

# Certified Green Office Program

## Action Guide

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### Introduction

Hello and welcome again to the Certified Green Office Program at the University of Illinois! The CGOP is a program by the [Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment](#), the UI's center for sustainability-focused research and campus sustainability improvement. We are very excited to be working with you to increase the sustainability of offices around our campus!

iSEE has been running the [Certified Green Office Program](#) for several years, and many offices from across campus have participated in order to make their workplaces friendlier places to our planet. We've also recently begun a similar program for [campus laboratories](#). We are counting on your participation to continue a legacy of sustainable offices now and in the future! There are many departmental, faculty, and administrative offices at UIUC, which represent a significant opportunity to reduce our community's eco-footprint in work life.

This guide will be a comprehensive review of the five Required Actions (prerequisites) necessary for all levels of certification in the program as well as the 48 Elective Actions, of which at least eight must be completed to achieve CGOP certification. **Completion of 8 - 10 Elective Actions** will earn you Bronze level certification, **completion of 11 - 15 Elective Actions** will earn Silver level certification, and **completion of 16+ Elective Actions** will earn Gold level certification. We've provided this guide so its resources will always be easily accessible, and that each office can complete the program at their own pace. If you have additional questions about how best to complete an action, feel free to contact iSEE at any time at [iseegreenoffice@gmail.com](mailto:iseegreenoffice@gmail.com). Happy greening!

# I. Required Actions

The five prerequisites are:

- 1) Elect a member to be the official Sustainability Ambassador to be the point of contact.
- 2) Use a minimum of 30% recycled copy paper only. Bulk pricing is available from F&S.
- 3) Turn off lights, monitors, and other unused devices on nights and weekends.
- 4) Offer at least one vegetarian (or vegan) option equivalent to a meat-based dish at every department-hosted event.
- 5) Make sure to have and use clearly labeled recycling bins. Contact F&S if you need bins.

## Instructions

### I. Required Action #1: Elect a member to be the official Sustainability Ambassador to be the point of contact.

The role of the Sustainability Ambassador is key to the success of the program, and it is essential to elect a person who is both willing and excited to take on the role. This position is mainly for facilitating any necessary communications between iSEE, program coordinators, and your office. Be sure to share the contact information for the chosen Ambassador with us. In addition, if there is any change to who holds the position, please update us with the new contact information so we can continue to support your office.

### II. Required Action #2: Use a minimum of 30% recycled content paper when you have to print things.

Printing documents will be absolutely necessary sometimes. Thankfully, reducing the environmental impact of the paper you do use isn't terribly hard. A major step towards doing so is purchasing paper made of a minimum of 30% recycled content, therefore reducing the number of trees cut down for your paper.

Here are available products from Office Depot and Staples:

- [Office Depot® EnviroCopy®](#) \$64.99 per case
- [Hammermill® Great White®](#) \$68.89 per case
- [Boise® Aspen®](#) \$65.99 per case
- [Staples® Business Executive](#) \$57.99 per case

Similar or identical products can also be found by searching “recycled content copy paper” on any other online retailer that sells copy paper, such as Walmart or Amazon.

On the Office Depot and Staples websites, it is easy to narrow down search results for recycled content copy paper by checking the “Recycled” option in the specification columns.

Something to consider: Though only 30% recycled content is required for CGOP certification, you can get additional elective points by going up to either 50% or 100% recycled content — which is often only a few dollars more expensive per case than the 30%.

### **III. Required Action #3: Turn off light monitors, and other unused devices on nights and weekends.**

Turning off lights in empty rooms should be a no-brainer — saving electricity will not only help the environment, but cut down on the cost of your office’s power bills as well. Though the exact savings will vary by your type, wattage, and amount of light bulbs, even the most sustainable bulbs will save more energy when not in use. A good rule to follow is that if you’re going to leave a room empty for longer than about thirty seconds to one minute, it’s best to switch off the lights to conserve energy. Beyond turning off lights, there are hidden consumers of energy lurking beneath every desk that can be shut off before leaving for the night. Monitors, printers, and other devices should be turned off and unplugged if possible. Even when turned off, some devices still consume energy just from being plugged in.

Of course, the worst thing is to leave a light on all night - or all weekend! Consider finding a volunteer, or a team of volunteers, to go around and turn off all the unneeded lights in the house at night before they go to bed. [Take a look at the template](#) created for this duty, which we recommend to help with organizing your volunteers.

