

Green Office Certification Guide

A guide to help your office implement the sustainable practices needed to become Green Office Certified



Please use this guide to implement the sustainable practices needed for Green Office Certification. *A minimum of 24 of these steps must be completed to achieve certification.* Please complete and submit this document to the sustainNU team for review.

If you have any questions, please contact the sustainNU team at sustainNU@northwestern.edu and make sure to reach out to schedule your mid-guide check in if you haven't already!

Communication and Engagement

1. We have an active Green Office Team.

Organize a Green Office Team to lead the process of making your office more sustainable. The Team members should work together to complete the items in this guide. After the certification process is complete, the Green Office Team should continue to meet regularly (at least quarterly) to discuss and implement strategies for maintaining and increasing Green Office practices.

Resources

If you haven't already, email a list of staff members who are on your Green Office Team to sustainNU@northwestern.edu.

2. We include Green Office information and updates in staff meetings and new employee orientation.

Include Green Office updates and reminders in staff meetings and regular staff communications. Provide new employees with an introduction to sustainability practices in your office.

Resources

Subscribe to the sustainNU newsletter at www.northwestern.edu/sustainability to receive updates and tips you can share with your coworkers.

3. We place Green Office signage and reminders in key locations in our office.

Survey your office space to identify places where signs or labels could be used to reinforce Green Office practices. Post prompts and relevant information where appropriate.

Resources

Request stickers, recycling bin labels, and other signage: sustainNU@northwestern.edu



4. We participate in campus-wide sustainability events such as Earth Month events or the Bike to Work Challenge.

Encourage your team to participate in campus-wide sustainability events such as the Bike to Work Challenge, Earth Month events, and relevant sustainability trainings and presentations.

Resources

Check the calendar of events at www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/calendar and follow @sustainNU on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Energy and Water

Computers and electronics

5. We use energy efficient settings for computers, printers, copiers, and other devices.

Work with your IT team to update energy saving settings for computers, copiers, and printers.

Resources

Learn more about energy efficient computing, www.it.northwestern.edu/policies/energy.html, and power management, www.it.northwestern.edu/hardware/eco/myth.html.



6. We use smart power strips to power down devices that are not in use, reducing standby power usage.

Many devices use “standby” or “vampire” power even when turned off or in standby or sleep mode. Look for opportunities to use smart power strips to stop energy vampires in your workplace. Smart power strips will automatically reduce standby power use. Remind staff to turn off electronics at the end of the day, and provide information on how to use smart power strips to save energy.

Resources

See choosing smart power strips: www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/choose-right-advanced-power-strip-you and learn more about standby power <http://standby.lbl.gov/>.



7. We purchase computers and electronics that are ENERGY STAR® or EPEAT certified.

When purchasing computers and other office electronics, look for products that have earned ENERGY STAR or EPEAT certification.

Resources

Find ENERGY STAR www.energystar.gov/products/office_equipment and EPEAT products www.epeat.net/.



Climate control

8. We have eliminated space heaters and report temperature issues to Facilities.

Identify any space heaters being used in your office. Work with your coworkers and Facilities to address temperature issues and eliminate the use of these heaters.

9. We keep windows and doors closed when heating or air conditioning is running.

Ensure that windows and doors are closed when heating or air conditioning systems are operating. If you find staff are opening windows due to excessive heating during the winter, report the issue to Facilities.

Resources

Report issues and request service at www.northwestern.edu/fm/services/service-requests/index.html.

Lighting

10. We use task lighting with energy efficient CFL or LED bulbs.

Small task lights at desks can be more efficient than full overhead lighting. Where needed, provide desk lamps equipped with LED or CFL bulbs. Encourage staff to use individual task lighting rather than full overhead lighting when possible. When purchasing light fixtures and light bulbs, look for products that are ENERGY STAR certified.

Resources

Find energy efficient lighting options at <http://energy.gov/energysaver/lighting-choices-save-you-money>.



11. We take responsibility for turning off lights and have placed reminder stickers on switches.

Check that lights are being turned off when not needed. Where appropriate, post reminders to turn off lights, such as stickers on light switches or signs in conference rooms.

Resources

sustainNU can provide stickers and signage upon request. Email us at sustainNU@northwestern.edu.

Kitchen equipment

- 12. We use a central, shared refrigerator rather than individual mini-fridges.**

Provide an energy efficient common refrigerator in the office and institute a policy for cleaning and maintaining the shared fridge. Discourage the use of individual refrigerators. If you need to purchase a new refrigerator for your office, look for a model that has earned the ENERGY STAR.

Resources

Find energy efficient refrigerators at www.energystar.gov/products/appliances/refrigerators.

