these pre-sorted items to the Wayne Recycling & Trash Center once a week. The bank has reduced its spending on trash collection by 43% per month.



Under Desk Recycling Bin



Recycling in Breakroom



Katie Diediker, Human Resources Director

WATER

Businesses vary widely on the amount of water they consume based on what products or services provide. Water is becoming more and more valuable and protecting and conserving it has never been more important.

The EPA approximates that nine percent of the total water use in commercial and institutional facilities in the U.S. takes place in office buildings and thirty percent split between hospitals and restaurants. The three largest uses of water in office buildings are restrooms, heating and cooling, and landscaping.⁶

⁵ <https://www.knb.org/waste-programs/materials-exchange/>

⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/types-facilities>

A Few Steps

- Develop a water management plan
- Assess your water use to identify opportunities for savings and track results
- Check regularly for leaks and repair them immediately
- Replace bathroom fixtures with more efficient models
- Replace medical equipment with efficient models
- Eliminate single pass cooling by recirculating cooling water or moving to air-cooled systems
- Evaluate equipment in cafeterias and laundry for potential water savings
- Design water smart landscapes on the exterior of the facility
- Improve irrigation techniques
- Start a campaign within the facility to target water waste

WaterSense is a program sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency as a great resource for water conservation and products may be labeled WaterSense when they meet the criteria of the EPA. Cutting down on water usage can be as simple as fixing leaks or as pricey as installing all new appliances. You may be shocked just how much water your business could be conserving. While each facility is different, it is important to address general water savings techniques and further that initiative into specific techniques for your business.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING

(EPP) is defined as the procurement of items that have minimized or reduced environmental effects. This idea directs us to choices that are less harmful to the environment and safer to human health. EPP considers criteria like postconsumer recycled content, energy efficiency, durability, air emissions, hazardous substances, the management after the product is used, water efficiency, packaging, responsible manufacturing and many more.

This idea directs us to choices that are less harmful to the environment and safer to human health and considers things like:

- Postconsumer recycled content
- Energy efficiency
- Durability
- Air emissions
- Hazardous substances
- The management after the product is used
- Water efficiency
- Packaging
- Responsible manufacturing and many more

It is vital to investigate the credibility of certain green labeling. "Greenwashing" is a marketing strategy that overstates the mitigated environmental impact of the product design or use. To counter this, the EPA offers a comprehensive recommendation guide so purchasers can efficiently and effectively identify and procure environmentally sustainable products and services. See Additional Reading for more information.

FUNDING ASSISTANCE – RECYCLING EQUIPMENT GRANTS⁷



NRC offers grant funds of up to \$20,000 for the purchase of recycling equipment.

Funding for these grants is provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Trust is funded by proceeds from the Nebraska Lottery and has awarded more than \$265 million to over 2,000 natural resource projects in Nebraska since 1993. Schools, municipalities, other government entities, nonprofit organizations, and recycling companies are eligible. The equipment purchased through these grants has proven to be especially useful.

Examples of Equipment Eligible for Grant Funds

- Forklifts, skid loaders, balers, recycling trailers, recycling carts, indoor and outdoor recycling bins, cargo trailers, semi-trailers, lift-gates, can crushers, dumpsters, trucks, portable loading ramps, approved recycling labels, and more.
- A fabric structure (rated highly to withstand straight-winds and hail) is fundable if additional storage is needed for recyclables.
- Equipment may be new, used, or in need of refurbishing. In some cases, applicant's existing equipment can be refurbished or rebuilt with grant funds.

Cash Match Requirement

A cash match is required from all grantees. In general, these minimum match amounts are required:

- 20% – Nonprofit organizations
- 20% – Communities with populations of 5,000 or under
- 25% – Communities with populations of 5,000 to 10,000
- 30% – Communities with populations of 10,000 and above
- 50% – For-profit businesses

In-kind Match

In-kind contributions are encouraged and will result in more points in the application review; however, "using" or "maintaining" the equipment is not a suitable in-kind contribution. It must be related to the purchase of the equipment.

"We use our recycling program and other conservation methods (composting and energy controls) to assist us with "winning" business [such as with] companies that are looking at multiple cities and venues to hold their events. Conservation is a high priority and helps us bring business to the Cornhusker and to Lincoln."

Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel
Recycling Equipment Grant Recipient



⁷ <https://nrcne.org/recycling-equipment-grants/>

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Sustainability Training and Consultation

Verdis Group: Kim Morrow | kim@verdisgroup.com | (402) 405-9425

Verdis Group helps organizations identify and implement sustainable solutions. They offer services pertaining to Waste Reduction and Recycling, Transportation Demand Management, Sustainable Behavior Change Programs, and Sustainability & Climate Resiliency Planning.

Nebraska Recycling Council: info@nrcne.org | (402) 432-2384

NRC can provide additional consult through a one-hour general consultation, zero waste consultation, green team training, waste reviews & waste audits, and train the trainer.

EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/>

Please visit the website for EPA related questions or further reading on the information mentioned within the document.

Reduction and Reuse Programs

Keep Nebraska Beautiful: Meagan Deichert | mdeichert@knb.org | (402) 486-4562

KNB Materials Exchange Program: Peter Stadig | pstadig@knb.org | (402) 486-4622

This is a no-cost service helping Nebraska business and industry reduce landfill impact by diverting usable material to schools, non-profits, and other businesses.

Regional Programs

City of Wayne Green Team Chair: Sandy Brown | sandybro@live.com | (402) 369-4685

Sandy implemented the recycling initiative within State Nebraska Bank and Trust, which has been a great success. If you would like to start a similar project, she would be happy to help!

ADDITIONAL READING

[The Benefits of a Sustainable Business](#)

[How to Conduct a Waste Sort – A Step-By-Step Guide](#)

Energy

[EnergyStar Guidelines for Energy Management](#)

[LEED](#)

[Practice Greenhealth Best Practices in Energy Efficiency](#)

[ENERGY STAR Retrocommissioning Guide](#)

[ENERGY STAR Lighting Guide](#)

[ENERGY STAR Supplemental Load Reduction Guide](#)

[ENERGY STAR Air Distribution Systems Guide](#)

[ENERGY STAR Heating and Cooling Upgrades Guide](#)

Waste

[Managing and Reducing Wastes: A Guide for Commercial Buildings](#)

[General Tips on Waste Reduction](#)

[General Tips on Source Reduction](#)

Water

[WaterSense at Work: Best Management Practices for Commercial and Institutional Facilities](#)

[Saving Water in Office Buildings](#)

[Saving Water in Hotels](#)

[Water Conservation Tips For Businesses](#)

EPP

[Office Supplies: Model EPP Specifications and Purchasing Guidelines](#)

[EPA How to Identify Greener Products and Services](#)

[Comprehensive Purchasing Resources](#)

[How to Implement EPP Guide](#)

Specific Industries

[Best Environmental Practices for the Hotel Industry](#)

[3 Steps to Reduce Plastic & Benefit Your Business - A Guide to Restaurants and Eateries](#)

[Restaurant Food Waste Action Guide](#)

[OFFICES: A Best Practices Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling](#)

[RETAIL: A Best Practices Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling](#)

[HOSPITALITY: A Best Practices Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling](#)

[RESTAURANTS & BARS: A Best Practices Guide to Waste Reduction and Recycling](#)

[Toolkit for Industrial Buildings](#)