



How to Implement  
**Green  
Practices**

In Your Small  
Business

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# How To Implement Green Practices In Your Small Business

Adopting green practices puts your small business in a better position with potential clients, team members and stakeholders while helping to protect the planet.

Business leaders should take action on

1. business operations that you directly control,
2. energy sources, and
3. partners, vendors, and suppliers.

## THE SITUATION

As a business leader, you know trust between your business and your clients is necessary. A recent Deloitte consumer survey found that sustainability is a key factor in building trust, particularly with younger generations.

“When Gen Z and Millennial customers believe a brand cares about its impact on people and the planet, they are 27% more likely to purchase it than older generations are.”<sup>1</sup>

Green, sustainable practices will strengthen your relationships with clients, especially with the generations that will soon have the most purchasing power.

“Adopting green practices can propel a small business into finding other like-minded companies to partner with and can also put the business in a good position with clients who also share environmentally friendly principles and goals.”

— Kathleen Vandegrift, Project Development Manager for [Advanced Solar Products, Inc.](#)

## THE CHALLENGE

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol<sup>2</sup>, the most widely used accounting system for carbon emissions, breaks down a company’s carbon emissions into three Scope Levels:

1. Business operations that you directly control,
2. Energy sources, and
3. Partners, vendors, and suppliers.<sup>3</sup>

Katherine Radeka, founder of Accelerate Net Zero, recommends using this framework as a tool for building an action plan for the company’s overall environmental impacts and improve its contributions to sustainability.

## THE PATH FORWARD

### 1. Business operations that you directly control

- a) **Trim waste.** When you recycle a pound of waste rather than throwing it away, you save three pounds of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.<sup>4</sup> There’s a lot any business can do to reduce waste — we recommend referencing the [EPA’s Waste Reduction Model](#) for resources specific to the kind of waste your business produces.
- b) **Go digital.** Going paperless, or simply reducing the amount of paper your business uses, reduces your business’s emissions. Allowing remote work is also considered to have a net positive impact on the environment.<sup>5</sup>



**c) Design out environmental impact.** Look for ways to minimize the use of materials that come with a high carbon cost, especially plastics. Consider becoming an early adopter of new materials produced in a more sustainable way, such as foods produced with regenerative agriculture or new forms of vegan leather.

**d) Support your employees.** Your employees have a big role in your business's environmental impact. Consider incentivizing sustainable commuting by reimbursing employees using public transportation or bike share.<sup>6</sup>

**e) Support local organizations.** Kim Allchurch Flick, founder of [Mighty Epiphyte](#) and a certified BCFG, donates and volunteers to local organizations that work to protect the planet. Whether you do it yourself, or promote it to your employees and community, there are a lot of options to choose from. You can find some Portland-based nonprofits on [Willamette Week's Give!Guide](#).

## 2. Energy Sources

**a) Reduce impact from your building/office space.** Is your building energy efficient? Even if you don't own the building, you may be able to either make small changes or advocate to your landlord.<sup>7</sup> Certified BCFG [Get Lagos Now](#) updated its buildings to have ductless heating. Consider reviewing a list of potential upgrades like [this guide](#) from Energy Star (EPA and DOE).

**i. HVAC systems.** Antea Group, an environmental consulting firm, specifically recommends improving HVAC systems to reduce energy consumption while making employees more comfortable.<sup>8</sup>

**b) Minimize transportation for both people and goods.** If you ask your office staff to report to the office, make sure it's to do work they can't do at home. If you can purchase supplies and materials locally, you eliminate the emissions from shipping. You can minimize work-related travel, and use transportation powered by renewable energy.



**c) Switch to renewable energy.** While installing renewable energy like solar panels is a significant cost, keep in mind that [tax credits](#) may reduce that cost. You can also research incentive programs in your state. Certified BCFG [Advanced Solar Products](#) chose a building powered by geothermal energy.

## 3. Partners, vendors, and suppliers

**a) Take a critical look at who your business works with.** When you objectively review your business's partners, vendors, and suppliers, are you proud to be associated with them? Have they implemented green practices of their own? If not, consider whether you'd be able to help inform them, or if you need to look into other options.





**b) Look for greener alternatives** for the things you purchase, even things like office paper. Consider carbon emissions and other environmental impacts when you make sourcing decisions.

**c) Your bank.** Fran Teplitz, executive co-director of business, investing, and policy at the Green Business Network, says that some larger banks are effectively “bankrolling the climate crisis.”<sup>9</sup> Consider banks with clear sustainable values, like certified BCFG [Pacific West Bank](#).

## Here is our list of initial steps to improve your business's green practices.

- 1. Create a sustainability statement.** This should be a detailed layout of your current practices, your goals, and how you'll reach your goals.<sup>10</sup>
- 2. Take immediate action.** Your business may be able to quickly implement some of our tips to reach your sustainability goals. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.
- 3. Share it.** Sharing your green practices with other businesses and your clients, or to the public in general on your website and social media, will encourage others to adopt similar practices and lead to a bigger impact.

**“Adopting green practices is important for businesses of all sizes. Not only is there a positive impact on the environment, but these forward-thinking policies can encourage employees to adopt green practices in their own lives.”**

— Kathleen Vandegrift

*Many thanks to Katherine Radeka of [Accelerate Net Zero](#) for her consultation and contributions to this document.*



# Endnotes

1. <https://hbr.org/2023/09/research-consumers-sustainability-demands-are-rising>
2. <https://ghgprotocol.org/corporate-standard>
3. <https://acceleratenetzero.com/p/how-small-business-climate-action-has-big-impact>
4. <https://time.com/6213434/climate-change-action-companies-businesses/>
5. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/serenitygibbons/2022/08/16/3-ways-companies-can-reduce-their-environmental-impact-without-compromising-on-efficiency/?sh=7bdb7686268d>
6. <https://www.tcg.com/blog/5-ways-small-and-midsize-businesses-can-reduce-their-carbon-footprint/>
7. <https://time.com/6213434/climate-change-action-companies-businesses/>
8. <https://us.anteagroup.com/news-events/blog/10-ways-business-reduce-carbon-footprint>
9. <https://time.com/6213434/climate-change-action-companies-businesses/>
10. [https://ecocart.io/sustainability-statement/?utm\\_content=283914259](https://ecocart.io/sustainability-statement/?utm_content=283914259)