### **IV. Required Action #4: Offer at least one vegetarian (or vegan) option equivalent to a meat-based dish at every department-hosted event.**

Though it hasn’t always been widely known, many of us are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that animal agriculture is one of the greatest drivers of global warming. This is largely because of the [huge amounts of energy](#) required to grow the crops fed to animals, though many other factors such as deforestation for grazing land, processing/distribution emissions and methane emitted by cows play a role as well. As such, becoming vegetarian (or even better yet, a vegan) has been [consistently listed](#) as one of the best ways to reduce one’s personal carbon footprint. However, any amount of meat reduction in your diet makes a difference (especially reducing beef and other red meats, which require the most energy input). This is why we are asking at least one vegetarian (or vegan) option at every

department-hosted event. Not only will this make your event more accessible to currently vegetarian and vegan staff and clients, but may help introduce new meals and dietary choices to others.

**V. Make sure to have and use clearly labeled recycling bins. [Contact F&S if you need bins.](#)**

Most of us are probably well aware of the benefits of recycling: reduced raw material extraction, reduced energy consumption, less land and marine litter, and lower landfill usage, just to name a few. Recycling is one of the easiest and most basic actions we can take to be good stewards of the environment.

But despite the fact that pretty much everyone knows this, and most of us make an effort to recycle at least the most obvious things, recycling rates in the U.S. are shockingly low: only around 35% percent for everyday municipal solid waste. Part of the explanation for this statistic is lack of access to comprehensive recycling services, and another part is general ignorance on what materials should be going into recycling bins.

We would recommend sending links to the acceptable materials web pages for [F&S recycling containers](#) around to everyone, and making a sign to hang by your indoor recycling bins with this list. To achieve this action, make sure you have separate, well-labeled receptacles within your office for paper and bottles/cans. We would recommend either that other recyclables be taken directly to the bins outside, or collected in a third container. The photo below is the F&S provided recycling bin for personal desk use.



Photo Credit: Facilities and Services

## II. Energy Conservation Elective Actions

Though energy use in one individual office is really just a tiny drop in the ocean of overall use, it is important to get into conservation habits. These habits, from simply flipping a switch to regulating temperature set an example for others to follow, and instill the desire to use resources more efficiently. Not to mention that more often than not, these practices will save you a significant amount of money in the long run!

### I. ***Elective Action #1: Turn off lights and use daylight, or use task lights.***

This one is as simple as can be - using natural light whenever possible over artificial lighting means less energy use. There may be an additional benefit of opening up the curtains, as natural light has been [found to increase productivity](#), boost moods, and reduce office related stresses such as eye strain. If natural light is insufficient, task lights provide a pinpoint of light just where you need it and avoid excess energy use.

### II. ***Elective Action #2: Turn off lights when leaving the office for significant time periods.***

As stated above, a good rule to follow is to turn off lights if they would be unused for over 30 seconds. Create a habit of switching off the light for short absences, even when you're just leaving to grab a copy or hit the coffee station. Depending on the type of lights in your office, the [energy savings vary](#).

For many of us, it is common to turn off lights in unoccupied rooms when we are in our own homes — why pay for electricity that we are not actively using? However, this practice doesn't always make the jump to communal spaces or semi-public shared spaces like your office kitchen, bathrooms, and hallways. Maybe we feel uncomfortable turning off light switches in buildings we don't own, or maybe it just genuinely doesn't occur to us to do so when we aren't immediately responsible for the power bill. Whatever the reasoning, it doesn't make any more sense to leave lights in empty rooms at your office than it does to leave the lights on at home. One easy way to encourage your workers to switch off the lights is to put up reminder signs to do so.

### **III. *Elective Action #3: Turn hall lights off if standby lights are adequate.***

Turn off bright hall lights if there are alternative light sources such as from windows, doorways, monitors, etc. that sufficiently light the area. Hallways are high traffic areas, but are typically not used as a working space, meaning they can serve their function without being as brightly lit as your office desk.

### **IV. *Elective Action #4: Use motion-sensor lighting.***

The easiest option of all is to install motion sensor lighting for offices, hallways, etc. Lights will consistently turn off any time they are unused for a set period of time, without requiring any changes to the habits of your office workers.

### **V. *Elective Action #5: Use LED lights instead of fluorescents. Ask your Facility Manager about making this change.***

LED lights provide many energy saving benefits over conventional fluorescent lights. First, LED lights use much less energy and have a lifespan of [~50,000 hours](#), lasting much longer on average than fluorescent lights. A slower replacement rate from improved energy conservation means less maintenance hassle and waste production. Next, LED lights are mercury free, so there are less toxins present that need to be accounted for when disposing. Lastly, the costs of LED lights are continuously declining, making this option a cost saving move in the long run.

