

Activity 1

Baseline Sustainability Assessment

Goals:

- Highlight specific practices and procedures relating to sustainability
- Assess the current status of a particular area and create a baseline of information to measure sustainability progress
- Identify potential improvement opportunities

Outcomes:

- Raised awareness and changes in behaviours
- Implementation of specific programs to help improve the economic, environmental, and social health conditions
- Demonstration of the tangible benefits of sustainability strategies

Background: A sustainability assessment can be described as a systematic process of assessing an organization's activities in order to establish a sustainability baseline to explore opportunities for improvement. Sustainability assessments may include environmental auditing of areas such as energy and waste, to more sophisticated analysis of management systems, community involvement, and performance indicators. An audit is often the first step to making real change in the built environment as it allows for quantifiable, statistical data collection, informed strategic planning, and easier communication of needs and achievements.

The Office of Sustainability conducts baseline audits of the built environment every three-five years. Audit parameters include aspects such as lights, fixtures, recycling stations, alternative transportation infrastructure, and office equipment. These audit results are used to help plan strategies at a university-wide level. These strategies are included in a university-wide sustainability plan and university sustainability assessment reports.

Sustainability Teams can use sustainability assessment as a learning tool, to identify specific opportunities within an area of the University, and to aid the Office of Sustainability in university-wide efforts. The focus of Sustainability Team assessments are on discovery and education.

Place: Faculty building, office place, residence floor or house, etc.

People:

- Auditors
- Data Analysts
- Communications people
- Promotional representatives (optional)

Materials needed:

- Assessment Sheet (posted on the educational material section of ReThink: Sustainability on Campus website)
- Data master sheet for electronic recording (posted on the educational material section of ReThink: Sustainability on Campus website)
- Camera (optional)
- Clipboard and pen
- Extra note-taking paper

Notes:

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with team to determine desired assessment areas and focuses• Meet with appropriate staff such as the building administrator to discuss the plan, receive approvals, and communicate the purpose of the assessment.	<i>You can do all or parts of the assessment.</i>
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine an appropriate time line that is convenient and is approved by appropriate building authorities and users if required.• Conduct part or all of the assessment.• Analyze results.	<i>Some energy audits are completed at night for convenience and to determine energy use after hours. Make arrangements with appropriate building authorities.</i>
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate findings and thoughts to the Office of Sustainability and building occupants.	<i>Communicate findings with a constructive tone to build positively on findings.</i>

Follow-Up:

- Meet up with team to discuss how the assessment went. Did anything surprise you? Do you now have a different perspective of sustainability after completing this assessment?