
Ottawa Small Business Community Sustainability Report



presented by
Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City
& Sustainable Enterprise
Alliance

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Abstract & Introduction

This purpose of this report is to serve the greater Ottawa Small Business Community. It is a tool to help small businesses in Ottawa achieve their sustainability goals. This report outlines common sustainability issues many businesses in various sectors face, and gives local Ottawa resources and solutions for tackling these sustainability challenges. The challenges and topics highlighted in this report originate from a business sustainable workshop completed in Ottawa by Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City and Sustainable Enterprise Alliance in November 2021, as well as expert knowledge on the Business Case for Sustainability.



Abstract & Introduction

OBEC and SEAlliance

Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City (OBEC) and Sustainable Enterprise Alliance (SEA) have partnered up to support local entrepreneurs and businesses to become more environmentally sustainable through their business practices. By connecting with local business communities and hosting Community Business Sustainability Plans (B-CSPs), OBEC and SEA have created a foundation for businesses to: learn, plan, and execute their individual solutions for a more environmentally friendly enterprise.

Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City is a local, grassroots charity that runs sustainability education programs across Ottawa. OBEC's focus within this partnership is to provide a framework of the Community Sustainability Plan, and to help with the facilitation of workshops.

Sustainable Enterprise Alliance provides information, resources and tools to support businesses in their sustainability journey, and connects local businesses to one another through their network. In partnership, our B-CSPs are a resource for the greater community of local businesses to utilize to advance their knowledge and practices on sustainable business management.



The Business Case for Sustainability

A 'sustainable' business is one which operates with minimal negative impact on the global or local environment, community and economy. It is an enterprise that strives to meet the triple bottom line of People, Planet and Profit.

In general, business is described as 'green' if it matches the following **four criteria**:

1

It understands its environmental impact including how much energy, water and raw materials are used and where the source of supply is.

2

It works towards minimizing that environmental impact through reducing energy use, sourcing responsibly and localizing as much as possible. Some businesses could have a net positive impact on the environment through restoring natural spaces, enhancing soil quality and water quality etc. Sourcing products made from ocean plastics as an example.

3

It supports a circular economy by helping customers understand what to do with the products at the end of their useful life or provide repair or reuse possibilities.

4

It works closely with staff to ensure a safe and healthy environment and engage them in sustainability goals and actions.

Our Workshop & Report

Our **Business Sustainability Workshop** took place virtually on the evening of **November 8th 2021**.

Invitations for this workshop went out to small business owners, managers, and employees of the **Glebe, Old Ottawa South, and Old Ottawa East**. This area was chosen originally so that the businesses could be connected through their **geographic community**, and would be able to share similar business sustainability issues and projects.

The **goal** of the workshop was to **inspire and assist** each business to create a **Business Sustainability Plan (BSP)**. We know entrepreneurs are incredibly resourceful and hardworking and through peer supported workshops, can create solutions towards balancing **People, Planet and Profit**.

Our hope is that this report will serve the greater **small business community** in Ottawa, and not just the participants that joined the workshop. The report takes the sustainability challenges and successes discussed in the workshop and uses them to create **general resources with direct links** for any business owner, manager or employee as a way to **make their business more sustainable**.



Addressing Barriers

The **Community Business Sustainability Plan in the Glebe, Old Ottawa South & East** provided beneficial insights to individual problems business owners are facing on the ground. However, this workshop did present challenges to overcome: attendance, Covid-19 stressors on businesses, timing of the workshop, and the assumption that sustainability would be a financial stressor.

By addressing these challenges and creating a general report, we are able to address key areas that have been a struggle for local businesses and can provide sustainable resources with more ease.

Barrier	Description
Covid-19 Challenges	With ongoing Covid-19 protocols, many businesses have struggled to keep afloat and this is one factor that has limited their capacity to prioritize sustainability as of late. Similarly, with a demanding workload as a small business coupled with Covid-19 stressors, we believe that the attendance was affected by small businesses not having the time to attend the session.
Low Attendance	The low attendance rate impacted the ability to have thorough and meaningful discussion with many different businesses from the communities of Glebe, Old Ottawa South, Old Ottawa East. With ongoing Covid-19 protocols, many businesses have struggled to keep afloat and this is one factor that has limited their capacity to prioritize sustainability as of late.
Time of Workshop	By hosting the B-CSP online in the evening, the goal was to provide an open time period after work for businesses to attend, however, this also presented the challenge of increasing attendance around most people's time off.
Perceived Costs	Many small businesses have limited flexibility in terms of overhead and general expenses, and assume that the cost of implementing a sustainability plan in their business will be costly. Although this is not the case, this assumption is also believed to have been a deterrent, especially during the financial strain of Covid-19.

