Our Climate Alliance

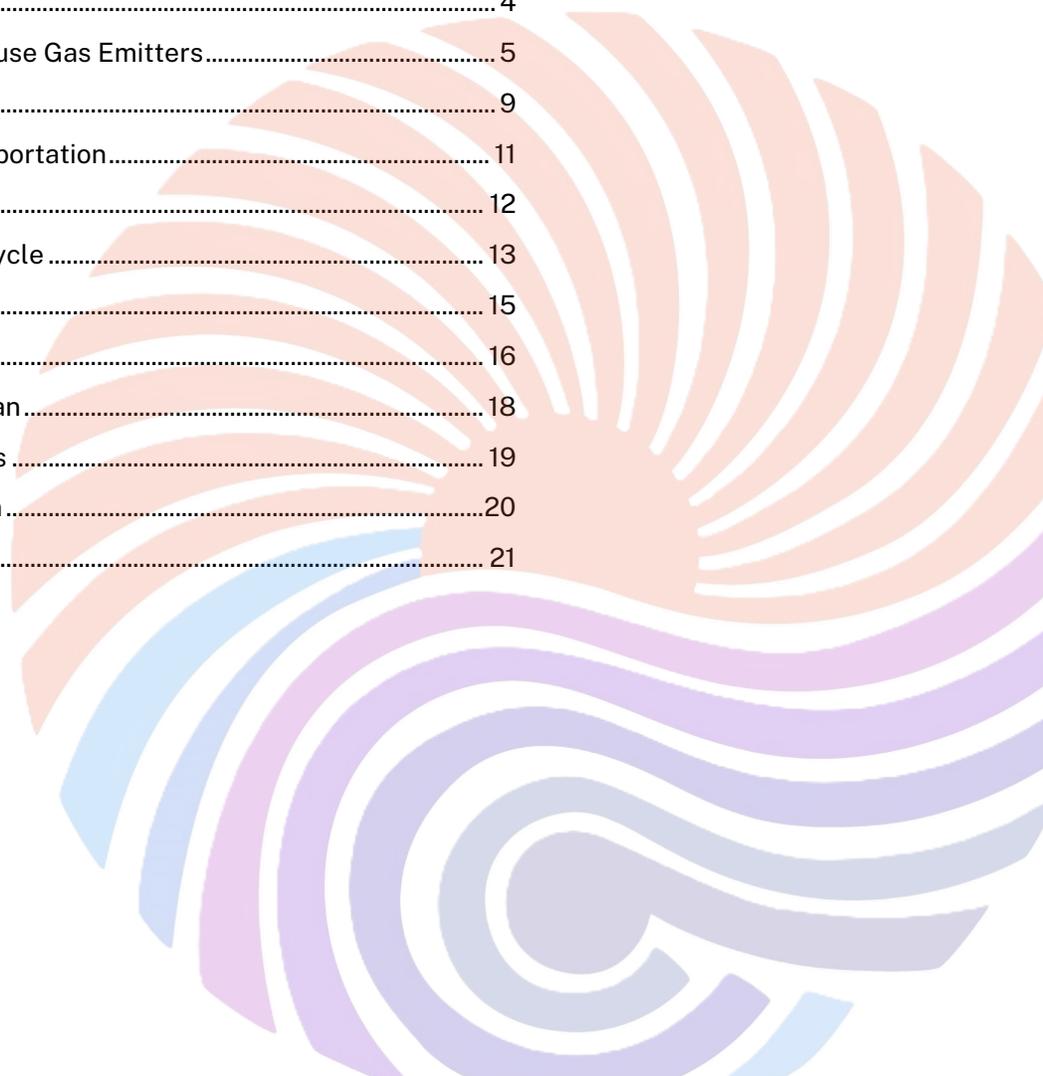# La Crosse Nonprofit Toolkit for Climate Action

Our Climate Alliance is a La Crosse, Wisconsin-based nonprofit. We seek to increase public awareness around the threat of climate change by offering actionable solutions to individuals and organizations.

www.ourclimatealliance.org

La Crosse Nonprofit Toolkit for Climate Action

Contents

Welcome!

The *Nonprofit Toolkit for Climate Action* provides steps your nonprofit can take to stop climate change. Nonprofits, as organizations created and motivated to serve the larger community, are natural leaders in mitigating climate change.

Use this toolkit to:

- Find effective actions that address global warming.

- Help your nonprofit and community take action.

- Save funds you can use toward your core mission or reinvest in green technology or causes.

Read this hardcopy and then download the online version (with links to many more resources) from our website.

https://ourclimatealliance.org/content/toolkit

Introduction

Nonprofits play a significant role in Wisconsin, helping people and the environment; they also contribute significantly to the financial well-being of the state. A few nonprofit organizations, such as hospitals, are large, but most are not. This toolkit is written for all nonprofits but is focused on smaller nonprofits that cannot hire sustainability coordinators.

Nonprofits address an enormous variety of issues and clients; some, such as churches and schools, have communities that may be interested in activities that address climate change. Please review the supplemental tool on community actions.

Let the world's nonprofits — steeped in hope, versed in advocacy, and empowered by engagement and intention — act as an indomitable and winning force for change.

