

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN 2023



VISION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

INTRODUCTION

The Boise State Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) provides a strategic roadmap for pursuing sustainability initiatives, while efficiently utilizing resources and connecting campus efforts and its community. Adoption of the SAP by university leadership establishes a public commitment to strategically coordinate existing and future sustainability initiatives to achieve long-term targets in resource use, waste reduction, infrastructure utilization, academics and engagement. Through this commitment, the university can consolidate parallel efforts, prioritize funding, advance progress in external reporting metrics, and establish Boise State's sustainability legacy.

With a commitment to fulfilling the needs of current and future generations, Boise State sees sustainability through the lens of continuous improvement. The SAP lays the foundation for measurable improvements in environmental responsibility, financial stability, and enhanced societal outcomes. This requires understanding the relationship between human and environmental systems, which includes consideration of how our actions affect the social, environmental, and economic resilience of our community, and the wellbeing of those within it.

Under the umbrella of sustainability, key areas for university engagement and improvement include: Education and research, energy and water, transportation, waste, finance, and ecological preservation

As an educational institution and an engine for economic development, Boise State is positioned to lead by example.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

Established in 2020 by President Tromp, the Sustainability Governance Council (SGC) was tasked with the ambitious goal of creating a centralized decision-making structure to advance sustainability at Boise State. The first task of the SGC was to establish a baseline for sustainability metrics using the AASHE STARS reporting tool, a global standard for sustainability in higher education (pg. 3) to understand where to strengthen existing university efforts and to identify opportunities to establish new programming or initiatives. After finalizing the STARS report in 2021 and receiving a Silver Rating, the SGC identified six target areas to advance Boise State's sustainability strategy. These target areas became six working groups to recruit stakeholders and use their combined experience and knowledge to create a targeted action plan. Stakeholders include students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and the working groups are:

Academics and research: Track sustainability in courses and research, student success and literacy in sustainability, curriculum recommendations for sustainability across subjects

Built environment (Buildings, energy and water): Analyze Boise State's carbon future, developing sustainable landscapes and rainwater management infrastructure

Engagement: Increase student, faculty, staff and community interaction and assessment of sustainability culture on campus through the development of communication, programming and volunteer opportunities

Funding opportunities: Pursue external funding opportunities, create a campus standard for procurement and purchasing that prioritizes sustainable supply chain management

Transportation: Expand our plan for the future of electric vehicles on campus, amplify public transit opportunities for campus users, continue to encourage active transportation and nurture robust bike culture

Waste management and events: Create campus standards for sustainable options in events and dining that aim to reduce waste and increase visibility and engagement of sustainable culture on campus



Broad input

Over 80 stakeholders, consisting of passionate students, faculty, staff, and community members, were involved in the SGC working group development of the campus-wide sustainability action plan.

LONG-TERM TARGETS

AASHE STARS

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) is a global standard for sustainability in higher education with over 350 participating institutions. With the AASHE commitment to sustainability, the STARS system rates universities using four tiers ranging from Bronze to Platinum.

In September 2021, Boise State submitted its first STARS report, receiving a Silver rating. The reporting cycle for STARS is required every three years, allowing the university time to utilize the data collected to create process improvement plans to increase sustainability on campus. With the work of the SGC and the Sustainability Action Plan, it is very possible to achieve a Gold rating within the next two reporting cycles. With commitment from campus leadership and the Sustainability Governance Council, Boise State could join one of the 11 institutions that have managed to score a Platinum STARS rating. The STARS reporting tool is a metric utilized by college ranking systems, including the Princeton Review and US News, to identify top 'green' colleges and universities across the nation.

CARBON NEUTRALITY BY 2050

This is a transformative time as the topics of climate resiliency, projected growth, affordability, new technology in innovation, and efficient design set institutions apart in their readiness to respond to the changing public and private spheres. The City of Boise's commitment to 100% clean and renewable energy by 2035, with a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, along with Idaho Power's similar commitment to clean and renewable energy by 2045, show that our community is moving forward with robust solution-oriented design. As a community leader, and an innovative academic institution, it is crucial that Boise State University, through a dedicated committee of campus-wise stakeholders, join its community partners in working towards building a better future. This Sustainability Action Plan sets the goal for Boise State to strive for carbon neutrality no later than 2050.

