

Green Teams

In a Nutshell

A green team is a group of dedicated individuals who come together to promote, identify, and implement specific solutions to help their organization operate in a more sustainable fashion. Green teams can form within governments, businesses, neighborhoods, churches, schools, or any other organization. Green teams can be started by an interested employee, can be mandated from above, or can be a combination of the two. Green teams are usually comprised of interested individuals who sometimes bring expertise in a specific topic or field but who are interested in civic engagement and sustainability.

The “How To”

Joining a Green Team

Many churches, schools, community groups, and governments already have established green teams. Look for flyers posted in lunch rooms, on community forums, or in other common areas to see if the green team at your organization is discussed. Sometimes just asking other people or sending out an interested email can garner response and information, as well. Green teams may also be known by different names ranging from Sustainability Commission to Climate Action Task Force to Citizens Committee for the Environment.

Creating Your Own Private Sector Green Team

Within private businesses, the green team is meant to promote sustainable actions and solutions the company can establish in order to become more efficient and sustainable. Private sector organizations and businesses are not using public money so the goals and objectives may be different than a public sector green team. Brandi McManus of GreenBiz.com has created a list of [five rules](#) the organization's green team should follow.

1. Executive support - A member of the green team should be from the executive staff of the organization; this shows executive buy-in and allows decisions to be made quickly
2. Commitment - The executive staff must commit to review suggestions from the green team; make sure the green team is empowered to make real change
3. Diversity - The green team should be comprised of employees from various departments within the organization and should hold official positions
4. Size - Limit the size of the green team to 10 or 12 people; a team too large has much difficulty agreeing on suggestions and accomplishing goals
5. Unleash the Creativity of Your People - Encourage creative thought and interesting solutions; tap the resources that organizations spend billions of dollars to attract and retain

Creating Your Own Public Sector Green Team

Local government green teams vary in their formation. In some instances, the green teams are formal committees or commissions created by ordinance with members appointed by the mayor or city council. Other times, the green team is an informal body that advises the local government staff. In either case, there is usually at least one city employee that acts as a liaison to the green team. Ideally, some members of the team will bring expertise in different sustainability or environmental areas in order to better guide and assist the city's sustainability efforts.

An effective green team should meet on a regular basis and agree upon a course of action in order to focus the team's efforts. The green team should frequently be in communication with city staff and both parties must agree to respect and listen to one another's ideas and suggestions.

Planning & Zoning

Sample Green Team Ordinances

Sustainable Jersey, a certification program for New Jersey municipalities that want to go green, offers [information](#) to municipalities who want to establish green teams. The differences between an ordinance and a resolution as well as a typical green team structure are discussed.

In 2006, the City of Nashua, New Hampshire adopted an [ordinance](#) creating a municipal green team. The ordinance states that the team will have no less than seven members and membership will be determined by mayoral appointment.

In 2011, the Borough of Eatontown, New Jersey adopted an [ordinance](#) creating the Eatontown Advisory Committee on Sustainable Practices. The ordinance establishes, among other things, very specific membership details.

Sample Green Team Goals

The Village of Northbrook, Illinois offers a list of ongoing [goals and accomplishments](#) of the village's green team on its website.

The North Royalton Middle School in North Royalton, Ohio has established very clear [goals](#) for its green team. Selected goals include to reduce paper usage, increase plastic recycling, change building computers to Eco Font, and to establish subcommittees. Municipal green team goals will be different than these but this is a good example of how goals can be simple yet concise.

Dollars & Cents

Costs of Creating a Green Team

The cost accrued in actually creating the green team will be minimal. Potentially, some man hours and other clerical and office expenditures might be necessary to appropriately advertise, establish, and inform the desired population about the green team.

Costs of Implementing Recommendations

Once the green team is formed, however, money will probably be necessary to implement any recommended policies or actions. Some green teams are tasked with recommending options while others are able to spend budgeted funds on initiatives and programs related to sustainability. The total cost of implementing sustainable options varies depending on scope and size of the project.

If the green team's main objective is advocacy and education, social media and other digital forms of communication can cost very little. Informing the public can be as simple as an online post, message board, newsletter, or email mailing list. Paper flyers, presentations at meetings and conferences, and newsletters will have a cost associated with them but should be minimal.

