



Certification Guide Office

This is a companion document to our [Office Application](#) that will provide you with more detail for the actions on that list.

Eligibility Requirements

- *Our workplace is located in Multnomah County, within Portland city limits.*
- *Our workplace has two or more employees and is not a home-based business.*
- *Our garbage and recycling containers are not stored on public sidewalks or streets.*
- *Paper, metal, plastic and glass are recycled.*

All businesses in Portland are required to collect these materials for recycling. Your garbage and recycling company provides you or your property owner with roll carts and dumpsters for garbage, glass and other recyclables that they collect from a central point in the building. Make sure that you also have collection containers available in your office for desk and indoor common areas. [Sustainability at Work can supply you with recycling boxes](#) at no charge.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Paperless alternatives are used whenever possible (paystubs, invoicing, orientation materials, etc.).

Share and edit documents electronically rather than printing multiple versions. Limit or eliminate mailed, printed reports and publications in favor of emailing electronic versions. Convert to electronic payroll, invoicing, and orientation materials.

Centralized printers are used. (No more than 1 per 10 employees.)

Eliminate as many personal printers as you can. Use centralized, multi-function printer/copiers instead. Take advantage of mailbox or PIN features to keep confidential documents secure until ready to print.

The majority of our copier paper is used on both sides.

Set the default on your printers and copiers to double-sided printing. If your equipment doesn't allow for this, then set up a collection area near the printers for extra or outdated single-sided print jobs. Use the blank side for scratch paper or save up enough to create notepads in-house or through your printing service.

At least one additional material (batteries, plastic bags, plastic take-out containers, etc.) is recycled beyond basic mixed recycling.

Many recyclable materials that are not allowed in your mixed-recycling bins can still be collected and dropped off at locations across the city. Consider setting up a collection area for these recyclables. You can locate drop-off places through [Metro's Find A Recycler](#).

Unused/outdated electronic devices are donated for reuse or are recycled.

Don't throw away broken or outdated electronics! Set up a collection area and then check [Metro's Find A Recycler webpage](#) for drop-off locations.

Recycling is clearly labeled, regularly monitored, and education is provided when needed.

All businesses in Portland are required to recycle at their workplace. Your garbage and recycling company provides you or your property owner with roll carts or dumpsters for recycling, garbage, and compost. Sustainability at Work can supply you with [cardboard recycling boxes](#) at no charge.

Copier/printer paper contains at least 30% recycled content.

You can usually find the percentage of recycled content in your paper on the end label of each ream, on the box label, and on the receipts from your office supply company.

Food scraps are composted.

In addition to garbage and recycling, your garbage company can add compost pickup to your service. If this is something you're interested in, give your current garbage company a call to see what they charge to add compost. You can find your current company's name and phone number on your bill. You'll likely see it printed on your garbage roll carts or dumpsters, too.

Note: Unlike residential service, businesses can sign up with **any [permitted commercial garbage and recycling company](#)** for pickup service. Whenever you are considering new service or a change in service, give several companies a call to compare rates.

Only reusable dishware is available for day-to-day office use.

Eliminate paper plates, cups, and plastic utensils from your break room or kitchen. Provide washable, reusable dishware instead. Tips: Get the word out to employees that you're looking for their unwanted or spare plates, utensils, and cups from home. Thrift stores are a great place to purchase affordable, used dishware, silverware, and mugs. Stocking your breakroom this way can be quick and inexpensive.

Caterers follow sustainable practices (reusable dishware, buffet style serving, minimal packaging, etc.)

Choose caterers that support your sustainability efforts. Ask questions about reusable dishware, buffet style serving, minimal packaging, regional and organic food choices, composting, and more. Create a list of caterers that know your office preferences, and consider developing a list of do's & don'ts for your employees to reference when working with caterers.

Green-certified cleaning products are used by employees.

Cleaning products impact indoor air quality and aquatic life. When it comes to purchasing green cleaners, these three programs have well-established standards for green cleaning in the workplace:

[Green Seal](#)
[EcoLogo](#)
[Safer Choice](#)

If you're interested in making your own cleaning products, check out this [helpful guide](#) from Metro.

