

# Creating a Sustainability Team

A Guide by the Pet Sustainability Coalition



*Research for this tool was completed by Sterling Consulting, on behalf of Worldwise. Worldwise has generously donated this tool to PSC for the benefit of all members.*

## How to Use This Guide

This guide was created to help your organization establish and manage an internal sustainability team. This guide will present industry best practices and examples of common sustainability team structures.

Specific Content Includes	
<b>Options for Managing Sustainability</b>	Identified best practices from other company's sustainability and green teams.
<b>Launch Your Team</b>	A 6-step guide to from conception to launch of your sustainability team
<b>Sustainability Team Structures</b>	Examples of common sustainability teams' structure
<b>Summary</b>	How can companies know which structures might be best for them

# Options for Managing Sustainability

Through the review of how companies are managing sustainability successfully a number of best practices have emerged.

## Best Practices

### ***Clearly Define What Success Looks Like***

Too often sustainability seems like a moving target, which can lead to a loss of momentum and enthusiasm. Define simple metrics to measure success for the first 12 months and check in on these at each meeting, or even have them included into employee performance or development plans.

### ***Start Small and Focus on Internal Operations First***

Before focusing on marketing or customer opportunities, start with a few high visibility internal opportunities to get a few wins before moving to anything externally.

### ***Ensure Diverse Departmental Representation***

When pulling together employees to form a green team or committee it can be easy to only take those folks who are ready and willing to volunteer, but be careful if these employees collectively do not represent the company or its key departments.

### ***Consistently Engage Senior Executives***

While grassroots support is crucial for getting a green team off the ground, the long-term success of a group will largely hinge on how senior executives value sustainability. Therefore, it is crucial that there is a process through which at least some of the senior executives are able to review, evaluate, and hopefully contribute to the green team's sustainability efforts.

### ***Keep it Authentic and Accessible***

Be sure that when the green team is engaging other employees they are speaking and presenting in a way that can be understood and appreciated. Too often sustainability is viewed as elitist or academic because the language used to describe it, is not readily adopted by all employees.

## Launching the Team

It is vitally important to determine what sustainability organizational structure aligns best with the company's culture, resources, and ultimately ambition with regards to sustainability. Below is a 6 Step-by-Step guide from conception of your sustainability team to launch:

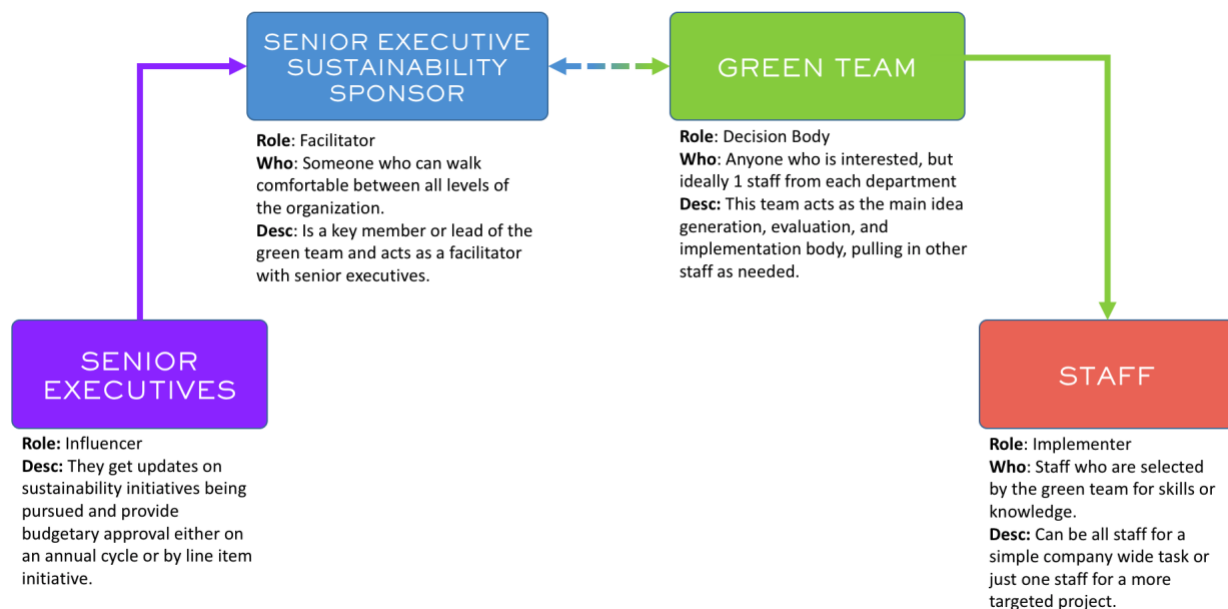
1. **Build the Business Case.** Ensure that your top leadership supports the development of a sustainability program so that your work to determine the best structure for your programs are worthwhile.
2. **Evaluate the current state of sustainability at your organization.** If you are revamping an old initiative or starting a new team, we suggest you survey employees to identify their current skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding sustainable business practices.
3. **Understand and Address Barriers.** If you identified barriers in your survey that may hinder your success in launching a sustainability program, be sure you understand the root cause and barriers when possible.
4. **Choose a structure.** Once you have surveyed employees and identified barriers review the most common structures in this document. Each of the structures have advantages and disadvantages and you need to decide which model would work best if your company's culture.
5. **Get Buy-In.** Once you have determined which structure will work best for your company, present your recommendation to the individuals and teams that will be responsible for helping carry out the structure moving forward. This may also include senior leadership who will need to sign off on budget and individuals who you think may be interested in participating. Be sure this buy-in relates to a shared understanding of what success looks like for your sustainability program.
6. **Launch your Team.** Ensure you have cross department representation, define roles and responsibility, and set goals! Determine how you will measure success on these goals and empower your team with the tools and resources they need to be successful.

