



Starting a Green Team Reference Guide



Overview

This reference guide provides you with guidance for building a Green Team. Green Teams can be an effective way to leverage sustainability minded staff in your organization to help you increase your reach and impact with your energy conservation campaigns and projects.

The following steps are just one way you can start building a Green Team in your organization. You may decide to follow the steps in a different order: you might start by gaining support from management and leadership or you may gather the team together and then seek leadership support for specific ideas.

There is no one right or wrong way to start a green team. The more you start trying things out and learning what works best for you and your organization, the more the Team will be successful and fun!

Step 1 - Conduct a Needs Assessment

Consider asking yourself the following questions before starting, to help make sure you develop a team and process that fits with the needs of your workplace and the interests of your colleagues:

- What is motivating me/us to start a green team? Why now?
- What is my/our vision for a successful green team? One year from now, what will success look like?
- Who will be involved?
- What projects or changes will the green team have completed? What projects will have started?
- What impact will the green team have had on the workplace or organization?
- Whose support do I/we need to help ensure a successful green team?

Type of Green Team

Then ask yourself “At this point in time, what kind of Green Team is the best fit for my/our workplace?”

- **Project-based Green Team:** This kind of Green Team forms in order to accomplish a specific, identifiable goal or project (e.g., a behaviour change campaign, series of workplace events, improvements to a piece of equipment or process, etc.). Once this goal is achieved, the group might find a new project or dissolve until a new initiative is found.

- Pros: there is a lot of momentum, with a clear shared goal to work towards. It is easier to avoid the 'committee syndrome' of meeting without purpose.
 - Cons: you will need to find others who want to work on a specific shared project. If the project doesn't succeed as planned, it can (sometimes) be hard to maintain momentum.
- **On-going Green Team:** This kind of Green Team forms first and then decides on projects or initiatives to tackle. Typically, there are regular meetings, with standing agenda items, and key roles. You meet regularly regardless of your projects.
 - Pros: Others in your workplace know who they can ask about sustainability related topics. You can focus time on building a strong group dynamic. You know you will have consistent meetings where you can bring up ideas and make plans.
 - Cons: Regular meetings can sometimes take the energy and inspiration out of energy conservation and sustainability projects. Knowing that you 'have to' meet can turn the Green Team into another chore. Once meetings lose their spark it can be challenging to reignite the team.

Once you've identified the approach that best fits you and your workplace, review the Steps 2-5 to further identify how you will make the most of your Green Team.

Step 2 - Gain Leadership Support

Senior Leadership Support

Ideally you'll have an opportunity to speak to your leadership team and ask for support to set up your Green Team. Green Teams are more likely to succeed when they are endorsed by leaders in your organization and if staff are given permission to use work time to attend meetings and run initiatives.

Successful Green Team type programs have been shown to increase staff retention and demonstrate to staff and the community your organization's commitment to sustainability practices - great benefits to point out when you are speaking with senior leadership.

Management Support

Managers are key allies in supporting your Green Team members. Without their approval and support, Green Team members may not feel they have permission to work on Team activities. Participating in a Green Team program is a great way for managers to acknowledge one of their staff member's interests in sustainability issues and provide opportunities for professional development.

Tips for communicating with management:

- It is helpful to have an initial idea of expected time commitments and possible activities, so managers and senior leaders understand what they're being asked to support. (This can likely be adjusted and communicated back to management, once the Team meets and outlines a specific scope).
- Whenever possible, identify how the Green Team's work aligns with your organization's mandate and strategic priorities.
- Be prepared to have a specific request for actions they can take, if they are supportive of the initiative. Sending out a recruitment email to their staff, attending a kick-off lunch and learn, etc... can all be things you bring to the table once managers have expressed support.

You may choose to start with this step. Or you may choose to informally gather potential Green Team members together, and then present a request, with specific details, to senior leaders and managers. Order the steps based on the needs of your workplace and the nature of your workplace culture.

Step 3 - Recruit Members

Find the Right Green Team Members

It's important that those on your Green Team want to be there! The best people for your team are staff members who want to participate, have an interest in sustainability, are comfortable taking a leadership role in their workplace and have permission from their managers.

While it is ideal to have members from different groups or departments, this may need to happen over time. You are more likely to have success and maintain momentum if you expand the group organically, starting with those who are really interested. As you demonstrate successes, it will become easier to recruit new members.

Promote the Team

You may choose to use one or all of the three promotion methods below. This will depend on who you have already recruited and the nature of your workplace.

- A brochure, poster or promotion email can be great first steps. Be sure to use the most effective communications channels in your organization. To inspire potential members, you may share some initial goals from the questions you answered in step 1 above.
- Ask your leadership team or managers to help identify potentially interested Team members and promote the benefits of participation.
- Look for opportunities to meet with potential recruits face-to-face and make direct personal appeals to join the team. For example, you could host a lunchtime event to generate ideas for possible actions to green the workplace, and use this as a launching point for recruitment.

Step 4 - Clarify Roles and Expectations

Many of these items may be clarified in your kick-off meeting. However, it's often helpful to have some idea of the scope and possible roles for the Team so you can share these during recruitment and with management. You can adjust these based on the ideas and interests of the Team members.

Create Team Structure and Shared Expectations

Establish a basic outline of the team structure and the expectations for membership.

- What are the goals and plans for the year? What do you hope to achieve together? (You could take time together to answer the initial questions in step 1).
- How often will you meet and for how long?
- How much time do members have to give each month or for the year?
- Are members playing an advisory, ideas generation, or implementation role?
- Do members want to participate on the Team for a specific project, or is it an ongoing commitment?

Outline Roles and Responsibilities

It will be helpful if you can have these roles filled in each meeting. You may decide that one person will consistently take on a role, or you may rotate through them.

Roles (At each meeting)	Responsibilities
Meeting facilitator/ chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Organizes and leads meetings · Supports and motivates other team members · Reports to management about progress · Helps ensure each meeting ends with clear action items · Helps identify key decisions made during the meeting
Note-taker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Takes clear notes about who attended, what decisions were made and key actions items · Manages team documentation (as needed) · Helps ensure each meeting ends with clear action items · Helps identify key decisions made during the meeting
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Coordinates team communications efforts (could take on the role of meeting organizing)
General Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide input on planning for initiatives · Communicate back to their department · Promote initiatives in their department · Can share responsibility for all of the above

Include all of the above in a Green Team Terms of Reference or promotional materials to help you gain support from senior leadership and recruit members.

Determine Scope + Priorities

Whether you're focused on a specific project or an ongoing set of initiatives, one of your first tasks will be to determine the specific goals for your Green Team. Will you focus on staff engagement activities like lunch-and-learns? Will your group identify and implement sustainability projects, like lighting upgrades or changes to processes and behaviours? Remember to identify how the Green Team's work aligns with your organization's mandate and strategic priorities.

Step 5 - Hold a Kick-off Meeting

Host your First Meeting

Organize your first Green Team meeting by selecting a date, booking a room, sending an invitation and drafting an agenda.

Look to Step 3 to help identify priorities for the first meeting. They should include:

- Creating shared goals and expectations (What does success look like? How much time can members commit? What specific activities do they want to undertake?).
- Identifying roles that members would like to play. (See Step 3).
- Promote relationship building between team members. A simple fun ice-breaker at the beginning of the meeting can achieve this. Create as much opportunity as you can for Green Team members to provide input, and for all who attend to contribute. This will help people create a sense of shared commitment and buy-in, and make sure you've accessed all the good ideas in the room.
- Identify specific action items and a time for when the group will meet next. Make sure to start with actions that are achievable and move you towards your goals. You are more likely to sustain momentum if you can come back to the next meeting with items checked off your list and a sense of progress.

If there are differences of opinion, that's ok. Note them down, so all members feel heard. Focus on the areas where there are shared goals and agreement and start there.

For further support with starting your Green Team contact the Airport Authority Climate and Environment Department at: environment@yvr.ca

Materials adapted from the BC Hydro Energy
Wise Network *Green Team Information Sheet*



Created for YVR by Prism Engineering

