

2014

Kirkland Green Business Program Audit Summary of Findings and Recommendations



City of Kirkland

Public Works Department

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Introduction and Overview

In 2013, the City of Kirkland hired Cascadia Consulting Group to complete an assessment of the **Kirkland Green Business Program**. The review covered current strengths and opportunities for improvement, as well as key decisions for program managers and staff members to address in the following key program topic areas:

- A. Categories and actions.**
- B. Application process and website.**
- C. Incentives, engagement, marketing, and recertification.**

Information on the evaluation process methodology is included in the next section. The evaluation process included:

- Program background research.
- A review of national green business engagement programs.
- Development of a survey of current program participants and non-participating businesses.

This summary report presents key findings and recommendations from the program evaluation for each of the key program topic areas listed above. Recommendations are based on the findings from the program background research and review of leading green business programs, as well as Cascadia's professional experience evaluating and implementing business assistance programs. Preliminary findings and recommendations were presented to program staff to obtain their comments and suggestions.¹ Cascadia considered this feedback in preparing the evaluation summary, though the recommendations do not necessarily represent majority or consensus opinions of program staff.

This summary presents findings and recommendations; Cascadia anticipates a follow-up effort with the City of Kirkland to develop these recommendations into an implementation strategy or action plan, identifying roles, responsibilities, and timelines for moving forward with improvements to this vital program. The follow-up effort should include administering the survey of current participants and non-participating businesses designed for this evaluation project. Feedback obtained should be evaluated and incorporated into any future program updates.

¹ Note that this document frequently uses *staff* and *staff member* broadly to include Kirkland Green Business Program specialists, program coordinators, and managers/directors.

Project Methodology

Cascadia conducted analysis and developed findings related to the Kirkland Green Business program model, program categories and actions, application process and website, incentives, engagement, marketing, and recertification process using two key approaches: 1) review of background documents and web resources and Kirkland’s business profile and 2) review of national green business engagement programs and meetings with program managers. Cascadia also created a survey of current program participants and non-participating businesses to gather additional information about the program’s strengths and opportunities for improvement. The survey will not be administered as part of this initial evaluation process.

Program Background Research

Cascadia reviewed the existing program categories and actions, the application process and website, current service offerings and program support resources, marketing materials, and existing reports, studies, and other documents that Kirkland Green Business Program staff provided. Documents covered the origins of the program, program strategies and activities, prior evaluations and surveys, business assistance workflows, and past data tracking. Cascadia also reviewed Kirkland’s business profile. A summary of this profile is provided in the [Key Findings on Current Program Model](#) section of this report.

Review of National Green Business Engagement Programs

Cascadia staff identified leading business outreach programs around the country for research. The list of programs included in this research is provided in Table 1 below. Cascadia drew this list primarily from the recently completed “National Summit on Green Business Engagement Programs Summary Report.”² In addition, Cascadia included two other local programs for comparison and possible future collaboration. Cascadia also reviewed several other programs which are mentioned throughout this report, but not included in the summary table.

Table 1. Green Business Engagement Programs Elsewhere Included in Research

Jurisdiction	Program Researched
State of California	California Green Business Program
District of Columbia	DowntownDC Business Improvement District
City of Saint Louis	St. Louis Green Business Challenge/ICLEI
City of Austin	Austin Green Business Leaders Program
City of Seattle	Get on the Map Campaign
Seven Washington Counties	EnviroStars Program

² “National Summit on Green Business Engagement Programs”. ABetterCity.
http://www.abettercity.org/docs/Summit_for_Green_Business_Engagement_Programs_Booklet_2%20May%202013.pdf

For each program, Cascadia gathered information through reviewing online materials and published reports. Cascadia also connected with many of these program managers to verify information. The research was intended to recognize successful program elements and lessons learned from challenges that programs elsewhere faced. In addition to researching the programs above, Cascadia:

- Participated in webinars to review two leading green business program web platforms from GreenPSF and the California Green Business Program and evaluate their potential use in Kirkland.
- Facilitated meetings with two members of the newly formed Green Business Engagement National Network to identify national green business program trends.
- Attended a meeting with staff from the City of Kirkland and VueWorks, a resource and service request management software vendor, to evaluate the possible integration of City tracking systems with the new green business program web platform.

Information gathered from the review of national green business engagement programs is included in the Key Findings sections throughout this report and summarized in a table for each program reviewed in the [Appendix](#). The summary tables for each program include the following metrics:

- Program name
- Website
- Primary contact name, email, phone, address
- Number of program staff
- Geographic area covered by the program
- Number of business participants
- Services offered through program
- Primary goal of program
- Marketing and communication services
- Program funding sources
- Distinguishing feature

Development of a Survey of Current Participants and Non-Participating Businesses

Cascadia designed a survey of Kirkland businesses that will inform improvements to the Kirkland Green Business Program. Cascadia helped Kirkland staff members define a primary goal for the survey, which is to assess the needs, interests, and preferences of businesses and organizations in Kirkland regarding the *future* Green Business Program, and not to assess the existing program. In particular, the survey is intended to:

- Obtain input on key decisions Kirkland will need to make, such as what types of assistance to offer.

- Understand differences in needs, interests, and preferences among organizations based on key characteristics, such as sector or size. For example, a large IT firm may have different needs from a small IT firm and from a small food-service business.

To obtain feedback on specific program materials—such as a new website or promotional materials—focus groups, one-on-one interviews, or user testing may be more appropriate data collection methods.

Because the Kirkland Green Business Program seeks to serve all businesses located in the city, the target audience for this survey is representatives of all businesses and organizations, such as educational institutions, in Kirkland. The ideal respondents are managers, owners, or representatives who understand their organization’s environmental practices/policies and decision-making considerations.

To reach these target respondents, Cascadia recommends that the City of Kirkland use a web-based survey (designed in SurveyMonkey) distributed through direct emails from the City and by Kirkland business associations.

