



Certification Guide

Restaurant

This is a companion document to our [Restaurant 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.*
- *Our organization recycles paper, metal, plastic and glass.*
- *Our workplace does not distribute single-use plastic bags to customers.*
- *Our workplace does not serve or package food in polystyrene foam containers.*

Food

Vegetarian and/or vegan meals are available.

According to the City's [Climate Action Plan](#), *by choosing to eat lower-carbon foods, residents can eat a healthier diet, bolster the local economy, help preserve the agricultural land base and in some cases reduce emissions from transporting foods.* Your menu should offer a variety of vegan or vegetarian options, including more than one of your entrée sections. Do you frequently highlight a vegetarian or vegan special? Look for ways to boost the number of lower-carbon meals you offer to your customers.

Seafood is purchased from sustainable sources ([Marine Stewardship Council](#) or [Seafood Watch](#)).

According to Seafood Watch, over 75 percent of the world's fisheries are either fully fished or overfished. Purchase seafood that has been certified by credible third parties and you'll help to maintain or even grow seafood populations without jeopardizing their ecosystem. Sustainable fisheries will be rewarded for their environmental stewardship, and those that aren't sustainable will be encouraged to improve their practices. Customers are increasingly trying to make thoughtful food choices. Let them know you share their interest and concern for the long-term health of the world's fisheries.

Food is purchased from certified organizations working for environmental and economic justice throughout the supply chain ([Food Alliance](#), [Fair Trade USA](#), etc.).

Sustainability at your restaurant isn't just about your own practices. Your purchasing choices can impact the practices of food suppliers, too. There are a number of organizations that support farmers and ranchers who not only produce sustainable food, but also work to promote safe and fair working conditions for their staff. When possible, make purchasing choices that take into account both the food and the farmer.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Food scraps are monitored, and actions are taken to reduce food waste.

Reducing food waste saves you money and staff time, reduces environmental impact, and supports our region's waste reduction efforts. Begin by monitoring and recording your pre-consumer food waste. Keep a [written log](#) of food scraps and food thrown out to raise awareness.

For a more in-depth analysis, the EPA has a free [tracking tool and calculator](#) that lets you compare different approaches to manage excess food. The [USDA](#) and the [National Restaurant Association](#) also have tools and resources that can help.

Large restaurants might want to invest in an automated approach such as [Lean Path](#). (They also have a program specifically designed for small and mid-sized operations called [Zap](#).)

Excess edible food is donated to staff and/or food donation program.

Before you compost excess food, consider whether you can donate it to a local organization that will redistribute it to those in need. [State](#) and [federal](#) laws protect you from liability when you donate in good faith; and since your staff is knowledgeable about safe food handling, it's unlikely you'll need to provide much additional training to ensure safe donation practices. Learn more at [Fork it Over](#) and through the nonprofit, [Urban Gleaners](#).

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. When considering new service or a change in service, you can give several companies a call to compare rates.

Cooking fats, oils, and grease are recycled.

You can often find a company that will take your spent oil for use as a biofuel. Fats and grease are typically pumped from your restaurant. At the bottom of this link you will find a list of [local "preferred pumpers" and oil recyclers](#). The businesses listed have been able to show that they meet certain criteria required by local government.

Reusable dishware, silverware, and cups are provided for customers and employees.

Eliminate paper plates, cups, and plastic utensils for customers who are dining in and from back of house. Provide washable, reusable serviceware instead. If you offer take-out, ask your customers if they need napkins and plastic utensils rather than assuming that they do.

Major paper supplies (paper towels, toilet paper, to-go containers) are made with recycled content.

Help close the recycling loop. Think about the paper supplies that you use the most and ask your vendor for products that contain at least 30 percent recycled content.

Specials are listed on a chalk/white board or shared verbally rather than printed.

For menu items that change frequently, use a chalk board or have your servers provide the details at the table. You'll save paper, ink, and computer time.

Electronic alternatives to paper are used whenever possible (invoicing, payroll, orientation materials, etc.).

Evaluate all the ways that paper flows through your restaurant. Transition to doing as much work online as possible and you'll save paper, ink, and wear and tear on your printer.

Purchasing decisions (food & beverage, office supplies, décor, etc.) take environmental impact into account.

Take a holistic view when making purchases. Reduce pesticides in the environment by favoring organic over nonorganic produce and meats. Consider used furniture, lighting, and remodeling materials before buying new. Think about how you can reuse or repurpose seasonal displays. Develop the habit of applying a sustainability lens to all of your purchasing decisions.

Green-certified cleaning products are used in areas not used for food prep.

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

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

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

Sustainable catering practices are offered to customers (minimal packaging, buffet style serving, etc.).

If you offer catering to your customers, avoid providing individually packaged meals. Provide buffet-style or platter servings instead. Also, don't assume your customers want or need paper plates and napkins, or plastic utensils and disposable cups. Always ask first. If you incorporate organic, local, or non-GMO food into your menu options, make sure you share those details with customers.

Food and/or supplies are delivered in reusable containers.

Waxed cardboard is no longer allowed in Portland's compost collection. If you receive seafood and produce packaged in waxed cardboard, work with your suppliers to see if they can convert to reusable plastic crates. See if your vendors offer a durable tote system for breads and other items.

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.

Employee Engagement

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

Just one sustainability champion can make all the difference at work, but the larger your restaurant, the more important it is to establish a sustainability group that includes representatives from different areas of your operation. 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 the do's and don'ts of recycling and composting now and then. Get in the habit of reminding staff about best practices at least annually during staff trainings or refreshers.

Sustainability accomplishments are communicated to customers.

Don't forget to share your accomplishments with customers and clients. Your restaurant'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 you maintain momentum, and even better, you may influence other restaurants 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 composting, recycling, alternative commute options, waste reduction efforts, 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, consider creating a one-pager with answers to FAQs along with a list of sustainability practices that you want 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 restaurant's 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 could start by establishing a purchasing policy that promotes sustainable food and supply purchasing. Or focus on equipment and energy by directing that the restaurant only purchase or lease [Energy Star-qualified equipment](#) going forward. Take the first step and build from there.

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 restaurant, but they aren't always sure how to share them. Encourage and capture as many ideas from as many employees as you can. Encourage staff to share ideas with a point person or green team member.

Transportation

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

It's important to have an idea of how many employees currently commute by means other than alone in their car. Knowing this helps you identify incentives to offer or changes you could make to accommodate bikers, walkers, and transit riders. Once you have this baseline, take whatever measures you can to acknowledge and encourage staff to leave their car at home.

Employees participate in a commuter challenge every year ([Bike More Challenge](#), [Drive Less Commute Challenge](#), etc.).

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 restaurant can register—as an individual or as part of a team. In early October, you can join Oregon's [Drive Less Connect](#) challenge. Don't want to wait? Your restaurant can create its own competition anytime. Set out to improve last year's alternative commute rate or compete across departments or restaurant locations. Consider challenging a neighboring restaurant or friendly competitor any time to see which restaurant's staff commutes the most miles by bike, has the most new riders, rides the most days, etc.

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

List as many alternative commute options as you can on your website "contact" page. Highlight nearby bus lines, MAX or streetcar stops, electric vehicle charging, and/or bikeways near your restaurant:

[Portland Streetcar](#)

[Downtown and Lloyd District Bike Parking](#)

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

Secure bike parking (sidewalk "staple" rack, custom rack, etc.) is available for customers.

Provide safe bike parking for your customers. The City of Portland can even provide and install a [free sidewalk "staple" rack](#), assuming your location meets a few minimal requirements. If you consistently see more than 10 bikes parked in front of your restaurant, you might want to also check with the City about getting a bike corral installed. Bike parking corrals are created by installing multiple bike parking racks in a street parking space at or near your restaurant. For more detail, visit [this website](#).

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. Here are a number of great examples of some innovative bike storage systems to help make the most use of space: [PBOT's Handbook of Approved Bicycle Racks](#).

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

The federal government currently offers a tax benefit of up to \$20/month per bicycle commuter. Employers can find out more in the [IRS publication 15-b, Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits](#). The League of American Bicyclists has a helpful webpage that details federal [bicycle commuter benefits](#). If this is too big of a step, 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 restaurant has an emergency ride program in place helps alleviate those concerns. You can offer cab reimbursement, or bus tickets. 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.

An [electric vehicle charging station](#), for employee and/or customer use, is located onsite or [nearby](#).

Electric vehicles are becoming increasingly popular. That means an increasing number of people are making destination decisions based on whether they can charge their car while they shop, eat, or meet. Is there an EV station within one block of your restaurant? If your restaurant has its own EV charging spot, consider making it available for both employees and customers. You can learn more about EVs and EV charge stations through [DriveOregon](#).

Deliveries to customers are made by bike, hybrid or electric vehicle, or vehicles using low-carbon fuel.

Your delivery vehicle says a lot about your restaurant's commitment to the environment. Can you use one of the local bike delivery services that have insulated cargo carriers? Or maybe all you need for your own "fleet" is a couple of bikes (e-bikes for those hills), or a nimble smart car or two. If you already have standard cars or trucks, can you convert them to biodiesel? Find ways to reduce the environmental impact of your delivery vehicles, and you may save money. Your current customers will notice your commitment, and you're more likely to grab the attention of potential customers.

A "no idling" policy is encouraged for vendors who deliver goods and services.

Idling for more than 30 seconds wastes more fuel than restarting the engine, and trucks and autos emit the same pollutants into the environment when idling as they do when they are moving. Ask your delivery people not to idle at their destination, and post "no idling" signs near your loading docks and doors. Drivers will save money while they help the environment.

Energy

Staff is trained to ensure optimal airflow of refrigerated cases and walk-in coolers.

Your cooling equipment works best when there's nothing blocking fans and vents. Provide periodic training to your staff to ensure food crates or other supplies aren't consistently stored where they will cause your equipment to work harder than necessary.

Annual maintenance checks are conducted on HVAC system (or as often as recommended by manufacturer).

Heating and cooling equipment that isn't operating at its best causes your HVAC unit to perform less efficiently than it should. Conducting maintenance as often as recommended helps catch potential problems early on, when they are often easier and less costly to repair than when left to chance. You also want to ensure that the air quality in your restaurant is as good as it should be. Keep filters and equipment clean and in good working condition to provide a safer working environment for staff and healthier air for your staff and customers.

The majority of cooking equipment is ENERGY STAR® qualified.

ENERGY STAR products are independently certified to save energy without sacrificing features or functionality. Whether you buy or lease, look [for equipment that is Energy Star-rated](#). And don't forget that you can get a rebate through Energy Trust of Oregon when you buy (and sometimes even lease) certain efficient restaurant equipment. Before you shop for cooking equipment, confirm the make and model through [ETO's website](#) to see if a rebate is available.

Cooking equipment is turned down or off during slack periods and after hours.

Create and post a schedule. Designate a staff person to ensure cooking equipment is turned off, or down, when not needed for long periods of time.

Automatic door closers and/or strip curtains are installed on walk-in cooler doors.

These are two very cost effective ways to reduce cold air that is lost because of frequent opening and closing of your walk-in cooler. In situations where an automatic closer is impractical, strip curtains are a good solution. However, most walk-in coolers would benefit from using both.

Seals on walk-in coolers are in good working order.

Door seals wear out over time so it's a good practice to inspect them at least once a year. Seals should not be torn, missing or compressed to the point that air leaks through. Leaky air can cause ice and frost build-up, water dripping on floors, freezing around door seals and unusual icing patterns in and around the refrigeration equipment.

Refrigerated appliances are ENERGY STAR® qualified.

As with cooking equipment, you can reduce monthly energy expenses by using the most efficient equipment possible. Look for [Energy Star-rated refrigerated units](#) and cross-check your preferred makes and models with [ETO's list of incentives](#).

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 or warm, dimming, colors, etc.) continue to expand. As with most energy equipment decisions you make, take advantage of [Energy Trust incentives](#) to maximize your buying power.

Track and spot lighting use LEDs 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. Track and spot lighting has historically been very inefficient lighting. LEDs use much less energy than halogen bulbs and most other forms of spot lighting, and they offer you a range of tints and colors. As with all lighting projects, check [Energy Trust incentives](#) to see if you can bring your costs down even further through rebates.

Occupancy sensors or timers are used for lighting in storage room, 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 percent, depending on room size, type of lighting, and the use of the space.

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 changes for *daylight savings time* take effect.

If you have a few 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 restaurants stay perfectly comfortable for that last bit of time before leaving for the night.

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 restaurants. If your restaurant is in a building larger than 20,000 sq. ft., you can count the [energy performance report](#) provided by the building owner to the City for this action. You can also count an independent energy assessment. If the building your restaurant is located in 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 factors such as whether you lease or own your building, how you use your space, the age of the building, your cooking and ventilation needs, and so on. Lighting and cooking equipment are obvious places to look at, but every restaurant has 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.

Doors are weather-sealed.

If you can see even a small amount of daylight around the edge of your external doors, you're wasting money. Replace or install doorway insulation and door sweeps so that your warm or cold air stays inside—where you want it.

Water

Dishwashing pre-rinse sprayer has a flow rate of 1.15 gallons per minute or less.

An older sprayer typically uses 2 gallons of water a minute. Replacing it with a new, more efficient model will cut your water use in half, not only saving on water and sewer charges but also the energy used to heat the water. The sprayer head is often stamped with a gpm number but sometimes not. If you don't see a gpm number, contact Sustainability at Work for a free flow-rate test bag.

All water-cooled equipment and dishwashers are regularly checked and adjusted for water efficiency.

Equipment that has water running through it (but not recirculating) is considered “single-pass” cooled equipment. Because by design the water flows through the equipment and then down a drain, this type of equipment uses a significant amount of water and can result in unnecessarily high water and sewer costs. It’s often difficult to know if your equipment is water-cooled unless you can see the plumbing. Either way, call your maintenance company to ensure your water-cooled equipment is working properly, especially if you see an unexpected spike in your water bill. You can also call the [Water Bureau](#) for a free assessment. They will provide your restaurant with a water use report and will also indicate whether certain equipment could be replaced with an air-cooled version. They can also calculate the estimated savings from making the switch. Based on water and sewer costs only, replacing a water cooled model with an air-cooled model can pay for itself in as little as 1-2 years.

Dishwashers should be maintained by a professional as recommended by the manufacturer or leasing company.

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 your restroom [aerators](#). If it’s 1.0 gpm or greater, let us know. We’ll give you a [free replacement aerator](#) that will reduce the flow by half or more.

Interior faucets and exterior hoses do not leak.

A faucet or hose that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water per year. You can often eliminate leaks and drips by replacing old washers and then using plumber’s tape and wrench to get a tight seal when you reattach aerators, hoses, or nozzles.

Rinse-water from equipment that is cleaned outside flows into a sanitary sewer, not storm drain.

If you clean and rinse containers or equipment outside, make sure that the water runoff is flowing into a sewer drain, not a storm drain. Some storm drains flow directly into rivers, along with whatever soaps or other cleaners you’re using. Rinse-water should only flow into a sewer drain so it can be filtered and treated.

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

A [WaterSense label](#) is printed on toilets that are independently certified for both performance and efficiency. Replacing an old, inefficient toilet with a *WaterSense* toilet can reduce water use 20 to 60 percent. If you’re remodeling soon or it’s time 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](#). Currently, commercial accounts can get up to twenty rebates at \$50 each.

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

Consider replacing older, inefficient urinals with new, more efficient models. Check for [rebates](#) through Portland’s Water Bureau.

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.

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, improve the health of watersheds, and provide attractive streetscapes.

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

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 food, services or products to nonprofits for their fundraising events? Do you occasionally devote a percentage of the day’s sales to a local nonprofit or cause? If your restaurant 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 business or neighborhood districts, schools, or public services (planning, environment, transportation, etc.), but we're open to other involvement as well. If you're not sure, check the box for now and then discuss it with us during the verification visit.

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

If you haven't already done so, consider creating and publicizing your restaurant's commitment to contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBE). Not only can you use this lens when hiring for formal contract work (consulting, remodeling, etc.), but you can also apply it to your internal contracts with janitorial services 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.

According to the [National Restaurant Association](#), "60 percent of consumers say they are likely to make a restaurant choice based on its eco-friendly practices, such as water conservation and recycling." It's probably safe to assume that the percentage is even higher in Portland, along with a broader focus that often includes local, organic, etc. Develop a short, one- to three-sentence statement that reflects the sustainability values of your restaurant. Once you have this, share it with employees and customers through your menu, website, and/or social media.

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

Does your restaurant 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 to support charitable donations by employees.

This can be a grassroots effort such as a silent auction or car wash where all the funds raised are directed to a charity chosen by employees; or it could be an organizational program that incorporates automatic payroll deductions and 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 restaurant. If you're not sure whether 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 our work with a wide variety of organizations. If your restaurant has also implemented some of these actions, feel free to include them on your application.