Themes

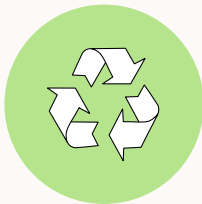
When it comes to sustainability, challenges in 3 theme areas have been highlighted as the most significant sustainability areas for businesses to address: **Energy, Waste, and Transportation.** Our workshop and report highlights information and resources for these themes.

1 / Energy



Energy focuses on how we as individuals and collectives use, create, waste, and distribute energy. When addressing energy, our focus prioritizes energy savings, supporting ways to best utilize energy, and initiatives that are creating new systems for energy supply and distribution.

2 / Waste



The Theme of Waste looks at the lifecycle of waste as a whole, from design, materials, processing, usage, to disposal, and rethinking and reshaping our current linear system to a circular, closed loop of resources.

3 / Transportation



Transportation focuses on the movement of goods and people. It addresses issues surrounding: the supply chain and shipping of products, travel options and distance, car-reliant cities, safety, mobility, accessibility, and fossil fuel dependency.

1 Energy

The energy used to run a business in the form of electricity or heating/cooling can have an environmental impact through producing greenhouse gasses and pollution. Ontario's electricity has low emissions but heating is mainly natural gas which does produce greenhouse gasses. Energy also costs money and is often one of the major expenses of a business.

Every business has challenges they need to face in order to survive. The challenges can be even harder for small businesses who might not have the disposable income needed to address each issue once it is found. For energy this is even more of a focus as most savings are found from purchasing equipment or services. For each of the challenges we have highlighted, we have different solutions to consider as well providing information on local resources, companies and grants.

1.1 Energy Challenges

- Increasing costs for electricity and natural gas.
- Time of Use electricity pricing
- Aging building/heating/ventilation.
- Quality of building/institution (e.g. ventilation, circulation, insulation)
- Energy retrofits in a leased/rental space
- Deep retrofits
- TOD(time of day)/smart buildings energy use

1.2 Energy Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS

DETAILS

Energy Reduction Strategy

Shift high energy appliances to run during off peak times where possible to take advantage of lower energy prices. If your business uses a lot of electricity during peak hours then you may be able to switch your pricing structure by talking to your utility.

Energy Audits

A good way to assess your building to determine the best steps to take in order to most effectively make positive changes which will in turn save you money over time. The energy auditor will let you know where most of your energy is being lost/used and give you information on how to make the changes. Many of the changes and upgrades can be partially or fully paid for through various grants and loans. For more information click [here](#)

Technology Solutions

- Building upgrades
 - Solar blinds/film on windows [Ottawa company](#)
 - Draft sealing [Ottawa Company](#)
 - Heat Pump retrofit. [Here](#)
- Solar panels are a renewable energy creator which can be installed on or near your building in order to use clean energy for your business. [Info Here](#), [Ottawa Company](#), [Ottawa Company](#)
- Film applied to windows to reduce sun damage to products being displayed → helps to conserve energy [Ottawa Company](#), [Ottawa company](#)

1.2 Energy Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS

DETAILS

Retrofitting

Retrofitting means making meaningful repairs or changes to your building in order to realize savings through energy reductions. Retrofitting can be done in parts, over time or all at once depending on budget.

A good place to start is [Save On Energy webpage](#) where they give information on retrofitting, new lighting and how to save money while your business is closed or partially occupied.

- Energy Star rating (machines primarily) [here](#) are certified products that are tested to meet specifications for energy performance. There are periodically rebates and incentives for the products and can greatly reduce your energy use over time.
- Timers on appliances ([Info Here](#)) Program timers to turn-on or shut-off at designated times so lights are on only when they are required.
- Energy efficient, power saving machines to transition to (e.g. [EnergyMisers technology](#)) → only turns on lights etc. when interacted with.
- Lighting → energy efficient light bulbs. Lighting is a huge power drain in almost every building before upgrades. SaveONenergy has more information [here](#).
- Contacting Enbridge directly to receive up to \$2000 for retrofits [here](#) or [here](#)
- Retrofit Business Program ([Info here](#)) to view and access the most recent information, tips and grants.
- Windows and doors can account for up to 25 percent of total house heat loss. You can replace them with more energy-efficient models. Proper installation and maintenance also play a key role in saving energy and improving comfort. Blinds can cover products within business windows (allowing heat in, increasing energy costs). More [info here](#)

2 Waste

It's often convenient to ignore the waste we create in the day to day operations of a business. We don't realize the long term impact of plastics in the environment and other issues with waste like organics in a dump that would eventually leak into water systems. Methane from organics in landfills is also a potent greenhouse gas. We currently live in a linear economy where we take raw materials, make a product and then throw it away at the end of its life. This is obviously not sustainable as we have a finite planet. Reducing waste is an easy way to transform to a circular economy and work towards a zero waste future.

