

Starting a Green Business Program

Congratulations! You're considering starting a Green Business Program, and with it, receiving a number of benefits for your city, county or State.

OUR IMPACT 2018

Businesses that join our network conserve precious resources, prevent harmful pollution, and enhance their bottom-line.



What do CA Green Business Network Programs Do?

Environmental Compliance Checks

A program can check environmental compliance in any area important to the local jurisdiction as part of the certification process. For example, checks could be performed for air, wastewater, storm water, hazardous waste, or food safety. By including environmental compliance checks, the program avoids the awkward situation of certifying a business that is still a known polluter. There is no quicker way to lose credibility with the public, with your partners, and with your funders than to promote a business that has a bad history of compliance.

Third-Party Audits

As well as sending program staff when the checklist is completed, a program may include other trained personnel to audit sections of the checklist along the way. For example, staff from the local water district may audit water conservation measures, or the energy company could send an auditor for the energy conservation measures. Trained student interns can also be used. Third-party audits offer possibilities to engage agency stakeholders. They may save money for the program, although they require additional management.

Paper, Spreadsheets and Metrics

Tracking the outcomes of the program are important to report success to funders and to keep the program sustained. This can be done using spreadsheets and a lot of follow-up with the businesses. Also, tracking the businesses through the program can result in endless amounts of paper use and file storage. The California Green Business Network utilizes a database that has key metrics to measure the outcomes of completing certain measures, such as greenhouse gas reductions, kW/hrs saved, gallons of water saved, hazardous waste and materials reductions, and solid waste diverted from the landfill among others. The database also tracks a business through the process, allowing the checklist to be completed on hand-held devices and eliminating paper use. Being able to generate reports on the outcomes that multiple certified businesses in a region can accomplish is central to obtaining continued program funding. The database can also be set up so that your certified businesses can see the results of their efforts in a "scorecard" format.

Multi versus Single Media

Many programs are set up to reward for energy conservation only, or for complying with wastewater and storm water regulations only, or for achieving air emissions reductions. It is very simple for one agency or utility to run a single media certification platform because they do not need to interface with other agencies to do so. However, several opportunities may be missed in doing so. The opportunity to network with like-minded and often well-connected environmental professionals in your community is often touted as the biggest benefit in a multi-media program.

Our model: Businesses implement green practices and receive free technical assistance, recognition, and advertising.

Assembling all the environmental and conservation agencies together in the same room on a regular basis is invaluable. It breaks down government silos and often sprouts numerous other beneficial programs as a result of the networking in establishing a Green Business Program. An example single media program is the [Clean Ocean Program](#) in Santa Cruz, California. An example partnership of agencies to develop a multi-media program is the [Monterey Bay Area Green Business Program](#).

Developing Your Green Business Program



Engaging Stakeholders



Developing Funding



Establishing the Certification Process



Recruiting and Recognizing Businesses

CAGBN has 28 California members and licenses its database platform to 5 other states. All of the 28 in-state and 5 national programs run independently, but we coordinate to share best practices, and resourcing. This sharing of grant funding and resources has allowed us to leverage valuable knowledge into expanding our program into the communities that need it the most. These communities would not have had the resources to start a green business program otherwise, and now their programs are independently running and thriving.

Development in Five Steps

- Step 1: Engage stakeholders,
- Step 2: Develop funding,
- Step 3: Establish the certification process, and
- Step 4: Recruit and recognize businesses
- Step 5: Join a state or national green business program

Step 1: Stakeholder Engagement

Developing a successful program requires getting buy-in from key people in your community.

Consider:

- Which agencies might benefit from a green business program that results in reduced solid waste, reduced water pollution, reduced water and energy consumption, and reduced carbon emissions?
- Are there any public initiatives or mandates that require reduced pollution or resource consumption?

- Which elected officials might benefit from associating with the program and could act as a champion?

Government officials and businesses. The program will also need support from local elected officials, government staff, or the business community so that certified businesses can be recognized by the local government. Sometimes you can find an elected official who is also a business owner who is interested in championing the program.

Government Partnerships. A green business program can be set up as a partnership among government agencies or special districts where each may benefit from it. Different agencies may contribute funding, checklist design advice, web development, or staff for audits. Also, city or county governments can be included in the partnership so that they will publicly recognize the certified businesses. Some communities sign a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize the partnership. Others operate through collaborative meetings and informal agreements.

Typical Program Partners:

- County and City Government Agencies – Environmental Health, Public Works, Economic Development, Waste Reduction
- Special Districts and Utilities – air, wastewater, water, power company, local waste hauler
- Regional planning entity
- Non-profits (NGOs) – small business development centers
- Consultants - may work with the program under contract to government agencies
- Community colleges – most have training programs and can be a source of interns
- State agencies with oversight authority – licensing, permitting, or other environmental legislative mandates
- Other allies – chambers of commerce, business associations, individual business champions, economic development agencies

Partner roles:

- Compliance inspections
- Onsite audits – water, energy, pollution prevention, solid waste
- Help make policy decisions
- Help develop and update standards and checklists

- Provide business referrals
- Provide funding
- Getting certified themselves as a green business

After inviting key agencies, organizations, and community members to be stakeholders in your program, the next step is to invite them to a stakeholder meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to further describe the program, start to develop the program based on stakeholder input, elicit any stakeholder concerns, enhance stakeholder support/buy-in, and identify champions among the stakeholders.