# Sustainability Team Structures

## Example 1: Standard Green Team

As one of the most common governance structures for managing sustainability, Figure 1 depicts the generalized groupings of staff for a sustainability program built around a green team being the main engine for ideas, evaluation, and implementation. This structure tends to be the most common, with a number of companies in and outside of the pet industry using it.

Figure 1: Standard Green Team Structure



### Advantages:

- This structure is easy to setup requiring little more than a few motivated employees to come together to form the initial team.
- low-overhead
- a flexible governance process which allows for changes or additions to the structure
- ability to better leverage the employees most motivated to pursue change.

### Drawbacks:

- overreliance on only a few individuals for the majority of the work leading to burnout and fatigue

- lack of ability to implement change if not all departments are represented on the green team (ex: trying to change product design without a designer on the team),
- difficulty maintaining accountability for why one sustainability initiative may be pursued over another.

## Example 2: Internal Governance Structure

For any organization to be able to successfully manage sustainability internally, it is important that any structure put in place is reflective of the current on the ground realities, but also allows for future growth.

Figure 2: Internal Governance Sustainability Structure

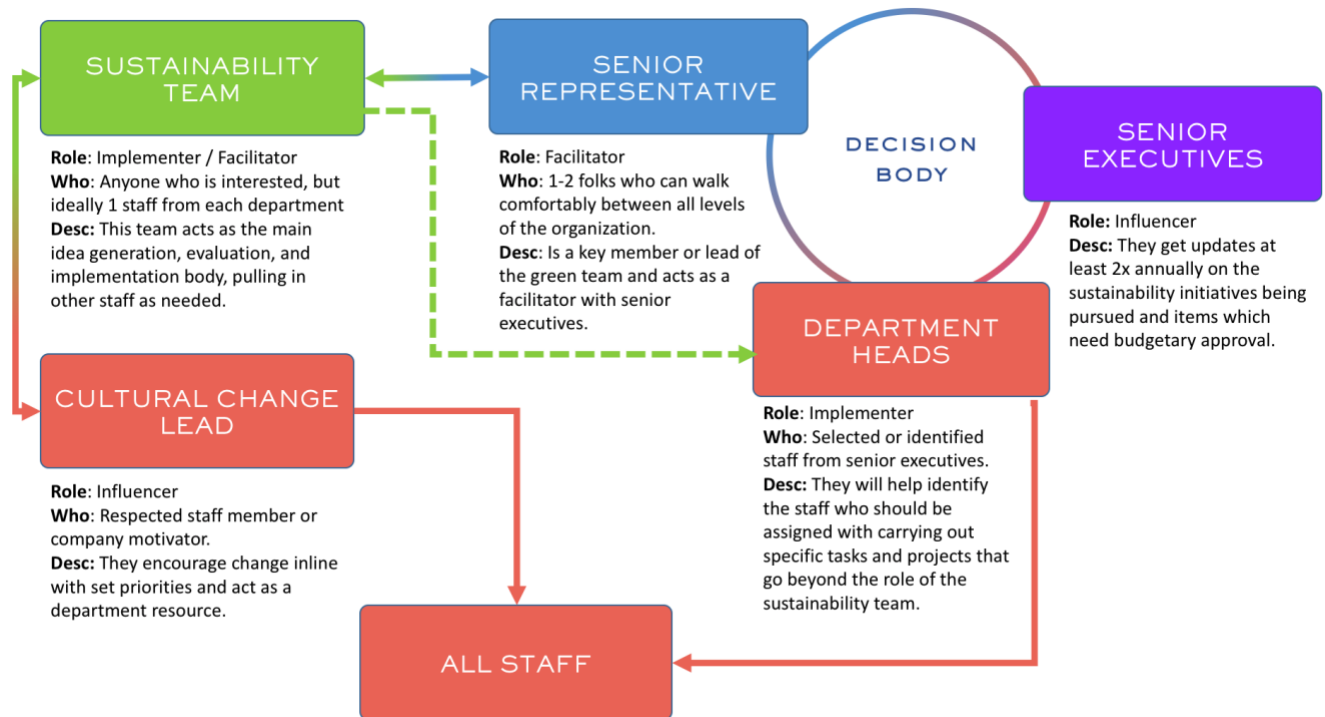


Figure 2 represents a sustainability structure that takes into account best industry practices including:

- Having a “Cultural Change Lead” within key departments is a useful strategy to not only increase adoption of sustainability and behavior change, but also lessen the burden on any one individual to be a resource.
- Ensuring a clear decision-making body or process for how sustainability and potential initiatives are prioritized is key to ensuring effective ongoing implementation

- Creating a one-on-one communication opportunity for senior leadership to provide input on sustainability, preferably with one to two individuals on a quarterly basis.
- Allowing multiple individuals and/or departments to take ownership of the work that needs to be done, lessening the burden on a sustainability team.