Measuring Success

Success of a Municipal Green Team

The success of a local government green team should be determined based on the goals of the team. If the green team was charged with making recommendations to the city council, the number of recommendations made could be counted. If the green team is granted the ability to implement plans and spend resources, the number of policies enacted and dollars spent could also be counted.

If the green team is not given the authority to allocate funding, then it would not be appropriate to measure the number of programs established as this would not indicate success of the team itself.

The creation of goals, a course of action for the team, attendance at green team member meetings, and community engagement activities are all potential metrics that can be measured to evaluate the success of a green team.

Discover More

The Missouri Gateway Chapter of the U. S. Green Building Council hosted a [Local Government Green Team Meet Up](#) in late September 2013. The Meet Up was held at the Missouri Botanical Garden and was a part of the Green Homes and Great Health Festival. A Meet Up was also held in 2012 and [resources](#) from that conference are available. The goals of the Meet Up are to network with other area green teams and share best practices.

The National League of Cities offers a [Sustainable Cities Institute](#) that provides many case studies, city profiles, and model ordinances that may be useful to a local government green team.

Some examples of cities and counties with green teams throughout the St. Louis/Southern Illinois region include the cities of [Alton](#), [Carbondale](#), [Chesterfield](#), [Maplewood](#), and [University City](#), and [St. Clair County](#). The names of the committees vary from Climate Protection and Energy Efficiency Committee to Citizens Committee for the Environment to Sustainability Commission but they are all green teams.

The St. Louis Rams offer environmentally conscious football fans the opportunity to watch the game for free by volunteering for their [Green Team](#). Volunteers get free admission to the game in exchange for collecting recyclable items between each quarter.

The U.S. General Services Administration offers [Seven Key Steps](#) to establishing a green team in federal facilities. Some steps are to Establish Leadership Advocacy, Perform a Building Sustainability Assessment, and Be Ready for Challenges.

Case Studies

St. Louis Cardinals Green Team - 4 A Greener Game

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Description

In 2008, the St. Louis Cardinals launched the “4 A Greener Game” initiative to make the team and stadium more sustainable. The Green Team has three primary goals – to minimize waste/increase recycling, conserve water and energy, and purchase environmentally friendly products. The Cardinals Green Team currently has 550 recycling bins throughout Busch Stadium, as well as an average of 25 Green Team volunteers per game that help collect recyclables and encourage other fans to recycle. For the past three years, Busch Stadium has also hosted the Green Series/Green Week in April to raise awareness of environmental issues and encourage sustainable practices, such as electronics recycling. The Cardinals have also invested in solar energy by partnering with Microgrid Energy, Electrical Connection, and Sachs Electric to make Busch Stadium even greener. By the start of the 2012 season, 106 solar panels had been installed, which is in addition to conservation efforts that have already reduced the stadium's energy use by 20 percent.

[St. Louis Cardinals Green Team - 4 A Greener Game](#)



Cost

The costs associated with the 4 A Greener Game program and its projects have been low. Volunteers are largely responsible for encouraging and collecting recycling at home games and of the roughly 3200 Green Team volunteers that help out at home games each year, the Volunteer Supervisor is the only paid position. The vests that Green Team volunteers wear are provided through a sponsorship with Ice Mountain. The recycling program itself has virtually zero costs since bags and disposal are needed by cleaning crews whether the waste is being recycled or going to a landfill. While there were certainly upfront costs associated with installing 106 solar panels, the solar array now provides Busch Stadium with 32,000-kilowatt hours of energy per year. That is enough energy to offset the power used at the Cardinals team store and help reduce overall energy costs.



[Above: Solar panels line the roofs of kiosks at Busch Stadium.](#)

Lessons Learned

While finding the 3200 volunteers needed to staff recycling collection at home games can be challenging, the Cardinals Green Team reaps the rewards in terms of the fans they are able to reach out to. The St. Louis Cardinals, and Major League Baseball in general, are in a unique position to promote sustainability. Not only is baseball an excellent venue for bringing visibility to sustainable practices, such as solar power and recycling, but also as an educational opportunity since MLB teams have the resources and ability to reach a huge public audience. Making changes at Busch Stadium will hopefully encourage all the fans out there to take a closer look at their own habits and potentially make their homes and lives more sustainable as well.

