

Ten Tips for Greening Your Institution

1. Form a Green Team

Greening isn't a solo job. Put out a call for staff or volunteers interested in sustainability and convene a sustainability committee, or "[green team](#)." It's helpful to have a representative from the facilities staff and the organization's board or leadership team. After forming a green team, use our "[institutionalizing greening checklist](#)" to make sustainability a permanent part of your operations. You can also try incorporating "sustainability" into a staff person's job title.

2. Conduct an Official Energy Audit

If your building hasn't undergone an energy audit, now is the time! Energy audits help institutions peel back the mystery surrounding their energy use, offering recommendations for better efficiency and lower utility bills. In New York, NYSERDA offers [free energy audits](#) and incentives for small non-profits, and subsidized [Flex Tech](#) audits for larger institutions. The federally-funded [BlocPower](#) firm connects houses of worship with these incentives and with energy efficiency contractors. Outside New York, [Interfaith Power & Light](#), a multifaith environmental coalition, can help your synagogue start greening. Check the [Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency](#) (DSIRE) to find out what kinds of energy incentives your state offers. Green teams may also want to use the [Hazon Seal audit recommendations on facilities](#) for guidance.

3. Conduct a Food Audit

Use [Hazon's Food Guide](#) & [Food Audit](#) to identify areas in which your institution can improve its food sourcing, food service, and food waste management. Learn how to organize sustainable holiday-themed meals, start composting, and even how to purchase healthier, and more sustainable food for meals and events. Even small changes — like serving less soda, or having regular meatless meals — can make a big statement, and can contribute to a healthier and more sustainable global food system.

4. Host a Green Kiddush

Green a weekly event at your institution. For synagogues, a [green kiddush](#) offers a way to publicly showcase your institution's commitment to greening through a Jewish lens. Make a few small changes, such as serving a meat-free or plant based meal, cutting out plasticware, or offering local produce and organic grape juice. Time the green kiddush with holidays like Earth Day, Tu B'shvat, or the reading of Parshat Noah (the Torah portion describing the biblical Flood). You could even go a step further and institute a green kiddush each week. Read about one

synagogue's sustainable kiddush [success story](#) to learn how to reduce waste and enliven your next kiddush or simcha.

5. Start Educating

Give a sermon, host a lecture series, show a [movie](#), or form a book club about food, water, sustainability, or climate change. These events build momentum around your sustainability efforts and inspire participants to green their own lives. If your organization has programs for children, invite [Teva](#) educators to teach a Jewish environmental lesson, or incorporate green activities into the existing curriculum. Use one of Hazon's [curricula or sourcebooks](#) to help you get started. Post clear signs (with Jewish content) that identify recycling, paper, and compost bins, and signs to remind people to turn off the lights.

6. Implement Small Facilities Upgrades

Start upgrading your building by installing programmable thermostats and low-flow faucet aerators, replacing incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs, and placing recycling bins next to every trash bin. These small improvements could even save your organization money. These projects will also build momentum for bigger projects like solar panels and HVAC retrofits.

7. Purchase Green Products

Conduct an assessment of your organization's purchasing habits for office supplies, kitchen supplies, and cleaning products. Meals and tableware are a major source of waste in Jewish communities and thus an excellent opportunity for improvement. Consider a shift to reusables to minimize all waste and energy waste related to production, packaging, shipping, waste removal and recycling, even composting. If this is not at all feasible in your institution purchase compostable/biodegradable tableware and cutlery. Ensure a healthier space by purchasing (or requesting your cleaning service to use), natural cleaning products free of hazardous chemicals. These products are often just as cheap, if not cheaper, than "standard" supplies. Check out the "Green Products and Purchasing" section in [Greening Resources](#) for a list of sustainable product providers.

8. Plant a Garden

[Start a garden](#) in the front of your building, in a courtyard, or on the roof. Host a community planting event at the beginning of the season, and create a gardening club to make sure it is well-tended. Gardens not only improve an institution's image, but also offer a myriad of educational opportunities. They can also provide the community with local and healthy food! Gardens are a

wonderful tool to help children learn about the natural world and the cycle of the Jewish year. Learn how one JCC set up a [garden and nature classroom](#) for all ages.

9. Speak Up and Get Active

Advocate for public transit, write letters to government officials in support of renewable energy or asking them to support food assistance programs, or plant trees in your neighborhood park - There is so much that you can do! There are environmental and social justice campaigns underway in every corner of the country, at the local, state, national, and international levels. Sign up for newsletters from [League of Conservation Voters](#), [350.org](#), [Greenfaith](#), [Religious Action Center](#), [Sierra Club](#), [Jewish Climate Action Network](#), or [Citizens' Climate Lobby](#) to stay up to date.

10. Spread the (Green) Word

Share your greening successes! Start by adding a tab to your institution's website that documents green improvements. Use social media to announce green upgrades and events. Encourage staff and community members to compost at home, unplug their personal electronic devices, use reusable water bottles, mugs, and shopping bags, and carpool or bike ride to work. Finally, fundraise by sharing greening stories with potential donors. Let organizations nearby know what you're up to.