### **VI. *Elective Action #6: Order and use “Not in Use? Turn off the Juice” light switch covers or similarly worded signage.***

Adding signage to light switches will remind office members to hit the lights, and will be especially helpful in supporting habit changes if you choose to participate in any of the above energy saving actions. You can download iSEE’s “Turn off the juice” signage [here](#). There are also tons of great printouts that are just an Internet search away — or, try your hand at designing your own!

### **VII. *Elective Action #7: Use equipment as instructed in the operating manual.***

The best way to prolong the lifespan of equipment, minimize energy use, and promote safe work habits is to simply use equipment as intended. Keep all necessary operation manuals or instructions as needed, and make sure new workers are aware of how to use office equipment. For example, using the recommended batteries for small appliances will ensure you burn through fewer ill suited battery types (helping to produce less wastes) and operate smoothly.

### **VIII. *Elective Action #8: Turn off equipment when not in use.***

Energy Vampires sound scary, and it is - for your energy bill! [“Energy Vampire”](#) refers to equipment that consumes energy when they are not in use, and even if they are turned off. To minimize this possibility, turn off all unused equipment, and if possible unplug them as well. The innocuous copy machine in the lobby doesn’t need to be plugged in all day, especially if it’s secretly wasting energy.

### **IX. *Elective Action #9: Provide regularly scheduled equipment maintenance.***

Don’t wait until your printer is spitting out inky pages, or the office fridge is hanging on for dear life. If there is equipment in your office that calls for repairs or tune ups, especially if it is heavily used, be sure to have regularly scheduled maintenance. Equipment operating at full capacity as intended will consume much less energy and save a lot of headache.

### **X. *Elective Action #10: Use smart plugs to turn devices on and off from your smartphone.***

[Smart plugs](#) are a solution that places energy savings at only a click away. They can be configured to turn off lights and equipment with voice commands or inputs from your smartphone. A smart plug links anything plugged into with a compatible home assistant, such as Alexa or Google Assistant, allowing commands to be read and initiated. So even if you’re already in the parking lot when you realize you left the lights on, it’s instantly fixable via the plug. Using plugs will make turning on and off devices an easy habit that saves you time.

They can also measure and record the power usage of any device and increase its operating lifespan through more efficient use and scheduling. Please read operating manuals to determine if equipment can be plugged into a smart plug, and speak to the Facility Manager to ensure safety in the building.

### **XI. *Elective Action #11: Use separate power strips or another tool to make it easy to switch off monitors without cutting off the CPU.***

Using an additional power strip for different devices allows you to turn off numerous devices at once, without impacting the power supply to unrelated devices. Even better, unplugging the single powerstrip from the outlet saves you the trouble of individually unplugging each unused device (and replugging in the morning). Keeping your CPU plugged in directly, while other devices are plugged into a strip means you can easily switch off monitors and other tools without affecting the CPU.

**XII. Elective Action #12: Close windows when HVAC is on.**

Closing windows helps to regulate temperature and ventilation, and is especially important to do when HVAC is on. Some people believe that opening up a window to let in fresh air will help cool the room, but this is [actually counterintuitive!](#) Opening windows lets in temperature variation and other changes that have to be countered by the set levels for HVAC, essentially making it work harder and expend more energy. It may also help to close your doors if possible, to place less stress on the heating and cooling units. By closing windows and doors, HVAC can run more effectively with less strain on equipment and less energy use overall.

**XIII. Elective Action #13: Pull down window shades in at least one room when the AC is on, and pull them up when the heat is on.**

On a hot stuffy day, the last thing you may think of is to close the curtains and trap in heat. But this is not the case, and in fact, the [use of curtains](#) for maintaining warmer or cooler temps is an easy and electricity free way to keep rooms comfortable in all seasons. Heat energy from the sun is very effective at warming up rooms through windows, which can be used to our advantage in cooler months, or kept away with curtains in the summer.

**XIV. Elective Action #14: Remove all space heaters.**

This action is in line with the previous few, in which we aim to put as little strain as possible on HVAC units. A space heater uses a large amount of energy for heating, and even more so when considering that the HVAC is continuously expending energy to counter its temperature change. An easy solution to stay warm without changing the thermostat is to keep a spare sweater in your office.

