Local Green Business Program

The purpose of a Green Business Program is twofold: to acknowledge the clean energy efforts and energy savings of the business community, and to encourage local businesses to take advantage of energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities, such as MassSave. As part of the program, neighboring businesses or business sectors can compete to showcase their efforts to increase local commercial energy efficiency and adopt clean energy practices. To celebrate their success, the municipality can reward businesses with prizes such as window decals, certificates, marketing opportunities, and technical assistance. This strategy describes how to establish an ongoing/annual Green Business Program to engage local businesses in clean energy opportunities, encourage businesses to pursue energy audits, implement energy efficiency measures, and celebrate local clean energy accomplishments.

Program Implementation Steps

1. **Establish a Program Leader.**

   The program leader may be a municipal staff person, a member of the Energy Committee, a passionate local business owner, a local Business Council or Chamber of Commerce staff person, or another local stakeholder/volunteer.

2. **Meet with Local Stakeholders to Identify Opportunities and Challenges.**

   Focus groups, workshops, and surveys for stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce, utility representatives, and local business owners may be helpful to gain further insight into how best to access and support the business community.

3. **Establish Specific Program Objectives and Outcomes.**

   Program objectives and outcomes can be influenced by both local energy goals and input from local businesses. Examples of program objectives include:

   - Increase participation in the MassSave business program by 25%.

   - Reduce commercial energy consumption in the food services sector by 10% by 2015.

   - Create a database to track local businesses' energy and cost savings from participation in energy efficiency programs.

4. Design Program.

Once the program objectives and outcomes have been established, the Program Leader should decide the most effective way to administer the program. An effective Green Business Program typically involves visiting businesses and providing a preliminary assessment of energy equipment and consumption habits, followed by any resources and incentives that the businesses can avail of to make upgrades. If there are budget constraints that prevent the implementation of such a program, the Program Leader can choose to follow an awards-based format where businesses are invited to showcase their "green" efforts and are given the chance to win an award recognizing their work.

For designing any Green Business Program, the Program Leader should:

- Meet with local Business Council or Chamber of Commerce, business associations, and local businesses to design a suitable Green Business program model based on program objectives, size of the commercial sector, diversity of businesses, target businesses (if applicable), and the types of local business districts.

- Develop a baseline survey to verify eligibility for the program and assess businesses' existing efforts, including energy audits for the past three years and documentation of energy efficiency upgrades for the past five years.

- Identify the budget available for the program and work with the Chamber of Commerce and the utilities to delegate roles and responsibilities.

- Hire an external specialist, if necessary, to assess the energy needs and funding opportunities for businesses on a case-by-case basis.

- Finalize all program materials with sponsoring entities, such as the Chamber of Commerce and utilities.

Additionally, a Green Business Program can be supplemented with a competition-style component, where businesses compete on the basis of pre-determined metrics to win an award. To implement such a component, the Program Leader should consider the following:

- Create a list of performance measures and a scoring system for a Green Business Award. Examples of program standards include adopting energy efficient operations, such as computer power management, walk/ride day, and producing renewable energy on site.

- Meet with the Chamber of Commerce Board and utilities to identify prizes for award recipients. Examples of prizes include certificates; window decals; technical assistance; and marketing opportunities through municipal websites, social media, and local broadcasts.

- Establish application and award recipient announcement deadlines.

- Draft program descriptions, award applications, and other advertising material.

5. Launch Program.

- Hold forums and events to distribute program documents to local businesses.

- Review applications and select award recipients based on the established criteria.

- Announce award recipients at an award ceremony or during community events and local media broadcasts.

- Advertise success stories through press releases in local papers, on the municipal website, Chamber of Commerce website, newsletters, literature at businesses, etc.

6. Monitor Program.

- Follow up with program participants annually to inform them of additional clean energy opportunities and to track energy savings and cost savings.

- Hold annual meetings with stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce, utilities, and local businesses to share opportunities and challenges in promoting clean energy efforts in the commercial sector.

- Hold annual meetings with the utilities to assess program participation, determine aggregated savings, and identify new program opportunities and incentives.

- Assess progress toward program goals.

Resources

- "Green Business Challenge." ICLEI. http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/green-business-challenge (free to members)
- "Sustainability Toolkit." A Better City. http://www.abettercity.org/toolkit
- "UnCommon Sense." Yellowstone Business Partnership. http://www.yellowstonebusiness.org/programs/uncommon-sense-business-leadership-for-a-sustainable-future
- "Greenovate Business Award." City of Boston. http://www.cityofboston.gov/environmentalandenergy/greenawards/businesses.asp
- "Chicago Green Office Challenge."City of Chicago. http://www.chicagogoc.com
- "San Francisco Green Business." City of San Francisco. http://www.sfgreenbusiness.org