Peggy Brannigan, Sustainability Coordinator on Linked In for Nonprofits

Climate change disproportionately harms people of color, immigrants, low-income communities, and other vulnerable populations.

Council of Nonprofits

Nonprofits, Climate, and Community

Nonprofits can make a difference in fighting climate change, by the numbers:

- Nonprofits employ more than 10% of the workforce — more than 12.4 million workers.

- Energy cost savings can redirect limited funds to their mission-critical work.

- Energy costs are the second largest operational expense for nonprofits behind salaries."

www.energy.gov, Energy Efficiency First: Preparing your Nonprofit for Solar

Using the Toolkit

We have the tools and the knowledge to make a difference, as described in this guide:

➤ Actions to rein in global warming.

➤ Resources on actions your nonprofit can take to help the environment and your community, and rebates and incentives to make climate technology affordable.

➤ Steps for developing a climate action plan.

About our Warming Planet

The mechanisms driving atmospheric warming are well understood. The good news is that we have tools to address this global threat to our planet: we know what's driving it, so we can slow it down.

Fossil fuels are significant contributors to global climate change. We are replacing them with renewables, such as solar and wind energy. To do this, we need new policies, regulations, and investment in alternate energy sources. Our actions, as individuals and groups, support renewable power and the switch to electricity throughout our infrastructure.

To interrupt climate change, we need to use electricity throughout our society. Right now, we rely on fossil fuels, which create energy through a process that generates greenhouse gases. This is largely to blame for the current global warming crisis. Renewables, such as wind and solar, generate electricity **without creating greenhouse gas**.

Because of this, we need to completely change our infrastructure so we can directly use electricity. This change involves electrifying buildings. We need to take out equipment that uses natural gas and oil. Specifically, this means we need to remove furnaces, standard hot water heaters, and gas stoves and ovens.

To interrupt global warming and restore the health of our planet, we need to:

• **Use renewables**, which will replace fossil fuels.

• **Use electricity throughout our society**.

• **Reduce energy demand** overall; as much as 68% of all the energy we generate in the U.S. is wasted.

• **Protect soil, plants, life, and water**.

Rent or Own?

Nonprofits come in all sizes — from small teams who work from home to large institutions, including churches and hospitals.

This guide intermingles actions for:

• nonprofits that **own facilities**

• nonprofits that **rent space**

• nonprofits with **work-at-home** staff.

The issues and actions are the same, but renters take a different approach--working with landlords (building owners); Work-at-home staff can pursue residential upgrades or work with the owner if they rent.

La Crosse Specifics

The La Crosse Climate Action Plan determined that the city's biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and waste are, in order of size:

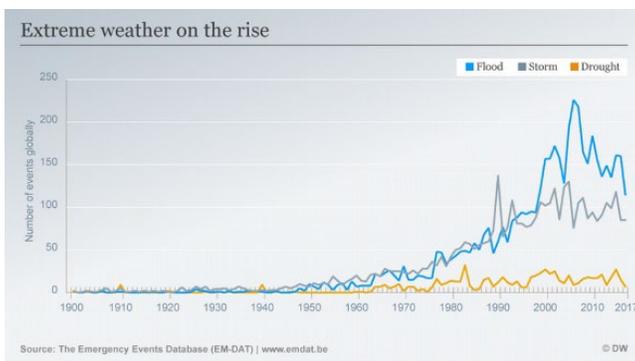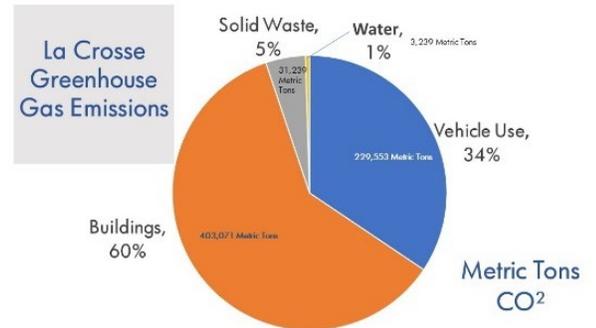➤ Buildings

➤ Transportation

➤ Waste

➤ Water/Rainwater

The toolkit presents actions you can take to address these greenhouse gas emitters.

The guide addresses these and a few additional categories that help in the fight against climate change:

- **Buildings** — including changes that owners and renters can make.

- **Renters** — a focus on actions by nonprofits that rent space.

- **Water Use Indoors** — tips on how to limit water waste indoors.

- **Waste** — managing waste responsibly; this includes food, electronics, yard, and hazardous waste.

- **Landscaping** — steps to take to protect our water and waterways.

- **Events** – creating green events that support your community and stop climate change.

- **Climate Action Plan** — how to make one and an example plan.

Check **supplemental materials for nonprofits** for more actions your nonprofit can take, including actions that encourage your community to engage in climate-positive action.

La Crosse is **getting hotter.** The area is experiencing increasing temperatures, increasingly severe storms, and flooding. Even our growing season has changed. The La Crosse region is now a USDA Hardiness zone of 5 instead of 4. This changes crops and wildlife habitat.

