



AMERICAN
SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS
COUNCIL

Principles of High Road Employers A Path to Building a Sustainable Economy

High Road Employers see their employees, the communities within which they operate, and the products and services they provide as equally critical ingredients to their financial success. These companies hold a long-term perspective and view the workplace as a vehicle to create significant business and social impact. They reject low-road business models that exploit employees and disregard the environment. High Road Employers know that their businesses have a far better chance to thrive when they operate responsibly and their employees are compensated fairly for meaningful work.

As the nature of work changes, a new compact between employers and workers (i.e., employees, independent contractors, and contingent workers) needs to be created which recognizes the need for fair pay and good benefits. The following principles, developed by the American Sustainable Business Council in partnership with diverse stakeholders and businesses across the country, are intended to serve as a guidepost for this new compact, and as impetus for more companies to become High Road Employers. We also intend for these principles to lead to the development of new public policies and market based initiatives that will help build the sustainable economy of the future.

As High Road Employers we endorse* the following principles.

1. Provide Family-friendly Benefits:

- Offer paid family and medical leave programs, paid sick days, health insurance, child care, paid time off, and other benefits that contribute to work-life balance.
- Seek to provide similar and/ or portable benefits to contingent workers.

2. Offer Flexibility:

- Encourage work-life balance, including flexible scheduling, telecommuting, predictable work hours, and teamwork.

3. Pay a Livable and Fair Wage:

- Pay employees a living wage that enables them to meet their basic needs. Ensures that the disparity in total compensation between top-paid executives and the median worker is reasonable.

- Develop policies to ensure fair compensation for freelance, contingent, and contracted workers by adopting clear contractual language and committing to on-time payments.

4. Invest in Employee Growth and Development:

- Help employees expand their leadership and operational skills and responsibilities through widely accessible education and training opportunities.
- Provide programs that enable saving and planning for future retirement.
- Ensure that women and minorities are able to take advantage of formal and informal coaching and mentorship structures similar to those of men and non-minorities.

5. Cultivate Inclusion:

- Foster a diverse workforce, acknowledge and embrace race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious, ethnic and physical ability differences and ensure that the work environment encourages equity in opportunities, inclusive collaboration, and honest dialogue.
- Adopt non-discriminatory hiring practices for employees and contracted workers and work to achieve pay equity.

6. Govern Fairly and Transparently:

- Adopt policies that allow for employee input, prevent conflicts of interest, and have clear ethical standards in place.
- Create legally binding structures and practices that provide for good labor-management relations.
- Ensure legal protections for whistleblowers and create opportunity for employees to provide feedback.
- Disclose employee compensation packages in keeping with SEC standards.

7. Engage with Communities:

- Foster direct involvement in community related issues and programs that benefit diverse stakeholders and improve the quality of life in communities within which the company operates through such means as local purchasing, local reinvestment and local ownership.
- Invest company resources into programs and practices that encourage volunteerism and empower workers to become civic leaders.
- Emphasize local hiring.
- Use the company's voice and resources to address policy issues that help to build a more sustainable economy.

8. Manage the Supply Chain Responsibly:

- Drive social responsibility and sustainable values through the entire supply chain by ensuring openness about employer policies and clarity about how the organization makes decisions.
- