

Green Office Certification at Northwestern

Northwestern is committed to being a leader in sustainability, and faculty and staff have essential roles to play in reaching the University's sustainability goals. The Green Office program engages faculty and staff in the process of adopting environmental best practices in the workplace. The program offers guidance on conserving energy and water, reducing waste, and increasing environmental awareness on campus. The process empowers all of our faculty and staff to become green leaders and its success is based on broad engagement and collective impact.

The Benefits of Certification

The Green Office program provides tools and support to help offices and departments conserve resources, reduce costs, and create a healthier, greener workplace. Participating offices and Green Office leaders receive University-wide recognition for their efforts.

The Certification Process

The sustainNU staff guides Green Office leaders as they work toward certification. Here are the basic steps to the certification process.

- 1. Contact sustainNU.**
Contact the sustainNU to learn more and start the process.
- 2. Hold an introductory meeting.**
Meet with a sustainNU staff member to review the certification process and define your office.
- 3. Get approval.**
Get approval from your office leadership to proceed with Green Office certification.
- 4. Organize a staff presentation.**
Organize a Green Office presentation for your staff with sustainNU.
- 5. Form a Green Office team.**
Organize a Green Office team to lead the certification process within your office.
- 6. Complete Green Office team training.**
The sustainNU staff is available to provide addition training to your Green Office team if needed.
- 7. Complete and submit checklists.**
Work with your team to complete the Green Office checklists, completing as many of the tasks on the list as possible. To receive certification, you must complete at least 75 percent of the items on the list.
- 8. Receive certification.**
Submit your completed checklist to sustainNU, along with a narrative describing your process. The sustainNU team will review your checklist and confirm your certification.

Get Started Today

To get started, contact sustainNU at sustainability@northwestern.edu.

Green Office Checklist

Complete this checklist and return it to sustainNU at sustainability@northwestern.edu. The goal is to complete as many of the items on this list as possible. The Green Office Guide provides additional information to help you complete these actions.

Getting Started

- 1. We have completed the assessment of our space and equipment.
- 2. We have submitted a list of the faculty and staff in our office to sustainNU.
- 3. We have achieved at least 75 percent participation in a Green Office presentation.
- 4. We have an active Green Office Team.

Communication and Engagement

- 5. We include Green Office information and updates in staff meetings and new employee orientation.
- 6. We place Green Office signage and reminders in key locations in our office.
- 7. We participate in sustainability events such as the Bike to Work Challenge and Earth Month events.

Energy and Water

Computers and Electronics

- 8. We use energy efficient settings for computers, printers, copiers and other devices.
- 9. We use smart power strips to power down devices that are not in use, reducing standby power usage.
- 10. We purchase computers and electronics that are ENERGY STAR® or EPEAT® certified.

Climate Control

- 11. We have eliminated space heaters and report temperature issues to Facilities.
- 12. We keep windows and doors closed when heating or air conditioning is running.

Lighting

- 13. We use task lighting with LED or CFL bulbs.
- 14. We take responsibility for turning off lights and place reminder stickers on switches where needed.

Kitchen Equipment

- 15. We use a central, energy efficient refrigerator rather than individual mini-fridges.
- 16. We use power strips or timers to turn off kitchen equipment.

Water Use

- 17. We use water efficiently and report leaks to Facilities.

Waste and Recycling

Paper and Office Supplies

- 18. We save paper by distributing materials electronically and using double-sided printing.
- 19. We reuse scrap paper and office supplies.

Food and Drink

- 20. We provide reusable kitchenware in order to reduce the need for disposable items.
- 21. We do not provide bottled water and encourage the use of water coolers, pitchers, and reusable cups and bottles instead.

Recycling

- 22. We encourage recycling by ensuring proper placement and labeling of bins.
- 23. We recycle e-waste through sustainNU.

Purchasing

- 24. We purchase environmentally friendly products such as recycled content paper.
- 25. We minimize the purchase of disposable products such as pod-style coffee maker “K-cups,” paper cups and plates, and plastic utensils.
- 26. We purchase products with minimal packaging and buy in bulk when appropriate.
- 27. We explore options for reuse and check surplus resources before purchasing new products.

Meetings and Travel

- 28. When hosting events we ask Northwestern Catering or other partners for sustainable options that minimize waste.
- 29. We encourage the use of public transportation and distribute information about transit benefits.
- 30. We encourage walking and cycling, including participation in the Bike Commuter Challenge.