Green-certified cleaning products are used by janitorial staff.

If your workplace uses a janitorial service, confirm that they are using green-certified products. Another option is to supply your own products and ask your janitorial service to use only those when they clean your office.

Fluorescent light tubes and compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) are safely stored and properly recycled.

Fluorescent lightbulbs (including tube style and CFLs) have **mercury** in them, so it's important to dispose of them safely. They should NOT go into your mixed recycling or your garbage. Mercury is a heavy metal that harms the brain, liver and kidneys and can cause developmental disorders in children. Sending burned-out fluorescent bulbs to the landfill instead of a hazardous waste facility can lead to contaminated air, water and soil, and accumulate in the food chain.

Careless cleanup of a mercury spill can also put you at risk. Learn how to [safely handle mercury](#). If your facilities manager or lighting contractor doesn't take care of your burned-out bulbs, check [Metro's Find A Recycler website](#) for locations where you can either drop them off or see the list of companies that can pick them up.

Note: Some **LED bulbs** can contain quite a bit of nickel, which could make them worth recycling. Also, colored LEDs can contain **lead** and **arsenic**. You can throw white LED bulbs away, but for other colors, use [Metro's Find a Recycler website](#) to determine where you can drop them off for recycling or safe handling. As with any bulb, they should NOT be put in with your mixed-recycling.

Potentially hazardous products such as paints, solvents, and cleaners are stored safely and recycled properly.

The government website for the State of Washington puts it well: *Hazardous wastes are not just radioactive drums stored at Hanford. They are wastes **your** business or organization may generate every day—spent solvents, toner ink sludge, heavy metals. Hazardous wastes pose real threats to real people... cancer, nerve damage, polluted drinking water.*

Metro's Recycling Information staff can provide details about recycling and disposal options, and answer many other questions about hazardous wastes. Call them at 503-234-3000 or visit [Metro Find A Recycler](#). Oregon's Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides assistance in determining what is and is not regulated as hazardous waste in Oregon, as well as whether businesses qualify as Conditionally Exempt Generators (CEGs). Here's [DEQ's Factsheet](#).

High-efficiency electric hand dryers are used in restrooms rather than paper towels.

High speed electric hand dryers are the [best environmental option for hand drying](#), above paper towels and standard speed hand dryers. Stuck with paper towels for now? You can still influence change. Encourage your coworkers to watch this TED [video about using one paper towel](#) instead of two (or three, or more).

Employee Engagement

An employee or green team is supported by management in implementing sustainability efforts.

Just one sustainability champion can make all the difference in your workplace, but the more employees you have, the more important it is to establish a sustainability group that includes representatives from different areas of your organization. See our [Green Team Guide](#) to learn how to start or reenergize a green team.

Employees are educated annually (at a minimum) about sustainability best practices.

Everyone can benefit from a refresher about do's and don'ts now and then. Use a newsletter, a lunch and learn, or make reminders at all-staff meetings. Get in the habit of doing this at least annually. You could also consider a Recycling 101 training every year or so. ([We can help you with ideas.](#))

Sustainability accomplishments are communicated to customers.

Don't forget to share your accomplishments with customers and clients. Your organization's commitment to sustainability can set you apart from your competitors. Our recognition program is one way to share the news, but there are others. Share your successes through industry newsletters, social media, advertising, and marketing. This has the added benefit of acknowledging staff effort and achievement. It will help keep the momentum going, and you may encourage other organizations to make their own changes.

New employees are informed about sustainability best practices—including waste reduction, recycling, and commuting options.

Don't forget to provide details and direction for new hires about recycling, alternative commuting options, best practices for efficient printing, etc. Include a sustainability and transportation section in your orientation materials. If you have only a few employees and take an informal approach to orientation, still consider creating a factsheet with answers to FAQs along with a list of sustainability practices that your office wants new hires to keep in mind.

A sustainability plan and/or purchasing policy guides decision-making.

Your plan can be as simple as a list of actions, assignments, and dates, or it can be as complex as a multi-page document that describes your sustainability mission, goals, measurements, and next steps. A plan helps maintain sustainability efforts by keeping everyone informed, and prevents lapses due to employee turnover. If you have fewer than 20 employees, you might simply start by establishing a purchasing policy that promotes purchasing recycled content products when possible. You can build from there. Or focus on equipment and energy by directing your organization to purchase only Energy Star-qualified equipment going forward.

