

GREEN PLUS – BEYOND CERTIFICATION

By

Catherine Noyes

Dr. Paul Baker, Adviser

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Abstract

The mission of the Institute for Sustainable Development's Green Plus program is to democratize triple bottom line sustainability by making sustainability education and practices more accessible to small enterprises across the United States. This impact assessment examines the success of Green Plus in fulfilling its mission by analyzing qualitative interviews from ten participating organizations in different industries and areas of the country, survey results from more than 30 current Green Plus participants, and the results of a survey of a control group of comparable small enterprises not involved in the program. The impact assessment indicates that participants have made significant improvements to their sustainable practices and policies over their tenure in the program, and that participants are generally satisfied with their involvement.

Introduction

In the last decade, Wal-Mart, McDonalds, Toyota, Coca Cola, and many other corporations have successfully demonstrated the business case for sustainability, and by devoting significant resources to the issue, have managed to increase sales, improve efficiency, and decrease their overall environmental impact. Though these large corporations have seen favorable outcomes as a result of their efforts, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) still face a number of barriers as they work toward sustainability, ranging from a lack of access to information to a lack of organizational resources like time and personnel. These barriers prevent SMEs from actively participating in the business sustainability dialogue, and are particularly important to overcome, as the US Census Bureau reports that more than six million businesses in the US are considered SMEs, and that those businesses employ more than 60 million individuals (2009).

To overcome these challenges, in 2007, the Institute for Sustainable Development was formed in the North Carolina Research Triangle by a group of academic, business, and philanthropic leaders. This group recognized the gains made by large organizations, but realized that the majority of businesses in America employ fewer than 50 people, and did not possess the necessary resources to pursue sustainability for their organizations. In consultation with the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School, the Institute gained 501c(3) non-profit status, developed a business plan, and created the Green Plus program (The Institute for Sustainable Development, 2011).

Launched in 2009, Green Plus is an education and certification program designed to provide networking opportunities, training, informational resources, and recognition to

participant businesses and non-profits around the country as they work toward triple bottom line sustainability. Triple bottom line sustainability focuses on the economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainability, rather than simply considering only the financial bottom line. As of February 2011, more than 200 organizations have participated in the program, with 38 having achieved Green Plus Certification (The Institute for Sustainable Development, 2011). As the map of Green Plus participants below indicates, organizations are fairly geographically diverse, with a significant concentration in North Carolina, and most are located east of the Mississippi River (Figure 1).

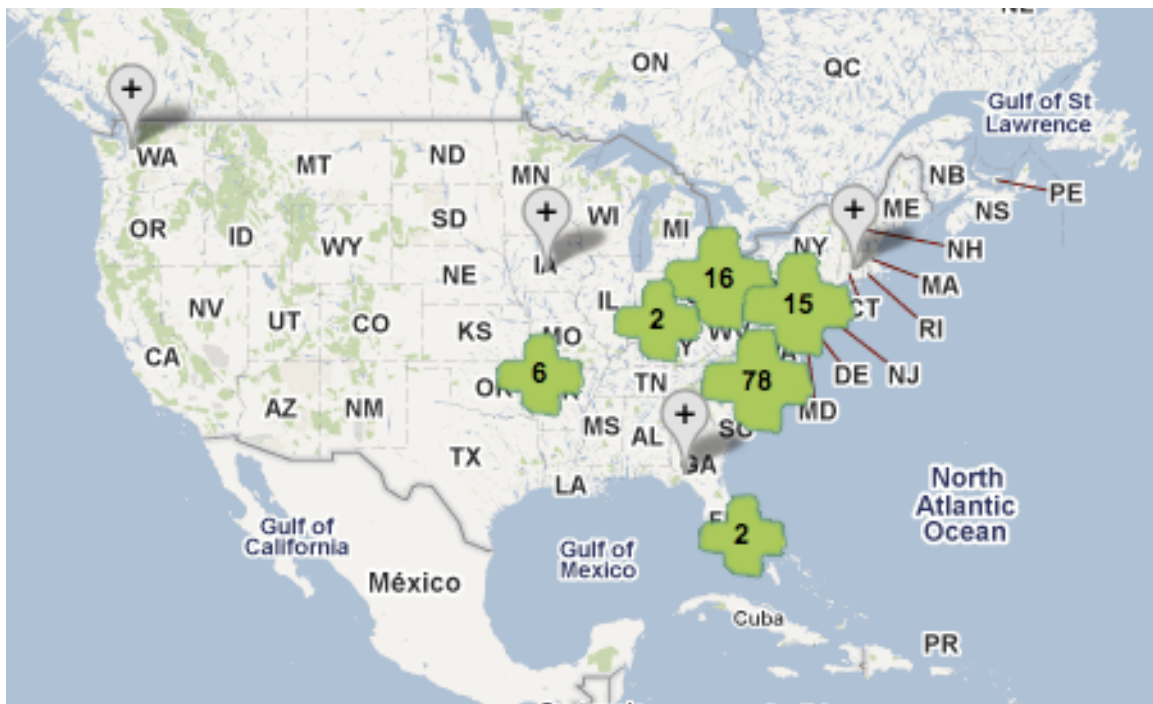


Figure 1. A map of Green Plus business locations (The Institute for Sustainable Development, 2011)

As the Green Plus program has now been in operation for more than two years, the goal of this study is to conduct a formative program evaluation, by evaluating diagnostics provided by Green Plus participants, surveying a subset of businesses and non-profits, and conducting a number of in-depth qualitative interviews. Additionally,

this evaluation includes a pilot study of businesses not involved in the Green Plus program, which was conducted to establish an external baseline and to measure outcomes for the program. The results of this study are intended for use by the Institute for Sustainable Development, as the Institute improves and expands on the Green Plus program.

This study begins with background regarding the Green Plus program, as well as a literature review on conducting program evaluations and impact measurement. The next section reviews the methodology used to gather and analyze data regarding the past and current sustainability practices that businesses have in place, as well as their reactions to the Green Plus program. The results section details the changes that businesses have made as a result of their participation, as well as their satisfaction level with Green Plus. Finally, the recommendations section concludes with suggestions for further engaging different groups, increasing program satisfaction, and revising available resources.

Background and Literature Review

The Green Plus Program

As a program designed to improve management practices, Green Plus offers a number of tools to help smaller enterprises incorporate triple bottom line sustainability into their organizations. These tools include educational resources, like the Green Plus How To Guide and informational webinars, Green Plus Certification, business networking, and recognition opportunities.

Thus far, the Green Plus program has spread primarily through a number of partnerships. In 2009, the Institute for Sustainable Development partnered with the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), to make Green Plus available to the ACCE's 1,300 Chambers of Commerce and 1.2 million business members. The Institute has also partnered with the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants, making the program accessible to accountants and their clients around the country. Finally, the Institute has worked with more than 15 regional chambers of commerce in 11 states, leading to Green Plus adoption by more than 200 smaller enterprises.

When a smaller enterprise enters the Green Plus program, it completes an 86-question diagnostic, designed to evaluate current triple bottom line practices. The diagnostic questions specifically focus on organizational management practices, financial stability, energy, water, waste, purchasing, community engagement, employees, and awareness building strategies. Once an organization finishes and submits its diagnostic, it receives a diagnostic report, which includes an assessment of the organization's triple bottom line sustainability, a quantitative summary of performance, qualitative feedback

regarding strengths and weaknesses, links to topic-specific resources, and next steps for the organization.

To achieve Green Plus certification, businesses must score at least 70% in each of three categories (People, Planet, and Performance), with a minimum of 80% overall. Achieving a score in excess of 40% makes an organization a Green Plus Mover, and entitles the organization to include their contact information in the Green Plus Directory. They may then submit the diagnostic and receive the follow-up report as many times as is necessary to achieve certification, with most organizations submitting two or three times. To help businesses move toward certification, Green Plus offers a How To Guide with specific recommendations for different sustainability measures, informational webinars, and access to best practices forums and sustainability news.

In addition to taking advantage of educational tools, Green Plus offers several networking opportunities. The first is the aforementioned Green Plus Directory, which includes information for participants from around the country. Organizations can also create a profile page to display more information about their particular services. Green Plus also offers a mentorship system, business referrals, and a variety of networking events, including green drinks and film screenings.

