

Environmentally Preferred Sourcing Program

EPS Toolkit: Long-term planning

How far do you want to go in your environmental work? One project a year could be sufficient, or your goal could be to create systemic change in your organization and to ensure that, once made, changes stick.

If your goal is systemic change, in-depth planning can serve as a blueprint for your work, helping you set short-term goals and monitor your overall progress. The backbone of environmental system change in health care facilities usually includes an environmental commitment statement, a plan, environmentally preferable purchasing policies, mercury elimination, a healthy food pledge, recycling programs, and water and energy conservation campaigns. It can be supported by the creation of policies to support your work, which will support your goals.

What you can do

Create an environmental commitment statement

Creating an environmental commitment statement is a powerful way to send a message about your long-term goals. You will want to incorporate language that fits your facility mission and its operations, goals and objectives.

Here is a sample:

XXX will conduct our operations and deliver health care services in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner, with the understanding that our future is dependent upon the environment and the sustainability of the natural resources we all share. We will practice continuous innovation to reduce the environmental costs of delivering health care services now and in the future. We will focus our efforts on the areas that afford us the best opportunities to make the greatest impact including:

Environmental performance

- Compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations

- Application of environmental performance indicators to all organizational units and to individual employees at all levels
- Measurement of environmental performance through continuous auditing for progress and reporting on internal and external standards
- Integration of environmental considerations into daily operations and business decision-making processes

Energy and climate protection

- Efficient use of natural resources to minimize waste generation, including greenhouse gas emissions, through efforts that include conservation, recycling, use of innovative technologies and pollution prevention
- Commitment to improving performance toward meeting set energy and climate protection goals
- Reduce operational costs through energy efficiency and conservation

Stakeholder engagement

- Promotion of effective environmental management by our suppliers
- Promotion of environmental policies and technologies
- Promotion of environmental education, practices and policies to employees, patients, visitors and the public

Develop a long-term plan

Effective planning focuses your efforts on the activities needed to accomplish a task, complete a project or achieve a goal. Organizations often waste time, resources and opportunities by not planning properly. When planning for the long term, consider the following questions:

- What do you consider to be long term? In today's ever-changing environment, two to five years is considered long.

- What are your main goals?
- What are the standards for measuring your success?

Ensure the plan fits your facility, is unique to your culture and situation, and provides a realistic view of your environmental expectations and capabilities. When writing the plan, remember to:

- Focus the plan on goals
- Set realistic deadlines for the first draft of the plan to force you to move forward on the planning process — but don't expect too much to be done in too short a time
- Make good assumptions about the industry and market environment — for instance, with rising energy prices, one can expect that energy conservation and alternative energy acquisition will become more important to facility administrators
- Establish measurable outcomes
- Realize that, based on your early successes, your second long-term plan may look very different than the first

Steps to prepare a plan

1. Clearly define the goal, ensuring that it is realistic, specific and easily measurable
2. Identify all the main issues that need to be addressed, focusing on matters of strategic importance
3. Decide on budgetary requirements, limits and allowances
4. Determine what is required to carry out the plan and how it will be done
5. Determine the length of the plan and its structure
6. Identify shortcomings and gaps in the concept
7. Identify strategies for implementation
8. Review the plan periodically

Implement the plan

Once you go through the process and create a plan, the hard part begins: implementing the plan. Without proper implementation, planning is meaningless. Consider the following strategies:

1. Reward implementation: For those charged with leading or directing implementation, build an incentive into the proper completion of the implementation phase.
2. Include evaluation procedures in the plan and evaluate as you implement. Also build evaluation procedures into various stages of the implementation process and use them to measure performance.
3. The plan is a living document. Revise and update it regularly as needed. As a plan is under implementation,

it is common to uncover deficiencies and, over a planning period, circumstances change.

4. The plan will not solve all of your problems. Proper planning is necessary for success but is only one of the ingredients for success.

Create environmentally preferred purchasing policies

Environmentally preferred purchasing involves purchasing products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products or services that serve the same purpose.

