

NATIONAL PRIZE

McGill University



(L-R) Kelsey Litwin, Megan Toth, Siobhan Mehrotra, Shona Watt, Francois Miller, Zaehen Ghanshani.

Encouraging Staff Engagement with the Sustainable Workplace Certification

In 2021, to accommodate remote work, McGill University redesigned its Sustainable Work Certification program, which encourages all stakeholders to establish a culture of sustainability on and beyond campus. The program guides teams through four certification levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum) using checklists with increasing levels of sustainability-oriented actions, implemented at their own pace, to promote environmental and social responsibility. Certification requires 75% of the team to commit to the actions.

Each team appoints a Sustainable Workplace Ambassador, guided by the Office of Sustainability and supported by the Sustainable Workplace network, to share ideas with counterparts across the university via MS Teams. Certified teams receive university-wide recognition.

More than 500 staff from 42 units have participated since 2017, with the relaunch renewing motivation for both bottom-up and top-down engagement along with boosting team morale. Productivity gains include reducing office supplies and single-use items while increasing paperless processes, efficiency, team connectedness, waste avoidance/diversion, and access to eco-friendly products.

The self-guided nature makes this low-cost, high-reward initiative inherently transferable. Best practices have been shared through Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Freely available online, the checklist includes actions applicable to physical and remote work at most institutions.

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