Buildings: Biggest Greenhouse Gas Emitters

Buildings, rented or owned, are the largest contributors to man-made atmospheric carbon. We need to work and live comfortably, which means heating and cooling our homes and workplaces. Right now, we draw our power through utilities, which rely primarily on fossil fuel.

Buildings, including rented space, churches, and other non-residential structures, consume more than twice the energy of homes and apartments per square foot in the La Crosse area.

> "Major opportunities to decarbonize ... buildings ... include the **substitution of electricity for direct fossil-fuel combustion** and improved energy efficiency."

Increasing Energy Efficiency and Reducing Energy Demand

Nonprofits that Rent Space

Nonprofits renting space in commercial buildings may want to talk to their landlords about energy efficiency upgrades to pursue, which may be cost-effective given current rebates and incentives. Renters may need to ask landlords for permission and possibly financial support in making changes that save energy — and money — over time. Smaller changes can also help, which do not require approval.

Nonprofits With Staff that Works at Home

For nonprofits operating primarily from the homes of volunteers, encourage volunteers to reduce energy use in their homes, if possible. If your nonprofit can afford it, offer to help pay for green improvements, or reimburse volunteers some of the extra cost associated with signing up for renewable energy through Xcel's Renewable Connect program.

Nonprofits that Own Building(s)

Nonprofits that own buildings have a range of options to reduce energy use, ranging from smaller, low-cost, **easy-to-implement actions** to big-ticket investments. Rebates and incentives may make some of these upgrades affordable.

> "**Energy costs are the second-highest operational expense for many nonprofits**, behind only salaries. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as much as 30 percent of the energy consumed in hospitals, worship facilities, and other ... buildings is wasted, leading to enormous opportunities for energy efficiency improvements and energy savings."

Energy-efficient Lighting

LED lighting: Uses 75% less energy and lasts up to 25 times longer than other lighting methods. In larger buildings like schools, hospitals, and colleges, motion-activated lights reduce lightings' power draw by at least 25%. In meeting rooms, these save 45% to 65% of the energy used to light the room.

Energy-efficient Office Equipment

- Upgrade Energy Star office equipment and appliances to reduce energy use. An Energy Star computer uses 30%-65% less energy than a standard computer.

- Ask staff and volunteers to put their computers in sleep mode when the computer is not in use for short periods, such as 20 minutes. Check your computer's main menu for example using a windows or apple keyboard icon, which displays options such as sleep and restart.

- Switch to smart power strips. When these detect that the attached equipment is sleeping, they shut down. Without this feature, power strips always draw power, even if everything attached to the power strip is sleeping or off.

- When getting new computers, get laptops rather than workstations when possible. Laptops use 80% less power than desktop computers.

- Find an environmentally friendly hosting service for your nonprofit website. "Hosting services are the invisible fossil fuel consumers." Computing is energy-intensive, so using a planet-friendly hosting service, one that relies on renewable energy, makes a big difference in the nonprofit's environmental footprint. Check the TechRadar.com website or try a simple search engine query, such as 'green hosting services.'

Building Automation: Smart Buildings

Nonprofit Building Owners: Consider fitting buildings with integrated monitoring and reporting using sensors and other equipment, to make your building a smart building. These buildings use software to monitor sensors from around the building, and connect to equipment, such as heating cooling, access identification, security, and air quality. These "can boost heating and cooling efficiency more than 20 percent[.]" The cost of installing them may be offset by financial assistance through rebates and incentives; some are listed below.

Use Energy Efficient Office Equipment

- Computers
- Imaging equipment
- Monitors
- Phones/VoIP
- Uninterruptible power supplies
- Audio/Video

Building Automation Systems

Building automation systems manage hardware and software, connecting heating, venting and air conditioning system (HVAC), lighting, security, and other systems to communicate on a single platform. Buildings with comprehensive automation are also called smart buildings.

Buildings Without Automation: Smart Thermostat

Nonprofit Renters: For buildings *without* automated heating/cooling, check with the facilities or building manager to see if you can install a smart thermostat in your offices. These can be installed relatively inexpensively and **reduce overall energy costs** by lowering energy use. Smart thermostats can reduce cooling costs by up to 15%.

Building Retrofits

Building owners: Greater investments in efficiency means greater savings.

Nonprofits that rent space can **educate the landlord** about potential savings to encourage the building's owner to upgrade. These upgrades can include:

- Insulated windows.
- Building insulation improvement.
- Heat-pump and other updated energy-efficient HVAC systems.

Add Renewable energy to buildings

Solar and wind energy produce electricity that can greatly reduce your electricity bill.

- Building owners: Add solar panels to the building. Choose a local installer who can visit your site. With federal incentives, building owners **can save 30-40% of the cost**, greatly shortening the payback period.
- Renters and Work-at-home: Choose renewable through Xcel's Renewable Connect program, which lets you sign up for affordable all-renewable energy. Also, advocate for solar, an option that can reduce energy bills by 15% but is not yet legal in Wisconsin.

Heat Pumps Replace Furnaces/AC

Building owners: To replace gas and oil furnaces, consider an increasingly affordable and climate-friendly option: heat pumps. These use heating and cooling technology that has come of age. Heat pumps move heat, rather than generating heat.

