

# ACTIONS FOR GREENING YOUR OFFICE SPACE





### Foreword

Most organisations, regardless of sector and size, have an office or administration space of some kind. Therefore, a large percentage of workers have an office space.

Offices are a great place to raise employee environmental awareness, as there are many opportunities for employees to undertake waste prevention, waste recycling, energy and water efficiency measures. Many of these opportunities are easy to do, don't require investment and can be replicated at home.

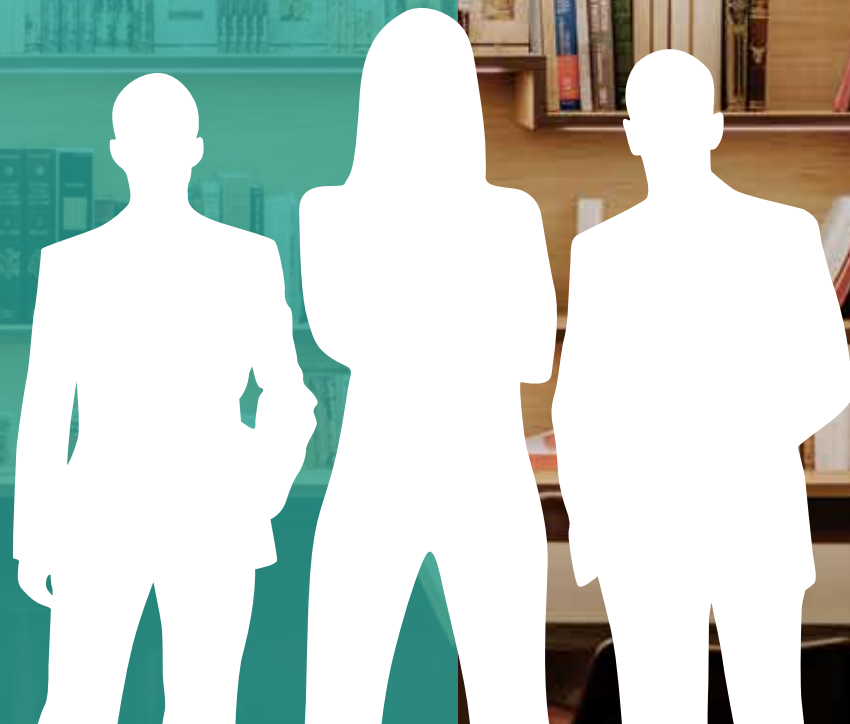
Inside this guide you will find 66 actions for greening your office space. These actions will help you reduce waste, reduce material use, save energy and water. This will make your workplace greener and reduce costs.



# GETTING STARTED

## Organising A Greener Office Action Plan

Obtaining management support and commitment are the first steps to a successful greener office action plan. Opportunities must be identified and action plans and targets decided upon. The action plan must then be implemented and of course constant review of actions is important.



# GETTING STARTED

## Organising a Greener Office Action Plan

1

### Management Commitment

For a plan to work, both management and staff must be committed to the plan. Management in particular must be convinced that the investment of staff time and finances in the area of resource efficiency is necessary. Commitment is driven by cost saving, legal, environmental and social responsibility perspectives.

2

### Establish a Green Team

A Green Team, which includes both staff and management, is a good way to manage any plan. The Green Team should consist of a core group of employees who have a direct influence on resources or have relevant skills or expertise. Typically representatives could be included from finance, maintenance, different departments, and general management.

The Green Team can:

- Develop action plans and targets relating to energy use, water use and waste prevention.
- Develop training and awareness raising initiatives.
- Review actions taken and consider their effectiveness.

## GETTING STARTED

### Organising A Greener Office Action Plan

3

#### **Review and Identify**

The assessment phase of a prevention programme is important in order to paint a picture of 'where we are now' so that the team can plan for 'where we want to go'. When you have collected information on your energy use, water use and waste generation you'll be able to set benchmarks. Identify all Resource Efficiency opportunities which your business could pursue from the actions suggested in this guide.