Innovations and Extras

- Please include a brief description of any additional sustainability measures your office has implemented.

Green Office Guide

Information and resources for completing the Green Office Checklist



This guide provides additional information to help you complete the Green Office checklist. If you have any questions, please contact sustainNU at sustainability@northwestern.edu.

Getting Started

- 1. We have completed the assessment of our space and equipment.**

Complete an assessment of your space in order to take an inventory of existing equipment and identify areas where you could save energy and resources.

Resources

Download the assessment form: www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/your-space/green-office/

- 2. We have submitted a list of the faculty and staff in our office to sustainNU.**

List the names and email addresses of your coworkers in an Excel document and email this list to sustainability@northwestern.edu.

Resources

Download the template for this list: www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/your-space/green-office/

Communication and Engagement

3. We have achieved at least 75 percent participation in a Green Office presentation.

Have at least 75 percent of your staff members attend a Green Office presentation. Keep track of who has participated, and submit your list of participants to sustainNU at sustainability@northwestern.edu.

Resources

Schedule a presentation: sustainability@northwestern.edu.
Use the staff list template provided to track participation:
www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/your-space/green-office/



4. We have an active Green Office team.

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

Email a list of staff members who are on your Green Office Team to sustainability@northwestern.edu.

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

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

Resources

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

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

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

Resources

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

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

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

Resources

Calendar of campus sustainability events: www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/calendar/
Events on social media: Follow @sustainNU on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

Energy and Water

Computers and electronics

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

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

Resources

Energy efficient computing at Northwestern:
www.it.northwestern.edu/policies/energy.html
Power management explained:
www.it.northwestern.edu/hardware/eco/myth.html



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

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

Resources

Choosing smart power strips: www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/choose-right-advanced-power-strip-you
About standby power: <http://standby.lbl.gov/>



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

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

Resources

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



Climate control

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

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

Resources

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

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

Ensure that windows and doors are closed when heating or air conditioning systems are operating. If you find that staff are opening windows due to excessive heating during the winter, report the issue to Facilities at www.northwestern.edu/fm/services/service-requests/index.html.

Lighting

- 13. We use task lighting with energy efficient CFL or LED bulbs.**

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

Resources

Energy efficient lighting options:

<http://energy.gov/energysaver/lighting-choices-save-you-money>

- 14. We take responsibility for turning off lights and have placed reminder stickers on switches.**

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

Kitchen equipment

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

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

Resources

Find energy efficient refrigerators:

www.energystar.gov/products/appliances/refrigerators

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

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

Water use

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

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

Resources

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



Waste and Recycling

Paper and office supplies

- 18. We save paper by distributing materials electronically and using double-sided printing.**

Set printers and computers to default to double-sided printing. Distribute materials electronically when possible and print only when necessary. For example, meeting agendas can be sent electronically prior to a meeting instead of automatically distributing paper copies.

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

Set up a designated area for staff to share office supplies that can be reused such as scrap paper, binders, file folders, desk organizers, and paper clips. Post signs encouraging staff to reuse these items and to place their unneeded office supplies in this area for reuse.

Food and drink

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

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

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

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



Recycling

22. We encourage recycling by ensuring proper placement and labeling of bins.

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

Resources

Request recycling bins, trash cans, and related signage: sustainability@northwestern.edu



23. We recycle or dispose of e-waste through the eCycling program.

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

Resources

Manage e-waste at Northwestern: www.northwestern.edu/fm/services/computer-electronic-recycling/
More on recycling at Northwestern: www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/recycle/

Purchasing

24. We purchase environmentally friendly products such as recycled content paper.

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

Resources

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

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

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

26. We purchase products with minimal packaging and buy in bulk when appropriate.

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

27. We consider whether purchases are really necessary.

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

Resources

Northwestern Surplus Property Exchange: www.northwestern.edu/procurement/about/surplusproperty/

Meetings and Travel

28. We encourage the use of public transportation and distribute information about transit benefits.

Provide your team with information about Northwestern’s pre-tax public transit options and encourage the use of public transit for travel to work and meetings.

Resources

Information about pre-tax transit: www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/pretax-transit/

29. We encourage walking and cycling, including participation in the Bike to Work Challenge.

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

Resources

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



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

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

Resources

Guide to hosting sustainable events: www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/take-action/host-sustainable-events.html



Innovations and Extras

31. Please include a brief description of any additional sustainability measures your office has implemented.

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