

Going Green: One Funder's Experience Entering Green Grantmaking

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What Does “Green” Mean?

In this brief, we use the term “**green**” to describe practices that reduce energy and water consumption, environmental hazards in buildings and/or the amount of raw materials or natural resources consumed.

The term “**greening**” refers to the process of increasing organizations' environmentally healthy operational practices or environmentally sustainable construction practices. In health care settings, greening also includes using safer medical supplies and materials, reducing toxic medical waste and increasing knowledge and action around local environmental health issues.

This brief summarizes the experience and lessons learned from the Community Clinics Initiative's (CCI) Green Buildings Program, a half-million dollar program that provided one-time, one-year grants of \$25,000 to twenty community clinics in California. The Program's purpose was to support clinics in building, renovating and operating environmentally sustainable health care facilities in order to promote healthy environments for patients, staff and their communities and responsible stewardship of global resources. We believe that the findings in this brief will be of interest to funders and lenders that are supporting or are considering supporting environmentally sustainable design, materials and practices among community clinics and other nonprofit organizations.

Developing the Green Buildings Program

The Green Buildings Program emerged from CCI's other grantmaking experiences, particularly CCI's Major Capital Campaign Gifts (MCCG) Program, which provided support for community clinics' capital campaigns and facilities improvement projects.¹ In recent years, some of the MCCG grantees began pursuing green practices in their building and renovation efforts. Furthermore, leaders in the community clinics field were voicing growing interest in incorporating green practices but had few funding opportunities to support such efforts

CCI designed the Green Buildings Program to explore clinics' interest in “going green” and to learn what small green grants could accomplish within a clinic setting. In developing the program, CCI learned from and partnered with two organizations with extensive green experience—Tides Shared Spaces/NonprofitCenters Network, which has experience in green building and renovations in nonprofit facilities across the United States, and the Teleosis Institute, a project of the nonprofit group Practice Greenhealth, which provides health care professionals with training, resources and consultation around green health care. The Teleosis Institute also assisted a few of the Green Buildings grantees with the planning and implementation of their grants.

Educating Clinics about Green Buildings

Since green buildings and practices are still relatively new for the community clinics field, CCI worked with the Teleosis Institute to develop a “Green Buildings Self-Audit” for clinics to complete as part of their grant proposals.

Who's Going Green?

The 20 grantees of the Green Buildings Program represent a small portion of more than 200 community clinic corporations in California that provide comprehensive and high-quality health care services to nearly 4 million uninsured and underinsured patients each year, roughly 11% of the state's total population.^{2,3}

The Green Buildings grantees include clinics in urban and rural settings within California. Approximately 60% of these grantees have multiple clinic sites, ranging from 2 to 14 sites per clinic corporation. Although most grantees had engaged in some type of greening efforts prior to receiving their Green Buildings grant (e.g., paper recycling, composting, pharmacy waste management, environmentally friendly purchasing), they generally considered these to be small and/or exploratory efforts, rather than focused projects with outside funding support.

This self-audit was adapted from the Teleosis Institute's assessment tools for medical offices and helped clinics assess their green practices in five areas:

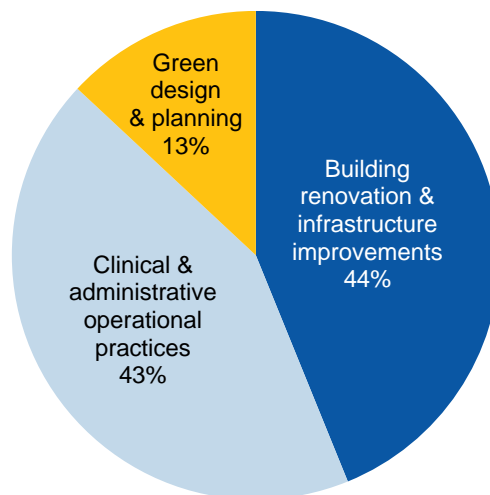
- Solid waste reduction (e.g., reduce and recycle paper and other waste)
- Energy consumption (e.g., install energy efficient heating/cooling equipment and lighting fixtures)
- Water conservation (e.g., replace sprinkler systems with drip irrigation)
- Pollution prevention (e.g., purchase non-polluting cleaning supplies, paints and pesticides; reduce hazardous waste)
- Medical equipment (e.g., replace products made of poly-vinyl chloride and mercury)

Beyond an assessment instrument, the self-audit served as an educational tool that helped clinic leaders identify and prioritize their desired green practices, including both simple and more substantial changes (e.g., utilizing computers' automatic sleep mode to save energy; replacing heating and air conditioning units). This snapshot of greening practices among these clinics was also useful information for CCI as they continued to develop and refine their grantmaking program.

FOCUS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE GREEN BUILDINGS GRANTS

The Green Buildings Program supported grantees' works in three major areas: planning and green design for major capital projects, building renovation and infrastructure improvements and operational practices. Within these broad areas, grantees were given latitude to choose their greening activities; each grantee pursued between one to five distinct grant activities. Exhibit 1 illustrates the proportion of grant activities pursued within each of three areas of the Green Buildings Program.

Exhibit 1
Percentage of Grant Activities Pursued in Each Green Buildings Area



Green Design & Planning

Green design and planning incorporates green principles and materials in plans for new construction or major capital improvements to new or existing buildings. Some examples of green principles include the design of energy efficient buildings with high levels of insulation and tight construction, the use of construction materials that will not emit harmful air pollutants and the installation of high efficiency lights and appliances.

“It’s a credit to this Green Buildings project that now whenever we renovate any clinic site, our top managers think green.”

—Grantee

A few grantees focused their grant activities on green design or planning. These grantees used their Green Buildings grant funds to:

- Hire a LEED-certified architect to design a new building
- Consult with an environmental engineer on construction plans
- Cover the costs of community planning sessions for a new green clinic building
- Work with consultants to incorporate green design into a building renovation

What is LEED®?

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System is a third-party certification program that has become the de facto standard for sustainable building. The U.S. Green Buildings Council manages and oversees the LEED system and certification. Buildings gain points for meeting standards in five areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. There are four levels of certification, with the platinum rating being awarded to the highest-scoring buildings. Increasing numbers of architects, engineers, interior designers, construction managers and government officials use LEED performance criteria as measures of their sustainable green building and development practices.

A “LEED for Healthcare Buildings” rating system is being developed collaboratively between the U.S. Green Buildings Council and the nonprofit group Green Guide for Healthcare (GGHC). The system addresses structural and regulatory challenges of health care buildings and design elements that enhance patient healing. GGHC notes that the rating system is primarily for hospitals or other acute care institutions, but it may also be useful to clinics and medical buildings.⁴

Building Renovations & Infrastructure Improvements

Grantees incorporated green building practices in structural additions or improvements to their clinics with the intention of reducing their energy and water consumption, improving indoor air quality and creating healthier environments for patients and staff. In general, these one-time efforts are expected to yield longer-term environmental benefits and cost savings. Examples of grantees’ activities and accomplishments in this area are listed on the next page.

“Our electrical retrofit will really save energy, and the clinic will save thousands of dollars on utility costs over time.”

—Grantee

Energy efficiency

- Installing solar electric systems and solar-powered water heaters
- Adding a solar attic fan, window shades and awnings
- Installing energy saving roof covers
- Replacing old windows with energy efficient windows
- Installing automatic thermostats and motion-detecting power switches

Water conservation

- Installing new drought-tolerant landscaping and drip irrigation
- Building a rainwater catchment system
- Upgrading to more efficient faucets and toilet fixtures

Air quality improvement

- Installing new or upgraded skylights to improve ventilation and natural light
- Adding re-circulating air fans and air filters
- Upgrading old heating and air conditioning equipment
- Replacing deteriorating carpeting with solid surface flooring

Some grantees that completed energy and water conservation projects could point to immediate reductions in their energy expenses. For example, one clinic reported that their 2008 energy costs were one-third less than in previous years, in large part due to their Green Buildings grant projects. Other grantees hope to document such cost savings in the future.

Changes in Operational Practices

Green operational practices refer to staff's engagement in environmentally sound routines. Grantees that implemented or augmented green operational practices were often able to reduce the levels of waste and pollution emanating from their clinics as well as their level of energy consumption. Changes in clinic policies and guidelines (e.g., supplies purchasing, recycling) helped integrate green practices into the regular routines of the organization. Examples of grantee activities and accomplishments in this area include:

- Initiating recycling programs
- Eliminating the use of mercury blood pressure cuffs
- Installing bicycle lockers to encourage staff biking
- Instituting new cleaning programs with non-polluting products

- Purchasing energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs
- Reducing the use of disposable plastic products (e.g., in-sink water filters in lieu of bottled water)

