

Prosperity Eastern Iowa's Petal Project Program Evaluation and Recommendations

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In partnership with
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Project Prosperity

Evaluation of a Green Business Certification Program in Eastern Iowa

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary ... 6

Section 1: Project Overview 8

Introduction ... 8

PEI and Petal Project ... 8

Using this Report ... 14

Section 2: Evaluation Framework 15

Impetus for Evaluation ... 15

Program Evaluation and Development Framework ... 17

Evaluation Goals ... 17

Section 3: Evaluation Methods and Results 18

Introduction ... 18

Comparative Analysis: Overview and Key Findings ... 18

1

2

3

4

5

Part I: Criteria Comparison ... 18

Part II: Organizational Comparison ... 20

Stakeholder Engagement ... 24

P.E.I. Strategic Plan and Priorities ... 24

Survey of Petal Project Affiliated Businesses ... 26

Interviews ... 30

Section 4: Program Development 40

Introduction ... 40

Synthesis of Findings: Six Key Themes to Drive Program Redevelopment ... 40

Recommendations ... 48

Advisory Council Case Study ... 56

Focus Group: Testing the Waters ... 63

Logic Model ... 65

Endnotes ... 68

Section 5: Appendix and Program Materials ... 69

1

2

3

4

5

Executive Summary

This report was prepared for East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) and Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI) to evaluate PEI's green business program, the Petal Project, and provide recommendations for program improvement and redevelopment. It is the first evaluation of the program since its inception in 2009, and comes at a time when Eastern Iowa faces threats to its long-term sustainability, particularly regarding its ability to attract and sustain its workforce.

Evaluation and Results

To evaluate the program, the Project Team ("Team Prosperity") conducted a survey of Petal Project-affiliated businesses; held a series of in-depth interviews of regional experts and green business program staff outside of Iowa; and completed a two-part comparative analysis to identify promising practices Petal Project could adopt in the future.

Key findings:

- 1. Workers:** the PEI Board identified workforce issues as the main challenge across their communities. 40% of surveyed businesses identified quality workers as their organization's highest priority, and leading business sustainability programs such as B Corps award businesses who promote diversity and help employees advance, among other strategies.
- 2. Business Case:** Surveyed businesses prioritize reduced operating costs and the ability to market themselves as 'green' as key incentives for participating in the Petal Project. Nearly 1/3 of respondents disagreed the program had saved them money, while over 90% felt it had improved their reputation. Other green business programs emphasize gains to employee engagement, retention, and marketing ability.
- 3. Flexibility:** Write-in responses on the survey identified a need for criteria flexibility, especially for small businesses, and revealed that businesses value some practices more than others; under the current program structure, energy conservation is perceived to have the highest value. Interview feedback and other program models show support for tiered certification levels to "meet businesses where they are at."
- 4. Capacity:** Access to resources and technical support for participating businesses and the administering

program is critical to the program's own sustainability. Businesses identified educational opportunities and ongoing access to knowledge as a reason for staying in the program. Interviews and study of other programs identified benefits and pitfalls of partnerships with university students, Chambers of Commerce, and regional organizations.

- 5. Tracking:** A challenge in evaluating the program evaluation was inconsistent reporting across businesses of their cost savings and environmental impacts. However, Team Prosperity found that requiring and even providing tools for reporting (such as sets of excel sheets) can be burdensome for businesses and frustrating for program administrators.
- 6. Funding:** Surveyed businesses showed a willingness to pay less than \$100 annually for the program, yet many other business sustainability programs charge significantly higher fees. Programs that in the past were offered for free now have fees to sustain programming.

Recommendations and Program Development

Team Prosperity developed five key major recommendations to re-structure the Petal Project with a strong workforce component, clear business benefits, and supportive networks developed through

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partnerships and strengthened ties to the program's champion businesses.

Recommendation 1: Expand the program framework to align with stakeholder priorities, regional needs, and successful program models. Expanding upon the Petal Project's five petals, Team Prosperity recommends two broad categories, **Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship**, and **Quality Workers, Quality Workplace**, with the following new focus areas:

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Community Involvement
- Employee Engagement and Advancement
- Health and Wellness
- Wages and Other Benefits

Recommendation 2: Build program capacity to support the administering organization and participating businesses. We detail partnership opportunities with regional and state organizations and propose opportunities to leverage business knowledge gained through the program through an Advisory Council and cohort model.

Recommendation 3: Appeal to businesses across the spectrum of sustainability engagement. Implementing a tiered certification structure and supporting pathways to large scale programs can bring in more businesses, reward them sooner, and still foster long-term sustainability commitment.

Recommendation 4: Build in desired program incentives. Expanding marketing (including helping businesses with internal efforts), education, and recognition of business achievements can be accomplished through shared programming efforts.

Recommendation 5: Adopt a sustainable funding model. Team Prosperity recommends adoption of one of three membership fee scenarios, with additional revenue or cost-sharing to come from sponsorships.

In addition to these recommendations, Team Prosperity developed a logic model to aid PEI in linking the implementation of program activities to desired outcomes, making ongoing evaluation possible as the program is improved over time. The Appendix includes a Program Guide outlining administrative responsibilities, program elements, and a programming timeline.



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Section 1: Project Overview

Introduction

In the summer of 2016, the project team (“Team Prosperity”) was charged with evaluating and proposing solutions for two initiatives of Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI), an economic development branch of the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA). The two initiatives were Buyer Supplier—a web-based program intended to increase intraregional purchasing by connecting regional buyers to regional sellers—and the Petal Project—a “green business certification” program designed to help East Central Iowa businesses “adopt policies and practices that positively impact the environment and the company’s bottom line.”¹

For reasons provided later in the report, Buyer Supplier was removed from the project scope in October 2016. As for the Petal Project, PEI asked our team to evaluate the program and find possible solutions for the decline in program participation. After refining the project scope, the Team Prosperity developed a plan to tackle the problem.

Our approach to the problem was twofold: (1) evaluate the Petal Project to determine what has worked and not worked and how to improve upon it; (2) research best practices for sustainability programs, especially those employed in the context of economic development. Team Prosperity relied on its findings to develop a renewed sustainability program that builds upon the achievements of the Petal Project.

PEI and Petal Project

ECIA is the Council of Governments for East Central Iowa. Its jurisdiction includes Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties. ECIA provides regional planning services involving community and economic development, housing, as well as transit and transportation.

PEI, as an economic development branch of ECIA, is a partnership of economic development leaders from Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, and Jones counties, as well as the non-contiguous City of DeWitt. PEI’s goal is to increase and expand economic segments and share expertise,

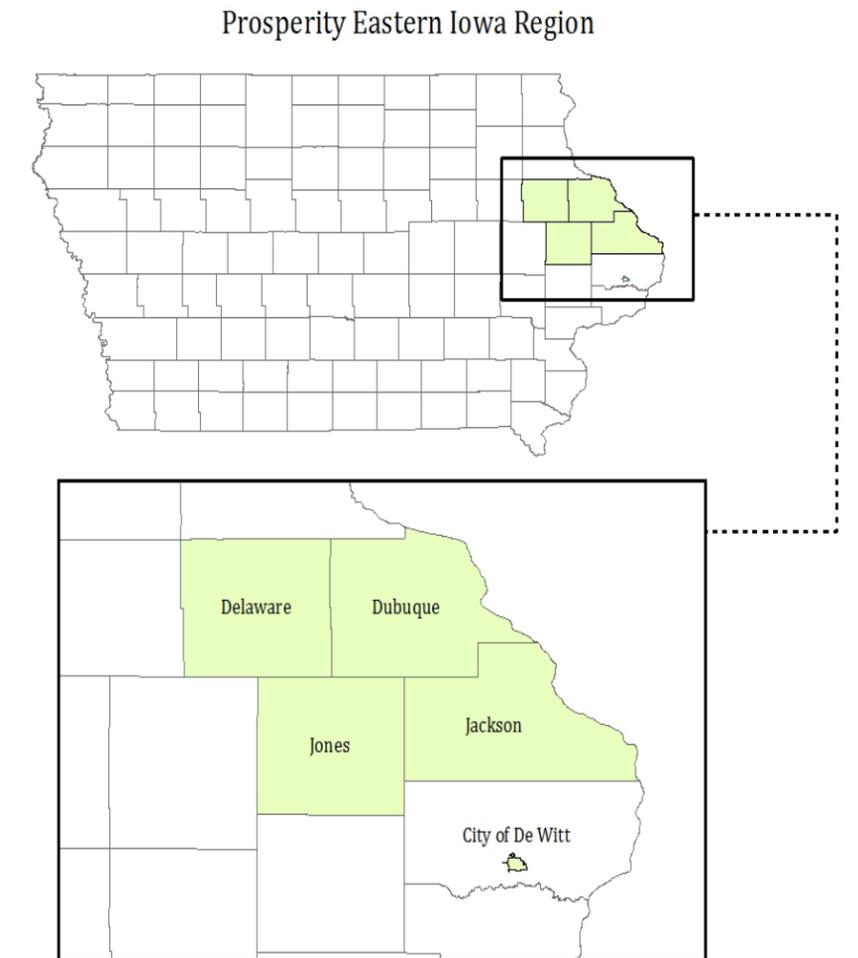


Figure 1: Map of Counties Served by Prosperity Eastern Iowa

support services, experiences, and projects that will empower each individual entity with the collective strength of its partners.²

The Petal Project is PEI’s regional green business certification program. Initiated in 2009, the program provides organizations a framework for reducing their use of energy, water, and natural resources to benefit the environment and their bottom line.³ The ultimate goal of the Petal Project is to make sustainability simple, easy, and cost-effective for organizations.⁴

As currently structured, the Petal Project provides 110 criteria encompassing five different areas. The five categories are waste reduction, energy conservation, pollution prevention, staff education, and water conservation. Within each category, an organization must complete all required and a specified number of optional criteria to earn a “petal” for the category. Once a business has earned all five petals, it is classified as a green certified business. Organizations participating in the Petal Project are categorized as either a “Petal Participant”—one that has enrolled but not completed all five petals—or “Petal Certified”—one that has completed all five

petals and continues to satisfy the criteria.

Currently, besides ECIA—which officially participates in the Petal Project—there are 21 active participants, 14 of which are Petal Certified. Collectively, these participants represent a diverse range of sectors—including nonprofit, education, finance, medical, printing, manufacturing, and retail—and employ over 4,000 people.⁵

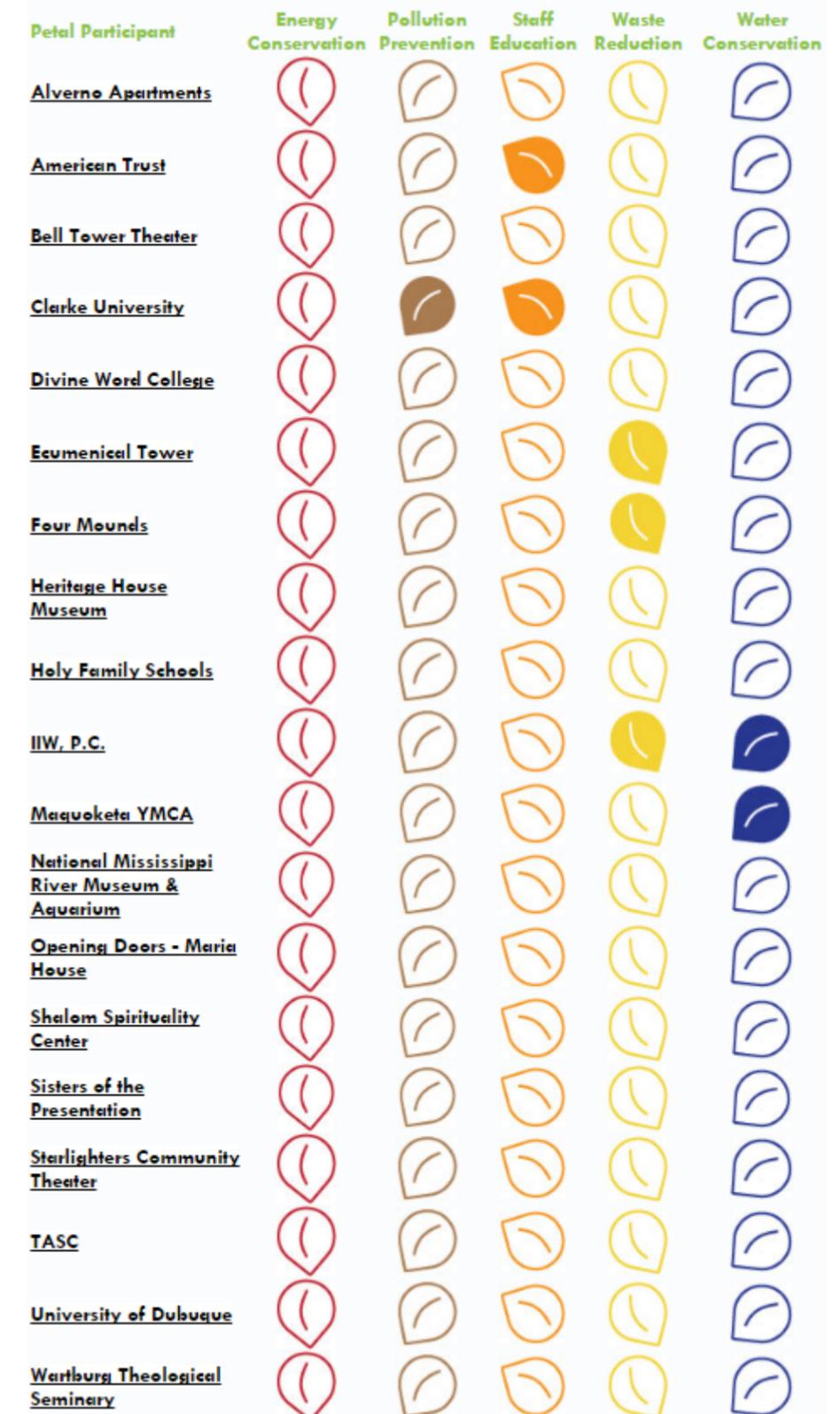
At its inception, the Petal Project was funded by grants. In 2012, however, following the expiration of one such grant, PEI began charging a participation fee to make up the difference. The membership fee schedule can be seen below.

In recent years, PEI saw an inordinate number of departures from the program. PEI board members and staff speculated that the decline in participation was due in part to an unpopular membership fee, perceived lack of return on investment,

CURRENT FEE SCHEDULE FOR PETAL PROJECT	
Employees (FTE)	Annual Fee
500+	\$1,000
100-499	\$600
50-99	\$500
11-49	\$400
1-10	\$200
Petal Certified	\$100

Table 1: Current Fee Schedule for Petal Project

Figure 2: List of Current Petal Project Participants and Their Progress Toward Certification



overwhelming criteria, and a lack of brand/program recognition.

Can We Make a Business Case for Sustainability?

Programs like the Petal Project strive to help businesses see beyond a traditional bottom line. While profits still matter, how those profits are made, and the ramifications for communities and natural resources, also matter. Businesses are recognizing that investment value is not captured by profit alone. In fact, “a business model focused solely on financial profit is inherently unsustainable if it ignores two critical elements necessary to its success: human and natural capital.” A UN report titled, *The Business Case for Responsible Corporate Adaptation*, states that companies are recognizing “their ability to grow and prosper cannot be disconnected from community well-being.”⁶

This wider lens means a new approach to business: the “triple bottom line.” Characterized by “people, planet, profit,” or the three “E’s” of sustainability, “social equity, economic viability,

environmental stewardship,” businesses operating under a sustainability framework turn a viable profit while and stewarding all resources efficiently and equitably. As key economic players, businesses support individual, community, and environmental well-being. A triple bottom line framework for businesses must come to terms with one question: is there a business case to be made for sustainability?

A growing research provides evidence of a wide range of benefits that accrue to businesses who advance sustainability goals. Businesses may gain operational efficiency, strengthened values, human resources improvements, marketing power, and expanded networks with other businesses, community organizations, and governing bodies. Aligning business concerns with sustainability helps businesses grow smarter as they grow stronger.

Analyzing the environmental and social impacts of continuing “business as usual” can help businesses understand a wide range of risks and incorporate them into short- and long-term decision-making. This in turn can help businesses realize the opportunity to innovate their processes, products, and markets. According to

Natural Capitalism Solutions, “as climate change, natural resource constraints... and a host of other factors drive unprecedented changes in business, the [business case for sustainability] will only grow stronger.”⁷ By adapting to such constraints, businesses can operate more effectively in the present while preparing for an uncertain future.

Stewarding resources more effectively can lead to efficiencies and cost savings. Businesses are recognizing that green processes can increase profits and reduce costs. Improving energy efficiency and reducing waste have been cited as leading to the highest cost savings, but other practices or policy changes can lead to monetary benefits as well. Some of the most resource-intensive business activities involve employees--their recruitment, hiring, training, and development. Human capital can become a significant source of cost savings.

Lastly, people prefer to do business with companies that are doing good things, aligning their values with those of the companies they purchase from. A Nielsen survey in 2015 communicated positive trends for businesses diving into

sustainability. Sales of consumer goods from companies with a sustainability brand grew more than four times faster than those without one between 2014 and 2015. Based on a survey of 30,000 consumers in 60 countries, two-thirds of global consumers across income levels are willing to pay more for goods from companies who have built a sustainability brand, up from 50% in 2014, signaling the profitability of becoming known for sustainability. “Going green” is a power thing to promote and market.

The Eastern Iowa Business Case for Sustainability

PEI serves Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson and Jones counties, in addition to the City of DeWitt. The region faces an aging workforce and a future mismatch between demand and supply of workers, placing the impetus on businesses to be proactive about attracting, retaining, and developing the workforce they need. For a sustainability program like the Petal Project to serve the region as an economic development tool, it must address the salient social and economic trends threatening the region’s long-term viability.

Profile of Region & Workforce Needs

The population of the PEI region is approximately 158,304, a 2.1% increase from 2009. Within the region, the growth in Dubuque County has offset population loss of the other counties. According to the ECIA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy plan (CEDS), Jones, Jackson, Delaware, and Clinton (where the City of DeWitt is located) counties lost population between 2010 and 2014; only Dubuque County experienced positive 2.9% growth. Outmigration is one of several factors affecting the region’s ability to sustain its workforce.

Outmigration goes hand in hand with an aging population. The median age for the PEI region is approximately 42; Dubuque County is the youngest county, with a median age of 38.9 years. As of 2014, 23.2% of the population is under 18 years of age, and 16.5% of the population is 65 years of age or older. Almost a third of the regional population is between 45 and 64 years old. In effect, the region is experiencing a “silver tsunami”—the retirement of a large portion of the current workforce. A 2016 study by Smart Solutions analyzes 7 counties (including the

entire PEI region) and projects by 2026 workers between 25-29 years of age will represent the smallest proportion of the total population (4.7%), while workers between 60-64 and 65-69 years of age will represent the largest (6.8% and 7.0%, respectively). In absolute numbers, workers near retirement (between 60-64 years of age) are projected to outnumber workers aged 25-29 by over 5,000 people by 2026. Workers post-retirement age (between 65-69 years of age) will outnumber the same age group by 5,800 people.

Low unemployment levels capture the region’s current labor supply issues: as of October 2016, all PEI counties had unemployment below 4%, highlight the need to import—and thus attract—workers and retain the existing workforce to the greatest extent possible. A study of the connection relationship between job dissatisfaction and turnover found that employee reservations about finding a job in a market with high unemployment kept dissatisfied workers from leaving their workplace; geographical areas with low unemployment have less leverage to dissuade employees from leaving.

Several studies have been conducted to identify workforce needs and propose economic development strategies to address these issues, across Iowa and specifically in the region served by PEI. The 2016 Greater Dubuque Region Skills Gap Analysis by Smart Solutions and a 2014 state-level analysis conducted by Battelle Technology Partnership Practice are summarized below.

2016 Greater Dubuque Region Skills Gap Analysis

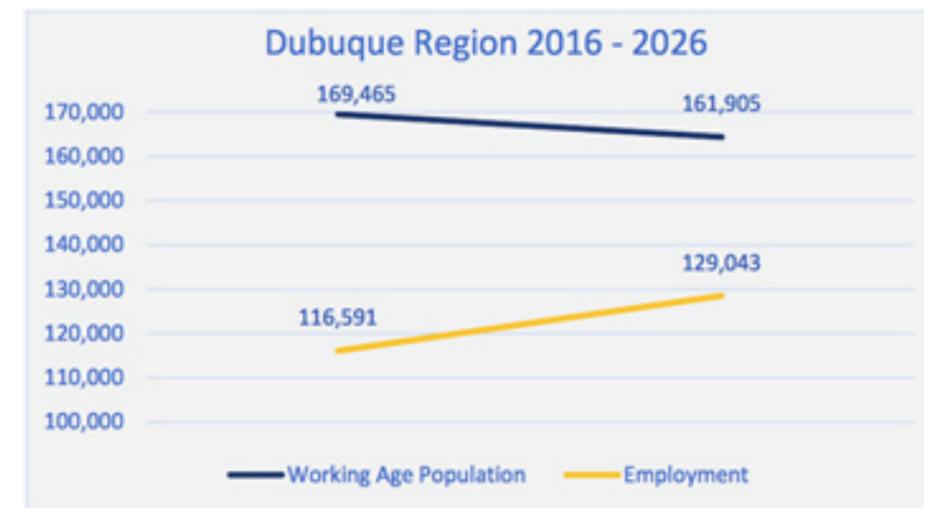
The Greater Dubuque Development Corporation worked with Smart Solutions, Northeast Iowa Community College, and EMSI Analyst data to conduct a report on workforce needs in 2016. The analysis includes PEI region counties and four additional counties. The report found employment demand is increasing as the working age population decreases, with projections made through the year 2026. Smart Solutions projects a shortage of college graduates to fill open jobs in 2026 due to 1) the out-migration of skilled graduates to other communities, and 2) potential barriers to hiring new graduates. Businesses must attract and retain young people through proactive efforts to hire young workers and train them. Expanding

community connections with students prior to graduation is another key strategy. Proactive talent pipeline development help students find viable regional career paths post-graduation.

Findings on wage levels could also affect the region's ability to attract and hold onto its workers. Dubuque County's median hourly earnings per worker is \$17.89/hour; this is 17.1% less than the national median, 6.4% less than the state median, and only 2% higher than the region's median. This means the region's median wage falls even further behind state and national levels. Dubuque County ranks 6th of 8 MSAs in Iowa for median wage. The State of Iowa's average earnings for private sector workers stood at \$40,489 in 2013 compared to a national average of \$49,700, roughly 23% lower (other findings from this report are detailed below).

Implications:

- Improving hiring practices, expanding training options, and developing internship and mentorship programs (or participating in existing programs) can better position businesses to retain Iowa workforce members.
- The need to retain Iowa workforce and import additional workers means



*Graph 1: Employment in the Dubuque Region
Source: Smart Solutions, 2016*



*Graph 2: Earnings per Worker in Dubuque MSA
Source: Smart Solutions, 2016*

businesses must be proactive about creating attractive workplaces that appeal to the needs of workers across backgrounds and age groups. Inclusive practices, community involvement, and opportunities for employee advancement and wellness can set businesses apart as great places to work.

- The region’s wage levels rank below other regions within the state. In a market with high employment demand and low supply, businesses will have to pay competitive wages to secure the workers they need. Businesses can offer wages above the minimum—or based on ‘living wage’ indices—and find ways to augment wages with other workplace benefits.

Iowa’s Re-Envisioned Economic Development Roadmap

In Iowa, two of every three companies surveyed are experiencing recruitment problems. Nearly 400 corporate executives were asked to rank workforce availability and workforce quality on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high): workforce availability received a score of 4.2, compared to a national ranking of 4.9. Workforce quality in Iowa received a score of 4.8.

The report outlines an action plan for attracting the workforce in demand

by Iowa businesses through internship programs and skills development. Across the state, creating talent pipelines through programs like the Iowa Student Internship Program and other experiential learning programs has proved successful, but existing programs are limited in reach and resources. The action plan emphasizes the “untapped opportunity” for Iowa to advance workforce development by

expanding efforts to upskill the existing workforce. In particular, Iowa college graduates may be underemployed and willing to take on higher-skilled work if provided career-specific training.

Implications:

- Businesses willing to take the initiative to start their own internship and apprenticeship programs (or support existing programs) will aid the effort

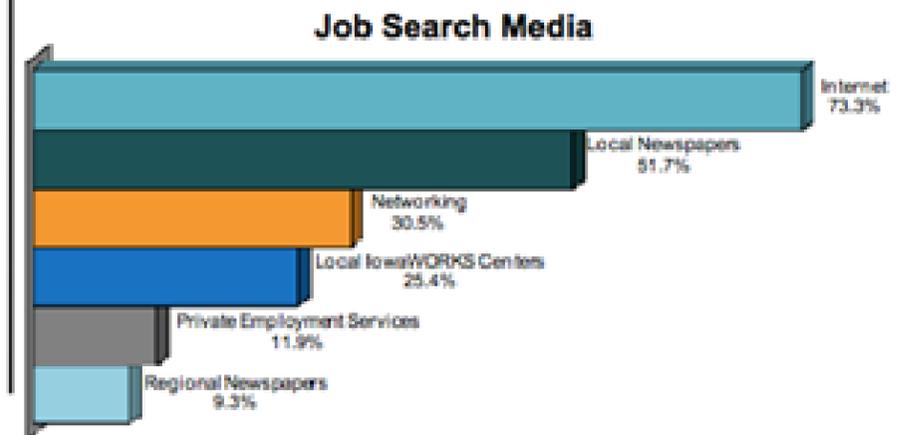
*Figure 3: Laborshed Analysis
Source: Prosperity Eastern Iowa, 2012*

Unemployed - Those Willing to Enter/Re-enter Employment

- 8.5% of the region are unemployed*
- 71.8% are willing to accept employment
- 48.3% have become unemployed within the last year;
- Average age is 48 years old
- 55.7% are female and 44.3% are male
- Education:
 - 59.8% have some post high school education
 - 2.5% are trade certified
 - 2.5% completed vocational training
 - 10.7% have an associate degree
 - 18.0% have an undergraduate degree
 - 4.9% have a postgraduate/professional degree
- Estimated wage range to attract the upper 66-75% of qualified hourly wage applicants is \$11.14 to \$12.00 per hour with a median lowest wage considered of \$10.00 per hour
- 71.9% expressed interest in temporary employment opportunities
- 66.1% expressed interest in seasonal employment opportunities
- 51.2% expressed interest in working varied shifts (2nd, 3rd & split);
- Willing to commute an average of 25 miles one way for the right opportunity

**Employment status is self-identified by the survey respondent. The unemployment percentage does not reflect the unemployment rate published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which applies a stricter definition.*

- Would prefer to enter employment that offers the following benefits:
 - Health/medical insurance - 84.2%
 - Pension/retirement options - 35.6%
 - Dental coverage - 31.7%
 - Paid vacation - 30.7%
 - Vision coverage - 17.8%
 - Paid holidays - 12.9%
 - Paid sick leave - 11.9%
 - Life insurance - 7.9%
 - Prescription drug coverage - 5.9%
 - Disability insurance - 4.0%
- 64.7% are seeking employment offers where the employer/employee share the cost of medical insurance premiums.



to bring postsecondary student interns into full-time employment within the State.