**XV. Elective Action #15: Use and encourage use of public transportation, walking, and bike riding.**

Commuting to work can be made much more active - and social - by encouraging the use of public transport, carpooling, or active transportation. Post a bus route map, and include a map in any information sent to visitors. Make sure employees know their i-Cards may be used as a bus pass. Using [public transport](#) is a great way to lower environmental stressors such as carbon emissions, noise, and traffic congestion.

The CUMDT is an excellent bus system across campus, and is in the process of [converting to electric energy](#). This allows for even greater environmental benefits, as electric cars are still an emerging technology and the average driver uses gasoline or diesel. So take advantage of the efficient public transit around you! Carpooling has

similar benefits of consolidating trips down to as few cars on the road as possible. Lastly, the most environmentally friendly option of all is to walk, bike, or use other forms of active transport whenever possible.

**XVI. *Elective Action #16: Use teleconferencing for one conference someone in your office would normally attend in person.***

A simple solution to a long conference drive is to host an online teleconference, such as over Skype or Zoom. Not only would these online meetings help reduce the carbon emissions of transportation, but it will also help increase accessibility and save time. Not having to travel allows people who otherwise are hindered by distance, finances, health, and other factors to attend a valuable conference and have the same experience as others. Lastly, it's a huge time saver, and will increase the efficiency of your office to begin holding smaller meetings online as well. Learn how to set up Skype, Zoom, and telephone conferencing, and suggest this option when appropriate.



This photo is a brief moment from the 2020 iSEE Sustainability Celebration, hosted on Zoom. Over 100 guests were able to attend and speak from their homes!

### III. Water Conservation Elective Actions

**XVII. *Elective Action #17: Report dripping and leaking faucets promptly.***

This action requires that any time staff notice any leaks or drips, that they submit a maintenance request. Contact your Facility Manager or submit a Facilities & Services work ticket to report a drip or leak. Do not assume someone else has already reported it! It is common to assume someone else will handle it, or that a small drip is nothing to worry about. However, a single dripping faucet at the average rate of 10 drips a minute results in water waste of [3,000 gallons a year](#).

**XVIII. *Elective Action #18: Update office landscaping and maintenance.***

A great option for reducing the water wastes of your office is to update the landscaping around your building. If your building has a maintenance office, place a request for the next landscaping renovation to upgrade to native plants, rain gardens, and smart irrigation systems. Learn what plants are [native to your region](#), and have a talk about water saving preferences with F&S and the property landscaper. The photo below is a native plant rain garden on campus, the [Red Oak Rain Garden](#), which borders the sidewalks by Allen Hall and McKinley Health Center. This planting helps to reduce water runoff and irrigation needs.



Photo credit: Red Oak Rain Garden iSEE

**XIX. *Elective Action #19: Take advantage of room renovations.***

If your office is looking at refitting rooms, push for water efficiency to be a priority in the new designs. For example, there are many modern water-saving technologies

available for bathrooms, from push button taps to waterless urinals. Incorporating environmental changes into preexisting renovation plans help take advantage of momentum and funding.

## IV. Waste Reduction Elective Actions

### **XX. *Elective Action #20: Consider all other options before purchasing anything new.***

Work with neighboring labs and offices to share supplies instead of buying new ones. Repurpose larger items, such as furniture and electronics. By reusing these larger items, your office reduces costs for new equipment and helps save the raw materials, energy, and transportation needs that go into the production and sale of anything new.

### **XXI. *Elective Action #21: Return old or unused equipment to Campus Surplus.***

Drop off unwanted University property (such as chairs, tables, and cabinets), and pick up free items at Campus Surplus (for University use only). The same concepts that apply to action 20 apply here, but in reverse. Your actions are helping another campus office or lab reduce their material consumption! Before throwing out any large equipment or furniture, check with Campus Surplus to see if it is needed.

### **XXII. *Elective Action #22: Whenever possible, choose options that reduce packaging needs.***

This action is a general requirement that when purchasing items for the office, from paper stacks to coffee mugs, that packaging is considered between different options. If you have the option to buy less heavily packaged items, such as those that are packaged in cardboard over styrofoam, choose the more environmentally friendly option.

### **XXIII. *Elective Action #23: Pledge to use the campus recycling system for any office generated recyclables.***

Ensure that every room is set up for recycling through the campus F&S service. This action should branch off directly from one of the prerequisites and be a logical next step for your office. There are [recycling options](#) available for all sizes of office, ranging from desk sized individual paper recycling bins to large totes for cans, bottles, and paper. We recommend posting these campus standard [lists of acceptable items](#) flyer above or on the respective bins. There are other signage

options such as the one below for reference. For more information on acceptable recyclables, resources, and contact information, please refer to [this flyer](#) from iSEE.