Going Green: Two Approaches

Tiburcio Vasquez Health Centers, Union City, CA

“Many of us here want to create a more caring, more healing environment, an environment that makes a difference, and that’s what greening is about,” says a clinic leader at Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, explaining why the clinic applied for a CCI Green Buildings grant and why the green building activities attracted a high level of staff involvement from a wide range of employees. The clinic operates seven clinics in southern Alameda County. For its Green Buildings grant, the clinic chose a mix of activities—initiating a mixed recycling program (paper, bottles, cans) to reduce waste, installing new landscaping and irrigation to cut water use and expense and training an internal Green Team to support greening efforts. Cost savings was a motivator for selecting these greening activities, since the clinic’s monthly energy bill averages \$10,000. “The Green Team worked at getting staff to think that [these projects] have an impact on our clinic’s long-term sustainability, to understand that conservation and a smaller overall carbon footprint is good but also that we are better stewards of the funds that come to our agency when we conserve,” says the clinic’s grant manager. The new recycling program quickly expanded from two to four clinic sites and the administrative offices. Trash volume has been reduced so much that the clinic cut the number of waste pickups from its vendor in half. New building renovations will incorporate green materials and energy efficiency measures. “Having members of management on our Green Team was important. I think we had a fear that cost would be an obstacle to being green, but this grant helped change that mindset. We could demystify what it takes to have a green building,” the grant manager says.

St. Anthony Foundation, San Francisco, CA

The St. Anthony Foundation, a multi-service organization serving many of San Francisco’s most destitute residents, utilized a Green Buildings grant to enhance the architectural and engineering plans for a major capital renovation of its health clinic. The grant enabled the organization to incorporate green building design and ensure that its new equipment would meet green standards for energy efficiency. The renovated clinic was one of the first LEED-certified social service buildings in the city. But the purpose of a green design was for more than energy savings. “The decision to build green was for our patients’ benefit. Illnesses such as asthma and allergies which are triggered by mold, dust or other airborne contaminants are very common in neighborhoods like the Tenderloin, where the buildings that people inhabit are often old and uncared for. The fresh air, low-VOC (low volatile organic compound) materials and natural light in the clinic now allows our patients the dignity of being cared for in a beautiful and healthy environment that won’t trigger their illnesses just by walking in the door,” noted Barry Stenger, Director of Development and Communications. Staff and board of the organization are deeply satisfied that they were able to take action on long-held organizational values of creating a healing environment for the vulnerable populations they serve, and contributing to the improvement of the city’s Tenderloin neighborhood where many of their patients reside.

CROSS-CUTTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE GREEN BUILDINGS PROGRAM

Regardless of the types of greening activities that grantees pursued, the grants commonly resulted in broader impacts including greater green awareness, knowledge and expertise among grantees; increased knowledge sharing and learning among greening partners; and enhanced grantee visibility in the community and among funders.

Greater Green Awareness, Knowledge & Expertise Among Grantees

The grants generated significant learning and awareness about greening among grantee staff. As part of the proposal process, all applicants had been asked to incorporate an education component for staff, patients and/or the broader community in their grant activities. Most grantees planned specific strategies to improve staff awareness and knowledge of environmentally sustainable practices for clinics. Grantees generally saw increased levels of interest and attention to environmentally sound operational practices among clinicians and administrative staff, with half of the grantees reporting the emergence of new champions for green clinic practices. Leadership and initiative for greening a clinic typically emerged within a few months of the grant's start from a cross-section of clinic staff. For this reason, Green Buildings grants strengthened leadership skills among staff, providing opportunities to a wide range of clinic positions to make presentations at staff meetings, lead group discussions and participate in planning green operational activities such as recycling or staff education sessions.

Grantees' successes in enhancing staff knowledge and awareness generally came from internally generated education efforts or as a by-product of greening activities (e.g., recycling challenges requiring staff meeting discussions) and to a lesser degree, through external consultants and trainings (e.g., a Leadership in Green Health Care course offered by the Teleosis Institute). It also was helpful that the philosophy of greening a clinic was quickly understood by most staff, aligned with many staff's personal values about environmental sustainability and was reinforced by the attention of the mass media to related issues like climate change, reducing carbon footprints and energy costs.

Increased Knowledge Sharing & Learning Among Greening Partners

Staff and board members of grantee organizations quickly became experts in various aspects of greening out of necessity, and at times were able to be resources to other individuals and organizations planning or engaging in greening efforts within their communities. Several clinic leaders who built up

“The [CCI Green Buildings] RFP really influenced what we did. It motivated us to think about the whole clinic and community. It made us think about educating others and informing the community. That’s been good – it got us to change our mentality rather than just accomplish a technical change.”

—Grantee

their knowledge about greening feel a responsibility to share what they have learned with other nonprofits.