Most heat pumps can draw heat from outside air even in winter. In Wisconsin, most buildings retain some kind of heater, such as electric coil heating or a furnace, used only in the coldest weather. Significant rebates and incentives are available, boosting their affordability: "heat pumps can be eligible for thousands of dollars in rebates and tax credits."

Heat Pumps

"The most common type of heat pump is the air-source heat pump, which transfers heat between [inside] and outside air."

"The cost to heat with a heat pump is lower than oil, propane or electric baseboard; in some cases, much lower; cost is roughly on-par with natural gas heat, depending on electric and gas prices in your area[.]"

Renters and Work-at-home: get informed about heat pumps and talk to your landlord or see if it would work at your home for those who own their homes.

> **Heat pumps move existing heat around**; furnaces generate heat by burning fuel; traditional electric heating systems generate heat in a less efficient manner. **Moving heat (with a heat pump) requires less energy than generating heat**. Heat pumps **are affordable** with current rebates and incentives.

Building-Related Resources

Heat Pumps

- Energy.gov: https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/heat-pump-systems

- Energy Sage: "Heat Pumps: Everything you Need to Know."

- Rewiring America. "Upgrade Your Heating and Cooling With a Heat Pump." Provides a checklist for renters. Also has a calculator to find incentives and rebates.

> A La Crosse heat pump supplier talked about a customer who got a call from Xcel inquiring about the gas bill, which had dropped to almost nothing for a period of months. "Why aren't you using gas?" The customer replied, "I have a heat pump."

Financing and retrofit tips

- Encourage Xcel to provide on-bill financing programs that offer low-cost options to pay for energy efficiency and electrification measures over time, with no upfront costs.

- Wisconsin's "new PACE financing creates a mechanism for … nonprofit … property owners to obtain low-cost, non-recourse financing for up to 100% of the cost of energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements."

- "Advanced Energy Retrofit Guides" https://www.energy.gov/eere/buildings/advanced-energy-retrofit-guides. US Department of Energy guides.

- Check Focus on Energy rebates section for incentives.

Renewable Energy

La Crosse Solar Ready Checklist. https://palebluedot.llc/lacrosse-solar-ready-guide.

"Important renewable energy organizations in Wisconsin" https://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/wi.

> ### Energy Savings Potential
> "On average, **30% of the energy** used in **commercial buildings** is wasted, which presents building owners and managers with a huge opportunity for operating cost savings."
>
> "Even with modest energy efficiency measures, you can get **cost-savings of 20%.**"
>
> "…lowering the average office temperature by 1° C in winter can cut energy consumption by 8%."

"A Checklist for Building Owners Considering Solar Energy,"
https://sustainableenergyaction.org/resources/checklist-for-building-owners-considering-solar-energy/.

Energy Efficiency

https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/save_energy_commercial_buildings/finance_projects/find_rebates. A starting point for finding energy-efficient commercial building equipment eligible for rebates.

https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/financing-and-incentives. Search the nationwide list of rebates and incentives.

https://focusonenergy.com/solutions. "Focus on Energy is Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource program funded by the state's investor-owned energy utilities."

https://www.epa.gov/green-power-markets/inflation-reduction-act. A description of incentives and benefits through the **Inflation Reduction Act**. These include:

- Renewable Electricity Production Tax Credit (PTC)
- Energy-Efficient Commercial Buildings Tax Deduction
- U.S. Department of Energy Loan Guarantee Program

https://www.energystar.gov/products/business. A starting point for finding energy saving products and rebates.

Check Focus on Energy, which provides information about instant rebates.

https://wi.my.xcelenergy.com/s/business/cost-savings/business-energy-assessments. Energy audits through Xcel.

Options for Renters

Renters do have options. These range in difficulty, depending on your landlord and your budget, with options available to almost all renters.

Possible Retrofits — Doesn't Hurt to Ask Your Landlord

Going electric is great for landlords, who want to save money and increase profits. Yours might not know that. For tips on talking to your landlord, check this guide, by Rewiring America.

Review the possible savings with the landlord; consider offering them the *Small Business Toolkit on Sustainability,* which goes into detail on potential savings. The owner may be motivated if they understand that **not** looking into it leaves a lot of money on the table.

"...retrofits are the most cost-efficient way to save on rising power bills"

Yale.edu

9

Nonprofits that rent space may be able to collaborate with the building owner on a green-lease option, which lets you support the owner's efforts to create an energy-efficient building, saving tenant costs.

Projects for Renters — Check First

You can perform basic weatherproofing after confirming that your landlord doesn't mind. Simple and affordable steps include adding window coverings and caulking and adding weather strips. To check for leaks, use the thermal imaging gun available for checkout at the public library.

Small Electrification Projects — Skip the Landlord

For a small sum, nonprofits that rent can go green.

Get a Portable Induction Cooktop

Add an induction cooktop to replace gas or electric burners. These use less energy. These are relatively inexpensive and only require an electric outlet and a little counter space.

Buy Renewables from Xcel

If it works in your situation, sign up for Xcel's Renewable Connect program. This costs a little more, but ensures your power comes from renewable energy.

Look into Stand-alone Solar

For a small sum you can purchase a stand-alone solar unit, which includes solar panels and batteries, and possible additional components. Although this is only an emerging trend for small organizations, options are in development that let you add some solar to your operations. It is not a one-size fits all, but it's worth paying attention to as technology evolves. This option can supplement power, if configured properly.

Advocate for Community Solar

Wisconsin is considering legislation to permit community solar, which can reduce renter utility bills. Supporting this legislation gives renters access to renewable energy. Using community solar, renters can save 5 to 15 percent off their utility bills each month.

Renter Resource

Rewiring America: Renters. Includes section on options for renters.

Wisconsin Action Alert: Support Community Solar

Community solar, also known as solar farms or solar gardens, lets people share the benefits of centralized single solar energy system. Follow the Wisconsin Solar Coalition and take action!

Electric Vehicles and Transportation

Transportation is the second largest carbon pollution source in La Crosse. The good news is that with the recent generation of electric vehicles, sustainable transportation is increasingly affordable, and costs much less to run. Used EVs make excellent options for nonprofits that own vehicles.

MIT studies "found **electric cars were cheaper**." Electric car pricing has dropped dramatically. Further, battery-powered electric vehicles have significant advantages over gas-powered cars:

- Far fewer moving parts that can break, reducing repair costs.

- Regenerative braking, reducing brake wear and tear.

- Inexpensive recharging.

- No oil changes required.

Larger nonprofits can:

- Consider offering free EV charging.

- Consider sponsoring bus passes.

- Offer a parking cash-out option for your employees, an incentive for non-driving staff. This pays non-driving staff the equivalent of free parking to staff who drive.

- Electrify if your nonprofit owns vehicles or gas/diesel equipment. Electric options are available for snowblowers, riding lawn mowers, forklifts, trucks, and delivery vans. For information, look into Xcel's *Fleet Electrification Program*.

Low- and No-pollution Commuting

- Encourage biking, e-biking, and walking instead of using gas vehicles.

- Encourage telecommuting when that is an option. The average employee saves up to $4,000 per year just by teleworking part-time.

- Hold meetings online, instead of in person, as appropriate.

Transportation Resources

- *Rebates and Programs*, Wisconsin Public Service https://www.wisconsinpublicservice.com/savings/business/.

- *Wisconsin electric vehicle rebates, tax credits and other incentives* https://www.edmunds.com/electric-car/tax-credits-rebates-incentives/wisconsin/.

- Identify nearby EV charging stations: https://palebluedot.llc/lacrosse-ev-guide#/find/nearest.

> "it can **cost about half as much** to drive an electric vehicle (EV) as an equivalent gasoline vehicle"
>
> *Energy.gov*

Water Use Indoors

Building Owners: install water-sense bathroom fixtures and appliances.

Renters: check with your landlord to see if you can upgrade to water efficient fixtures.

Work-at-Home: If your volunteers or clients can be persuaded, recommend that they install water efficient equipment; this saves water heating bills and reduces water use.

Greywater: Look into reuse of greywater (for example, water used by sinks, showers, and washing machines) for irrigation and other permitted uses. Some options for setting up a grey water reuse system are described by the grey water action group. Although not commonly instituted, this is a great way to reuse water.

Toilets: If your toilet is 15 years old, consider upgrading to a high-efficiency 0.8 gallons per model. That can save 13,000 gallons of water per year.

Showers: Consider using a low-flow showerhead. This saves on energy (heating water) and water waste — to 27,000 gallons per year.. This is a good tip for volunteers or clients — saving money, water, and the planet.

Faucets: Inefficient faucets can be replaced with faucets that save more than 700 gallons per year.

Fix Leaks: Look into fixing leaks in a building. A small leak in a faucet can waste up to 3,000 gallons of water per year.

Appliances: Water-efficient appliances offer big saving. For example, by running a dishwasher when it is full, rather than handwashing, you can save up to 5,000 gallons of water per year. The most efficient washing machines use as little as seven gallons per load, compared to a whopping 54 for a traditional washer.

Don't Let It Run: It's not necessary to run a faucet continuously during activities such as brushing teeth, and shaving; by turning it off between use, you can save 8 gallons of water a day.

> If your nonprofit uses large quantities of water (for example, hospitals), consider following the tips provided by the Alliance for Water Efficiency.

Water-Related Resources

- Find water sense products and rebates. https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-products.

- Water Efficiency: https://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/.

- Grey Water Systems, legal to use in Wisconsin: https://greywateraction.org/greywater-reuse/.

- 45 Tips to Using Less Water: https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/45-ways-to-conserve-water-in-the-home-and-yard. /

- https://sftool.gov/learn/about/45/water-efficiency. Resources on water-related topics, compiled by the US General Service Administration.

- https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-products. List of EPA WaterSense labeled fixtures.

Waste: Reduce, *Reuse,* Recycle

Recycling helps the planet and helps reduce the cost of materials. The most important option: reduce — just use less! After that, reuse when you can, recycle after that.
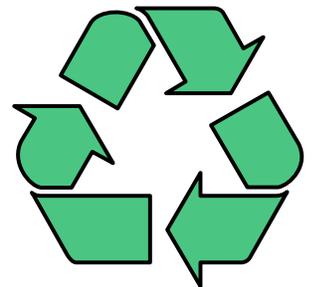
Donate rather than pitch: Check to see if any of your used and still working electronics and office materials can be donated.