With regard to recognition, Green Plus Certified organizations receive public recognition through national press releases, a Certified logo on their Green Plus Directory Page, a Certified Green Plus window decal for their place of business, and the opportunity to become a Green Plus Champion in their community by sharing stories, supporting other businesses in their efforts to become more sustainable, and gaining exposure through presentations and other events. Additionally, the Institute for

Sustainable Development hosts the North American Sustainable Enterprise Awards each year, and Green Plus Movers and Certified organizations are eligible for award receipt.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation of the Green Plus program is important for a number of reasons. Traditionally, businesses evaluate their successes and failures by looking at the impact on their finances. Successful ventures make money, generate returns, and allow the company to expand. Unsuccessful ventures are those where the money and resources invested in a project are not recouped. Recently, however, investors, funders and entrepreneurs have increasingly looked at the level of social and environmental return, in addition to the strictly monetary metrics. There is also a growing need for increased transparency and accountability for money invested in organizations seeking social returns (Clark et al., 2004).

Impact can be defined as the portion of the total outcome that happened as a result of the activity, above and beyond what would have happened anyway (Clark et al., 2004). There are several reasons for non-profit organizations to measure impact on more than the single (financial) bottom line. Using performance-based metrics allows organizations to focus on the results that they want to achieve and to look for effective ways to create and sustain social value (Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship). According to Jim Collins, in Good to Great and the Social Sectors, performance must be measured by the delivery of mission-related outcomes, rather than financial outcomes (2005). He goes on to state that the critical question for social ventures is “How effectively do we deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our

resources?” Formative evaluations also allow organizations to engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, and to heighten the accountability of the organization to the constituencies served (Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship).

Methodology

This study aims to evaluate the impact and the effectiveness of the Institute for Sustainable Development's Green Plus program. To accomplish this assessment, four sets of data (described in more detail below) were collected and analyzed: the first and the most recent Green Plus diagnostics that participant businesses have completed, a survey released to all participant businesses that had completed at least one diagnostic, a similar survey released to non-Green Plus businesses, and qualitative interviews with 11 participant businesses. The Green Plus diagnostics were submitted between early 2009 and early 2011, and the rest of the data was collected between January and March of 2011.

The Green Plus Diagnostic

The Green Plus program measures progress toward certification through an 86-question diagnostic, which includes questions designed to evaluate the financial, environmental, and social policies and practices of the participating organization. For each question in the diagnostic exam, businesses can answer “yes,” “no,” “commit,” “not applicable,” and “not sure,” depending on their current practices. Businesses also have the option of providing additional information about their practices for each question. The diagnostic can be submitted as many times and as often as the participating organization would like, and upon each submission, organizations receive a diagnostic report, which contains a breakdown of strengths and weaknesses in each section, feedback on answers, and suggestions for next steps.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first action a majority of businesses take after signing up for the Green Plus program is to complete the diagnostic, so the first

diagnostic submission can be used as a baseline for a company's practices prior to the Green Plus intervention, and the most recently submitted diagnostic can be used to evaluate the changes businesses have made as a result of the Green Plus intervention. After collecting the data, comparisons were made using Microsoft Excel. Because the diagnostic results present the most readily available data, the set of businesses that have completed the diagnostic multiple times was used as the population for an additional and more in-depth survey (hereafter referred to as the impact assessment survey).

Impact Assessment Survey Design and Implementation

The impact assessment survey was designed to ascertain information regarding the specific sustainability practices in place before and after joining the Green Plus program, the general satisfaction level regarding the Green Plus program, and the overall impact that participants felt that Green Plus has had on their organization (See Appendix A). Prior to survey implementation, the question set was pre-tested with several current and former members of the Green Plus staff, to ensure that the question set covered the necessary elements and to receive general feedback. The final revised survey instrument included 41 questions designed to collect ordinal, nominal, and interval data.

Survey implementation occurred over a three-week period in January and February of 2011. Of the 42 businesses that had taken the diagnostic multiple times, 31 (74%) chose to participate in the impact assessment survey. Data was gathered using Qualtrics, an Internet-based survey software. The survey took respondents between seven and twelve minutes to complete. Data was analyzed using the STATA software package and Microsoft Excel.

Though efforts to minimize error in this study were taken, there were several factors that were outside investigator control. For example, some businesses joined Green Plus almost two years ago, and asking them to remember the practices they used to have in place may not have yielded entirely accurate recollections. Additionally, as people tend to come and go, the current contact for Green Plus may not be the same as the person who initially signed up for the program, and thus may not have full knowledge of the intervention.

Green Plus Baseline Survey Design and Implementation

A common way to evaluate the impact of an organization or intervention is to measure the outcomes, or the changes to a social system minus what would have happened anyway (Clark et al., 2004). To accomplish this, a survey was designed for organizations that have not participated in the Green Plus program (hereafter referred to as non-Green Plus businesses). This survey asked a combination of questions taken from the Green Plus diagnostic and the impact assessment survey, so that Green Plus businesses could not only be compared to themselves prior to entering the program, but also to organizations outside the Green Plus network (See Appendix B).

To determine the baseline businesses, ten Green Plus businesses were selected from the 31 that had participated in the impact assessment survey. These businesses were chosen as roughly proportional representations of the number of businesses that Green Plus works with in different areas of the country (three were selected from Ohio, four from the Triangle area of North Carolina, and three from Pennsylvania). Each business also represented a different industry, and both for-profit and non-profit organizations were included. For each of these ten Green Plus participants, matches were found by

looking for similar companies operating in the same industry and general geographic vicinity using Internet-based search engines.

The main focus of the non-Green Plus business survey was to learn what specific sustainable policies and practices were present in businesses similar to the organizations in the Green Plus program, and how the non-Green Plus businesses had changed over the past two years. The Green Plus and non-Green Plus businesses were not compared with each other directly, but rather the responses from each group were aggregated and then compared as two groups, in order to increase the statistical accuracy of the comparison and to protect the privacy of individual respondents.

The survey included 28 questions, designed to gather ordinal, nominal, and interval data, and took between seven and nine minutes to complete. Implementation occurred over a four-week period in February and March of 2011. Data was gathered using Qualtrics, an Internet-based survey software. Data was then analyzed using the statistical software package STATA and Microsoft Excel.

There are several potential sources of error present in this data set. The first is the small sample size, which may not provide an accurate account of the status quo. The selected competitors may not be representative of industry practices, which would skew my study results. Additionally, while every effort was made to select companies similar to those represented in Green Plus, there were limitations in both the business information and the contact information available online. Finally, five non-Green Plus organizations were initially selected to survey as matches for each Green Plus business. After sending the initial survey and two reminders, only four industries had representatives, so five to seven more organizations were selected to try to obtain

responses from. The second set of competitors was typically from a larger geographic range, and may not have provided the most ideal comparisons.

Qualitative Methodology

As this is a mixed methods study, the embedded experimental model is appropriate for combining this data, as it allows for gathering qualitative data to help explain the quantitative data that evaluate the Green Plus intervention (Creswell, 2007). The quantitative data are also more expansive than the qualitative data, as the surveys have between eight and 32 responses, while interviews were only conducted with 11 participants. As suggested by Creswell, the embedded design is also fitting because simply gathering qualitative data would not have been the most effective or efficient way to answer all parts of the research question, but the data do play a vital role in gathering feedback about different strengths and weaknesses of the Green Plus program.

Thirteen of the businesses that participated in the impact assessment survey were selected for follow-up interviews, of which 11 businesses chose to participate. The 13 businesses selected were both certified and non-certified businesses that had participated in the Green Plus program for varying lengths of time. They represented a variety of industries and ranged in size from three to hundreds of employees.

The interviews were conducted by two teams of Green Plus fellows, and took place over February and March of 2011. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted for between 25 and 45 minutes each. Each team of fellows asked an identical set of questions (See Appendix C), which sought to gauge what participants felt they had gotten out of the Green Plus program, the extent to which the program had changed their

practices and operations, and their feedback on the different tools provided by Green Plus to assist organizations on their path to sustainability.

To organize and analyze the qualitative data, the NVivo 9 software package was used, as it is designed to aid qualitative researchers in their analysis of large and small volumes of text-based or multimedia data.

Because different teams conducted the interviews, and the teams were given directions to ask the questions in a way that felt natural and comfortable for them, a possible source of error is that different interview participants had different phrasing and prompting, which may have led to different interpretations of the questions. Additionally, several of the businesses that participated in the interviews had signed up for Green Plus very early on, and as a result, did not have access to some of the completed resources asked about in the interviews, which led to incomplete responses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Since Green Plus began, 123 organizations have submitted diagnostics with an average initial score of 58%. The average score increase between the first and second diagnostic is 19%. At the beginning of this study, 41 businesses had completed the diagnostic at least once, with 11 having submitted the diagnostic three times, and one organization having submitted four times.

The three-week sampling frame for the impact assessment survey yielded 31 responses, for a 74% response rate. Almost 75% of businesses were more than ten years old, while only six percent had been in operation for fewer than two years. Eight organizations are woman-owned, and one is a minority-owned company. Every business belonged to at least one professional or industry-related network, with the average business participating in at least three associations. Twenty-eight businesses (90%) reported being a member of at least one chamber of commerce. Additionally, more than 40% of respondents reported having participated in another business certification program, including LEED, ISO, B Corp, and OSHA.

Eleven organizations chose to participate in in-depth interviews with Green Plus fellows. Because the names of the organizations have been kept confidential, each enterprise will be referred to by its industry sector (Hospitality, etc.).

Businesses and the Triple Bottom Line

Planet

For the planet section, the average initial score for businesses is approximately 53%, which rises to an average of 83% for the most recently taken diagnostic. To

examine these numbers more fully, the impact assessment survey asked businesses to indicate the specific environmental practices they had in place prior to Green Plus and also their current environmental practices. Respondents were also asked to comment on how they felt that a particular resource use had changed since joining the Green Plus program (Figure 2).

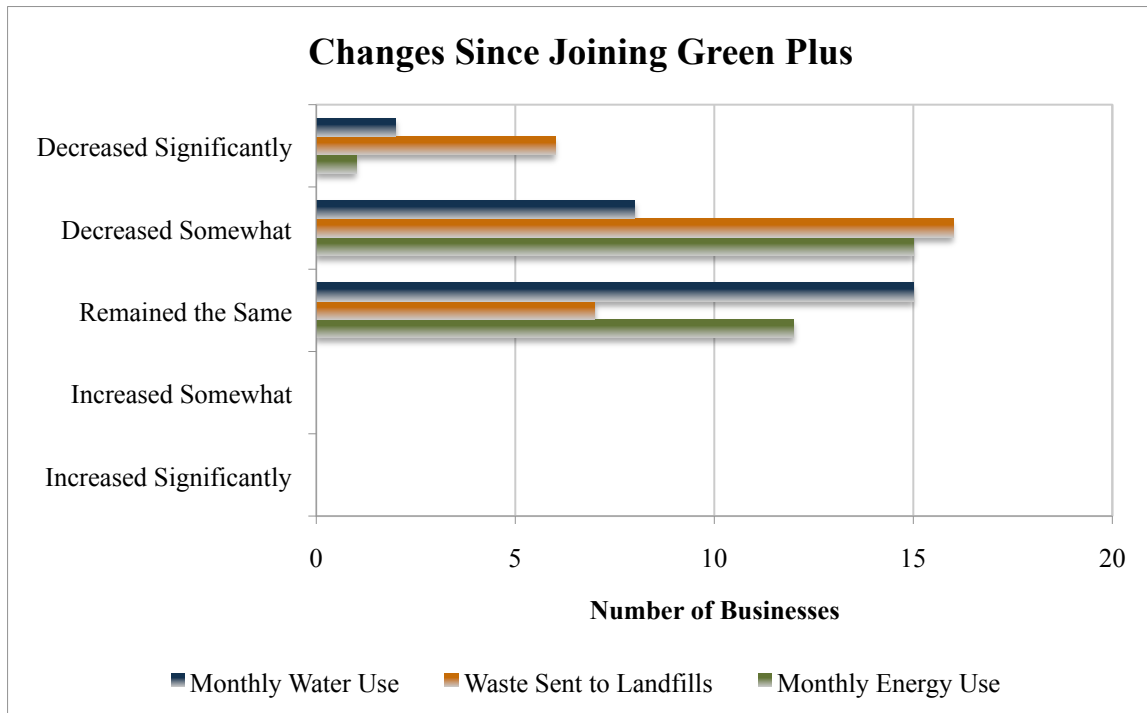


Figure 2: The number of businesses reporting that a particular resource use had changed since joining Green Plus

The average number of energy saving practices that businesses had in place prior to joining Green Plus was 2.83, which has increased to a current level of 3.56 practices. Between the first diagnostic and the most recent diagnostic, conducting energy audits and purchasing carbon offsets were the most frequently cited additions, with five and four businesses respectively utilizing each option (Figure 3). In an interview, one educational non-profit commented, “We’ve developed a program for teenagers, who have helped us through this process of becoming certified. They did an audit, where they looked through

our facility and told us where we were positive and where we were negative and then gave us tools to help us improve. We've then taken some of their recommendations. It's bringing awareness to our community through our teens.”

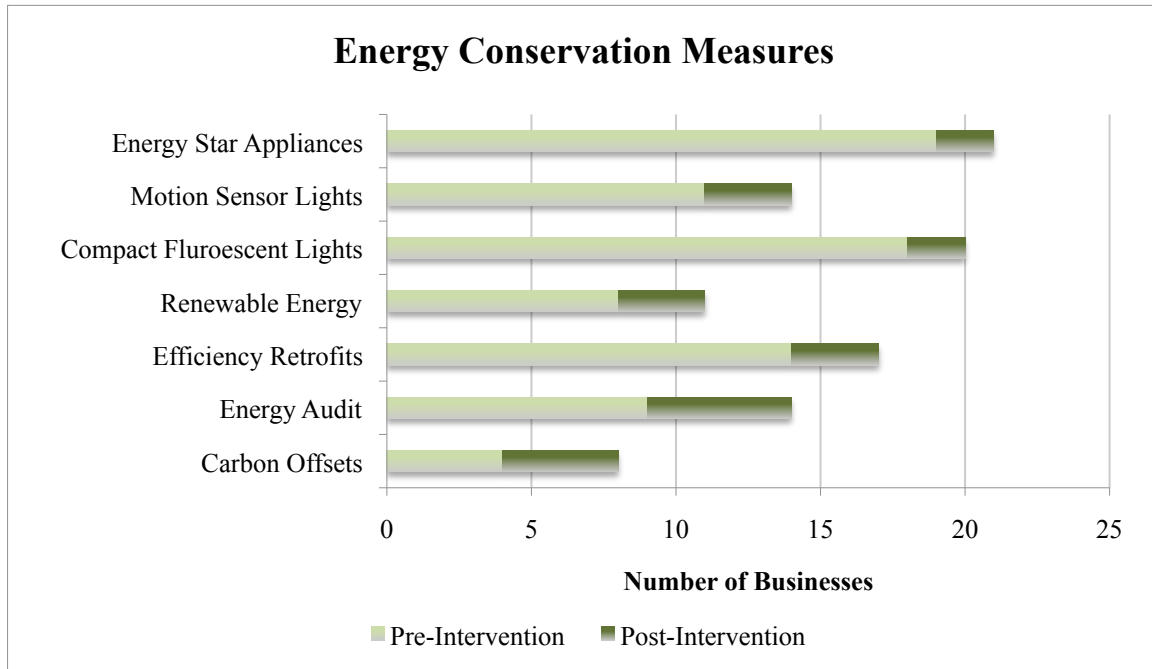


Figure 3: The number of organizations with a given energy conservation measure in place prior to the Green Plus intervention and the number of businesses that have added energy conservation measures since participating in the Green Plus program.

The average number of waste conservation practices that businesses had in place prior to joining Green Plus was 5.3, which increased to a current level of 6.9 practices (Figure 4). According to a specialty retail organization, “For us, an additional level of success has been to figure out, okay, how do we recycle that? Can we make some money off of what we’re recycling? What does that supply chain do with the goods we recycle? Is there another way? So we’re kind of upping it a notch as far as what we consider successful with regard to the environmental stewardship.” Later in the interview, the same organization commented, “Last month, we received the Progress Energy Sustainable Business of the Year award, and we’re very excited about that. I think that one of the things that pushed us over the edge is that we do a really good job with making

sure that everything we get (and 50% of what we get is trash) is funneled into the proper stream – selling it to people who will use it responsibly or disposing of it responsibility ourselves.” The most frequent new waste conservation measures were purchasing environmentally friendly materials and purchasing materials made with recycled content (eleven and seven businesses respectively).