- In general, businesses must play a proactive role in developing the workforce they need.

Skills Gap

Many regional workforce studies discuss a “skills gap,” most often for skilled manufacturing production, information technology, and health services jobs. Either explicitly or implicitly, workforce problems are attributed to workers’ lack of training or education to meet the workforce demands of Eastern Iowa. Some research points out that a claim of “skills gap” can often signal that companies are unable to find workers at a wage the company is willing to pay. MIT economist Paul Osterman co-authored a study of the manufacturing industry nationally and found that wages for manufacturing production workers with the highest level of training have not increased as would be expected if a skills shortage existed in the industry. A report from Iowa State University found similar results in Iowa; there is no evidence of workers working for longer hours or receiving higher wages in high-demand

positions.

Yet Prosperity Eastern Iowa’s 2012 Laborshed Analysis found that an hourly wage of \$11.14 to \$12.00 would be necessary to attract the upper 66-75% of qualified hourly applicants who are not currently employed. Figure 5 shows the same potential workers also value benefit packages and flexible work opportunities.

Overall, regional workforce studies show there is a clear case for businesses to compete for workers and be proactive in solving workforce problems. At the end of this report, we outline recommendations for the Petal Project program to expand its framework to include strategies that help businesses attract and retain workers by implementing training programs, reducing hiring barriers, offering flexible work options and competitive wages, and implementing other strategies to become an attractive workplace. Workers are central to sustainability in Eastern Iowa.

Using this Report

This report is aimed at providing the background, frameworking, and results of Team Prosperity’s program evaluation. The main findings are condensed into six emergent themes, with varying levels of consensus. From the findings, specific recommendations are being proposed, each of which exist in their own right, but would be most effective if implemented in conjunction with other recommendations. Program structure, criteria, and materials can all be found in the appendix of the report.

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Section 2: Evaluation Framework

Impetus for Evaluation

The Petal Project has not been comprehensively evaluated since its inception in 2009. As such, and to ensure the efficient use of resources, PEI sought an evaluation of the program. Points of concern raised by PEI board members and staff, and indicated by program records, include as follows:

- Expiration of two grants at the end of FY17
- Program attrition, including trends characterized by Petal Participants failing to reach certification and Petal Certified leaving the program
- Possibly perceived lack of return on investment by participating businesses
- Potentially outdated or overwhelming program criteria
- Lack of brand/program recognition in the region
- Team Prosperity set out to develop a framework for evaluating the program's design and implementation and determining potential improvements.

Within the first few years of the program, the Petal Project enlisted prominent Dubuque-area organizations and received awards for environmental and economic development excellence (2011 and 2012, respectively).⁸ Over time, while businesses continued to join, other participants left the program, some without ever becoming certified. At the time of evaluation, there were 22 businesses engaged in the Petal Project as certified or participating businesses. Records available to date indicate no businesses beyond Dubuque County have participated and/or received certification. Fourteen have achieved certification, while eight additional businesses and organizations are working towards it. Organizations like the City of Dubuque and the River Lights Bookstore achieved certification but have since left the program.

Through a series of conversations in fall of 2016, PEI staff and Board members cited the following as potential causes of decline in the program's success:

- A lack of incentive to participate or a perceived lack of return on investment;
- A set of certification criteria that may be

outdated or overwhelming; and

- A lack of brand and/or program recognition.

A closely related issue is that, as a program, the Petal Project has incomplete records regarding aggregate impacts from changes businesses have made over time. Reporting on implemented practices, cost savings, and environmental impacts varies widely across businesses; many report nothing or have not produced an updated report in years. Businesses often make short-term expenditures to meet criteria requirements in order to reap long-term benefits. Depending on how businesses determine a return on investment, they may perceive benefits do not outweigh costs.

Funding also affects businesses' short-term costs and the amount of staff capacity available to support the program. When the Petal Project started, it was funded by grants and dues from members within the counties served by PEI. Originally, businesses could participate in the program for free. A change in grant funding in 2012 led to the introduction of participation fees. This is not

a phenomenon unique to the Petal Project, but it may have served as a disincentive to participation.⁹ Certified businesses must pay \$100 annually to maintain their certification. Participating businesses pay a larger fee based on the number of full-time-equivalent employees.¹⁰

Additional changes in grant funding for FY18 will reduce program funding by over 50% when the Grants to Green and Clear4 program expire. The Grants to Green program, administered by the Greater Dubuque Community Foundation, helps fund participation costs to non-profits pursuing Petal Project certification. It accounts for \$6,000 of Petal Project funding. The Petal Clear4 program is part of a partnership between the City of Dubuque, the University of Iowa, and the Environmental Protection Agency and currently accounts for an additional \$2,000. Petal Project fees from certified and participating businesses and organizations provide \$4,400, for a total of \$12,400 in Petal Project funding for FY17.

The past seven years of operation do provide opportunities to build upon in the future. For one, the program reached a wide range of businesses and organizations

in as many as nine industries, including manufacturing, entertainment, professional services, education, health services, and retail. Thanks to the Grants to Green program, many non-profit organizations could participate.

Another important opportunity lies at the heart of these businesses--their workforce. Petal-affiliated businesses employ over 4,000 workers. Finding ways to maximize their engagement in the sustainability goals of their workplace can improve sustainability practices and improve employees' experience at work. Furthermore, exploring the addition of criteria that address employee treatment and workplace experience could impact a large number of employees' lives.

Program Evaluation and Development Framework

Evaluation of economic development programs falls broadly into two categories: formative and summative. Formative evaluation provides information on improving program design and operations, while summative evaluation is a systematic attempt to measure the effects, both

intended and unintended, of some level of government intervention.¹¹ Systematic evaluation may take the form of pre- and post-testing, benefit-cost analysis, economic impact assessment, or other quasi-experimental methods.

Summative evaluation requires reliable and consistent measures for program costs and accomplishments. Reporting varies widely across Petal Project participants, with some reporting environmental impacts of their actions (e.g., reduction in energy usage by a certain percentage), some reporting cost savings (e.g., saving a dollar amount annually on water bill), and some failing to report either type of impacts. For those who have reported in the past, their cost savings and/or environmental impacts may not have been updated for years.

As a result, Team Prosperity determined it infeasible to contact businesses for past data on cost savings and other impacts and developed a methodology for formative rather than summative evaluation. We applied several evaluation tools that focus on the program itself, rather than a systematic assessment of all impacts. Our evaluation framework falls broadly into two categories: stakeholder engagement,

consisting of surveys, interviews, and consultation with the PEI staff and Board members; and comparative analyses of green business criteria and programmatic structure.

Under this framework, we assessed program activities to determine how well the Petal Project is implemented, the degree to which participants are satisfied with the program, and what opportunities exist to improve the program. All recommendations for program improvements are based on findings from stakeholder input and research into best practices of other green business programs.

One advantage of this approach is its focus on a wide range of stakeholder input through surveys, interviews, and consultation with the PEI Board and staff. As an additional step, we developed a logic model as a tool for evaluating our proposed program so any changes can be implemented with desired outcomes in mind.

The graphic to the right depicts our two-prong program evaluation framework. The comparative analysis and research provided a solid foundation of understanding upon which we could integrate the findings from our stakeholder engagement activities.

Evaluation Goals

Under a formative evaluation framework, the goals of the Petal Project evaluation are to:

1. Determine participant satisfaction and identify successful elements of the current Petal Project program and where there is room for improvement;
2. Compare the framework and operation of the Petal Project to other regional, national, and international green business programs to identify best practices to

incorporate into a new program;

3. Identify ways for the program to complement other economic development and sustainability efforts in Eastern Iowa, with special attention to PEI's strategic goals.

Figure 4: Program Evaluation Framework



Section 3: Evaluation Methods and Results

Introduction

Our evaluation framework consisted of extensive stakeholder engagement and comparative analyses of multiple elements of regional, national, and international green business programs. Each of the two broad components of the framework contained multiple phases. We present each of those sub-steps in the following format: a summary of what each step entailed and significant conclusions; an expanded methodology; and all key findings for each step of that part of the evaluation.

Comparative Analysis: Overview and Key Findings

Overview

Team Prosperity developed a two-part comparative analysis to evaluate the framework and operation of the Petal Project against regional, national, and international green business programs. One goal of this analysis was to find

ways to align PEI's strategic priorities with a successful business sustainability certification model. Team Prosperity developed a criteria-comparison matrix in part to observe how other programs incorporate social and economic indicators into their framework of sustainability. We identified a mismatch between current PEI priorities, which are economically and socially oriented, and the topic areas addressed by the Petal Project, which focus on the environment. Other programs show it is possible to close that gap without sacrificing environmental stewardship or sustainability.

Another goal was to identify proven best practices that are applicable to PEI's administrative capacity and regional dynamics. We developed a program-comparison matrix to compare the Petal Project's structure and programming against other programs based on eight elements. We found most programs charge significantly higher fees than the Petal Project, emphasize marketing and employee engagement as incentives, create strategic partnerships with public

and private organizations, and leverage existing networks of businesses to build momentum for the program and maximize staff resources.

Part I: Criteria Comparison

Methodology

Team Prosperity consulted over 30 sustainability assessment/certification programs, reporting guidelines, and catalogs of business performance indicators and metrics, totaling more than 2,000 criteria and guidelines. Team Prosperity created a criteria-comparison matrix to conduct a side-by-side comparison of programs. Programs receive a colored dot next to a selected topic area if they contain at least one criteria pertaining to that topic.¹² The comparison highlights areas of overlap and omission between the programs. Individual programs may contain multiple criteria or metrics within a single topic area, or they may not address certain topics at all.

From the total set of criteria gathered through research, a representative

Table 2: Sustainability Framework Comparison

selection of 30 topic areas (e.g., “energy use”) under five major categories were chosen to create the matrix. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is internationally recognized and cross-referenced in many business assessment programs and thus provided a reputable baseline for selecting the topic areas. It contains guidelines for reporting business performance in forty economic, environmental, and social topic areas.¹³ From those forty, Team Prosperity removed considerations less relevant to businesses in Eastern Iowa (e.g., anti-competition compliance).

Six other assessment/certification programs were selected for the analysis. The programs were selected to compare across geographic scope (international, national, and regional programs) and sustainability frameworks. Ceres and B Impact assess businesses across the globe, while Green Plus and Green America serve primarily domestic businesses and organizations. The last three are state or regional programs. Programs also had to have full criteria available online.

	Ceres	B Impact	Green Business America	Green Plus	Illinois Green Business	California Green Business	Petal Project
Sustainable Management							
Designated Sustainability Leadership	●	●	●		●	●	●
Financial/Organizational Documentation and Plann	●	●	●	●	●		●
Mission, Vision, and/or Values Statement	●	●	●	●	●		●
Sustainability Training and Awareness	●	●		●	●	●	●
Stakeholder/Other Business Engagement	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Economic Performance							
Overall Economic Performance		●	●				
Business Efficiency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Job Growth		●					
Innovation and Technology	●						
Environmental Responsibility							
Materials		●	●	●	●	●	●
Energy	●	●		●	●	●	●
Water	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Biodiversity					●		
Emissions		●				●	●
Waste	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Product Design/Life Cycle	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transportation	●		●	●	●	●	●
Facility Standards and Location	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Social Responsibility							
Equal Employment Opportunity Hiring		●		●			
Training, Education, and Advancement		●					
Diversity/Inclusion	●	●		●			
Equal Remuneration for Women and Men		●	●	●			
Minimum Wage and Living Wage		●	●	●			
Employee Engagement and Evaluation		●		●	●		
Employee Safety and Wellness		●	●	●		●	●
Flexible Work Options		●		●			
Leave and Benefits	●	●		●			
Internships/Apprenticeships				●			
Community Involvement		●	●	●	●		●
Charitable Giving and Volunteerism		●		●			
Product/Service Labeling	●		●	●			
Purchasing/Supply Chain Policies and Practices							
Social/Environmental standards	●	●	●	●	●		●
Local Purchasing Policy		●	●			●	●



Findings

Noteworthy findings from the comparison are included below by category:

Sustainable management:

- Programs range from requiring the formation of a “green team” to requiring the CEO’s performance evaluation to be linked to sustainability goals.
- With the exception of GAGB, all selected programs emphasize training employees to become drivers of implementing sustainable practices.

Economic and social responsibility:

- Only B Impact assesses businesses based on job growth, and only Ceres acknowledges innovation and R&D investments as components of sustainable businesses.
- B Impact and Green Plus cover extensive social considerations, with questions on living wages, flexible work options, and diversity policies. Impact’s focus on employee engagement, and Green Plus’ focus on businesses not normally drawn to “green” initiatives, may explain the socially oriented sustainability framework.

Environmental responsibility:

- Programs cover a comprehensive range of environmental practices and policies.
- Environmentally focused programs do not include a high level of social concerns. Intriguingly, the categories are not always clear cut. CGBN includes flexible work options as an element of promoting clean air by reducing commuting miles traveled.

Responsible purchasing/supply chain:

- Most programs require businesses to investigate and assess their supply chain for adherence to certain social and environmental policies.
- CGBN and the Petal Project emphasize local purchasing as a form of “green” purchasing.

Part II: Organizational Comparison

Methodology

Beyond criteria, the many programs researched by Team Prosperity represent a wide range of services and operational structures. Team Prosperity created a program-comparison matrix to compare different elements across varied programs.

The team also identified two programs, Green Plus and the Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA), that overlap with the Petal Project and suggest practices to improve the program, as well as pitfalls to avoid. Comparing both criteria and overall program operations informed best practices for revising the Petal Project.

Within the matrix, select characteristics are provided on the structure and offerings of six programs, broken down by the following eight categories:

Benefits and incentives:

What benefits do businesses receive from the program? How are businesses incentivized to participate and remain engaged over time?

Technical assistance and resources:

In addition to the benefits, what level of technical assistance do businesses receive through the program? Who provides this assistance? What resources help businesses develop and accomplish sustainability goals?

Costs to participate and program-funding structure:

What do businesses pay into the program,

and how does the program sustain itself?

Assessment and certification process:

How and when are businesses evaluated?
How and when is certification conferred?
How long does the certification remain valid?

Criteria development and adaptability:

How were criteria determined? Does the program award certain actions more highly than others? Are there tiered levels of attainment? Are there special considerations for businesses of a particular size or industry?

Tracking impacts:

Who is responsible for reporting and maintaining records of the impacts of sustainable practices? What methods or resources are available for this purpose?

Partnerships and capacity:

Does the program offer services through other community partners? Does it facilitate connections between businesses or foster networking and knowledge sharing?

Unique elements or key takeaways:

What differentiates this program from others? What lessons might apply to the Petal Project's evaluation and update?

Findings

The matrix with the answers to the aforementioned questions that were used to assess the programs can be found in the appendix of this report.

Building on the information captured in the matrix, Team Prosperity's comparative analysis concludes with detailed descriptions of the Green Plus program and the Illinois Green Business Association, highlighting best practices and potential pitfalls especially relevant to the Petal Project.

Green Plus Program

Overview:

The Green Plus program began in 2009 as an initiative of the Redwoods Group Foundation. It operates under a “triple bottom line” approach to sustainability, or “Planet, People, and Performance.” The program is one of few with an explicit focus on business education, networking, and the role of sustainability in economic development. It is recognized as a third-party certification system with nearly 400 businesses listed on its National Business Directory.

Challenges Shared with the Petal Project:

Green Plus seeks to engage small businesses, rural businesses, and others not typically considered “green.” While it has supported a number of such businesses through extensive partnerships and grant/scholarship opportunities, achieving its vision for this “niche” market remains dependent on outside funding.

Reporting and tracking of cost savings and other impacts resulting from sustainable practices is limited or non-existent. Aside from one survey conducted in

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2011, the program does not track overall impacts. The transitory nature of the staff comprised of student fellows may make tracking progress and impacts over time extra challenging.

Unique Elements and Best Practices:

Small and Rural Business Focus: Criteria acknowledge many small businesses do not own their workspace outright but lease from landlords who control what improvements can be made.

Fellow Program for Staff Capacity, Knowledge-Sharing, and Marketing Support:

The Green Plus Fellow program brings together graduate students across disciplines from multiple universities (e.g., UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, technical schools, etc.) to provide the majority of Green Plus staff support. In addition to coaching, Fellows write blog posts, post relevant articles, produce podcasts, and conduct research surveys. Fellows work with program partners to produce resource guides that help small and rural businesses with specific challenges.

Leveraging Local Policy and Business Networks:

Green Plus partnered with the Institute for Sustainable Development and the Council of Smaller Enterprises in the City of Cleveland to develop policy that awards certified businesses. In Cleveland, Green Plus businesses are getting additional points on municipal bids.

Green Plus identifies existing business networks to focus its certification efforts. In the summer of 2015, Green Plus certified a number of businesses in PRO*ACT, a network of fresh produce and foodservice distributors. For Green Plus, supporting PRO*ACT businesses built momentum for their program, as a large number of businesses were certified in a short time period. It leveraged staff resources effectively, concentrating efforts on businesses with similar challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainability goals.



ILLINOIS GREEN
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
www.illinoisgba.com



Illinois Green Business Association

Overview:

The IGBA grew from a student organization at the University of Illinois in 2007 to become a well-trusted green business non-profit that has worked with over 3,000 businesses, certifying 80 businesses across the state.¹⁵

Unique Elements and Best Practices:

Tracking Tools and Upgrade to Online Database:

An IGBA intern developed a comprehensive tracking mechanism on Excel to help businesses monitor their practices and business impacts. The system performs calculations and reports to businesses how close they are to meeting certain thresholds. Even with this system, IGBA has found businesses struggle to keep track of files, use them properly, and return them to IGBA staff. Through a long-standing relationship built with the California Green Business (CGB) program, the IGBA will soon be upgrading to an online database in use by the CGB and similar programs in Colorado, Nebraska, Nevada, and Washington. Grant funding through the National Environmental

Information Network, an initiative of the EPA, will facilitate efforts to translate the on-line database used by the CGB into a system that meets the needs of IGBA. Each year the CGB apply for and receive this grant funding, they seek out new programs to sign on to the grant. Should the Petal Project continue, access to this database tool could help bring the program to state scale.

Criteria Development and Accountability:

The IGBA created Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) with experts from academia and public and private sectors. TAGs oversee the efficacy of program criteria and bring in up-to-date knowledge of business, industry, and environmental practice to make changes as necessary. The program will soon transition to its third version of criteria, which will allow for public comment for the first time. Public review allows IGBA to become a “third-party” verification system. This in turn allows IGBA businesses to apply their certification status towards becoming Benefit Corporations.

Lessons to Consider:

The IGBA struggled to make partnerships with the University of Illinois and local

community colleges contribute to program success and meaningful sustainability projects for businesses. Teachers and students must be willing to learn and accurately perform tasks other than energy audits, and resources must be available for that training. Student auditors also confronted distrust from some business partners, who felt their results were not authoritative.

The IGBA has mixed experience with detailed tracking methods on cost savings, energy savings, water consumption decreases, etc. Although the ability to report on program impacts builds program credibility, being armed with quantitative evidence may not be the appropriate “tool” to bring some businesses on board. For example, despite having clear information and timeframe on cost savings, one surplus-goods store would not participate in IGBA until the program was recommended by a long-time business partner. Referrals may be more effective to enact culture change and positive attitudes toward sustainability rather than reporting.

Stakeholder Engagement

Overview

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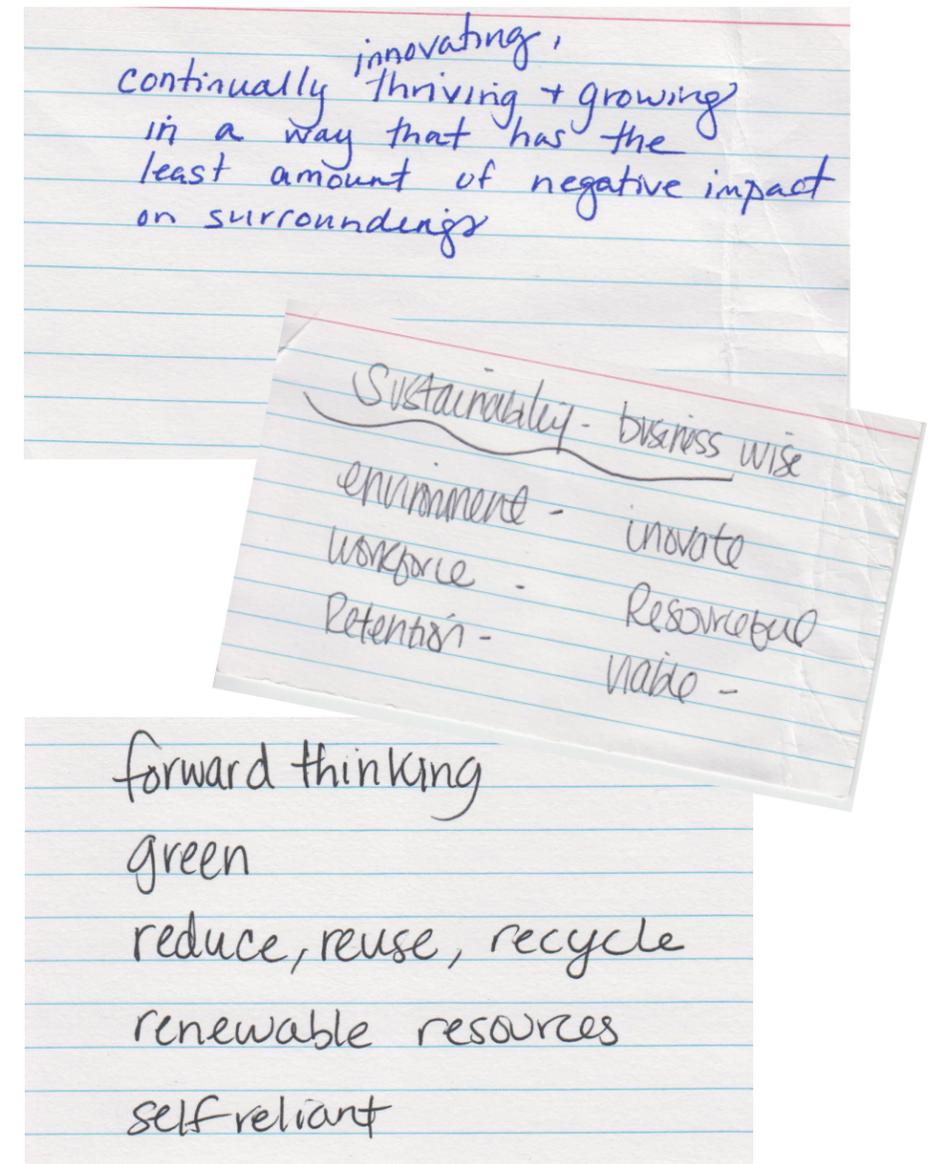
As we researched the sustainability framework and organizational structure of other programs, Team Prosperity employed several methods to gather a broad range of stakeholder input and expert opinion to evaluate the current Petal Project and develop recommendations for its improvement. Those methods included:

- Gathering input at PEI's strategic planning session as well as two PEI Board meetings. Economic development representatives from the City of Dubuque, the City of DeWitt, Delaware County, Jackson County, Jones County, Iowa Workforce Development, IowaWorks, and the regional community college network participated in at least one of the meetings.
- Distributing an online survey to all organizations that had ever participated in the program, former and current, (71 organizations in total).
- Conducting over 20 in-depth interviews with leaders from other regional green business programs, public-private sustainability initiatives, community college networks, and economic development, workforce, and environmental programs.

P.E.I. Strategic Plan and Priorities

Summary

In October 2016, Team Prosperity traveled to Dubuque, Iowa to attend a PEI board meeting and strategic planning session. After a short presentation, the team received support for exploring a “triple bottom line” approach to sustainability, which incorporates social and economic concerns alongside the Petal Project’s environmental focus. The team identified a gap between the workforce-dominated mission and strategies of PEI and the environmental focus of the Petal Project. In March 2017, Team Prosperity again attended a PEI board meeting to gather input on program recommendations including the addition of workforce-related criteria and new programming elements. The team received direction to link environmental criteria to existing manufacturing programs and include rural businesses in its April focus group.



Note cards of PEI board members when asked to define “sustainability” at the October Board Meeting.

October 2016 Meeting

Team Prosperity asked the PEI Board to submit definitions of sustainability. Answers emphasized innovation and wise use of resources, natural or human, indicating enthusiasm for including economic and social concerns in future recommendations for the Petal Project. Responses included phrases like: “green”; “forward thinking”; “thriving within your means”; “self-reliant”; “resourceful”; “innovating, thriving, and growing in a way that has the least amount of negative impact on surroundings”; and “workforce retention.”

At PEI’s strategic planning session, Team Prosperity obtained a questionnaire completed by PEI stakeholders as part of that process. In addition, the team observed PEI board members as they refined PEI’s mission statement and performed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to inform PEI’s goals for the next five years. Several important themes emerged from the session:

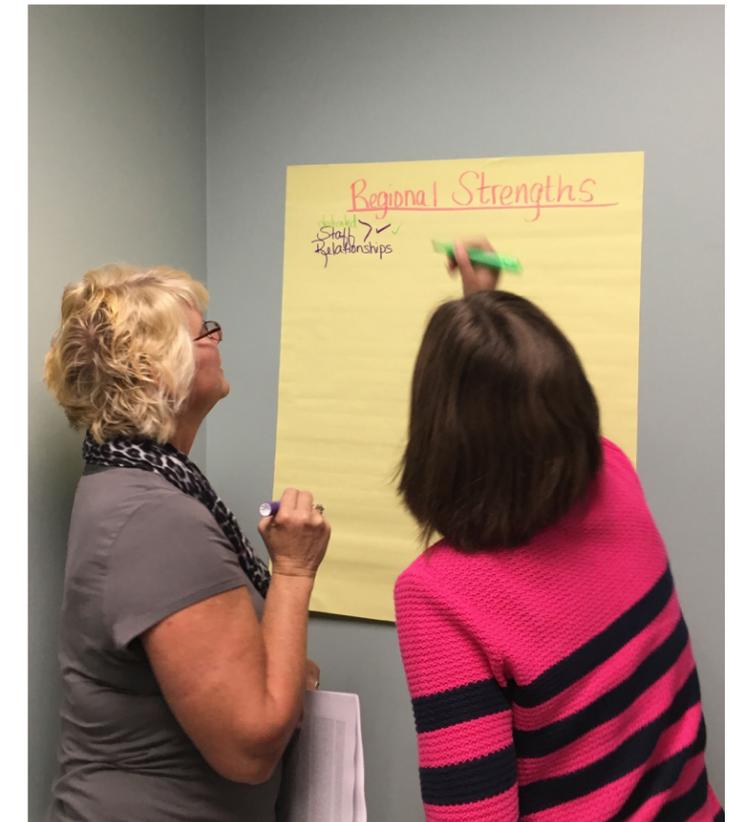
Prevalence of workforce issues: Of 13 open-ended responses asking PEI stakeholders to identify their communities’ main challenges, 11 cited workforce and

jobs skills. Attracting, retaining, and training younger and more skilled workers dominated the discussion.