4

#### **Create Action Plans**

Create action plans for energy, water and waste. You should set out clear actions, the dates for completion and the person who will take charge of completing the task. Estimate expected costs and the savings for each action (savings both financial and environmental). Remember to set realistic goals in order to help keep people motivated for continuous improvements.

5

#### **Create Awareness Amongst Staff Through Training**

Training is a vital part of any plan. Staff should be aware of the Resource Efficiency action plans and specific ways in which they can help achieve the targets set out. Training can cover areas such as waste prevention and segregation, procedures for use of equipment, lighting, and efficient use of water. Remember to listen to all your staff. There may be some very innovative ideas amongst the group.

# GETTING STARTED

## Organising A Greener Office Action Plan

6

### Implement Action Plan

Implement the action plans and involve staff. Ensure the actions are reviewed on a regular basis at Green Team Meetings. Involve your suppliers, who may be able to assist in helping you to be more efficient. For example, you can talk to your suppliers about reducing unnecessary packaging with deliveries.

7

### Review Improvements

Through regular monitoring, you should be able to identify improvements made by your actions. Check how you are progressing in terms of meeting quarterly or annual targets set out. Review the savings actually achieved as against the expected savings. Review your action plan and improvements regularly. Don't forget to tell people how the project is going, and most importantly don't forget to reward people for improvements made!

# WASTE

## How to manage your waste costs effectively

Since 2012, there has been a clear government policy focus on waste as a resource and virtual elimination of landfilling. The current and future focus is on waste prevention, reuse, maximising recycling and using waste as a fuel in replacement of fossil fuels: all elements of the circular economy strategy to boost competitiveness, foster sustainable economic growth and generate new jobs.





# WASTE

## Waste segregation

1

In offices, provide well-labelled bins to allow segregation of office paper, recyclables, food and general waste. Centralise waste bins which should be clearly labelled to help encourage staff to segregate all waste.

2

General waste (landfill waste) should not exceed 20% of the total waste produced. If it does, you are likely to be throwing away materials that can be recycled or reused.

# WASTE

## Paper use and printing

3

Paper is the most common waste for offices. It has a major purchasing and disposal cost, yet the amount used can be reduced by following the principles of the waste management hierarchy: prevent, minimise, reuse, then recycle.

4

Paper use reduction. Quantify paper use and printing quantities by each office area and take steps to minimise paper consumption.

5

Default all printing to double-sided.

6

Use electronic means of communication rather than paper.

## WASTE

### Paper use and printing

7

When purchasing paper, try to purchase 100% post-consumer recycled paper. (Close the loop by purchasing recycled products)

8

Use reusable envelopes.



## WASTE

### Food Waste

9

Reduce food waste. Work with canteen staff to quantify food waste and identify changes to reduce amounts arising.

10

Take measures to prevent food waste when purchasing, preparing and serving food and monitor food waste benchmarks.

11

Provide separate food waste bins in canteen and staff kitchens. This is the law where hot food is provided.



## WASTE

### Other helpful tips

12

Eliminate individual waste bins at employee desks. Request employees to segregate waste at centralised waste bins.

13

Eliminate single use coffee cups and replace with ceramic or reusable cups.

14

Eliminate single use plastics. Government departments are required to eliminate single use plastic including cups, straws, and cutlery.

15

Provide employees with refillable water bottles or glasses and eliminate use of plastic cups.



## WASTE

### Other helpful tips

16

Minimise packaging by purchasing goods with minimal, efficient packaging.

17

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) should be stored separately and not go into general waste. (Have WEEE collected by authorised collectors).

18

Use rechargeable batteries wherever possible (eliminates the need to buy new ones).