Figure 3, below, helps to better illustrate how a decision would be made using the above structure.

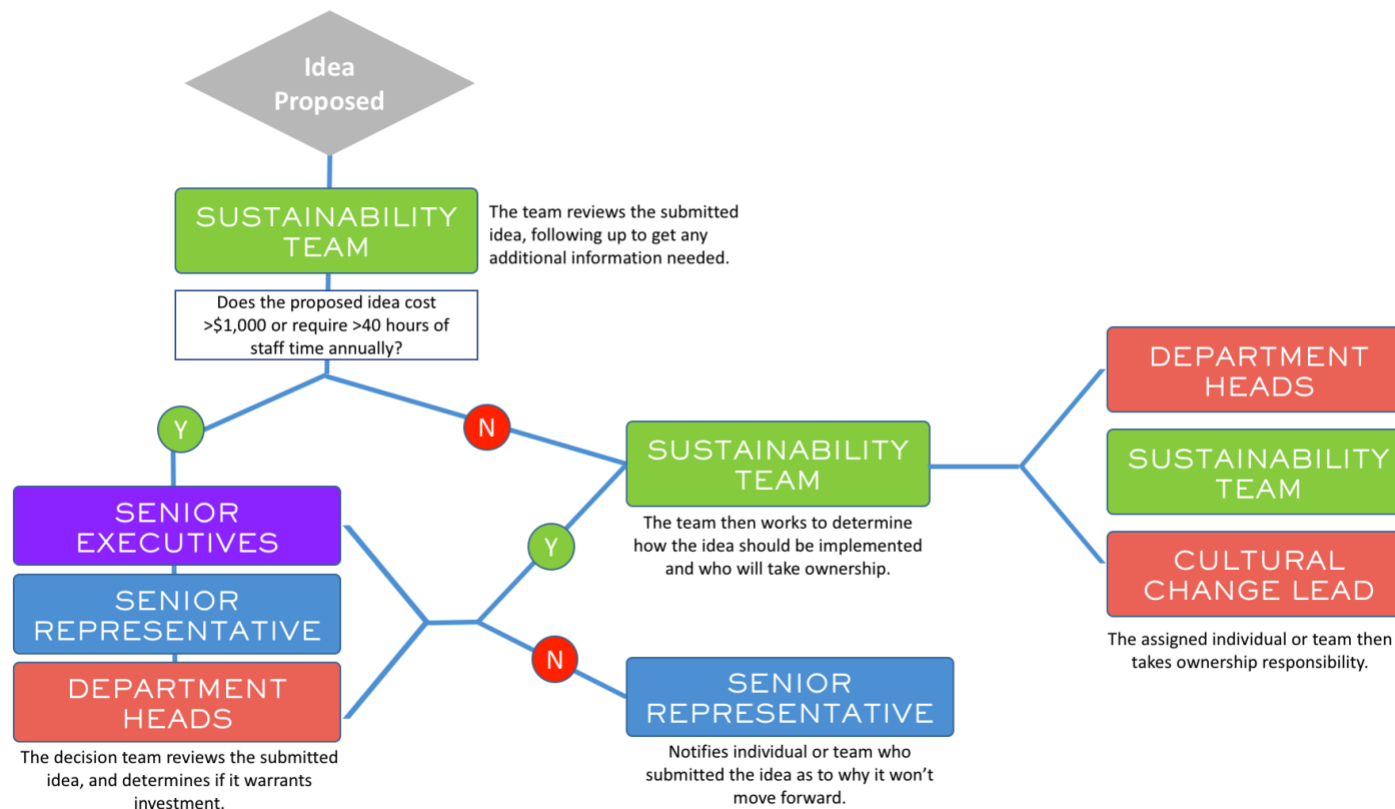


Figure 3: Decision Making Process in Internal Sustainability Structure



## Summary

When it comes to implementing sustainability many organizations fail to effectively determine how to utilize their internal staff to move the company's program from concept to action. However, when utilized effectively, a successful sustainability team is a great resource to engage employees at work, embed sustainability within your organization, and drive results. It is possible that every company can take steps towards reducing its impact on the world while increasing business success.

Beyond this guide the Pet Sustainability Coalition has many tools and resources to help organizations build and execute structures that work. More information can be found in PSC's toolkit [here](#).