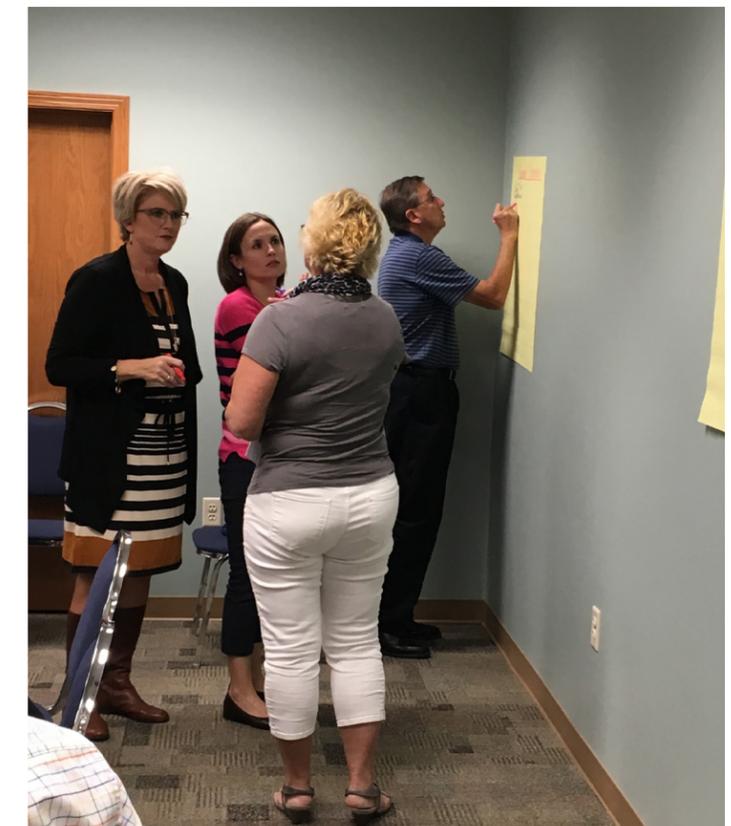
Need for shared services: Terms like “partnership,” “networking,” “sharing,” and “collaboration” came up frequently in the discussion of PEI’s core values and strengths. PEI is a regional partnership in a region of rural and metropolitan communities, with the City of Dubuque, with its relative economic dominance, playing a unique role within the region.

Sustainability as implicit, not explicit: When PEI created the Petal Project in 2009, sustainability was featured prominently among PEI’s strategic goals. Such was not the case in PEI’s strategic plan for 2012-2016 and for 2017-2021. When this was brought to the attention of PEI board members, the consensus response was that they felt sustainability was implied by the other goals.

Focus should be on the Petal Project, not Buyer Supplier: The PEI board officially determined not to continue allocating resources or staff time to the Buyer Supplier program, thereby removing it from the scope of evaluation carried out by Team Prosperity.



PEI board members complete a strategic planning exercise in October.



PEI Board members shared their perspective on challenges facing the Petal Project, which include limited incentives offered to businesses, insufficient reach throughout the region, and inability to attract or accommodate smaller businesses. Staff highlighted the impending loss of grant funding as a need for a self-funded program. Several board members mentioned that business concerns regarding retaining skilled workers overwhelm other concerns like environmental responsibility. One comment suggested identifying “gateways,” or points of intersection where existing needs of businesses overlap with environmental and social responsibility.

In response to this meeting, Team Prosperity researched business sustainability programs to determine the extent to which successful programs include economic and social indicators alongside environmental elements. In addition, the team interviewed regional leaders of programs that address social and economic needs to gauge potential for connectivity between their work and the Petal Project.

March 2017 Meeting

Following a presentation on proposed goal revisions and expansion of the Petal Project’s sustainability framework, Team Prosperity presented proposed program materials providing an additional focus on social and economic in the form of workforce-related criteria. Board members questioned whether the program would be suitable for rural manufacturing businesses, and if there was potential to link the program to other existing manufacturing certification programs.

Survey of Petal Project Affiliated Businesses

Summary

PEI staff communicated to Team Prosperity the importance of incorporating feedback and insight from businesses who had invested time and resources into the program. As a result, in mid-November 2016, Team Prosperity sent out a survey to 71 Petal Project affiliated organizations to guide program evaluation and future recommendations.

Respondents were limited to organizations that had at some point had worked towards or received certification in the program. The survey had a 21% response rate for completing the survey in its entirety, with earlier questions having a response rate of up to 39%.

The survey indicated 95% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and over 90% of respondents believe the program improved their reputation with customers and the community. Other findings identified some room for improvement:

Only 2/3 of respondents agreed the program saved their organization money, and few organizations devote staff time to tracking environmental and monetary impacts. In general, respondents indicated a low willingness to pay (\$200 or less annually) for the current program.

Write-in responses highlighted criteria flexibility/alternatives as a need. Respondents consider some “petals” more “valuable” than others (e.g. energy valued the most 75%; pollution valued the least 50%); and 1/3 feel the program has too many criteria.

Questions designed to reveal business priorities show that reduced operating costs, high quality workers, and improved brand/reputation and marketing ability rank above positive environmental or social impacts. Building a strong business case to appeal to sustainability practices is critical. Detailed survey findings are provided below.

Methodology

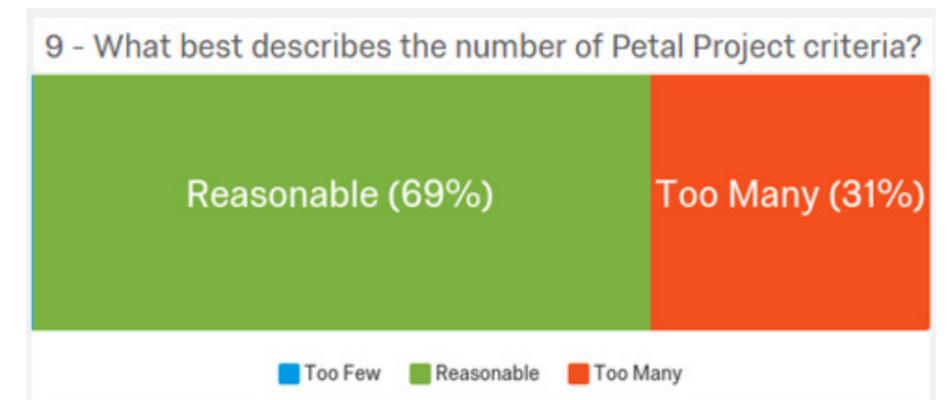
The survey developed by Team Prosperity included a mix of 22 closed- and open-ended questions to identify:

- Successful and unsuccessful elements of the Petal Project;
- Program benefits/incentives that are attractive to businesses;
- Business needs regarding methods for tracking cost savings and environmental impacts, direct staff support, and resources/expertise to implement required practices; and
- Concerns surrounding the current fee structure.

It also included a statement that results would maintain the anonymity of

respondents. PEI staff emailed a link to the survey to the 71 former and current participants of the Petal Project. Businesses had six weeks to submit a response. Response rates fluctuated between 17-38% by question. It should be noted that, because the survey was distributed to all known participants, it was a census survey of the targeted population. The response rate, although fairly robust, comes with limitations for analysis; yet, the responses still provided valuable insight into the Petal Project.

It must be noted that the responses obtained did not capture the perspective of many larger organizations affiliated with the program. Only one respondent had more than 40 full-time employees. Due to a relatively small number of responses, results are presented as part of a descriptive and qualitative analysis as a proportion of total responses; they are not extrapolated to reflect the views of all organizations affiliated with the program. Respondents did represent a wide range of organizations, including professional services, retail, manufacturing, and public and non-profit organizations, among others.



Successful Elements

In general, 95% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and 96% were likely or very likely to recommend it to others. Write-in responses showed an appreciation for self-assessment and education. Respondents desire information about environmental responsibilities and continued educational opportunities for employees. More than one business appreciated the current criteria's "daily impact." Another indicated pride in their organization's accomplishments, including a new composting program.

Elements Needing Improvement

Of 13 write-in responses addressing potential program changes, 5 addressed program flexibility, 4 addressed program cost, and 4 addressed capacity needs—both staff and funding. Respondents identified criteria flexibility and the option to find alternative requirements as a need, especially for small businesses without a point-person or sustainability coordinator (most respondents employ less than 40 full-time employees). Otherwise, businesses leave the program, fail to become certified, or may even fudge the

truth to receive certification.

Impacts of Program

25 respondents weighed in on the merits of program participation. Nearly 90% them believe participation has been important to their employees, and 85% believed it has been important to their clients and customers. Over 90% believed it improved their reputation with customers and the community. Over 80% believed the Petal Project improved their reputation with other businesses or investors/board members.

Over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Petal Project made their organization more environmentally responsible. However, nearly 1/3 of respondents disagreed that the program had saved their organization money or helped them connect to other organizations in Eastern Iowa. Survey results also show that more businesses have kept track of environmental impacts than cost savings. Nearly 80% of respondents said that tracking takes too much time or that they did not have enough staff hours allocated to the task, making impacts difficult to determine.

Survey Input

If you could keep only one thing about the Petal Project...

- "Referrals"
- "Self-evaluation to start, taking a hard look at how things are currently done"
- "Keep us informed of our environmental responsibilities"
- "Workshops and education"
- "Daily impact"

If you could change only one thing about the Petal Project...

- "Membership cost"
- "More flexibility based on business size, type, and capacity"
- "Opportunity to find alternative options"
- "More training assistance onsite"
- "More regular follow up"
- "We cannot get too much further without good funding"

Figure 5: Graphic Representation of Survey Responses

Participant Priorities and Incentives

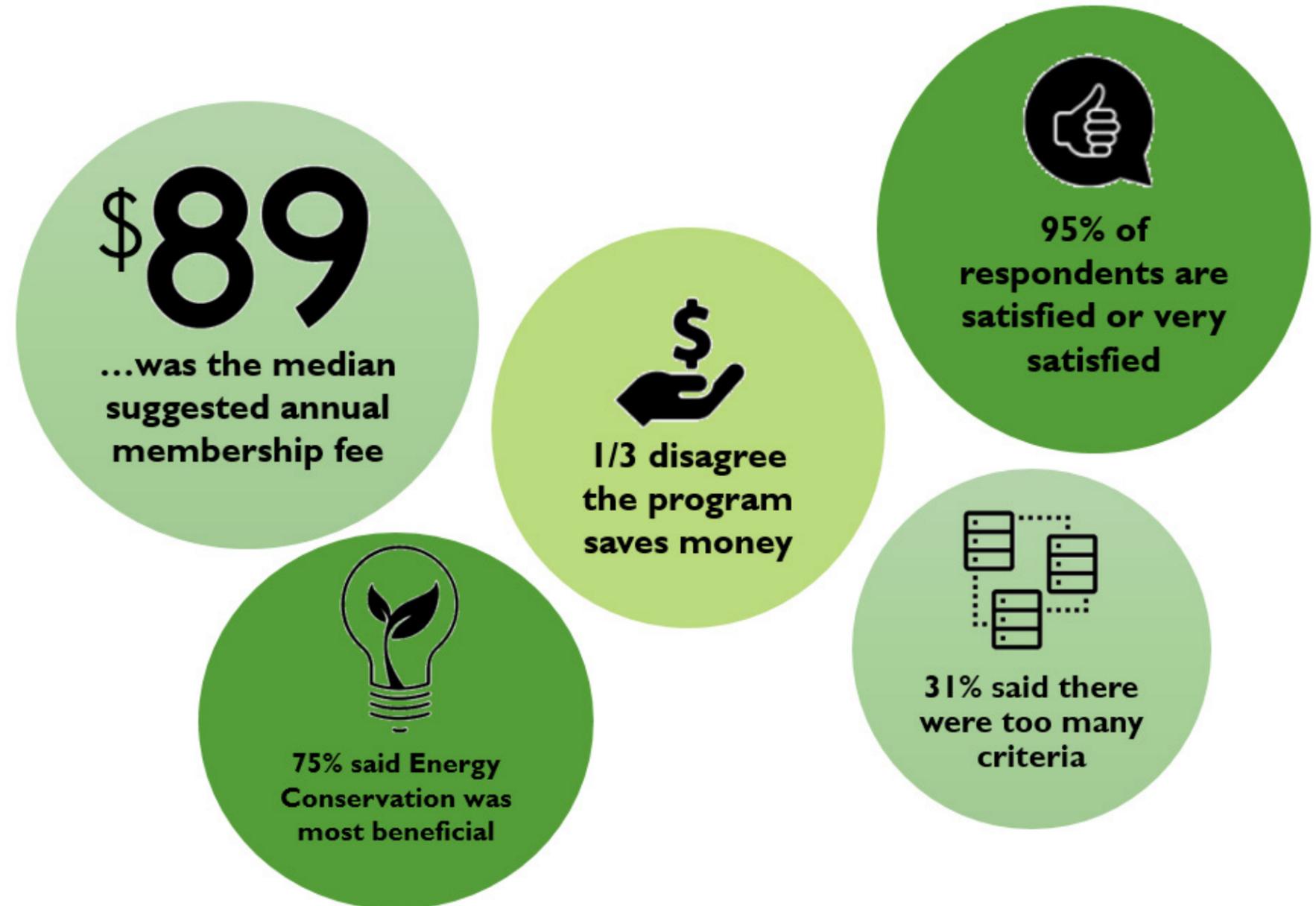
As part of the survey, 19 respondents ranked eight items (e.g., networking, energy-efficient practices, community engagement, and reduced operating costs) in order of importance to their organization:

Over 50% ranked reduced operating costs as first priority, and over 40% ranked high-quality workers as first priority.

Exactly 50% of respondents ranked reputation and brand recognition within their organization's top three priorities.

On the other end of the spectrum, over 50% of businesses ranked networking, environmentally-friendly practices, and community engagement as their three lowest priorities.

Respondents could also cast up to three "votes" for incentives they find valuable. Nearly 1/3 (the highest proportion) of those votes went towards the ability to market as green. Clearly, while organizations value the potential benefits of programs such as the Petal Project



(cost savings, improved reputation and marketing ability, and appeal to quality workers), they may not value the means of the program itself (e.g., connecting with other organizations and implementing environmental practices) as highly. Having a strong business case for buy-in is critical.

Criteria Effectiveness

Nearly 1/3 of respondents feel the program has too many criteria, and 27% described the cost of completing the criteria as expensive. The vast majority of respondents (90%) felt the difficulty of completing the criteria was reasonable, but the perceived value gained by completing each “petal”/criteria area varies: 75% of respondents believe the program’s criteria on energy conservation provides the greatest benefit. Several write-in responses cited energy savings and the desire to keep environmental concerns integrated in their decision-making as reasons for staying in the program. On the other hand, 25% believe staff education provides the least benefit, and 50% believe pollution prevention provides the least benefit.

Business Capacity

The largest organization to respond to

the survey employs less than 200 full-time employees. All remaining respondents employ less than 40, and some employ only part-time employees. Of the seven that employ less than ten full-time employees, five of the seven are not certified. Of the seven that employ more than ten employees, six are certified. The difficulty of completing the certification process likely increases as staff capacity decreases. Although one organization achieved certification with as few as six employees.

Another organization indicated that “lack of staff time” ended their participation in the Petal Project. Yet when businesses were asked to rank potential program incentives, only 2 indicated an interest in having an intern or other direct staff support. A particular write-in comment suggested a part-time work-study sustainability intern was not able to dedicate sufficient time to the Petal Project due to other responsibilities.

Membership Fees and Funding

Two businesses cited the membership fee as the reason for ending their participation. Under the current program, no respondent indicated a willingness to pay more than \$200 annually. Organizations

willing to pay \$200 annually all ranked reduced operating costs, energy efficiency, or high-quality workers as their organization’s first or second priority. Additionally, all agreed the ability to market their organization as “green” is among the top three most valuable incentives the program could offer.

Interviews

Summary

Team Prosperity viewed the opportunity to evaluate the Petal Project or the first time as an opportunity to also comprehensively explore other existing programs and initiatives within the region that tackle sustainability goals— whether social, environmental, or economic. Against a backdrop of international, national, and statewide programs, gaining a deeper understanding of the resources unique to Eastern Iowa will help Team Prosperity identify the best role for the Petal Project to play in the region and identify ways to connect it to larger initiatives. This was done through a series of more than 20 in-depth phone and in-person interviews, conducted in late 2016

and early 2017.

Some of these key insights from these conversations include the following:

- Many interviewees reiterated the importance of customizable and flexible criteria to reach a broad range of businesses. This included providing alternative options for businesses operating in leased spaces. Several discussed developing a tiered, weighted, or phased program.
- Many highlighted the value of effective partnerships. While interviewees recommended working with several different programs, they also provided insight on pitfalls and ways to improve partnerships with college students and Chambers of Commerce.
- Those familiar with green business programs stressed the need for recognition of participants and opportunities for continuous engagement; this included the possibility of linking regional programs to those national or international in scope.
- Those working in workforce development suggested opportunities for businesses to be proactive in reducing hiring barriers and improving existing career pathway programs.

All key findings, organized by expertise and

background of the interviewees, will follow the methodology.

Methodology

Between the end of October 2016 and January 2017, Team Prosperity conducted over 20 in-depth interviews in person and by phone. Interviews ranged from 20 - 75 minutes, allowing for a lot of dialogue between Team Prosperity and interviewees. To gather contacts for the interview process, Team Prosperity began with a list of programs and people affiliated with Prosperity Eastern Iowa. Team Prosperity members also attended the Dubuque Sustainable Communities Conference and several other sustainability-related lectures in Iowa to network with people in the field and schedule interviews based on a growing contact list.

Ultimately Team Prosperity developed a list of regional experts from:

- Sustainability initiatives;
- Career pathway and workforce training programs;
- Community colleges;
- Economic development organizations;

Figure 6: Fields of Interviewees



and

- Business support organizations.

Team Prosperity developed an Interview Protocol, outlining expectations for communication, research, and other preparations before and after each interview. An important component of each interview was to identify new programs, resources, or contacts for future research and interviews. Each team member self-selected an area of interest and was responsible for developing a contact list and executing an individual interview plan. This way, each team member became an ‘expert’ on a particular subject. As we grew more knowledgeable, our ability to connect people and ideas increased with each interview. The Protocol requires note-taking; notes were used to compile observations, key findings and recommendations, state and regional resources, and cautionary tales of lessons to be avoided in a future sustainability program.

Green Business Programs

Interviewees:

- Gabrielle Carbajal, Monterey Bay Green Business Program Coordinator
- Anthony Santarelli, IGBA

In addition to research gathered online, speaking to representatives of multiple state “green” business programs proved to be incredibly insightful. Similar concerns faced by the Petal Project were echoed in their sentiments, and a bounty of possible ideas to incorporate were sparked.

The California Green Business Program has regional and municipal branches such as the Monterey Bay Area Green Business Program. Focused almost exclusively on environmental components, the program was created to help reduce carbon emissions and provide a mechanism of accountability and measurements for the state’s climate change mandates. The criteria for the Monterey Bay program is created from a committee comprised of representatives from the local water and waste districts, private utility companies, and other municipal department experts. The committee identifies specific regional issues— such as focusing on pollution prevention in areas closer to the ocean— and votes on criteria for a range of industries. Private utility companies also

provide audits for businesses looking to complete certification. A key difference between California and Iowa is the lack of statewide legislation mandating a limit for greenhouse gas emissions, which drastically impacts both private and public motivation for choosing more environmentally sustainable practices.

The main incentive offered by the California programs is a preferential status for business responding to proposals from the municipalities. If a business is certified, they receive additional points for bids to county or city government contracts. The Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA) identified connections to other programs, rebates, and cost-saving opportunities as a main benefit for businesses involved in the program. Staff prides themselves on the expertise and support they provide businesses through the certification process.

As it current exists, the California program does not charge a membership fee. The IGBA requires businesses to pay a one-time fee to be certified, and the certification is valid for three years.

Team Prosperity learned that IGB applied for—and received—an Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) grant that provided \$700,000 for the IGB to utilize California's online database.

The California program focuses mainly on "small to medium" businesses, with anywhere from 2-200 employees. Some comments made by staff of other state programs identified the lack of time available for small businesses to spend on researching, implementing, and tracking certification requirements.

Key Findings:

A committee creates the goals and criteria for the California Green Business Program branches, which is tailored to the specific needs and conditions of the region by industry

Technical, academic, and business experts oversee criteria development for the Illinois Green Business Association through Technical Advisory Groups

Creating a network for certified businesses to share information could be a key incentive for businesses to participate in the revamped Petal Project

California Green Business Program's online

database tool, recently adopted by the Illinois Green Business Association, could be utilized by other local and state programs through the same EPA grant if a partnership is formed

Cautionary Tales:

Without the right expertise and/or commitment, interns may not be an ideal mechanism for providing businesses assistance to implement certification criteria

Setting valuable metrics and tracking/measuring is difficult and may fail to serve as a meaningful benefit to businesses involved in a program

Sustainability Initiative Leaders

Interviewees:

- Cori Burbach, Sustainability Coordinator for City of Dubuque
- Liz Christiansen, Former Director of University of Iowa Office of Sustainability
- Eric Holthaus, Sustainability Coordinator for City of Cedar Rapids
- Lynnae Hentzen and Beth Hicks, Center



for Sustainable Communities

- Sara Maples, Research Support and College Sustainability Manager, Tippie College of Business

Conversations with sustainability-minded leaders significantly informed Team Prosperity’s knowledge of sustainability initiatives in the region and environmental efforts being made across the state. At the University of Iowa, Sarah Maples works with the Tippie College of Business to integrate components of sustainability into curriculum for business courses. Liz Christiansen oversees a number of initiatives across the UI campus, partnering with local governmental and community organizations in the process. She also spent two years attempting to launch the Petal Project in Iowa City and shared the challenges of that endeavor. Cori Burbach with the City of Dubuque was already familiar with the Petal Project, while the other interviewees were familiar with similar programs and public sector attempts to connect green practices and the private sector.

Despite a number of differences in the programs interviewees oversee, feedback on several topics was strikingly

unified. Interviewees shared similar or complementary insight on:

- the need to “meet businesses where they’re at” and find ways to incentivize participation in a program like Petal at the outset and over time;
- the role of business education in promoting sustainability and sustainable practices;
- the benefit of interns and opportunities for internship programs;
- the need to match certification programs with the appropriate host organization; and;
- potential policy and funding options.

A reoccurring conversation throughout Team Prosperity’s research and interview process has been the best way to frame “sustainability” when connecting with for-profit businesses. One interviewee defined “sustainability” as speaking to an enterprise’s ability to sustain itself, which comes down to the “bottom line.” Demonstrating that environmentally conscious practices can impact a business’s profitability is key to engaging them. “Meeting businesses where they’re at” requires understanding businesses’ phases

of development and how that impacts their willingness and ability to implement physical and policy changes focused on sustainability. Almost every interviewee reiterated the importance of customizable and flexible criteria to reach a broad range of businesses. Several discussed developing a tiered, weighted, or phased program.

Overall, too many criteria can be overwhelming for businesses. In a restructured program, highlighting the most popular or impactful criteria would help businesses get their foot in the door. Educational opportunities could be the first-step toward business sustainability. Other ideas were having a lower entrance threshold for smaller businesses and criteria that encourages businesses to engage with their community. On the other end of the spectrum, keeping leading businesses engaged is a challenge. Businesses and organizations that have already made significant strides towards sustainability—by becoming Petal certified or by other means—need a program to offer them a reason to continue participation. Cori Burbach of the City of Dubuque said declining participation in the program could be attributed to the lack of

engagement for businesses after achieving certification; this is significant considering the City of Dubuque left the Petal Project.

From her unique perspective, Cori provided another key insight: losing an intern dedicated to the Petal Project was another factor driving the City's decision to leave the program. Other interviewees recommended training students to do a specific set of services and pointed to programs like the Iowa DNR's Pollution Prevention internship program, the DNR's Waste Reduction Action Program, and the University of Northern Iowa's Waste Reduction program. The University of Iowa also has a model for project-based internships that combine sustainability practices with business skills and knowledge. Interviewees seemed to agree that internships could benefit institutions, students, and businesses alike.

Several interviewees commented on the dynamic within the region. With such a strong sustainability focus directly within the City of Dubuque, a certification may not be "enough" to garner competitive attention within the city. Cori Burbach did mention that for the City of Dubuque as an organization, marketing benefits

Project Team interview with Liz Christiansen



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were not as appealing as they might be for a for-profit business. Additionally, businesses seem to be interested in being more sustainable but lack expertise and resources to conceptualize and implement necessary changes. A large portion of the interviews involved hearing about existing resources, programs, and potential for partnerships within the region. One interviewee recommended utilizing existing networks and momentum of regional groups, such as the faith community in Eastern Iowa.

Key Findings:

- A “sweet spot” for participation may include businesses with 50 to 500 employees; they are likely to have significant staff capacity, a champion for sustainability, and a relatively simple chain of command.
- Link the Petal Project to other programs and groups within the region: when revamping the program, certification should provide access to networking, knowledge sharing, or some incentive that businesses could not find elsewhere.
- Utilize local higher education institutions to build business’ capacity for completing criteria.

- Create criteria alternatives for businesses in leased spaces or small businesses that may not have a permanent facility; Green Restaurant certification programs are a good resource.
- Examine the benefits of having a tiered or phased structure for certification that is approachable and keeps businesses engaged.
- Be content with small sustainability wins; they may inspire bigger impacts over time.
- Identify opportunities for business recognition and engagement after certification.
- Consider the future direction of sustainability efforts, such as electric car charging stations. Connections exist between forward-thinking strategies and attracting/ retaining workers.
- Research feasibility of connecting Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a funding mechanism for certification, such as legislating that .5% of TIF funding goes toward certification for businesses within the TIF district.

New Connections and Resources:

- B Corps and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) are quality resources for sustainable business practices

and reporting methods; Team Prosperity utilized B Corps’ “B Impact Assessment” and GRI indicators to develop a criteria matrix.

- Net Impact and the Frontier-Tippie Impact Competition helps students build business skills around a sustainability focus, creating plans to make the Tippie College of Business more sustainable and create a positive impact.
- Connect with the Regional Sustainable Business Alliance, a committee seeking to create a pro-sustainability business community.
- Utilize the DNR P2 Intern Program to help businesses complete certification criteria. The P2 Intern program gives students an introduction to project management at Iowa companies looking to achieve economic and environmental results.
- The DNR Waste Reduction Action Program utilizes retirees to implement sustainable practices in businesses. The region’s high number of retired and near-retirement workers could act as a great match for such a model.
- Almost all of the interviewees identified LeanCorps, a logistics and supply chain management system, as a key resource for identifying ‘green’ practices that improve efficiency.