Waste Audit: Determine one item your nonprofit significantly adds to the landfill, then ask your staff and waste and recycling haulers for ideas on how to reduce, reuse, or recycle that item. La Crosse County offers free waste auditing: https://www.lacrossecounty.org/hmp#audit.

Compost: Collect unused food and yard waste for compost.

- Try a tumbling composter for the nonprofit.

- Or try electric tabletop composting: https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/appliances/g60373874/best-countertop-composter/.

- Contact *Harters* and *Hilltopper* in La Crosse for commercial composting. Consider subscribing and sharing the cost and the container with neighbors. (https://harters.net/composting/ and https://www.hilltopperrefuse.com/special-services)

Recycling: Encourage recycling commercial paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and styrofoam: https://www.lacrossecounty.org/hmp.

Food Waste

- Get a headcount before ordering meals to limit excess food, which may go to waste.

- Encourage employees to take home leftovers.

- Collect food for composting. If you have large amounts of leftover food, contact local haulers for composting — farmers call compost black gold. Help the community!

- Add a vegetable-based meal option to meetings that include meals.

- Source food locally.

Electronic Waste

Check with La Crosse and independent recyclers to determine proper disposal of electronics and appliances that no longer work.

Hazardous waste: La Crosse County offers hazardous waste collection options for groups that generate a limited amount of hazardous waste. https://lacrossecounty.org/hmp.

Recycling: Check with your recycler to determine the best methods of recycling electrical equipment; donate it if it is still working.

Yard Waste

From early spring and through November, citizens of La Crosse can take advantage of the brush and yard waste site to drop off approved natural materials. For details about what is accepted, check the La Crosse drop-off brush/yard web pages. Attendants review what you bring in. Please note that materials must be emptied from bags — no compostable or paper bags permitted. Permitted materials include:

- Brush, which includes "branches and tree limbs from 1/4-inch to 8-inches in diameter and less than 8-feet in length."

- Food waste includes "fruit & vegetable matter (including cores and rinds), flour & grain items such as bread, rice, and pasta, coffee grounds & filters, eggshells, and [...] uneaten food/leftovers."

- Yard waste "grass clippings, leaves, weeds and the tops of garden plants".

Food Waste

According to the USDA:

"... food is the single largest category of material placed in municipal landfills, where it emits methane," which is a big source of pollution."

"In the United States, food waste is estimated at between **30-40 percent** of the food supply."
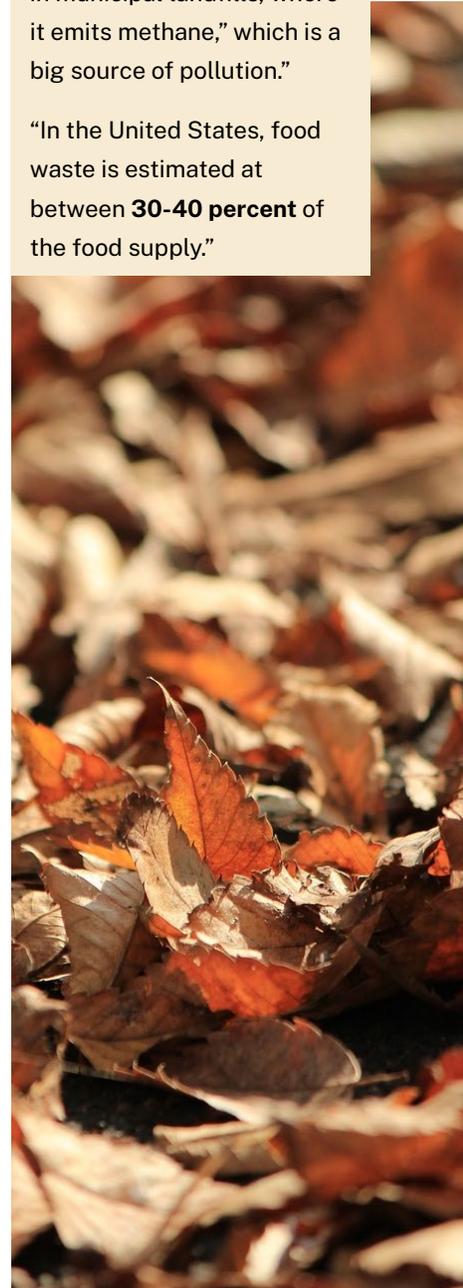
Managing Events

Events waste resources unless they are planned with care. For events sponsored by nonprofits, take steps to reduce the associated climate impact. Sustainable practices reduce event cost by 20-30% and waste by 60-80% according to the Events Industry Council. Attendees increasingly want eco-friendly experiences, which demonstrate your organization's commitment to protecting our planet. This can increase attendance.

From invitations to cleanup, consider implementing green options:

- **Invitations**: digital invitations are increasingly common and reduce paper waste. Alternatively, use post-recycled paper or even seed paper to ensure an environmentally friendly event.

- **Venue**: use a centrally located location, when possible, to reduce transportation-related carbon, and ensure recycling and composting options are easily available. When possible, support virtual attendance.