Grantees' interest and growing expertise in greening spurred some vendors to seek training and certification in green building practices, while the CCI-supported technical assistance providers were able to gain a better understanding of community clinics' unique greening needs. For example, after working with one grantee, the Teleosis Institute staff became aware of the many demands on clinic staff meeting time and adapted their materials and recommendations with subsequent grantees.

“Increasing awareness and funding for [nonprofit healthcare greening] is a huge need. We believe in this and we want to be known for green clinic work. We want to spread the word and share what we’ve learned.”

—Grantee

Enhanced Grantee Visibility & Resources

Grantees' greening efforts frequently garnered the attention of patients, clinics' broader communities, and at times, foundations and other donors. The most successful ways of promoting awareness about grantees' greening efforts among external audiences were the visible changes to clinic buildings (e.g., solar panels, landscaping, new construction), as these changes frequently generated conversations about environmental health and sustainability. Articles about grantees' greening efforts occasionally appeared in local newspapers with positive comments by community members about building improvements. This type of community recognition heightened staff's pride and inspired continued engagement in greening activities; sometimes it led to the pursuit of greening efforts by other community members or organizations.

Partially as a result of their greater visibility and recognition for greening efforts, some grantees were able to attract additional resources for their work. For example, one grantee received \$8,000 worth of replacement windows from a local business, and another received a large donation of incentives (e.g., mugs, t-shirts, coupons for local merchants) for staff's participation in “Air Quality” week. Although grantees report that it has been difficult to find other green-focused grants, about half were able to leverage their Green Buildings grants to attract small amounts of new funding from a variety of sources. For instance, some grantees were able to access government funding that was not specifically “green” and apply it to greening purposes (e.g., Community Development Block Grants, California Health Facilities Financing Authority). The green aspect of grantees' new buildings attracted interest from funders from whom they might not have otherwise. For example, one grantee directly attributes a \$1 million foundation grant to their serious pursuit of LEED certification for their new clinic wing; another reports two additional major gifts from individual donors who want to support the environmental sustainability work of the organization.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUNDERS

Lessons learned in the CCI Green Buildings grants program can be considered by other funders who are interested in supporting green buildings and practices among the nonprofits they support:

1. Since green health care and green buildings are emerging fields, take adequate time to “get up to speed” on green grantmaking and utilize existing knowledge, experience and resources in the design and implementation of grants.
2. Use a green grants program as an opportunity for mutual learning. Provide educational resources as part of the grant proposal process (e.g., a self-audit about the current level and type of green practices), and throughout the program, capture and share learnings and resources with grantees and other funders and nonprofit organizations.
3. Help grantees look for and draw connections between their mission and green practices (i.e. between health care and environment health).
4. Consider providing small grants that have the potential for triggering catalytic changes. Small grants may be especially attractive for funders who are new to greening.
5. Identify and support technical assistance providers who can guide grantees in choosing greening activities and projecting realistic foci and timelines.
6. Require grantees to articulate relevant educational activities for staff, clients and/or the broader community as part of their grant proposal.
7. Remain flexible within the grantmaking structure to allow for innovation, risk taking and multiple ways of going green—greening can occur in many ways other than through capital projects and new construction.
8. Provide opportunities for “cross over” with other grants and grants programs as applicable, for example, providing a green grant to an existing major capital grantee to support green design or purchasing green supplies as part of a patient care grant. If starting a green grants program among current grantees, assess and generate interest in greening (e.g., add the topic to a grantee convening).
9. Encourage grantees to track changes in their greening practices (e.g., through a pre/post self-audit) and related cost savings over time for internal decision making, to inform others interested in the organization’s green activities and to make a business case for going green. When green grants include client-focused objectives, include ways to measure the impacts on clients’ health and well-being.
10. Help grantees identify financial incentives and funding for greening efforts, including sources that are not advertised as green (e.g., Community Development Block Grants, blight eradication funding, special loan programs, commuter bus passes, rebates).

“Getting our management team buy-in was very important. Now their perspective is that being green can be fiscally sound; it can be doable for a nonprofit. That is a change.”

—Grantee

Key Factors that Help Nonprofits Go Green

These factors are important for funders to keep in mind when supporting grantees as they plan for and pursue greening efforts.