Cautionary Tales:

Inadequate staff capacity and/or dedication to a sustainability program can detract from the program or make it unfeasible to undertake in the first place. Interviewee Liz Christiansen attempted to launch a green business program in Iowa City and found local government, regional planning organizations, and Chambers of Commerce unable to administer the program due to lack of staff to dedicate to it.

State and Regional Program Leaders

Interviewees:

- Donna Boss, Director of Delaware County Economic Development
- Jeremy Pickard, Director of Curriculum, Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC)
- Jim Brattvet, Director of Economic Development, EICC
- Tim Cottle, Business & Industry Associate Director, EICC
- Dr. Daniel Marvin, Director of Blong Technology Center and CTE Programming, EICC
- Dominique Petrillo, Environmental, Health, and Safety Program, EICC

- Kristin Dietzel, Opportunity Dubuque and Greater Dubuque Development Council
- Julie Plummer and Ben Kvigne, Iowa Waste Exchange

Team Prosperity contacted program directors and staff in a wide range of programs with goals in economic development, education and workforce training, and environmental stewardship. Donna Boss leads business retention and workforce efforts for Delaware County and sits on the PEI Board. Interviewees from the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges network together provide a wealth of expertise on business needs and the workforce training issues in the region, in addition to how students could play a role in working with businesses to become more sustainable. Julie Plummer and Ben Kvigne shared insight on the process of engaging businesses with the Iowa Waste Exchange program, a program all Petal Project businesses are required to have a consultation with under the present criteria structure. Kristin Dietzel is also engaged with business development and a career pathway program that helps communities facing significant barriers gain skills and find employment.



IOWA 
WASTE 
EXCHANGE 

 EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
CLINTON ♦ MUSCATINE ♦ SCOTT

Each contact brought new awareness of the resources already available within Eastern Iowa. Casting a wide net in the interview process gave Team Prosperity the opportunity to gather insight on key research questions (e.g how workforce programs fit into a sustainability context) and spark innovative ideas among a diverse range of experts. One example included the idea to create a ‘think tank’ of businesses committed to waste diversion, so smaller businesses facing high costs and logistics challenges could pool resources and effectively market by-products to sellers.

The majority of these interviews focused on opportunities to create partnerships that would connect Petal-affiliated businesses to interns or staff in other programs to accomplish sustainability goals in their workplace. EICC encouraged Team Prosperity to reach out to specific programs within the community college to build an intern ‘pool’ for the Petal Project. Julie Plummer of the Iowa Waste Exchange has had success helping businesses achieve waste management goals by working with interns hired through the DNR Pollution Prevention program, which many sustainability

initiative leaders recommended. She also had a unique perspective on seeing economic development, workforce training, and environmental responsibility come together: she determines whether businesses are eligible for funding for business training through EICC by auditing them according to a number of environmental standards.

Team Prosperity learned about other programs similar to Petal Project, though less comprehensive. A program in the City of Davenport (outside of PEI’s region) incentivized businesses to meet a set list of standards regarding storm water management in order to receive a discount on fees for storm water treatment; however, the program was not well publicized and discounts were often negligible in comparison with the costs to meet the standards. In addition, interviewees provided knowledge on community needs, leading to suggestions for social benefits businesses could provide at the workplace level.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Continue to include the role of waste diversion in a revamped Petal Project, but increase follow-up to ensure small businesses reap the benefits. Using the

Petal Project to refer businesses to the IWVE has resulted in new opportunities for IWVE but limited follow-up means some businesses do not take advantage of the connection.

- In areas where smaller businesses face extra logistics challenges, leveraging a program like the Petal Project to go beyond referrals to establishing networks can overcome those challenges.
- Food waste presents many opportunities for businesses, especially in rural areas, to improve current practices; training and resources exist for businesses to learn how to effectively compost their food waste.
- In terms of workplace benefits, childcare was cited as a need for helping unemployed and underemployed access jobs they have been trained to fill.
- Diversity policies are often absent in small companies but critical to workforce retention.
- Companies willing to provide mentorship or on-the-job coaching could increase their benefit from career pathway programs and benefit the region’s workforce.
- The DNR P2 Intern program was again recommended as a future resource. To

be selected for the program, businesses need a clearly defined project, which a future Petal Project could provide.

- Explore specific programs within community colleges to build a potential ‘intern pool’.

New Connections and Resources:

- Northeastern Iowa Community College has curriculum in place for green job skills.
- The Solid Waste Alternatives Program provides grants to businesses for waste management projects.
- The UNI Waste Reduction Center is a source of educational materials, auditing and technical expertise, and green program development. Students recently developed a green certification program for breweries.

Cautionary Tales

- The City of Davenport’s Stormwater Fee Credit program highlighted how limited promotion and limited payoffs can deter participation in a criteria-based programs.

Conclusion

The advantage of our formative evaluation approach is its focus on a wide range of stakeholder input. The evaluation process began with input from the PEI Board and its strategic goals for the next five years. Over the course of several months, Team Prosperity incorporated the views and experiences of businesses affiliated with the Petal Project, other green business program leaders, and regional leaders of economic development, education,

and sustainability initiatives. At the same time, we conducted research into the framework of other programs and their successful (and unsuccessful) elements. Our findings from stakeholder engagement and comparative analyses form a strong basis for program recommendations and path toward redevelopment. The following section will describe in detail our synthesis of stakeholder engagement and research findings across each stage of our evaluation process and how this informs our recommendations for the Petal Project.

Project Team interview with Cori Burbach



Section 4: Program Development

Introduction

To move from evaluation to program development, Team Prosperity synthesized the findings described in detail in the previous section. Several themes emerged as common points of discussion and as areas of agreement across a wide range of sources. Team Prosperity identified six key themes to use as a basis for program recommendations, ensuring that all proposed changes to the Petal Project are founded in stakeholder priorities and efforts and the promising practices of other green business programs. Five major recommendations are outlined, with 2-5 additional recommendations provided for moving toward larger change. Finally, we summarize the feedback we received in a focus group on several proposed program changes.

Synthesis of Findings: Six Key Themes to Drive Program Redevelopment

Summary

The next section helps streamline the most important takeaways from the evaluation process. As Team Prosperity revisited findings for each stage of the evaluation process, we found many areas of overlap and agreement. In other cases, opinions held by different groups of stakeholders diverge or conflict with research findings. In response to this reality, themes are presented in order of strength of consensus, where “high” represents agreement across stakeholders and research, and “low” indicates frequent discussion of a topic but disagreement on how to integrate it into the program.

Theme 1: Workers are central to the region’s stakeholders and to national and international business sustainability program models.

Strength of Consensus: High

Across all stages of our evaluation, strong consensus emerged around the need for quality workers and the business role in fostering quality workers. The PEI Strategic Planning session first highlighted the need to align the Petal Project with the most pressing economic development concern for the region: its workforce. When PEI stakeholders—representing economic development organizations, community college networks, and business development groups—were asked to identify their communities’ main challenges, 11 of 13 open-ended responses cited workforce and job skills. Attracting and retaining younger and skilled workers, and providing training to build up a strong workforce, dominated the strategic planning session.

Petal-affiliated businesses agreed. In the

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survey administered by Team Prosperity, 40% of survey respondents ranked high-quality workers as the highest priority for their organization, far above the rank for environmentally-friendly practices.

We identified a mismatch between current PEI and business priorities, which are workforce oriented (falling under the Economic and Social aspects of sustainability), and the topic areas addressed by the Petal Project, which address profitability through environmental practices. Comparative analyses of other business sustainability programs show it is possible and beneficial to close that gap without sacrificing environmental responsibility. Programs like B Corps and Green Plus encourage businesses to address wage levels, implement flexible work options, and increase the diversity of management, among other worker-related social practices. Successful certification programs consider worker and workplace quality as fundamental to business sustainability as energy efficiency. As a result, those programs function as employee engagement tools, adding to the program's ability to create competitive advantage for participating businesses.

Figure 7: Emergent Themes from Stakeholder Engagement and Comparative Analyses



Voices from the region support the kinds of practices encouraged by these other programs. In interviews, we heard the need for subsidized or on-site childcare was high. Lack of childcare prevents unemployed or underemployed workers from taking positions they have been trained to fill. Also, companies willing to provide mentorship programs and on-the-job coaching can increase their benefit from career pathway programs (such as Opportunity Dubuque) and help the region build a stronger workforce. Lastly, the research outlined in the Introduction of this report on workforce trends in the region show the importance of proactive responses from businesses to attract, retain, and develop the workforce their operations demand in the present and future.

Though not discussed in the above section, Team Prosperity also conducted a focus group to gauge interest in specific aspects of program recommendations. During that time, focus group members were asked to share what their business would most like to be known for. With the exception of one participant, they all said their workers. Though not part of our evaluation, this feedback confirmed our findings.

Theme 2: A successful certification program makes a clear business case, appealing to businesses' bottom line to help them transition to a triple-bottom line approach.

Strength of consensus: High

During the Strategic Planning session, PEI Board members removed support from a program that was not perceived to provide a significant benefit to businesses or PEI members. In the same session and subsequent board meetings, PEI Board members stated multiple times the need for the Petal Project to communicate and provide clear benefits to businesses. This is necessary for continued support from PEI and for the successful implementation of a program by any similar organization.

Survey results affirmed the need for a business case: Nearly 1/3 of respondents disagreed that the program had saved their organization money. As part of the survey, 19 respondents ranked eight items (e.g., networking, energy-efficient practices, community engagement, and reduced operating costs) in order of importance to their organization. Over 50% ranked reduced operating costs as their organization's highest priority, and

exactly half ranked reputation and brand recognition within their organization's top three priorities. On the other end of the spectrum, over 50% of businesses ranked networking, environmentally-friendly practices, and community engagement as their three lowest priorities. Respondents also cast up to three "votes" for benefits they would value receiving from the program. Nearly 1/3 (the highest proportion) of those votes went towards the ability to market as green. Clearly, while organizations value potential benefits of programs such as the Petal Project (cost savings, improved reputation and marketing ability, and appeal to quality workers), they may not value the means of the program itself (e.g., connecting with other organizations and implementing environmental practices) as highly. Having a strong business case for buy-in is critical.

Other business sustainability programs make a clear business case in their appeal to participants and in their supporting resources. Both Green Business America and Green Plus have member directories that function as a marketing tool, connecting customers to socially and environmentally responsible companies. For example, the B Corps

program explains why each element in its business assessment matters for business profitability, in addition to many real-world examples of businesses benefiting from making changes in that area. It provides detailed guides on implementing new practices (e.g. those that contribute to an inclusive work environment) that describe how to develop a business case to share with employees, managers, and senior leadership. Making a business case is not only necessary to attracting businesses to a program like the Petal Project, it is critical to building momentum within businesses who have committed to operate more sustainably.

As demonstrated in our program-comparison matrix (Appendix X), certification programs offer improved marketing ability, employee engagement, and reduced operating costs as the major incentives for participation. Secondary but nonetheless attractive incentives provided by these programs include benefits beyond those flowing from sustainability-related practices. The Green Plus program partnered with local business leaders in Cleveland, Ohio to help develop a policy that would reward certified businesses with additional points on municipal bids.

The Green Business America program leverages its extensive national directory to connect certified members to discounted business services.

Lastly, making a strong business case comes down to offering services and resources businesses want. Write-in responses from certified businesses show some businesses remain in the program in the hopes of receiving new information on ways to improve (e.g. energy efficient practices). At the same time, interviewees recommended developing opportunities for continuous engagement with businesses, so that improvements in sustainability outcomes do not taper off upon certification. Interviewees and PEI Board members suggested findings ways to connect the regional-level program to other certifications, so that businesses can maximize their investment in new practices, and so the program can serve as a stepping stone to well-known programs and, over time, boost the region's ability to market as a leader in sustainability. Specific programs named were B Corps and LEED.

Theme 3: Introducing flexibility into the program's content and structure can increase program reach and

integrity. It can also help businesses direct resources to their most strategic goals and receive benefits at multiple levels of investment.

Strength of consensus: Medium

PEI members operate within a four-county region (and City of Dewitt). Members serve different constituent businesses and organizations within the overall region; as a result, they are attuned to region-wide concerns and the business culture of their specific county or sub-region. While the City of Dubuque has built a brand around sustainability, other areas served by PEI have not had the same traction with an explicit message of sustainability in economic development efforts. Subsequently, PEI members asked that the program be accessible and attractive to businesses who may not be drawn to environmentalism or sustainability by appealing to their context, especially their workforce needs. During the strategic planning session, one member suggested identifying “gateways” into the program—points of intersection between business needs and sustainability goals. Region-wide implementation also requires adaptability for businesses of all sizes and sectors.

Our survey revealed the business perspective on improving flexibility and ability of the program to adapt to business needs. Of 13 write-in responses addressing potential program changes, 5 addressed program flexibility. Respondents identified criteria flexibility and having alternative requirements as a need, especially for small businesses without a point-person or sustainability coordinator (most respondents employ less than 40 full-time employees). Otherwise, businesses leave the program, fail to become certified, or may even misrepresent accomplishments to receive certification.

The survey also showed wide variation in the perceived value of certain practices. For example, 75% ranked energy efficiency practices as the most beneficial, while over 50% said pollution prevention provided the least benefit. As many as 1/3 of respondents felt the program has too many criteria. Introducing flexibility measures would allow businesses to prioritize allocating their time and resources to practices that matter to them. A tiered structure (see Recommendations) would allow businesses to reap recognition and other benefits after phased

implementation, rather than completing an entire list of requirements.

Interviews with sustainability coordinators and program staff reiterated the importance of customizable and flexible criteria to reach a broad range of businesses. Several rallied around the mission to “meet businesses where they’re at.” A program’s inclusion of simple, entry-level requirements leads to “small wins” for businesses that build momentum for greater achievements over time. Several discussed developing a tiered, weighted, or phased program so award accomplishments at multiple levels of business effort. A sustainability coordinator who tried to implement a similar Petal Project program highlighted the need for flexibility for businesses operating out of leased spaces, as there is less control over facilities changes.

Programs like Green Business America award certifications based on a tiered system, and score-based programs (e.g. B Corps) allow businesses to track and market incremental accomplishments—in contrast to the all-or-nothing certification model of the Petal Project. The Green Plus program acknowledges limitations of

leased-space businesses in its diagnostic assessment.

Taken together, input from PEI suggests flexibility through an expanded program framework of sustainability—introducing business needs that push forward sustainability outcomes—while other stakeholders and research findings support flexibility in terms of requirements for certification. Doing both means expanding program content while not requiring more from businesses and increasing their access to benefits.

Note: current PEI staff expressed concern that program flexibility could increase administrative oversight in order to award certification in a fair and transparent manner. Team Prosperity has addressed this in a recommendation for an Advisory Council and by standardizing requirements for each proposed level of certification (see Recommendations for more detail).

Theme 4: Building capacity into the organizations administering certifications program and participating businesses is critical to program sustainability. Creating advisory groups, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing networks can

accomplish both.

Strength of consensus: Medium

Capacity includes all resources an organization devotes to a program—the Petal Project has thus far been administered on less than 10 hours per week of staff time and with the aid of outside funding. Many programs utilize advisory groups or committees to oversee program updates based on technical and industry-specific expertise, thus reducing the burden on program administrators to understand the interworking of diverse businesses and the most up-to-date practices that can improve each of those businesses' operations. This builds in the opportunity to incrementally improve the program while sharing the efforts to do so.

On the survey, businesses indicated that a lack of staff time and other resources devoted to the program either ended their participation or compromised their ability to achieve their goals and track the impacts they were having. Nearly 1/3 disagreed program helped them connect to other organizations in Eastern Iowa. Effective partnerships that directly support businesses improve their ability to become sustainable and lessen the burden of

program administrators to provide specific technical expertise.

Interviews with Iowa Waste Exchange staff indicated room to improve communication between program administrators and IWE staff so businesses make the best use of referrals. Interviews with representatives from the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges network indicated support for developing “pools” of students for sustainability-related internships. Other interviews found that better coordination with individual businesses could improve the functionality of career pathway programs. Sustainability leaders suggested opportunities for additional state and regional partnerships; for example, utilizing the DNR Pollution Prevention internship program and developing internship/class credit opportunities with local university students.

The Green Plus program is a great example of harnessing partnerships. It developed a student fellow program with several universities, drawing on the knowledge of students in business, environmental science, and other sustainability-related fields. Students created resource guides, published social media posts on emerging

best practices, and created podcasts based on interviews with businesses who make a difference. They played a key role in marketing business accomplishments, ensuring a key incentive of program participation paid off for businesses. The program spread to many states by being administered through a range of organizations, including chambers of commerce and other business support organizations. This helps fuel policy changes, such as municipal bid scoring that award its businesses for their efforts to become sustainable.

Both Green Plus and the California Green Business Program have worked with utility companies and other organizations to create scholarship funds, so businesses can apply with project proposals and find additional resources for implementing sustainable practices.

However, not every promising partnership comes to fruition. Interviewee Liz Christiansen attempted to launch a green business program in Iowa City and found local government, regional planning organizations, and Chambers of Commerce unable to administer the program due to lack of staff to dedicate to

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it. The Illinois Green Business Association also shared that without the right expertise or training, student interns may not be able to provide meaningful services to businesses and their recommendations may not be seen as authoritative.

The above examples focus on increasing access to resources and technical support for businesses and program administrators. Another way to build capacity is through networks for sharing knowledge and collaboration. Write-in responses on the survey indicated a desire for the program to keep and expand its educational efforts, for both businesses and the wider community. Identifying experts and business leaders willing to share from their experience or area of expertise can meet this demand while taking the pressure off program staff to administer high-level sustainability knowledge. Iowa Waste Exchange staff shared that smaller businesses may be unable to carry out waste diversion unless they can achieve economies of scale by pooling waste products (and sharing transportation costs) with other businesses. One interviewee shared about working with retired senior-level workers as volunteer 'experts' to help implement

sustainability practices in facilities within their industry.

Though not part of the formal evaluation framework, conversation during the focus group (discussed in greater detail in the next section) naturally turned to sharing practices that had proven successful and unsuccessful. Focus group members agreed the benefit of any business association is the connection it provides to people with specific experience and/or knowledge on implementing a certain practice or policy.

Theme 5: Tracking cost savings and other impacts from implementing new practices and policies can help build a business case for the program's continued function and for individual businesses' ongoing participation.

Strength of consensus: Low

From an evaluator's perspective, Team Prosperity acknowledges that access to reliable data on program impacts is critical to measuring the cost effectiveness of a program and its ability to reach stated goals. Improved mechanisms and/or requirements for businesses to assess current performance and quantify cost savings or other improvements (e.g.

percentage reduction in turnover per year) would improve PEI's ability to evaluate whether time and resources devoted to the program are well spent. For individual businesses, it would help determine what practices bring in the most cost savings or other desired outcomes and improve their ability to market accomplishments to customers, investors, businesses they supply to, etc.

However, this ability comes with a cost in terms of time. On the survey, nearly 80% of respondents said that tracking takes too much time or that they did not have enough staff hours allocated to the task, making impacts difficult to determine. Adding stricter tracking requirements may act as a barrier to participation, although making participation potentially more valuable in the long run.

Additionally, we learned several lessons on tracking from interviews with the Illinois Green Business Association staff. Although the ability to report on program impacts builds program credibility, being armed with quantitative evidence may not be the appropriate "tool" to bring some businesses on board. For example, despite having clear information and timeframe

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on cost savings, one surplus-goods store would not participate in IGBA until the program was recommended by a long-time business partner. Referrals may be more effective to enact culture change and positive attitudes toward sustainability rather than reporting. Despite having a comprehensive system of excel sheets developed for the program, IGBA struggles to get data from businesses. They are improving their system by upgrading to online software utilized by the California Green Business Program and translated to their needs through a grant and technical support program administered through the EPA. Costs to use the software after its development can be as high as \$30,000 per year, several times the current operating budget of the Petal Project (with grants).

Theme 6: Stakeholders agree on the need for a financially self-sustaining program, but disagree on the mechanism; research suggests business fees and sponsorships are effective means.

Strength of consensus: Low

The survey of Petal-affiliated businesses presented intriguing findings: while over 95% of businesses were satisfied or very satisfied with the program, no business indicated a willingness to pay higher than \$200 annually for its services; some advocated for it becoming a free program. Since the beginning, however, PEI Board members have indicated interest in the program becoming self-sustaining and no longer dependent on grants. the majority of which will expire at the close of FY18.

Research suggests offering a free program is not effective. Compared to many other programs, current Petal Project rates are already low. Long-standing free programs like the California Green Business Association have had to begin charging for services, suffering from a loss of grants and other outside funding. Sustaining a sustainability program requires businesses to invest in its success; it also gives them a stake in their own sustainability improvements, a perspective held by the Illinois Green Business Association. Programs like Green Plus show other sources of financial resources, however, such as donations from utility companies, business support organizations, and private donors who support sustainability; many

administering organizations have 501(c)3 status and can accept donations.

Conclusion

With these themes as a basis for program recommendations, the next section will outline possibilities for re-structuring a program with a strong workforce component, clear business benefits, and meaningful connections to other organizations through partnerships. Several alternatives will be provided regarding program funding and impact tracking, due to lower consensus on these issues. Recommendations are cross-referenced with each theme, so PEI can identify the strength of consensus in the evaluation process leading to each recommendation.

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Recommendations

Summary

Team Prosperity condensed, synchronized, and analyzed the input gathered through the program evaluation process. The information presented by interviews, comparative analyses, participant survey, and the focus group has produced eight program recommendations aimed at increasing participation and retention for the Petal Project. These recommendations each include more specific implementation strategies and are interrelated in many ways. Depending on the extent of implementation of these recommendations, a revamped program may have many points of departure from the current Petal Project.

Table 3: Program Recommendations and Alignment with the Six Identified Themes

Level of Consensus	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Theme	Workers	Business Case	Flexibility	Capacity	Tracking	Funding Mechanisms
Recommendation 1: Expand program framework						
1A: Integrate strategies to improve workplace culture and retain/develop workforce	■	■			■	
1B: Update environmental and operations criteria		■	■		■	
Recommendation 2: Build administrative capacity						
2A: Develop partnerships for technical and communications support	■	■		■		■
2B: Leverage knowledge and experience of participating businesses		■	■	■		
Recommendation 3: Attract businesses at various levels of sustainability engagement						
3A: Implement tiered certification structure			■			
3B: Preparation for national or international certification	■	■			■	
Recommendation 4: Build-in desired program incentives						
4A: Expand educational/technical support & align with business goals		■		■		
4B: Promote business accomplishments and help internal communications efforts	■	■			■	
4C: Host on-boarding and recognition event		■				
4D: Scale benefits by certification tier		■	■			■
4E: Make business case clear in program materials		■				
Recommendation 5: Adopt sustainable funding models						
5A: Three Fee Scenarios						■
5B: Sponsorships				■		■

Recommendation 1: Expand program framework to align with stakeholder priorities, regional needs, and successful program models

Recommendation 1A: Include strategies that help businesses take proactive steps to improve workplace culture and develop and retain the existing workforce.

To align with PEI priorities, regional needs, and make the business case for sustainability, the Petal Project should address costly business activities that affect economic, social, and environmental outcomes. This means addressing employee turnover and recruitment in addition to inefficient facilities. Program content should offer approaches for “single bottom line” thinking while encouraging a shift to “triple bottom line”, where environmental impact and social equity are improved in addition to cost savings. The program should promote practices to attract, develop, and retain quality employees along with improving the workplace.

Expanding upon the Petal Project’s five petals, Team Prosperity recommends moving towards two broad categories, **Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship**, and **Quality Workers, Quality Workplace**.

The proposed topics under each category are shown on Figure 8

Based on research from other programs, our interview process, and additional sources on business best practices, Team Prosperity has developed a tool kit template with the following components:

- A rationale for why the topic area matters to businesses’ bottom line;
- Metrics for business self-assessment;

- Case studies of successful practice or policy implementation;
- Strategies for regional businesses to adopt and receive credit towards certification; and
- Resources to support implementation (e.g. information on a local or state organization that can provide technical or other forms of assistance).

Figure 8: Proposed Criteria Categories for Revised Program



Recommendation 1B: Update criteria focused on environmental responsibility and efficient operations, including principles for sustainability leadership and accountability.

Businesses do not have to be producers of “green products” to make a commitment to environmental sustainability. The Petal Project has encouraged businesses across many industries to make improvements that lead to wiser use of resources. However, there is room to improve. Team Prosperity has updated existing environmental focus areas in light of new technology and best practices and with a similar emphasis on providing the “why” behind sustainability strategies.

Under the “Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship” category, Team Prosperity maintained most of the current petals; an important exception is the transformation of ‘Staff Education’ to a more comprehensive “Good Governance,” which incorporates leadership principles to steer companies toward long-term engagement with sustainability.

Recommendation 2: Build administrative capacity for host agency and individual participating businesses.

Businesses have trouble dedicating

resources, especially valuable staff time, to completing the Petal Project criteria, and ECIA staff has a limited amount of time to dedicate to administering the program. Several steps can be taken to connect businesses to educational and technical resources while not overburdening program administration.

Team Prosperity believes that an advisory council will help the program run more efficiently by providing information, assisting with the review process for efficient businesses, and working with the program manager to ensure that the program is operating on all cylinders.

Recommendation 2A: foster partnerships with other regional and state agencies and organizations. By fostering symbiotic, strategic partnerships, the host agency of Petal Project can expand the technical expertise being offered to program participants and complement economic development efforts in the region.

A frequently cited comment during interviews and participant survey was the need for participating businesses to have resources to help alleviate the burden of completing criteria. Other successful business sustainability programs depend on partnerships, and the Petal Project must do the same. Organizations with specific

While this list is not exhaustive, it is representative of the main partnerships suggested through interviews and other research:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Colleges and Universities
- DNR Pollution Prevention Internship Program
- Inclusive Dubuque
- Iowa Waste Exchange
- Iowa Workforce Development (IowaWorks)
- Opportunity Dubuque
- Solid Waste Management Authorities
- Small Business Development Centers
- Energy Companies
- University of Northern Iowa

knowledge and expertise can provide the technical and other assistance businesses need, while Petal Project staff can facilitate connections between programs and businesses and verify that businesses have upheld their commitments with partner organizations.

This section outlines possible partnership opportunities for each organization. Based on feedback from the focus group (detailed in a later section), Team Prosperity learned that businesses value having a trusted circle of contacts to provide technical support from experience. Partnerships may take many forms, but a key first (and ongoing) step will entail developing a list of contacts who are willing and able to provide information to Petal businesses on specific practices and policy development.

Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce understand the power of networks, marketing, and building a brand. Working with Chambers of Commerce could help expand the geographical reach of the program, improve marketing/recognition of certified businesses, and lead to sponsorships of events and membership fees.

To the right are the names and official websites for Chambers of Commerce in the PEI region.

Opportunities for Partnership:

Chambers of Commerce could sponsor educational and promotional events that align with the Petal Project and the wider interests of their member organizations (see Recommendation 5). This could expand sustainability-related activities to networks of businesses outside the Dubuque region. In return, sponsoring Chambers would be featured on the Petal Project website and agreed-upon promotional materials.

