



## Introduction to Green Teams at Harvard

Harvard's Green Teams are informal, self-organized groups of staff who are dedicated to advancing sustainability within their School and/or Department.

Green Teams set their own priorities (e.g., education, waste reduction, events) inspired by the [University-wide Sustainability Action Plan](#), develop and execute their own initiatives or projects (with local departmental approval), and determine their own meeting cadence based on their goals and their community's needs and interests. Green Teams are an opportunity to advance sustainability on campus, build networks and peer collaboration, and develop leadership experience.

To support Green Teams, the Office for Sustainability (OFS) convenes the Green Team Network, comprising 1-2 representatives from each of Harvard's Green Teams, for quarterly meetings to share resources and opportunities, troubleshoot challenges, and brainstorm solutions and project ideas. OFS also hosts a Teams Channel for Green Team members to share information.

## Want to get involved?

First check the [Harvard Green Team webpage](#) to see if your School or Department already has a Green Team to join; and if not, keep reading to learn how to create your own!

## Creating a Green Team

### 1. CHECK WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR FIRST:

If you plan to spend time creating a Green Team (whether during your paid time or as a volunteer during off-hours), you should check with your supervisor first and consider the following questions:

- *Does your supervisor approve of you using Harvard resources (e.g., your email account) for this?*
- *Will you be doing this work during your own time (lunchtime, off-hours)?*
- *Is your supervisor comfortable with you contacting others to pull together a team?*
- *What role (if any) do they want in oversight (e.g., reviewing newsletters)?*
- *Do you need to remind new members to check in with their respective supervisors before they join or commit to a project?*

### 2. FIND PARTNERS:

Recruit fellow staff members interested in launching a team. Do not be afraid to start small with one or two people. Designate a leader (or leaders), and any other roles that might be helpful (e.g., Communications Lead, Membership Lead, Recordkeeper). Consider having someone in charge of membership (growing the team or keeping members engaged).

### 3. NOTIFY OFS:

When you are ready, email [sustainability@harvard.edu](mailto:sustainability@harvard.edu) to say you want your Green Team be added to the [Green Teams webpage](#) (so others can find you) and who you want to be on the Green Team Network (one to two representatives from your team, who OFS will invite to quarterly Green Team Network meetings).

#### **4. SET PRIORITIES & REALISTIC GOALS:**

Hold a brainstorming meeting to select only a few initial priorities (do not burn out early!), decide what types of work you will start with (e.g., community education and skill-building, operational projects aligned with the function of your office/department, cost-saving interventions, a newsletter, etc.), and set one or two achievable short-term goals. Ask participants what they want to learn about, what they can teach, and how they want to spend their time.

#### **5. (OPTIONAL) WRITE IT DOWN**

Consider writing down your plans/priorities in a charter and/or high-level project plan so that members (existing and new) are aligned and next steps and roles are clearly defined.

#### **6. OUTREACH & CONNECTION:**

Create a way to communicate (e.g., email listserv, Teams group), recruit additional participants, and determine a meeting/check-in cadence. With appropriate approvals, consider introducing the Green Team at an all-staff meeting or in a department newsletter to reach a broader audience. You may also want two separate email lists – one for active members and a larger one for advertising events/opportunities.

#### **7. KEEP MOMENTUM:**

Track results, recognize and celebrate successes, and continue iterating on plans/priorities to remain flexible to address emerging sustainability needs/interests.

#### **8. ASK OFS FOR ADVISING SESSION:**

Once you have a sense of your team's priorities, reach out to OFS ([sustainability@harvard.edu](mailto:sustainability@harvard.edu)) to see if one of their staff members could join your team for a brainstorming/priority-setting session.

## Examples of Green Team Projects

- Review and consider how OFS's resources could be applied to your work and/or departmental operations:
  - Sustainable Office Guide
  - Sustainable Lab Guide
  - Sustainable Meeting and Events Guide
  - Sustainable Purchasing Guidance
- Incorporate into an existing newsletter or regular communications: your favorite sustainability tips and tricks, team challenges (e.g., “October team challenge: Try one new plant-based meal per week”), or campus sustainability events.
- Invite Harvard staff/faculty speakers to Green Team meetings or organize BYO-lunch “lunch-and-learns” on sustainability topics of interest.
- Read and discuss a sustainability-themed book, or host a documentary screening.
- Organize an event or activity for Earth Day (e.g., freecycle, plant giveaway, interactive waste sorting games, upcycled foods cooking demo).
- Host a freecycle or create a standing reuse room/area to reduce waste and save money. Consider product-specific swap events for items like clothing, puzzles, or books.
- Gather staff for a walking tour of Harvard’s biodiversity and other sustainability sites on campus.
- Research/benchmark what others in your field or at other Harvard departments are doing to advance sustainability in their work, and summarize some best practices tailored to your team.

**Questions? Contact [sustainability@harvard.edu](mailto:sustainability@harvard.edu).**