



Offices and other workplaces use a lot of paper, energy and other resources, but their environmental impact can be reduced with simple strategies like recycling, turning off equipment when appropriate, and encouraging employees to incorporate "green habits" into their daily lives.

In this project, help your office become green. Reach out to your managers and recruit volunteers to form a **Green Team** in your place of business. With the help of your team, survey your office to see what your organization is already doing to reduce waste, save energy and water, and prevent indoor air pollution. Finally, brainstorm and implement initiatives to further green your office.

Although we talk about greening your office in this guide, the project could work at a non-traditional office setting, such as a school, gym, animal shelter, art center, church or any other place of business.

Timeline:

Project Proposal due online: 1 week after the Community Organizing class

Part I: Preparation: ~2-3 weeks

Part II: Survey and Implementation: 1-2 months

Part III: Follow Up and Tracking Environmental Benefits: 1 hour

Final Project due online: 2 weeks after your project is complete

Materials:

- Spray bottles for green cleaning solutions
- Vinegar
- Dish detergent
- Green cleaning solution labels
- Reusable canvas bags
- Reusable water bottles
- Reusable plates, cups or silverware
- Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs)
- Power strips
- Bicycle lights (front and rear)
- Faucet aerators
- Rain barrel (to raffle off)
- Outdoor composter (to raffle off)
- CTA one-day transit cards
- **Green Office Checklist**

Part I: Preparation

~2-3 weeks

1. **Become an expert.** Read through the following guide, including the **Green Office Checklist** attached. Ask your liaison if you have any questions about how the project will work.
2. **Define your project vision and goals.** What do you hope to achieve by doing this project? How many of your colleagues do you hope to include? How much waste do you hope to prevent or divert from a landfill? How much energy and water do you hope to save?
3. **Reach out to your management.** Before you begin, you will need the support of your managers. Explain that you would like to set up a **Green Team** of employees who will volunteer their time to brainstorm and implement strategies to reduce waste and conserve energy and water in your office. Make sure to explain how the survey and project will work. Let them know that C3 will provide some supplies. Ask the managers for their ideas, and discuss how the **Green Team** will coordinate with management (e.g., what will you need permission to do? How will the **Green Team** communicate to managers and other employees?)
4. **Recruit a Green Team.** Refer to the **Building Your Project Team** worksheet in your **Project Development Workbook**. Once you have the support of management, recruit a team of at least 3 other employees to help you conduct the office survey, brainstorm and implement ideas for greening the office.

Part II: Survey and Implementation 1 month

1. **Survey your office using the Green Office Checklist** attached. With the help of your **Green Team**, check off the items on the checklist that are already being implemented in your office. Keep in mind:



- In order to complete the survey, you may need to walk around the office and look at the supplies that are being used, how much paper is being thrown away, etc. Also make sure to talk to management, the janitorial staff, and whoever orders supplies.
 - Some of the items on the list apply more to individuals than to the office as a whole (e.g., bringing lunches in disposable containers or taking public transportation to work). For these items, find out whether your organization has any programs or incentives to encourage these behaviors. Talk to employees to get an idea of how many people already incorporate green habits into their daily lives.
 - As you go down the list, think about things your office already does or could be doing that the checklist does not include.
2. **Based on your survey, choose at least 3 initiatives from the Green Office Checklist**, or come up with your own ways to green your office. Work with your **Green Team** to choose at least one initiative from each of the following categories:
- **Land** (e.g., improve recycling, switch to recycled paper, put washable plates and glasses in the kitchen)
 - **Air and Energy** (e.g., set up carpools, turn off office equipment at night and on the weekends, weatherize, work with janitorial staff to switch to green cleaning products)
 - **Water** (e.g., attach low-flow aerators to sink faucets; fix leaky toilets and sinks)
- Run your ideas past management whenever appropriate. Also, be sure to discuss your ideas with janitorial staff, the person who orders supplies, and others who may be affected by your project.
3. **Order materials through your C3 Liaison.**
- Refer to your **Material Checklist** in your **Project Proposal**.
 - Confirm with your C3 liaison final quantities of each material requested and the address where materials should be shipped. Note: Some materials will need to be picked up at the Chicago Center for Green Technology, 445 N. Sacramento Blvd.
 - Remember, materials can take up to 3 weeks to arrive after C3 orders them so **plan ahead!**
4. **Roll out your green initiatives.** Depending on your initiatives, you could implement them all at once or one at a time. Make sure to let your co-workers know what you're doing and how they can participate.