Chambers of Commerce could subsidize (in part or in full) Petal Project membership fees for Chamber members as a strategy to promote positive workplace and environmental practices among Chamber businesses.

Chamber websites contains business directories and could mark businesses who have achieved certification with the program logo. Chamber websites with job postings could also highlight Petal businesses as attractive workplaces by showing the logo.

Regional Chambers of Commerce

- Anamosa Area Chamber of Commerce (in Jones County): <https://www.anamosachamber.org>
- Dewitt Chamber and Development Company (in Clinton County): <http://www.dewittiowa.org>
- Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce (in Dubuque County): <http://www.dubuquechamber.com>
- Dyersville Area Chamber of Commerce (in both Delaware and Dubuque County): <http://www.dyersville.org>
- Manchester Area Chamber of Commerce (in Delaware County): <http://www.manchesteriowa.org>
- Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce (in Jackson County): <http://maquoketachamber.com>
- Monticello Area Chamber of Commerce (in Jones County): <http://www.macc-ia.us>

Colleges and Universities

Develop partnerships with colleges and universities in the region and across the state to provide technical and communications support while building relationships between businesses and the future workforce.

We propose utilizing community college and university students in multiple capacities with mutual benefits for businesses and students, such as:

- Forming student fellows group to conduct research focused on marketing and sustainability. Students could be assigned to businesses individually or as a group to help them achieve their goals with regards to sustainability.
- Technical assistance research, where students are paired with businesses. They attend technical workshops with the business representatives and identify ways that student fellows could be involved in implementation and what other training would be needed.
- Colleges could host educational events with ideas for businesses so any students can be invited and students

in a particular program/class could get credit (e.g. sustainability certificate)

DNR Pollution Prevention Services

Through Iowa's Department of Natural Resources, businesses with over 100 employees have access to no-cost, confidential, and non-regulatory assistance from technical engineers regarding energy use (including HVAC and lighting efficiency); water use, wastewater generation, and treatment; and solid and hazardous waste reduction. The program also offers an internship program, where upper-level undergraduate or graduate engineering students are paired with businesses and other organizations to implement 12- or 24-week projects. Internships often lead to full-time work as a result of relationships built and the quality of work produced.

Opportunities for partnership:

Team Prosperity learned through interviews that the program is very competitive for businesses. Businesses need a clear project scope and proposal in order to be placed with an intern. PEI staff—well-versed in grant writing—could work with businesses to develop a

competitive proposal.

In addition, Team Prosperity found businesses are interested in reducing stormwater fees but have been unsuccessful in implementing practices that do so. This could be an area of interest for businesses to address with help from an assessment team or intern.

The DNR program provides a resource library upon request, giving businesses access to reports, software, tools, and calculators for impacts.

Iowa Waste Exchange

The Iowa Waste Exchange (IWE) helps establish markets for waste by-products to develop innovative opportunities for waste diversion. Businesses can form a “match” to re-use or sell the waste products available in the region. IWE also conducts waste audits and helps businesses implement recycling and composting programs.

IWE operates in collaboration with community colleges and other partners across Iowa. PEI's region corresponds to three different IWE service areas:

- Dubuque and Delaware counties are

served by Ben Kvigne: bkvigne@inrcog.org, 319-235-0311 ext. 125

- Jones County is served by Alicia Presto: Alicia.presto@ecicog.org, 319-365-9941 ext. 121
- Jackson and Clinton counties are served by Julie Plummer: jplummer@eicc.edu, 563-336-3319

Opportunities for partnership:

In its current state, the Petal Project connects businesses to IWE staff, who have helped businesses implement successful recycling and composting programs.

This should continue. However, Team Prosperity also learned that a referral may not be sufficient to complete a project with a business. With referrals, Petal Project staff and the participation business should commit to a schedule for follow-up communication to learn about barriers to implementation and find alternatives.

Closely related to the above, Team Prosperity learned from interviews that small businesses face extra logistics hurdles when trying to implement IWE recommendations or sell their waste. Petal Project staff could help facilitate communication between several small

businesses and IWE staff to develop economies of scale for waste by-products. Inviting IWE staff to lead group workshops may also help form these connections.

IWE staff member Julie Plummer works with Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has helped train student interns to complete waste diversion projects on-site with businesses. IWE could be a key source of technical training for developing expertise in interns and thus expanding the number of people available in the region to conduct waste audits and complete projects on-site.

As a benefit to IWE, the Petal Project could include the organization as a partner on its website and highlight its role in marketing materials for the individual businesses it helped become certified.

Iowa Workforce Development (IowaWORKS)

Iowa Workforce Development connects employers to the resources they need to address critical workforce problems and operate viable businesses. IowaWORKS facilitates access to incentives for activities in line with many of the new focus areas proposed for an updated Petal Project, especially with regards to reducing hiring

barriers and upskilling the available workforce.

For example, IowaWORKS helps businesses:

- Apply for Work Opportunity Tax Credits, which decrease federal tax liability by \$2,400.00 and \$9,600.00 per employee in target groups facing hiring barriers, with additional deductions for businesses who hire ex-offenders and people with disabilities; Complete On-The-Job-Training contracts, a program that reimburses employers up to 50% of the wage rate of the participating worker;
- Establish Iowa Registered Apprenticeships which help boost productivity and reduce turnover and recruitment costs through a customizable program that can work for any business; in addition to other services.
- IowaWORKS Centers are located across the state; within PEI's region, there is a center located in Dubuque and a satellite expansion office located in Maquoketa in Jackson County. There is an additional satellite office in Clinton, IA that businesses in the City of Dewitt could utilize. These locations could help extend the program's geographic reach.

Opportunities for partnerships:

The Petal Project can encourage the utilization of IowaWORKS programs by awarding credit towards certification for successful participation in one of the above programs and facilitating connections through referrals.

IowaWORKS staff could lead a workshop on the benefits of its programs and the process of participating in its programs.

IowaWORKS has extensive experience facilitating job fairs and ‘meet and greet’ events. Events like these could become opportunities to promote Petal Project businesses with advice to share about new practices they have implemented and how it has benefited their business.

As a benefit to Iowa Workforce Development (IowaWORKS), the Petal Project could include the organization as a partner on its website and highlight its role in marketing materials for the individual businesses it helped become certified.

Inclusive Dubuque

Inclusive Dubuque brings together community leaders from faith communities, labor, education, business, non-profit, and government entities to promote equity. Inclusive Dubuque already has a sector group dedicated to creating equitable economic opportunities. In 2015 this group completed a survey assessing whether barriers exist in hiring and in workplace experience based on race, gender, and other factors. They have continued to build on ways to expand economic equity in the Dubuque area, measure the impacts of their strategies, and build a supportive network of organizations with similar goals.

Opportunities for partnership:

The Petal Project can encourage businesses to join the Inclusive Dubuque Partner Network by awarding credit towards certification. To join, businesses must fill out a form requiring them to demonstrate real investment through a variety of ways: committing to regular meeting attendance, joining a sector group, identifying opportunities to share lessons learned, etc. No fee is required. The form asks businesses to reflect on inclusion and equity challenges facing their

organization and asks them to set a goal and identify metrics for measuring success. The network requires commitment and provides opportunity for peer-to-peer sharing and other resources. Note: certification would depend on verification from Inclusive Dubuque that the business met commitment requirements.

Inclusive Dubuque staff and/or sector group leaders could lead workshops on specific efforts businesses can take in decision-making, training, and policy development to improve inclusivity and foster diverse workplaces. Inclusive Dubuque would be well poised to host workshops open to workforce members, as well as business leaders, to foster open communication about needs and potential solutions.

Petal Project staff could also with Inclusive Dubuque sector groups to periodically update certifiable strategies with practices and policies that reduce hiring barriers and promote diverse workplaces.

Inclusive Dubuque has developed a metric system for tracking impacts that could help Petal Project determine which measurements have proved useful and less-burdensome for businesses to utilize.

As a benefit to Inclusive Dubuque, the Petal Project could include the organization as a partner on its website and highlight its role in marketing materials for the individual businesses it helped become certified.

Opportunity Dubuque

Opportunity Dubuque is a nationally-recognized, collaborative job training effort developed in response to local employers' needs for a skilled workforce. It already offers its business partners attractive benefits; businesses can shape the training new workforce members receive, speak at the program's graduation ceremony, and have the first opportunity to meet and hire new graduates.

Opportunities for partnership:

The Petal Project can build on ECIA's partnership with Opportunity Dubuque by encouraging businesses to participate in the program and receive credit towards certification for doing so, expanding the number of businesses involved with the program and increasing their access to qualified workers.

One of the strengths of the Opportunity

Dubuque program is its coaching support. Team Prosperity learned from interviews that job coaching and mentorship are needed as graduates become employees. Opportunity Dubuque coordinators, Wendy Mihm-Herold or Northeast Iowa Community Colleges and Kristin Dietzel of Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, could lead workshops on what makes for a successful mentorship or job coaching program.

Petal Project staff could also work with Opportunity Dubuque coordinators to periodically update certifiable strategies with practices and policies that reduce hiring barriers and increase workplace success for Opportunity Dubuque graduates. For example, through interviews, Team Prosperity learned childcare would help placement of program graduates.

Former and current Opportunity Dubuque business partners may be willing to be contacted about the Petal Project and pursue certification and recognition for their efforts to support workforce development in the region. It is an effective strategy to market programs like the Petal Project to existing networks of businesses.

As a benefit to Opportunity Dubuque, the Petal Project could include the organization as a partner on its website and highlight its role in marketing materials for the individual businesses it helped become certified.

Small Business Development Centers

The Small Business Development Center located in Dubuque provides services to entrepreneurs and existing businesses to two PEI counties—Delaware and Dubuque. Partnering with the SBDC could help embed sustainability in the DNA of a business from the beginning and help small businesses get recognition and positive press as they build up a customer base.

Opportunities for partnership:

The SBDC could advertise the Petal Project to businesses interested in sustainability or looking for opportunities to build recognition.

The SBDC and its businesses could also advise the program on flexibility measures for businesses in leased spaces and with

small staff sizes.

Recommendation 2B: Leverage knowledge and investment of program participants to create a supportive network of businesses with similar goals and maintain integrity of the program.

This recommendation is spurred by multiple motivations. Firstly, if Petal Project is to be revamped, it is crucial to engage businesses that are currently certified and have been champions of the program and sustainability. From the start of the program evaluation, helping to smooth the transition from the current Petal Project to the proposed program has been important. Team Prosperity has been cognizant of finding ways to engage and support businesses that have achieved certification or are in the process of becoming certified.

Team Prosperity proposes three potential mechanisms for maintaining participation of these businesses and leveraging their knowledge and experience:

- Creation of an Ambassador program
- Creation of an Advisory Council
- Adoption of a cohort program model

Ambassador Program.

Businesses who have received Level 2 or Level 3 certification—or have implemented a particularly innovative practice or policy—should be encouraged to conduct workshops to help other businesses learn from their success and challenges, and/or speak at promotional events, and/or willing to be put on a contact list where businesses from a similar industry background or interested in implementing similar practices could contact them for guidance outside of a workshop context. This means keeping records of which businesses have implemented which strategies over time.

Advisory Council

Advisory council members would ideally be comprised of experts who would help ensure the integrity of the program under a more flexible structure (discussed further in Recommendation 3). Advisory council members would be a mix of representatives from currently certified businesses, regional agencies focused on sustainability, and other organizations invested in the regional business climate. Their role would be two-fold: 1) provide oversight on certification of businesses in

Advisory Council Case Study

Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) is a free and trusted source of environmental product ratings that makes it easy to select high-performance electronics that support organizations' IT and sustainability goals. The system began in 2003 with a stakeholder process convened by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and has grown to become the definitive global environmental rating system for electronics. Managed by the Green Electronics Council, EPEAT currently tracks more than 4,400 products from more than 60 manufacturers across 43 countries.¹⁷ The EPEAT Advisory Council is a non-fiduciary body formed to provide input and advice to EPEAT management and the Green Electronics Council Board of Directors.

The EPEAT Advisory Council draws volunteers from all of EPEAT's stakeholder groups, including representatives of manufacturing, purchasing, environmental advocacy, recycling, government, research, retail and reseller interests. The Advisory Council meets twice annually in person and at least twice annually via teleconference. Subgroups of the Council also meet to discuss and develop proposals on specific issues as needed. The Council operates and makes decisions primarily through a consensus-based process. Nonmembers are welcome to attend meetings by invitation.

the program, and 2) oversee incremental changes to program to keep up-to-date with developments in business sustainability.

An advisory council for the program would provide authoritative knowledge on sustainability, particularly as it relates to businesses. With technological advances continuously expanding options for business sustainability, it is important that the program materials and strategies be updated regularly. The advisory council would help make decisions regarding changes in the program content. Our comparative analyses revealed that many green business certification programs, including state-level programs in California and Illinois and international programs like B Corps, rely on advisory councils to make decisions regarding criteria updates and performance standards.

Cohort Model

Enrolling participants into a cohort based on registration time is an option that would allow for consistent scheduling of programming and tailoring education and tech support contacts to interests that overlap in the group. Businesses tackling

similar goals could potentially share information.

Recommendation 3: Appeal to businesses at various levels of sustainability engagement.

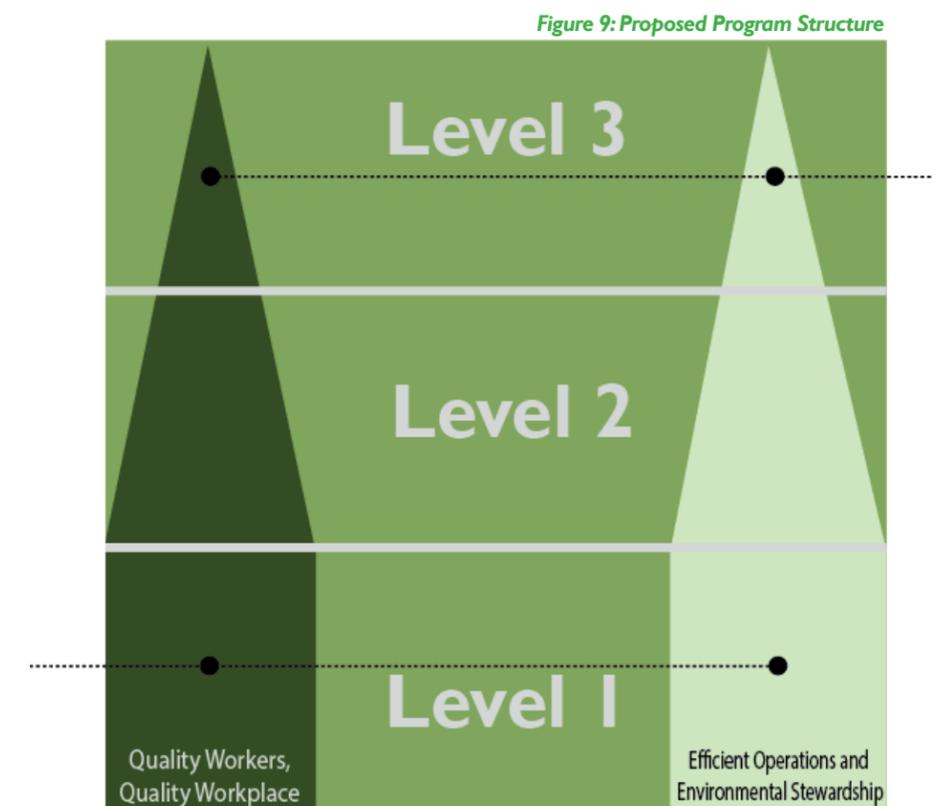
Recommendation 3A: Implement a tier structure for certification.

Team Prosperity believes a tiered structure for certification would improve multiple areas that were identified as shortcomings of the program. It would help keep businesses engaged after initial certification, as well as allow for easier onboarding for businesses that previously have not engaged in sustainability efforts. A business would complete three strategies from one topic area under each category (EOES and QWQW), so six strategies total per tier. Businesses will be able to choose the categories that are most important to them and implement sustainability strategies that best match their capacity and conditions. A tiered structure will increase flexibility and thus, marketability of the program, since businesses of all size and sustainability status will be able to join.

Recommendation 3B is to structure the program criteria and content in a manner that positions top-tier-certified businesses to be competitive for international sustainability certification.

After finding that successful international-scale certification programs, such as B Corps, include significant worker treatment and engagement strategies, we identified an opportunity (and need) to expand the Petal Project's framework while also 1) expanding the services it could provide to businesses, and 2) increasing the branding power of the region over time.

By incorporating strategies in line with other programs, businesses who progress through



the Petal Project will be well-poised by Tier 3 to score highly on programs that may otherwise have been intimidating or had unexpected requirements. As the Petal Project helps businesses through its own certification system, it sets up businesses with a series of small wins that build confidence and real impacts, enough so that businesses could be recognized by largescale programs in the future. These programs offer frequently updated resources, technical support, access to new networks, and additional marketing power. The Petal Project can thus support businesses' long-term engagement in sustainability as a facilitator, rather than the sole provider, of assistance through the businesses' sustainability journey.

At present, there are only two B Corps businesses in Iowa, both located in Cedar Rapids. Were the PEI region to become a hub of B Corps businesses, it would build on the strong sustainability and economic development nexus already present within the region.

Recommendation 4: Build in desired program incentives.

Recommendation 4A: Promote business accomplishments and help internal communications efforts.

- Marketing on website, press releases, radio, other media outlets
- Helping businesses advertise on job postings (possibly on access Dubuque jobs)
- Help businesses craft a message of their efforts for investors, customers, etc
- Provide flexible tracking structure (so businesses can decide what they are going to track with the end goal of being able to market effectively and discuss cost savings)

Recommendation 4B: Host annual kick-off and recognition event, potentially in tandem with other large-scale gatherings (e.g. the Dubuque Sustainability Conference)

Multi-facted program is crucial to utilizing the administrative capacity available to the program, in addition to making businesses feel appreciated and recognized for their efforts.

Recommendation 4C: Expand educational/technical support workshops and align them with business interests to the greatest extent possible

The partnerships section list several organizations who could lead or assist in executing workshops. Workshops could be scheduled based on the categories and strategies businesses are actively selecting, so it is more beneficial for participants. If there are several businesses pursuing energy and inclusion, for example, workshops should be geared toward those topics.

If the Petal Project collaborated with existing events hosted by another organization, it could be open to all businesses for a fee, while Petal Project businesses get in for free.

Recommendation 4D: Scale benefits by certification level

Incentives offered by tier of certification can be found in the Program Guide in the appendix, and are summarized below.

“Dedicated” Participants:

- Celebrated at kick-off event as a newly committed business
- Listed on website with company logo

WRRecommendation 5: Adopt a sustainable funding model

Recommendation 5A-4C are a range of membership fee scenarios

One of the principal issues PEI asked Team Prosperity to address was membership fees. PEI speculated that the imposition of membership fees had played a significant role in waning program participation. Survey responses from former and current Petal participants seem to support that notion at least to some extent.

- 1 customized press release (radio, social media, printed media)
- Access to all educational events/workshops

“Level 1” Participants:

- All benefits provided at Dedicated level, plus additional ones listed below
- 2 customized press releases (radio, social media, printed media)
- Access to scholarships/sponsorships, when available
- Access to discounted financial or business services, if Petal Project has established such a relationship
- Special attention at community college and ECIA career fairs

“Level 2” Participants:

- All benefits provided at Level 1 level, plus additional ones listed below
- Increased marketing/exposure (larger logo on website, etc.)
- 3 customized press releases (radio, social media, printed media)

“Level 3” Participants:

- All benefits provided at Level 2 level, plus additional ones listed below
- Opportunity to present at educational workshops (marketing)
- 4 customized press releases (radio, social media, printed media)

Recommendation 4E: Make business case explicit in program materials by providing a ‘why’ for required strategies and citing successful business case studies

The toolkits provided in the appendix of this report each include a “why it matters” section, to explicitly outline the business interest in altering their activities or policies. As frequently as possible, marketing materials and workshops should be geared on the benefits businesses receive by participating and adapting to more sustainable behavior.

Table 4: Administrative Funds for Petal Project
Source: Petal Project Invoices 2014–2017

TOTAL FUNDS TO ADMINISTER PETAL PROJECT (2014-2017)			
Year	Petal Dues	Grant funds	Total
2014	\$7,700	—	\$7,700
2015	\$8,600	Grants to Green = \$3,000	\$11,600
2016	\$4,900	Grants to Green = \$6,000 Clear4 Grant = \$5,000	\$15,900
2017	\$4,400	Grants to Green = \$6,000	\$10,400

In researching potential improvements to the fee structure, Team Prosperity repeatedly ran into a roadblock—an inability to determine the real costs of administering the Petal Project. Although Team Prosperity was encouraged to identify fee structures that would make the program self-funding, no specific amount could be provided regarding the real costs of administration. Resource availability could only be stated in terms of available staff time, 8–10 staff hours per week. Our research into program pricing suggests this issue is not entirely uncommon, just a matter of allocating time without accounting for the real costs of such time to the organization.

Team Prosperity looked for guidance in the amounts allocated for administration of the Petal Project in recent years (see table below). The amounts varied significantly from year to year in terms of total funds available and the extent to which such funds were comprised of grant funds.

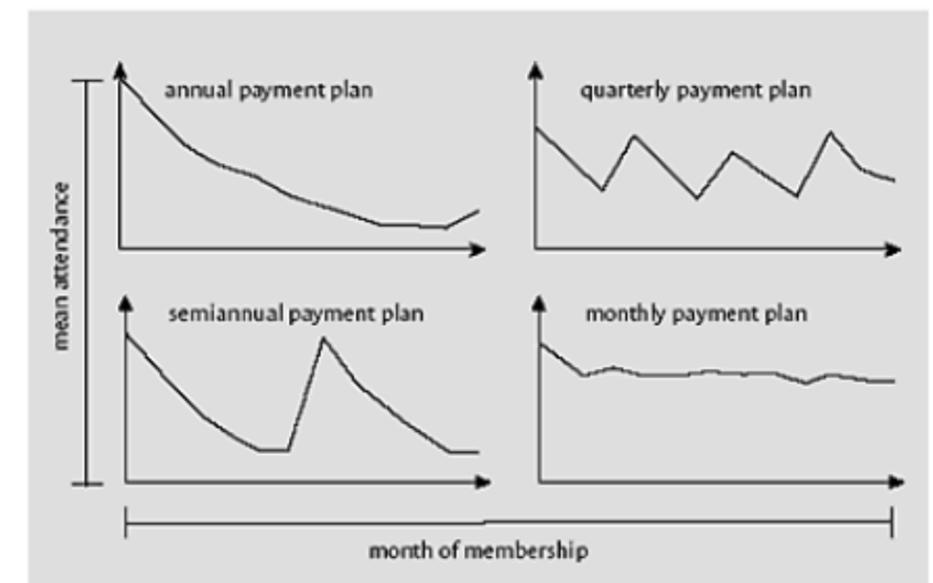
Between 2014 and 2017, the median annual amount allocated to administer the Petal Project (including grant funds) was \$11,000; excluding grant funds, the median annual amount was \$6,300. The minimum annual amount allocated in that time was \$7,700 (in 2014).

General Findings

Team Prosperity’s research into membership fees revealed a few potentially helpful findings regardless of any particular fee structure. First, to the extent PEI does or will ever rely on self-reporting in charging membership fees, it should not concern itself with creating enforcement policies to ensure accurate reporting. Second, there may be benefits to charging fees on a monthly basis; research on pricing and consumption has shown that charging a monthly fee instead of an annual lump sum fee makes it more likely a participant will renew their membership.

For example, X and Y are each charged \$600 to participate in program. X is charged an annual lump sum of \$600. Y, however, is charged \$50 per month. Despite paying the same amount for the same benefit over the same amount of time, research shows Y is more likely to participate regularly, because she’ll be reminded of her membership fee every month, and the extent to which members participate determines whether they will re-up their membership. In short, “consumption is important to the bottom

Figure 10: Membership Structure and Attendance
Source: Gourville and Soman



line... and is important to any business that relies on satisfaction to generate repeat sales and positive word-of-mouth” (see chart from Gourville and Soman’s to right).

This is attributed to the economic concept of “sunk cost effect,” whereby a consumer feels compelled to use products they’ve paid for to avoid feeling they’ve wasted their money.²³

Membership Fee Scenarios

Beyond the general recommendations noted above, Team Prosperity has identified several fee scenarios for PEI to consider. Their descriptions as well as their relative strengths and weaknesses are provided below.

Cost-Based Pro Rata Sliding Scale

In this scenario, PEI relies on membership fees to cover the total costs to administer the program, if necessary. PEI determines total administrative costs for the upcoming reporting period and, based on such costs, charges participants a pro rata membership fee based on their number of employees. Of course, PEI may apply grant proceeds or other funds, as available, to bring down member costs.

Example: PEI determines administrative costs to be \$10K per year. The program has 20 participants—10 have 10 employees, 6 have 50 employees, and 4 have 100 employees—with 800 total employees b/t them. The 10 participants with 10 employees will each pay \$125, the 6 with 50 employees will each pay \$625, and the 4 with 100 employees will each pay \$1,250.

Features:

- Cost-based: requires determination of administrative costs
- Self-funding: designed to cover all administrative costs if need be; thus, low to no cost for PEI
- Perceptibly fair: vertically and horizontally equitable; based on ability to pay as determined by # of employees; progressive
- Self-reinforcing: fees lower as membership increases
- Amenable to participation by smaller firms
- Similar to current Petal fee structure, but no discounted fee for certification
- Petal Certified likely to pay much more in short run

Cost-Based Pro Rata Flat Fee

This scenario is similar to the previous one, but, here, all participants pay the same fee. Again, PEI relies on membership fees to cover the total costs to administer the program, if necessary. PEI determines total administrative costs for the upcoming reporting period and, based on such costs, charges participants a pro rata membership fee based on the number of program participants. Again, of course, PEI may apply grant proceeds or other funds, as available, to bring down member costs.

Example: PEI determines administrative costs to be \$10K per year. The program has 20 participants—10 have 10 employees, 6 have 50 employees, and 4 have 100 employees—with 800 total employees b/t them. Each participant pays \$500 regardless of number of employees.

Features:

- Cost-based: requires determination of administrative costs
- Self-funding: purports to cover all administrative costs if need be; thus, low to no cost for PEI
- Perceptibly unfair: lack of vertical equity—differently situated members pay

same amount; regressive

- Self-reinforcing: fees lower as membership increases
- Petal Certified still likely to pay more in short run, but increase not nearly as drastic for larger organizations
- Less amenable to participation by smaller organizations

Cost-Plus-Value-Based Pay What You Can (PWYC)

This type of fee structure has also been referred to as “Pay What You Want” or “Voluntary Commitment.” In this scenario, PEI departs from a mandatory membership fee and, instead, grants membership while suggesting a minimum sustaining charitable contribution and otherwise relying on participants’ tax-deductible contributions to meet its administrative costs. It is cost-based in that PEI still determines total administrative costs for the upcoming reporting period and, based on such costs, proposes a minimum sustaining contribution. At the same time, it is value-based in that PEI allows membership regardless of contribution and anticipates some tax-deductible charitable gifts will be made in excess of the minimal sustaining amount. Such anticipation is rooted

in the value of providing a means for reducing tax liability as well as the “warm glow” associated with charitable gifts (see conceptual model by Isaac et al on following page).