- **Lighting and Decorations**: Select a venue that supports LED lighting, or better, solar-powered lighting, and opt for reusable and recyclable decorations.

- **Sustainable Food and Water Stations**: Make sure the food and water made available all use recyclable and compostable materials. If possible, use local catering or food sources to reduce transportation related carbon.

- **Event Materials**: use recyclable and environmentally friendly materials for any giveaways associated with the event, and use digital check in, and recyclable name tags.

- **Recycling and Composting** on site: Make sure the event has plentiful and obvious recycling and composting available, which also helps post-event cleanup to ensure eco-friendly practices (and speed).

- **Local, Eco-friendly Suppliers**: use local services and goods where possible, to limit transportation-related carbon emissions and minimize or eliminate waste and support community small businesses.

Event Carbon Calculators

For large events, consider evaluating the event's carbon footprint, setting green goals, and evaluating your success in reaching those goals, to continuously green up events. A calculator can help you tabulate:

- Carbon footprint (in tons or kilograms)

- Energy consumption (kilowatt-hours)

- Waste generated (in tons or kilograms)

- Water usage (in liters or gallons)

- Waste recycling rate (%)

Event Resources

- https://eventify.io/blog/sustainable-event-ideas.

- https://www.zoho.com/backstage/thegreenroom/eco-friendly-events.html.

- https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/plan-a-green-event-ds00/.

Landscaping

Owners: plant native botanicals around your nonprofit.

Renters: Check with landlord. If your landlord permits and your nonprofit can afford it, add native plants. This helps stop runoff and minimizes water. requirements.

Owners: You can also make sure the land is maintained without pesticides or chemical fertilizers. This small investment can help the larger community. For tips on native or xeriscape options, refer to the following section.

Invest in Native or Low Water Landscaping

As an owner, renter with permission, or stay-at-home, invest in gardens that are native or low water (xeriscape). Native plants thrive with minimal watering, using indigenous and drought-resistant plants. These require far less maintenance and greatly reduce or eliminate water bills, especially compared to grass lawns.

Native and Xeriscape Garden Advantages

- Stop runoff/flooding.

- Cool buildings using native trees.

- Eliminate pesticides.

- Reduce or eliminate the need for water.

- Reduce or eliminate maintenance, such as mowing.

Watering Best Practices

- Water in the evening or early morning, so less water is lost due to evaporation.

- Adjust sprinkles to water only vegetation, not streets and sidewalks.

- Hand-water or use drip lines in gardens so you're watering only the intended plants.

- Mulch around garden plants, again to minimize waste due to evaporation.

Landscape Resources

- Rainwater collection: This is legal in Wisconsin for irrigation and other non-potable uses. Collecting rainwater reduces storm run-off, as well.

- https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/rain-barrels/.

- Limit runoff: https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home.

- https://landscapingduty.com/wisconsin-xeriscape-ideas/.

- https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lands/EcologicalLandscapes.

Making a Climate Action Plan

A good first step in making a climate plan is to assess your organization's carbon footprint. To do this, gather values using the following table, then enter the values in a carbon calculator, listed below the table. For very small nonprofits, this step is optional.

Carbon Calculators

https://8billiontrees.com/carbon-offsets-credits/carbon-ecological-footprint-calculators/

https://coolcalifornia.arb.ca.gov/calculator-small-business: an easy-to-use carbon-footprint calculator, which lets you specify a location, such as La Crosse, WI.

Task	Value
A year's worth of energy bills	
For electricity, cost/year or kWh/year	_____ $/yr or kWh/yr
For gas, cost/year or kWh/year	_____ $/yr or kWh/yr
For heating oil, cost/year or kWh/year	_____ $/yr or kWh/yr
Waste: cubic yards per week (cubic yard=200 gallons)	_____ cubic yards
Recycling: cubic yards per week (cubic yard=200 gallons)	_____ cubic yards
Organizational Factors	
Number of staff	_____
Number of square feet of your nonprofit	_____ sq. feet
Estimate staff commute miles per year	_____ miles (total)
Estimate air travel for nonprofit per year	_____ miles (total)
Nonprofit owned vehicle (only gas- or diesel-powered)	
Vehicle 1	
Miles per year	_____ miles/year
MPG	_____ mpg
Fuel type	Diesel Gasoline
Vehicle 2	
Miles per year	_____ miles/year
MPG	_____ mpg
Fuel type	Diesel Gasoline

Climate Action Plan Process

Larger nonprofits may want to create a formal action plan. To do this:

- Review the toolkit and prioritize actions. Start by auditing energy use and calculating the nonprofit's carbon footprint.

- Assign someone or a small group to take the lead in part or all of the climate effort.

- Ask project leaders to encourage staff to contribute to climate goals and suggest climate positive actions.

- Create a rough schedule for the actions to be undertaken.

- Set aside a budget for this if your nonprofit can do so. For example, invest in LED lighting as existing lighting burns out, and sensors for light switches.

- After you have completed some of the steps over a period of time, calculate the effect of your efforts in reducing the group's environmental footprint, and evaluate cost savings.

- Consider using the savings from the plan to fund additional climate friendly upgrades.

