

# Green Business Recognition

## Recognizing Commercial Sustainability Achievements

Many local governments have catalyzed efforts to improve building performance and common business practices in the commercial sector by instituting Green Business programs. These programs provide added value to leading local businesses by rewarding them for their performance toward recognized goals and standards for environmentally excellent business operations.

### Background

For many local governments, the commercial sector presents significant opportunities to achieve environmental goals, and, likewise, many companies aspire to demonstrate their environmental leadership and to be recognized as “green” businesses. Launching a Green Business program can be a primary means to engage and enlist the business community in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainability – while helping reach community climate and energy goals. The goals of the program can align directly with the goals of a community’s climate action plan, sustainability plan, or energy efficiency and conservation strategy. Local governments may also consider tracking and reporting program metrics from participants.



*Award Winners take a moment for the camera at Chicago’s Green Office Challenge Awards Breakfast.*

### Benefits

**Challenge Local Businesses to Engage in a Myriad of Sustainable Strategies.** Green business programs can focus community efforts in a variety of areas simultaneously such as energy and water use efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, alternative modes of transportation, behavioral change, involvement with community programs, and the purchase of environmentally friendly office supplies and contracted services. By leveraging existing sentiment in the broader community to pursue local environmental goals, local governments can have a larger impact than is possible through responsible management of their own operations and services.<sup>1</sup>

**Save Local Businesses Money and Boost the Local Economy.** Companies across the United States recognize the bottom-line-boosting advantage of attracting “green minded” customers through responsible business practices. Beyond that, green projects and long-term efforts to increase sustainability at work improve employee retention and reduce operating costs. Green Business programs promote conservation and thoughtfulness in the work place, and provide a platform for participating businesses to connect and forge the relationships necessary to strengthen local economies.

**Recognizes Business Leaders.** Recognition programs should never “greenwash.” A key element of these programs is the ability to prove that businesses have chosen to act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. A recognition system for effective leaders cultivates proactive attitudes and can act as a catalyst for action throughout the community. By creating a Green Business program, a local government can promote these community-and globally-conscious businesses and drive the goodwill that supports these efforts. Businesses may find the award is useful in demonstrating internally that their sustainability efforts are valued.

## Getting Started

In order to run an impactful community engagement program, ensure that the community has the necessary elements to attract participants, provide them with quality learning and networking opportunities, and reward them for their efforts and success in implementing green business strategies.

### Step 1: Engage Elected Officials.

One of the few incentives that local governments can provide to their constituents at low or no cost is that of recognition from elected leadership at the City or County government. Enlist elected officials' support for the program and commitment to attend program kick-off events, awards ceremonies, and other events. Attendance and support from elected officials will raise the profile of the program and has been listed by participants as a primary draw for participation.<sup>1</sup>

### Step 2: Engage Stakeholders.

Stakeholders should be invested in the program's success and should be allowed to spearhead aspects of this initiative in the community. They may receive or create their own press about their assistance in the development of the program. Consider allowing stakeholders to assist or lead participant training sessions, networking socials, or other events. These trainings will present opportunities for stakeholders to showcase their organization while providing a tangible benefit to the program. Stakeholders also provide value by acting as a program ally and using their communication channels to assist with program marketing efforts.

### Step 3: Align Program with Community Goals.

City or County departments often have programs targeted at the business community but either lack the resources to reach businesses or the departments work in silos and "compete" with each other to attract the attention of businesses. A Green Business program acts as a hub for a local government's programs targeted at the business community.

## Existing Policies or Programs

### Chicago, IL: Green Office Challenge

<http://www.chicagogreenofficechallenge.org>

- **Adopted:** February 2009
- **Affected Property Types:** Commercial Office Buildings and Tenant Companies.
- **Key Requirements:**
  - Participants must be within Chicago central business district.
  - Participants must submit baseline data, update data throughout the program, and submit final data.
  - Engage in energy, water, waste, transportation, and behavioral actions – participants are ranked by Tier according to their performance.

**Outcome:** In Round One, commercial buildings and office tenants experienced an average energy reduction of 8%. The average building avoided approximately 1,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e and accrued \$123,000 in savings from electricity savings alone. Also through their efforts, many commercial buildings qualified for an ENERGY STAR rating or other third party certification. Many office tenants have taken their best practices and brought them to their corporate level for wider implementation.<sup>2</sup>



## Houston, TX: Green Office Challenge

<http://www.houstongoc.org>



- **Adopted:** September 2010
- **Affected Property Types:** Commercial Office Buildings and Commercial Tenant Companies.
- **Key Requirements:**
  - Participants must be within Houston city limits; commercial properties and tenants may participate.
  - Participants are grouped in sub-teams according to the major business district in which they are located, providing a second layer of competition between these districts.
  - Any tenant company may participate, regardless of whether their building itself is participating (and vice versa).

