



A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO GREENING GOVERNMENT

greengov
CHALLENGE

FINAL REPORT

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GreenGov Challenge Results

Final Report

On October 19, 2009, the White House launched the GreenGov Challenge to ask all Federal and military personnel to share ideas about how the federal community can lead by example, green the government, and meet the goals of President Obama's Executive Order on Federal Sustainability. The GreenGov Challenge generated more than 5,000 ideas and 165,000 votes from 14,000 federal employees.

This report presents the results of the GreenGov Challenge. Each category includes a list of unique ideas, listed by popularity as determined by the number of votes. Each idea is attributed to individuals as they identified themselves, with some individuals submitting multiple ideas. The total vote count for the top idea in each category is included, along with a "word cloud" that represents the frequency with which specific words and concepts appeared in submissions. Major themes that emerged from the 5,000+ ideas that were submitted are summarized and presented as well.

The GreenGov Challenge demonstrated that the federal community is committed to leading by example through transforming how they work in practical ways that have real results. Many of the ideas that were submitted—like eliminating cafeteria items that can't be recycled or composted—can be implemented immediately. Others—like installing motion sensors to lighting systems and retrofitting bathrooms to conserve water—will take resources and planning over the longer term. Taken as a whole, the results of the GreenGov Challenge help to illuminate a course of action that will make the Federal government's operations more sustainable, responsible, and efficient. And for that, the Federal community owes each individual who has participated in the GreenGov Challenge a debt of gratitude.

This report summarizes ideas generated by Federal employees through the GreenGov Challenge and does not represent ideas or suggestions advocated by the Council on Environmental Quality.

7. **Insulate hot water pipes and water tanks** in all federal buildings.
–Katie S., Washington, DC
8. **Make the day after Thanksgiving a holiday** so we aren't utilizing heat, electricity, water etc. when only a small portion of the workforce is in the building.
–Monica, NH
9. **Change the work dress code**—thermostats could be a degree or 2 higher in the summer and a degree or 2 lower if people modified how they dressed. Skip the jacket and tie in summer / add a sweater in the winter. Japan is already doing this.
–Barbara J., Bangkok, Thailand
10. Encourage bicycling! **All Fed buildings need to be more bike friendly.** That means reasonable places to store bikes, as well as places to hold professional clothing and take showers. The federal government should lead this charge in America!
–Tom, NASA, DC

Bonus Idea: Hire herdsman with goats or sheep to maintain large grassy areas—bid out the contracts. They pay the government for grazing land rights. No waste of fuels, plus income to the installation. And sheep are no threat to security.

–K. Gordon, Columbus, OH

What We Heard About Conserving Energy

More ideas were submitted in the Conserving Energy category than any other in the GreenGov Challenge. Overwhelmingly, the federal community wants to eliminate what they see as wasteful energy use, whether it's leveraging technology to reduce travel and commutes or using "smarter" lighting systems that turn off when spaces are empty.

Over 120 ideas in the Conserving Energy category and more than 320 of all the ideas cited flexible working arrangements as an area the federal government should invest in to reduce energy consumption. Over 300 of the ideas submitted in the Conserving Energy category and more than 500 of all the ideas addressed motion sensors and lighting improvements.

Additionally, many ideas suggested individual actions. For example, Phil from DC suggested that the government hold all meetings at the site which requires the fewest number of people to travel, and hold more meetings via tele- and/or videoconference to reduce emissions and costs.

7. **Reduce the amount of “lawns” at government facilities that require excessive water and maintenance.** Replace lawns with sustainable landscapes that are designed to utilize rainwater and drip and micro irrigation, but still offer green space.
–Trouble, Central WI
8. **Replace older hot water heating systems with instant hot water heating systems that are tankless and don’t use up as much electricity keeping the water hot.**
–rbhallmsfc, Huntsville, AL
9. **Consider permeable pavement for parking surfaces where Z to GWT allows, allowing storm runoff to infiltrate into subsurface.** Consider sloped tin roofs (fewer contaminants in storm runoff) to fill cisterns used to water green roofs and landscaping.
–Half-M Walker, CA
10. Get rid of the requirement for “white” paper products and **go with a paper that has not been bleached** white.
–John V., Norfolk, VA

Bonus Idea: Gradually retrofit water fountains to better allow for cup or container fill-up and eliminate need for bottled water.

