

The
Sustainable
DECA
Toolkit

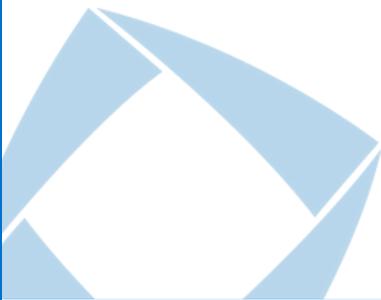


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Introduction

Hello! We are a group of students from Washington State who are involved with both our local [Sustainability Ambassadors](#) organization and our local DECA chapters.

DECA excels in preparing emerging leaders in the business world. Sustainability is a significant aspect of the future that these students need to be prepared for, and yet sustainability is not often noted as a priority within the organization.

With the power of innovation, outreach, and the internet, **we aim to change that.**

This document is a **toolkit** for anyone in DECA at any level — including students, advisors, educators, association office, and international staff — to integrate environmental sustainability into DECA as a fundamental framework. We encourage **educators** and **student leaders** alike to take the sustainability pledges that we have created.

You can use the toolkit at your convenience. Our final ask: **please spread the word (and the toolkit) to your networks!** Connections are incredibly valuable. Together, with this brilliant organization as a conduit, we can shape the future.

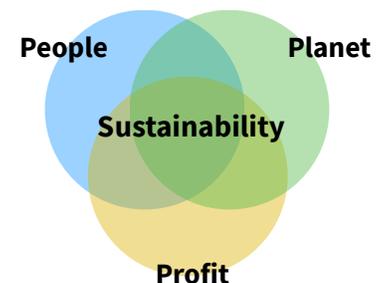
Sincerely,

Sana David Class of 2027, Interlake High School

Special thanks to the DECA team of Sustainability Ambassadors:

Amy Lu Class of 2026, Redmond High School

Haowen Yu Class of 2026, Skyline High School



The **triple bottom line**: social/environmental/economic factors that businesses of the future must consider!

Note: The toolkit is still in development and our creators are open to any feedback that you may have as to its contents!

Mission Overlap

DECA's Guiding Principle:

DECA's activities assist in the development of academically prepared, **community oriented**, professionally responsible, experienced leaders.



Recognizing the benefit of service and **responsibility to the community**, DECA members continually **impact** and **improve** their local and broader communities.

This **responsibility to the community** unquestionably includes a commitment to environmental sustainability. Sustainability is irrefutably intertwined with business. Therefore, DECA must prepare future leaders not only for the world of business and management, but also for a future in which the environment and natural resources must be regarded with the utmost care and preservation.



Sustainability Ambassadors Mission Statement:

Rapidly advancing a sustainability future.

Encouraging youth involvement in sustainability initiatives and empowering future leaders to create measurable **impact in their community** helps to rapidly advance this vision.

In order to create **impact in their community**, ambassadors must develop leadership skills and be empowered within said community. DECA, which centers on developing student leadership and communication skills, is an excellent platform from which to launch any number of impactful sustainability initiatives.

Shared Mission

Empower future leaders to positively impact their community.

DECA can help Sustainability Ambassadors lead the way in rapidly advancing a sustainable future. Sustainability Ambassadors can help DECA prepare its students to become community oriented.

This is how.

Part I: Student-Level Actions

Applies to:

- All DECA members and competitors

1

Participate in a DECA event with a potential sustainability focus.

There are several events within DECA that can be completed through a sustainability lens. Those events are listed below, along with guidelines on how best to approach the integration of sustainability and the brainstorming phase.

Business Operations Research

Ex.



Business Services Operations Research
BOR

The ability to integrate sustainability will vary based on the topic of the given year.

“For the 2025-2026 school year, the topic for Business Services Operations Research is: for participants to collaborate with a local business or organization to seek and incorporate customer feedback into the company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and overall business strategies.”