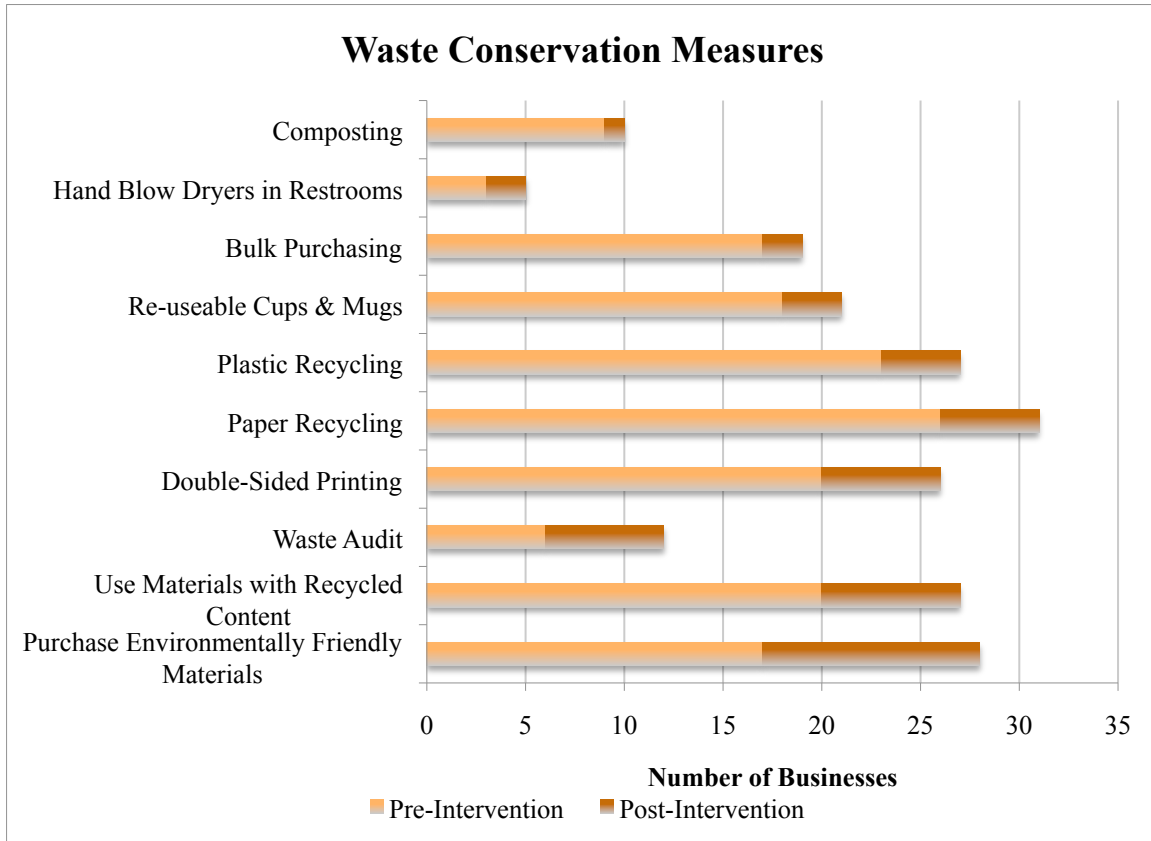


Figure 4: The number of organizations with a given waste reduction measure in place prior to the Green Plus intervention and the number of businesses that have added waste reduction measures since participating in the Green Plus program.

The average number of water conservation practices that businesses had in place prior to joining Green Plus was .833, which increased to a current level of 1.23 practices (Figure 5). On water conservation, the educational non-profit enterprise remarked, “When we had a drought four or five years ago, we ... discontinued our towel service, which was an in-house service. When we took it away, there was a big uproar from the

people who were really used to it. Even now, we ... have to go into the list of why it's better for them to bring a towel and add it to the laundry that they're already doing at home, because [by discontinuing the service] we're saving 500 gallons of water a week." Since joining the Green Plus program, seven businesses have installed low-flow toilets, three have implemented rain barrels, and two have installed motion-sensor faucets.

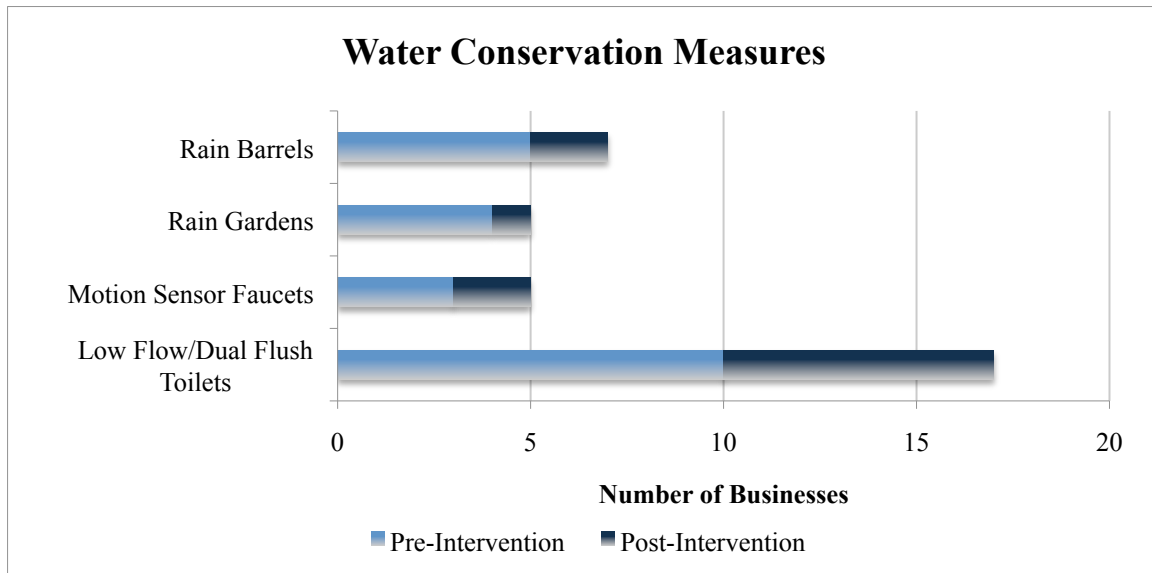


Figure 5: The number of organizations with a given water conservation measure in place prior to the Green Plus intervention and the number of businesses that have added water conservation measures since participating in the Green Plus program.

The average number of transportation reduction practices that businesses had in place prior to joining Green Plus was 1.7, which increased to a current level of 2.06 practices (Figure 6). During the Green Plus program, four businesses added fuel-efficient vehicles; three included incentives for employees to use public transportation; and two have started using tele- and video-conferencing to reduce travel.

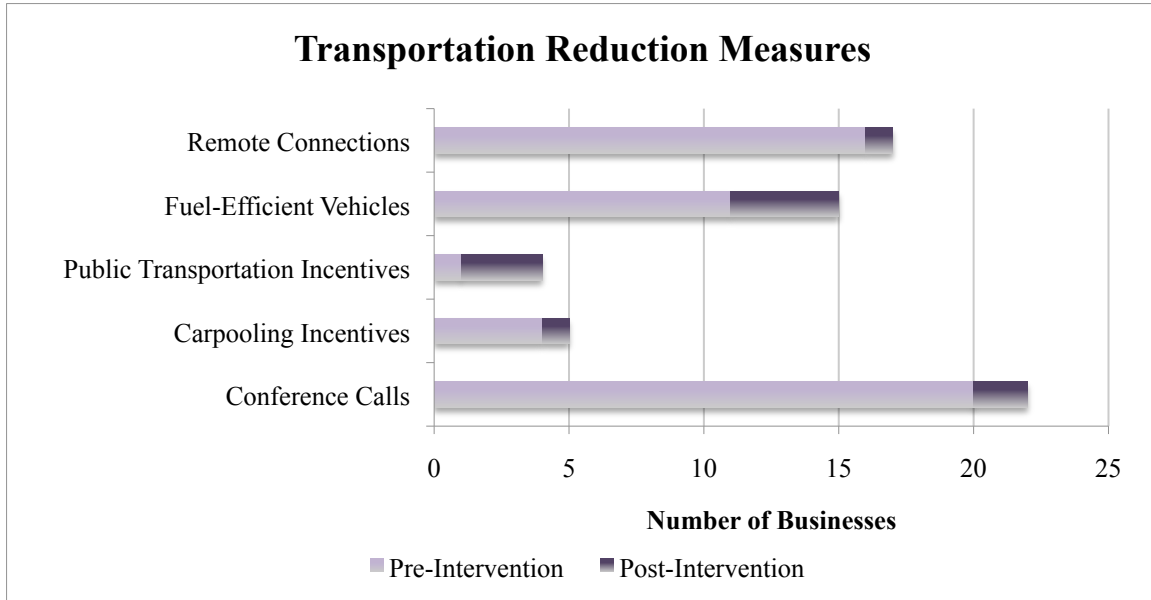


Figure 6: The number of organizations with a given transportation reduction measure in place prior to the Green Plus intervention and the number of businesses that have added transportation reduction measures since participating in the Green Plus program.