19

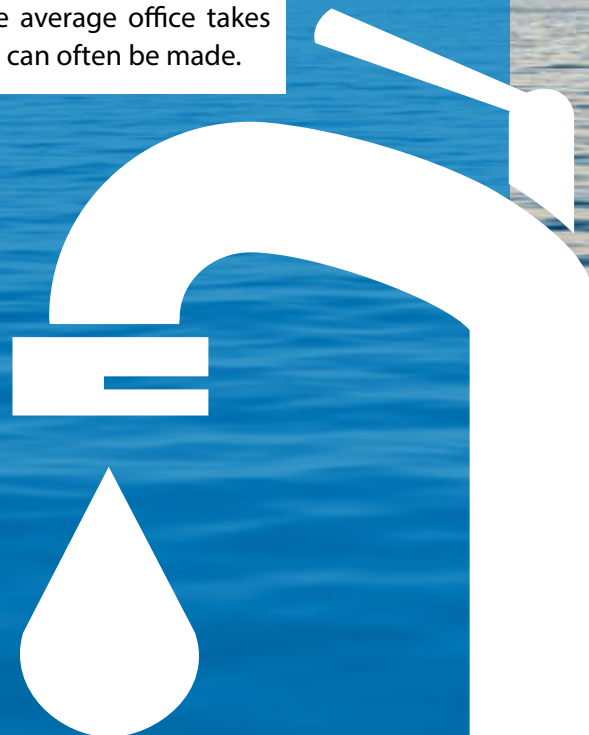
Use reusable bin liners.

# WATER

## How to manage your water costs effectively

Climate Change is leading to increased seasonal water shortages. In the future, organisations are likely to see tighter restrictions on their use of water and further increases in charges for metered water. The production of potable water is energy intensive with consequential green house gas emissions.

Over two-thirds of potable water use in the average office takes place in the toilets, where substantial savings can often be made.



# WATER

## Taps

1

Taps and showers: fit aerators to taps and showers (reduce flows to 8 litres/min for showers and 3 litres/min for taps).

2

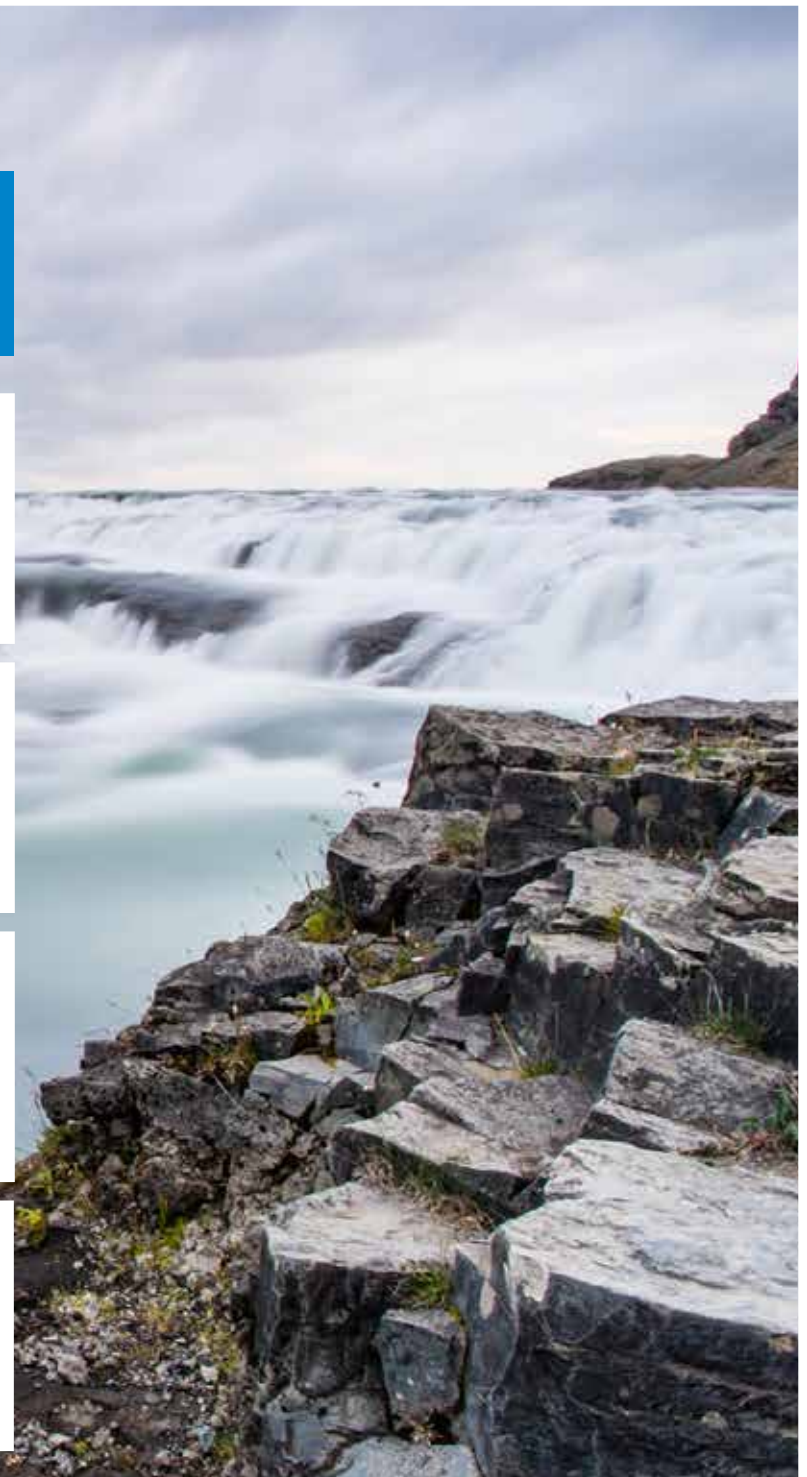
Consider installing electronic sensor operated taps.

