



Empowering Employees Leader

Awarded by:

Vibrant Communities Calgary – a non-profit organization that works collaboratively, with various stakeholders and partners, seeking to engage Calgarians and advocate for long-term strategies that address the root causes of poverty.

A Vibrant Communities Calgary selection committee will review the nominees to select the award winner.

Award Description:

Awarded to a REAP member that is affecting meaningful and sustainable progress towards reducing poverty through employee-centered practices that build resilience. These may include but are not limited to paying a living wage, providing additional forms of compensation, financial literacy and employee wellness programs.

Why does paying a Living Wage matter to your business/organization?

BluPlanet's commitment to paying a minimum living wage to any employee within our organization has relevance to several aspects of our corporate mission and values. This policy affects both our internal corporate environment as well as our broader community. From the standpoint of human resources policy and corporate culture, we feel that by ensuring that our employees have the financial capacity to support their basic living needs, we can reduce the stresses and pressures experienced by our staff in their daily lives. This reduction of stress will support the physical and mental health of our workforce and thereby serve to enhance the morale of our team, translating to improved engagement, job satisfaction, etc.

Secondarily, by paying a wage which may be beyond the lowest wage needed to recruit an employee to a position, we are able to attract and retain a stronger workforce. In terms of our impact on our community, paying a minimum living wage to all employees contributes to the financial health of City as it will decrease the need for our staff to draw on public resources to close the gap between their earnings and the financial requirements for their living needs. In other words, we view it as our responsibility as a corporate citizen to pay our employees enough (including a comprehensive benefits program) that our community does not have to shoulder the rest of the cost of ensuring that their living needs are taken care of.



What other HR practices do you have in place that represent an investment in your employees?

Examples: Skills development & training opportunities, day care, flex time, sports team, paid volunteer time

BluPlanet Recycling is proud to include a comprehensive benefits package for all employees which includes components specifically designed to support their personal as well as professional health and development. Those aspects which comprise the health and wellbeing components of the plan (besides their wages and supplementary health and insurance benefits) include:

- Education and training platform: As a foundational piece of our employee development/review process, all employees are given the opportunity to participate in additional training and education to enhance their skillsets, supporting personal and professional development goals. This system includes industry licence certification, job specific training courses, post-secondary or general programs. In some instances, these educational or training programs are identified and suggested by an employee's reviewing manager, but more often they form part of our unique self-authored *employee development plans*.
- Partially covered gym/health club membership: Each employee is entitled to participate in our corporate membership at a specialized health club/gym which includes a variety of fitness, rehab, and wellness programs/services.
- RRSP contribution and matching program: All employees who have maintained continuous employment with BluPlanet for 2 years or more are eligible for participation in our RRSP contribution plan. This plan contributes the equivalent of 4% of each employee's salary directly into a group RSP plan, which is intended to encourage them to save for their retirement needs.
- Financial acumen/literacy program: A recent addition to our employee engagement program, our financial institution partner has designed a basic financial literacy and acumen program which will be delivered semi-annually at our operating facility.
- Paid/supported volunteer program: In 2019, BluPlanet has committed to a new initiative aimed at increasing community service amongst our employees by encouraging them to participate in volunteering activities with the support of up to 16 hours of paid time each quarter, per employee.

How does your business empower employees?

Examples: financial literacy programs, employee wellness programs

BluPlanet Recycling has developed (and continues to develop) a compensation program which includes specific components intended to support our employee's personal and professional wellbeing, thereby empowering them to achieve greater satisfaction or success. Foremost among our efforts is a self-authored *employee development plan*



system which we devised as a replacement for a traditional periodic employee evaluation/review/performance assessment. In our new process, employees are given the opportunity to establish development goals (personal or professional) and work with their reporting manager to create an education and training strategy to achieve these objectives. Also, employees are put into the driver's seat for their own performance evaluations and self-rate themselves, which establishes their annual compensation raise. This method is intended to redefine the relationship between staff members at different levels in the corporate structure and their reporting manager, placing "Managers" into the position of supporter rather than evaluator. It also serves to empower employees by giving them the chance to self-assess their own performance and decide (with help) what their annual raise should be. Finally, each *employee development plan* includes a training and development section wherein each employee is tasked with determining (again, with support) what types of experience, courses, certifications, etc., are needed to achieve their personal or professional goals.

Another way in which BluPlanet empowers our employees is through our corporate model and communication system. We have embraced the view that in order to increase engagement and contribution of all staff in achieving our corporate mission, we must maintain open dialogue and empower each team member to participate in improving the company's systems. Our flattened hierarchy allows for employees to voice concerns or make suggestions for improvements regardless of position level or title. We implement a collaborative stakeholder engagement model of decision making and strategy. In this system, those individuals who are impacted the greatest amount by a decision are given a proportionate amount of influence over the decision. This process has significantly improved the quality of decisions made by our group and increased engagement levels across all functions.

**Bonus - Describe a new initiative adopted within the last 12 months that reflects your commitment to and investment in your employees*

One new initiative we have committed to in 2018 is a supported financial literacy and acumen development program. With the help of our financial institution partner, we have planned regular one-on-one sessions for all employees to meet with a financial advisor who can help train employees on the basics (or more advanced, depending on the situation) of financial literacy and planning. These sessions will take place at our operating facility and on work time (ie, paid time). The primary reason for this initiative is that it was brought to our attention that personal finances are a major stressor for many of our staff. As a means to improve corporate culture, increase engagement, and support the mental and physical wellbeing of our employees, financial acumen training is a targeted initiative which represents an investment in our employees.