

Model Environmental Policy

Environmental policies are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Companies consider developing corporate environmental policies for a variety of reasons that include communicating corporate environmental values, showcasing environmental practices, defining procurement preferences and differentiating themselves from competitors. Also, all policies are not the same. Some merely detail an organization's current environmental performance, while others establish ambitious environmental goals.



Regardless of your organization's reasons for developing an environmental policy, it should not be entered into lightly. Actual implementation of the policy should be something that your organization can achieve, improve upon and sustain for many years.

Due diligence is an essential first step in developing a policy you can live with. You will want to work with all important stakeholders, including the conservation science community and your suppliers to gather information that facilitates informed decisions about your business. You may also want to survey your customers to understand whether or not a policy is important to maintaining their loyalty. Additionally, it is important to establish realistic expectations about achieving stated goals and outline how you intend to measure and report environmental performance.

Your organization should consider the following questions prior to developing an environmental policy.

- How will this policy affect the entire organization?
- Is an environmental policy important to your organization's reputation or mission?
- Is an environmental policy important to your relationship with your customers?
- Is the policy consistent with company values?
- Can the policy realistically be implemented?
- How will environmental performance be measured and reported?

You may be ready to begin drafting an environmental policy once you have gathered sufficient information and performed an internal audit to determine if an environmental policy is right for your organization. If this is the case, be aware that you may receive pressure from external parties during the fact-finding and development stages to influence your decision-making and rush the development of your policy. Take your time, consult with a variety of stakeholders and ensure that your policy is well thought out and a good fit for your business.

Environmental policies generally address some or all of the following topics: sustainable forestry, procurement preferences, paper recovery and recycling, environmental health and safety, monitoring and public reporting.