Part III: Follow-up and Tracking Environmental Benefits 1 hour

1. **Calculate the environmental and community benefits of your project.** Once you have implemented all of your improvements, estimate the benefits of your project. For example, you might calculate:
- How much energy you saved.
 - How much water you saved.
 - How much waste you diverted from landfills.
 - How many people participated in your project.
 - How much publicity you received (e.g., number of notices in office newsletter).
 - How many participants pledged to take environmental action. Ask individuals to make a single pledge to reduce their environmental footprint. Collect pledges on a sign-in sheet with attendees' names and contact info listed, make pledge cards for participants to take home, or take photos of individuals with their written pledges and follow up by sending them a digital copy.
2. **Display the environmental benefits of your project in a common area.** Let your colleagues know what they've achieved.
3. **Compare your results to your project's vision and goals (see Part I, Step 2 above).** Did you achieve the results that you hoped for?
4. **Follow up by continuing your Green Team's efforts (optional).**

Turn in Final Report

Within 2 weeks of project completion. As soon as you've calculated environmental benefits, please fill out your **Final Report** online. Corresponding materials such as digital photographs, outreach flyers or posters, press releases, or news clippings should be emailed to conservation@cityofchicago.org.

Green Office Checklist

Compiled by Sundee Wislow, former Midwest Field Coordinator for Heifer International and Chicago Recycling Coalition Board Member.

This checklist is meant to lend guidance and share ideas on how to manage a more environmentally sound office. It was put together by a small office in Chicago and is intended for use in similar environments.

Responsible Paper Usage

- Purchase chlorine-free, high post consumer waste recycled paper.
- Keep mailing lists up-to-date and avoid duplicates.
- Eliminate use of fax cover sheets; write on the fax itself or attach a fax post-it.
- Edit documents on-screen as much as possible to avoid printing multiple drafts.
- Conserve paper by printing and copying double-sided. Buy machines that have this capacity and ensure that employees understand how to use those features.
- Use the reduction feature on a copier to fit more on a page.
- Print using the lowest quality print setting when appropriate to conserve ink and cartridges.
- Save paper by design: use narrower margins and smaller fonts when acceptable.
- Use postcards for mailings when possible and use the smallest size envelope required.
- Save ½ used sheets of office paper (sheets printed on only one side) to stock fax machines, use as scratch paper, and copy and print on when appropriate.
- Use reusable inter-office envelopes.
- Avoid using colored paper when possible.
- Cancel junk mail and mailings you receive two copies of. Visit sites such at www.catalogchoice.org/signup.
- Work with printers who use responsible inks and papers. For example, www.consolidatedprinting.net

In the Kitchen

- Keep washable plates, mugs, glasses and silverware in the kitchen and avoid disposables.
- Purchase recycled and non-chlorine bleached paper towels and napkins.
- Hang hand-towels in the kitchen (and bathroom) and use cloth napkins in place of paper ones. Establish a system for washing cloth items.
- Purchase fair-trade, organic coffee.
- Avoid individually packaged sugar and cream in the kitchen.
- Bring lunches in reusable rather than disposable containers.
- Provide a dish washing area to support staff efforts to use reusables.
- Eat out as opposed to carrying-out food. Bring your own container/s for leftovers and don't accept Styrofoam containers.
- Bring your own bags when shopping.
- Limit or eliminate "fast food" chain restaurants from eating options; provide suggestions for local or organic options.

Office Supplies, Products and Furniture

- Have a "used goods area" within the office and include binders, folders, padded envelopes, cardboard boxes, disks, etc. Use these before purchasing new supplies.
- Purchase and use products that are recycled and recyclable.
- Purchase unbleached or chlorine-free high post consumer waste recycled paper products including binders, envelopes, and even toilet paper.
- Consider products with minimum packaging; purchase in bulk.
- Use refillable pens and tape dispensers instead of disposable ones.
- Use non-toxic, biodegradable cleaning supplies.
- Fix or donate broken furniture rather than sending it to a landfill.
- If replacing your carpet, look for non-toxic recyclable carpeting. <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/>
- Purchase products from local suppliers (to avoid long distance shipping and packaging) and from suppliers committed to environmental issues.
- Purchase used items from thrift stores when possible.