Isaac et al found that such a fee structure “can improve market efficiency and, in special cases, generate more profit than a standard posted price scheme.”²⁵

Example: PEI determines administrative costs to be \$10K per year. The program has 20 participants—10 have 10 employees, 6 have 50 employees, and 4 have 100 employees—with 800 total employees b/t them. PEI suggests a minimum sustaining contribution based on either a flat fee or sliding scale. Some participants give that amount, some give less, and some give more. PEI grants membership regardless of the contribution.

Features:

- Cost-based and value-based: requires determination of administrative costs to formulate suggested minimum contribution, but it gives the member the ultimate choice regarding what contribution to make
- Not necessarily self-funding: although the intent is to cover all administrative

Figure 11: “Warm Glow” Impact of Charitable Giving
Source: Isaac et al

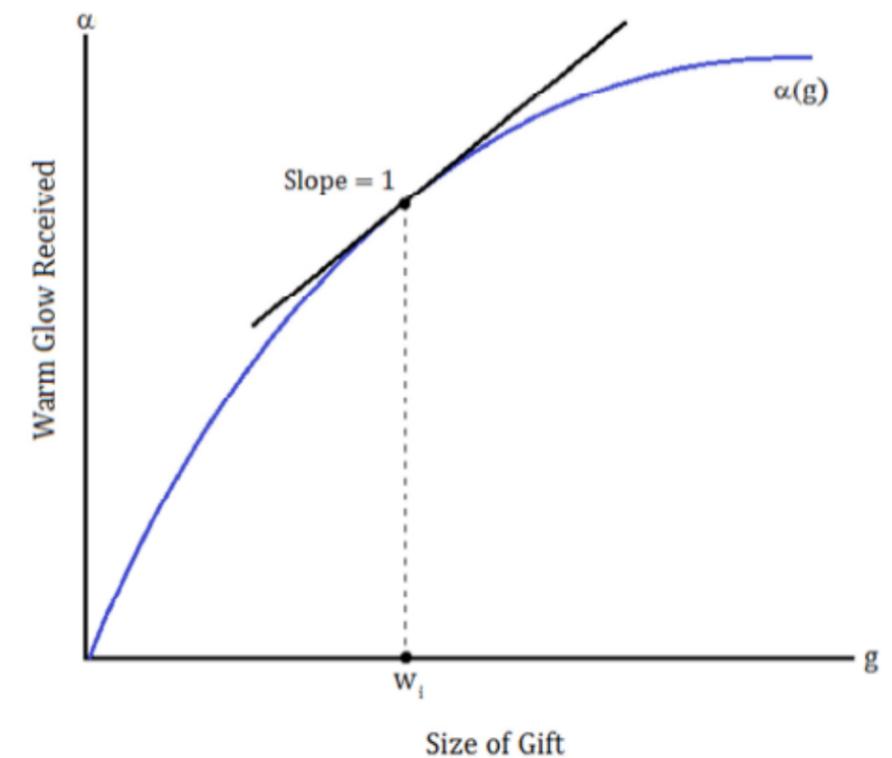
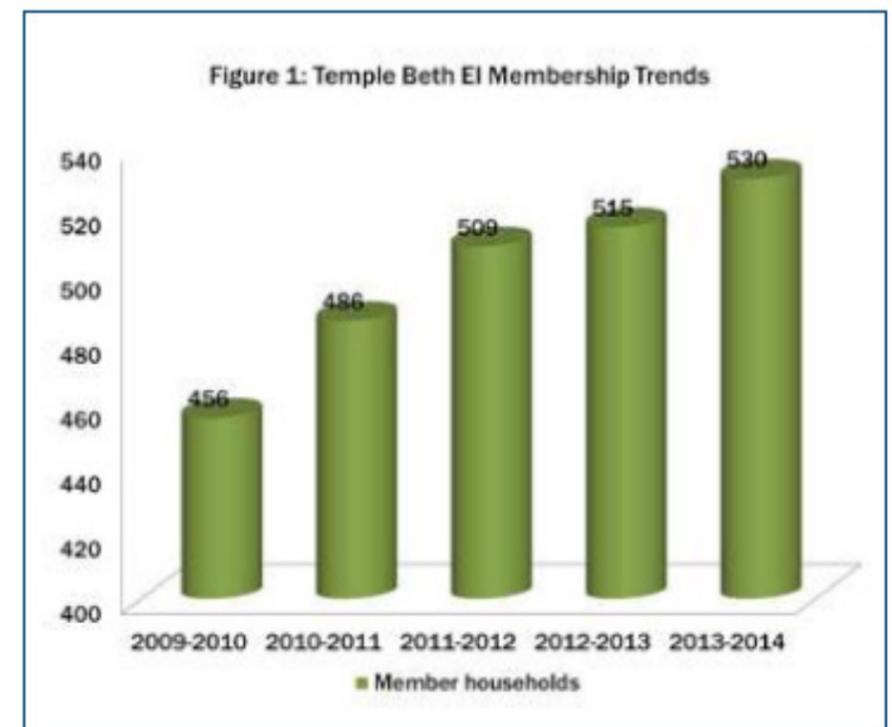


Figure 12: Average Annual Membership of Temple Beth EI



costs, there is no guarantee; PEI or ECIA must be willing to fund any shortfall

- **Perceptibly fair:** although, theoretically, there may be a perceived lack of vertical equity if the minimum suggested contribution is based on a flat fee, the ultimate choice over what to contribute as well as the tax benefits of doing make it fair; could be progressive or regressive depending on real contributions of members, but, again, this is rendered moot by giving members the ultimate choice
- **Self-reinforcing:** the suggested minimum contribution lowers as membership increases; incentivizes increased membership by giving members ultimate choice over contribution
- **Petal Certified can pay what they want,** which may be the same as or more or less than \$100, but ultimate choice should give them no cause not to transition to new program
- **Amenable to participation by organizations of all size**

This model has had proven success in various situations from Panera Bread’s charitable spin-off, St. Louis Bread Company Cares Café, to Radiohead’s release of their album, Many synagogues nationwide, after experiencing waning membership and dues

under a “fair share” model (contributing a certain percentage of income), have had great success with this model—average annual memberships have increased (see Temple Beth El graph to right), recruiting and retaining members has become easier, perceived value and level of engagement has increased, average annual revenues have increased, and those with backup plans have not had to use them.

Recommendation 5D: Utilize sponsorships and fundraisers as additional sources of revenue.

There are countless longstanding corporations and companies in the region that should be contacted about sponsoring Petal Project activities. They could sponsor the membership fees for participants, or help provide physical and capital resources for events and programming. Having sponsors for year-end or workshops could drastically improve the financial operations for PEI.

Focus Group: Testing the Waters

Summary

On April 7, 2017, Team Prosperity hosted

a 90-minute focus group of six participants to get feedback on certain elements of its proposed program revisions. Prospective participants were contacted via email or phone. PEI Board members helped with invitations. One participant represented a former Petal Certified organization. Another participant represented a current Petal Participant. The remaining participants were interested in, or had engaged in, sustainable business practices, but had never participated in the Petal Project. Of the six participants, two represented government entities, two represented private media organization, one represented a private architectural/development firm, and one represented an education nonprofit organization. One of the government representatives could only participate for the first hour of the allotted time.

Key Findings

One element Team Prosperity tested was the workforce attraction/retention and quality workplace facet of business practices and the relative importance of that facet to potential program participants. An example of a question used to gauge the level of such importance was: “If your organization could only be known for one of the following—(1)

being profitable; (2) being environmentally conscious; (3) being good to its workers—which one would it be, and why?” All but one of the participants agreed that, first and foremost, it was important to turn a profit to keep the organization going, but that it wasn’t necessarily important to be known or being profitable. These five participants ultimately agreed that, if their organization (otherwise profitable) could only be known for one thing, it would want to be known for being good to its workers. One participant felt that, as a governmental entity, it was most important to be known for financial solvency, efficiency, and responsibility.

Another element tested with the participants was the importance of networking/knowledge-sharing-type opportunities to their organization. Such opportunities were thought by the PEI Board to be important to provide to its constituents. Paradoxically, survey respondents had indicated that such opportunities weren’t all that important to them. All focus group participants, however, acknowledged the importance of such opportunities, and all but one stated such opportunities were the most important thing any community association,

Focus Group in Dubuque, Iowa on April 7, 2017



1

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business-networking group, or other such group could provide to its members. One participant stated that such opportunities weren't necessarily important to him in his individual capacity, but that it was certainly important to his organization.

Another principal element tested with the participants was the membership fee scenarios. The three fee scenarios proposed in this report were explained to the group, and the group was asked which fee structure it would favor. All participants ultimately chose the cost-based pro rata sliding scale option—whereby total program costs are calculated at the outset and then charged proportionally to members based on their number of employees. One participant saw the virtue of a flat fee, but ultimately thought it was fairer to charge based on number of employees to ensure smaller organizations could participate. The focus group participants did not think the Pay What You Can scenario was a viable option for funding a program.

The participants were also given the opportunity to review four of the

“toolkits” Team Prosperity created as part of its proposed program revisions. All participants seemed engaged in reading through the materials. The response was generally positive although rather subdued. One participant commented that the flexibility built into each was positive. Another participant commented that the energy conservation toolkit read as outdated given some of the terms and technology used. This raised an important point regarding the rapid advancement of energy-saving technologies and the

obstacle this poses in terms of providing program materials.

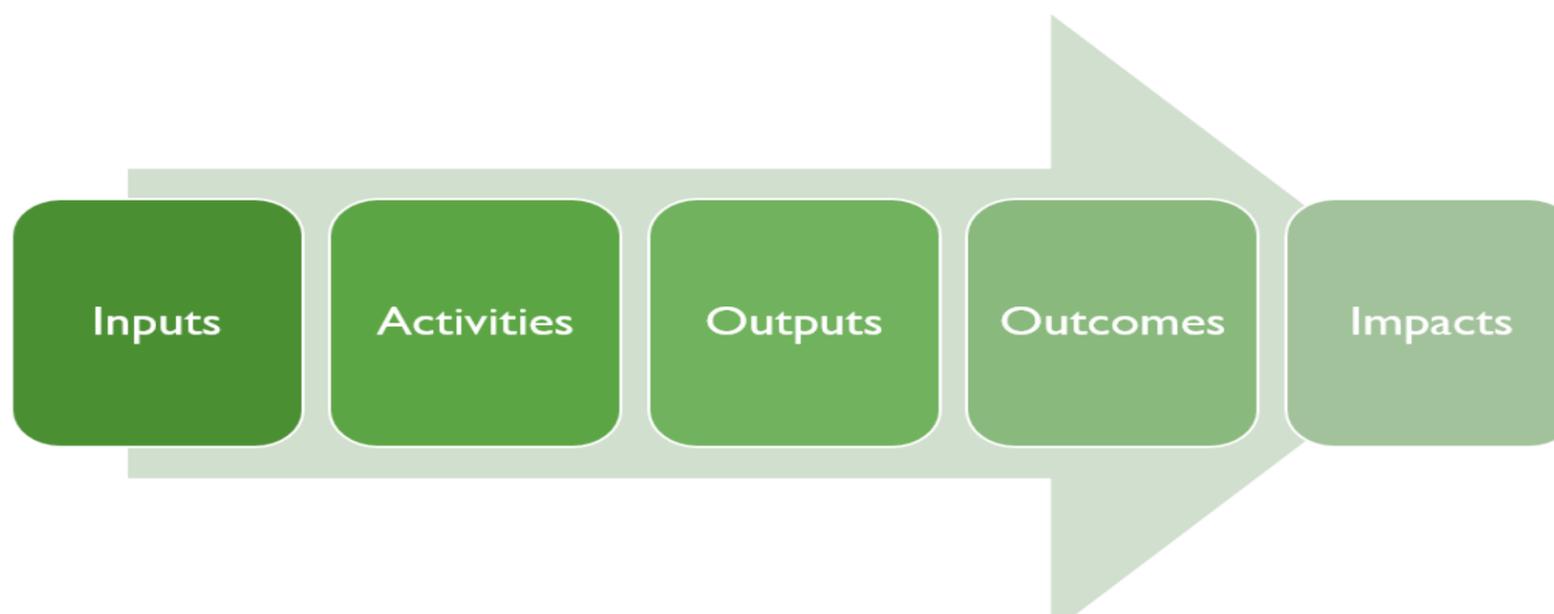


Figure 13: Logic Model Aspects for Future Program Evaluation



Conclusion

In conclusion, the focus group participants seemed to support the following:

- Inclusion of worker attraction/retention and quality workplace type criteria; and
- Importance of providing networking/knowledge-sharing opportunities for participants, as contemplated by the proposed cohort structure, advisory council comprised of Petal Certified, annual awards/initiation ceremony, and other aspects of our proposed participant driven program.

Logic Model

Developing a logic model takes Team Prosperity's evaluation beyond a presentation of research findings and program recommendations. A logic model is a tool that can facilitate ongoing and/or periodic evaluation by program staff and stakeholders for continuous learning and improvement. A logic model is a

Table 5: Logic Model for Revised Program, Created by Team Prosperity

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
<p><i>In order to perform program activities, we need the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEI staff time and dedicated funding • PEI Board Support • Scholarships available to fund business projects • Participating business resources and staff time • Dedicated Advisory Council of certified businesses and other sustainability leaders • State and local partnerships (e.g. hours and expertise donated by DNR, Iowa Waste Exchange, Opportunity Dubuque, student sustainability groups) • Donated space for workshops • Educational materials & communications guides/templates 	<p><i>To foster economically viable, and environmentally and socially responsible businesses, we will conduct the following activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact potential partners and businesses; network at sustainability events • Program events to kick off program and celebrate accomplishments • Provide toolkits to businesses for strategy selection and certification • Businesses progress through tiers • Coordinate educational workshops and maintain referral lists to expert groups • Meet individually to orient new businesses, provide marketing guidance • Coordinate Advisory Council meetings as needed • Create and send out marketing materials; establish partnerships to help with marketing (e.g. work with sustainability student groups, local media) • Collect business reports, maintain records, and verify certification 	<p><i>If accomplished, these activities will produce the following evidence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # New businesses annually (suggested goal: 10-20) • # Events for kick-off, celebration, and promotion (suggested goal: 2) • # of educational workshops per year (suggested goal: 4+) • # Advisory Council meetings/year (suggested goal: 2-4) • # Hours committed to program coordination (suggested goal: 10+ weekly) • # of strategies committed to within each category • # Referrals within one year; e.g. # of 'matches' through IWE • # of businesses receive communications training and/or # of partnerships with marketing focus • Program participation fees/donations sustain operation without grant funding 	<p><i>If accomplished, we expect these activities to lead to the following changes in the short- to mid-term (1-5 years):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses progressively receive Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 certification • % or unit reduction in energy use, water use, vehicle miles traveled, solid waste to landfill; • # of new environmental facilities/programs/policies implemented (e.g. lightbulb replacement; new composting program; "lights off" policy) • # of new workplace programs/policies implemented (e.g. diversity training, on-site ESL; flexible work policy) • Increased cost savings to businesses from reduced expenditures on energy, water, waste transport • Increased cost savings to businesses from reduced employee turnover & increased productivity • Certified businesses participate in sustainability education and business leadership events • Certified businesses report accomplishments and impacts to program and stakeholders (through newsletters, social media, etc.) • Change in consumer and investor attitudes in Eastern Iowa towards businesses who reduce negative impacts on the environment and are socially responsible 	<p><i>If accomplished, we expect these activities to lead to the following changes in 6-10 years:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in regional workforce issues reported among certified businesses in Synchronist process (e.g. improvements in retention, productivity, skills development) • Barriers to employment reduced for different groups: increased # of businesses offering childcare subsidies, ESL/ELL courses, etc.; increased # of businesses participating in Opportunity Dubuque • Scholarship funds provided on annual basis from solid waste management authorities • Chambers of Commerce and other development groups in Eastern Iowa promote program to members • Increased # of businesses from Eastern Iowa attaining B Corp Certification (or other national-level recognition), showing long-term commitment to sustainability and industry leadership • Business networks grow between employees, businesses, and organizations with sustainability expertise • College student fellow program is established, providing 5+ volunteers per semester • Policy developed to award points to certified businesses in RFP processes

Logic model developed with guidance from W.K. Kellogg Foundation's "Logic Model Development Guide"

systematic visualization of relationships among the resources available for a program, the activities planned for the program, and the changes or results the program is being implemented to achieve.²⁸ Read left to right, it spells out the program’s progression of planned work and its intended results. Logic modeling is considered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to help ensure goals are consistently met in an effective and efficient manner.²⁹

Logic Model for Revised Program

Based on recommendations outlined in preceding sections, we developed a logic model linking recommended programming with outcomes deemed valuable by a wide range of stakeholders — Petal Project affiliated businesses, PEI staff and board members, economic development leaders, and sustainability leaders across many programs. In particular, the model highlights the resources and programming efforts required of the implementing organization; activities carried out by businesses will vary by business and by year. The outcomes of those activities, however, are captured in the model, as the economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be reported and tracked over time

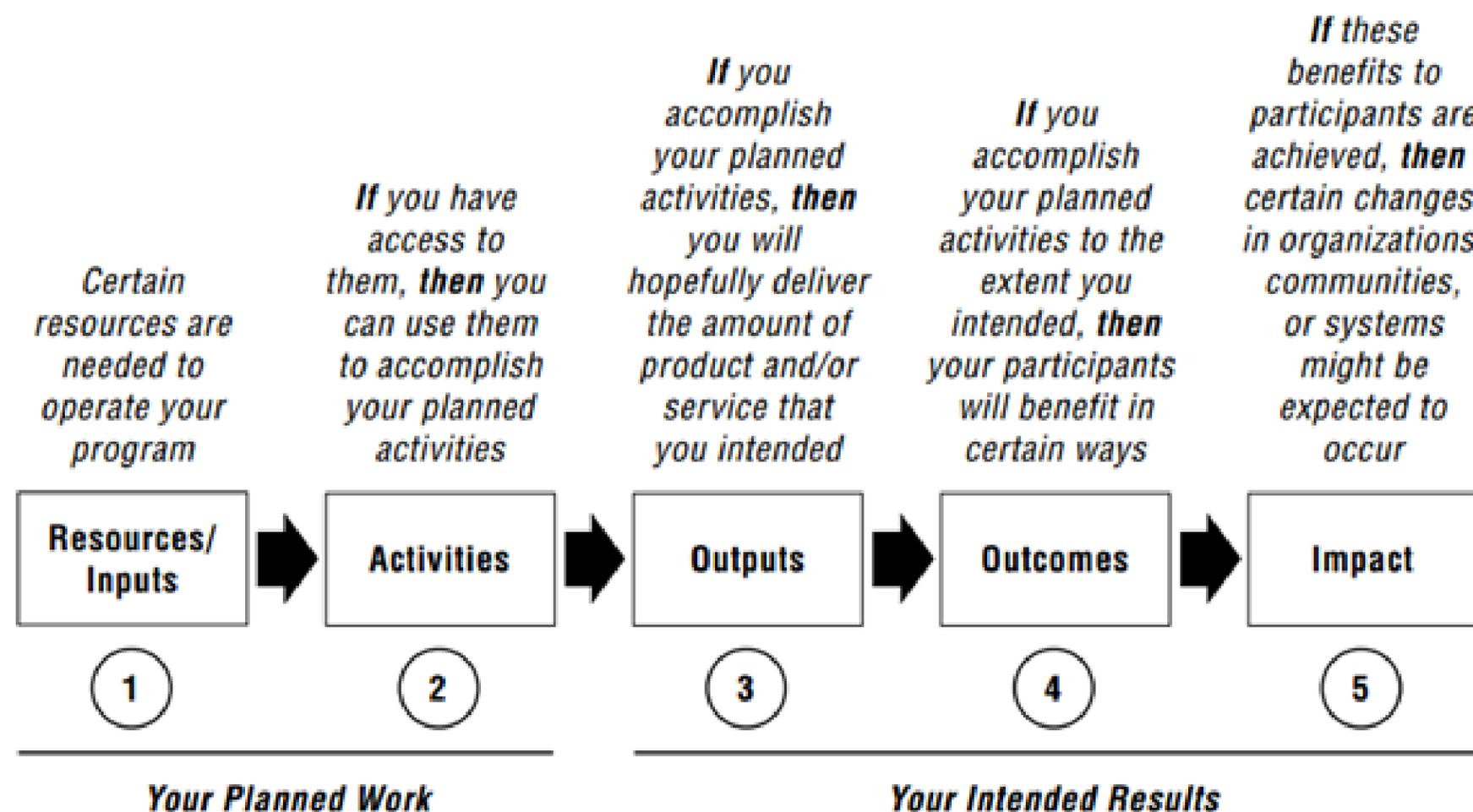


Figure 14: How to Use a Logic Model
Source: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004



to determine if program activities are supporting businesses in reaching desired organization-level, community-level, and even regional goals.

The logic model on page 66 outlines 8-10 items in each of the following categories: inputs (or resources), activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Inputs feed the operation of program activities, which produce direct and measurable evidence. When activities are fully implemented, outcomes (primarily at the business-level) should result over the short- to mid-term (1-5 years). In the long-term, impacts go beyond individual businesses to effect community change, potentially leading to established partnerships and even policy development. Each category includes a brief description to connect its contents within the logic of the model.

Part of the usefulness of a logic model is its ability to evolve with the program; it is a working draft. As PEI staff and board members determine how to carry forward Team Prosperity's recommendations, the

logic model can be altered according to their implementation choices. They may determine to de-emphasize certain impacts or outcomes, with resulting changes to programming demands. Any reduction in programming and resources should be considered in light of its effect on outcomes.

PEI conducts many services and projects that require time and resources. Having a logic model for the Petal Project lends an organized approach to capturing, documenting, and disseminating program results, increasing the likelihood of garnering support for the program's continuation. Having an expanded ability to identify and share what is working and why to a large and diverse board can inform decisions regarding the Petal Project and other programs.

Summary

Team Prosperity has developed templates and program materials in draft form that can be edited for future use, depending on how the program recommendations are implemented.

Endnotes

- 1 Prosperity Eastern Iowa website—Initiatives. <http://www.prosperityeasterniowa.org/initiatives.cfm>.
- 2 http://www.ecia.org/programs/econ_development.cfm.
- 3 <http://www.petal-project.com/>.
- 4 <http://www.prosperityeasterniowa.org/initiatives.cfm>.
- 5 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2015–2019), pp. 44 <http://www.ecia.org/publications/>.
- 6 Bernhard Frey et al. The Business Case for Responsible Corporate Adaptation: Strengthening Private Sector and Community Resilience, 2015, https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/Environment/climate/Adaptation-2015.pdf.
- 7 Natural Capitalism Solutions. Sustainability Pays: Studies That Prove the Business Case for Sustainability, May 2012, <https://natcapsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/business-casereports.pdf>.
- 8 Smart Solutions. (2016). Greater Dubuque Region Skills Gap Analysis. Dubuque: Greater Dubuque Development Corporation. http://www.greaterdubuque.org/media/userfiles/subsite_88/files/2016%20Skills%20Gap%20Analysis.pdf.
- 9 Hom, Peter W., and Angelo J. Kinicki. “Toward a greater understanding of how dissatisfaction drives turnover.” *Academy Of Management Journal* 44, no. 5 (October 2001): 975-987. *Business Source Elite*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 15, 2017).
- 10 Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. (2014). Iowa’s Re-Envisioned Economic Development Roadmap. Battelle Memorial Institute. <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/user-docs/documents/ieda/2014BattelleReport.pdf>.
- 11 Weaver, A., & Osterman, P. (2016, July). Skill Demands and Mismatch in U.S. Manufacturing. *ILR Review*, 20(2), 275-307. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177%2F0019793916660067>.
- 12 Iowa State University News Service. (2015, June 10). Iowa State researchers find little evidence to support skills gap claims. Retrieved from Iowa State University News Service: <http://www.news.iastate.edu/news/2015/06/10/skillsgap>. For report, go here: <http://www.icip.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/reports/Exploring%20the%20Skills%20Gap%20in%20Iowa.pdf>.
- 13 Iowa Workforce Development Labor Market & Workforce Information Division. (2012). Laborshed Analysis. Dubuque: Prosperity Eastern Iowa. https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/sites/search.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/files/prosperityeia_execsummary.pdf.
- 16 East Central Intergovernmental Association, “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2015–2019),” East Central Intergovernmental Association, <http://www.ecia.org/pdf/Final-FiveYearCEDS-forweb.pdf>. In 2011, ECIA was awarded an Iowa Environmental Excellence Award from the Governor of Iowa, and, in 2012, a Gold Excellence in Economic Development Award from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).
- 17 The California Green Business Network, a model for the Petal Project, has recently begun charging participation fees in certain jurisdictions, ending its run as a free program. For more on the California Green Business Network, see the Comparative Analysis in Section Four, or visit the program’s website: <http://www.greenbusinessca.org>.
- 18 The membership fee structure for FY15–16 was provided to Team Prosperity by program staff.
- 19 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Evaluating Local Economic and Employment Development,” OECD, 2004, <http://www.oecd.org/leed-forum/publications/Evaluating%20Local%20Economic%20and%20Employment%20Development.pdf>.
- 20 For example criteria from selected programs, see Appendix C.
- 21 Global Reporting Initiative. GRI Standards Download Center, 2016, <https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/gri-standards-download-center/>.
- 22 Green Plus, About the Green Plus Program, 2015, <http://go-greenplus.org/about-the-green-plus-program/>.
- 23 Illinois Green Business Association, “About IGBA,” IGBA, 2017, <http://www.illinoisgba.org/AboutIGBA.aspx>.
- 24 W.K. Kellogg Foundation, “Logic Model Development Guide,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, January 2004, <https://ag.purdue.edu/extension/pdehs/Documents/Pub3669.pdf>.
- 25 Samantha Schasberger, “Telling the Performance Story: Logic Models, Performance Measurement, & Evaluation,” U.S. Economic Administration, November 10, 2014. https://www.lib.noaa.gov/about/news/schasberger_nov102014.pdf.
- 26 W.K. Kellogg Foundation, “Logic Model Development Guide,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, January 2004, <https://ag.purdue.edu/extension/pdehs/Documents/Pub3669.pdf>.

Section 5: Appendix

The appendix includes more background research results in addition to the program materials such as toolkits and a useable program guide.

