

## **Going green without breaking the bank**

You'd like to reduce your nonprofit's environmental footprint, but fear that going green is too time- and resource-intensive. There are, in fact, many simple and relatively inexpensive ways to become more environmentally conscious.

### **Baby steps**

You can start your green makeover with small actions. For example, conserve paper by printing documents only when you truly need a hard copy. When you do print, use both sides of the paper. Also, try to reuse file folders and envelopes that are still functional. And make it easy to recycle: Place containers throughout your facilities to capture paper, glass, plastic and other materials that are accepted by your community's recycling program.

Extend this reuse philosophy to purchasing. Buy recycled printer and copy machine paper and other paper products, such as paper towels. Consider buying recycled ink cartridges, which not only conserve materials, but generally are cheaper than new ones.

### **Make a big impact**

Take a long, hard look at your processes for items that can be eliminated. For example, scrub your mailing lists of old and duplicate addresses to trim your printing and mailing burden. Or, even better, switch some of your print communications to electronic versions. Ask your supporters if they want to continue to receive printed information. You may find that donors or members regularly throw away (or recycle) the bulk mail you send them.

Here are other simple ways of going green:

- Post signs by light switches and electrical appliances that remind employees to turn them off when they're not needed. And consider installing motion detectors in break and conference rooms, so that lights automatically switch off.
- Buy compact fluorescent light bulbs that use less energy. Compact fluorescents cost more initially, but they last longer than standard incandescent bulbs.
- Purchase newer, Energy Star rated machinery. Donated equipment is great, but energy efficient equipment can greatly reduce your electric bill.
- Install a programmable thermostat to minimize energy use during nights and weekends. Also, set the thermostat a degree or two cooler in the winter or a degree warmer in the summer.

A more ambitious project to consider is weatherproofing your office space. You'll likely recoup the initial cost with lower energy bills because weatherproofing prevents heat and air conditioning seepage.

### **Paying for worthy investments**

Many environmentally friendly changes require little or no financing to accomplish. But if like those of many nonprofits your budget is stretched too tight already, get creative. Distribute a "green wish list" to your supporters or ask board members to donate one compact fluorescent light bulb each time they attend a board meeting. Funding sources exist to help you take on bigger green projects, such as trading in your current vehicles for hybrids. Many private foundations fund nonprofits' green initiatives. The Kresge Foundation's Green Building Initiative, for example, gives as much as \$100,000 per organization to support environmentally sound construction and building rehabs. And, depending on your project, you may be able to tap federal, state or local funding sources. The EPA has a list of available funding on its Web site. (See "Green resources online.")

### **Greener is good**

Don't let cost keep you from turning your nonprofit greener. A few changes in your habits and the products you buy can make a big difference in your energy and other resource consumption, your financial bottom line, and even the public's opinion of your organization.

### **Sidebar: Green resources online**

The Web is full of useful tips and information for going green. Sites include:

ENERGY STAR. The site offer resources and information for all types of green projects (<http://www.energystar.gov>).

EPA. The EPA has an online clearinghouse of environmental information, including funding resources (<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/nonprof.htm>).

Earth 911. The site helps you locate by ZIP code places to recycle everything from newspapers to computers (<http://earth911.org/>).

Green Pages. Search the Green Pages for advice and direction for purchasing green products (<http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages/>).