Recycling and Proper Disposal

- ___ Set up a comprehensive office recycling program for paper, cardboard, glass, metals and plastic; and clearly label all recycling bins. www.chicagorecycling.org
- ___ Recycle toner cartridges through manufacturers.
- ___ Dispose of hazardous materials properly. This includes cleaning products, fluorescent light bulbs, computers and electronics, paint, paint thinner, lawn chemicals, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, drain cleaners, batteries, old cell phones, and so on. See **Guide to Recycling Household Hazardous Waste**.
- ___ Compost food waste outdoors or indoors. www.chicagorecycling.org
- ___ Recycle packing peanuts. Call 1.800.828.2214 or visit www.loosefillpackaging.com to find the nearest drop off location.
- ___ Donate equipment and furniture to a resale store. Salvation Army offers free pick-up.
- ___ Educate your office about recycling and proper waste management.

Meetings and Events

- ___ Support environmentally responsible hotels and meeting spaces.
- ___ Ensure that meetings and trainings are held at locations served by public transportation. Include train or bus directions on the invite.
- ___ Buy locally grown organic food, and support caterers who do too. www.localharvest.org
- ___ Label foods at events if they are local and organic.
- ___ In evaluations of meetings and events, ask how the event could be “greener” in the future.

Transportation

- ___ Bike, walk, take public transportation or carpool to work.
- ___ Tune-up vehicles on a regular basis.
- ___ Purchase hybrid or fuel-efficient vehicles, or car-share. www.igocars.org
- ___ Use videoconferencing and conference calls instead of travel when possible.

Energy Efficiency

- ___ Turn on *power-save* modes on equipment and appliances.
- ___ Turn off equipment during nights and weekends. Attach TVs, radios, computers, copy machines, microwaves, telephones etc. to power strips for ease in turning them off at the end of the day. (Even when not in use, appliances use electricity. According to Co-op America, turning computers and copiers off after work can cut energy usage by up to 75%.)
- ___ Install an automated thermostat (it's easy to do!) and/or set temperatures so that it will be comfortable during the day, and will use less energy during nights and weekends.
- ___ For windows that receive direct sunlight, close the blinds after work and on weekends to prevent excess heating in the summertime.
- ___ Use a ceiling fan or other fan in the summer time with or without air conditioning. Fans use 98% less energy than A.C. and make you feel up to 6 degrees cooler.
- ___ Open the windows and turn off the air conditioning on nice days.
- ___ Ensure radiators and heaters are not blocked by furniture.
- ___ Add weather stripping to all doors and windows.
- ___ Use energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs.
- ___ Use thin fluorescent tubes (T8 or T5) which use less energy but have the same output as T12 tubes.
- ___ Replace flickering fluorescent lights promptly.
- ___ Turn off lights when exiting rooms.
- ___ Schedule an energy audit through your local power company.
- ___ If you have to use batteries, buy rechargeable batteries and a charger.
- ___ If purchasing new equipment or appliances, look for EPA Energy Star certified options.

Water Efficiency

- Attach low-flow aerators to sink faucets.
- Fix leaky toilets and faucets promptly.
- Check for water leaks at least twice a year.
- Purchase water efficient toilets and dishwashers.
- Research what could be done with office gray water and put ideas into practice.

Indoor Air Quality

- Conduct an air quality check.
- Add plants to offices and use natural fertilizers.
- Change air filters regularly.
- Use low VOC paints for walls.
- Integrate indoor air quality concerns into your purchasing behaviors.
- Turn off air conditioning and open the windows on nice days.
- Establish an effective smoking policy to protect indoor air quality.
- Notify your building manager immediately if you suspect indoor air quality problems.
- Work with building management to ensure only necessary and appropriate pest control practices and non-chemical methods where possible.