## Lexington, KY: Live Green Lexington Games / Bluegrass PRIDE WasteBusters, Water Partner, and Energy Partner

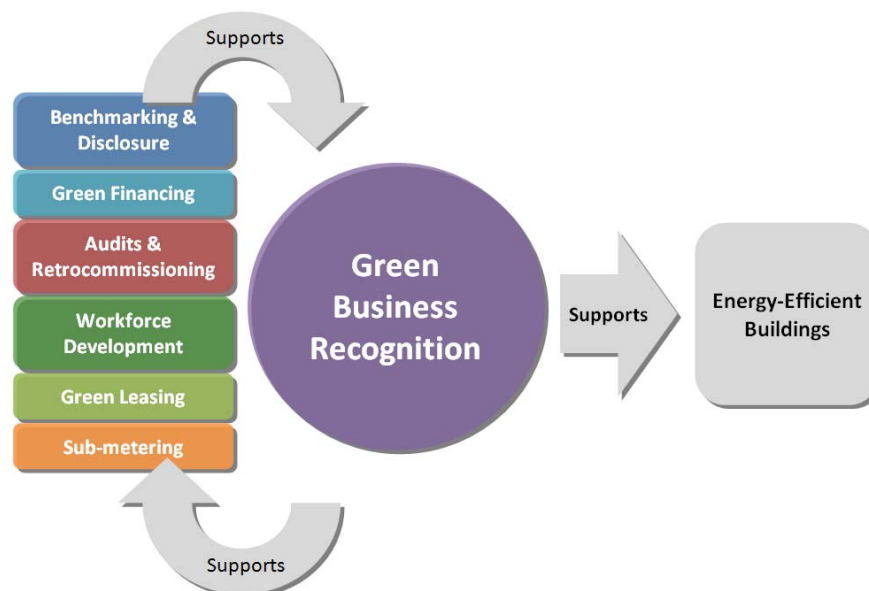
<http://www.bgpride.org/LiveGreenLexingtonProgram.htm>



- **Adopted:** Live Green Lexington Games is launching in May 2011; WasteBusters began in 2001; Water Partner began in 2009.
- **Affected Property Types:** Local Businesses, Apartment Complexes, Schools, Houses of Worship, and more.
- **Key Requirements:**
  - Fayette County organizations can participate in the Live Green Lexington Games.
- **Outcome:** 335 businesses are WasteBuster Partners, recycling an additional 600 tons of material annually. There are also 113 apartment complexes (representing over 8,000 units) and 80 schools that are WasteBuster Partners. 26 apartment complexes and 46 businesses are Water Partners, and there are 31 existing Energy Partners. The Live Green Lexington Games anticipates multiplying the success of the existing subprograms while unifying the efforts into a single program.

## Complementary Policies

### Complementary Policy Landscape for Green Business Recognition



For Access to the Commercial Buildings Toolkit visit <http://www.icleiusa.org/commercialenergypolicytoolkit>

For Further Information on Local Sustainability visit [www.icleiusa.org](http://www.icleiusa.org) & [www.imt.org](http://www.imt.org)

## *Green Business programs are highly complementary to nearly any energy efficiency policy.*

- **Energy Audits** can guide building owners and operators towards the most cost effective lighting upgrades or other energy efficient retrofits, ensuring success in a program that targets energy efficiency.
- **Submetering** empowers office tenants to implement energy efficient measures given their reductions in energy and savings are reflected in their utility bills.
- **Green Retrofit Financing** programs enable participants of a Green Business program the supplemental or sole financial resources necessary to implement energy efficiency measures.

## References

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1. ICLEI USA. ICLEI Green Business Challenge Handbook. 2010.  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/programs/climate/green-business-challenge>
2. Chicago and ICLEI Recognize Winners of Green Office Challenge.  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/news-events/press-room/press-releases/chicago-and-iclei-recognize-winners-of-green-office-challenge/>

## Additional Resources

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- EPA Portfolio Manager.  
<https://www.energystar.gov/istar/pmpam/>
- The ENERGY STAR Challenge.  
[http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=challenge.bus\\_challenge](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=challenge.bus_challenge)
- ICLEI USA. Local Government Green Business Challenge Programs.  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/programs/climate/local-government-green-business-challenge-programs>