SWIC President's Sustainability Leadership Team

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Description

The President's Sustainability Leadership Team is part of the Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) Office of Sustainability that was created in 2010, and is tasked with leading SWIC's engagement in and promotion of sustainable practices by providing resources and guidance. The mission of the Team is to be a model of sustainability for students and staff at all campuses, as well as other institutions served by the college, and to be engaged at the local, regional, state, and even global level. The Team is a member of the Illinois Green

Economy Network, and has also participated in the EPA Energy Star Challenge, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council. As part of its “Green Initiatives,” the Team has already instituted a number of sustainable practices, including:

- Offering classes and curriculum to train students for careers in a green economy
- Installing energy efficient heating & cooling, light bulbs, and low-flow water fixtures
- Reducing paper use by converting files to electronic copies, making publications and forms available online, and moving from print mail to email
- Committed to purchasing green products – eco-friendly cleaning supplies, recycled print cartridges with soy ink, and sustainable building materials
- Recycling & composting
- Purchasing food from local farms and vendors
- Create a green campus with permeable pavements in parking lots and rain gardens
- Utilizing bike patrols for public safety instead of cars
- Providing students and staff free Metro and transit passes to encourage public transit use

Visit the [SWIC Sustainability Center](#) online for the full list of Green Initiatives.

Cost

Many of the projects undertaken by the President’s Sustainability Leadership Team have been relatively low cost. Switching food vendors and ink suppliers, for example, does not require an expensive operations overhaul. The SWIC Sustainability Center boasts a long [list of completed projects](#), many of which have resulted in cost savings in a number of ways, including major reductions in costs for paper, ink, printing, and postage by making forms and documents accessible online instead of doing mass mailings. One of the biggest projects the Team has promoted is the now complete Server Virtualization Project which has provided a cost savings of \$148,053 and an annual reduction in utility costs of \$93,788.

Lessons Learned

Basically, a lot of small, low-cost changes in SWIC’s daily practices have resulted in big changes and for the most part, cost savings as well. At the same time, it is important to remember the bigger picture. For an educational institution such as SWIC, educating and training students for careers in a green economy is one of their biggest and most important contributions to creating a more sustainable campus, community, and future for the region.

Check out some of the organizations that the SWIC President's Sustainability Leadership Team has been working with:

[Illinois Green Economy Network](#)

[Illinois Green Governments Coordinating Council](#)

[U.S. Green Building Council](#)

[EPA Energy Star Challenge](#)

University City Green Practices Commission

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Description

The [mission](#) of the Green Practices Commission of University City is to encourage sustainable practices and programs that improve the health and quality of life of our community; restore and protect our natural resources, and strengthen our economy. The [Green Practices Committee](#) was formed in 2008 with a goal to develop a strategic plan recommending ways University City become sustainable at the municipal, residential and commercial levels. The Committee was charged with developing practices in University City that improve environmental quality, decrease waste, conserve natural resources and energy, thereby establishing University City as a practical model for other municipalities and businesses. The Committee is made up of residents with expertise in seven areas, including, Ecosystems/Habitat, Water/ Storm Water, Air Quality/Transportation, Water/Resource Conservation, Land Use/Open Spaces and Parks, and Energy/Green Buildings. In October 2010, the Committee completed a draft Community Sustainability Strategic Plan for the City, which addresses complex energy and environmental issues.

Cost

There are few costs associated with actually forming and running a Local Government Green Team. Budget needs, like printing, have been absorbed by a city department like Public Works. When the Green Team recommends an initiative requiring funding, such as an energy audit for a city building or publicity for the RainScape Rewards program, it is funded as a special budget item by City Council. Special projects have also been funded by grants.

Lessons Learned

Advocacy really works! The Green Practices Commission has encouraged the University City to pursue projects such as parking lots with permeable paving (implemented in three separate locations); more energy efficient street lighting; green practices incorporated into City renovation projects; and stormwater management projects such as rain gardens and green infrastructure. Maintaining a great relationship with the City's Public Works & Parks and Community Development Departments is key to success, allowing for the opportunity to provide input on projects and initiatives as they are in the planning stages.