



GREEN BUSINESS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Developing Sustainability Policies

Why Important

A business is a place where, each day, management and staff must make an infinite number of split second decisions, and execute uncountable individual actions. In such a complex system, it would be impossible to prescribe in advance exactly what should be done in a given circumstance. Therefore, setting formal policies founded on basic principles defines how things are done—so everyone can make choices in alignment with the business' core values.

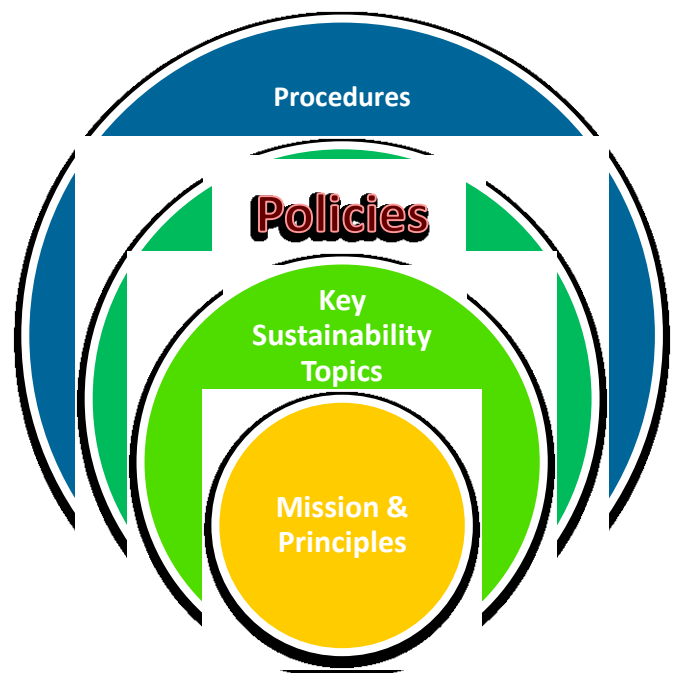
Not only do formal policies set the parameters for consistent decision-making, they save time and allow your staff to successfully execute their duties. This frees up management resources for other, more important tasks.

Overview

Formal sustainability policies set the rules of the road, defining the boundaries of acceptable behavior for everyone acting on your behalf. At once broad enough to encompass multiple facets, and specific enough to offer clear guidance, solid policies set the parameters for good decision-making regardless of specific circumstances. Rather than constraining behavior, policies offer everyone within your organization the freedom to be creative within acceptable boundaries.

Step by Step Implementation Instructions

1. Mission & Principles – Begin your policy development with an honest examination of what sustainability means to your organization and how it integrates with your corporate mission. This will lay the foundation for setting strategic sustainability goals that align with your overall business purpose.
2. Key Sustainability Topics – Next, identify the key sustainability issues for your organization. You can do this in one of two ways:
 - Sustainability Impact – Consider the main ways your business impacts people and the environment, such as





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energy, water, waste, etc.

- Functional Area – Alternatively, you can align your policy development with functional areas, such as human resources, marketing, finance, etc.

If you need help generating a topic list, go through the checklist of actions associated with your green business certification program (e.g. B Lab, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Green Seal, etc.) and ask some probative questions, such as:

- *What larger principle does this action fall under?*
- *Why did we choose to take this action?*
- *How does it fit with our company values?*

3. Initial Policy Development – Based on what sustainability means to your organization, consider each topic identified in section 2 above and determine your minimum expectations. To do this, ask two questions:

- *What commitments have we made as a company?*
- *What are our expectations of staff, customers, and suppliers?*

After these instructions, you'll find a template that your organization can use to develop a set of policies that fit your organization.

We have also provided a number of policy development guides and examples below, but you should change them to reflect your unique operations and circumstances:

- Resources to guide policy development:
 - [How to Write an Environmental Policy](#)
 - [Creating a basic green \(environmental\) policy](#) (NOTE: This is a download link, NOT a link to the company's website.)
 - [How To Write a Policy Manual](#)
 - Example policies:
 - [Bethesda Green](#)
 - [Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce](#)
4. Procedures – While policies tell employees *what* management wants them to do, procedures lay out in more detail *how* to get it done. So, as you develop your sustainability policies, resist the temptation to dictate detailed behavior. Doing so will unnecessarily constrain management and staff alike.

Build on Your Success! Keep the Process Going

Sustainability policies should never stand alone. A really good set of sustainability policies should fully integrate with your other policy documents. As part of your efforts at continuous improvement, we encourage you to evaluate your existing policy documents and insert new language that reflects your sustainability priorities. Existing documents to consider include:



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- Human Resources
- Purchasing
- Commuting
- Employee Handbook
- Contractual agreements
- Code of Ethics
- Business travel



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Policy Development Template

Company: _____

Mission / Values: _____

Sustainability Principle #1 _____

Sustainability Principle #2 _____

Sustainability Principle #3 _____

Sustainability Principle #4 _____

Policy Topic: Organizational Commitment

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers

Policy Topic: Waste Reduction & Recycling

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers



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Policy Topic: Purchasing

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers

Policy Topic: Energy

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers

Policy Topic: Water use

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers



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Policy Topic: Travel & transportation

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers

Policy Topic: Sustainable Landscaping/Stormwater Management

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers

Policy Topic:

Commitment	Expectation
Based on this mission and principles, we make the following commitments as a company:	In support of these commitments, we expect the following from our staff, customers, and/or suppliers