Photo credit: Central Virginia Waste Management Authority

**XXIV. Elective Action #24: Return Styrofoam shipping boxes.**

Styrofoam is commonly used in shipping and packing, and products purchased for the office may come with styrofoam packing. Unfortunately, while styrofoam is a type of plastic, it cannot be recycled in the same process as other types of plastic wastes. Whenever possible, return all styrofoam shipping boxes to the vendor to recycle and reuse.

**XXV. Elective Action #25: Bring waste Styrofoam to Urbana DART for recycling.**

For any styrofoam wastes that cannot be returned to the vendors, they can still be recycled at the Urbana DART facility. Styrofoam has a unique recycling process unlike any other plastic, which manufacturing company DART Container specializes in. The Urbana location for DART is at 1505 East Main Street, Urbana, IL 61802.

**XXVI. Elective Action #26: Take advantage of vendor recycling and take-back programs.**

Beyond just styrofoam, there are other programs to recycle products and packaging directly through the vendor. This prioritizes sending materials back to the facilities that produced them and could reuse them best, requiring minimal alterations or cleaning before they can be used again. Putting materials back into the production stream is the most effective way to reduce waste, so consider prioritizing these programs over in-office recycling. These programs are especially common for

electronics and appliances, such as laptops, printers, and more. Refer to [this website](#) for a helpful list of companies with take-back programs.

**XXVII. *Elective Action #27: Recycle all batteries and portable electronics.***

[Batteries](#) and electronics require specialized recycling, which is vital due to the chemical components in them. If handled improperly, the contents of batteries and electronics can be dangerous, and release heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, and nickel. Keeping these toxins out of the trash, and ultimately the landfill, is vital for clean soils and water. Metals are also very energy and space intensive to mine and process, which is very harmful for the environment. Recycling helps to provide metals and other compounds to reuse in future electronics and batteries. There are [several locations](#) on or near campus for battery drop off.

**XXVIII. *Elective Action #28: Recycle printer ink and toner cartridges.***

Printer ink and toner cartridges may not need to be changed that often, but it is still an important item to recycle. There are several ways to recycle:

1. Return toner cartridges to the copier/printer toner supplier, if there is a direct take back program
2. Send cartridges to ICC Business Products, Inc. in Indianapolis
3. Take ink-jet cartridges to Best Buy on North Prospect Avenue

**XXIX. *Elective Action #29: Recycle writing instruments.***

Writing instruments may be cheap and seemingly disposable, but there are ways to reuse and recycle them. The plastic casing for a pen typically does not wear out nearly as fast as the ink runs dry. As long as the casing and other mechanics are in place, there are options to simply refill the ink cartridge and reuse them, such as the Pilot brand pens. Take out the empty tube, pop in a new cartridge, and you have a new pen! Another option is to send pens, markers, and pencils to [Terracycle](#). Terracycle is a zero waste program that allows for the recycling of atypical materials that other facilities do not take.

**XXX. *Elective Action #30: Reduce single-use plastics whenever possible.***

Single use products are very useful, and it's easy to toss them and forget them. However, even something as small as plastic wrapping or cutlery adds up when everyone is using and disposing of them. According to the [United Nations Environment Programme](#), nearly 50% of the plastic waste generated globally in 2015 was plastic packaging. Reduce the office's use of single use plastics whenever

possible, such as by only offering metal cutlery in the office kitchen over disposable ones.

**XXXI. *Elective Action #31: Eliminate purchases of bottled drinking water.***

Bottled drinking water is a common contributor to single use plastic consumption. Encourage office workers to bring reusable water bottles to refill at water fountains, or have a common use water filter pitcher (such as a Brita) in the kitchen. Phase out bottled water use in the kitchen and at events.

**XXXII. *Elective Action #32: Use communal appliances (coffee pots, printers, and so on) instead of individual ones whenever possible.***

Sharing is caring! Using communal appliances is beneficial for many reasons. One, it reduces the number of potential energy vampires that we discussed above. Second, using one less appliance means not contributing towards needless consumption - and the raw materials, transportation, packaging, and other additional environmental costs associated with new products. Depending on the size of your office, try to share a single appliance for a group of offices, or have one for the whole floor.

**XXXIII. *Elective Action #33: Eliminate use of disposable cups.***

Use a mug or a reusable coffee cup. An additional perk is that many shops on and near campus offer discounts for providing your own container, such as at Starbucks in the Union or Espresso Royale. Have extras on-hand for meetings.