People

The overall average score for the “People” section of the diagnostic is approximately 69%, while the average current score for businesses having taken the diagnostic more than once is approximately 83%. According to a business in the hospitality industry, “Green Plus helped us to think about the people side of our organization ... we had [submitted our first diagnostic] before we had hired any employees. Green Plus helped us put things in perspective and guide us as we did bring people on, as we thought about workplace quality. We work too hard, and we don’t want to burn out the wonderful people who work here.”

Several of the businesses interviewed indicated that the “People” section of the diagnostic was the area in which their organization required the most work. The educational non-profit representative remarked, “The social aspect may have been one of the main motivators for our executive director, for getting us the information and getting

us signed on to Green Plus. I think that socially, he wanted to go in that direction. We weren't there at all ... As far as the "People" section goes; we have a long way to go. If you look at the diagnostic, we've improved on the "Planet," and the "Performance" is fine, but the people part is where we really need work and are deficient."

With regard to organizing sustainability efforts, almost all respondents (87%) indicated that they had an individual in their organization that championed sustainability efforts, and almost two thirds of respondent businesses have a "Green Team" that worked to make the organization more sustainable. Nineteen businesses responded that between 81 and 100% of their employees are involved with the organization's sustainability efforts. According to the impact assessment survey, most (77%) of the Green Plus businesses surveyed partner with at least two non-profit organizations, with 87% of that group volunteering, 70% providing in-kind donations, 70% providing financial contributions, and 52% providing other donations.

In an interview, the specialty retail organization commented, "We try to foster a culture of sort of family. And that's family within our organization, from an employee standpoint, but also family from a volunteer standpoint, as well as with donors and customers. So it's not unusual in both locations for customers to come in and know our employees by name. Our employees know things about our customers – there's sort of this information sharing and familiarity. We foster that because we're a community-based organization, and it's important for people to believe in what we do." Seventy-four percent of businesses report engaging customers around sustainability on at least a monthly basis, and more than 80% of businesses report engaging employees around sustainability on at least a monthly basis. Another business, in the agricultural sector,

reported, “I think that the biggest thing would be that we’re looking for new ways to communicate the type of company we are, and to give our customers the feeling that we’re a company that cares. Not just about what we’re doing, but about the communities we live in and everything around us.”

Eighty-seven percent of organizations claimed that since joining Green Plus, sustainability has been more integrated into their corporate culture and values, and 90% believe that Green Plus has altered the course of the organization with regard to sustainability. According to an environmental services organization, “Green Plus has really heightened our awareness. I think before I started working on this initiative, when I thought of sustainability I thought of environmental only. Waste, air, water pollution, being energy efficient. It’s a much more of a whole lifestyle, and can be a business model too.”

Performance

The average score on the “Performance” section of the Green Plus diagnostic was approximately 67% for the first submission, and has increased to 82% for the most recent submission.

When asked in the impact assessment survey about the size change of the respondent’s organization since joining Green Plus, 11 businesses reported expanding, 19 reported having stayed the same size, and only one business indicated a contraction. According to the environmental services organization, “If we’re promoting sustainability as a nation and as a world, it doesn’t make sense if our company is not sustainable financially. So there’s that, and making sure that we can continue to grow and hire new people, and gain new expertise. We’re making more money than we’re spending.”

Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that their businesses were able to somewhat increase their employee base, and 57% reported that their employee numbers were unchanged.

When questioned regarding whether respondents believed that Green Plus has helped them to generate new business in the impact assessment survey, 52% answered in the affirmative, though only six companies indicated having received direct referrals. One business in the hospitality industry commented, “It gives us legitimacy and while it’s not as well known as LEED, I would like it to be. The more it’s known, the more it means for me as a specific seal. The certification is good for backing up our green claims.” Additionally, half of businesses reported an increase in sales/revenues since joining Green Plus, while 43% saw sales/revenues remain constant and 7% saw a marginal decrease.

Though a majority of businesses surveyed indicated that Green Plus had helped them to generate new business, many of the businesses interviewed suggested that Green Plus has not necessarily provided them with a competitive advantage. Several reasons were cited for this, including a lack of marketing on the part of the organization, a lack of awareness of the certification scheme in the general public, and a generally low prioritization of sustainability values in the consumer base. A business in the agricultural industry commented, “We haven’t seen much of a competitive advantage from Green Plus at this point. We’re already triple ISO certified, and that has also not given us an advantage. Our customer base doesn’t really put much emphasis on that sort of thing. They want quality and timeliness. If we lose customers, it’s for one of those reasons, not for certifications or lack thereof.”

Green Plus Businesses Against a Baseline

After a four-week data collection period for non-Green Plus baseline data, eight of the ten Green Plus businesses had been matched with a non-Green Plus business in the same industry and location. The two Green Plus organizations for which suitable comparisons were not found were both Pennsylvania business and were both removed from future comparisons.

The non-Green Plus businesses were all at least five years old, with the majority of the businesses having been in business for more than 50 years. Three of the eight businesses were woman-owned, while only two of the Green Plus businesses were woman-owned, and none of the businesses in either group were minority-owned. Each organization in both groups belonged to at least one industry or professional association. Only one of the non-Green Plus businesses had participated in a green business certification program (the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council).

When asked to comment on how the size of their business had changed in the last two years, 29% non-Green Plus businesses reported expansion, 29% reported that their organization had stayed the same, and 43% reported a contraction. Of the Green Plus businesses, 38% indicated that their organization had expanded, while 50% reported having stayed the same size, and 12% stated that their organization had contracted. Fifty percent of Green Plus businesses reported that their sales/revenues had increased over the last two years, and 50% reported that their sales/revenues had maintained the same level.

Of the non-Green Plus businesses, 57% reported an increase, 14% reported the same level, and 28% indicated a decrease in sales/revenue.

Non-Green Plus businesses have utilized an average of 2.25 organizational planning tools, while their Green Plus counterparts have utilized an average of 5.13 tools. Sixty-three percent of the businesses in the Green Plus sample had established a formal mentorship program as compared to 33% in the non-Green Plus sample, and 100% of the Green Plus businesses (as compared to 67% of non-Green Plus businesses) had new employee integration strategies in place.

Green Plus businesses had an average of 3.375 energy conservation and 6.25 waste conservation practices in place, while their non-Green Plus comparisons had an average of 2.38 and 3.88 practices in place, respectively. Water conservation and transportation reduction practices were more similar between the two groups, with non-Green Plus businesses having .875 water practices and 1.125 transportation practices in place, and Green Plus businesses utilizing 1.125 water and 1.25 transportation practices.

One hundred percent of the Green Plus businesses in this sample offered employee wellness programs and have a local purchasing strategy in place, while only 57% of the non-Green Plus business baseline has these programs/strategies in place. In both the Green Plus and the non-Green Plus sample, 71% of businesses partner with non-profit organizations, through volunteering, in-kind donations, and financial contributions.

Satisfaction with the Green Plus Program

Interactions with the Green Plus Team

In the impact assessment survey, businesses were asked several questions about communication with the Green Plus team. Of the 31 businesses that participated in the survey, 22, or 71%, had received a visit from a Green Plus representative. One organization stated, “We have an office in a high rise building. We have no control over how the toilets flush or power conservation in the building works at large. When we had a Green Plus fellow with us, she was able to talk to the landlord and the owner of the parking deck and get us NC green power carbon offsets for car travel. Green Plus has always been very responsive to our needs.”

