



Earth Day 2017

Distinguish Your Firm with a Sustainability Program

Whether you work on horizontal or vertical construction projects, public and private owners alike are interested in sustainability. Some construction firms along with other industries have responded with developing sustainability programs for their firms. Contractors sustainability plans often demonstrate their expertise in meeting owners' goals and their own commitment to sustainable practices. Some firms publish annual reports that showcase their progress and achievements. This Earth Day, AGC of America researched existing sustainability reports and gathered some of the common elements. We also pulled out ideas for goals that you may want to consider when developing a sustainability program for your construction firm.

1. Develop A Commitment Statement

Your sustainability commitment statement sets the framework for your program and identifies core principles that guide your company. Keep the statement as short and as simple as possible, and build on your company's existing, perhaps unspoken, commitment to excellence. Your statement will likely include aspects of—

- Compliance Assurance – Complying with applicable legal requirements, e.g., stormwater controls
- Pollution Prevention – Taking extra steps to prevent pollution, e.g., waste recycling or reuse
- Sustainable Practices – Sustainability is often considered a balance between the “Three E’s” of ecology, economy, and equity. In addition to environmental concerns, your sustainability program may also address employee safety and well-being, as well as the economic health of your firm. Corporate ethics and community outreach/enrichment components may also be considered.

2. Demonstrate Your Expertise

Your sustainability program is a great place to highlight your firm's expertise fulfilling green projects, track training programs, and showcase your knowledge of available rating systems and standards. These elements of your program demonstrate your firm is prepared to help project owners achieve their green goals for a project. Your sustainability program may include these activities related to the environment—

- Staff Awareness Initiatives – Do you publish an internal green newsletter? Do you mentor and recognize “green champions” on your project teams?
- Staff Accreditations – What percentage of your staff are accredited professionals with knowledge of green construction certification programs? What would you like that percentage to be?
- Training Program – How often do you conduct or send staff to related training? Do you include your subcontractors and trades?
- Standard Operating Procedures – Do you have existing “green procedures” in place to facilitate certification that includes for example--
 - Document and Chain of Custody Management Plan
 - Stormwater Plan
 - Waste Management Plan
 - Indoor Air Quality Plan
- Coordination Plan – Do you have a plan in place that coordinates with subcontractors and identifies flow-down requirements to ensure the green requirements within their area of expertise are met?

3. Set & Track Achievable Goals

Set pollution prevention or sustainability goals that focus on what your construction firm can or is authorized to control. For example, a contractor does not make the decision for a project to "go green," and they are not responsible for all the steps in the process nor whether the project ultimately achieves certification. Therefore, you may not want to set a goal to achieve a certain number of green certifications, as these are beyond your control to achieve. Here are some ideas gathered from other construction firms for your consideration—

JOBSITE INITIATIVES

- Energy conservation
 - Solar-powered trailers (renewables for temporary power generation)
 - Energy efficient jobsite lighting
- Fuel and equipment use (air emissions reductions)
 - Carpooling and/or transit incentives
 - Anti-idling policies
 - Right sized equipment and right sized vehicle policies
 - Hybrids – fleets
 - Vehicle and equipment maintenance
 - Fuel – e.g., biodiesel (or exploring LNG/CNG conversion)
 - Engine retrofits (criteria pollutants)
- Recycling
- Water conservation

OFFICE INITIATIVES

- Paperless office initiatives
- Energy efficient office equipment
- eWaste management
- Recycling – cans, paper, etc.
- Purchasing – renewable energy credits (carbon offsetting)
- Purchasing – environmentally friendly office supplies
- Green cleaning/housekeeping
- Green-certified office space (e.g., Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, GreenGlobes, or WELL Building Standard, etc.)

► Questions?

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► Need a Head Start Pulling Together Your Sustainability Program?

Check out the free resources on the AGC-supported Construction Industry Compliance Assistance Center online at www.cicacenter.org. In addition to extensive environmental compliance information, the CICA Center has a green construction toolkit and recycling resources, as well as, an environmental management system toolkit—which although only focused on environmental management may provide helpful guidance.