Table 2. Program Evaluation Distribution Methods

Distribution Method	Distribution Recommendations
Direct Email from City	The City should directly email survey links to current green business program participants and other businesses for which Kirkland has email addresses (such as through the Kirkland Business Roundtable, Kirkland First directory, a permits and business license database, or other lists). Cascadia recommends using the mail merge function to send an invitation individually to each business. Invitations sent through SurveyMonkey or as group emails are more likely to be labeled as spam.
Kirkland Business Associations	The City should also engage associations and organizations serving Kirkland businesses to distribute the survey invitation either by emailing their distribution lists, including a link and blurb in their e-newsletters, or posting a link on their websites. Organizations may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kirkland Downtown Association/ Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce ■ Kirkland Networkers ■ Green Kirkland Partnership
Other Methods	If these distribution methods do not result in a sufficient number of responses after a month and after sending at least one reminder, Kirkland could also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attend and distribute paper versions of the survey at business association meetings. ■ Include a link to the survey in the City’s newsletter after modifying the survey instrument to screen out respondents that do not represent businesses. ■ Offer incentives to respond.

Cascadia recommends using a unique SurveyMonkey collector link for each distribution channel—including individual collectors for each business association—to track how many respondents came from each distribution channel. In particular, it is important to understand whether one channel accounted for a disproportionate share of respondents.

A final survey draft can be found in the [Appendix](#).

1. Current Program Model

The evaluation examined both past and current program materials and included meetings with program staff to review the program over time. The evaluation process also included gathering basic information about Kirkland’s business community to help better tailor recommendations for program updates. A summary of Kirkland’s business community and key findings on the current program and model are summarized below.

Kirkland Business Profile

- The City of Kirkland has a diverse business community, including a highly educated and tech-savvy workforce. There are a number of nationally recognized organizations in the area, including Google, Go Daddy, Inrix, and Kenworth Truck Company. In 2012, Kirkland registered over 8,000 businesses employing over 31,000 people.
- The largest employers in the City are EvergreenHealth (2,603 employees), Google, Inc. (625 employees), and City of Kirkland (575 employees). Other top employers include Kenworth Truck Company, Evergreen Pharmaceutical LLC, IBM Corporation, WB Games, Inc., ATG Stores, Fairfax Hospital, Fred Meyer, Wave Broadband, Lake Vue Gardens Convalescent Center, Toyota of Kirkland, Lake Washington Institute of Technology, and Griptonite Games.
- Kirkland has a large number of home-based businesses. Approximately 40 percent of Kirkland companies are home-based, owned by IT consultants, software developers, artists, business people, entrepreneurs, and other members of the cottage industry.
- Roughly 45 percent of Kirkland businesses are in the service sector, including technology companies, attorneys, finance and insurance brokers, and web-related services firms.
- Over 10 percent of Kirkland businesses are in the retail sector, including restaurants, automotive dealers and auto supply stores, and gift shops.
- Kirkland is also known for its Lake Washington waterfront, which includes various businesses offering boat sales, boat repair, and moorage services.
- The City has eight distinct business districts— Downtown Kirkland, Carillon Point, Yarrow Bay, Juanita Village, Market Street Corridor, 85th Street Corridor, and Totem Lake East and West.
- Networking is important to business leaders in Kirkland. Some notable professional organizations include the Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Kirkland Downtown Association, and the Washington Technology Industry Association.

Roughly 45% of Kirkland’s businesses are in the service sector.

Other key sectors include construction (10%), retail trade (10%), health care (9%), and accommodation and food service (7%).

Key Findings on Current Program Model

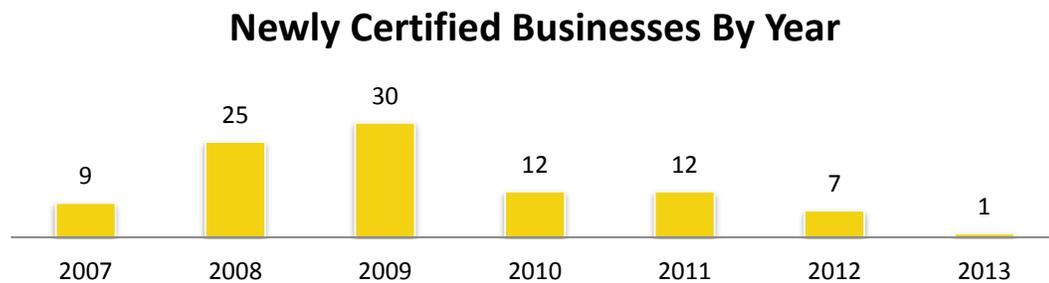
- **Kirkland’s Green Business Program is intended to:**

- Motivate businesses of all sizes—from international companies like Google to one of Kirkland’s many home-based businesses—to take new actions and apply best management practices (BMPs) to conserve resources and protect the environment.
- Recognize businesses for the good actions they have already adopted.
- Help most businesses in Kirkland take basic actions across all environmental topic areas and support those businesses that want to take advanced actions.
- **The target audience for Kirkland’s Green Business Program** is businesses and organizations (such as educational institutions, non-profit agencies, and government entities) in Kirkland that could use assistance to:
 - Improve recycling and composting programs.
 - Conserve energy.
 - Conserve water.
 - Reduce health and environmental risks from toxic or hazardous chemicals.
 - Reduce the risk of stormwater pollution.
 - Reduce the risk of wastewater pollution, such as fats, oils, and grease.
 - Increase the use of alternative transportation methods (non-single occupancy vehicles), including public transit, vanpool, carpool, biking, walking, and rideshare programs.
 - Implement green building best practices.
 - Reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
 - Grow or use food produced organically and locally and help sustain local community feeding programs.
- **Leading programs around the nation utilize web-based platforms with interactive content** and the ability to target content to specific users, track outcomes, and provide direct referrals to program partners within the platform. The current Kirkland Green Business Program website and application process offer limited functionality and use of emerging technology. Many of the leading green business programs included in the evaluation research utilize web-based platforms that allow users to create their own profile, update and track green action adoption information over time, and link directly to resources and partners that can help encourage the implementation of additional actions.
- **Smaller cities struggle to fund green business engagement and certification programs** and can benefit from partnering on and leveraging regional programs. For example, the City of Kirkland has benefited from the regional King County-Cities Climate Collaboration to reach regional businesses through the GreenTools program. There is a growing trend nationally for developing regional or even statewide green business programs. Local efforts include the Eastside Green Business Challenge, a program serving seven cities, including Kirkland, and the EnviroStars program, currently serving seven counties throughout the state of Washington. The California Green Business Program is a statewide program that operates a shared web platform and single landing webpage while offering individual cities and counties the option to tailor materials, marketing, and green actions to meet the needs of each community. The California Green Business Program recently applied for a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to