Businesses were also asked to quantify the level of interaction that their organization had with Green Plus, and the frequency of communication from the Green Plus team. Just over 70% of business representatives indicated that their organizations contacted Green Plus on at least an annual, quarterly, or monthly basis, with another 23% contacting Green Plus on an approximately weekly basis. The agricultural sector business commented, “I pretty much called often and frequently because I was trying to get things finished and finalized, and it was positive and helpful and easy. They made me feel really comfortable about calling, and that it wasn’t a hassle at all.” Ninety-one percent of businesses reported receiving communications from Green Plus at least once a quarter, with more than a third of businesses being contacted by Green Plus several times per month. When asked how satisfied they were with the level of communication from Green Plus, two-thirds of businesses were satisfied or very satisfied, while the remaining third was neutral.

When asked to comment on their interactions with members of the Green Plus team in the interviews, business responses were largely positive, but qualified. In

general, respondents felt strongly about the more high-touch interactions they had had, but also commented on the lack of consistency in timing and team members. For example, the educational non-profit organization summarized many comments when it proposed, "...monthly contact, because of the turnover of fellows. You meet with them, and then six months later, you meet with the next set, and there's no consistency. I understand that the nature of interns and fellows coming and going... but more contact would be good. When I did have contact, it felt really good. I think that having a good conversation with anybody is inspiring. It has an energy about it that motivates you and inspires you to do things and to see things in a positive way." Another business representative from the environmental services industry included that he was disappointed that it took so long to get the certification meeting scheduled, as he had a specific timeline in mind and it ended up taking longer than he had wanted. He commented, "People get very busy and need reminders. It's easy to let things slip by and everyone has good intentions when they originally sign on. But, then they end up having other issues that take priority. More contact in the mover stage would have been helpful for something like that."

Programmatic Resources

When asked in the impact assessment survey to agree or disagree with the statement "Green Plus provides me with the resources I need to take meaningful sustainable actions at my place of business," 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 33% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. During the follow-up interviews, businesses were asked to comment on several programmatic resources,

including the diagnostic report, webinars, the “How To” Guide, and the Green Plus website/blog.

The diagnostic report typically received positive comments from several businesses, including the following, from an organization in the business services sector, “Their diagnostic questions forced us on all three prongs to get down to the nitty gritty, and to talk about things. For example, lighting. We changed the lighting and thought, ‘That was easy.’ But we didn’t think we could rewire zones so that only the lights we needed were in use! So Green Plus gave us an opportunity--and forced us, since we went ahead--to think through how we do things and how to do them better. That was very humbling, because we thought we were all that.” The environmental services organization also commented, “[The diagnostic report was] very helpful, it was enlightening. Obviously someone put a great deal of thought and care into that report, and it was pretty well crafted.” However, that organization went on to remark, that they were “disappointed in the analysis of the report in terms of [the organization’s] ability to actually make the suggested improvements.”

Reviews of the “How To” Guide were less than favorable, as many companies indicated that when they had last tried to use it, the guide was incomplete and challenging to use. The agricultural sector business reported, “It was helpful, but not as helpful as it could have been.” Few of the businesses interviewed had utilized the webinars, citing primarily a lack of time and also the passive and somewhat boring nature of the presentation style. The Green Plus website/blog was popular with many of the businesses, with one organization in the specialty retail industry calling it “Phenomenal,”

and another business representative from the environmental services sector commenting that he felt most connected to Green Plus through its social media outreach.

The Green Plus Network

One of the stated goals of the Green Plus certification program is to provide networking and recognition opportunities for participant businesses. For that reason, respondents were asked to comment on different aspects of the Green Plus network in both the impact assessment survey and the individual interviews.

In the impact assessment survey, 74% of businesses reported attending Green Plus events at least once a year, with the majority of businesses attending events on either a yearly or quarterly basis.

Approximately two-thirds of businesses communicate with other organizations within the Green Plus network at least once a year, with one-third reaching out at least once a quarter. One of the chambers of commerce that participated in this study commented, “A lot of what we do to help our members is called “direct connections.” We try to look for win-win relationships that we can facilitate. It’s more of a partnership and teamwork initiative. We’re more conscious of our members that have achieved certification and try to give them benefits. For example, we connected a Green Plus Certified packaging company with a person in need of packing.”

One theme in the interview data was a desire for more Green Plus networking opportunities. The representative from the company in the hospitality industry indicated “I would love more green business after hours and talk about things that are going on in different industries. I’d love to snag some knowledge from other industries that are unrelated to hospitality. Like accounting.” Other businesses offered to hold workshops

for businesses going through the certification process, or to reach out to businesses that might be interested in joining Green Plus.

Recommendations for Green Plus

Business Engagement

Though largely businesses reported having been satisfied with their Green Plus experience, there are several opportunities for Green Plus to enhance the program through an increase in client engagement. In the qualitative interviews, several of the certified businesses suggested that they had been in contact with Green Plus less frequently since achieving certification, and expressed a desire to reconnect with the staff and the larger community. Offering additional, industry or resource-specific diagnostics and certifications could be a way for Green Plus to reach out and help the certified community to feel involved while also giving those businesses new sustainability goals to strive for. This would also provide additional recognition opportunities for the businesses that are going above and beyond, allowing them to gain more from the certification.

Another engagement opportunity is for Green Plus to expand the network, as several businesses indicated that they would like to participate in events with other Green Plus businesses. One suggestion was to hold a “green drinks” event for businesses to come and get a sense of what other businesses were participating and where they were in the certification process. Three of the businesses interviewed expressed a desire to share their expertise with other businesses that were just starting the program, and some volunteered to partner with Green Plus in some kind of an event. One way to capitalize on this internal support might be for Green Plus to hold events similar to the Flip It events held by the Duke Microfinance Lending Initiative, where a business presents a current challenge to a group of graduate students, who then propose solutions or plans of

action. Instead of only using graduate students, perhaps it would be beneficial for other businesses to provide feedback on different courses of action.

Finally, facilitating a stronger mentorship program could help both certified businesses to increase their involvement while also motivating businesses new to the program. Having a more robust mentorship system in place would also help to increase the different types of interventions around sustainability, and could give newer businesses a more personalized and “high touch” experience. Ensuring the “high touch” experience has been challenging for Green Plus, as the program has limited time and personnel resources, so individualized consultation for each business is not a realistic option at this time. Utilizing exceptional and experienced members of the Green Plus community could provide mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties involved.

Business Resources

Though businesses found several of the Green Plus resources to be helpful in their path to sustainability, there are some that they considered to be ineffective. The first of these tools is the “How To” Guide. Though the information contained in the “How To” Guide is very relevant to businesses as they progress through the program, few businesses seemed to know how to best take advantage of it. The interviews and anecdotal evidence suggests that some businesses believed that the “How To” Guide was a trouble-shooting tool for moving through the computer program used to take the diagnostic, rather than a tool with information about sustainability best practices. Another problem is that until recently, the “How To” Guide was incomplete, which frustrated businesses when they did attempt to use it correctly. Finally, the layout of information in the guide is not visually appealing, which may have contributed to participant dissatisfaction with the resource.

As they progress through the diagnostic, businesses have a link to the “How To” Guide with each question. Better labeling the links could increase the utility of the Guide. For example, in the “Performance” section, when the diagnostic is asking about strategic planning, making the link say something to the extent of “Questions about Strategic Planning? Check out the “How To” Guide!” could help businesses to understand exactly what information they will receive upon clicking. Additionally, making the Guide more interactive, with pictures and video, could make it much more appealing and effective. Showing not only best practices, but also other Green Plus businesses that have used these practices successfully, could help businesses to connect to the information.

Another resource that businesses felt could be improved was the focus on webinars. Several businesses commented that they were too busy to listen in, and one even went so far as to say that they were, “...kind of boring.” Other businesses reported that they did find the information in the webinars to be very useful, so they probably should not be cut out entirely, but rather the information should be made available in as many formats as possible. This would allow businesses with limited time resources to better take advantage of the information, in a way that fit into their schedule better.

Communication

While the impact assessment survey indicated that businesses were largely satisfied with their level of communication with Green Plus, the interviews revealed that many businesses would like for Green Plus to check in on a more frequent and consistent basis. One business went so far as to comment that it would like for Green Plus to better hold it accountable for making changes and moving forward on its sustainability path.

While very frequent and individual consultation may not be feasible given the limited nature of Green Plus resources, having some kind of a schedule where businesses have a check in immediately after they start the program, a month after they start the program, after they submit each diagnostic, and every six months or so (or some variation on that scheme) could help businesses to feel involved in and connected to the program. It might also help mover organizations to keep moving if they know that there is a scheduled communication.

