

Sarasota County touts Green Business Partnership

The **Green Business Partnership (GBP)** is an exciting new program that encourages environmental stewardship and recognizes those businesses that make an extra effort to operate in an environmentally responsible manner.

This collaborative effort includes businesses, business organizations and local governments. The GBP was initiated through an innovative grant awarded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to Sarasota County.

In 2007, the county expanded the Green Business program to include its contractors, even those with offices outside of Sarasota County.

The Green Business Partnership is open to all businesses in Sarasota County, regardless of type or size, that implement environmental standards documented through an on-site certification assessment. Certification is valid for three years, after which a recertification process will be required. Certification may be revoked if a later site assessment reveals that a business no longer meets the certification standards.

Becoming a green partner

To become a certified Green Business Partner, your company must: Commit the program by agreeing to display the program seal and adopting the following Green Business Pledge:

[Name of business] believes that a successful business is dependent upon a healthy environment. We pledge to demonstrate our environmental stewardship by reducing waste and conserving natural resources, and by operating an environmentally responsible business.

Implement the required environmental standards, as indicated on the application and checklist.

Participate in an on-site visit to verify that your business meets the required standards.

Then enjoy the environmental and business benefits of being a Green Business Partner.

How your business can benefit

Cost savings: Implementing the program's waste reduction and water and energy conservation measures can save you money!

Market exposure: The Green Business Partnership will be promoted through a marketing plan that includes advertisements and news releases in the local media.

Increased sales: Businesses with a green ethic can use this distinction to achieve a marketing edge over the competition by offering customers more environmentally sound alternatives.

Green Business Partnership directory: Certified businesses will be listed in an online directory that will give consumers the opportunity to patronize businesses demonstrating their commitment to the environment.

Healthy work environment: Implementing many of the program standards will create a safer, healthier working environment.

Increased productivity: Caring about employees' well-being can improve morale and increase productivity.

Free site assessments and product rebates: Sarasota County can help with a free waste assessment. A fresh perspective may help you discover cost-saving measures you'd never considered.

Florida Power & Light: (FPL) offers free energy assessments and rebates for certain types of high-efficiency cooling systems, energy-efficient ventilation units and installation.

Resource information: Find a list of available resources to help you implement environmentally sound business practices.

Additional Benefits

- Green Business Partnership seal

Certified businesses may display the program seal prominently in their businesses and include it on printed materials and advertisements.

- Recognition as a community leader

Demonstrating your company's commitment to a healthy environment demonstrates your community goodwill and can give you recognition as a community leader.

- Peer-to-peer networking

Green Business Partners will be encouraged to share their experiences with each other.

- Conservation Awards

Sarasota County annually acknowledges businesses that demonstrate outstanding contributions to resource conservation. Certified businesses will be eligible for consideration for these awards.