share and customize their web platform with six other interested states across the country. Regional or statewide programs offer smaller cities the opportunity to share the costs of the design and development of marketing and outreach materials, web platforms, and other operating expenses. The potential for increased participant exposure beyond City limits can also be an added incentive for businesses to participate.

- **Leading green business programs use a host of activities to incentivize business participation.** They provide incentives such as cash rebates for specific actions, market the program broadly, conduct direct outreach to draw in new participants, and maintain interest and relevance through recertification. Kirkland Green Business Program participation has become stagnant and could benefit from increased incentives for participation, direct engagement, program marketing, and mandatory recertification. Kirkland’s Green Business Program was started in 2007, and there are currently 96 participants. The number of new participant signups peaked in 2009 at 30 participants (see Figure 1 below). Just one new participant was certified in 2013. The City has not been able to put significant efforts into marketing the program in recent years and requested this evaluation project to assess opportunities for improvements.

Figure 1. Newly Certified Businesses By Year



Recommendations for Current Program Model

Recommendations based on the key findings related to Kirkland’s Green Business Program model are presented under the applicable topic areas below: A) Categories and Actions; B) Application Process and Website; and C) Incentives, Engagement, Marketing, and Recertification.

A. Categories and Actions

The main categories of green actions and specific actions included in green business programs vary broadly, based largely on the goals of the program and on available support resources. Some programs choose to feature only actions that they can help businesses implement through available program resources and partners. And others choose to offer a more comprehensive list of actions, with referrals to general web resources for implementation assistance. The number and types of actions should be chosen to maximize utilization of program resources and referrals to program partners and to appeal to the broadest range of potential participants, from Kirkland’s largest companies to its many home-based businesses.

Key Findings on Categories and Actions

- **The current list of Kirkland Green Business Program categories is comprehensive and consistent with other programs.** The current categories of actions include Waste Reduction and Recycling, Water Conservation, Pollution Prevention, Energy Efficiency, Transportation, Green Power, and Green Building. There are opportunities to consolidate similar categories, such as Energy Efficiency and Green Power, to eliminate categories such as Green Building that do not have many associated resources, and to consider adding other categories related to community engagement or stewardship.
- **Leading programs elsewhere limit the specific actions based on available program resources to support implementation.** Overall, the number of specific green actions in Kirkland’s program (141) is higher than many programs, including other large City programs such as the Austin Green Business Leaders (92) and Seattle’s Get on the Map campaign (64). Successful programs offer a comprehensive list of actions without overwhelming businesses by including too many, or by including those that are not applicable to the specific business applicant. GreenPSF achieves this by using a web-based green action checklist with the ability to filter actions based on business criteria such as sector, number of employees, location, whether they are in a property-managed or owner-occupied space, etc. This information is collected in the initial application phase, and then subsequent actions, resources, rebates, and partners are filtered accordingly.

Figure 2. Current Kirkland Green Business Program Activity Categories



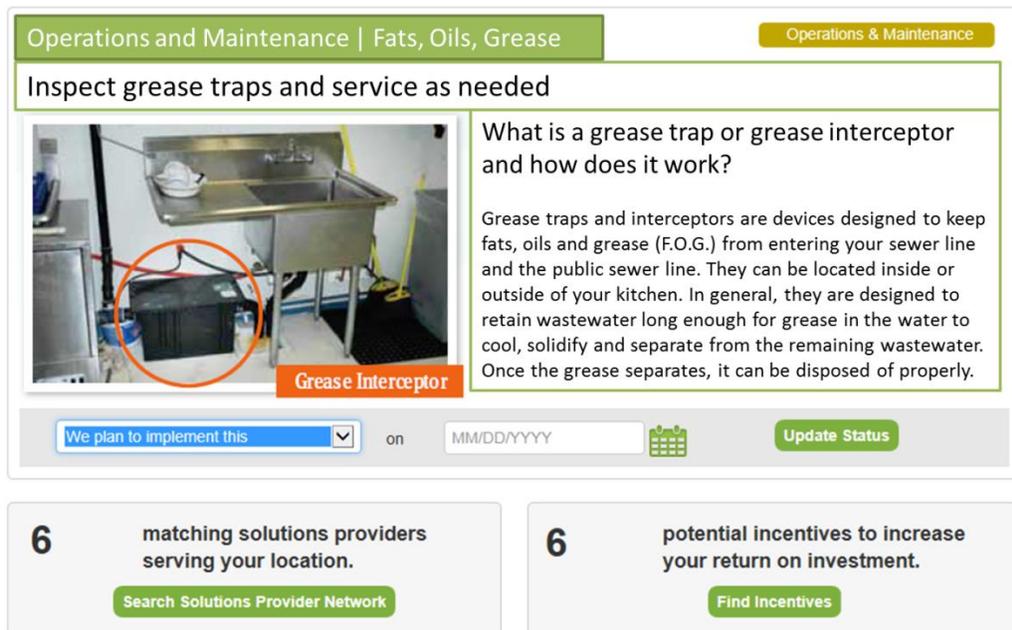
Recommendations for Categories and Actions

Recommendations for action format and website layout

- **Encourage businesses to go beyond actions they have already implemented by:**

- **Adding live hyperlinks to resources, information, available rebates, and implementation partners for specific actions.** For example, under the *Complete a fats, oils, greases (FOG) inspection* action in Kirkland’s current *Pollution Prevention* Category, include a link to information on how to locate and inspect your grease trap, a direct link to available rebates or resources for new equipment, or a referral to a list of possible grease trap maintenance and FOG recycling service providers.