Reporting Timeframe

The AASHE STARS report requires recertification every three years. The SAP addresses this by laying out a roadmap of actionable goals that will guide the work of the SGC until 2024, when the next AASHE STARS report is due. To accompany these immediate action items, the SGC working groups have identified long term goals that enable the university to prioritize campus commitments to sustainability, and to develop long term partnerships in these shared aims.

GUIDING VALUES

CAMPUS AS A LIVING LAB

The core tenet underlying guiding values of the working groups is a commitment to establishing Boise State's campus as a living laboratory. This reflects a philosophy of utilizing the campus to create tangible and practical opportunities to deepen student engagement through meaningful research, experiential learning, and community partnerships.

By practicing the living laboratory philosophy from the inception of the SAP, the SGC has been able to incorporate student voices and perspectives every step of the way, from data collection for baseline metrics, to tracking resource consumption and emissions, to student involvement in SGC working groups, actively contributing to and co-writing the SAP.

CONNECTION TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Each of these working groups, in order to best fit the university's long term goals, prioritized its objectives and deliverables based on impact, feasibility, and connection to at least one pillar of the Boise State Blueprint for Success strategic plan.

These pillars include:

Improve Educational Access & Student Success: Enhance the comprehensive student experience with a focus on student success and post-graduate outcomes.

Innovation for Institutional Impact: Expand and implement leading-edge innovations to provide access to integrated high-quality teaching, service, research and creative activities.

Advance Research and Creative Activity: Develop research that positively impacts lives and breaking down traditional barriers so researchers and students can collaborate on big problems.

Foster a Thriving Community: Promote and advance a fair, equitable and accessible environment to enable all members of the campus community to make a living, make a life and make a difference.

Trailblaze Programs & Partnerships: Enhance and foster pathbreaking interdisciplinary programs and activities that transcend traditional fields of study and offer students new opportunities to grow, thrive and contribute to our state and our nation.



Impact Areas

The Working Groups' Sustainability Action Plans are concurrent and integrated efforts. The order of the plans presented is not indicative of level of importance or urgency, but rather each of these plans are in communication with one another about opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches to achieving their respective goals.

ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH

INCORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND ENCOURAGE TRANSDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

- Centralize Data Collection and Communication: Apply established metrics to track existing efforts and launch new initiatives like workshops, lectures and job boards to encourage the incorporation and expansion of sustainability in curricula
- Support School of the Environment: Connect innovative research, relevant coursework and community-driven need with Environmental Science Degree and Sustainability Certificate
- Explore refining Bronco Budget Model to encourage collaboration and self sustaining funding: Offer higher returns to departments offering courses with sustainability designations

EXPAND SUSTAINABILITY-RELATED, APPLIED RESEARCH AND CAMPUS AS A LIVING LABORATORY

- Campus as a Living Laboratory: Develop a platform to connect students, staff, and faculty with on-campus projects and learning opportunities.
- Sustainability Literacy Assessments: Survey sustainability literacy, culture, and behavior

Incorporating sustainability into Academics and Research supports all of the University's Strategic Plan goals. An integrated Sustainability Action Plan will encourage innovative, transdisciplinary research, and allow students to develop marketable skills while finding solutions to real world problems on campus and in the community at large. Campus as a Living Laboratory opportunities provide students with critical learning experiences by deepening theoretical knowledge through practical application. The opportunities also enhance student connection to the university through intentional inclusion of the students' work in university goals and positive change.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS - CARBON NEUTRALITY BY 2050 OR SOONER

- Increase energy efficiency and conservation: Establish a goal to reduce energy usage by implementing a tracking and reporting system, prioritizing energy efficient construction and renovations, and building audit and retrofit programs.
- Improve the sustainability of campus district heating infrastructure: Identify opportunities to transition from steam to low temperature heating water infrastructure, and to increase use of City of Boise geothermal energy.
- Increase renewable energy generation / utilization: Establish a goal to increase renewable energy generation through on-campus solar, other renewables and/or off-site partnerships.
- Standardize energy tracking and reporting: Establish a university energy management system and create dashboards and annual reporting systems.