In 2025-2026, the topic includes environmental sustainability; therefore, students can develop **plans for businesses to improve environmental sustainability practices.**

Project Management



Business Solutions Project
PMBS

“The Business Solutions Project uses the project management process to work with a local business or organization to identify a specific problem with the current business operations and implement a solution.”

Students can choose to **implement solutions to improve the environmental sustainability practices of the business.**



Community Awareness Project
PMCA

“The Community Awareness Project uses the project management process to raise awareness for a community issue or cause.”

Students can choose to **raise awareness for a sustainability-related issue** such as plastic pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, food waste, water conservation, energy efficiency, etc.



Community Giving Project
PMCG

“The Community Giving Project uses the project management process to raise funds or collect donations to be given to a cause/charity.”

Students can choose to **raise funds for a sustainability organization**, such as those found at <https://tinyurl.com/sustainability-orgs>.

Corporate Challenges

These are unique challenges that are independent of roleplays or prepared events. Sponsored by partners of DECA, these events cover a variety of topics and offer you the chance to get internationally recognized.

The **Strategic School Procurement Challenge** and the **Lead4Change Community Service Challenge** are both versatile challenges that can be completed with a sustainability focus. Learn more about the guidelines at deca.org/challenges

Strategic School Procurement Challenge

Develop a strategic procurement plan to solve a real-world issue in your school—such as sourcing sustainable cafeteria food, upgrading classroom technology, or increasing local business participation in contracts. Your team will research ethical, sustainable, and value-driven procurement strategies and create a detailed written report outlining the problem, proposed solution, implementation approach, and expected impact. Then, bring your plan to life with a creative media piece designed to engage and inspire your community.

 Submissions due by:
January 9, 2026

Lead4Change Community Service Challenge

Lead a team to identify a real problem in your community or school and develop a service project that creates impact. You’ll apply leadership skills to plan, promote, and implement your project—focusing on causes that matter most to you and your team members. Projects can address anything from mental health to school safety to hunger relief—it’s your choice. Your impact. Your legacy.

 Submissions due by:
January 15, 2026

2

When travelling for a DECA conference, travel sustainably.

Sustainable travel is an important habit to pick up now for future trips that you may make, whether it be for your career, for recreational purposes, or anything else.

Below are some simple guidelines that can help you to **reduce the carbon footprint** of your trip.

Pack reusable items

Of course, bringing a **reusable water bottle** is much more sustainable, cost-efficient, and healthy than constantly buying new plastic water bottles. However, you can take this action a step further and pack your own **reusable utensils, straw, and tote bag** so that you do not need to accept single-use plastics when purchasing from a cafe, a grocery store, or any other institution.



Bring snacks from home

This is both sustainable due to the reduction in **pre-packaged food**, and **cost-efficient** because you do not need to purchase additional snacks! You can even make a fun hotel room “snack drawer” with your roommates.



Skip the unnecessary swag

It can be tempting to pick up every free item you can possibly get your hands on when attending exhibitions and expos. However, **think carefully** about whether you are picking up a sticker that will only end up unused or in the trash can, or an item that you will actually use.



Save energy

When leaving your hotel room for the day, **unplug chargers** (these are called “vampire plug loads” because they suck up power even when not using them!), **turn off lights**, and **reduce the thermostat** level.



Leave no trace

Always **pick up all of your trash**, and **recycle items** as needed! For example, even when disposing of your presentation boards after your competition, ask the hotel staff where you can recycle those boards.



Bonus: Carbon offsets

Air travel is one of the most carbon intensive human activities, accounting for 2.5% of global CO₂ emissions. To offset the carbon footprint of some inevitable flights, you can engage in long-term lifestyle changes such as:

Walk/bike as much as possible for short-term commutes!

Reduce meat consumption!

Plant trees!



Part II: Advisor-Level Actions

Applies to:

- All business teachers and DECA advisors
- All DECA curriculum developers

1

Take the [business educator pledge to support sustainability](#).

