



*Greater efficiency supports patient care.*

## **Develop an Organizational Environmental Principles Statement**

*All ECM content was independently developed and reviewed to be vendor, product and service provider-neutral.*

### **Description**

A sustainability statement that is endorsed by facility leadership outlines guiding principles and commitments for sustainability program management. The statement can include specific commitments to environmental considerations (e.g., commitments to clean water and air), specific programs (e.g., energy reduction, water conservation, waste minimization, source reduction or chemical reduction programs) and/or target goals to reduce use of energy, water and chemicals and to increase reuse and recycling rates.

### **Project Talking Points**

- Leadership commitment sets the tone for organizational readiness and makes the difference between simply having an “initiative” and having a commitment to environmental stewardship.
- The most successful health care sustainability programs have significant support from health care leadership and some level of dedicated resources to coordinate program goals into actionable improvements.
- A green team (including representatives from departments responsible for implementing various sustainability programs and then operating them day-to-day) can help create this statement, ensuring that the ideas presented are both feasible and practical.
- There is no reason for an organization to start from scratch. Many organizations have shared their statements, which others can use as a template (see examples in the Case Studies section).
- According to Practice Greenhealth, almost 90% of the top-performing hospitals have an executive-level supporter at the top of the sustainability benchmark reporting structure.
- Documented leadership support for sustainability principles helps assure the commitment will be articulated to all levels of management. A formal statement will also persist through leadership changes or staff turnover.
- For staff responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives, an endorsed document makes their efforts official and sets clear communication of sustainability as a priority.
- C-suite leaders are unlikely to have time to engage in the details of energy, water, waste or climate mitigation implementation strategies, but they are positioned to drive an organization's actions by setting and committing to a supportive statement of sustainability goals.
- An environmental principles statement can help an organization articulate the strategic value of supporting sustainability across the organization. It can also highlight the synergies between sustainability and organizational priorities such as community benefit, safety, return on investment, quality, etc.

- A growing recognition that sustainability is closely linked to human health has motivated many health care organizations to begin integrating sustainability into organizational strategy.

### **Benefits**

- **Cost benefits:** Although cost savings are not directly related to an environmental principles statement, indirect savings will be realized through support and implementation of sustainability projects. Implementing energy reduction practices can lower utility costs and an organization's environmental impact.
- **Environmental benefits:** Benefits will be realized indirectly when leadership support has been established and environmental programs receive increased attention.
- **Social benefits:** An environmental principles statement demonstrates leadership support and helps integrate sustainability into the cultural fabric of the organization.

### **Purchasing Considerations**

Encourage leadership to agree on a budget that would fund the sustainability programs and provide team members with necessary resources.

### **How-To**

1. Research commitment statements to get a sense of what your environmental principles statement will look like.
2. Work with your **green team**, communications team and community benefit team to draft a statement that reflects your organization's motivation for commitment, the results the organization hopes to achieve and the activities to which it has committed to reach those goals.
3. Review and finalize the statement with leadership. Have the CEO and board chairperson endorse (sign) the statement.
4. Host an internal event for all staff to attend. Have the CEO and/or leadership team express their commitment to sustainability and read the environmental principles statement aloud. Consider developing a banner-size environmental principles statement that all staff can sign. Share the principles in the organization's newsletter or in an email so that each member has a copy. Contact your local paper and/or news station to attend the event.
5. Publicly announce your organization's environmental commitments by reaching out to local, regional and national media outlets.
6. Consider having the statement printed and framed for posting in key areas of the facility. If a banner-size statement was created and signed by staff, consider having that on display.
7. Periodically send best practice sustainability tips to staff that can help them contribute to the organization's environmental goals.

## **Case Studies**

- **University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI**
- **JLL-Adventist Health**
- Kaiser Permanente
- Memorial Hermann

Contact us to share your organization's statement.

## **Regulations, Codes and Standards, Policies**

Although not required by any regulatory bodies, an environmental principles statement helps articulate an organization's sustainability commitment and processes to regulatory inspectors.

## **Resources**

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- **Energy to Care Educational Resources**
- **Cleveland Clinic: 2018 United Nation's Global Compact Report**
- **Dignity Health: Social Responsibility Report**
- **Practice Greenhealth Academy:**
  - Leadership and engagement resources
  - Webinars
- **Spectrum Health: 2017 Data Report**

Energy, Supply Chain, Waste, Water

Category List:

- Strategic operations

ECM Attributes:

- Policy: strategic/compliance
- Strategies/projects

Improvement Type:

- Operations

Department:

- Interdepartmental