Reducing Bird Collisions

(Information provided by the Chicago Ornithological Society, Birds and Buildings Forum, and the National Audubon Society.) About 8 million birds migrate through Chicago each spring and autumn. Unfortunately, window collisions kill approximately 1 billion birds every year in the US, with millions of collisions happening annually in Chicago. Birds do not see glass and are attracted by reflections. Especially during migratory season from mid-March to early June and late August to mid-November, building owners and residents can take the following steps to prevent collisions:

During the day

- Pull down blinds, use external screens, or apply window film to mute reflection.
- Place furniture, banners, or artwork in front of windows to serve as a visual barrier.
- Move green plants away from windows so birds cannot see them as a potential landing spot.

At night, in high-rises

- Turn off lights or close blinds from dusk to daylight.
- Dim or turn off exterior decorative lights, or install motion sensitive lighting.

Green Office Links:

www.greenbiz.com

Green Purchasing:

www.environmentalchoice.com,
<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/>

Guide to Recycling Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

Chicago Department of Environment

List of Common HHW Products and Safety Tips

Cleaning Products

- Oven cleaners
- Drain cleaners
- Wood and metal cleaners and polishes
- Toilet cleaners
- Tub, tile, shower cleaners
- Bleach (laundry)
- Pool chemicals

Lawn and Garden Products

- Herbicides
- Insecticides
- Fungicides/wood preservatives

Indoor Pesticides

- Ant sprays and baits
- Cockroach sprays and baits
- Flea repellents and shampoos
- Bug sprays
- Houseplant insecticides
- Moth repellents
- Mouse and rat poisons and baits

Automotive Products

- Motor oil
- Fuel additives
- Carburetor and fuel injection cleaners
- Air conditioning refrigerants
- Starter fluids
- Automotive batteries
- Transmission and brake fluid
- Antifreeze

Miscellaneous

- Batteries
- Mercury thermostats or thermometers
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Driveway sealer

Workshop/Painting Supplies

- Adhesives and glues
- Furniture strippers
- Oil or enamel based paint
- Stains and finishes
- Paint thinners and turpentine
- Paint strippers and removers
- Photographic chemicals
- Fixatives and other solvents

Tip #1 Use and store products containing hazardous substances carefully to prevent any accidents at home. Never store hazardous products in food containers. Do not mix products from the different groups shown above. Keep products containing hazardous materials in their original containers and never remove the labels. Corroding containers, however, should be repackaged and clearly labeled. This will prevent accidental ingestion and also can help protect sanitation workers.

Tip #2 When leftovers remain, never mix household hazardous waste with other products. Incompatibilities may react, ignite, or explode; contaminated household hazardous waste may become unrecyclable.

Personal Protective Clothing and Other Items for Safely Handling HHW

- Safety glasses
- Gloves – rubber, leather – wear rubber gloves under leather gloves. Many of the containers are sharp and therefore the leather gloves will provide protection. The rubber gloves will prevent chemicals from contacting skin.
- Long-sleeve shirt and long pants
- Soap & water – for cleaning after collecting, or for washing off chemicals
- Fire extinguisher

Where to Recycle Household Hazardous Waste

City of Chicago Household Chemical and Computer Recycling Center

The Household Chemical and Computer Recycling Center is the city's first permanent hazardous waste recycling facility. In addition to responsibly disposing of hazardous products from landfills, the center will train ex-offenders in electronics recycling. Many of the electronics will be taken apart and recycled, while newer computers will be refurbished through the program and made available to local schools, churches, non-profit groups and low-income families.

The facility accepts the following materials for recycling or safe disposal: antifreeze, used motor oil, old gasoline, oil-based paints, paint thinners, aerosol paints, herbicides, insecticides, pesticides, lawn chemicals, solvents, drain cleaners, cleaning products, pool chemicals, hobby chemicals, mercury, fluorescent lamps and bulbs, computers and cell phones. People can also use the Paint Exchange Room to swap old paints with one another for free.

These materials are accepted during the facility's hours of operation: Tuesdays from 7 a.m. to noon; Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., and the first Saturday of every month from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Drop off household chemicals and electronics at:

Household Chemical and Computer Recycling Center, 1150 N. North Branch St. on Goose Island

Recycle Batteries

Participate in the City's household battery recycling program at all Chicago Public Libraries and Walgreens stores. By recycling your batteries you will help keep these materials out of the waste stream and the battery components will be reclaimed for reuse. All common dry cell batteries can be recycled, including alkaline, rechargeable, and other common types. Wet cell batteries, like car batteries, cannot be recycled through this program. Funding for the City of Chicago's battery recycling program has been provided in part through a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Drop off batteries at **Chicago Public Libraries** and **Walgreens Stores' Photo Centers**.

This recycling program includes most disposal and rechargeable batteries used in the home, including:

- Alkaline Batteries, these are the typical disposable batteries, Duracell, Energizer, Ever Ready
- Lithium Batteries, these are typically found in cameras
- All Button Type Batteries, often found in watches and smaller electronic devices

Recycle Corks

Yemm & Hart Ltd. recycles cork stoppers. The company reprocesses the corks into a block that is sliced into thin sheets that will be offered for sale, made into tack boards, award plaques, coasters, and more. If the company gets enough corks, they may begin to produce recycled cork floor tiles. Plastic stoppers cannot be recycled through this program. Collect and mail your cork stoppers *prepaid* (paid by sender) to Yemm & Hart via UPS or USPS: **Wine Cork Recycling, Yemm & Hart Ltd**, 425 North Chamber Drive, Fredericktown, MO, 63645.

Visit <http://www.yemmhart.com/news+/winecorkrecycling.htm> for more information.

Recycle Cell Phones

There are more than 150 million cellular users in the United States alone. It is estimated that by 2005 there will be over 700 million retired phones in the U.S. Seventy-five percent of these out-of-use phones will be in people's drawers at home or at work. The balance is going to landfills or is recycled. The EPA estimates that this quantity of cell phones is equal to about 250,000 tons of toxic materials.

ECO-CELL is an organization that takes used cell phones, accessories and cell phone batteries and recycles them using the best demonstrated technologies for recycling e-waste. Approximately 80% of the phones collected will be refurbished and reused by first-time users abroad or by selected local organizations, such as Hospital patients for emergency 911 calls. All unusable cell phones and accessories will be recycled under strict EPA guidelines by certified recyclers.

ECO-CELL pays non-profits to collect cell phones as a fundraiser. Select organizations will receive dollars from ECO-CELL for the phones to aid in their fundraising as an added benefit. To learn more about ECO-CELL and participating local non-profits, visit <http://www.eco-cell.org/>. You can also drop off cell phones at the city's **Household Chemical and Computer Recycling Center** at 1150 N. North Branch Street on Goose Island.

Recycle CD-ROMS

Plastics Recycling Inc, located in Indianapolis, grinds the CDs down and reuses the plastic for automotive parts and the spindles for adding machine rolls. The firm is capable of handling large quantities, so please share the information with colleagues, friends and family. CDs must be sent without sleeves or cases. Send CDs to: **Plastics Recycling Inc. (Allen Shaw)**, 2015 S. Pennsylvania, Indianapolis, IN 46625, 317-780-6100

Recycle Floppy Disks & Videocassettes

Alternative Community Training (ACT) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide personalized support to individuals with disabilities as they become full and valued members of the community. The company employs over fifty five disabled employees who erase and then package floppy disks and videocassettes every day. By donating these items, you not only dispose of unwanted materials, but also support the training and development of these individuals. For more information see <http://www.actrecycling.org/donations/> Mail floppy disks and videocassettes to: **Alternative Community Training**, 2200 Burlington, Columbia, Missouri 65202

Recycle Tyvek® Envelopes

Turn any Tyvek® envelope inside out, so the unprinted white surface shows on the outside. Stuff the inside-out Tyvek® envelope with other used Tyvek® envelopes for recycling. For small quantities (less than 25 envelopes/month), address and mail the envelope to: **Tyvek Recycle. Attn: Shirley B. Wright, Tyvek® Recycling Specialist**, 8401 Fort Darling Road, Richmond, VA 23237. See http://www2.dupont.com/Tyvek_Envelopes/en_US/tech_info/tech_environ.html to find out how to recycle larger quantities.