- The more clearly the philosophy of greening aligns with an organization's stated mission, the easier it is to get leaders' support of and involvement in green practices and green buildings. Getting buy-in from both senior leadership and day-to-day managers is critical for success.
- A "Green Team" of internal staff—either appointed members or staff who volunteer—amplifies enthusiasm and helps to identify and support change agents at various levels within the organization. It is important to include staff who hold positions most relevant to day-to-day greening efforts, such as facilities directors and purchasing directors, as well as executive leaders who can facilitate change and ensure the timeliness of greening efforts.
- By tapping into staff's personal values and enthusiasm around environmental sustainability, organizations can adopt green practices like recycling and energy conservation more quickly into their daily routines.
- Relatively inexpensive green investments can go a long way. Small "wins" (e.g., placing recycling bins near desks, providing bike racks) help change staff's expectations around environmentally sustainable practices and can trigger larger behavior changes. When weighing choices about the greening activities to pursue, both the short-term and long-term benefits need to be considered as well as upfront costs; a common barrier to greening efforts is a misconception that going green is always more costly.
- Hiring LEED-certified vendors or other vendors with demonstrated experience around green buildings or green business practices helps to avoid costly mistakes. Since variations in internal environments and workplace demands impact greening efforts, it is important to choose vendors as well as trainers and consultants who are knowledgeable of these differences.
- Multi-site organizations must be clear at the start of a green project whether the activities will be independently planned and undertaken at individual sites or whether the project will impact corporation-wide practices or policies. It can be advantageous to pilot and demonstrate the success of some green changes at individual sites prior to taking new practices to scale, but even single site activities may need to involve central administrators.
- The ability of organizations to institute green practices is sometimes influenced by external factors, such as the availability or cost of community services (e.g., recycling pickup, waste disposal). It is important to assess these external factors early in the planning phase.

General Resources for Green Buildings and Green Practices

- The Thoreau Center for Sustainability, a project of Tides Shared Space (www.thoreau.org/green-design/index.html)
- “An Introduction to LEED, for Nonprofits” written by NonprofitCenters Network, a project of Tides Shared Spaces (www.tidessharedspaces.org/fileadmin/tss_pdfs/leed_fact_sht_0507_final.pdf)
- “Easy things you can do to make your office greener” written by NonprofitCenters Network, a project of Tides Shared Spaces (http://www.tidessharedspaces.org/fileadmin/tss_pdfs/greener_office_0107.pdf)
- U.S. Building Council’s LEED Certification System (www.usgbc.org)
- Energy Star (www.energystar.gov)

Resources for Green Health Care

- Community Clinics Initiative and the Teleosis Institute, “Community Clinic Initiative Green Buildings Self-Audit” (<http://www.communityclinics.org/content/general/detail/914>)
- Practice Greenhealth (www.practicegreenhealth.org)
- The Teleosis Institute, a project of Practice Greenhealth (www.teleosis.org)
- Health Care Without Harm (www.noharm.org/us)
- Green Guide for Health Care, a green building guide for the health care industry (www.gghc.org/about.cfm)
- U.S. Building Council’s LEED Certification for Health Care Buildings (www.usgbc.org)

The Green Buildings Program is part of the Community Clinics Initiative (CCI), a joint project of **The California Endowment** and **Tides** to strengthen the capacities of California’s community clinics. **The California Endowment** is a statewide health foundation whose mission is to “expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.” The foundation has provided over \$98 million in funding for CCI since 1999. **Tides** is a nonprofit organization based in San Francisco that works with “individuals, groups and funders to implement programs that accelerate positive social change” in the nonprofit sector.



This brief was written by Tina Cheplick and Kim Ammann Howard from BTW *informing change*, a strategic consulting firm for nonprofits and philanthropic foundations, which evaluates the overall impact of CCI and its specific grant programs. For more information or questions about this brief or the CCI evaluation, contact Kim Ammann Howard at kahoward@btw.informingchange.com. For additional information about the Green Buildings Program, contact Olivia Nava at onava@tides.org.

¹ The Major Capital Campaign Gifts Program is described in “Building for the Future: The Community Clinics Initiative’s Major Capital Campaign Gifts Program” (2009) by BTW *informing change*, which can be found on the Community Clinics Initiative’s website www.communityclinics.org

² Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development. (2006). Primary Care Clinic Profile Report 2006. Annual Utilization Report of Primary Care Clinics. Retrieved April 21, 2008, from http://www.oshpd.ca.gov/hid/Products/Hospitals/Utilization/PC_SC_Utilization.html

³ U.S. Census Bureau. State & County QuickFacts California. Retrieved April 21, 2008, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>

⁴ U.S. Green Buildings Council. Green Guide for Health Care. Retrieved February 23, 2009, from www.gghc.org/about.cfm