Whatever your approach, [Sustainability at Work](#) has examples of plans and purchasing policies that we can email to you to help jumpstart your own effort.

A system is in place to gather employee feedback, comments, and suggestions related to sustainability actions at work.

Employees often see opportunities or have recommendations for greening the office, but they aren't always sure how to share them. Encourage and capture as many ideas from as many employees as you can. Create an old-school comment box; encourage staff to share ideas with a point person or green team member; or set up a bulletin board so that everyone can post ideas, questions, articles and/or inspiration.

Transportation

Alternative transportation is used for work-related trips whenever possible (walk, bike, transit, carshare, carpool, or electric vehicle).

For work-related trips, encourage staff to first take advantage of public transit, bike share, shared cars, electric cars, and carpools. Here are some resources that can help:

[Biketown](#)

[TriMet Trip Planner](#)

[Zipcar](#) (car rental for round trips; hybrids widely available)

[Car2Go](#) (Smart Cars for point-to-point trips)

[ReachNow](#) (BMW and MINI car share)

An annual commute survey is conducted as part of promoting low-carbon commuting.

Create your own survey, find one through a web search, or use [Oregon's DEQ survey](#). Also, check out Oregon's [Guidance on Conducting Employee Commute Surveys](#). This can be a helpful tool for staff to find a bike-to-work buddy or make a carpool connection. It will also help you achieve and improve on this next action.

Twenty percent or more of our employees walk, bike, carpool, or take transit as their primary commute method.

Knowing how many employees are commuting by means other than driving alone can be very helpful. If you want to boost the percentage of bikers, make sure you have plenty of secure, rain-protected bike parking. For bikers, walkers, and runners, some lockers could help for storing gear and extra clothes. Has your organization grown large enough that you can offer a discount on bus passes and/or an incentive for cyclists and walkers?

Reimbursement, raffles, or other incentives are offered to employees that bike, walk, or carpool to work.

[The Best Workplaces for Commuters](#) website has helpful resources with details on tax benefits for commuters, carpool incentive programs, and more. You might start with their [Commuter Benefit Briefs](#).

For bicycle commuters specifically, the federal government currently offers a tax benefit of up to \$20/month. Your accounting and/or HR folks can learn more about the federal tax benefit in the [IRS publication 15-b, Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits](#); see "Transportation (Commuting) Benefits."

If you're looking for smaller first steps to take, consider a gift-card raffle or pizza party (or both) every now and then. A common parameter is to include folks who use alternative transportation for at least 80% of their trips, but you can set any threshold you want. Celebrating staff that leave their cars at home can be rewarding for those making the effort and motivating for others that may simply need a nudge to give it a try.

Emergency ride vouchers or taxi reimbursements are available to employees who commute by foot, bike, transit, or carpool.

Sometimes employees are reluctant to take alternative transportation to work because they worry they might need to suddenly leave work for unexpected personal needs (pick up a sick kid from school, accompany a relative to the doctor, etc.). Knowing their workplace has an emergency ride program in place helps alleviate those concerns. Solutions include offering cab reimbursement, bus tickets, and/or rides by coworkers. If your organization participates in one of TriMet's employee pass programs or subsidizes at least \$10/month per employee for alternative transportation, [TriMet will supply your organization with cab vouchers](#). Here's an example of [how an emergency ride policy can be used](#). Feedback we've gotten from businesses indicates that employees are grateful the policy is in place, and that it rarely gets used.

Alternative travel options (TriMet, bike parking, EV charging station, etc.) are displayed on our website for visitors.

Look at your website "contact" page. Make sure you've listed nearby bus lines, MAX or streetcar stops, electric vehicle charging, and/or bikeways and bike parking near your workplace:

[Portland Streetcar](#)

[Downtown and Lloyd District Bike Parking](#)

[Plugshare Map; West Coast Electric Highway](#)

Another way to share these details are to include them with directional or scheduling emails.

