

# Social Equity Indicators

## Overview

Social equity is important as a component of sustainable practices because it encompasses the human aspects of the “triple bottom line”. This cluster of indicators focuses on the consideration of worker and community interests that need to be protected and enhanced, as part of an overall program for sustainable business practice.

Social sustainability is connected to how we choose to treat other human beings in our communities – the workers and other businesses we deal with and the community as a whole – in order to maximize individual and community well-being.

Defining “best practice” in the social equity realm of sustainability is difficult. We know that many factors affect a company’s ability to reach a fully sustainable practice. We structured each indicator along levels of performance, with the idea that sustainability can be viewed as a continuum, and that businesses need to be acknowledged for the sustainable practices that they have adopted along with additional goals outlined for them to meet. We recognize, of course, that a company’s size would have an impact on its ability to meet some of the indicators listed.

There are six indicators that focus on workplace practices and five that address broader community interests.

### Workplace Social Indicators

1. Wages
2. Benefits
3. Participation/Communication
4. Fair Treatment
5. Safety and Health
6. Opportunities for Advancement

### Community Social Indicators

1. Community Health
2. Education and Training
3. Affordable Housing
4. Corporate Social Responsibility
5. Transportation

We look forward to a lively discussion of these indicators at a future meeting. If you have suggestions, questions or concerns about any of them and you’d like to share those with us, feel free to contact the sub-committee (please send to all).

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## **A. Workplace Issues**

### **Indicator 1. Wage Levels**

**Level One:** Employer offers a progressive wage schedule. The median wage of company workforce is equal to the average state wage for designated industry.

**Level Two:** Employer offers a progressive wage schedule. The median wage of company workforce equal to 105% of average state wage for designated industry.

**Level Three:** Employer offers a progressive wage schedule. The median wage of company workforce equal to 115% of average state wage for designated industry.

### **Indicator 2. Benefits**

**Level One:** The minimum level of benefits offered must include accessible medical insurance coverage for employees. The probationary period to qualify for benefits must not exceed six months of cumulative service.

**Level Two:** The minimum level of benefits offered must include accessible health insurance coverage for employees, and at least three of the following additional benefits offered to full time employees: accessible dental and vision insurance; medical insurance coverage for family; holiday pay; paid vacation time; paid sick time; employer contribution to retirement plan; equitable bonus system established as a standard practice to award productivity and share profits. The maximum probationary period to qualify for these benefits must not exceed six months of cumulative service.

**Level Three:** Employer provides full medical, vision, and dental coverage for employees, with an option for family coverage. Holiday pay, paid vacation time, and paid sick time are provided. The employer matches employee contributions to the retirement plan. Equitable bonuses are standard practice to award productivity and share profits. Part-time employees are offered equal benefits on a pro-rated basis.

### **Indicator 3 Participation/ Communication**

**Level One:** Employer provides policies and procedures in writing and on file.

**Level Two:** Employer communicates expectations effectively. Employer conducts regular performance evaluations and offers opportunities for training on problem areas.

The employer verbally encourages employees to discuss workplace issues and develop ideas for improving the workplace.

**Level Three:** Employer takes steps to encourage and get feedback regularly from employees. The employer schedules meetings to communicate with employees about their

concerns and their ideas for improving the workplace, and has an open door policy in writing.

Where applicable, the employer offers cultural sensitivity classes for managers and workers.

The employer is willing to work with groups of employees or third party representatives (any person representing a group or organization dedicated to the workers' welfare and safety) to improve workplace conditions.

The employer agrees to remain neutral if the workers want to explore affiliating with a labor union. If a majority of workers indicate support for union representation, the employer agrees to formally recognize the union and bargain in good faith.

#### **Indicator 4. Fairness (Discipline, Fair Treatment):**

**Level One:** Employer abides by all state & federal employment laws. Company rules are included in an employee manual, which is given to every employee. Rules are applied consistently for all employees.

**Level Two:** A formal process is established within the business to mediate disputes. Employer manages performance and discipline problems with a corrective approach, rather than a punitive one. Management is sensitive to issues beyond the workplace.