Attributes can include a long list of factors that evaluate the purchaser's need, the cost and functionality of the product and its environmental effect. Some attributes to consider are:

- Made from recycled content
- Durability
- Maintenance
- Recyclability and disposal
- Energy and water efficiency
- Raw materials acquisition, manufacturing and packaging
- Distribution and transportation
- Methods operation

The Vizient Environmentally Preferred Sourcing Program considers the same factors all purchasers are familiar with — price, performance and availability — while taking into account a few new attributes, giving purchasers an opportunity to make environmentally responsible decisions that will have a positive effect. Your policy should reflect your facility's unique needs but could incorporate standard environmental language such as:

- It is our intent to purchase goods, equipment and services that have the least environmental impact within the constraints of statutory purchasing requirements, departmental needs, availability, and sound economic considerations. We encourage suggested changes and environmental enhancements for possible inclusion in future revisions of this specification.

Another way to manage environmentally preferred purchasing is to establish your purchasing department as responsible for the purchasing of all equipment, supplies and services, and perhaps the exception of construction and project-related expenditures as being the responsibility of facilities department. Policy language could include:

- Only authorized purchasing personnel are permitted to issue an official serially numbered purchase order to purchase equipment, supplies and services. Purchase orders shall be safeguarded at all times to prevent misuse. A purchase order number will be issued to a department only

in an emergency or for technically sensitive goods. A proper requisition must be submitted to purchasing the same day. This method of purchasing is not available for capital equipment.

Creating policies

Creating and implementing policies is one way to move environmental work forward in your facility, providing consistency, authority and reasoning to the work that you do. Here is a step-by-step approach to developing a policy:

1. Clarify your basic objectives

Before preparing a policy, define what the main objectives of the policy should be. Your facility may already have other policies in place that cover some of the aspects of the proposed environmental policy. By identifying any such policies and analyzing their content, you will be able to ensure that your proposed policy does not conflict with your facility's other objectives. Once you have identified synergies and resolved potential conflicts with other policies, you can define your main objectives more accurately.

2. Define the scope of the policy

It is important to consider the scope of the policy, such as which product and service groups and departments to cover.

- Consider whether to apply the policy to the whole facility or in select departments. Starting with just one or two departments may be more appropriate if your facility is large or is new to environmentally responsible health care and wishes to pilot the activities first.
- Consider how many issues you wish to cover. It may be more effective for you to initially select just one or two. Remember that pilot activities are very helpful in demonstrating the practicality and benefits of environmentally responsible health care and to support the case for wider implementation.

3. Identify relevant stakeholders

Include three types of relevant stakeholders:

- Those who need to be involved or consulted on the drafting of the policy
- Those who the policy will directly or indirectly affect

- Certain user groups who will have a significant impact on improving efficiency, such as operating room staff or information technology equipment users. Consider how to communicate the policy to these groups and let them know how they will be affected and how they can assist.

4. Prepare the high-level policy statement

Your high-level policy statement should provide the commitment framework, outline the key goals and targets you aim to meet as well as to compare and assess progress.

5. Contextualizing the policy

The policy statement should provide the context for its adoption, including reference to environmental implications and overall environmental aims of the policy. The policy statement will need to take account of and appropriately reference any relevant national level policies and strategies that your organization must adhere to.

An effective policy statement should also include specific targets. For example:

- X% of spending on cleaning materials will be spent on green products by 20__, or
- Standard environmental criteria for inclusion in all tenders will be implemented for XXX product/service groups by <date>.

6. Prepare the operational implementation plan for the policy

The high-level policy statement requires the support of a more in-depth plan of how the goals of the policy will be met in practice (either contained within it, or drawn up after the policy is set). Such a plan should cover:

- Implementation activities, such as the development of environmental purchasing criteria, their inclusion in tendering documents and processes
- Training activities for affected staff and high-level decision-makers
- Communication activities, both internal and external (with suppliers and the general public)

The Vizient Environmentally Preferred Sourcing (EPS) Program offers members supply and service cost savings through more than 36,000 supplier agreements. EPS suppliers have verified EPS attributes and provide products that can support members' sustainability objectives. This toolkit is a resource to help members create or enhance their sustainability programs.

As the nation's largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides network-powered insights in the critical areas of clinical, operational, and supply chain performance and empowers members to deliver exceptional, cost-effective care.



To learn more, contact us at eps@vizientinc.com.