- If you are an educator, we **highly encourage you to fill out the form linked above!** Taking this pledge will
1. help you to understand the small actions you can take to create a ripple effect within your students.
 2. help us to track our collective impact across business classrooms throughout the scope of DECA influence.

Business Educator Sustainability Pledge

I will do all that is in my power to take the following actions:

◆ Integrate sustainable business case studies into school curriculum.

Sustainability is recognized as one of the four key concepts of business management by the International Baccalaureate program, alongside change, creativity, and ethics. In order to encourage sustainability as a priority within future business leaders, incorporate some of the following case studies into your curriculum.

- [NYU Center for Sustainable Business Case Studies](#)
- [Cox Conserves: Cox Enterprises Sustainability Program](#)
- [INSEAD Sustainable Research Case Studies](#)

◆ Connect 21st-century skills to the IP3 strategy.

When teaching students the value of 21st-century skills, the IP3 strategy can be taught in tandem because many of these skills contribute directly to creating a meaningful impact within their community. An overview of the IP3 strategy and associated skills can be found to the right.

Teaching students about the IP3 strategy can be foundational in encouraging them to complete impact projects. More guidelines on how to implement the IP3 strategy as a project can be found [at this link](#).

| IP3 Element | 21 st Century and Business Skills |
|---------------------|---|
| Impact Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking • Problem Solving • Creativity and Innovation • Collaboration • Global Awareness • Strategic Thinking  |
| Impact Tracking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Management • Quantitative Reasoning • Data Analytics • Performance Measurement • Reporting and Documentation  |
| Impact Storytelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and Outreach • Stakeholder Engagement • Promotion and Branding • Public Speaking and Presentation • Content Creation and Social Media Management  |

Pledge continues on next page!

Cont: Business Educator Sustainability Pledge

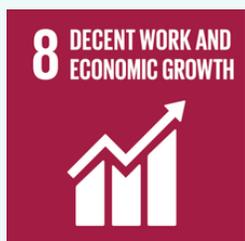
◆ Introduce the concept of the circular economy.

The circular economy — an economy that produces zero waste, built on a framework of resource conservation — is a crucial concept to familiarize our future business leaders with.

- A simple introduction to the circular economy can be found by observing the butterfly diagram and the accompanying video at this [Ellen MacArthur Foundation link](#).
- The Ellen MacArthur foundation has compiled a list of case studies of the [circular economy in business practices](#), which could be an excellent introduction to circular economy concepts for students.

◆ Connect curriculum to the [sustainable development goals](#).

The UN SDG goals should be incorporated into a business-focused curriculum, especially when discussing concepts such as the Corporate Social Responsibility that businesses have to their community.



[Goal 8](#) connects to the green economy, tourism, and employment practices.



[Goal 9](#) connects to sustainable transportation and industry practices.



[Goal 12](#) connects to chemical waste, producer responsibility, and tourism.

◆ Commit to minimizing classroom carbon footprint.

Below are some simple guidelines that can help you to reduce the carbon footprint of your classroom.

To print or not to print?



Consider the context of what you are printing. According to an analysis by EXCEPT Eco:

If the document will merely be scanned, it is more sustainable to read and distribute it digitally.

If it will be read/used more than three times or by multiple people, printing is more sustainable, especially with recycling and double-sided printing.

Turn off the lights?



When sufficient natural light is available, you can always turn off classroom lights. Keep in mind that LED lights are up to twice as efficient as CFLs and 10x more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.

Which bin?



Reinforce correct bin usage. If you see something in the wrong bin, immediately call it out!

If your school does not have these, attach some form of [bin guidelines](#) to each bin in your classroom. If you do not have multiple bins, advocate for obtaining them.

Part III: Chapter-Level Actions

Applies to:

- All DECA advisors
- All students with chapter leadership roles

1

Take the [chapter pledge to support sustainability](#).