Bicycle tire repair kit, air pump and a spare lock are available for employees and visitors.

Bikers (employees or visitors) occasionally forget to bring a bike lock to your office and sometimes need a loaner. Have a spare lock or a welcoming, secure space for them to leave their bike. An air pump and a tire repair kit can be helpful, too.

Employees participate in a commute challenge every year.

Every year in May, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) organizes the [Bike More Challenge](#). (This was formerly the *Bike Commute* Challenge held in September.) Anyone at your office can register—either as individuals or as part of an office team. In early October you can join Oregon’s [DriveLess Connect](#) challenge.

Don’t want to wait? Your office can create its own competition anytime. Compete against last year’s commute rate or compete across departments or office locations. Set out to improve last year’s alternative commute rate or compete across departments or locations. Consider challenging a neighboring business or friendly competitor to see which office commutes the most miles by bike, has the most new riders, rides the most days, etc.

Sheltered, secure bike parking is available for employees.

Because employee bike parking is long-term, it should be sheltered from rain and it should be secure – in a locked room, enclosed by a fence, or within view of employees, a building attendant, or security guards. There are lots of great examples of innovative bike storage systems to help make the most use of space: [PBOT's Handbook of Approved Bicycle Racks](#).

A transit pass program is offered to all employees.

If you have more than 30 employees, consider enrolling in a [TriMet Employer Pass Program](#). If you have just a handful of employees, consider purchasing a booklet of tickets or even a monthly pass or two that can be shared among employees for work-related trips.

Energy

Computers, computer monitors, printers, and copiers are set to sleep after 15 minutes of inactivity.

Use [sleep and/or hibernate commands](#) to make this an automatic office practice. If you’re initiating this action for the first time, see if your IT staff or one or two employees can go around and set this up for everyone at the same time.

Lighting is dimmed or turned off when adequate sunlight is available.

If you can’t install automatic or manual dimmers, try to establish workplace habits for turning off lights when they aren’t needed. Most of us are working in front of computer screens all day, which means that daylight is sometimes the only light that we really need at our desks.

Maintenance checks are regularly conducted on HVAC and other energy-intensive equipment.

This is an obvious one but is often overlooked. Find out if someone is scheduled to check your heating and cooling equipment each season or however often the equipment manual recommends.

Windows are double-pane or better.

Switching from single-pane to double- or even triple-pane windows will reduce your need for heating and cooling. You’ll reduce UV ray impact and street noise, too.

Doors are weather-sealed.

If you can see even a small amount of daylight around the edge of your doors, you’re likely losing energy. Install and replace doorway insulation and door sweeps so that your heating and cooling stays inside – where it’s needed.

Programmable thermostats automatically reduce heating and air conditioning during closed hours.

Occasionally check the settings on your programmable thermostats to make sure they are still set for appropriate on/off times. At the very least, check them after power outages, and in spring and fall when *daylight savings time* changes take effect.

If you have a few office rebels overriding the settings on a regular basis, you might be able to minimize this behavior by setting the timer so that heat/air comes on 30 minutes before the first employee arrives. That way, the temperature is comfortable when people start their workday. To offset this extra energy, you should also program the thermostat to revert to your off-peak temperature 30 minutes to an hour before the last person leaves for the day. Most workplaces stay perfectly comfortable for that last bit of time before the office closes.

Occupancy sensors or timers are used for lighting in storage rooms, offices, restrooms, and other common rooms.

Occupancy or motion sensors can be very effective, especially in rooms that are used sporadically. Estimates of savings after installing sensors range from 35-75%, depending on room size, type of lighting, and the use of the space.

Linear lighting uses either LED bulbs, T8 or T5 fluorescents with electronic ballasts.

When it's time to replace or upgrade your lighting, check out LED options. The prices continue to fall and the options (bright and warm, dimming, colors, etc.) continue to expand.

Track and spot lighting use LED bulbs or CFLs (compact fluorescent lightbulbs).

LEDs in particular are improving very quickly in both quality and variety, even as the price per bulb continues to decline. As with all lighting projects, check [Energy Trust incentives](#) to see if you can bring your costs down even further.

Emergency EXIT lights use LED bulbs.