The other point on inconsistency and communication is with regard to the Green Plus fellows. Because it is the nature of graduate students to work with Green Plus for a finite period of time, businesses rarely see the same fellow twice, which may be leading to dissatisfaction with the lack of consistency. Though businesses seem to appreciate and value the opportunity to work with the fellows, the fact that the graduate school schedule is not the same as the business world schedule has caused negative experiences as well. Businesses want their communication to be answered within a few days, and many commented that they had seen communication drop as fellows came in and left, and as the school year became more intense. On this point, it is vital that the fellows understand the expectations from participants around their interactions, so that they can best respond. There also needs to be a mechanism established for transferring knowledge from one fellows class to the next, so that businesses do not need to re-explain their challenges and feel that they are starting over every six months when new fellows come in.

Future Research

Because the Green Plus program is still relatively new, it is important to perform regular evaluations of participants. Using some version of the impact assessment survey

on an annual basis will help Green Plus to chart progress over time, which is imperative as Green Plus looks to communicate the cumulative effects of the program. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the fellows teams while interviewing participants also indicated that obtaining feedback in person can serve a dual purpose of program evaluation and creating the high touch experience that participants seem to want.

To facilitate regular evaluation, it would be beneficial for Green Plus to survey businesses regarding sustainable practices as they enter the program. As the Green Plus diagnostic has an associated score that will help businesses to achieve certification, it is possible that organizations would wait to take the diagnostic until they felt that they would receive higher marks. Implementing a short survey for organizations to take as they register for the program would help to establish a more accurate baseline, which will help to isolate and attribute the impact of the Green Plus program. This survey should be brief, and should include questions regarding current policies and practices in all three areas of the triple bottom line.

Finally, Green Plus could benefit greatly from a more complete study of non-Green Plus organizations. The results presented in this study represented a minimal sample size, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the larger population. However, the results of the pilot study were informative, and could prove to be very useful to Green Plus if they held true with a larger sample size. Ideally, a comparison business could be found for each of the businesses participating in the impact assessment survey, which would be enough for a statistically significant sample.

Conclusions

This evaluation indicates that participants have made significant improvements to their sustainable practices and policies over their tenure in the program, and that as a result of their participation; sustainability has become more integrated in the organizational values of organizations. Several Green Plus businesses reported having received business referrals as a result of program participation, as well as an increase in sales/revenues over the last two years. The results also suggest that participant businesses are satisfied with their Green Plus experience, though they would appreciate more programmatic support in marketing the changes that they had implemented. When compared to a baseline of comparable small enterprises, Green Plus businesses have more sustainable measures in place on average, and have seen more expansion over the last two years.

While this evaluation has sought to determine whether the Green Plus program is on the path to achieving its mission of democratizing sustainability to smaller enterprises and their communities, it also presents several opportunities that Green Plus could take advantage of to enhance client satisfaction, and to better measure the impact of the program. Based on the information presented in this study, it is clear that businesses engaged in the Green Plus program have made significant strides toward more sustainable social, environmental, and economic practices, however there is a need to expand the information gathered from non-Green Plus participants, so that the comparisons drawn regarding the two populations are more robust. When Green Plus can analyze both changes based on the intervention within organizations, and the differences between those organizations that have been exposed to the program and those that have

not, it will be better able to market the program to potential participants, and to demonstrate success to different stakeholder groups, like academic partners and philanthropic organizations.

Appendix A

Survey for Green Plus Businesses

On behalf of the Institute for Sustainable Development and the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, we want to thank you for your time and consideration in completing this survey. Your responses to this survey are important and will inform the evaluation of the Green Plus program.

You have been selected to participate in this survey based on your completion and multiple submissions of the Green Plus diagnostic. Your participation is completely voluntary and all your responses will be kept confidential. The access code you receive will be used to remove you from our contact list once you have completed the survey. Published reports of this data will not associate your personal or professional information with your responses. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact Catherine Noyes at Catherine.noyes@duke.edu.

How long has your organization been in operation?

- Fewer than two years*
- 2-5 years*
- 5-10 years*
- 10-25 years*
- 25-50 years*
- More than 50 years*

Is your organization minority or woman-owned? (check all that apply)

- Minority-owned*
- Woman-owned*
- Neither*

Does your organization belong to any professional or industry-related associations or networks? (I.e., Chamber of Commerce) If so, please list.

Has your organization participated in any green business certification programs (other than Green Plus)? (check all that apply)

- LEED*
- ISO 14001*
- B Corp*
- Green Industry-Specific Certification*
- Other (more than one can be listed).*

Does your organization have a sustainability champion?

- Yes*
- No*
- I don't know*

Does your organization have a Green Team?

- Yes*
- No*
- I don't know*

How often does your organization participate in Green Plus Events?

- Very Frequently (2+ times per month)
- Frequently (Once a month)
- Somewhat frequently (Once a quarter)
- Infrequently (Once a year)
- Never

How often does your organization communicate with the Green Plus Network?

- Very Frequently (2+ times per month)
- Frequently (Once a month)
- Somewhat frequently (Once a quarter)
- Infrequently (Once a year)
- Never

Has your organization received a visit from a member of the Green Plus team?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

How often does your organization communicate with Green Plus?

- Very Frequently (2+ times per month)
- Frequently (Once a month)
- Somewhat frequently (Once a quarter)
- Infrequently (Once a year)
- Never

How often does Green Plus communicate with your organization?

- Very Frequently (2+ times per month)
- Frequently (Once a month)
- Somewhat frequently (Once a quarter)
- Infrequently (Once a year)
- Never

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the amount of communication that you have indicated in the last two questions.

- Highly satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Highly dissatisfied

How has your monthly energy use changed since joining Green Plus?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

Since joining Green Plus, has your organization utilized any of the following energy conservation measures? (check all that apply)

- Compact fluorescent lighting
- Energy Star appliances
- Motion sensors in bathrooms
- Energy Audits
- Energy efficiency retrofits
- Use renewable energy
- Other _____

After joining Green Plus, did your organization utilize any of the following energy conservation measures? (check all that apply)

- Compact fluorescent lighting
- Energy Star appliances
- Motion sensors in bathrooms
- Energy Audits
- Energy efficiency retrofits
- Use renewable energy
- Other _____
- None

Since joining Green Plus, does your organization utilize any of the following waste conservation measures? (check all that apply)

- Hand blow dryers in restrooms
- Plastic recycling
- Paper recycling
- Bulk purchasing
- Waste Audits
- Composting
- Offering re-usable mugs or cups
- Purchasing materials with recycled content
- Other _____
- None

After joining Green Plus, does your organization utilize any of the following waste conservation measures? (check all that apply)

- Hand blow dryers in restrooms
- Plastic recycling
- Paper recycling
- Bulk purchasing
- Waste Audits
- Composting
- Offering re-usable mugs or cups
- Purchasing materials with recycled content
- Other _____
- None

How has your monthly water use changed since joining Green Plus?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same

- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

Before joining Green Plus, did your organization utilize any of the following water quality/conservation practices? (check all that apply)

- Water efficient toilets
- Motion sensor faucets
- Rain gardens
- Rain barrels
- Other _____
- None

After joining Green Plus, does your organization utilize any of the following water quality/conservation practices? (check all that apply)

- Water efficient toilets
- Motion sensor faucets
- Rain gardens
- Rain barrels
- Other _____
- None

Before joining Green Plus, did your organization use or engage in any of the following transportation practices? (check all that apply)

- Conference calls to reduce travel
- Carpooling incentives
- Public transit incentives
- Fuel-efficient vehicles
- Working at home (remote connection)
- Other _____
- None

After joining Green Plus, does your organization use or engage in any of the following transportation practices? (check all that apply)

- Conference calls to reduce travel
- Carpooling incentives
- Public transit incentives
- Fuel-efficient vehicles
- Working at home (remote connection)
- Other _____
- None

People

Does your organization partner with community non-profits?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Which community non-profits does your organization partner with?

Which of the following activities does your organization participate in when partnering with non-profits?

- Volunteering
- In-kind Donations
- Financial Contributions
- Other Contributions (Please List)
- I don't know

Likert Scale Question

How often does your organization engage with the following stakeholders regarding sustainability or environmental issues?

Stakeholders: Customers, Employees, Suppliers, Government, Investors/Shareholders, Financial Service Providers, Community, Academia

Timeframes: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually, Never, N/A, I don't know

Performance

How has the size of your organization changed since joining Green Plus?