WATER USE REDUCTION

- Standardize water tracking and reporting: Set specific goals and develop a plan for optimizing campus water usage and reducing consumption.
- Reduce potable water use: Create a low-flow fixture policy, and develop a roadmap for upgrading buildings to lower-flow plumbing fixtures.

EMBRACE BIOPHILIC DESIGN, INCREASING CONNECTIVITY OF CAMPUS USERS WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Regenerate Local Ecosystems: Reduce the amount of turf grass on campus, update landscaping to increase native, climate-appropriate plants and amenities such as pollinator gardens and food gardens.

UTILIZE CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE AS A LIVING LAB

- Increase research using the campus environment : Create an inventory, develop and track projects, courses, and challenges with the goal to increase projects which leverage campus infrastructure.



Boise State's buildings and infrastructure use considerable resources in their construction and operation, and have the ability to affect the environment around them both positively and negatively. By committing to improve the university's built environment, Boise State can enhance its sustainability by reducing the costs and emissions associated with campus operations and infrastructure, while facilitating the use of the campus itself as a tool for research and learning.

For many of the Built Environment goals, further research is required to set ambitious yet feasible target reduction goals and timeframes. For this scope of this initial planning period within the Sustainability Action Plan, the goal is to conduct the required studies to set those specific targets.

TRANSPORTATION

PROVIDE EDUCATION AND RESOURCES ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

- Build a community knowledgeable of sustainable transportation options: Develop training and outreach tools to make the campus community aware of all transportation options and benefits.

REDUCE TRANSPORTATION CARBON EMISSIONS AND CARBON FOOTPRINT

- Decrease fuel consumption and carbon emissions through vehicle shared use models: Identify partnerships and resources available to expand infrastructure and use of alternative transit modes.

SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT TRANSPORTATION MODES

- Improve transportation access and efficiency through partnerships that overlap and support various modes of transportation: Multi-use path and multi-modal network expansion that connects campus with the surrounding community.

INTEGRATE SUSTAINABILITY INTO CAMPUS OPERATIONS

- Promote electric vehicle transportation: Expand charging infrastructure, provide alternative forms of low emission transportation options and adopt policy that prioritizes sustainability practices.

Boise State University strives to be a leader in sustainable clean energy transportation through education, cultural change, accessible solutions, and commitment to improving environmental health. By making an intentional commitment to active and accessible transportation, the university will reduce carbon emissions, influence valley-wide utilization of alternative transportation, develop a fleet of low emission vehicles, and build a campus suitable for safe travel that optimizes electric and human powered vehicles. Modeling and education opportunities will have a long-term effect on community environmental, physical, and economic health.



ENGAGEMENT

DEVELOP A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

- Adopt campus-wide understanding and definition of sustainability at Boise State.
- Gain approval for definition of sustainability and integrate Sustainability Action Plan with university strategic plan.
- Build a strong foundation from which to develop sustainability culture.
- Integrate concepts of resiliency into culture via internal and external communications and prioritize work to meet basic needs in sustainability services, engagement, and events.



BRIDGE CAMPUS-COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- Establish recurring signature events around sustainability: Bring together the internal and external campus community around sustainability and service.



CONNECT CAMPUS THROUGH A CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATION NETWORK

- Assess current outlets of sustainability-related communication on campus: Make sustainability-related events easily identifiable and provide a platform to recognize student commitment to sustainability.
- Develop communication strategy: Create a central system for internal and external opportunities engage with sustainability initiatives.

With its commitment to engagement, Boise State prioritizes a culture of sustainability that goes beyond the academic degree, making sustainability education, service, and impact opportunities accessible to all levels of campus including students, faculty and staff. From interdisciplinary collaboration to interstate partnerships, developing a stronger campus connection fosters not only a more intentional community commitment to reducing carbon emissions and waste, but a more resilient community to develop, innovate, and thrive despite unexpected challenges.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND EVENTS