Figure 3. The GreenPSF platform provides a direct link to available rebates, incentives, and partners for green action implementation



- **Creating a custom field under each action for capturing interest** in getting more information on how to implement that action, or for noting plans to implement an action in the future. This information could be used to assign business follow-up to implementation partners.
- **Cross-referencing other related actions** when a business indicates they have completed an action in one category. For example, Kirkland currently provides information on setting up a compost program under the *Limit or eliminate use of garbage disposal* green action under the *Water Conservation* category.
 - **Ensure any links to program or partner resources are active and routinely updated.** As of the time of this report, the link to PSE’s online energy audit under the Energy Efficient Practices section does not work.

Recommendations for action language, categories, and point values

- **Consolidate related action categories.** For example, the Green Power category could be combined with the Energy Efficiency Category. The category could simply be called Energy or Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy. Categories that do not have custom actions or

sufficient City support resources could be eliminated or worked into other categories, such as Green Building.

- **Update individual actions to be consistent with other local or national green business programs.** Using wording consistent with actions from other sustainability programs, like EnviroStars or LEED, allows for easier referrals from and to other programs. Kirkland already offers credit for being certified under these two programs under two different action categories. Other actions could be updated under the Water Conservation, Energy Efficiency, and Pollution Prevention categories to cross-reference these programs.
- **Work with other City program managers** to make sure the full list of actions is complete and consistent with available City resources, rebates, and other local programs. City staff are already involved in the [Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation](#) (IRAC) and could use this network to identify specific actions and resources other local jurisdictions may recommend incorporating into Kirkland's program.
- **Tailor point values for specific actions to match your program goals.** For example, if your primary goal is to encourage advanced action adoption, consider assigning smaller point values to basic actions, and exponentially higher point values for more advanced or in-depth actions. If your main program goal is service equity across business sectors and sizes, add higher point values to actions that are widely applicable and ensure there are enough actions relevant to all sectors and sizes to become certified, including Kirkland's many home-based businesses.

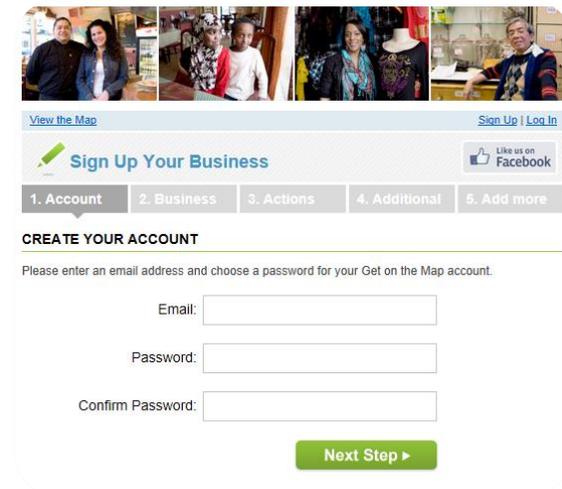
B. Application Process and Website

Creating an engaging and user-friendly application process and program website can help increase program participation and satisfaction. An effective green business program website creates a seamless user experience—promoting program participation and benefits, facilitating easy sign-up and profile creation, capturing actions already taken, providing information, resources, and incentives to take additional actions, and allowing for easy data retrieval and reporting.

Key Findings on Application Process and Website

- **Leading programs nationally use web-based platforms for their application process and overall program website that:**
 - Allow users to create their own profile and update green action adoption information over time.
 - Clearly outline the application process, and show applicants where they are at in the application process on every page or when they log in to their account.
 - Use interactive content to drive action adoption as outlined in the [Recommendations for Categories and Actions](#) section above.
 - Incorporate ways to manage customer referrals to service providers.
 - Track interactions with businesses and follow-up assignments to program administration and implementation partners within the platform.
 - Create reports on a variety of information, from number of participants in a particular zip code or sector to resource conservation savings associated with actions implemented by participants.
 - Tailor user experience, available green actions, available rebates, incentives, and other support resources based on information collected in the application process, including business size, sector, and zip code.
 - Highlight successful participants with case studies, videos, and testimonials.

Figure 4 Get on the Map Account Sign Up Page



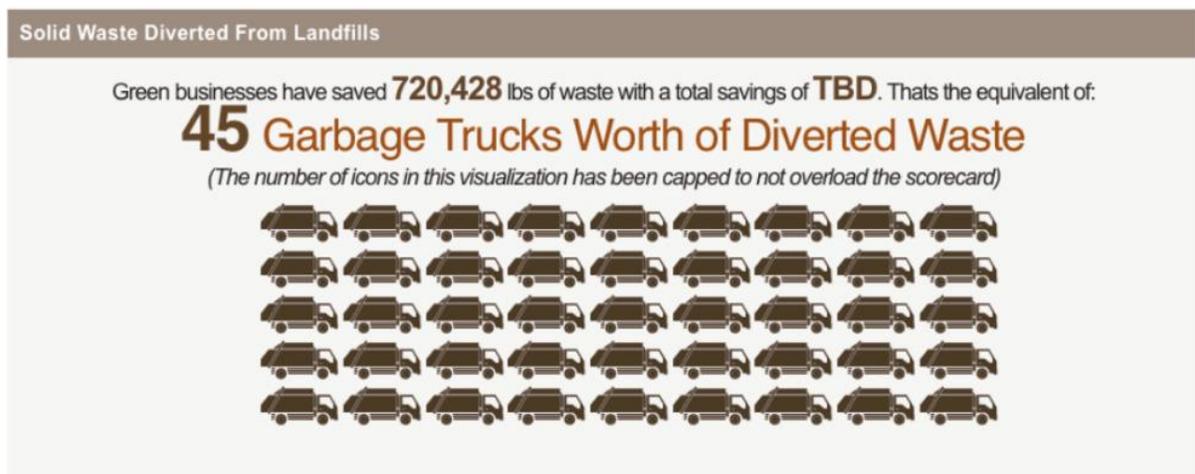
Recommendations for Application Process and Website

- **Transition the Kirkland Green Business Program landing page and application to an existing green business program web platform such as GreenPSF or the version used by the California Green Business Program to take advantage of advanced features and the best practices listed**

above. Program costs could be reduced for Kirkland by partnering on the launch of a regional program, where customization costs are shared by participants. More recommendations on joining a regional effort are provided in the next section.