If you are part of chapter leadership, we **encourage you to fill out the form linked above!** Taking this pledge will

1. help you to understand the small actions you can take to reduce the carbon footprint of your chapter.
2. help us to track our collective impact across high schools throughout the scope of DECA influence.

DECA Chapter Sustainability Pledge

I will do all that is in my power to take the following actions:

◆ Commit to minimizing the carbon footprint of chapter meetings.

Below are some simple guidelines that can help you to reduce the carbon footprint of your chapter meetings.

Sustainable snacks?

When hosting chapter events with food, opt for compostable serving materials and bulk/loose snacks rather than pre-packaged snacks and single-use plastic materials.



Promotional alternatives?

Posters and flyers may be a staple of the high school experience, but opt for quality over quantity: e.g. rather than handing flyers out to everyone, convince teachers to play promotional DECA videos.



To print or not to print?

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If the document will merely be scanned, it is more sustainable to read and distribute it digitally.

If it will be read/used more than three times or by multiple people, printing is more sustainable, especially with recycling and double-sided printing.



◆ Commit to minimizing the carbon footprint of conference transportation.

When possible, organize carpooling and bus transit rather than driving individually to conferences (if not already required). Promote these options as not only a more sustainable alternative, but a method of building chapter community during the travel experience.

◆ Share the student-level actions with chapter members.

You can download pages 5 and 6 of [the toolkit](#) to send to your chapter members at the appropriate times of the year.

Pledge continues on next page!

Cont: DECA Chapter Sustainability Pledge

◆ Share the educator-level actions with DECA advisors.

You can download pages 7 and 8 of [the toolkit](#) to request your advisors to consider sustainability for their curriculum.

◆ Promote SustainabilityxBusiness events and opportunities.

If you take the pledge, we will reach out with opportunities at the intersection of business and sustainability to promote to your members. The following opportunities are updated for 2026.

2050 Sustainable Transportation Competition



This competition is a DECA/FBLA-style competition co-hosted by Tesla STEM FBLA, Interlake DECA, and Sustainability Ambassadors. It aims to educate students about the world of opportunities in the transportation industry and open their eyes to meaningful careers at the intersection of sustainability and business. For 2026, this event will be from 9 AM to 12 PM on March 21.

Our goal for this conference is to invite the **top 2 teams** from each school based on the results of a comprehensive application process. Should you fill out the pledge, we will send you application information and resources to promote the event to your members.

Furthermore, when promotional material is posted on Instagram for this conference, we will inform you so that you can share the information with members by reposting it to your chapter's Instagram story. An [initial flyer for the conference can be found here](#).

Green Career Conversations

Sustainability Ambassadors organizes quarterly panels with professionals in a variety of fields, all of whom work towards rapidly advancing a sustainable future. These panels offer critical insight into possible futures for students who are interested in pursuing meaningful sustainability-oriented work.

When promotional material for these panels is posted, we will send it to your chapter social media so that you can promote them to your members.



Example Promotion

◆ Inform your chapter of your commitment to sustainability.

Utilize social media and chapter meetings to inform your chapter members that your chapter has committed to becoming a Sustainable DECA chapter. If desired, post collaborations with @ambassadors2050 can be arranged, and your chapter can be spotlighted in a professionally edited video highlighting the commitments you have made to promote sustainability.

We highly encourage you to make use of the following post templates, or create your own unique video/post to highlight your chapter's commitment to sustainability.

[DECA Meets Sustainability: Instagram Post Templates](#)

Part IV: Association-Level Actions

Applies to:

- State/province-level DECA staff
- All students with state/province leadership roles

1

Establish a Sustainability Representative position on association office.

In addition to the established roles of vice president of Hospitality, Career Development, Finance, and Leadership, an unofficial role of Sustainability Representative can be created. Over time, this informal responsibility may evolve into a formally recognized position.