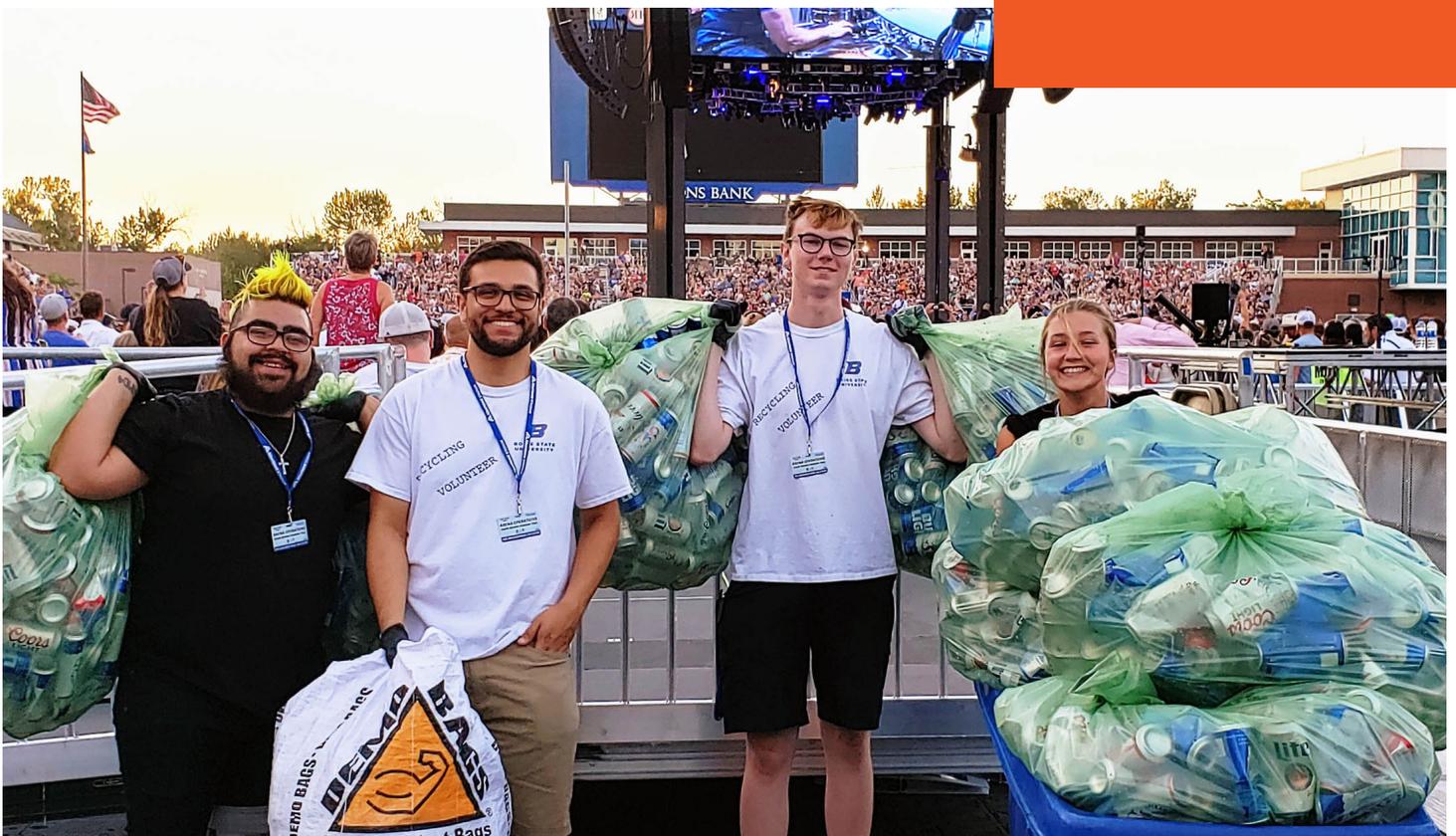
REDUCE ON-CAMPUS EVENT WASTE

- Implement on-campus program that makes thrifting and donating accessible to students as they move-in/out: educate users on resources, create a system for donations and track progress to goals.
- Create a standard operating procedure for catered on-campus events that reduces food and utensil waste: Adopt procedures for catered events which includes sustainability standards that realistically reduce food and utensil waste.
- Establish a consistent monitoring system for waste accumulation and diversion: Create a monitoring plan to establish baseline data and set target goals for waste reduction.

SHIFTING CAMPUS CULTURE TO REUSE AND REDUCE

- Integrate waste reduction messaging into campus-wide promotional platforms: Create student waste reduction pledges and share “good, better, best” strategies for reducing/reusing.
- Implement Bronco Shop program that makes reusing accessible to students: Create a buy back program at the Bronco Shop so students can be compensated for returned items to be resold at reduced prices.

Through a strategic partnership between waste management and university events, Boise State will foster a campus-wide culture in which consumption and waste can be managed in a manner that increases environmental, social and economic wellness. This can be done in partnership with academics, research, and engagement committees. Through implementation of new standard operating procedures (SOP) and campus programs, this plan will minimize the university's contribution to the waste stream and reduce university resources allocated to waste disposal and landfill.



EXPLORE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

PURSUE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Implement a sustainability focused internal lending program: Identify available funding, establish criteria for lending and determine how returns might be quantified.
- Explore the possibility of issuing green bonds: As defined by the Climate Bond Standard Board, review and determine ability to comply with standards, identify future projects and payment structure.
- Pursue external funding sources, including but not limited to the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING POLICIES ACROSS CAMPUS

- Create a campus standard for procurement and purchasing that prioritizes sustainable supply chain management: Identify baseline metrics associated with purchasing and supply chain management and collaboratively deploy measurements to track progress.



For Boise State to be truly sustainable, the university must adopt a sustainable financial model that allows for the agency that is needed to re-invest back into university operations, infrastructure and programming. The Funding Opportunities actions outline pathways for the university to pursue creative and strategic funding opportunities to increase institutional resilience and build a foundation from which the university can not only survive but thrive despite future economic uncertainty.

IMPLEMENTATION

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Once the SAP is adopted, the SGC will move from planning and reporting to implementation. A campus-wide and public facing communication campaign will present the SAP to university stakeholders, and invite students, faculty, staff and community members to contribute in achieving the deliverables outlined in the SAP. Between reporting periods, the SGC committees will continue to meet quarterly, with smaller action-oriented subcommittees focusing specifically on deliverables to meet as often as is needed to achieve their task. Regular updates will be made in public-facing content at these quarterly meetings to inform the community on the SAP progress.

A planned outcome of the Sustainability Action Plan is for the Council to work with departments across the university to coordinate their sustainability efforts in alignment with the campus-wide goals. Adopting a centralized strategy to increase sustainability, provides the structure, resources, and support to enable departments to work towards reducing their carbon footprint or waste in a way that best fits their specific culture, while staying connected to the campus-wide mission.

Funding to further the initiatives outlined in this plan are to be determined. With the adoption of the Sustainability Action Plan, the SGC will establish a project intake process in which departments across campus can submit funding requests for projects and programs that can be approved, prioritized, tracked, and connected to campus-wide goals, allowing for a cohesive and efficient approach to sustainability programs. The Sustainability Office will pursue grant opportunities and budget requests as appropriate to seed the resources needed to achieve the deliverables outlined in the interim of having a specific Sustainability Governance Council fund.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Sustainability Action Plan is a living document that requires ongoing input, collaboration and adjustments. The SAP will be updated periodically as needed. The Sustainability Office will develop an annual report to communicate progress to the campus community.



THANK YOU

The Sustainability Governance Council wishes to express appreciation and gratitude to President Tromp and the university executive team for continued support of the advancement of sustainability at Boise State University. The development of the SGC catalyzed Boise State's first institution-wide effort to collaborate and centralize data collection and goal setting in order for goal-oriented students, faculty and staff on campus to enhance their roles and campus life through meaningful work which builds a better future. This work advances not only creative activity and valuable research, but strengthens relationships and systems from which the university can grow to best support leadership in Idaho.

This work would not be possible without the remarkable work and contributions of many campus community members, all working together to deepen our campus' performance in sustainability. The students, faculty, staff that participated in this inaugural Sustainability Action Plan gave valuable time and energy from their day-to-day activities to ensure that this plan is well thought out, inclusive of all stakeholders, feasible, and ambitious. This work goes beyond the Office of Sustainability and is representative of the expertise and passion that spans departments and divisions on campus. We want to thank all our co-writers and co-creators of the Sustainability Action Plan. This foundational document will set the tone for the future of sustainability Boise State.



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY