



Accelerate Sustainability Workshop Project Ideas & Resources

Looking for sustainability project ideas at your business? This list is compiled from past successful initiatives at local businesses and recommended best practices. Reach out to Lorenza at lorenza@sustaindane.org for additional resources and support.

Energy Efficiency

Carbon Footprint	Calculate your energy carbon footprint & set reduction goals.
Energy Assessment	Conduct an energy assessment with your utility or Focus on Energy in your office space or building.
Time-of-use	Participate in the MGE time-of-use program that gives customers the opportunity to reduce their electric bills by changing when they use electricity.
Efficient Lighting	Replace inefficient lights with energy efficient lights.
HVAC	Replace or perform maintenance on inefficient HVAC systems.
Behavior Change	Encourage energy conservation behaviors (e.g. reduce heating/cooling, turn off lights & electronics when not in use).
Electronics	Enable sleep mode and power saver features on electronics, use smart power strips to turn off multiple devices at once.
Turn off lights	Maximize natural light by placing work spaces around windows. Use task lighting at workstations rather than overhead lighting.
Benchmarking	Measure the energy performance of buildings over time to set a baseline and help prioritize projects.



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Renewable Energy

Utility programs	Participate in MGE's Green Power Tomorrow program to use wind power generated from their wind farms in WI and IA and solar power generated from local arrays.
Renewable Energy Rider	Work with MGE through their Renewable Energy Rider program to provide renewable energy to power all or a portion of your business.
Solar	Install solar on your business, or participate in community solar.



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Transportation

Measure	Track organization-wide transportation carbon footprint.
RoundTrip training	Train team on how to use RoundTrip resource to find alternative transportation options.
Emergency Ride Home	Encourage the use of the Emergency Ride Home program from RoundTrip.
Commute cards	Offer free or discounted Metro Commute cards, BCycle passes, and encourage employees to use them.
Biking	<p>Install bike racks in a covered, secure, indoor area.</p> <p>Install bike maintenance station and teach team how to use it.</p> <p>Offer lockers, changing rooms, and showers on site.</p> <p>Create a "bike to work" group or join an existing one.</p> <p>Offer Bicycle Benefits to employees and customers.</p>
Fleet and company cars	<p>Upgrade fleet or company cars to hybrid, electric, or other alternative vehicles.</p> <p>Develop a sustainable travel and rental car policy. Consider purchasing emissions offsets for air travel.</p> <p>Purchase a "community car" for employee use to encourage alternative commutes.</p>
Parking	<p>Charge for parking in transit-served urban areas.</p> <p>Shift from long-term permits to daily parking fees.</p> <p>Implement no idling policy.</p>
Flexible policies	Allow working from home on a full or part-time basis and flexible start times to encourage alternate modes.
Incentives	Offer financial incentives for using alternate modes.
Event	Plan an alternative commute event such as Bike to Work Week.



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Food

<p>Food waste assessment</p>	<p>Perform a food waste assessment/audit and establish reduction goals.</p>
<p>Compost</p>	<p>Start a composting program either on site or through a pick-up service.</p>
<p>Garden</p>	<p>Plan a community garden on company property.</p>
<p>CSA</p>	<p>Set up your workplace as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pick up site.</p>
<p>For restaurants & cafeterias</p>	<p>Adopt new practices for food purchasing, storage, and right-sized cooking quantities to minimize waste; if possible, track any changes in amounts of food purchased.</p> <p>Be flexible on portion sizes (e.g., offer smaller portions, half-size options, etc.).</p> <p>Cook in small batches and/or cook to order.</p> <p>Make side dishes and bread optional for your customers and ensure that garnishes are edible.</p> <p>Creatively repurpose surplus foods and record any new or modified recipes.</p> <p>Use foods that might otherwise be discarded (like imperfect fruits and vegetables and unusual plant parts) and take a “nose to tail” approach with animal products; record any new or modified recipes.</p> <p>Donate surplus food regularly to a local charity.</p> <p>Donate or sell food scraps for animal consumption.</p> <p>Actively encourage the use of carryout containers (reusable or recyclable containers preferred to reduce overall waste).</p> <p>Incorporate more plant-based menu options.</p>



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Material Waste

Waste audit	Perform a waste audit and establish reduction goals.
Education	Encourage waste reduction practices with internal marketing or education sessions.
Printing	Use recycled printer paper, print double sided, and go paperless when possible.
Bins	Have recycling bins wherever there are trash bins and/or centralize bins in one area.
Signage	Set up proper signage for each bin and common items disposed of in your business and where they go.
Replace disposables	Replace all disposable products in any kitchen or cafeteria (plates, cups, utensils) with reusable or more easily composted or recycled items instead. Replace paper towels in bathrooms with hand dryers. Install a water bottle refill station instead of plastic water bottles.
Redesign packaging	Reduce volume and increase recyclability or recycled content.
E-waste	Organize an electronics drive with a responsible e-waste recycler (check E-cycle WI).
Hazardous waste policy	Design a policy for responsibly disposing of hazardous wastes.



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Water

Assessment	Perform a water assessment/plumbing audit to identify possible areas of reduction.
Conserve	Encourage water conservation practices with internal marketing and education sessions.
Replace equipment	Install low flow faucet aerators on your bathroom and kitchen sinks. Replace older toilets with low-flow toilets.
Rain garden	Design and plant a rain garden or swale.
Landscape	Landscape with water conservation in mind. Plant native plants, maximize the use of natural vegetation, establish smaller lawns, only water when necessary.
Rain barrels	Install rain barrels to capture rainwater on your company's property and use it to water landscaping.
Reduce salt	Reduce winter salt use on parking lots and sidewalks and optimize water softener salt use.



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Equity & Social Well-being

Environmental Justice	Reflect on how your organization might impact environmental justice, i.e. the uneven exposure of marginalized communities to environmental harms.
Educational programs	Plan or attend programs with guest speakers on subjects such as environmental justice.
Sustainability committee	Be intentional about inviting diverse members of your community to join your sustainability team.
Reading group	Offer space for employees to build community through shared learning such as reading groups.
Volunteer and Donate	Organize volunteer events or donate to organizations that work on equity and social well-being related issues.
Benchmarking survey	Ask for feedback from everyone within your organization using anonymous employee surveys to identify areas of improvement.
Partnerships	Ensure equitable partnerships by prioritizing funding partners and collaborative involvement from the beginning of project. Support co-design and co-implementation of solutions with partners.



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Tools and Resources

- Reliable carbon footprint calculators include Greenly or CarbonFootprint.com for businesses or CoolClimate for households.
- MGE online tools can be used to track energy usage by each meter at your facility.
- Focus on Energy offers a range of incentives and services to support the energy efficiency efforts of Wisconsin businesses.
- Energy Star Portfolio Manager is an online tool that helps you benchmark the energy use of any type of building.
- Project Sunroof is a solar savings estimator powered by Google Earth imagery.
- RoundTrip is a commuter options tool.
- Madison BCycle
- Metro Transit
- State of Wisconsin Vanpool Program
- The EPA Food and Packaging Waste Prevention Tool can help identify patterns of waste generation.
- The EPA Food Waste Hierarchy
- Dane County Waste and Renewables Small Business Hazardous Waste Program.
- DNR publication Managing Used Electronics: A Guide for Businesses, Institutions, Governments and Nonprofits.
- Wisconsin Salt Wise and the City of Madison Salt Certification.
- Sustain Dane's recycle better site.
- The City of Madison's Recyclopeda.