Some older buildings still have EXIT lights that use inefficient lighting. Replace them with new EXIT lights using LED bulbs and you'll save energy 24-hours a day.

"Smart" power strips are used at workstations that have three or more peripherals (monitor, printer, speakers, etc.)

Smart power strips reduce the energy used by task lighting, computer accessories, fans, space heaters, and other miscellaneous plug loads. It's not always practical to unplug these items when you leave your desk, and sometimes you forget to unplug them or shut them off at the end of the day. These three types of smart power strips can automatically turn them off for you:

1. **Timer-equipped.** Devices plugged into this type can be scheduled to automatically turn on and off at designated times.
2. **Occupancy sensing.** Occupancy-sensing power strips have two types of outlets on the same strip. You choose which electronics to control through a motion detector (for instance, task lighting and a fan), and which ones you want to stay active all the time (a phone, for example).
3. **Current sensing.** These power strips automatically turn several outlets off or on when they detect that your computer monitor (plugged into the "master outlet") enters sleep mode, is turned off, or is turned on. Used in combination with power management features, these power strips can turn just about any electric device off and on automatically.

Janitorial services are scheduled during business hours.

If your cleaning service works after hours, see if they can switch to clean during office hours. Your lights and HVAC won't be turned on—and maybe left on—after hours, employees will be more aware of the impact of their recycling habits, you will be able to tell whether green cleaning products are being used, and it gives staff an opportunity to get to know the people providing this service and vice-versa.

Water heaters are set to 120 degrees.

Most water heaters work by holding water (in a tank) at a specific temperature 24 hours a day. Reducing the temperature setting to 120° will save you energy 24 hours a day. If it's not clear what your water heater is set to, you can run hot tap water over a candy thermometer to get a fairly accurate reading.

An energy audit has been conducted in our workplace within the past 5 years through either our electric utility or Energy Trust of Oregon.

This action is intended primarily for large businesses. If your office is in a building larger than 20,000 sq. ft., you can count the [energy performance report](#) you provide to the City for this action or you can count an independent energy assessment. If your workplace is smaller than 20,000 square feet or is exempt from energy reporting, give your utility company a call and ask them about ways you can save energy. Your options will depend on whether you lease or own your building, how you use your space,

and the age of the building, etc. Lighting and HVAC are obvious places to look at, but each workplace can have additional, unique opportunities.

[Pacific Power](#)

[Portland General Electric](#)

[NW Natural](#)

[Energy Trust of Oregon](#)

Renewable energy is purchased for a portion of our electric use.

[PGE](#) and [Pacific Power](#) both have green energy programs.

Garage or parking lot lighting is energy efficient.

If you haven't updated the lighting in your parking lot or garage in the past 5 years or so, you should see if there are [more efficient options](#) available.

Water

Only tap water is provided at our workplace; no water delivery service or single-serve plastic bottles.

You're already paying for high-quality water to come through your tap each month. Don't pay for bottled water on top of that by having it trucked in or offering it in single-serve bottles. Encourage everyone to use refillable bottles at the sink, and if there's any concern about water quality (due to aging pipes, for instance), don't make assumptions. Instead, connect with the [Portland Water Bureau](#), 503-988-4000, to request a water testing kit. Their kit tests for lead, copper and iron. For more details about Portland's water, check out the [Water Bureau's FAQs](#). For help convincing co-workers to make the switch, visit the [Food & Water Watch website](#).

Do you still want or need filtered water? There are a number of local companies that can provide directly plumbed and filtered water dispensers that will enable you to eliminate bottle transportation and waste. Let us know if you would like more information about this. There are also an increasing number of affordable filters, for above or below the sink, that you can install.

Kitchen faucet aerator has a flow rate of 1.5 gallons per minute or less.

Look at the [aerator](#) on your current faucet. You will hopefully see a number stamped into the outside rim right where the water comes out. (It will be very tiny print!). That number tells you the gallons per minute (gpm) that the water is flowing through the tap. If your aerator says **2.0 gpm** or higher, we can give you free replacement aerators that fit many types of kitchen faucets and can reduce the amount of water you use to 1.5 gallons per minute.