- 13. We use power strips or timers to turn off kitchen equipment.**

Implement a system for turning off microwaves, coffee makers, and other small kitchen equipment when not in use. For example, set up timers to turn off appliances at the end of the day, or plug appliances into a power strip and designate a team member to shut off the power strip.



Water use

- 14. We use water efficiently and report leaks.**

Check for leaky faucets or other water fixtures and report any leaks to Facilities. Where appropriate, post signs or stickers reminding staff to conserve water.

Resources

Request service at www.northwestern.edu/fm/services/service-requests/index.html.

Waste and Recycling

Paper and office supplies

- 15. We save paper by distributing materials electronically, unsubscribing from unnecessary bulk mail subscriptions, and using double-sided printing.**

Set printer and computer defaults to double-sided printing. Distribute materials electronically when possible and print only when necessary. Sign up for digital mailing lists in place of paper mailing lists when possible.

- 16. We reuse scrap paper and office supplies.**

Set up a designated area for staff to share office supplies that can be reused such as scrap paper, binders, file folders, desk organizers, and paper clips. Post signs encouraging staff to place their unneeded office supplies in this area and to see what's available before buying new.



Food and drink

- 17. We provide reusable kitchenware in order to reduce the need for disposable items.**

Provide a supply of reusable kitchen items as an alternative to disposable products. Consider purchasing a dish drying rack to make it easier to wash these items. Avoid the use of disposable plates, cups, and silverware whenever possible.



- 18. We do not provide bottled water and encourage the use of water coolers, pitchers, and reusable cups and bottles instead.**

Work with your department administration to ensure that your office has access to a water cooler or water bottle filling station. Ensure that you have a supply of glasses, cups, or reusable water bottles available. For meetings and events, provide water pitchers and reusable glasses rather than bottled water.



Recycling

- 19. We encourage recycling by ensuring proper placement and labeling of bins.**

Ensure that recycling bins are available at all work stations and in common areas such as kitchens, conference rooms, and break rooms. Recycling bins should be clearly labeled and should always be paired with trash cans. Where needed, post signs to explain what should be placed in bins. sustainNU can provide recycling bins, labels and signs.

Resources

Reach out to sustainNU@northwestern.edu if supplies are needed. Learn more about recycling at www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/recycle/.



- 20. We recycle e-waste through the eCycling program.**

Inform your staff about the proper methods for disposing of electronic waste and used equipment. Put a system in place for collecting and properly recycling all electronic waste.

Resources

Learn more at www.northwestern.edu/fm/services/computer-electronic-recycling/.

Purchasing

- 21. We purchase environmentally friendly products such as recycled content paper.**

Work with the people who handle purchasing for your department to make a practice of buying environmentally friendly products such as recycled-content paper, envelopes and paper towels. Look for reusable alternatives such as refillable pens. Note that recycled and reusable products do not necessarily cost more than less sustainable options, and reusable items can cost less over time.

Resources

Refer to the sustainability information in the preferred vendor matrix www.northwestern.edu/procurement/purchasing/purchasing-strategic-sourcing/preferred-vendors/.

- 22. We minimize the purchase of disposable products as such pod-style coffee maker cups, paper plates, and plastic utensils.**

Look for alternatives to purchasing single-use disposable products such as pod-style coffee maker “K-cups,” coffee stirrers, napkins, paper cups, plates, and utensils.

- 23. We purchase products with minimal packaging and buy in bulk when appropriate.**

Look for opportunities to reduce packaging waste by buying in bulk and selecting products that do not involve excessive packaging. For example, consider bulk sugar and creamer rather than individual packets.

- 24. We explore options for reuse and check surplus resources before purchasing new products.**

Before purchasing new items, consider sharing supplies and reusing items rather than buying new products. Look for reusable options in your office or check the Northwestern Surplus Property Exchange website for available items.

Resources

Visit the Northwestern Surplus Property Exchange at www.northwestern.edu/procurement/about/surplusproperty/.

Meetings and Travel

- 25. We encourage the use of public transportation and distribute information about transit benefits.**

Provide your team with information about Northwestern’s alternative transportation incentive programs and encourage the use of public transit for travel to work and meetings.

Resources

See details on the Divvy Discount Membership <https://www.northwestern.edu/wildcard/services/businesses/divvy-bikes.html>.

Learn more about traveling sustainably <https://www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/travel-sustainably/index.html>



- 26. We encourage walking and cycling, including participation in the Bike to Work Challenge.**

Encourage staff to walk or bike when traveling short distances. Provide facilities or resources for cyclists such as maps of local bike paths. Consult with Facilities about providing additional bike parking if sufficient bike parking is not already available. Encourage staff to participate in the Bike Commuter Challenge each June.

Resources

Find more resources for cycling at www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/travel-sustainably/resources-for-biking.html.