- **Utilize customer relationship management (CRM) software** to help track green business program participant requests, interactions, referrals to service providers, specific actions taken, and resource conservation outcomes. CRM software could be built into the new web platform, or purchased separately for use by other City departments and linked to the web platform for efficient green business program data import and export.
- **Outline the application process more clearly for potential participants.** Basic steps should include **1) Create a profile** and enter basic business information **2) Select the actions you have already taken** and those you would like help and resources to implement **3) Get onsite action verification and implementation assistance** and **4) Get recognized.** Applicants should be able to check on their application status and make and save updates to their applications.
- **Reduce the need for redundant data entry.** Under the current Kirkland Green Business program, businesses have to enter redundant information to get certified under each category. Automate the process wherever possible by populating fields with known data from previous steps in the application process.
- **Create a seamless process for importing existing data** on current participants into the new platform, and for exporting information for reporting to internal and external stakeholders. The new external green business program web platform could be connected with the City's existing web resources to facilitate referrals and information to City staff that are not connected to the green business program.
- **Add interactive content to feature participating businesses.** This could include business photos, videos, and resource and cost savings information, and links to the social media sites of participants. More information on participant engagement is provided in the next section.
- **Request specific metrics for green actions businesses implement** to allow for reporting on aggregate activity outcomes.

Figure 5. Savings Information for Solid Waste Actions from the California Green Business Program



C: Incentives, Engagement, Marketing, and Recertification

Green Business Programs use a host of activities to incentivize businesses, engage them in specific actions, market to new participants, and maintain interest and relevance through recertification. Effective strategies to maintain business interest are critical. Upon launch, programs are met with excitement among members of the business community, a willingness to participate, and an expectation that the program will help differentiate the business in the market by recognizing its green actions. For these reasons, membership spikes early, but unfortunately tapers within 2-3 years unless there are specific tactics implemented to continue engagement and excitement among businesses. Such tactics fall into four categories: 1) Incentives, 2) Engagement, 3) Marketing, and 4) Recertification.

Key Findings for Incentives, Engagement, Marketing, and Recertification

Incentives

Businesses respond to incentives that matter to them. Green actions are often promoted as cost-saving opportunities for businesses. While cost savings are an important motivator, the most appealing incentives are those that help businesses attract new customers, as well as incentives that help businesses stand out among their peers and receive recognition as a leader. An important consideration for providing meaningful business incentives is that businesses operate beyond a city and sometimes region, depending on the type of business. Programs use the following incentive tactics to help businesses attract new customers or stand out among their peers.

- **Regional Marketing Efforts.** Regional program such as EnviroStars, the Eastside Green Business Challenge, the California Green Business Program, and the GreenPSF Green Business Challenge are cooperative efforts of several jurisdictions that pool resources to market and promote their programs across a broader territory. Because most businesses draw customers from across a geographic region, these cooperative efforts provide more incentive for business involvement than smaller, individual programs.
- **Advertising.** Advertising is considered an expensive tactic because of the volume of media buys required to rise above the clutter and get noticed. But programs are finding new methods of advertising that rely less on volume and more on targeting green-leaning customers through unique channels. Seattle's Get on the Map Program successfully reaches its green audience through a unique partnership with Chinook Book, the printed and online sustainable business coupon collection. When programs purchase

Figure 6. Get on the Map Sponsored Mobile Chinook Book Coupon Pack



advertising, Chinook Book offers additional promotion including 1) promoting membership in the green business program to other Chinook Book businesses, 2) attaching the program logo to the business listing through online “push notifications” and listings that differentiate the business from others in the book.

- **Marketing Collateral.** Decals, window clings, posters, and other visuals for display are relatively low cost, and showcase the business’s accomplishment to existing customers. However, they may not be as effective at attracting new customers, and decals are only effective if they are broadly recognized among customers. This widespread brand awareness is only achieved through high volume advertising. The EnviroStars program enjoys brand awareness in King and other participating counties as a result of steady brand awareness-building over time.

Engagement

Engagement tactics maintain interest in the program and activities, and help businesses feel they are part of a community in which new activities are happening that they want to learn about or be a part of. For a program, engagement tactics provide opportunities to introduce priority green actions and gain momentum toward achieving sustainability outcomes. The most successful engagement tactics are success stories and challenges.

- **Success stories.** Business owners love to see their name and pictures in print or online. Many program websites now feature inspiring stories about businesses by highlighting their accomplishments, quoting devoted employees, posting pictures, and including vendor information and customer quotes that illustrate achievements. The business story page is frequently refreshed to maintain interest for returning visitors, and existing stories remain on the site. New success stories can be easily promoted via social media channels. Other programs, like Seattle’s Community Power Works, report that success story pages are among the most visited on the program’s website.
- **Challenges.** Launching a challenge is a tactic that is getting increased attention through the GreenPSF and ICLEI Green Business Challenge. Appealing to and capitalizing on the competitive nature of businesses as the primary motivator, challenges engage members to be the best among their peers or in their building during a distinct period of time and on a specific set of activities. Challenges are a terrific way to build excitement about the program.

Figure 7. City of Austin Green Business Leaders Video Case Study



Figure 8. GreenPSF Green Business Challenge Leaderboard

Leaderboard		View All Standings
Rank	Property	Points
1	The Realtor Building	1300
2	Northcross Shopping Center	800
3	Miami Green Lab	500
3	Delray Marketplace	500
3	Schatz Plaza	500

Marketing

In addition to challenges and advertising, marketing may include events to recognize member accomplishments. The Eastside Green Business Challenge hosts an annual recognition event. Seattle Business Magazine’s Green Washington Awards is another well-attended, annual green business event. There is a large pool of nominees, a panel of judges, and the winners are honored at the event and publicized online and in print. However, events can be expensive to organize and promote. A more accessible option may be to sponsor an existing event to which businesses are invited and recognized as part of a larger program.