- Expanded
- Stayed about the same
- Contracted
- I don't know

How has your employee base changed since joining Green Plus?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

Has Green Plus helped you to generate new business?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Has your organization received any business referrals as a result of participating in Green Plus?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

(If Yes) How many business referrals has your organization received?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 5-7
- 7-10
- More than 10

How have your sales/revenues changed since joining Green Plus?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

How have your net revenues changed since joining Green Plus?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

We are interested in comparing the sustainability practices of organizations that have gone through Green Plus to those who have not. Please list three organizations in your industry or region that you would consider a comparable or competitive organization:

Fill in the blank: Since joining Green Plus, sustainability has become _____ integrated into the culture and decision-making processes of my organization.

- Much more
- More
- Slightly more
- Neither more nor less
- Slightly less
- Less
- Much less
- I don't know

Fill in the blank: Green Plus has _____ affected the course of our organization with regard to sustainable business practices

- Significantly
- Somewhat
- Not

Agree or Disagree: Green Plus provides me with the resources and connections I need to take meaningful sustainable actions at my place of business.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How satisfied are you with your organization's involvement with Green Plus?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

How likely would you be to recommend Green Plus to other organizations?

-Highly Likely

-Likely

-Neutral

-Unlikely

-Highly Unlikely

Is there any other information you would like to provide?

Appendix B

Survey for Non-Green Plus Businesses

On behalf of the Institute for Sustainable Development and the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, we want to thank you for your time and consideration in completing this survey. Your responses will help to evaluate the adoption and incorporation of sustainability issues of small businesses.

Sustainability can be defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. Triple-bottom-line sustainability expands on the previous definition, specifically with regard to the financial, environmental, and social sustainability of the organization.

You have been selected to participate in this survey based several factors, including the size, location, and industry classification of your organization. Your participation is completely voluntary and all your responses will be kept confidential. The access code you received will be used to remove you from our contact list once you have completed the survey. No personally or professionally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact Catherine Noyes at Catherine.noyes@duke.edu.

How long has your organization been in operation?

- Fewer than two years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-25 years
- 25-50 years
- More than 50 years

Is your organization minority or woman-owned? (check all that apply)

- Minority-owned
- Woman-owned
- Neither

Does your organization participate in any affiliation programs?

For example, a Chamber or Commerce

Has your organization participated in any green business certification programs? (check all that apply)

- LEED
- ISO 14001
- B Corp
- Green Industry-Specific Certification
- Other (more than one can be listed).

How important is sustainability to your organization's mission?

(scale of 1-7; not at all important to very important; I don't know)

Has your organization joined or participated in a sustainability organization or event in the past year?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Which of the following organizational planning tools does your organization utilize (check all that apply)

- Written Business Plan
- Written Strategic Plan
- Structured Work Plan
- Written Human Resources Plan
- Written Marketing Plan
- Risk Management Plan
- Succession Plan
- Other _____
- I don't know

Has your organization established a formal employee mentorship program?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Has your organization established a new employee integration strategy?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Which of the following energy conservation measures does your organization employ? (check all that apply)

- Compact fluorescent lighting
- Energy Star appliances
- Motion sensors in bathrooms
- Energy efficiency retrofits
- Use renewable energy
- Other _____
- None

Which of the following waste conservation measures does your organization employ? (check all that apply)

- Hand blow dryers in restrooms
- Plastic recycling
- Paper recycling
- Bulk purchasing
- Offering re-usable mugs or cups
- Purchasing materials with recycled content
- Other _____
- None

Which of the following water quality/conservation practices does your organization use or engage in (check all that apply)

- Water efficient toilets
- Motion sensor faucets

- Rain gardens
- Rain barrels
- Other _____
- None

Which of the following transportation practices does your organization use or engage in (check all that apply)

- Conference calls to reduce travel
- Carpooling incentives
- Public transit incentives
- Fuel efficient vehicles
- Working at home (remote connection)
- Other _____
- None

Does your organization regularly recycle at least 75% of recyclable waste such as paper, plastic and glass through municipal or commercial recycling programs?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Does your organization provide any wellness programs such as workout facilities, free flu shots, health or diet consultations?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Does your organization provide in-kind donations (services, supplies, or equipment) or financial support, the value of which exceeds 1 percent of your annual profits, to non-profit and charitable free organizations?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Has your organization adopted a strategy for purchasing local products, requiring the purchase of local area products over non-local alternatives when available and economically viable?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Does your organization partner with non-profits?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Which non-profits does your organization partner with?

Which of the following activities does your organization engage in when partnering with non-profits?

- Volunteering
- In-kind Donations
- Financial Contributions
- Other Contributions
- I don't know

Likert Scale Question

How often does your organization engage with the following stakeholders regarding sustainability or environmental issues?

Stakeholders: Customers, Employees, Suppliers, Government, Investors/Shareholders, Financial Service Providers, Community, Academia

Timeframes: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually, Never, N/A, I don't know

How has the size of your organization changed over the last year?

- Expanded
- Stayed about the same
- Contracted
- I don't know

How has your employee base changed in the last year?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

How have your net sales/revenues changed in the last year?

- Increased Significantly
- Increased Marginally
- Stayed the same
- Decreased Marginally
- Decreased Significantly
- I don't know

Is there any other information that you would like to provide?

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Green Plus

INTRODUCTIONS:

My name is _____, and I am a graduate student at Duke University. This semester, I'm helping with the Green Plus Impact Assessment. Our questions will take approximately 30 minutes of your time, and we will not ask any sensitive or confidential questions. We will not associate your name, address, or any other identifying information with the information you provide in this interview in the final report.

Great! Before we begin, I'd like to mention a few other things. First, this survey is entirely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any question. Second, with your permission, we would like to audio record this interview. The tape will be used to assist Green Plus in creating the impact assessment. Will you allow this interview to be recorded? Thanks! Let's get started.

QUESTIONS:

Thanks so much for taking the time to chat with us today and to share your experiences with the Green Plus program. As you think about the following questions, please share any experiences you may have had, particularly as they apply to your organization's interactions with Green Plus.

To get started, I'd love it if you might tell us a little more about your organization's workplace and overall culture (EX: if I asked one of your employees or partners "What's it like to work at _____, how would they describe your work environment and culture?")

Does your organization have a way to measure or define success? If so, what?

Has your organization shifted its definition of success since joining Green Plus? If so, why? How has your definition shifted?

"Sustainability" is a word getting tossed around a lot these days, and I'm sure you've heard it in relation to Green Plus as well. In your own words, what do you think sustainability means? (There's no right or wrong answer, we'd love to get your take on this concept that's sometimes hard to pin down). Does your organization have an official definition of sustainability?

For the rest of this interview, please consider the following definition of sustainability: Sustainability is providing for the best for the organization, community, and the environment both now and in the indefinite future.

Has your view of sustainability changed since you started to work with Green Plus? If so, why? How has your view of sustainability changed?

Do you see this concept of “sustainability” related to your organization’s work culture? If so, in what ways?

Follow Up:

For example, does your organization have any norms around sustainability activities, like employee mentoring or recycling?

Do you have a “sustainability” story as an organization that you could share with us?

FOLLOW UP:

How long have you been moving in this direction? How did it start?

*Do you feel that the broad community in which your organization operates has recognized your efforts to become more sustainable? *Community can be town/city, other businesses, etc.*

FOLLOW UP:

*Please share any instances of your community recognizing your sustainability efforts (for example, has your organization received positive press or customer feedback related to sustainability?) *Interviewer: Be sure to probe for the types of community referenced by the interviewee*

How did you first hear about Green Plus?

What motivated your organization to join?

Has Green Plus had an impact on your organization?

FOLLOW UP:

In what ways?

**Probe for further details (positive/ negative). Be careful to not lead them/ bias their answers.*

Overall, how satisfied are you with your organization’s involvement with Green Plus? What would you consider the strengths/weaknesses of the program to be? Do you see any barriers to the Green Plus program achieving success?

Do you feel that Green Plus has provided a competitive advantage for your organization?

How effective were the different Green Plus resources for your organization?

- Diagnostic Report
- How To Guide
- Consultations with Green Plus team members

- The Green Plus business network
- Webinars
- The Green Plus website/blog

Do you feel like you've gotten your money's worth from joining Green Plus? Why or why not?

If you had the opportunity to join again, would you? Why or why not?

For Certified Businesses:

How satisfied have you been since you gained certification? How could Green Plus enhance your experience?

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