Recycling conserves resources, saves energy and costs, helps the environment and reduces the number of items going to landfill. There are less garbage trucks on your street and the landfill will smell less too.

2.1 Waste Challenges

- It takes time to reorganize waste management.
- Suppliers send us non recyclable packaging
- Need to source 'green' packaging
- Need to educate customers
- Not sure what to do with the 'waste'.

2.2 Waste Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS	DETAILS
<p>Conduct a Waste Audit</p>	<p>The goal is to discover what types and quantities of waste (paper, plastic, food, electronics, hazardous material etc.) you produce to set recycling, reduction and diversion goals.</p> <p>You can follow this link for more information on a quick 5 step waste audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Set a time and assemble a team • Step 2: Gather Supplies • Step 3: Collect all bins and separate the types of waste • Step 4: Weigh and calculate waste diversion rate • Step 5: Brainstorms ways to reduce <p>You can use the City of Ottawa's Waste Explorer to find 'take back' retailers and decide what truly is waste.</p> <p>Other resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A checklist for Waste Operations by Ottawa EnviroCentre • Watch on youtube Five Quick tips to reduce your waste by Green Business Bureau • Hire professional Waste management services in Ottawa by Best in Ottawa
<p>Manage your Procurement and suppliers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable procurement aims to reduce the adverse environmental, social and economic impacts of purchased products and services throughout their entire life cycle. • Create a 'sustainable procurement' policy and work with suppliers to minimize packaging. <p>Here is a template for you to consider: https://recycle.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/GreenProcurementTemplate.pdf</p>

2.2 Waste Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS

DETAILS

Go Paperless

Switch to paperless :

- Electronic Billing
- Accounting, Payroll, [Quick books](#), [Wave accounting](#), [Fresh books](#) [Zoho books](#), [Green Books](#)
- Cut Down on Faxed Documents, choose Efax ie. [Voice2net](#)
- Get Electronic Receipts For Office Supply Purchases.
- Reduce Junk Mail.
- Remove yourself from mailing lists, switch to digital subscriptions
- Scan documents.
- Unsubscribe from catalogs
- Move Your Marketing Strategy Online.
- Choose a E Signature tools

Apps to go paperless 5 simple steps By [PCMag](#)

Packaging

- **Switching to vendors** that have :
 - Biodegradable and edible [peanuts packaging](#)
 - Mycelium based packaging
- **Educating suppliers and consumers**
 - Pressuring supplier/distributor with facts about their competition going green
 - Try to find others who may want your excess packaging or Post it for free at curb pick up
- Reusing and repurposing current packaging. Use the packaging you receive to pack outbound goods. Leave a note to tell your customer that its what your doing to reduce waste!
- Do a Surplus exchange posting on SEAlliance's facebook page.

2.2 Waste Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS

DETAILS

Composting

Start a composting program at your office.

- Worm bin Set up can be a joyous occasion! Local Ottawa business **'Box of Life'** can set you up.
- Food cyclers can turn your food waste into a nutrient-rich soil amendment within a week
- Compost bins, compost accelerators, activators or compost starters are concentrated fungi and bacteria packages. When applied, they can jumpstart or bootstrap the decomposition process.

Food production waste

- Conduct inventory frequently in order to compare purchase and quantity of garbage. Change the menu in order to minimize the quantity of leftovers. Create rules for this program.

Don't want to deal with indoor composting?

- Have the City pick up all your recycling and compost for free by participating in the **Yellow Bag program**. It is a convenient and affordable garbage and waste diversion service for small businesses in Ottawa that generate smaller amounts of garbage.

3 Transportation

Transportation and the use of natural gas plays a critical role for addressing business-related sustainability challenges, as this theme encompasses many aspects such as: employee travel to the workplace, to the transportation of goods and services. In Ottawa, this category has been identified as a major source of emissions for the local business sector.

With the goal of overall reducing your enterprise's amount of produced emissions, below we have identified key challenges and their corresponding solutions and local resources to help your business on the road to sustainability!