Figure 9. Eastside Green Business Challenge award recipients at their annual recognition event



Recertification

Not all programs focus on recertification, but those that do recognize recertification as a way to ensure business activities remain relevant, meet environmental needs, and focus on the program’s top environmental priorities. Marion County’s Earthwise Business Assistance Program is a great example of effective recertification that ties in with encouragement or incentives to take the next step in resource conservation. Businesses that have achieved recertification are featured in a quarterly program newsletter.

Recommendations for Incentives, Engagement, Marketing, and Recertification

Recommendations for incentivizing, engaging, marketing to, and recertifying green businesses in Kirkland are grouped into three overarching suggestions.

1. Join a regional program.

Interest in a regional green business program is gaining momentum among Seattle, EnviroStars, and other cities in the Puget Sound region, as well as across the country. We recommend Kirkland continue to join in the regional conversations and selection of a program platform. The two options currently under consideration include GreenPSF and the California Green Business Challenge. Both programs are comprehensive, cover a broad geographic territory that would appeal to businesses operating in several locations across multiple jurisdictions, provide high-functioning IT support, and offer a simple yet effective user interface for program administrators and businesses. Other benefits include:

- A flexible platform that allows participating jurisdictions to create unique activities and to easily change focus over time.
- Interactive web inputs that raise participation by highlighting resource and cost savings associated with specific green actions and reduce data entry cost by program administrators.
- A customized look and branding specific to Kirkland, as well as the opportunity to capitalize on brand equity of a larger program or platform.
- Appeal to both small and home-based businesses operating only in the City of Kirkland, and larger businesses like EvergreenHealth and Google interested in reaching beyond city limits.
- A coordination hub for programs facilitating technical assistance provided by many different departments and experts.

2. Attract new customers for participating businesses.

Regardless of how Kirkland and others decide to move forward with a regional program, Kirkland businesses will benefit from tactics that expose them to and attract new customers. These strategies will increase awareness of business members and should be applied locally and regionally if possible.

- Create and post a searchable map of participating businesses on the city's website. Allow for easier navigation by offering business sector or zip code-specific search capabilities.
- Maintain social media sites including Facebook and Twitter with photos, customer stories, business quotes, and specific savings summaries recognizing participating businesses.
- Advertise using channels that specifically target the most receptive customer segment, such as Chinook Book.

3. Refresh and Recertify.

- Host challenges for highest conservation achievements, by sector, or by neighborhood.
- Host or sponsor an existing awards event and feature program participants.
- Partner with local jurisdictions and service providers to host monthly green business forums for participants and interested businesses. These could be in person or via web conference and cover new sustainability topics each month, such as water conservation or energy efficiency.
- Offer awards for high performing participants and for businesses who routinely meet recertification criteria.
- Provide resources to businesses via the web, including tools, calculators, and handouts that help owners, managers, and employees navigate choices and take the best actions toward greening the business.
- Require recertification every 2-3 years. Require at least one additional new action to remain certified.

Next Steps and Business Survey

This evaluation of the Kirkland Green Business program identified many strengths of the program, as well as areas that hold opportunities for improvement. We recommend that the City of Kirkland capitalize on the momentum from this program review. Program managers should convene to consider these recommendations and select a course of action. Within the first quarter of 2014, the group members should document their areas of agreement and establish an action plan and timeline, with specific responsibilities and milestones, for how to move forward with implementing the program modifications. While many efforts will involve coordination across multiple City departments and potentially with other regional groups, the team should identify a lead person responsible for the progress of each selected recommendation or topic area. Focusing initial changes on areas of general consensus will enable the group to achieve progress in the near term and build momentum for future efforts.

The City of Kirkland should plan to conduct the survey of Kirkland Green Business Program participants and non-participating businesses using the survey instrument and distribution method outlined in the Development of a [Survey of Current Participants and Non-Participating Businesses](#) section of this report, ideally by March of 2014.

By September 2014 (within six months of the initial action plan), we recommend that the group revisit any areas that lack decisions and seek to address them. Kirkland Green Business program staff and partners should also regularly examine the areas of change to assess progress on the modifications and evaluate the program's overall results. Checking in at least quarterly on the status of the selected recommendations and their implementation will help keep the program moving forward. Regular evaluation will help keep the program on track and help it meet the City's environmental goals. Taken together or in stages, these recommendations are designed to strengthen the program and expand its impact as the Kirkland Green Business Program moves into the next stage of affecting environmental change within the Kirkland business community.

Appendix

1. Summary of Research on Leading Programs Elsewhere
2. Kirkland Green Business Program Survey

Appendix 1. Summary of Research on Leading Programs Elsewhere

California Green Business Program_Alameda County	
Website	www.greenbusinessca.org
Primary Contact	Pamela Evans, Green Business Coordinator, pamela.evans@acgov.org , (510) 567-6770
Staff	2 part time, 1 volunteer
Geographic area	Alameda County specific program, part of statewide CGBP network
Number of business participants	<100
Services offered through program	Online resources or toolkits, custom worksheets, scorecards, one-on-one meetings with businesses, group meetings, technical assistance, marketing, certifications
Primary goal of the program	General sustainability
Marketing and communication services	Window decal stickers, annual awards or recognition, online directory and marketing toolkit
Program funding sources	(0-10%), private grants (0-10%), state funds (0-10%), federal funds (0-10%), utility (11-20%), other (81-90%)
Distinguishing feature	Part of a statewide program with umbrella program advertising, web platform and overall program web landing page; customized activities and information for County business participants