–EDM, Arlington, VA

What We Heard About Conserving Water

Nearly 100 ideas touched on the installation of high-efficiency, low-flow toilets and fixtures or motion-activated sensors in restrooms to conserve water. Others noted that employees can make an impact by changing habits, like remembering to shut off the faucets after use and encouraging people not to flush an empty toilet prior to using it.

Federal and military personnel also see room for improvement in the landscape and structure of federal buildings. More than 80 submissions asked the federal government to reconsider its irrigation practices and look at more sustainable landscaping options around federal buildings. Many of the submissions called for the use of native plants in landscaping practices as well as finding ways to utilize empty roof space to collect water for use as an irrigation supply. Kristy from Colorado suggested using a new irrigation standard for the selection of plants used at federal facilities: she thinks that if a plant needs to be watered by humans more than once week, it doesn’t belong there.

7. Require all government employees to **print double sided from their printers, and also only allow the purchase of duplexing printers** (double sided capable)
–CPT Bow, Fort Bliss, TX
8. Reduce the **amount of times garbage can liners are replaced or used**. It is not necessary to use/replace a liner when there is nothing in the trash that gets the receptacle dirty.
–Charee, Shiprock, NM
9. **Recycle construction/building demolition waste** as a requirement. Material such as drywall, wiring, metals, and plastics can be reused. Research shows that a 360,000 sq/ft facility can divert over 20 tons of material annually
–Adam K., US DOT, Boston, MA
10. **Install energy efficient hand dryers in the restrooms** to save millions of trees and reduce waste resulting from the disposal of paper towels.
–Katherine, Bethesda, MD

Bonus Idea: Use ecofonts AND draft settings when printing; cuts down on the amount of ink used per sheet.

–BullGator, Atlanta, GA

What We Heard About Eliminating Waste

According to the results of the GreenGov Challenge, Federal employees are ready and willing to transition to a more electronic way of doing business. Two hundred ideas were submitted during the GreenGov Challenge related to improving e-business throughout the government, including encouraging all agencies to use electronic systems for submitting, signing, and tracking standard business forms. An employee from Huntsville, AL suggested changing office culture to discourage printing hardcopies of all internal communications by giving recipients the offer to print only if needed.

Nearly 100 ideas submitted in the Eliminating Waste Category, and more than 170 overall, related to getting rid of Styrofoam and making our cafeterias more sustainable.

Federal cafeterias can make some small changes that would offer big benefits. Simple solutions submitted to the GreenGov Challenge included eliminating plastic water bottles for purchase from cafeterias.

7. Work with local transit authorities **to provide services between major commuting hubs and high capacity federal installations**. Act now. FDA is relocating 9,000 employees to a heavily congested location lacking adequate public transportation options

–Steven R., Bethesda, MD

8. Just as some agencies provide parking or public transportation stipends, **allow employees to apply those same funds to bicycle purchases**.

–JD

9. **Replace all government vehicles with fuel efficient models.**

–LBF, August, ME

10. **Convert Federal buildings across the Nation into alternate energy usage.** Transition buildings to use solar and/or wind generated energy dependant on location of building. Offer budget incentives for transition based on reduction of power grid usage.

–Anthony F., Albuquerque, NM

Bonus Idea: Transportation subsidies for users of mass transit should also be provided for bicycle commuters to help cover the cost of outerwear, lights, increased bike maintenance, etc.