3

Install self-closing push button taps to ensure taps are not left on unnecessarily.

4

For medium to large sized canteens, fit trigger spray heads in wash-up areas.





## WATER

### Toilets/Cisterns/Urinals

5

Install dual flush systems or reduce flushes to 4.5 and 6 litres per flush.

6

Old cisterns can be fitted with water displacement devices to reduce flush to 6 litres per flush.

7

Urinals: Control urinal flushing by installing push buttons or motion sensors which activate flushing. (An uncontrolled set of urinals can cost €800 / annum in water charges).

8

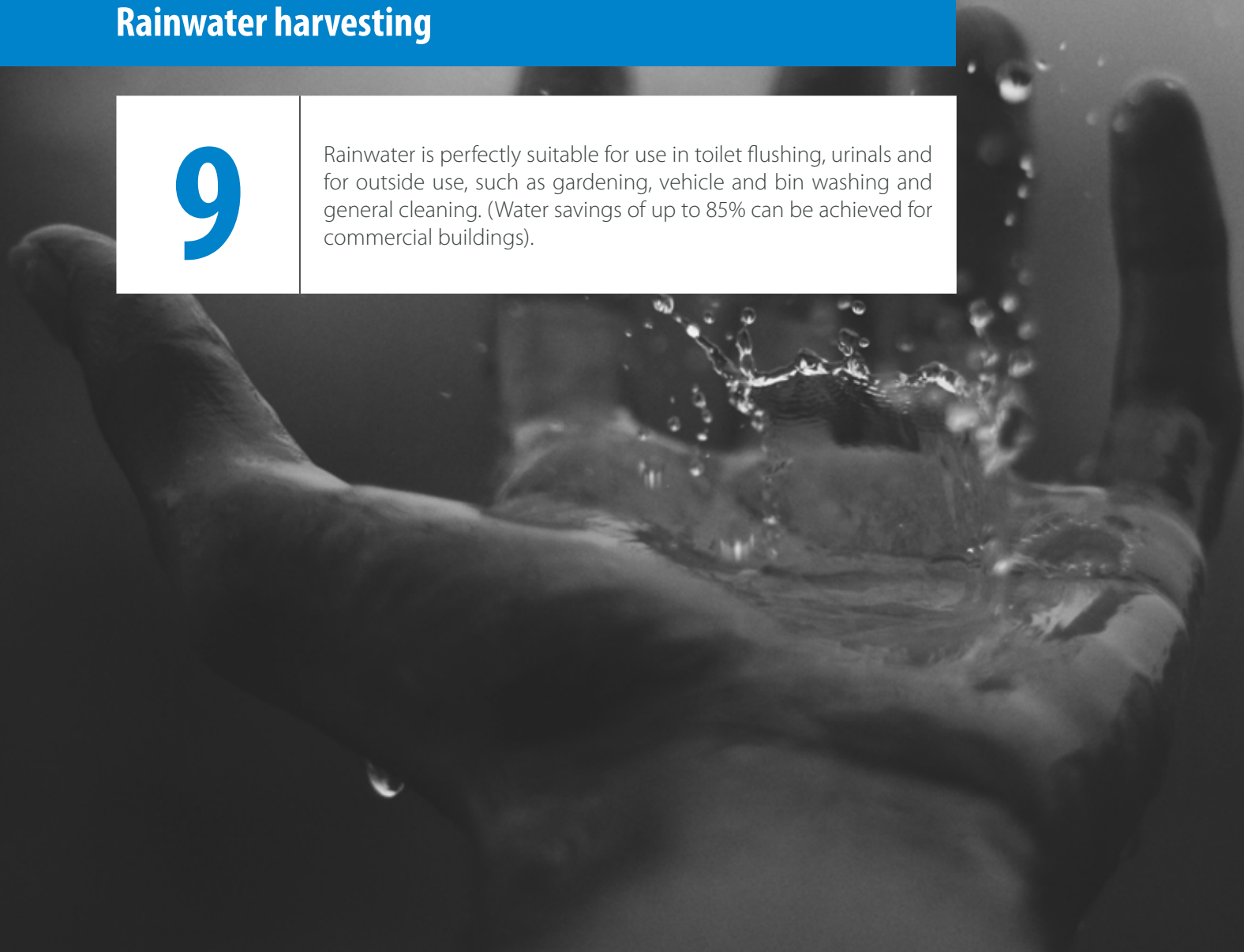
Install waterless urinals. Ensure correct cleaning instructions are followed to eliminate odours.

## WATER

### Rainwater harvesting

9

Rainwater is perfectly suitable for use in toilet flushing, urinals and for outside use, such as gardening, vehicle and bin washing and general cleaning. (Water savings of up to 85% can be achieved for commercial buildings).



# WATER

## Measuring and recording water consumption

10

Establish location/s of water meter/s and record water consumption on a weekly or monthly basis. Monitoring consumption allows you to identify trends, identify irregular usage and possibly identify leaks.

11

Carry out a leak test. Take a reading from your water meter at the close of business. Turn off all water users including urinals. Take another reading first thing the next morning. If there is any difference between the two readings, you probably have a leak.

12

When purchasing new equipment, buy products that are water and energy efficient or 'A' rated. For example, modern dishwashers can use as little as 9 litres per wash cycle. Build this into purchasing procedures.

# WATER

## Other helpful tips

13

Communicate actions which employees can take to reduce water consumption such as:

- Turning off taps after use
- Reporting water leaks
- Filling dishwashers before use

14

Ask employees for their inputs and suggestions on how to save water.



# ENERGY

## How to manage your energy costs effectively

Your office may already have an energy action plan under the public sector energy efficiency programme. Here are some other energy actions to consider.



## ENERGY

### Space heating and cooling

1

Install heat reflectors to the walls behind radiators to improve their efficiency at relatively low cost. Avoid using supplementary electric heaters. These are one of the most expensive heat sources to run.

2

Ensure heaters and radiators are kept clear by not covering them or placing furniture in front of them. This will enable them to heat up your office more efficiently.

3

Before you run your air conditioning system, consider if your office could be sufficiently cooled by opening doors and windows.

4

To avoid staff using their own fans which can be inefficient, try to cater for different people's needs by moving employees to where they would be most comfortable. Men usually prefer a slightly lower ambient temperature than women.





## ENERGY

### Space heating and cooling

5

Turn off air conditioning systems in unoccupied rooms (offices, meeting rooms, storage areas). Only use the system when people are actually going to benefit from it.

6

Find out how the heating system for your office works and make sure you are taking full advantage of built-in energy efficiency functions.

7

Use timers and temperature control sensors. For example, an optimiser sensor fitted externally to your office building can set heating controls to warm up the office before staff arrive and shut off heating controls once the building is at the optimum temperature, avoiding overheating or the need to open windows.

8

Set your heating control settings to take account of work patterns and different seasons that have different heating requirements. Install thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) where there are large natural variations in temperature across your workspace. TRVs can be used to quickly restrict the heat being delivered to the warmer areas of the building whenever necessary.



## ENERGY

### Review energy unit price and energy use

9

Review the cost structure of your energy bills to establish what you are being charged for and eliminate unnecessary charges where possible, e.g. MIC too high or too low.

10

Shop around for the best energy prices on an annual basis or before your contract expires. When your contract expires your unit price is likely to increase without notification by your supplier.

11

Monitor energy consumption trends over a daily/weekly basis with a view to understanding energy consumption.

12

Identify and meter energy users to determine daily/ weekly energy consumption. Then put in place measures to manage the largest users.



## ENERGY

### Structure and Positioning

13

Check that your office building is adequately insulated to prevent heat loss. Ensure that walls, and attics are insulated with adequate insulation and that windows are at least double glazed.

14

Use physical barriers to separate areas you are heating. Divide your office into zones (e.g. corridors, meeting rooms, office space) which have different heating needs and set the ideal temperature range for each.

15

Give careful consideration to the positioning of thermostats – for example, a thermostat next to a draughty door may result in your heating system working hard to heat a room that is actually warm enough.

16

To avoid overheating your office in the first place, fit horizontal blinds or external shading to windows. This can direct light away from staff's workstations and onto ceilings and walls.



## ENERGY

### Other helpful tips

17

Regularly service your heating system - a serviced boiler can save up to 10% on heating costs.

18

Reduce your office temperature settings by 1°C. It's not likely anyone will notice and this could result in as much as a 10% saving to your heating bill.

19

Try to avoid/ prevent staff members tampering with your heating controls. Instead, appoint a member of staff to have responsibility for heating controls (and make sure all staff know who the appointed person is, perhaps have the heating controls password protected).

20

Undertake an energy audit to identify the main sources of wasted energy in your office, and work out how much you can save your business.

# STAFF AWARENESS

## Communication is key

Staff awareness communication is the key to improving your office as most initiatives require everyone's involvement. Make sure that everyone understands what you want to do and why. Provide regular feedback on your targets and achievements to staff.





## STAFF AWARENESS

### Communication and engagement

1

Provide staff with induction training so they understand the systems that are in place to conserve energy, water and waste in your office.

2

Encourage friendly competition in your office to conserve energy, water and reduce waste. Reward staff for useful suggestions.

3

Take part in global energy awareness campaigns such as “Earth Hour” and “Earth Day”

4

Provide staff with resource efficiency saving tips for their homes. This will help them to realise the benefits of resource efficiency – behaviour which can be transferred to the office.

## STAFF AWARENESS

### Communication and engagement

5

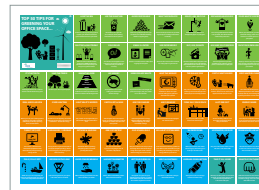
Carry out awareness raising activities on resource efficiency for staff through competitions, the staff intranet, seminars, surveys, green days, etc.

6

Promote vegetarian options and consider a 'Meat Free Monday'.

7

Use the 50 top tips poster to promote awareness on Resource Efficiency in your office.



[Click to Download](#)



NWPP



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

This booklet was produced by Clean Technology Centre, CIT.

Photos courtesy of Unsplash.com