DowntownDC Business Improvement District	
Website	http://www.dcsmarterbusiness.com/
Primary Contact	Scott Pomeroy, Sustainability Manager, scott@downtowndc.org , (202)-661-7580, 1250 H Street, NW Suite 1000, Washington, DC, 20005
Staff	3 part time
Geographic area	City, DowntownDC ecoDistrict
Number of business participants	9 (115 building participants)
Services offered through program	Online Resource or Toolkit, custom worksheets, scorecard, one-on-one meetings with businesses, group meetings, technical assistance, marketing, mayor awards, City applies for other awards on behalf of businesses
Primary goal of the program	General sustainability
Marketing and communication services	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn group, press releases, case studies, newsletter, film or video, annual awards
Program funding sources	State funds (50%), other (50% Business Improvement District)
Distinguishing feature	Interactive website with videos and links; strong use of social media

St. Louis Green Business Challenge with ICLEI Challenge feature	
Website	http://www.stlouisgreenchallenge.com/
Primary Contact	Eric Schneider, Senior Director, Public Policy, eschneider@stlregionalchamber.com , (314) 444-1148, One Metropolitan Square, Suite 1300, ST. Louis, MO 63102
Staff	1 full time, 1 part time
Geographic area	Greater St. Louis Region
Number of business participants	60-100
Services offered through program	Online resources or toolkits, scorecards, one-on-one meetings with businesses, group meetings
Primary goal of the program	General sustainability
Marketing and communication services	Press releases, annual awards or recognition, case studies, online networking, LinkedIn group
Program funding sources	Membership fees (81-90%), private grants (0-10%), state funds (0-10%), federal funds (0-10%), utility (0-10%)
Distinguishing feature	Part of the national GreenPSF/ICLEI Green Business Challenge series

City of Austin Green Business Leaders Program	
Website	http://austintexas.gov/department/austin-green-business-leaders
Primary Contact	Zach Baumer, Climate Program Manager, Office of Sustainability, zach.baumer@austintexas.gov, (512)974-2836, City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, 2006 East 4th Street, Austin, Texas 78702
Staff	2 quarter-time
Geographic area	City
Number of business participants	115
Services offered through program	Scorecard, various award recognition program, site visits, networking meetings hosted by program participants
Primary goal of the program	Connect businesses with tools and resources help companies save money, expand market share, protect the environment, and support local community
Marketing and communication services	Annual awards, website, press releases
Program funding sources	City funded (100%)
Distinguishing feature	Easy three step process sign up process; business participant video case studies, utilized a yearlong challenge to refresh an existing and long term program.

City of Seattle Get on the Map Campaign	
Website	www.Seattle.gov/getonthemap
Primary Contact	Philip Paschke, Seattle Public Utilities, Customer Service Branch Resource Conservation, phil.paschke@seattle.gov , (206) 684-8529, 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4900, Seattle, WA 98124.
Staff	3 full-time, 1 part-time
Geographic area	City
Number of business participants	386 businesses “On the Map”
Services offered through program	Technical assistance, free resources, and rebate assistance around waste reduction, stormwater pollution prevention, energy conservation, and water conservation, as well as recognition and promotion of local businesses taking green actions.
Primary goal of the program	The Get on the Map campaign uses an online map of Seattle’s neighborhoods to publicly recognize businesses taking actions to cut waste, save water and energy, and reduce pollution. The campaign provides free on-site technical assistance to help businesses start taking green actions, do more to save money, and get free recognition.
Marketing and communication services	Social media, telephone and email hotline customer service, website, free materials and resources, community events, and promotional materials.
Program funding sources	Utility (Seattle Public Utilities -80 %, Seattle City Light-20%)
Annual operating budget	\$100,000
Distinguishing feature	Online searchable map of participants, customer facing promotion including Chinook Book partnership.

EnviroStars Program	
Website	http://www.envirostars.org/
Primary Contact	Laurel Tomchick, Department of Natural Resources & Parks, Laurel.Tomchick@kingcounty.gov , (206) 263-3063, 130 Nickerson St #100, Seattle, WA 98109
Staff	1 part time
Geographic area	Multiple counties
Number of business participants	Over 700
Services offered through program	Certification and rating process including onsite consultation, technical assistance, free resources
Primary goal of the program	Certify companies based on their practices and policies that demonstrate commitment to protecting the environment by properly managing and reducing hazardous materials and waste.
Marketing and communication services	Website, dedicated hotline, Facebook page, shared hotline

Program funding sources:	Taxes from utility ratepayers deposited into a Hazardous Waste Account (100%)
Annual operating budget	Ranges from \$60,000 in King County to \$11,000 in Whatcom County
Distinguishing feature	Program started as single a county hazardous waste program and has since effectively expanded to seven Washington counties.

Table 3 Sample Program Operating Budget

Program	Annual Budget	FTE	Itemized Annual Costs
King County EnviroStars	\$60,000	0.5	Staff: 1 FTE Program brochure: \$20/100 copies Application worksheets: \$50/20 copies Window decals: \$456/100 decals Star and year stickers: \$49/100 stickers New member folders: \$274/100 stickers Print/ads/marketing: Variable Letterhead, business cards: \$80/250 cards Certificate: \$50/100 certificates Green Business Directory: \$45/100 directories

Appendix 2. Kirkland Green Business Program Survey

Survey Text

[Introduction]

Thank you for helping the City of Kirkland improve its program to help businesses conserve energy and protect our environment!

To help us put your responses into context, please provide a little information about your business:

Which of the following best describes your business? (Select one)

- Restaurants, Bars, and Other Food Service
- Grocery
- Other Retail
- Arts, Entertainment, or Recreation
- Hotels and Lodging
- Health and Medical Services
- Professional Services
- Construction or Landscape Services
- Salon, Spa, and Beauty Services
- Automotive Services
- Other Services
- Education
- Non-profit or Religious Organizations
- Government, Public Administration, or Utilities
- Manufacturing, Warehouse, or Transportation
- Technology-related Services or Products
- Other (please describe) _____

How many people work at your business location?

- More than 100 [Skip to question 0]
- 50 to 99 [Skip to question 0]
- 25 to 29 [Skip to question 0]
- 15 to 24 [Skip to question 0]
- 5 to 14 [Skip to question 0]
- 2 to 4 [Go to question 0]
- Only me [Go to question 0]

[Home-Based Business?]