27. When hosting events we ask Northwestern Catering or other vendors for sustainable options that minimize waste.

Seek out sustainable, organic, and locally-sourced options for meetings and events. Look for food with minimal packaging, and offer vegetarian options. Provide water pitchers and glasses rather than bottled water for meetings.

Resources

Check out our guide to hosting sustainable events

www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/host-sustainable-events.html.



Social Sustainability

Office Culture

28. We bring natural elements into our workspace.

Offices with natural elements offer more calming, creative, and productive work environments. Opening blinds and shades to let natural light in, adding plants, or directing staff towards natural soundscapes as background sound (via apps and websites such as calmsound.com) can create a more welcoming work environment. Using natural light in place of overhead or task lighting also reduces energy and incorporating natural elements into the workplace fosters a connection to the natural world.

Resources

Visit calmsound.com for natural soundscapes.

The YourLife Wellness Grants through Human Resources offer funding for wellness activities, events, and/or additions to the office space at bit.ly/WellnessGrants5

29. We encourage staff to take advantage of Health and Wellness programs offered through Human Resources.

Human health is intertwined with the health of our planet. As such, the wellness of individuals is integral to fostering sustainable communities. Office staff are encouraged to sign up for the YourLife Wellness Mailing List to receive updates on the current wellbeing programs available. Staff are also made aware and reminded of the wellbeing programs available to them, from 15- and 30- minute virtual sessions offering stretching, meditation, kickboxing and more to free consultations with a registered dietitian.

Resources

Sign up for the YourLife Wellness Mailing list at bit.ly/YourLifeMailList

Visit the Well-being HR page for information on free physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing programs offered to all staff and faculty northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/well-being



Environmental Justice

30. We encourage all office members to review environmental justice and anti-racism resources.

There is unequal exposure to environmental risks and disparate access to environmental benefits that occur along racial and economic lines. Sustainability must benefit all people. To be engaged, aware, and welcoming members of the Northwestern community, we ask that members of our office community review the National Resources Defense Council overview of environmental justice (or an equivalent resource) as well as at least two anti-racism resources from the below list.

Resources

View the Natural Resources Defense Council Video What is Environmental Justice at bit.ly/EJVideo5

Follow the Chicago Environmental Justice Network for information on environmental justice issues impacting the Greater Chicago area on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Review at least two anti-racism resources from the following lists of materials:

- The Northwestern Libraries [Anti-Racism Resources Guide](#)
- The myHR [Learn Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Playlists](#)
- The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education [No Sustainability Without Justice Anthology](#)



31. We encourage all office members to learn about the Indigenous People native to the land on which Northwestern sits.

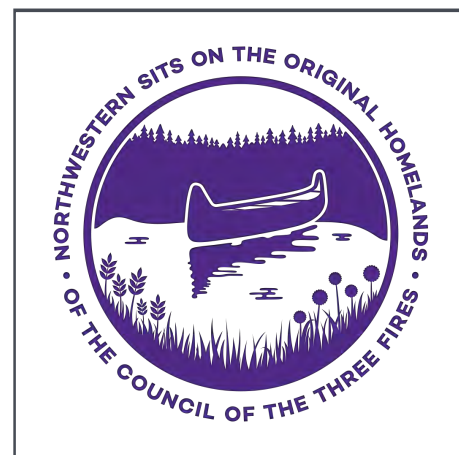
Northwestern is situated within a network of historical and contemporary relationships with Native tribes, communities, parents, students, and alumni. It is also near an urban Indigenous community in Chicago and several tribes in the Midwest. The Northwestern campus sits on the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami, and Ho-Chunk nations. Indigenous People are the original stewards of the land that Northwestern occupies, and Indigenous People today are leaders in the sustainability movement through activism, research, and the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge. We encourage office members to educate themselves about the Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the land we currently live and work on.

Resources

Review Northwestern's Land Acknowledge Statement and the reasoning behind this statement at bit.ly/NULandAckn

Learn about the Sand Creek Massacre via resources compiled by Northwestern's John Evans Study Committee at bit.ly/SankCreekMassacre

Become acquainted with Indigenous groups native to places that are important to you at native-land.ca



Innovations and Extras

32. We do something innovative, implementing measures that go above and beyond the sustainability practices listed here.

If your office has undertaken any sustainable activities that are not included in this guide, please provide a brief description, either below, in a Word document, or in the body of an email to sustainNU. For example, were you able to find creative solutions to any of the sustainability challenges in your workplace? Your ideas could be incorporated into future campus-wide Green Office efforts. In addition, offices and teams that make an extra effort to improve sustainability in the workplace could be eligible for special recognition.

Thank you and congratulations on your efforts!