–Robyn, Seattle, WA

What We Heard About Reducing Carbon Emissions

Many of the ideas submitted in the GreenGov Challenge applied to multiple categories, particularly in the area of reducing Carbon emissions. Employees identified with greening their commutes, particularly by making bike commuting a viable and attractive option for federal employees. Programs which provide incentives to cyclists, like offering benefits for bike commuting similar to existing transit benefits for parking and public transit—as well as offering lockers and shower facilities—were of especial interest. Joan R. from Bethesda encouraged all of her fellow employees to make one change a week like biking or walking to work to do our individual part to reduce carbon emissions.

- 6. *Transportation diversity when selecting sites for new Federal buildings***—Select sites that allow for a broad range of alternative modes (methods) of commuting such as bus, train, walking, and biking.

—Adam K., Boston, MA

- 7. *Require all new constructions to meet minimum LEED standards.***

—JD

- 8. *Create roof-top gardens on government buildings.*** This would help insulate the buildings, lowering costs. Water the garden by retaining and storing rainwater in a covered reservoir/cistern. Create a farmers market for employees from garden produce.

—BDN, Baltimore, MD

- 9. *Old windows should be replaced with double paned windows to conserve heat.***

—Nate, Washington, DC

- 10. *Green Cleaning***—adopt a comprehensive set of custodial practice guidelines that ensure clean facilities while protecting the health of building occupants & cleaning staff.

—Adam K. US DOT, Boston, MA

Bonus Idea: Make stairwells large and the focal point of new buildings, instead of just basically off to the side, like fire escape stairs. Similar to grand staircases of old buildings which encourage people to use them.

—MS, TX

What We Heard about Sustainable Buildings

The “greening” of federal buildings generated many ideas, from improvements in building design, to reducing wasted energy with audits and smarter systems, to promoting teleworking as a way to reduce the amount of office space the government owns and maintains. Looking for ways to use renewable energy to power offices was a highlight, with hundreds of submissions calling for solar and wind energy projects on Federal buildings.

Small changes in how employees use offices spaces were also suggested. Karen in Winedale, WY, suggested using a more “natural” system of climate control by opening windows when possible to moderate temperature changes instead of cranking up the air conditioning. From Riverdale, MD, Andrew suggested that buildings and offices provide maps of which lights are operated by which switches to encourage people to turn off lights that don’t need to be on (without leaving anyone to work in the dark).

6. Stop completely redoing offices each time a new political is appointed. Does there need to be new carpet and furniture installed every 6 months to a year?

–Laura S.

7. Request vendors to send only e-catalogs or catalogs on CD.

–J, CA

8. Low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)–specify that all furniture, flooring, carpets, paints, and partitions are either low-or-no VOC. Use 3rd Party Validation (e.g. Green Seal, Scientific Cert. Systems, etc.) to verify.

–Adam K., Boston, MA

9. Eliminate paper forms, making all forms electronic, and reducing paper consumption.

–Chris P., Alexandria, VA

10. Install self-limiting faucets which control water pressure and flow in the restrooms of our government facilities would conserve this precious resource.

–Lee, Baltimore MD

Bonus Idea: Build green into government contracts and grants. Mandate awarded contractors and grantees pursue energy sustainable/ renewable practices for project, and weight RFP submissions for their “green” factors.

–Tom W., Washington, DC

What We Heard About Sustainable Products and Purchasing

Federal employees definitely see room for improvement in products and purchasing, particularly regarding paper products. More than 500 ideas targeted overuse of paper. Nearly 100 of those ideas were in the sustainable purchasing category, where employees suggested more recycled content and less bleach used in paper products for the office and the restrooms.

CR from DC suggested that each office create a ‘Freecycle’ system to help reuse and recycle unwanted products (both from work and home) within each agency campus to reduce waste. The project’s goal is to redistribute existing supplies to meet the needs of employees rather than purchasing new products.

Many ideas were inspired by the desire for more transparency about the products they use every day. David J. in Seattle submitted an idea to create a label, similar to the EnergyStar program, which allows you to see the environmental benefit of using that product. He highlighted this system as one that all employees could easily understand and incorporate into their decision-making without previous training or background knowledge of the system.