Do you run or work for a home-based business?

Yes

No

[Go on to question 0]

[Types of Assistance]

The goal of Kirkland’s Green Business Program is to help businesses and organizations in Kirkland to conserve resources and prevent pollution by taking actions that:

- Increase recycling and composting
- Conserve energy and water
- Reduce the risk of polluting water outdoors and indoors
- Protect workers from toxic chemicals

The following questions will help us decide what types of assistance to offer businesses.

To what extent would your businesses be interested in using the following types of assistance?

	1 not at all	2	3	4	5 extremely	Not Sure
One-on-one assistance at your business	<input type="radio"/>					
Personalized phone and email consultation	<input type="radio"/>					
Web-based information resources	<input type="radio"/>					
Printed information resources	<input type="radio"/>					
“How to” videos	<input type="radio"/>					
Written step-by-step instructions	<input type="radio"/>					
Case studies showing how other businesses have taken action and benefitted	<input type="radio"/>					
Training for your employees	<input type="radio"/>					

What other types of assistance would your business be interested in?

[Types of Promotion]

Kirkland’s Green Business Program also recognizes and promotes businesses that conserve resources and protect our environment.

To what extent would the following types of recognition and promotion motivate your business to participate?

	1 not at all	2	3	4	5 extremely	Not Sure
A program logo to put on your company’s marketing materials	0	0	0	0	0	0
Certificates or logo to display in your business	0	0	0	0	0	0
Free listing in Chinook Book	0	0	0	0	0	0
Searchable map listing your business on the program’s website	0	0	0	0	0	0
Your business featured on the City’s or program’s website	0	0	0	0	0	0
Your business photo and testimonial featured on the City’s social media site(s)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Annual [regional] event with networking and top green business awards	0	0	0	0	0	0
Listing in a printed advertisement (e.g., in the Seattle Times, Seattle Magazine, or the Kirkland Reporter)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Listing in the City’s printed newsletter	0	0	0	0	0	0

What other types of public recognition would motivate your business to participate?

[Resource Conservation and Pollution Prevention Topics (Page 1)]

Please help us understand in which resource conservation and pollution prevention topics Kirkland businesses could most use help.

In what areas would your business want help? (Select all that apply)

- Recycling, composting, and waste reduction
- Water conservation
- Energy conservation
- Toxics reduction and green purchasing
- Employee commuting
- Reducing the risk of outdoor spills or stormwater pollution
- Keeping kitchen greases out of sinks and drains to avoid sewer backups
- Growing or supporting local organic food production
- We are not interested in receiving help
- Other (please describe) _____

[Resource Conservation and Pollution Prevention Topics (Page 2)]

Which statement best describes opportunities at your business to improve **recycling, composting, and waste reduction**?

There are many remaining opportunities to improve 1	2	3	4	We are doing almost everything that is possible 5
0	0	0	0	0

Which statement best describes opportunities at your business to conserve more **water**?

There are many remaining opportunities to conserve more water 1	2	3	4	We are doing almost everything that is possible 5
0	0	0	0	0

Which statement best describes opportunities at your business to save more **energy**?

There are many remaining opportunities to save energy 1	2	3	4	We are doing almost everything that is possible 5
0	0	0	0	0

[Language and Decision-Making Power]

In what language(s) besides English would your business want to receive information or training materials for employees? (Select all that apply)

- None—English only
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Cantonese
- Mandarin
- Somali
- Korean
- Russian
- Other (please list) _____

Does your local business location need approval from a property manager or corporate office to make changes to your building or business operations?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

[Reaching Businesses (page 1)]

Please help us understand how best to reach Kirkland businesses like yours.

How does your business prefer to receive information about City of Kirkland programs? (Select all that apply)

- City of Kirkland website
- Email
- Direct postal mail
- City of Kirkland postal newsletter
- City of Kirkland e-newsletter
- Other (please describe) _____

How do you and your business obtain local information relevant to your business? (Select all that apply)

- Associations we belong to (such as Kirkland Downtown Association or the Chamber of Commerce)
- News media (paper, TV, radio, web) **[skip logic to question 0]**
- Trade publication **[skip logic to question 0]**
- City of Kirkland website
- City of Kirkland postal newsletter
- City of Kirkland e-newsletter
- Word of mouth or networking
- Other (please list) _____

[News Media and Trade Publications Follow-up]

[use skip logic from question 0] Which news media or trade publications provide you with local information relevant to your business?

[Reaching Businesses (page 2)]

In which Kirkland neighborhood is your business located? (Select all that apply)

- Finn Hill
- Juanita
- Evergreen Hill/Kingsgate
- Totem Lake
- Market
- Norkirk
- Highlands
- North Rose Hill
- South Rose Hill/Bridle Trails
- Everest
- Moss Bay
- Central Houghton
- Lakeview
- Don't know

What, if any, associations do you or your business participate in? (Select all that apply)

- None*
- Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce
- Kirkland Downtown Association
- Kirkland Networkers
- Kirkland Business Roundtable
- Eastside Sustainable Business Alliance
- Eastside Business Association
- Eastside Women in Business
- Green Drinks
- Washington Technology Industry Association
- Other (please list) _____

What, if any, environmental programs does your business already participate in? (Select all that apply)

- None*
- Kirkland's current green business recognition program
- EnviroStars
- Eastside Green Business Challenge
- Salmon Safe
- LEED (your facility is LEED certified)
- Take-It-Back Network
- Other _____

What are your suggestions for how Kirkland can better reach businesses and promote its green business program?

[Closing]

Thank you for taking the time to provide your input on Kirkland's Green Business Program.

Do you have any other recommendations for improving Kirkland's green business program?

If you would like to receive more information about the Green Business Program when it re-launches, please provide your contact information below or email Stephanie Gowing, Recycling Program Coordinator at SGowing@kirklandwa.gov.

Business name

Your name

Your email

Your phone

Business address