3.1 Transportation Challenges

- Products coming from overseas
 - Not accessing solely local supply chains
 - Car dependency/ car centric
 - Bus is affordability/accessibility for employees and customers
 - Transportation accessibility to your business' location
-

3.2 Transportation Resources & Solutions

SOLUTIONS	DETAILS
Individual Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging employees to walk, bike, scooter, bus, carpooling • Incentive for customers to shop local, to discourage buying elsewhere (e.g. maybe a sticker to say “we’re a small shop- come on in!”)
Supply-Related Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing local source of supply. Joining local business groups like SEalliance and Ottawa Green Business can or local industry associations to help find local suppliers.
Product Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car sharing services (e.g. Communauto) • Zero emission couriers (e.g. Biking and walking couriers) • Trexcity services (local delivery company, reduces the number of people making small local deliveries) • Delivering more products virtually if possible (E.g. sending photo products virtually rather than physically)
Executive – Level Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving benefits for public transportation to reduce business travel. • Considering location upon hiring • Offering working from home to avoid travels • Some workplaces/schools giving incentives for employees/students to take public transportation • E.g. Providing a car sharing allowance • Creating pop-up shops in popular areas • Travel/shipping City-wide • Conducting audits to measure company’s transportation footprint • City buses going electric in Ottawa - incentives to take the bus could be explored

Appendices of Resources: Energy

Here are some more resources for businesses about energy conservation:

- **Energy Efficiency Grants For Ontario Businesses**
- Investing in carbon offsets **here**
- Energy retrofits in a leased/rental space **here**
- Deep retrofits **here**
- Increasing Energy Costs **here**
- TOD(time of day)/smart buildings initiative **here**
- Creating a Green Team in your company: to apply to grants, make plans within your business **example steps**
- Partnering with local stakeholders/other businesses as an alliance to make collaborative changes/collective impact SEA and many business associations within Ottawa.
- Tips to save energy (e.g. unplug appliances) **10 steps**
- Energy assistance **here**
- **Green homes grant**
- **Small business energy tips**
- **Best business energy saving practices**
- Energy Manager Program - Through energy managers offers expertise for businesses on what energy-saving equipment and technologies are right for your business. Energy managers are trained to find energy savings, identify smart energy investments, secure financial incentives, and unlock competitive advantages. To learn more about the Energy Manager Program, you can contact **EnergyManagers@ieso.ca** via e-mail.

Appendices of Resources: Waste

Here are some more resources for Ottawa-specific businesses about waste consumption and zero-waste:

Zero waste stores in Ottawa:

- [Nu Grocery](#)
- [Herb and Spice](#)
- [The Piggy Market](#)
- [Natural Food Pantry](#)

Eco-Packaging, Ottawa better alternatives to enhance greener changes and practices.

- [Eco-Packaging](#)
- [All Eco](#)

Composting product Ottawa business:

- [Tero Innovation](#)
- [Food cycler](#)
- [Worm Composting](#)
- [Making a Business Case for Composting Video](#)

Appendices of Resources: Transportation

Here are some more resources for alternative transportation in Ottawa:

- **Healthy Transportation Coalition**

A grassroots movement of concerned citizens, organizations and businesses working together in the National Capital Region.

- **Cycle Salvation**

Strives to provide training and employment for people who are economically disadvantaged, while diverting bikes destined for scrap and landfill.

- **Ottawa Insights - Transportation**

The environmental impacts of transportation are largely defined by how residents commute to work, and access services.

Conclusion

This report's goal was to serve **Ottawa's small business community** by providing **local resources** to address **common challenges** that many enterprises face when trying to become more environmentally sustainable. But balancing **People, Planet, and Profit** should not be an unachievable feat.

Moreover, there are many rewards for businesses to reap such as **lower costs of operation, as well as access to new markets**. For example, the federal government has a green purchasing policy which would give businesses with environmentally preferred goods and services. **Please see link here to the policy.**

Canadians are also willing to support businesses that are environmentally responsible, local and have products and services that are green. A report from 2019 shows evidence of this.

Our teams at **Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City (OBEC) and Sustainable Enterprise Alliance (SEA)** hope that this report has been a valuable tool for all members of your business, from general managers to employees, for finding sustainable solutions to various pain points that are often encountered when trying to operate more sustainably.

. We have also created a **living document of resources** that will be updated periodically, to help your business reach its sustainability goals.

Thank you for taking the time to invest in sustainability - your business and the planet will both reap the benefits!

All the best in your endeavours,
The OBEC and SEA Team

Want to join? Contact Us!

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