One fun event promoted by [Do it Green Minnesota](#) is an ugly mug contest. Encourage everyone to bring their ugliest or wackiest coffee mug to work, and offer a small prize for the winner. Afterwards, they can keep those mugs at work.

**XXXIV. *Elective Action #34: Use reusable dishes and tableware instead of disposable ones.***

Keep a set of reusable dishes, tableware, and tupperware in your office. Decide if everyone would like to share, such as by keeping several sets for common use in the kitchen, or if individuals commit to bringing a single set for personal use. It may be difficult to convince everyone to ditch the convenient disposable dishes. This switch will require more effort to wash dishes, and others may feel negatively about the cost of purchasing reusable dishes (reusable dishes cost more upfront, but are cheaper in the long term!).

Here are some tips to help your workplace switch from disposables to reusables:

1. Dedicate a spot in the office or lunchroom for employees to store their dishes, such as only taking up one cabinet in the kitchen.
2. If employees are paying to purchase food, either as a fundraiser or as part of your company's meal plan, offer a set discount to those providing their own dishes.
3. Send out an email reminder before every staff event that encourages people to bring their own plate and utensil.

**XXXV. *Elective Action #35: Work with a caterer to reduce waste in department functions.***

Ask caterers for options to use non-plastic and returnable utensils (i.e. washable silverware, bamboo utensils, wooden or ceramic chopsticks). If that is not an option, ask caterers to simply bring fewer disposables; events often end with excess plastic utensils and cups that are tossed. You can also consider what types of food items are ordered:

1. Finger foods such as cookies, mini sandwiches, and pizza are popular options that require no utensils.
2. Family style platters, such as sandwiches or cheese platters can reduce the number of individually packaged meals.
3. If condiments typically come with a meal, ask them to bring a bulk size (ketchup, mayo, sugar, salt, etc.) rather than individual packets.

**XXXVI. *Elective Action #36: Implement a food waste reduction program.***

Reducing food waste can come from many different angles. Identify the largest sources of food waste from your office. [Common hotspots](#) for wasted food include leftovers from catered events, uneaten lunches by staff, and forgotten food in the office kitchen refrigerators. Consider what currently happens with these sources - is catered food thrown out? Are there frequent fridge cleanouts? A simple strategy is to make food available for everyone.

1. Create a system and designated area for placing left over foods that are 'up for grabs'. Anything from a fully catered lunch to half a birthday cake can still be appreciated! Food left at the end of the day can be donated or composted.
2. Send out an email announcement to ALL office staff that remaining catered food is free to take home. This reminds people of this option and includes staff who were not at the event.
3. Remind staff before events if there will be food provided to cut down on uneaten packed lunches (and so people can bring their own tableware!).
4. Have a set schedule for when leftovers or spoiled foods are purged from the kitchen.

**XXXVII. Elective Action #37: Implement a composting/food waste diversion program.**

Once everyone has eaten and taken home as much food as they desire, there may still be food waste. There are also unavoidable wastes like fruit peels. A great option is to implement a compost or food waste diversion program to keep food out of landfills. [Composting](#) relies on decomposers under controlled optimum conditions to rapidly decompose food wastes and produce valuable humus. Humus can be added to soil to improve soil quality, nutrient and moisture content.

There are many methods and devices that can be used to compost, however the best options for an office are vermicomposters (worm bins) or the tumbler and bin system as they require less space and can remain covered.

1. [Vermicomposters](#) suit offices with 30 employees or less, and can take in several pounds of food per week.
2. Tumbler and bin systems suit larger offices, and require at least a 4' by 4' space with access to water. Visit [this website](#) to learn how to set up a system for your office.



Photo credit: iSEE

**XXXVIII. Elective Action #38: Set double-sided printing as default.**

Make sure all printers in the office are set to double sided printing as a default, and place signage near printers reminding workers to choose that setting whenever possible. This is an easy switch that saves paper and consolidates materials - and results in less paper clutter on your desk!

**XXXIX. *Elective Action #39: Reduce paper margins when printing whenever appropriate.***

This is another small change that only requires a one time tweak to printing default settings. Slimmer margins allow for more text per page, and can reduce overall paper use.

**XL. *Elective Action #40: Change subscriptions of industry publications to the online versions.***

If your office regularly gets mail regarding industry publications or other similar subscriptions, change them over to online subscriptions. This will keep clutter out of your mail, and reduce one source of paper waste in the office. If the information in a particular mailing works best as a hardcopy, print out the individual page as needed. Thus, only the most important documents that need to be printed will be, anything else can be viewed online.

