

GUIDE TO CREATE A GREEN CUBE AT YOUR OFFICE

A **Green Cube** is an easily accessible area (usually an empty cubicle) in which employees can bring in items for donation or materials that are difficult to recycle. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation created the Green Cube program in 2014 for their Central Office and rolled out the program to all eight of their Environmental Field Offices in 2018. Each year, the program has been able to divert hundreds of pounds of materials from the landfill by recycling, donating, and reusing items that are normally discarded from offices.

A **Green Cube** can be easily applied to any office environment. An empty space, collection containers, and signage are the only items needed to start a Green Cube. A scale and a log book of materials recycled is helpful in measuring materials diverted from the landfill but are not needed if your organization are not interested in measuring diversion.

Before beginning collection of items for recycling within your office or business, take a moment to develop a Green Cube Plan. A good plan will make **Green Cube** implementation seamless. The plan should include the following details:

1. Coordination and approval from all necessary parties.

For a green cube to be successful, buy in from different sectors within an organization must be achieved as different sectors may oversee an element that is associated with a functional green cube. Working with managers to understand which element may affect an area they oversee and developing an understanding of responsibilities will ensure that a green cube will operate without affecting the organization's current structure and protocol. Below is a general list of potential managers you may need to work with and list of responsibilities that relate to Green Cube operations:

Facilities Manager	Environmental Health & Safety Manager	IT Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waste disposal• Office space allocation• Janitorial services• Equipment maintenance• Facilities maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and safety planning• Inspect work areas for safety issues• Risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversees the disposal of computers and networking equipment

2. A permanent location for the Green Cube.

The selected location for recyclables collection should be one which is convenient for and accessible to users. An unused cubicle, storage closet, vacant office, or a corner of a break area that can accommodate items that will be collected all make good locations for the cube.

3. Items that will be accepted at the Green Cube.

Create a list of items that can be recycled within the Green Cube. Examples of accepted items may include books, magazines, small electronics, incandescent/LED light bulbs, packaging supplies, hangers, office supplies, and other lightly used items, such as clothing.

This list may be dependent upon recycling services and/or vendors available within your region. The list should include each item to be recycled and a recycling provider for each of the items that will be taken in the cube. Keep in mind that other businesses and non-profits can accept re-usable items such as magazines, hangers, office supplies, and clothing. The recipients of the recyclables do not have to be a recycling service.

Items to avoid collecting in the Green Cube include fluorescent bulbs (because most contain mercury), any hazardous waste, and items which already have recycling containers readily available at your work location.

4. Containers for the Green Cube.

Bins for storage and organization of the recycled items that will be collected at the cube location are a necessity. The containers should be the right size to fit in the area you have available for the cube and should also be made of materials that can accommodate items that may leak harsh chemicals such as alkaline batteries or printer cartridges.

A great place to look for containers for your Green Cube is the [Container Store](#). You can order them online, or find a location near you.

5. Layout / Setup of the Green Cube.

Arrange the containers or bins in a manner to make the collection of the recyclables efficient and aesthetic. A good layout should make the most frequently used containers the most easily accessible. Make sure that each container is clearly labeled to prevent confusion for users and extra work when taking items to the recycling service. Be sure to include any important directions or restrictions on signage as well – such as “Please Remove Labels” or “No Fluorescent Bulbs”. You can download the labels provided to you on our webpage for FREE.

6. Making arrangements for the management of your Green Cube items.

When looking for organizations to process your materials, consider using local organizations to reduce cost, transportation, and support local. Local nonprofits and charities can accept lightly used items for upcycling while most major cities have organizations that process e-waste.

Arranging to Have Your Recyclables Processed by a Vendor

- Take into consideration costs, shipping, pick-up and delivery options and time to manage the recyclables.
- It is rare to find one recycling service provider that will accept every item in the cube. Therefore, multiple providers may be necessary for all of the items to be recycled properly.
- Keep in mind that certain items that can be recycled may not have a recycling service provider in the area that the project will be implemented.
- Record all weights of items collected by your vendor to assist in determining diversion rates.

Have Arrangements in Place for Vendors and Donation Centers

- Ensure that you have agreements and/or contracts in place with recycling companies and donation centers before implementing a Green Cube.
- Get a clear description from recycling companies and donation centers as to what they can and cannot accept.
- Call ahead of time before bringing in materials as some recycling companies and donation centers may be full and cannot accept a certain material for a given amount of time.
- Develop a master list of vendors and donations centers with their contact information, list of materials they accept, and costs so anyone in the office can arrange to have materials processed.

7. Tracking success of the Green Cube.

A reputable recycling service provider will provide weights for the items brought to their facility. The service provider should also provide documentation of proper recycling of the items accepted by their facility. For vendors that do not provide weights, or for items taken to donation centers, record the weight, volume, or number of items internally.

Create a spreadsheet to document the use of the cube including volumes/weights and dates the items were picked-up or taken. Use these records to track the amount of recyclables being diverted from landfills and the overall success of the program.

A contact should be assigned for the **Green Cube** to assist when questions arise. A sign should be displayed in the Green Cube with the assigned contact's info.

A good idea to make the Green Cube more inviting is to offer other services such as a “free item” bin that allows employees to leave items that are lightly used or still in good condition for others to take home to use. Examples include: coffee thermoses, notepads, picture frames, craft supplies, toys, working electronics, etc. Also, a book exchange area can be helpful to encourage use of the [Green Cube](#).

One of the most important things to remember is to keep the [Green Cube](#) neat and organized. If the area becomes cluttered or “junkie” in appearance, it will become a trash magnet instead of a recycling oasis.