Sample First Meeting Agenda and Presentation.

- Description of program (benefits to stakeholders and community, and assistance requested from stakeholders)
- Funding expectations (amount and where it would come from)
- Potential auditor and compliance inspector involvement
- Identification of lead public agencies
- Defining program operating procedures
- Getting board or city council approval

Step 2: Program Funding

Developing funding starts with creating a budget. Create a preliminary budget before meeting with the stakeholders, since the budget and funding will necessarily be part of the first stakeholder meeting. Use feedback from the meeting to refine the budget, and update potential sources of funding. Basic green business budget components include:

- Overhead/fiscal services: sometimes waved, but typically 7-15%
- Coordinator: Generally, a 25-50% FTE is required to coordinate a program initially.
- Fiscal agent: think strategically whether you want your fiscal agent to be a government entity, an NGO, or a utility. There are constraints and freedoms within those choices.
- Consulting services/contractor: if you need to hire a consultant to do the 3rd party verification and/or program coordination.
- Design and production of materials, website if needed
- CAGBN can fund new programs which meet the criteria outlined in this document.

- Promotions and advertising
- Events

Potential sources of funding:

- One organization may serve as the "home" for the program and may be the primary source of funding
- ongoing partners who will contribute funding (environmental agencies, special districts and governmental entities that benefit from the program such as those with a conservation mandate)
- grants for start-up and special projects
- utilities, business service organizations, and community groups
- fees from certifying businesses: see below.

One strategy is to put together enough funding to cover a small, limited pilot program, without a lot of material expenses. Use this initial program to demonstrate success, and gather metrics to measure your success. Then go back to your original sources to request additional funding for an expanded program, and/or identify new funding sources.

While some green business programs remain free to businesses, many charge fees. The fees can range from a few hundred dollars for a few years, to several thousand dollars annually. The fees offset some or all of the program costs, such as staffing, database development and maintenance, and marketing. Since such a range in fees exists, it is important for businesses applying for green certification to consider what benefits they will get from a particular program. New programs must consider how much income they want to receive in fees vs. how much businesses may be willing to pay. Currently, the least expensive programs are often run by local jurisdictions which benefit from them.

Step 3: Planning the Certification Process

Now that you've secured stakeholders and funding for the program, you're ready to plan the process by which businesses will get certified.

Target Business sectors. Choose the sectors, or types of business, that the program will include. Most programs start with an “office/retail” sector, since this is the most common type of business, and the checklist can be used as a starting point for all other types of businesses. Then decide which other types of businesses you want to address. For example, restaurants are also a common type of business, and are high energy users and potential sources of water pollution. Do your compliance inspectors note any types of businesses that are problems in your area? Dry cleaners? Auto body shops? Printers? Decide which sectors the program will start with, and you can expand later.

Checklist measures. Consider which checklist measures you would like to include for each business sector. Here, you will not have to reinvent the wheel! To view checklists developed by other programs, go to www.greenbusinessca.org and click “Resources” at the bottom right corner of the page. On the Resource Forum page, click the blue box “View Your Checklist”, where you can see the measures included in any sector for any CAGBN program. The CAGBN has created a “bare bones” checklist of what the program partners have identified as the essential criteria for any green business. This can be used as a starting point in developing your checklist. It is highly recommended that you get signed up and receive training on creating checklists on the CAGBN database before doing this task.

Compliance Inspectors. Decide which areas of environmental compliance, and for which sectors, your program will check. For example, you may or may not decide to check on office or retail businesses, but for restaurants, you may decide to check wastewater, storm water, and food safety. Once you’ve decided which areas you want to check, speak with supervisors at the appropriate agencies to ask if their inspectors will look up businesses for you when needed. Invite them to the next stakeholder meeting if they are not already included.

Auditors. Decide how your program will audit the checklist measures. Will program staff go to a site and verify all the measures? Or would it help to have third party auditors for some areas, for example, energy, water, solid waste, or pollution prevention. Factors affecting this decision include the areas in which your staff has expertise, whether local agencies are willing to provide auditors, and the potential to partner with other organizations (e.g., community colleges) for interns. Also, the organization of agencies in the area can affect the ease or difficulty of working with outside auditors: for example, if there are multiple water districts whose boundaries do not

correspond to the those of the local towns, simply managing the auditors may add significant time and money.

Pilot group. Before kicking off the full program, pilot your process to find out what works and what doesn't. This is a key step to ensuring that your program succeeds!

- Shadow a neighboring, existing and seasoned Green Business Program coordinator and gain mentorship.
- Choose a business sector, with a small group of businesses, that are important to your local area and partners.
- Research the industry, to ensure that the checklist addresses the key pollution and resource conservation concerns.
- Conduct an outreach workshop to targeted businesses to explain the process
 - o Use experts from partner agencies.
 - o Provide any incentive information to businesses.
 - o Solicit champions among the businesses, based on referrals from agencies or volunteers from workshop.
 - o Kick-off Workshop.
- After the businesses complete the certification process, evaluate, and make necessary changes.