**XLI. *Elective Action #41: Unsubscribe people from junk and unwanted mailings.***

Getting junk mail is both annoying and wasteful. Make sure that only valuable and up to date mailing services are used at your office. Here are several tips to eliminate junk mailings:

1. Call vendors to remove names from catalog mailing lists.
2. Ask vendors and suppliers for mailings and catalogs in electronic form.
3. Mark mail for former employees "Return to Sender/Not at This Address," and return to the mail stream.

**XLII. *Elective Action #42: Pledge to use IDEALS***

Pledge to upload your department's annual reports, working papers, and other digital content to the [Illinois Digital Environment for Access to Learning and Scholarship \(IDEALS\)](#) site to reduce your need to print as many copies of publications.

## V. Innovation Elective Actions

### **XLIII. *Elective Action #43: Form a Green Team to share the responsibilities of the Sustainability Ambassador.***

The Sustainability Ambassador is a valuable position for communicating office needs and environmental actions to other staff. A Green Team can help share the responsibilities and bring in new ideas. This will allow more people to directly be involved with these measures. Consider what aspects of the position can be better adapted to suit your office, or what new initiatives could supplement existing actions.

For example, many of the above actions involve sending email reminders; a person could be tasked with sending emails or drafting office wide announcements. Another member could be in charge of informing new staff or visitors of sustainability actions taken in the office.

### **XLIV. *Elective Action #44: Have all members of the office sign the “Use the Bin” pledge.***

The [“Use the Bin” Pledge](#) aims to hold members to a higher standard for recycling. By signing the pledge, individuals can confirm their commitment to always recycling whenever possible.

### **XLV. *Elective Action #45: Provide training or orientation to new staff/visitors of the office on Green Office requirements.***

Make it known from day one that your office strives to be sustainable. Help inform new staff and visitors of what the Green Office Program entails and what actions the office has committed to. Host training or orientation times, and make sure they are set up for success! This task can be designated to a Green Team member if needed.

### **XLVI. *Elective Action #46: Host a Green Office Event.***

A [Green Office Event](#) is another subdivision of the Green Campus Program, and is open for offices, labs, RSOs and other campus entities to take part. The key component of a green event is to submit a Green Event plan, with corresponding event related actions. These actions include carpooling for out-of-town attendees, offering vegetarian/vegan dishes, and having recycling at the event. Office events such as conferences, award ceremonies, and holiday parties can all be certified green!

**XLVII. *Elective Action #47: Recruit another lab or office to join the program.***

Do you know another office or lab that would be interested in becoming more sustainable? Let them know of this opportunity and what successes your office has seen! Creating a network of certified offices and labs makes this certification program more effective, and increases support for sharing ideas or consolidating efforts. For example, if offices near you are interested in reducing food waste, several offices could share one composting system.

**XLVIII. *Elective Action #48: Come up with your own strategy to make your office more sustainable - and tell us about it!***

If there are any ideas that come to mind right away, or if a specific need arises during the course of certification, let us know! We are always looking to add new and unique ways to connect offices with sustainable efforts.

## VI. Green Office at Home Edition

In recognition of COVID 19 and the increase in people working remotely, we are introducing a brand new addition to the certification checklist! These are optional additional actions that your staff could partake in at home, to incorporate sustainability efforts into their lifestyle beyond the office.

### **XLIX. *Elective Action #49: Make meatless meals at home and eat vegetarian/vegan a minimum of one day a week.***

Encourage commitments from workers to try out meatless meals at home. One point is awarded if 50% or more employees commit to one full meatless day a week. As discussed in Required Action #4, meat production consumes large quantities of energy and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions through the raising and transportation of livestock. To meet this criteria, there are many options for staff to take.

There are meat substitute products such as the Impossible Burger, which is sold in most grocery stores and even sold in fast food restaurants. So a vegan meal can be made even without forgoing burger night! For those who want to be more adventurous, there are great resources online for making fully [vegetarian](#) and [vegan](#) dishes without meat substitute products.

Prefer to eat out after a long day? There are plenty of vegan and vegetarian restaurants on and around campus, such as 100% vegan and locally sourced restaurant [The Red Herring](#), or [The Dancing Dog Eatery & Juicery](#) in downtown Champaign.