The responsibilities of this sustainability representative would encompass the following:

1. Take the [pledge to lead sustainability efforts within your DECA association](#).

This will help us to track the total number of associations that have employed sustainable practices.

2. Originate a Sustainability Initiative to be showcased on the association website.

All of the following actions could be documented and displayed on the website so as to spread awareness of sustainability as an important DECA value, and by extension, a business value.

3. Set goals to minimize the environmental impact of Career Development Conferences.

Examples include:

- Increase recycling of paper used during the conference by X%.
- Reduce energy use of the buildings employed by X%.
- Minimize waste created by single-use conference programs by providing them only to those who opt in, or encouraging the use of a digital program.
- Encourage the return and reuse of lanyards and name tags after the conference concludes.
- Avoid the distribution of single-use promotional items and opt for reusable items instead.
- Encourage vendors to limit single-use packaging when possible.

4. Spearhead communications about sustainability efforts.

During conferences, networking activities, drafting newsletters, and any other form of communications, promote sustainability as a value of the association. Outline actions that are being taken to achieve an increase in sustainable operations.

5. Create a Sustainability Committee composed of representatives from each district to accomplish the goals described above.

The committee can be modeled after existing committees such as the Washington Access & Inclusion Committee, with dedicated subgroups for each primary initiative taken. After goals are set, this committee will work on implementing the actions, tracking impact, and finally communicating their impact.

2

Establish sustainability workshops at the association conference.

Following the model of past workshops hosted by Washington DECA such as “Marketing Presentations” and “Community Service”, the association could partner with a local sustainability organization to organize a workshop on sustainable practices in business.

3

Promote the toolkit via the association Instagram and website.

A large variety of Instagram post templates can be accessed at the following link. Modify the template and post on the association Instagram in order to multiply impact by spreading word about this toolkit to even more members.

[DECA Meets Sustainability: Instagram Post Templates](#)



Part V: Organization-Level Actions

Applies to:

- International DECA staff
- All students with organizational leadership roles

1 Partner with other organizations to create new sustainability-focused corporate challenges.

In addition to the current corporate challenges that revolve around creating an impact in one's community, a yearly corporate challenge that focuses specifically on sustainability can be created.

DECA Inc could attempt to collaborate with organizations such as those listed below, all of which have a sustainability focus or have invested in sustainability programs. Connecting with the future of their employment is an excellent incentive for them to sponsor new corporate challenges.



2

Create a new chapter campaign focused on sustainability.

We recommend creating a new **Sustainable Development** campaign to further spread awareness of sustainable business practices. This campaign could be merged with the Community Service campaign or stand alone. A mockup of the campaign is shown below:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN

REQUIREMENTS

Promote sustainability within your DECA chapter from the beginning of your school year through DECA Month.

1

OR MORE TEACHERS COMMIT
TO SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION



75%

OF MEMBERS ATTEND A
SUSTAINABILITY EVENT



1

FORM OF PUBLICITY AND
AWARENESS

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

- Participate in community outreach activities
- Conduct of public-relations activities
- Utilize project management skills to start, run, and end projects
- Demonstrate 21st Century Skills such as innovation, systems thinking, and global awareness

IDEAS

- Recruit a guest speaker from a local sustainable business to run a workshop
- Host a workshop for students regarding sustainable travel before travelling to SCDC or ICDC
- Track and audit the carbon footprint of your DECA chapter while attending a conference or hosting meetings throughout the year

Conclusion: 2050 Vision

We envision a 2050 where business owners, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs acknowledge and implement sustainability as a key framework for business operations.



That future starts with DECA preparing today's student leaders for the conditions of the future — including the need for eco-conscious development.

With this collaboration between Sustainability Ambassadors and DECA members, this 2050 vision can become a reality.



**Now, it's your turn to take the pledge.
Spread the word about this toolkit to your networks.
Let's rapidly advance a sustainable future, together.**

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