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	B Impact	STAR Community Rating System	Green America Business Network and Certification
Sustainability Framework	Standards and Impacts determined for Governance, Employees, Community, Environment	Built Environment, Climate & Energy, Economy & Jobs, Equity & Empowerment, Health & Safety, Natural Systems, and Innovation	Focus on economic strategies to solve social and environmental problems; definition of “green” explicitly links social justice and environmental responsibility. Program tailored towards quality control and support of “green” and social enterprises.
Mission or Defining Statement	“We are a global movement of business leaders that seek to redefine success in business, so that one day all companies compete not only to be the best in the world, but to be the best for the world.”	“The STAR Community Rating System provides a roadmap to help evaluate, assess, and improve communities’ economic, environmental, and social performance measures and become healthier, stronger, and more resilient.”	“Green America is dedicated to harnessing the economic power of consumers, investors and businesses to promote social justice and environmental sustainability. We help people and green businesses connect in the marketplace.”
Organization Type	B Impact is one initiative of B Lab (non-profit)	Partnership: Local Govts for Sustainability, U.S. Green Building Council, Center for American Progress, Natl League of Cities	501(c)3 non-profit
Participating businesses	40,000+; E.g. Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s, Etsy proprietors, Oliberte Shoes (Ethiopia); Ouro Verde Amazonia (Brazil)	N/A	Over 8,000 evaluated; 3,000 in directory; E.g. Seventh Generation, Honest Tea, Clif Bar, Klean Kanteen, Mary’s Gone Crackers
Costs to Participate	Free assessment, reports, and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies by service package Free download of STAR Community Rating System STAR Full Access - \$1,000 per year for ‘full suite’ of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership fees are due annually \$130 0-5 employees \$250 6-20 employees \$350 21-99 employees \$1200 100-250 employees \$2500 Over 250 employees
Program Funding	Numerous funding partners and donors	Numerous funding partners and donors	Numerous funding partners and donors
Benefits and Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free comparison to peer companies (competitors) Attract employees Engage employees Build trustworthy reputation and positive press Gain competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National recognition Demonstrates commitment to sustainability Gain competitive advantage and attract funding improve transparency Communicate resilience and risk management to financial partners Build and strengthen partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listed in nation’s leading green business directory Grow market: access to nationwide network of green consumers (200,000+ households) Cost savings on business services (shipping, web hosting, packaging, responsible credit card processing, retirement plans) Connect with businesses, consumers, investors online and at green events, exhibits, festivals, and other networking events Financial awards and recognition
Technical Assistance and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free assessment of business practices in governance, employee treatment, community involvement, and environmental practices Educational info with every question on assessment: relevant definitions, industry standards, example practices, and case studies of implementation Criteria cross-referenced to Global Reporting Initiative and IRIS standards for ease with compliance requirements Customized improvement reports based on your assessment Toolkits with resources to improve areas of poor performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials educate users on sustainable practices and implementation steps with descriptions of goals, qualifying outcomes, action steps STAR Technical Team provides verification and certification Help with reports and analysis to improve rating (technical assistance varies by service package) Additional technical assistance programs can be purchased Webinars, trainings, publications, case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green America’s Certification Team reviews application; if not approved, businesses receive guidance on ways to improve Directory, publications, and relationships with companies provide more benefit than staff expertise; previous commitment to “green” issues is assumed Program focus on ‘green’ enterprises requires staff expertise on nano-technology and GMOs



Table 2 of 4

	B Impact	STAR Community Rating System	Green America Business Network and Certification
Assessment and Certification Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete online assessment and make changes to business based on customized report; time and effort varies by business • Assessment questions are weighted based on impact of implementation and based on business size and sector • No certification or verification process • Impetus is on business to assess, improve, re-assess 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities gather data and apply through proprietary Online Reporting Tool. • Applications are verified by staff within 60 days. • Certification lasts for 3 years and designate communities as 5-star, 4-star, or 3-star • Scoring is based on points; communities earn points for certain outcomes and for putting local actions into place • Communities receive more/less points depending on whether actions are preparatory- or implementation-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apply, business must have website; some industries banned • Assessment requires answering 10 questions and is designed to take 20-40 minutes • Certification Team responds within 30 days • Recertification necessary if there are changes in ownership, business model/ products, applicable standards, or complaints from consumers/colleagues • Standards and Certification Committee conducts independent review of businesses applying for Gold Seal
Criteria Development and Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards created/ revised by business and academic experts in Standards Advisory Council • Standards open to public review and feedback • Working groups research specific issues • Assessment updated every two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards determined through extensive research process by working groups, formal committees, and volunteers • Criteria presented in ways that make sense for audience: local government • Scoring system awards process and implementation • Innovation category functions as ‘extra credit’ category 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four general standards apply to all businesses • 40+ industry-specific assessment standards • New seals released in 2016 conform to Federal Trade Commission Green Guidelines to ensure legitimacy • Standards evaluated throughout the year and are open for feedback; program qualifies for “third party verification” in Benefit Corporation process
Methods for Tracking Impacts	Assessment report is only tracking mechanism	STAR provides protocol for verification documents, and communities/ Technical Team utilize proprietary Online Reporting Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on market reflected in tracking: business’ ongoing commitment to values is tracked while specific savings are not • Timely membership dues keep businesses within the online directory so consumers know who is/is not certified
Partnerships and Capacity	Program provides assessment and information only, although knowledge sharing through case studies is emphasized	STAR Staff and program provide all resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public policy advocacy on green issues through American Sustainable Business Council • Savings on businesses services achieved through business network • Maintaining connection to consumer base is high priority and incentive of program
Unique Elements or Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program issues no certification • Transparency about where to improve and steps taken generates positive press and organizational change without certification • Criteria cross-reference other established standards and metrics and undergo advisory group review • Every element of program educates participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program materials are designed for the audience: city governments. In the same way, business program materials should resonate with business owners. • Documentation requirements are standardized • The purpose behind every criteria area is made clear • Points are awarded for clear steps toward desired outcomes • STAR provides a guide for designing a weighted point system and tiered certification levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program tailored towards quality control of businesses already claiming to be “green” • Major incentives include access to business services and large consumer base; may make program less applicable to businesses without direct consumer base • Unlike in Petal Project, gambling businesses cannot apply • Green Business Network campaigns for policy changes



Table 3 of 4

	Green Plus	Illinois Green Business Association	California Green Business Network (non-profit)
Sustainability Framework	Triple Bottom Line: Environmental, Social, and Business Practices, or “Planet, People, Performance”	Environmental focus: waste reduction, pollution prevention, water and energy conservation, and employee awareness; community development included to limited degree	Environmental focus: waste reduction, pollution prevention, water and energy conservation, and employee awareness. Philosophy of having “different shades of green”
Mission or Defining Statement	“Green Plus is a business improvement program focusing on business education, networking, and recognition. We educate, motivate, and recognize smaller enterprises for their efforts towards becoming more sustainable.”	“The IGBA helps businesses integrate green practices through education and engagement, causing a business to find profitability in sustainability. Our vision is that a sustainable business culture is the standard practice of economic activity.”	“The California Green Business Program leads the state and nation in working with small to medium sized businesses to grow a vibrant and healthy green economy. Led by a coalition of cities and counties, we contribute to more livable communities [...] while also conserving resources and saving money.”
Organization Type	Green Plus is an initiative of the Redwoods Group Foundation	501(c)3 non-profit organization	California Green Business Network (non-profit)
Participating businesses	393 listed in directory; E.g. Lube Stop, Great Lakes Brewing Co., Alex Kontos Fruit Co.	80 certified, 3,000_ participants; E.g. BLDD Architects, Busey Bank, Body N’ Sole, IPPATSU Salon, Vitesse Cycle Shop	3,409 certified; E.g. Almici’s Coast Pizza, Bank of Marin, Awe Sum Organics, Many Chambers of Commerce, schools, and ounty and city government buidlings
Costs to Participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$75 1-2 employees • \$275 fall general businesses • Diagnostic Survey is free; no further assistance without payment • Partner organizations periodically offer scholarships for participation and implementation of sustainability projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee purchases predetermined number of hours of staff support • Fee is “one-time” per certification (3-year certification period) • \$750 1-25 Employees • \$1,500 25-50 Employees • \$3,000 50-100 Employees • Custom determination 100+ Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free to participate, however some jurisdictions have begun charging nominal fee • Business support centers and utility companies offer scholarships periodically
Program Funding	Funding from donations to the Redwoods Group Foundation	Funding from public and private sector partners	Funding from EPA; Contributions from local governments and utility companies (Pacific Gas & Electric Company)
Benefits and Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Green Plus Certified” window decal and certificate • “Green Plus Certified” logo and vendor proof of certification • Customizable press release • Access to the “Green Plus Directory” of businesses • Marketing kit and “how-to” guides for utilizing Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms • Ongoing access to technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and access to programs/rebates/incentives • Reduce operating costs • Attract new customers and retain current customers • Credibly market business as green • Receive marketing materials and support from IGBA staff: window decal, certificate, posters and handouts for customers, press release, social media press • Employee engagement and community recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost savings, business efficiency • Competitive advantage over other businesses • Marketability to community, customers, supply chain • Tailored to help small and mid-size businesses • Connection to state-wide network through directory and established partnerships
Technical Assistance and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Plus Fellow program provides staff support • Fellow “sustainability coaches” help businesses transform their survey results into attainable goals for improvements. • Fellows drive resource and information-sharing through the “Environmental Help Desk” and media prsence: they write blog posts, post relevant articles, produce podcasts, and conduct research surveys • Fellows and program partners produce resource guides to help small and/or rural businesses with specific challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided checklist assessment (in person or by phone) based on business type • Customized implementation plan • Resources supporting specific goals of implementation and personal ‘hands-on’ assistance when applicable • Verification assistance--organizing and collecting documentation • Coordination with energy audit programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line database to track status, company profile, and company report card • On-site assessments • Level of assistance may vary by participating jurisdiction • Templates provided for policy changes required by certification



Table 4 of 4

	Green Plus	Illinois Green Business Association	California Green
Assessment and Certification Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51-question Diagnostic Survey is free for self-assessment • Businesses must achieve a score of at least 70% within each category and an 80% overall score; Bonus provisions boost scores • Businesses work with program staff to address issues identified by the survey. They resubmit responses to the survey until reaching a satisfactory score. Verification documents required. • Businesses retain certification status for two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete checklist assessment in waste, energy, water, pollution, staff education, and community involvement practices • Criteria are weighted equally • Implement unfulfilled actions identified in customized implementation plan • Submit all forms of verification • Upon receipt, certification valid for 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use on-line checklist of criteria in waste, energy, water, pollution, staff education, and community involvement practices • Implement unfulfilled actions necessary for certification • On-site assessments required for verification
Criteria Development and Adaptability	<p>Program markets itself as customizable based on financial and staff capacity restraints of participants with the goal of reaching small- and medium-sized businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored checklists available for office/retail, restaurants, and hotels • Technical Advisory Groups provide oversight and quality control for required standards • New public input process on criteria will meet ‘third-party verification’ requirements • Criteria are weighted equally (no weighted or tiered system) • Community development criteria have not achieved desired outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100+ required and option practices, depending on jurisdiction and business type. Categories include: janitorial products, lighting, storm water pollution, waste diversion, etc. • Optional and required practices vary by business type • All criteria equally weighted
Methods for Tracking Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a priority; potential trade-off from high turnover in staff, primarily graduate students. • Previous Fellow conducted survey and interviews in 2011 to measure the impact of the program on business practices. • Little to no resources on determining cost savings / impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current system: extensive Excel spreadsheet macro developed by program staff; business and program staff share responsibility to communicate and send documentation • Upgrade to on-line database utilized by the California Green Business • Program seeks to find reasonable metrics without over-emphasizing tracking and reporting on the implementation and impacts of business practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online database allows businesses to view, track, and update status • EPA grant allowed CGBN to disseminate tracking technology to other programs starting in 2015
Partnerships and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Plus partners with “Chambers of Commerce to offer Green Plus to their members, and licenses the program to philanthropic foundations and local governments” • Leveraged partnership to achieve public policy change awarding businesses advantage in municipal bid process • Partners such as North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center provide scholarships and microloans for business projects • Focuses certification on existing like-minded business networks • Fellow Program draws from multi-university partnership to provide bulk of staff capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with similar programs through the Green Business Engagement National Network helped strengthen knowledge-sharing relationships; EPA Grant facilitated sharing of online database between multiple statewide green business programs • Partnership with the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center will allow for accreditation assistance with manufacturing and largescale production operations • Technical Advisory Groups and “Green Drinks” social functions allow for formal and informal knowledge sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program operates through local coordinators across the state • Onset of jurisdiction fee signals need to compensate staff time and efforts, which may vary by jurisdiction and success of program • Statewide presence allows for wide network of funding partnerships
Unique Elements or Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly utilizes and builds on existing business networks • Targets small and rural businesses • One of few to highlight economic development context of program through strategic partnerships and public policy initiatives • Program builds momentum by certifying several businesses within one network in a short time frame • Weak reporting may be due to turnover in staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher fees than many similar programs; fees have been adjusted over time to better reflect staff time and investment • Criteria checklists are tailored to specific businesses • Better technology (online, user-friendly) is key tool for scaling up operations and expanding business access to program • Found tracking cost savings/impacts may not help attract businesses and requires a lot of staff time • Program faced difficulty creating partnerships with colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line tool allows program to be scale-able and disseminated throughout the state to wide range of cities and counties with varied staff capacity • Significant number of participants are public sector • For private sector, program focus on smaller enterprises • Criteria award businesses for helping other businesses become certified/referring businesses



[PROGRAM NAME]

Program Guide

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WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?

The Program encourages regional organizations to adopt sustainable business practices, guides them through implementation of such practices, and helps them achieve critical mass for adoption of more advanced sustainable business practices. In so doing, the Program seeks to:

- (1) Produce cost savings through efficiency.
- (2) Develop environmentally responsible and socially conscious brands.
- (3) Create workplaces that attract and retain quality workers.
- (4) Achieve cumulative gains making for a more economically vibrant region.

WHO RUNS THE PROGRAM?

Program Manager

Ultimately, the Program Manager is responsible for administering the Program. The responsibilities of the Program Manager include:

- Serving as principal contact for the Program—including initial communications from prospective participants, media, and other persons or organizations external to the Program;
- Onboarding prospective participants, including holding the annual Onboarding Meeting;
- Organizing the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, including arranging for creation and presentation of all certifications and awards;
- Assisting with coordination of events organized or hosted by Program Participants throughout the year;
- Acting as liaison between Program Participants, including groups such as Cohorts and the Advisory Council, as needed;
- Creating and maintaining records of the progress and achievements of Program Participants; generating and disseminating an annual report presenting the progress and achievements;
- Marketing, advertising, and promoting the Program within the region; and
- Identifying and securing additional, diverse sources of funding to offset Program costs, and Receiving and managing Program funds.

Advisory Council

Although the Program Manager is ultimately responsible for administering the Program, the Program is intended to be driven primarily by Program Participants. The group of Program Participants expected to be the foremost driver is the Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council is a five-member advisory body comprised of Program Participants who have achieved Level-3 status. The responsibilities of the Advisory Council include:

- Serving as contact and mentor to fellow Program Participants, including advising on advancement through the Program and implementation of sustainable business practices;
- Organizing at least one educational event for Program Participants in each quarter other than the one in which the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony occurs;
- Reviewing applications by Program Participants for certification and rendering recommendations regarding such applications to the Program Manager;
- Assisting the Program Manager with administering the Program, including conducting the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony; and
- Acting as positive ambassadors for the Program and promoting it from time to time.

Cohorts

Other groups of Program Participants expected to drive the Program are the Cohorts formed with each new class of Program Participants. By onboarding new Program Participants once each year, the Program will produce Cohorts to serve as additional collaborative networks—both between the individual Program Participants of a given Cohort as well as between the various Cohorts within the Program.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Program Structure

The basic structure of the Program is based on two pillars of sustainability, each comprised of five Focus Areas. Program Participants can achieve three levels of certification as they advance through the Program.

The two pillars of sustainability are “Quality Workers, Quality Workplace” (QWQW) and “Efficient Operations & Environmental Stewardship” (EOES).

The QWQW pillar is comprised of the following Focus Areas:

- Diversity & Inclusion;
- Employee Engagement & Advancement;

- Health & Wellness;
- Community Involvement; and
- Wages & Other Benefits.

The EOES pillar is comprised of the following Focus Areas:

- Energy Conservation;
- Pollution Prevention;
- Waste Reduction;
- Water Conservation; and
- Carbon Footprint.

Program Participants are acknowledged as “Dedicated” when they join the Program, and they can achieve three levels of certification—Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3—within the Program. Program Participants should seek to achieve the next level of certification by completing their declared Strategies within an Annual Reporting Period.

Advancement through Program

Program Participants advance through the Program by completing Strategies prescribed for each focus area. For each Annual Reporting Period, a Program Participant must choose two Focus Areas—one from each pillar—on which to concentrate. Upon choosing two Focus Areas for the upcoming Annual Reporting Period, the Program Participant should consult the Program toolkits respective to those Focus Areas.

Program Toolkits

Each Program toolkit provides as follows:

- The “business case” for making progress in the given Focus Area;
- An opportunity for Program Participants to “reflect and assess” how they currently conduct business regarding the given Focus Area;
- Examples of benefits of what other organizations have done in the context of the Focus Area;
- Recommended Strategies for making progress in the given Focus Area;
- Resources for carrying out such Strategies; and
- Examples of local organizations making significant progress in the given Focus Area.



Declaration of Focus Areas & Strategies

At least 60 days before the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, each Program Participant must select two Focus Areas—one from each pillar—as well as six Strategies—three from each Focus Area—to take on in the upcoming Annual Reporting Period. The selected Focus Areas must be different than Focus Areas selected by the Program Participant in previous Annual Reporting Periods. The Program Participant must submit a written Declaration of Strategies to the Program Manager, with a copy submitted to the Advisory Council.

Request for Certification

At any point within the Annual Reporting Period—but no later than 60 days before the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony—the Program Participant may apply for next-level certification upon completing the six Strategies they selected for the Annual Reporting Period. Such application will be made via Request for Certification to the Advisory Council, with a copy submitted to the Program Manager.

Each Request for Certification must contain the following:

- An identification of the two Focus Areas and the three Strategies within each Focus Area the Program Participant selected for the Annual Reporting Period;
- An Attestation by the Program Participant that all selected Strategies were carried out;
- Statements regarding the benefits known to the Program Participant of carrying out such Strategies; and
- A modicum of evidence supporting the execution and benefits of executing such Strategies.

Review by Advisory Council

For all Requests for Certification received during the Annual Reporting Period well ahead of 60-day mark before the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, the Advisory Council will review such requests and provide a written recommendation regarding next-level certification within a reasonable time to the Program Manager, with a copy submitted to the requesting Program Participant. Within 60 days of the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, the Advisory Council will review all outstanding Requests for Certification received by the 60-day mark and render recommendations to the Program Manager, with copies submitted to the requesting Program Participants, at least 30 days before the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony.

The Advisory Council is not expected to investigate the veracity of the claims in the Request for Certification. The Advisory Council will simply review all Requests for Certification to ensure they meet the following minimum standards:

- The requesting Program Participant followed the Program by identifying at least three Strategies from each of two different Focus Areas not already selected in previous Annual Reporting Periods;

- The requesting Program Participant made a statement of attestation regarding execution of selected Strategies; and
- The requesting Program Participant made some effort to provide statements of benefit and evidence supporting the execution and benefits of executing the Strategies.

If the Advisory Council finds that a given Request for Certification meets the minimum standards, the Advisory Council must make a written recommendation to the Program Manager, with a copy submitted to the requesting Program Participant, that the Program Manager should approve the Request for Certification. If the Advisory Council finds that a given Request for Certification does not meet the minimum standards, then the Advisory Council must make a written recommendation to the Program Manager, with a copy submitted to the requesting Program Participant, that the Program Manager should reject the Request for Certification, with the grounds for rejection expressly stated.

Upon receiving a copy of the Advisory Council's recommendation against certification, the requesting Program Participant may appeal to the Program Manager for secondary review. If the Program Manager finds that the Request for Certification meets the minimum standards, notwithstanding the Advisory Council's recommendation against approval, the Program Manager may approve the request and grant next-level certification. If the Program Manager finds that the Request for Certification does not meet the minimum standards, the Program Manager—in a timeframe and manner in the complete discretion of the Program Manager—may work with the requesting Program Participant to cure the Request for Certification or determine next steps appropriate to achieving next-level certification.

Grants of Next-Level Certification

All grants of next-level certification will be formally announced at the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony. The Program Manager will present each recipient with a tangible certificate of achievement.

Achievement Levels

The Program classifies Program Participants in five ways: "Dedicated," "Level-1," "Level-2," "Level-3," and "Inactive." Please refer to the Program Glossary for important details on these classifications.

Level 3 is the highest level Program Participants can achieve within the Program. Upon reaching Level-3, Program Participants are encouraged to serve on the Advisory Council or otherwise remain in the Program in an advisory role. Level-3 Program Participants must continue to pay their Annual Participation Fee each Annual Reporting Period to avoid Inactive status and remain on the Advisory Council, if serving. Level-3 Program Participants may, but need not, adopt and implement additional Strategies prescribed by the Program to maintain their Level-3 status. Level-3 Program Participants will, however, be encouraged to consider joining a national sustainability program in addition to participating in the Program.



Onboarding New Program Participants

All expressions of interest by prospective participants should be communicated to the Program Manager.

Initial Meeting

The Program Manager will contact all prospective participants to briefly discuss the Program, answer any questions they may have, and invite them to the annual Onboarding Meeting. Between this initial contact—which may occur in person, by phone, or via teleconference—and the Onboarding Meeting, the Program Manager should maintain a rapport with the prospective participant and update them regularly on Program news and information regarding the Onboarding Meeting.

Onboarding Meeting

Within 90 days of the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, the Program Manager must hold the Onboarding Meeting, at which the Program Manager:

- Provides a more in-depth presentation regarding how the Program works, Program benefits and success stories, and the next steps and timeframe for joining the Program;
- Informs prospective participants of the Annual Participation Fee and collects such fee;
- Secures a written Dedication to Sustainable Business Practices from each Prospective Participant who paid the Annual Participation Fee and intends to start the Program in the upcoming Annual Reporting Period;
- Declares all who have paid the Annual Participation Fee and provided the written Dedication to Sustainable Business Practices to now be “Dedicated to a Sustainable Region,” for which the Program Manager will grant a tangible certificate of acknowledgement;
- Establishes the new Cohort of Dedicated Program Participants and encourages collaboration between them;
- Provides the new Dedicated Program Participants with Program toolkits and other Program materials; and
- Invites all new Dedicated Program Participants to the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, at which they will be welcomed and acknowledged.

Initial Declarations & Initiation

Between the Onboarding Meeting and the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, the Program Manager will work with new Dedicated Program Participants as needed to help them submit their initial Declaration of Strategies. Following the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony, all new Dedicated Program Participants will proceed as a regular Program Participants.



Credit for Current Sustainable Business Practices

Any Dedicated Program Participant who believes any of their current business practices substantially meet the Strategies prescribed by the Program may request Program credit from the Advisory Council. The Program Manager will assist any Program Participant expressing such a belief with submitting the request to the Advisory Council. Such Dedicated Program Participant must make the request in writing to the Advisory Council, with a copy sent to the Program Manager. The processes set forth regarding Requests for Certification, reviews by the Advisory Council, and grants of next-level certification will apply. Any Dedicated Program Participant making such a request may be granted up to Level 2 certification, but no higher. Even incoming champions of sustainable business practices are expected to participate for at least one Annual Reporting Period before being granted Level-3 certification and permitted to serve on the Advisory Council. Regardless of any credit granted, each new Program Participant will be considered a member of the Cohort with which they entered the Program.

Program Glossary

“**Advisory Council**” is the five-member advisory body comprised of Level-3 Program Participants that, among other things, reviews and renders recommendations on Requests for Certification and organizes educational events—e.g., a “lunch and learn,” webinar, tour of facilities, etc.—for all Program Participants at least three times per Annual Reporting Period.

“**Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony**” is the yearly event, organized by the Program Manager, serving to recognize and promote the achievements of Program Participants, initiate new Cohorts, and promote the Program to the region.

“**Annual Participation Fee**” is the yearly fee Program Participants must pay to avoid becoming Inactive and missing out on the full benefits of the Program.

“**Annual Reporting Period**” is the yearly timeframe in which the Program is administered. The Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony marks the end of one Annual Reporting Period and the beginning of another.

“**Cohort**” is a group of Program Participants who begin the Program at the same time. The Program contemplates admitting one Cohort per Annual Reporting Period, at least initially, to achieve onboarding efficiencies and build Program capacity.

“**Declaration of Strategies**” is the written document by which a Program Participant sets goals for the upcoming Annual Reporting Period. Declarations of Strategies are to be submitted to the Program Manager, with copies submitted to the Advisory Council.

“**Dedicated**” Program Participants are those who have paid their Annual Participation Fee and provided a written Dedication to Sustainable Business Practices but have not yet reached Level-1 certification.

“**Dedication to Sustainable Business Practices**” is the written statement new Program Participants must make when starting the Program.



“**Efficient Operations & Environmental Stewardship (EOES)**” is one of the Program’s two organizing pillars. Each pillar contains five Focus Areas, and each Focus Area contains multiple Strategies.

“**Focus Area**” is a category of sustainable business practices within one of the Program’s two organizing pillars. Each pillar contains five Focus Areas, and each Focus Area contains multiple Strategies.

“**Inactive**” Program Participants are Program Participants, regardless of what level they have reached, who have not paid their Annual Participation Fee for the current Annual Reporting Period. Inactive Program Participants are not demoted to a lower achievement level for failing to pay, but, until getting current on their Annual Participation Fee, are classified as “Inactive,” making them ineligible to attend the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony and otherwise putting them at risk to miss out on the full benefits of participation. If a member of the Advisory Council becomes Inactive, the Program Manager must notify them that Inactive Program Participants may not serve on the Advisory Council and that such Inactive Program Participant must restore their Level-3 status by paying the Annual Participation Fee within 14 days or risk being replaced another Level-3 Program Participant.

“**Level-1**” Program Participants are those who have taken all the steps of Dedicated Program Participants, have paid their Annual Participation Fee for the current Annual Reporting Period, and have been certified by the Program Manager in a previous Annual Reporting Period as having adopted and implemented at least six Strategies—three from each of two different Focus Areas, each Focus Area being from a different pillar.

“**Level-2**” Program Participants are those who have taken all the steps of Level-1 Program Participants, have paid their Annual Participation Fee for the current Annual Reporting Period, and have been certified by the Program Manager in a previous Annual Reporting Period as having adopted and implemented at least 12 Strategies—three from each of four different Focus Areas, with two Focus Areas each from a different pillar.

“**Level-3**” Program Participants are those who have taken all the steps of Level-2 Program Participants, have paid their Annual Participation Fee for the current Annual Reporting Period, and have been certified by the Program Manager in a previous Annual Reporting Period as having adopted and implemented at least 18 Strategies—three from each of six different Focus Areas, with three Focus Areas each from a different pillar.

“**Onboarding Meeting**” is the meeting conducted by the Program Manager within 90 days of the Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony that effectively informs and brings new Program Participants into the Program.

“**Program**” is the regional sustainable business practices program set forth herein.