Restroom faucet aerator has a flow rate of 0.5 gallons per minute.

Find the gallons per minute (gpm) number stamped into the outer edge of one of your restroom [aerators](#). If it's 1.0 gpm or greater, let us know. We'll give you a free aerator that will reduce the flow by half or more.

Our business has signed up as a Green Street Steward and adopted a bioswale in our neighborhood.

Bioswales are rain gardens that collect stormwater runoff from streets. When placed by the City along street curbs, they are often referred to as "[Green Streets](#)." They help keep stormwater and pollutants out of our streams and rivers, provide attractive streetscapes, and improve the health of watersheds.

The City, often through professional landscapers, conducts regular visits to bioswales to ensure that they're operating effectively and to trim or replace vegetation. Green Street Stewards help in between City visits to alert City staff to any issues needing immediate attention. If you are interested in learning more, visit the [Bureau of Environmental Services FAQ](#) page.

A majority of our landscaping is native and drought tolerant.

Landscape with plants that are drought tolerant, native to the NW, and are hardy in urban environments.

Toilets are WaterSense-approved or use 1.28 gallons per flush or less.

A [WaterSense](#) label is printed on toilets that are independently certified to meet criteria for both performance and efficiency. Replacing an old, inefficient toilet with a WaterSense toilet can reduce water use by 20 to 60 percent. If you're remodeling soon or simply need to replace an older toilet, check with Portland's Water Bureau to see if they are offering [rebates for toilets and other water-efficient fixtures](#). Commercial accounts can get up to twenty rebates.

Urinals are WaterSense-approved or use 0.5 gallons per flush or less.

Consider replacing older, inefficient urinals with new, more efficient models. [Rebates](#) may be available through Portland's Water Bureau.

Community Engagement

Sponsorship, in-kind services or products are donated to community organizations.

Do you sponsor local events, clubs, children's sports teams or activities? Have you donated services or products to nonprofits for their fundraising events? If your organization does any of these, or something similar, check the box!

One or more employees serve a community leadership role (business association, government advisory committee, etc.).

This applies if at least one manager or leader at your organization serves on a local committee, association, panel, etc. We're specifically looking for participation in groups devoted to improving Portland's neighborhood or districts, schools, or public

services (planning, environment, transportation, etc.), but we're open to other involvement as well. We would not consider serving on the board at another company towards this. The role should be with a public agency or nonprofit organization.

A formal policy promotes contracting with women- and minority-owned businesses.

If you haven't already done so, consider creating and publicizing your organization's commitment to contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBE). Not only can you use this lens when hiring for formal contract work, but you can also apply it to your own internal contracts with janitorial services, caterers, office remodelers, and others. The [Business Oregon website](#) has a search feature to help you identify businesses that have registered and been certified by the State of Oregon.

A social responsibility mission statement guides our work and is shared with the public.

Looking for ideas? Conduct a web search on the phrase "social sustainability mission statement." You'll find a lot of examples. After you've read through several you'll have a feel for how to draft a statement that reflects the particular values of your own office. Once your business has settled on a statement, share it with employees, but don't forget to also share it with customers or clients through your website, social media, or other means.

Employees are allowed to volunteer in the community on paid work time.

Does your organization allow staff to volunteer a certain number of paid hours per year? This can take many forms, from individuals choosing and participating in their own volunteer experience, to teams, divisions or your entire staff choosing and working on a project together. Not sure where to start? Check out [HandsOn Greater Portland](#).

A charitable giving campaign, matching funds or similar program is in place for the business to support charitable donations by employees.

This can be a grassroots effort such as a silent auction, car wash or casino night where all the funds raised are directed to a charity chosen by employees; all the way up to an organizational program that incorporates automatic payroll deductions and possibly matching funds.

Additional Actions

Your advisor can consider up to five additional actions towards your certification total. We encourage you to list actions unique to your workplace. Not sure if an action will count towards certification? Put it down anyway, and your advisor will review these with you as part of the verification visit.

On our website you'll find a list of **Additional Actions** that advisors have compiled through their work with a wide variety of organizations. If your workplace has also implemented some of these actions, feel free to include up to five of them on your application.

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