Note: leverage existing community programs – coordinate with partners if they already have existing auditing, assistance or rebate programs.

Step 4: Planning Post-certification Promotion of Businesses

A Successful Marketing Plan. Marketing has two functions – to promote the program to the community and businesses to recruit, and to promote the businesses once they become certified. Effective promotion is key to creating one of the great potentials of a green business program – a “green marketplace”, where green businesses and consumers support each other. It also rewards businesses that have made a great effort to go green! Successful marketing will bring more customers to the certified businesses, and in some cases will make the difference of whether or not a business will stay in the program.

Possible avenues to recruit businesses and promote the program:

- websites: local website for the program, as well as all partner websites
- social media
- radio, television, local newspapers
- presentations to local chambers of commerce, and other business groups
- events to celebrate program kickoff and milestones
- press releases, newspaper articles to promote events
- giveaway items (e.g., reusable shopping bags)
- ask businesses to enlist other businesses
- door to door canvassing (most successful!)

Possible avenues to promote individual businesses:

- Board of Supervisors, or City Council, celebrates new green businesses in annual ceremony
- Certificates for wall display, signed by local government officials
- Window decals with Green Business logo

“Marketing toolkit” given to each certified business, with link to logo and suggestions on marketing as a green business. Example marketing toolkits:

There is a Statewide Facebook Page here: <https://www.facebook.com/greenbusinessca/>

Businesses that achieve the Innovator tier are marketed on the California Green Business Network homepage at greenbusinessca.org

Green Business Academies

Green business academies have been extremely successful in recent years. This is a structure in which businesses are led through the process in a series of workshops as a cohort. Businesses are encouraged to communicate with each other and with technical assistance providers through a list-serve or online community, as well as meet in person for workshops. Focus groups and surveys indicate that businesses prefer this method since they feel part of a community.

Additionally, there is a much higher completion rate for businesses that go through an Academy rather than doing it by themselves. Below is an example of an Academy structure.

GREEN

CALIFORNIA
GREEN BUSINESS
NETWORK
MONTREY BAY AREA

ARE YOU READY TO TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS?



Join the Green Business Academy to become a Certified Green Business.

As part of the Green Business Program of Santa Cruz County, the Academy includes three modular workshops that support a three-month long cohort process—providing businesses the tools, training and resources they need to green their operations and get recognized as a Certified Green Business.

1



July 14: Kickoff Workshop

10 AM to 12 NOON
Hosted at the Chaminade



TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Enrollment
- Intro to Online Checklist
- Pollution Prevention
- Recycling/Waste Reduction

2



Aug 11: Workshop 2

10 AM to 12 NOON
Capitola City Hall
Community Room



TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Progress Reports
- Energy
- Alternative Transportation
- Water Conservation
- Support

3



Sep 27: Wrap-up Workshop

3-5 PM
New Bohemia Brewing Co.



TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Progress Reports
- Employee Engagement
- Transportation
- Celebrate and Recognize Accomplishments



Sep 27: Celebration Mixer at New Bohemia Brewing Co.!

5-7:30 PM
Celebrate finishing the process. Get to know other Green Businesses at our biennial mixer immediately following your last workshop.

Sign up now. Space is limited. Go to:

greenbusinessacademy.eventbrite.com

For questions, contact Josephine Fleming at 831.706.7384

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“ Businesses that get certified through the Green Business Academy will save money, attract more customers, and gain community recognition. ”

— Ana Mafra Rebelo, Program Director

Step 5: Join a State or National Network

New members benefit from a well-established network of state and national programs. Joining is like receiving a “program in a box”. New users can learn from the tried and true practices of other programs, receive training in establishing their own programs, copy existing checklists, benefit from statewide marketing, and become part of and use the statewide database.

Green Business Programs (GBPs) are voluntary, local government administered environmental recognition programs for businesses that go beyond compliance and implement environmental practices. GBPs develop and customize environmental standards by business type, provide onsite consultation support to help businesses with implementation and recognize businesses that meet the standards. Green Business standards cover a range of environmental issues, such as waste minimization, energy efficiency, water conservation, and pollution prevention. Local government agencies offering GBPs provide free or low-cost services to participating businesses and have recognized nearly 4,000 California businesses.

The **California Green Business Program Network (CAGBN)** is a coalition of 28 GBPs in California that collectively represent over 40% of the State. CAGBN provides a forum for GBPs to share information and to set policies that ensure consistency across the State. Since its development in 2009, CAGBN created an electronic system to help Green Businesses track their status and measure their environmental benefits. CAGBN continues to host and maintain the system for its members. Currently, the system is owned by CAGBN members through membership fees. The GreenBizTracker database is leased to 5 states operating Green Business Programs is Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, and Washington.

Funding for CAGBN is provided by the member green business programs, Pacific Gas and Electric, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency’s Exchange Network, and EPA Region 9 Pollution Prevention Grants.

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