### **L. *Elective Action #50: Attend a Sustainability Webinar each month.***

Sustainability webinars are a great way to have a discussion on environmental issues and conservation actions - right from home! One point is awarded if 50% or more employees commit to this action. These are learning opportunities on a variety of topics to choose from. Some great resources are:

1. [Everyday Environment Webinar Series by Illinois Extension](#)
2. [International Society of Sustainability Professionals Webinars](#)
3. [IFC Sustainability Webinar Series](#)

In addition, be sure to visit the iSEE [Illinois Sustainability Calendar](#) for more information and links to virtual events all year!

**LI. Elective Action #51: Subscribe to the iSEE Weekly E-Newsletter.**

iSEE distributes a [weekly newsletter](#) with content on campus activities, upcoming events, program highlights, and other related sustainability information. One point is awarded if 100% of employees sign up for our weekly e-newsletter. In addition, your office's efforts through this program could be featured in the newsletter as well!

**LII. Elective Action #52: Send out monthly sustainability updates to staff.**

Report the successes of your chosen actions to your staff through a monthly sustainability update. For example, is your office using 10% less paper than last year? Are energy costs down? Let people know that their efforts have an impact! These updates can also include content that appeals to your staff, such as individual highlights for excellent sustainability initiatives, fun facts about sustainability actions, or alerts for upcoming virtual events/webinars.

**LIII. Elective Action #53: Set monthly reminders to unplug unused appliances.**

Your home naturally has lots of appliances, from everyday items such as microwaves and TVs, to potentially forgotten ones like the dusty lamp in a guest bedroom. These unused appliances still use energy just from being plugged in. Save energy and lower electricity bills by setting a reminder either daily or weekly to unplug electronics when not in use. We recommend a daily alert on your cell phone for unplugging electronics around the time you typically go to sleep. One point is awarded if 50% of employees commit to setting a weekly (or daily) reminder to unplug not-in-use electronics (coffee pot, chargers, TVs, fans, etc.).

**LIV. Elective Action #54: Dedicate one hour of no electricity each month.**

What's better than using less electricity? Not using it at all. Take one hour per month to shut off all unnecessary electricity. While it might seem hard to turn off all the lights, unplug appliances, and put away your phone or computer for a full hour, this could be a great time to recharge yourself. Go for a walk, garden, practice an art, or simply take a nap! One point is awarded if 50% of employees commit to no electricity use for 1hr/month (and tell us about it!) Let us know what creative ways that time was passed, and how it felt to be electricity free.

## VII. Conclusion

First and foremost, we at the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment would like to thank you in advance for taking part in the Certified Green Office Program. Every little bit of effort counts when it comes to making our campus greener, and we are looking forward to awarding your certifications!

While we have a master plan for making campus more sustainable (see information about the Illinois Climate Action Plan [here](#)), this plan cannot account for the impact of entities outside the university's direct jurisdiction. By having chosen to participate in the CGOP, you are complementing and even further advancing the iCAP's goals and mission by:

- Conserving energy meets the '[Reduce Emissions from Energy Consumption](#)' goal through Required Action #3 and Elective Actions #1- 14.
- Promoting more sustainable transportation meets the '[Reduce Transportation Emissions](#)' goal with Elective Actions #15 and #16.
- Preserving water directly with Elective Action #17-19 and indirectly through many other actions (reducing meat consumption & energy usage, etcetera) to meet the '[Responsible Stewardship of Campus Land and Water](#)' goal.
- Increasing responsible purchasing of ethical and sustainable products, and minimizing waste generation/promoting recycling to meet the '[Zero Waste](#)' goal with Elective Actions #20 - 42.
- Reducing the impacts of agriculture, land use, and food with Elective Actions #35-37.

The iCAP allows the campus to work towards each of these general goals on a large scale, but there's absolutely more work to be done, which is why it is so important to engage as many groups as possible. With each office that joins the program, the larger our campus culture of sustainability grows.

As a reminder, remember that CGOP certification is not permanent! Each certification is a year-long designation, so getting certified this year does not mean you will continue to be certified in coming years. This is because sustainability is a continuous process, and we always have more work to do. As such, we would like to ask that you make sure your office continues to re-enroll in the coming years for the next certification cycles!

We would also love to have a photo gallery of our Certified Green Offices! Please send us photos of your office, Green Team, and/or sustainability improvements around the workplace. We can't wait to see the changes you have made and to recognize all of your agents of change!

Lastly, don't forget that the CGOP is just the beginning - there's endless ways to keep making your own life more sustainable, and we encourage you to continue living by

the principles and actions of the program. Please consider doing everything you can to extend the mission of the Certified Green Office into your long term habits, and promote them to your friends and family! **Updated 09/11/2021**