“**Program Manager**” is the organization that offers and ultimately administers the Program within a region.

“Program Participant” is any entity that has been initiated into the Program regardless of their achievement level or active status, unless such entity has affirmatively withdrawn from the Program.

“Request for Certification” is the written document by which a Program Participant applies for next-level certification. Requests for Certification are to be submitted to the Advisory Council, with copies submitted to the Program Manager.

“Strategies” are suggested means for adopting and implementing sustainable business practices within each Focus Area. Each pillar contains five Focus Areas, and each Focus Area contains multiple Strategies.

MODEL TIMELINE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIOD

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<p>Second Friday in January. * Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony</p>			<p>Second Friday in April * Advisory Council Meeting & Sponsored Program Event</p>			<p>Second Friday in August * Advisory Council Meeting & Sponsored Program Event</p>			<p>Within 90 days of Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony. * Onboarding Meeting</p>		
										<p>No later than 60 days before Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony: * Requests for Certification & Declarations of Strategies due</p>	
										<p>No later than 30 days before Annual Awards & Initiation Ceremony: * Recommendations regarding Requests for Certification returned</p>	



Getting Started

The **petal** Project

Your organization has decided to improve its economic, social, and environmental impacts. Congratulations! Setting goals will ensure you make progress in what matters most to you. This guide will help you set challenging but attainable goals based on a year-long timeframe and select the metrics you need for measuring success.

ONE | Making the Business Case

Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship

Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship (EES) minimizes costs by helping businesses identify ways to use resources efficiently while reducing the environmental impacts of day-to-day business operations.

With a triple-bottom line approach, saving money means improving the business and planet. Green businesses must be profitable to increase the market share held by companies committed to making a difference.

The “business case” -- that is, the quantification of opportunities and risks -- for environmental and sustainability education might not yet be heavy on data. But anecdotes from around the world give clear indications that teaching employees to conserve, recycle, improve efficiency and reduce waste, among other actions, have benefits for employees, companies and communities.

In fact, the success stories from companies ranging from retail giant Walmart to a seven-person apparel company show similarities. Employees on the company’s front lines are in the best position to identify and implement environmental and sustainability practices. And those practices lead to numerous benefits, from improving the company’s financial position to reducing the amount of environmental hazards and waste caused by production.

Quality Workers, Quality Workplace

Establishing a great workplace comes with significant payoffs to businesses and their surrounding areas. A study from Great Place to Work shows companies that go the extra mile in the workplace can experience an extraordinary “ROI on Niceness” --increasing productivity by a factor of 7! Employees experiencing a great workplace are likely to identify their organization as friendly, cooperative, welcoming, and honest and ethical. They are proud of the organization’s accomplishments and are 8-9 times more likely to speak about it with pride, giving a big boost to reputation through ‘word of mouth’ and promotion of the organization’s brand. Impacts on talent retention, productivity, and loyalty to the organization are shared by Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers alike.

For Millennials (workers aged 18-32) specifically, fair treatment of all employees and being given a lot of responsibility drives their perception of the workplace. Taking these claims seriously has other benefits--fair treatment can boost an organization’s ethnic diversity, which in turn has been shown to boost financial performance by as high as 35% over more homogenous companies. (B Impact study). 90% of Millennials who feel they have found a great workplace want to stay there for the long haul, reversing assumptions that young talent will always hop from job to job. In Iowa, appealing to a younger generation of workers and retaining talent is integral to sustaining economic vitality.



TWO | Recruiting a Team

Having an invested group will make all the difference in making real changes and maximizing employee engagement. Consider including “champions” of sustainability, key decisionmakers, and those with detailed knowledge of the company and its operations.

Name	Department

THREE | Finding a Focus

Each topic listed under the two categories consists of a range of strategies to achieve improvement in one sustainability area. Pick one topic in each category and complete ____ number of items to achieve certification!

Efficient Operations and Environmental Stewardship

Quality Workers, Quality Workplace

Pollution Prevention

Employee Engagement & Advancement

Waste Reduction

Health & Wellness

Water Conservation

Good Governance

Wages & Benefits

SHARE YOUR FINAL GOALS WITH THE COMPANY!

Consider a brown-bag lunch to share your process, take feedback, and find others to champion the effort.

Toolkit: Community Involvement



Your organization has chosen to focus on building a reputation for good. Congratulations! This toolkit will help your team make the business case and point you to practical steps toward improvement.

Why Community Involvement Matters

Businesses need to attract and retain talented workers. In Eastern Iowa, this is especially important as the Baby Boomer generation retires, taking their skills and valuable work experience out of the workforce. Becoming a company known for giving back has been shown to have measurable influence on productivity and company loyalty. Workers who felt their employers made a positive impact on the world were four times more likely to see their coworkers putting in extra effort at work and eleven times more likely to plan to stay with their organizations “for the long haul.” Younger workers in particular tend to stay with companies they perceive as willing to give back.¹

Reflect & Assess

Does your organization encourage workers to invest in the local community? Do workers have a voice in selecting organizations for charitable giving? Does your organization have any formal policy in place to provide volunteer or pro bono services, in-kind donations, or dedicated funds for a cause (i.e. 1% for the planet)?

Be Inspired

Before you build your own strategy, here are some creative ideas being implemented in company’s across the nation to help you brainstorm ideas for policies and programs that will be effective with your organization.

<p>Granite Properties</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> Each employee receives 40 hours of time off to volunteer annually and the company provides resources to help them find opportunities.³</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> Strengthening community connections connects employees to their passions and engages employees in the businesses’ mission.</p>	<p>Give Back from Day One</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> Cornerstone OnDemand makes a volunteer activity—building skateboards for youth in the community—part of new-hire orientation; all new hires at Veteran United Home Loans receive a \$10 gift certificate with instructions to “pay it forward” with a good deed. The orientation has time to share about the experience.²</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> Boosts team spirit, connection to workplace, and makes “giving back” part of the job from day one.</p>	<p>Novo Nordisk</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> Employees given the opportunity to pitch community projects for company-funded grants and work with winners to make the project a reality.</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> Employees gain “more than a job” and increase their connection and the business’ reputation with the community.</p>
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Build a Strategy

Look over these suggested strategies. Choose at least one you and your team can commit to for the next year. How will you mobilize time and resources for good in the next year?

Strategies for a diverse, inclusive workplace:

- Incorporate a service opportunity or “giving back” experience into new hire orientation
- Implement a **Volunteer Time Off** policy.
 -  *Policies vary widely across organizations, from one day of paid volunteering at Dartmouth College to 40 hours at Granite Properties. Some companies may require volunteer hours to take place with certain organizations to focus company efforts.*
- Develop a community impact program where donations can be made through grants or through pro bono or in-kind services and products.
- Implement internships or formal apprenticeship programs.
 -  *Example for Tim's Cascade Snacks: work with a school district to establish a school-to-work community lab program. Students work two hours per day for a semester, and some end up being hired, promoted, etc. The students learn job skills and life skills such as conflict resolution and teamwork.*
- Host a company or department potluck for a cause/organization in the community, and invite those interested to donate what they would have spent on eating out for lunch.
- Partner with local organizations to learn more about barriers to success for different groups in your local community and develop a practice or policy not listed above that addresses a local need.
 -  *Local Spotlight: Inclusive Dubuque has research and strategies to draw from with input from business leaders.*
- Sponsor a run, walk, or other similar event to raise awareness for a cause. Find creative ways to identify organizations or issues your employees and/or customers care about supporting.

Maximize your impact by advancing community engagement in other strategic ways:

Implementing other practices can increase employee engagement as well as demonstrate an organizational commitment to the community. Have you considered:

- Charitable giving (see **Leave and Other Benefits**)?
- Capturing rain or runoff water for other uses (see **Water Conservation**)?
- Expanding professional development (see **Employee Engagement & Advancement**)?
- Expanding benefits for part-time workers (see **Leave & other Benefits**)?

Resources

To dive deeper into a particular strategy or to get help from a group working in your area, check out the following resources.

Community Connections

For 501(c)3 organizations with a Lucky's Market in the area, applying for Lucky's Community Impact Program could be a great way to improve the quality of life in your community. Learn more [here](#).

Volunteer Time Off

Few businesses make full use of their community connections as a way to inspire employees. Implementing a Volunteer Time Off program or policy, [such as this one from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#) is a great place to start.

Local Spotlight: Wellmark

Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield has a program, BluesCare Giving, where the Wellmark Foundation matches personal contributions dollar-for-dollar to eligible nonprofits. Through this signature initiative, millions of dollars have been distributed to more than 1,100 nonprofits in Iowa and South Dakota. Additionally, Wellmark employees volunteer more than 35,000 hours to qualifying organizations and the Wellmark Foundation matches these hours with monetary contributions.

[BluesCare Giving](#)

Local Spotlight: Clarke University

Clarke University takes its responsibility as an anchor institution in the community seriously, looking to deeping its connections with the underserved populations in the area. In 2015, Clarke piloted a minority student mentoring program with Dubuque Senior High School. The program is focused on increasing the high school students' exposure to higher education and inspire them to consider college as a future goal.

A program that involves one partnership and a clear goal could be a great start for any business!

Toolkit: Diversity & Inclusion



Your organization has chosen to focus on building a diverse and inclusive workplace. Congratulations! This toolkit will help your team make the business case and point you to practical steps toward improvement.

Why Diverse, Inclusive Workplaces Matter

According to the Society of Human Resource Management, striving to build and maintain a diverse workforce gives businesses access to a larger pool of candidates, thus improving the odds of hiring the best people. Employers who put people first, regardless of their race, religion, gender, age, or physical disability have an advantage over competitors.¹ Workplaces promoting multiculturalism may see better retention rates and employee investment² and be better poised to mitigate risk and identify opportunities for innovation by drawing on the skills of people from different backgrounds and life experiences.

Yet many companies have room to improve, for the good of their workers and their business. In a national survey in 2016 of nearly 450,000 employees, Black, Hispanic, and Asian respondents were less likely to report fair treatment regardless of race at work and were less likely to report that people care about each other in the workplace.³ At the local level, a 2015 survey by Inclusive Dubuque found over 1 in 4 respondents had experienced bias, discrimination, or exclusion related to employment or financial services.⁴ Businesses can lead the way in making an inclusive economy by making diversity and inclusion something they prioritize, measure, and proactively manage in their workplace, supply chains, and investments.⁵

Reflect & Assess

Does your organization have data on current demographics? Consider gaining perspective on your own performance by comparing data to the diversity of the communities and neighborhoods in which you do business, your customer/user base, and your industry/sector.

Be Inspired

Before you build your own strategy, here are some creative ideas being implemented in company's across the nation to help you brainstorm ideas for policies and programs that will be effective with your organization.

Boston Consulting Group

Practice: Provides unconscious bias training for management and HR staff and refine onboarding and mentorship practices for employees from underrepresented groups.

Payoff: Maximize skills and productivity in the company by ensuring talent is identified and developed for all groups in the workforce.

Tim's Cascade Snacks

Practice: Provides ESL program on-site and cohort-style through partnership with VWorld Vision. Program was provided for 4 hours during the workday.

Payoff: Valued members of workforce learn life skills and maximize their contribution to the company. On-site program created deep team bond.

Rivanna Natural Designs

Practice: Consulted regional International Rescue Committee office to understand workplace needs of refugees and developed opportunities with flexible hours, training for non-English speakers, and living wages.

Payoff: Excluded group gains meaningful employment; Rivanna becomes more attractive workplace.



Build a Strategy

Look over these suggested strategies. Choose at least one you and your team can commit to for the next year. How will you mobilize time and resources for good in the next year?

Strategies for a diverse, inclusive workplace:

- Provide training on cultural sensitivity and recognizing unconscious bias for employees, and especially HR and management staff.
- Improve diversity in recruiting practices and the talent pipelines.
 - 💡 *Be explicit about your commitment to inclusivity on job descriptions and advertise on platforms targeting underrepresented groups.*
 - Partner with organizations that support job training and placement for underrepresented groups.*
 - Local Spotlight: Participate in the Opportunity Dubuque network.*
- Create or encourage Employee Resource Groups representative of your workplace to hold regular events and advocate diversity awareness. Establish a direct line of communication for ERGs to report concerns and ask for input to make your workplace more inclusive.
- Encourage a multicultural workplace by celebrating cultural holidays, foods, or foreign languages.
 - 💡 *Send out a short survey to identify important holidays and create a calendar. Use your Green Team to help coordinate periodic celebrations with food and description of each holiday's significance.*
 - Host a potluck where coworkers bring food significant to their family or culture.*
- Offer subsidized or on-site childcare to reduce barriers to gainful employment and upward mobility.
- Identify and act on opportunities to diversify your company's management and share leadership with people from underrepresented groups.
- Provide ESL/ELL services on-site or help coordinate access to language services for employees.
- Partner with local organizations to learn more about barriers to success for different groups in your local community and develop a practice or policy not listed above that addresses a local need.
 - 💡 *Local Spotlight: Inclusive Dubuque has research and strategies to draw from with input from business leaders.*
- Use suppliers that have proven their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Maximize your impact by advancing inclusion in other strategic ways:

Implementing other practices can foster an inclusive workplace by addressing the needs and resources of all workers and creating multiple pathways for upward mobility. Have you considered:

- Adding flexible job options (see **Employee Health & Wellness**)?
- Providing financial education and services (see **Leave & other Benefits**)?
- Expanding professional development (see **Employee Engagement & Advancement**)?
- Expanding benefits for part-time workers (see **Leave & other Benefits**)? or
- Developing a community involvement strategy to invest in underrepresented groups or initiatives led by women or people of color (see **Community Involvement**)?

Resources

To dive deeper into a particular strategy or to get help from a group working in your area, check out the following resources.

On-Site Childcare

Five companies who are making it work and seeing it pay off: "[Working Mother](#)" Blog

Benefits, costs to on-site care and alternatives to support parent workers: [here](#).

Inclusive Hiring Practices

In-depth guide on crafting inclusive job descriptions an dpartnering with organizations to diversity recruitment, plus ideas for companies who are not currently hiring: [download here](#).

Also includes guidance on starting successful mentorship programs!

Local Spotlight: Inclusive Dubuque

Inclusive Dubuque has monthly meetings dedicated to the research and promotion of economic well-being in the Dubuque area, in addition to other focused efforts on issues of equity. In 2015, the group conducted a survey to gather data on workplace equity and potential barriers to economic opportunities. Connect with a Sector Group leader or read the [survey results](#) to identify ways your business can be a good neighbor and expand economic prosperity to all.

[Inclusive Dubuque Working Groups](#)

"Inclusive Dubuque is a local network of leaders from faith, labor, education, business, nonprofit and government dedicated to advancing justice and social equity in our community."

Local Spotlight: Opportunity Dubuque

Become a partner business and attend career events, help get workers career ready, and be at the forefront of talent development in an increasingly diverse workforce. Learn what it takes to have a workplace ready for the up-and-coming workforce and make your own business and this program more effective for the region.

[Opportunity Dubuque](#).

"A win-win for students and employers, Opportunity Dubuque builds career pathways for students to enter the workforce and continue their education and training, while filling employers' demand for talent in high-wage, high-demand careers."

1. Society for Human Resource Management. (2013, April). The Business Case for Diversity. Retrieved from Presentations: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-templates/presentations/pages/thebusinesscasefordiversity.aspx>.
2. Plaut, V., Thomas, K., & Goren, M. (2009, April). Is multiculturalism or color blindness better for minorities? 20(4), 444-446. Summarized based on Iowa Public Radio. (2009, March 31). Celebrating Diversity Can Enhance the Workplace. Retrieved March 20, 2017, from Iowa Public Radio: <http://www.iplr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=107565929>.
3. Great Place to Work. (2016). The Best Workplaces for Diversity: Pursuing the potential of all employees. Great Place to Work. Survey results retrieved from Inclusive Dubuque: <http://inclusivebu.org/working-groups/economic-wellbeing/>. Click Economic Wellbeing Sector Group > Data > Local > Survey. For write-in comments, select "Community feedback from survey" after "Local".
5. B Lab. (2016, September 25). We Need an Inclusive Economy. Retrieved February 10, 2017, from B Lab: <https://medium.com/b-the-change/>.

Toolkit: Water Conservation



Your organization has chosen to focus on conserving water in day-to-day business operations. Congratulations! This toolkit will point you to practical steps toward improvement and saving money as well as the planet!

Why Conserving Water Matters...

Water conservation methods are engineering or behavioral practices that help save water, ranging from fixing faulty plumbing to creating water conservation education plans for employees. Within an organization, water is typically consumed from industrial processes (e.g. manufacturing) as well as building and sanitary uses. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “with the U.S. population doubling over the past 50 years, our thirst for water tripling, and at least 36 states facing water shortages in 2013, the need to conserve water is becoming more and more crucial.” Furthermore, many utility companies are raising water rates in response to dwindling resources, so conserving water can curtail these shortages while helping your organization save money.

Plus, energy efficiency and water conservation go hand-in-hand, as it takes a considerable amount of energy to deliver and treat the water you use every day. For example, letting your faucet run for five minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60-watt light bulb run for 14 hours. Making changes in water usage can lessen your business’s environmental impact as well as save money!

Reflect & Assess

Does your organization have data on current water usage? Consider gaining perspective on your performance by comparing annual water usage history during the same month on different years. You can also estimate usage with methods such as: measuring flow rates using buckets and a stopwatch, estimating volume of daily use from toilets and faucets, or calculating water use of operating equipment per cycle and cycle frequency.

Be Inspired

Before you build your own strategy, here are some creative ideas being implemented in company’s across the nation to help you brainstorm ideas for policies and programs that will be effective with your organization.

<p>Kandalama Hotel</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> The hotel switched to operating the dishwasher and laundry machines only at full capacity, and dedicated time to training employees on water efficiency.</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> These small changes helped the hotel reduce its water usage by almost 15!</p>	<p>Chicago Oases Tollways</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> The restrooms at the tollways service roughly 30,000 visitors daily and account for over 48 million gallons in annual water use. 273 toilets at 105 urinals were converted to low-flush and manual valves were replaced with sensors.</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> Retrofitting resulted in a 57% decrease in water usage, with a payback period of 1.7 years</p>	<p>George Mason University</p> <p><i>Practice:</i> The child development center at GMU began utilizing a 1,000 gallon rainwater harvesting system with their existing gutters.</p> <p><i>Payoff:</i> The collected water from rain events is used to irrigate a garden, removing the need for sprinklers entirely!</p>
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Build a Strategy

Look over these suggested strategies. Choose at least one you and your team can commit to for the next year. How will you mobilize time and resources for good in the next year?

Strategies for conserving energy and increasing efficiency:

- Conduct a water audit.
 -  *Determining how much water you use will help you spot opportunities to save. To track water use, read your water meter or monitor your water bills, keeping an eye out for indications of spikes or leaks. You can contact your local water utility provider to find out how to read your water meter.*
- Register with the EPA's Portfolio Manager to track energy, water, and natural gas usage.
- Make changes to landscape maintenance, especially with regards to sprinklers. *Adjust sprinkler locations for proper coverage to reduce runoff, and sprinkler timing/duration during non-daylight hours.*
- Increase efficiency of water heaters.
 -  *Install insulation blankets on water heaters that are more than seven years old, and insulate the first three feet of the heated water "out" pipe, or switch to newer, more efficient water appliances. In areas of infrequent water use, consider "tankless" water heaters to reduce standby storage costs and waste.*
- Switch to low-flow water appliances, such as toilets, faucets, shower heads, or no-flow urinals. *To start, you could retrofit your faucets with a low-flow aerator.*
- Identify and fix leaky fixtures, appliances, and pipes.
 -  *Identify toilet leaks by placing a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If any color appears in the toilet bowl after 10-15 minutes (without flushing), you have a slow leak.*
- Replace outdated appliances with more efficient models that utilize less water per use and/or include sensors.
- Identify potential to capture grey water from appliances, or add rain gardens to your landscaping.
 -  *Brainstorm uses for any rain water that is captured, or increase grey water cycling from appliances. Use rain barrels to collect rain water for landscaping.*
- Implement a staff education program, sharing new policies, tips, and information on water conservation.

Maximize your impact by advancing water conservation in other strategic ways:

Implementing other practices can foster a water-and-energy conscious workplace by combining efforts and educating staff:

- Empower an employee to be the "Water Champion" (Employee Engagement & Advancement)
- Increase property's surface permeability to better handle stormwater (Pollution Prevention)
- Partner with a water-focused organization for an event (see Community Involvement)

Resources

To dive deeper into a particular strategy or to get help from a group working in your area, check out the following resources.

Saving Water in the Workplace

Go Green Plus provides a [guide](#) on how methods for conserving water indoors. There are strategies for implementing smaller changes or retrofitting, as well as resources and tips for more advanced, large-scale changes.

Landscaping for Water

Rainscaping Iowa has a ton of [resources](#) on native landscaping options for Iowa, rainwater harvesting, living walls, bioretention cells, and many other landscaping aspects that can increase your ability to conserve water and handle stormwater.

Local Spotlight: Premier Tooling and Manufacturing, Inc.

[Premier Tooling and Manufacturing](#) implemented water conservation practices into their facilities maintenance procedures.

Water from the floor scrubbers and part washer is cleaned through a water-recycling system and reused to clean the floors and wash parts.

On average, 375 gallons of water per week is recycled.

Local Spotlight: Strake Johnson Architects

[Strake Johnson Architects, P.C.](#) utilizes permeable paving at their office to address stormwater run-off, in addition to catchment basins, ponds, bio-swales, and rain gardens.

They also use native landscaping, which helps conserve water because native plantings are more adapted to the existing climate and require less maintenance than non-native plants.

Toolkit: Energy Conservation

The **petal** Project

Your organization has chosen to focus on conserving energy in day-to-day business operations. Congratulations! This toolkit will point you to practical steps toward improvement and saving money as well as the planet!

Why Conserving Energy Matters...

Whether you own or lease your building, you typically need lighting, heating, air conditioning, and power for office equipment, and other services to stay in business. This guide will help you to maximize energy efficiency, which will save you money while helping the environment.

Most organizations can achieve annual energy savings of 2-10 percent through better energy management. No matter the size of your business, there is always room for improvement!

Upfront costs do not need to be significant to start saving energy. You have already taken the first step—made a commitment to conserving resources! The next step is benchmarking your energy performance and creating a plan to reduce it. Capture those wasted energy dollars and use them to finance more low-cost improvements. Keep saving, keep improving. When you're ready, you can point to the value of good energy management and secure the capital you need for bigger projects.

Reflect & Assess

Does your organization have data on current energy usage? Consider gaining perspective on your own performance by comparing annual usage history during the same month on different years. Conducting an energy audit is a simple (free!) way to identify your baseline and areas of improvement.

Be Inspired

Before you build your own strategy, here are some creative ideas being implemented in company's across the nation to help you brainstorm ideas for policies and programs that will be effective with your organization.

Pioneer Valley Condominiums

Practice: Built in 1957, PVC was paying high energy bills and residents were still not getting consistent temperature control. They brought in 3 high-efficiency boilers, insulated attics, switched to programmable thermostats, and did air sealing.

Payoff: The improvements will save 15,370 therms (heat equivalent of 100,000 Btu) and almost \$17,000 annually with a payback of less than 5 years.

Hannaford Supermarkets

Practice: Hannaford replaced 400-watt metal halide lamps in grocery aisles with T5 high bag florescents and replaced 100-watt ceramic track lights with electronic ballasts and improved optics.

Payoff: The total project cost was \$175,000, but resulted in \$25,530 in annual savings and 5.613 tons in carbon reduction.

Linda Manor Extended Care

Practice: The installation of ozone laundry allowed Linda Manor to save natural gas by lowering hot water use and reducing linen drying time. They also installed high-efficiency heating equipment and two unitary air conditioning units 7.5 and 5 ton capacities, plus controls.

Payoff: The improvements saved \$15,200 annually and saw a 5,100 KWh decrease in yearly energy consumption, plus the ozone system extends the linen use!

Build a Strategy

Look over these suggested strategies. Choose at least one you and your team can commit to for the next year. How will you mobilize time and resources for good in the next year?

Strategies for conserving energy and increasing efficiency:

- Complete an energy audit through a utility or other audit provider.
- Register with the EPA's Portfolio Manager to track energy, water, and natural gas usage.
- Switch 75+% of bulbs and lighting to compact fluorescents, cold cathodes, or other efficient lighting.
 *Replace all T12 fluorescent lighting with energy efficient T8 or T5 fixtures with electronic ballasts or other efficient lighting. You can make a big impact by switching all the exit signs to LED signs, electroluminescent.*
- Use power management software programs that saves energy by automatically turning off idle machines, install plug load controllers for office equipment, and manually turn off power strips after working hours.
- Perform regular maintenance and inspections of your HVAC and refrigeration systems.
 *Regularly change (or clean if reusable) HVAC filters every month during peak cooling or heating seasons. New filters usually only cost a few dollars, and dirty filters cost more to use, overwork the equipment and result in lower indoor air quality.*
- Increase lighting efficiency by installing optical reflectors and/or diffusers. Consider implementing a formal policy to ensure that blinds and curtains are closed during peak summer hours, since white reflects light.
- Increase employee awareness by posting signs, implementing formal policies, or holding competitions for turning off lights or other energy efficient behaviors.
 *Consider implementing a formal policy to ensure that blinds and curtains are closed during peak summer hours, since white reflects light.*
- Change settings or maintenance procedures for appliances such as setting the temperature to no more than 120 degrees on the water heater or cleaning filters on the HVAC.

Maximize your impact by advancing inclusion in other strategic ways:

Implementing other practices can help your energy conservation efforts! Have you considered:

- Operate dishwashers only when fully loaded (see **Water Conservation**)
- Calculate the impact of your energy usage (See **Carbon Footprint**)
- Designate an "energy champion" and encourage employees to be energy-conscious (see **Employee Engagement & Advancement**)

Resources

To dive deeper into a particular strategy or to get help from a group working in your area, check out the following resources.

HVAC Efficiency

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, “mechanical air conditioning accounts for the largest percent of energy in commercial buildings.” Green Plus offers a [guide to HVAC efficiency](#) to help you use less energy to control temperature in your space and save on your utility bill.

Rental Resources

The Council on Smaller Enterprises has a [guide](#) for empowering landlords and tenants to collaborate on energy saving practices. Recognizing the restrictions imposed by renting or leasing your business space, it contains everything from “green lease” clauses to tenant operations and build-out guides.

Local Spotlight: East Iowa Machine Company

East Iowa Machine Company (EIMCo) was already utilizing efficient T-5 lighting, but they went one step further and replaced all the lighting in the plant with efficient LED lights. By replacing all their lights, EIMCO saw a 50% increase in light output with a 50% reduction in power!

[Sustainability and Manufacturing](#)

Local Spotlight: St. Joseph the Worker

St. Joseph the Worker, the first church in Iowa to be Petal Certified, programmed their heating and cooling systems to work efficiently during the day and are turned down after hours. Additionally, all their lighting comes from compact fluorescents and other low-energy options!

[St. Joseph's Sustainability Work](#)