

Task Force to Lay Groundwork for National Association of Green Business Engagement Programs

First-ever national summit demonstrated growing role of green business programs in cities across the country.

Boston, May 29, 2013 – Independent programs that help businesses across the country green their operations may soon have a national forum for sharing best practices. Representatives from 21 green business engagement programs met for a first-ever national summit in Boston earlier this month. During the event, attendees decided to create a formal network or national association, and organizers today announced the formation of a preliminary task force.

Cities across the country are increasingly looking to independent business engagement programs to help them achieve their climate action targets. More than 50 different programs now serve several thousand businesses nationwide, ranging from small neighborhood shops to large national corporations.

Programs run by organizations like A Better City, the Environmental Defense Fund, ICLEI-USA, and California Green Business Challenge provide participants with sustainability scorecards, energy benchmarking, one-on-one assistance, best practices sharing, online resources and toolkits, marketing, and public recognition. Participation is often free or heavily incented through utility and foundation grants.

In Boston, where the City has a climate goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25% by 2020, A Better City's [Challenge for Sustainability](#) program is working with more than 100 organizations, including P&G Gillette, John Hancock, and Boston Properties. The Challenge for Sustainability provides participants with a comprehensive sustainability program that in 2012 resulted in the reduction of 19 million kilowatts and an average energy reduction of 4.5% across more than 21 million square feet of commercial space.

“Green business engagement programs have proven effective at positively impacting participants’ business practices with respect to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions,” said Michael Cantalupa, Chairman of A Better City and Senior Vice President of Development at Boston Properties. “By hosting the National Summit, ABC hoped to strengthen the coordination and impact of these programs across the country. We believe the information shared during the Summit will also lead to the development of new programs in more cities. We are pleased to have played an important role in this process.”

As part of the National Summit on Green Business Engagement Programs, ABC published a comprehensive directory of participating programs and a survey of defining characteristics including funding, utility partnerships, number of staff, number of businesses enrolled, reductions, successes and challenges. The directory is [available online](#).

Some highlights from the survey include:

- Participating programs work with well over 2,200 businesses.
- Nearly 80% of the programs are free for participating businesses.
- Roughly two-fifths of the programs operate on annual budgets of less than \$100,000.
- Utilities are the largest single source of funding, providing support to just over 41% of participating programs.
- Only 14% of the programs receive state or federal funding.
- The 13 programs that reported reductions have helped businesses cut 644 gigawatt-hours of electricity usage.

“We are all trying to achieve similar results in different communities, so attending this summit gave us vital insights into the challenges and innovations of green business programs around the country,” said Brian Geller, Executive Director of Seattle’s 2030 District. “Based on what we learned, Seattle may launch a Green Business Challenge to complement the 2030 District’s building-level program.”

The task force of administrators from A Better City, ICLEI-USA and several other organizations will convene bi-monthly meetings through September to explore what the mission, structure and activities of a national organization may be.

About A Better City

[A Better City](#) (ABC) is focused on improving the economic competitiveness and quality of life of the Boston region by advancing significant transportation, land development, and environmental policies, projects, and initiatives. ABC manages the Challenge for Sustainability program funded by the Barr Foundation and The Boston Foundation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with more than 30 million square feet of commercial space throughout the city of Boston.

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