The diagram is built on a process described by *wemeanbusinesscoalition.org*.
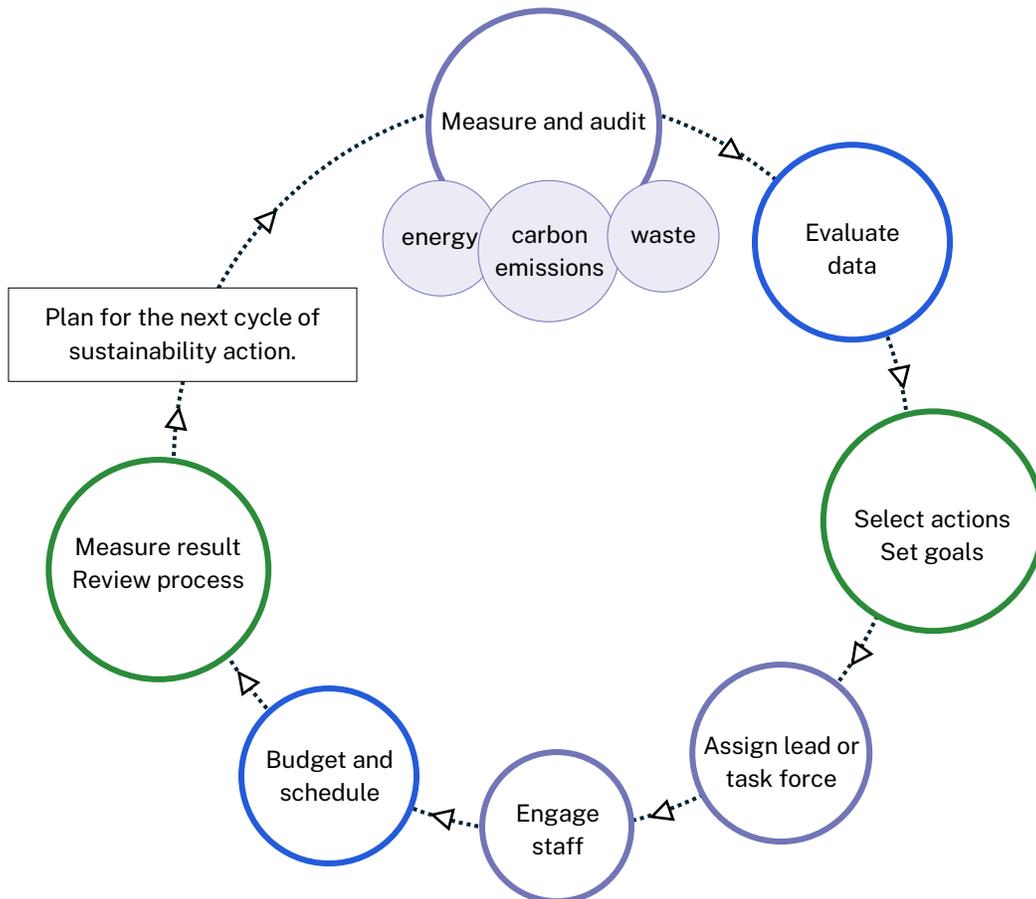
Sample Climate Action Plan

Following are example initiatives and targets. This format can be adapted to a spreadsheet format and may simplify tracking goals and progress.

Initiative: [category example - Reduce Energy Use]

Action	Target	Manager/Team	Timeframe	Notes
Power off computers				
Maintain HVAC				
Add solar panels				

Initiative: [category example - Reduce Waste]

Action	Target	Manager/Team	Timeframe	Notes
set out recycling containers				
implement recycling				

Initiative: [category example - Reduce Water Use]

Action	Target	Manager/Team	Timeframe	Notes
Install water-smart fixtures				

Initiative: [category example - Reduce Transportation Pollution]

Action	Target	Manager/Team	Timeframe	Notes
offer public transportation passes				
encourage cycling and walking to work				

Initiative: [category example – Contribute to Community]

Action	Target	Manager/Team	Timeframe	Notes
Plant a pollinator garden				
Help a local environmental project				

Start Here Checklist

Buildings

- ☐ Pursue an energy audit: request an audit through Xcel or perform one using online tools.

- ☐ Start small: turns off lights and equipment when not in use.

- ☐ Use renewables such as renewable energy through Xcel Renewable Connect.

Water

- ☐ Use non-toxic deicers and salt.

- ☐ Install water-efficient fixtures for up to 20% savings.

- ☐ Check for plumbing leaks in the building.

- ☐ Use native landscaping.

Transportation

- ☐ Encourage staff and volunteers to bike to work by adding a bike rack.

- ☐ Consider offering bus passes.

- ☐ Allow telecommuting to save money, energy, and time.

- ☐ Consider offering EV charging for employees.

Waste Reduction

- ☐ Plan ahead to reduce waste when serving food: get a headcount and request recyclable containers.

- ☐ Request a free waste audit from La Crosse County.

- ☐ Ask your employees for suggestions on how to reduce waste.

Notes

Notes

Our Climate Alliance

www.ourclimatealliance.org

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www.facebook.com/ourclimatealliance

www.linkedin.com/company/our-climate-alliance