**Level Three:** Outside agencies or third-party neutrals are designated to participate in mediation or arbitration of disputes. Preventative/informational policies instituted.

#### **Indicator 5. Safety and Health**

**Level One:** Employer abides by all state/local safety and health laws. Provides educational materials for safe operation of equipment, handling of all materials, especially chemicals or other toxics, and other tasks specific to the jobs.

**Level Two:** Offers regular in-house or external training on safe work practices. Joint worker-management safety committee does periodic assessment of safety features and recommends improvements. This committee is empowered to intervene in unsafe conditions. There is an explicit understanding of no retaliation for any employee who is alerting others or attempting to remediate a safety problem.

**Level Three:** Employer is actively involved in improving worker safety not only by use of worker protective gear, but also by redesigning the process, where feasible.

## **Indicator 6. Opportunities for Advancement**

**Level One:** Employer has an established policy to encourage advancement or support professional development within the company. This policy applies to all full-time non-probationary employees.

**Level Two:** Every year at least 10% of employees are offered opportunities for professional development, and/or at least 5% of employees experience actual advancement (in wage scale, position, responsibility, accruing of additional credentials).

**Level Three:** Employer has active programs which engage at least 25% (or 40 people, whichever is less) in advancement opportunities or professional development, and at least 15% of employees experience advancement (in wage scale, position, responsibility, accruing of additional credentials) every two years.

## **B. Community Issues**

### **Indicator 1. Community Health**

Community Health as defined as business's direct impacts on the public resources of land, air and water. The protection of the environment and the health and safety of employees are understood to be fundamental requisites of a commitment to good corporate citizenship. Employers and workers benefit from increased productivity, less absenteeism, less stress, economic savings, less worker's comp insurance claims and overall improved community health.

**Level One** Employer complies with regulations. Must implement 3 out of 3 criteria

1. Business complies with federal and state air and water emissions standards.
2. Employer provides certified protective uniforms and/or equipment whenever employees request one and/or if the work situation is hazardous.
3. All equipment is checked and certified to be in good working order in accordance with its documentation or at least on an annual basis.

**Level Two** Employer takes air, soil and water quality seriously and provides maximum control technology whether or not it is required by law. Must implement 3 out of 6 criteria.

1. Business installs Maximum Available Control Technology for any air emissions.
2. Employer provides water effluent treatment on site.
3. Employer truck hazardous waste off site immediately (doesn't leave it in on-site storage) to a government approved landfill site.
4. Employer eliminates fugitive emissions that may escape into neighboring areas.
5. Employer provides recycling areas.
6. Employer eliminates the use of herbicides or pesticides in or around buildings or on the business "campus."

**Level Three** Employer invests in the maximum and most innovative emission technology that does not contribute to a deterioration in indoor or outdoor air quality, water or soil contamination. Employer has a working plan to reduce the use of toxic chemicals in timely increments. Must implement 6 out of 10 criteria.

1. Employer installs Maximum Available Control Technology, bio-filters, water filtration systems or other technologically advanced equipment to achieve as close to zero hazardous emissions as possible.
2. Employer tests indoor air quality and fence-line air quality on a (determined) regular basis. Tests after any disruption in regular production. (Same for water effluent)
3. Employer files a toxics use reduction plan with achievable goals and timelines with appropriate local or state agency and allows on-site inspections by such agencies and union representatives to determine that the plan is adhered to.
4. Employer works with consultants to determine safe alternatives to toxics use.
5. Employer provides on-site shower and change facilities if worker's clothes are exposed to hazardous substances.
6. Employer sets goals and has programs to divert waste from land fills and incinerators through re-use and recycling.
7. Employer maintains good indoor air quality by eliminating materials that off-gas and cleaning supplies that have toxic ingredients.
8. The business showcases environmental health innovations throughout an employee awards program that increases employee awareness of the company's environmental goals and inspires efforts throughout the company.
9. Business has a "retired equipment" take-back policy to divert older equipment from being land-filled.
10. Employer utilizes renewable energy sources and reduces water use.

## **Indicator 2. Education & Training**

**Level One:** Company participates in community education and vocational raining programs on a limited basis with emphasis on in-house activities.  
No established policy/ program in place for community engagement.

**Level Two:** Company promotes community education and vocational training programs and encourages employee participation. Company program/policy established to facilitate participation with community programs.

**Level Three:** Company dedicates staff time to development of and engagement with community education programs. Company provides financial/technical support to vocational training programs.

## **Indicator 3. Affordable Housing**

**Level One:** Employer provides information on federal, state, and local programs for housing and energy saving assistance.

**Level Two:** Employer actively supports and contributes to 3 out of the 6 following programs:

1. Matching funds for energy assistance programs (gas and electric)
2. Matching funds for solar panels
3. Subsidies for low income housing (rental)
4. Subsidies for low interest loans on mortgages or home improvement. programs .
5. Support of living wage legislation at a local level
6. Fund for moving expenses / moving day with pay

**Level Three** Employer participates in one of the following programs:

1. Habitat for Humanity- Contributes percentage of profits.
2. Mortgage- Cosigns on a mortgage loan for employees.
3. Down payment- Loans part or all of down payment for lower interest mortgage loan.
4. Lobby Policy- Actively advocates change in federal laws to promote housing benefits.

#### **Indicator 4. Corporate Social Responsibility**

**Level One:** A commitment to diversity in employment.

Employer actively seeks to use materials, products and vendors that support sustainability.

**Level Two (Two of the following)**

Employer seeks ways to incorporate more family time into employees' schedules. Allows flex schedules where possible. Gives money or employee time for family organizations, like Kidsports or eldercare.

Employer commits to employ and to contract with as vendors those populations normally excluded from the political and economic mainstream.

Employer shows a demonstrated collaboration with NGOs to solve or meet the social needs of the community.

**Level Three (Two of the following)**

Encourages employees' civic participation. Provides 6 hours/month paid time off for volunteer activities in the community

Supports the community's civic and cultural activities by co-sponsoring events, performances, or local associations/groups that promote community building and civic engagement.

One percent of corporate profits go to support basic living needs of Eugene's low-income and vulnerable populations: food support (FFLC), community gardens, child development programs, youth centers.

#### **Indicator 5. Transportation**

The City of Eugene and Eugene businesses encourage all employee commuters to reduce the number of car trips to and from work and use alternatives to driving alone to work. When employers participate in making transportation alternatives available, workers benefit by saving money, improving air quality,

reducing energy use, stemming traffic congestion and enhancing personal health. Alternative transportation modes can include: the bus, carpool, employer vanpool, bike or walk to work.

**Level One** Employee takes the responsibility as an individual to reduce number of car trips. Must implement 3 out of 3 criteria.

1. Employer provides bike racks.
2. Employer provides a "Guaranteed Ride Home" registration to employees who normally commute via carpool, bicycle, or transit that arranges for a ride or allows reimbursement of transit expense in the event of an emergency or illness.
3. Employer offers worksite mechanism for rideshare options, or for employers with more than 100 employees, employer arranges for a public transit stop within two blocks of the workplace.

**Level Two** Employer works with employees to reduce the number and length of drive-alone commute trips made to the worksite. Must implement 3 out of 3 criteria

1. Installation of additional bicycle racks (or bike cages out of the weather) with higher visibility to promote Alternative Transportation program
2. Employer subsidized bus tickets (books of 20) at a savings of 50% to employees.
3. Setting aside of business-owned parking spaces especially for employee carpool parking.

**Level Three** Employer rewards employees for avoiding car use and for using public transportation or bicycle. Must implement 4 out of 8 criteria

1. When employees stop driving alone to work they can apply to receive up to \$200 cash yearly bonus or annual bus pass.
2. Providing flexible work schedules to aid employees in meeting bus or carpool schedules.
3. Employer works with local public transit district to set up Park & Ride locations.\*\*
4. Employer provides a company van at Park & Ride locations or arranges for express routes on public transit buses.\*\*
5. Employer provides shower and change facilities to bikers and walkers so that they can transition from outdoor clothing to work clothing.
6. Employer turns excess parking spaces into recreational or ornamental space.
7. Employer uses bio-diesel or other alternative fuels in company vehicles.
8. Employer provides plug-ins for electric cars.

\*\* for large employers