

Essential Components

Founded by The Evergreen State College
& Washington State Department of Corrections



Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) Network

SPP Network teams share best practices and tools for program implementation, tracking, and dissemination. Diverse partnerships across the nation learn from each other. Together we are expanding the reach of SPP's approach, to the benefit of all.

SPP's Essential Components

In support of new SPPs, SPP-Washington offers tips for success, custom protocols, and—most important—the Essential Components that define our work. Although each state, county, and corrections institution is unique, our experience points to five *Essential Components*. New SPPs may not be able to tackle all components from the start, but use them as guides for continued growth and improvement. Most SPP programs should satisfy more than one of these essentials; our most successful programs encompass all five at once.

1. Partnerships with multiple benefits

Seek out partnerships adapted to the needs of your region. Establish a truly collaborative approach in which each contributor plays an important role. See partnerships as central to accomplishing program objectives. Involve and benefit:

- Incarcerated individuals
- Students, faculty, and/or education organizations
- Conservation, sustainability, and/or science organizations or initiatives
- Corrections staff
- Local communities and ecosystems

2. Bringing nature “inside”

Create opportunities to work with living things through lectures, workshops, conservation programs, gardens, and other programming. Ways to bring nature inside include:

- Endangered species and/or ecological restoration programs in partnership with appropriate conservation organizations and regulators
- Lectures and workshops on topics such as plants, animals, and restoration
- Dog and cat rescue and training programs
- Beekeeping
- Horticulture programs
- Houseplants and nature imagery in staff and living areas



3. Engagement and education

Offer science and sustainability education to inmates and corrections staff. Provide green job training and skills development for a variety of employment options. Also involve and benefit college students, scientists, and the broader community. Ways to incorporate education include:

- Education regarding *how* and *why* programs are implemented
- Green job training and certification programs
- Emphases on opportunities to contribute and the importance of each task—i.e., how actions influence and contribute to the broader community and/or restoration efforts

4. Safe and sustainable operations

Reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle materials whenever possible. Increase prison safety by providing programs that engage inmates in pro-social activities, reduce idleness, and offer meaningful work. Example initiatives include:

- Rainwater catchment, effluent reuse systems, and other water conservation programs
- Energy Service Company (ESCO) projects, alternative energy, and other energy-use mitigation strategies
- Green purchasing and procurement, especially minimizing packaging and unnecessary purchases
- Upstream waste sorting (*all* staff and inmates sort their own throw-aways) and on-site composting systems

5. Evaluation, dissemination, and tracking

As a part of program implementation, include tracking, evaluation, and a plan for sharing program progress and results. Specifics should include:

- Provision of a comprehensive evaluation program, with approved Human Subjects Review
- Sharing outcomes with all program partners, other SPPs, the public, funding sources, media, etc.
- Data systems to record baselines and track progress on targeted goals such as energy use, waste reduction, water conservation, etc

The SPP Network is funded in part by the National Science Foundation. Join us!



Photos: Cyril Ruoso (front), Benj Drummond & Sara Joy Steele (top and 3rd), Joslyn Rose Trivett (2nd), Tiffany Webb (4th), and Shauna Bittle (bottom)

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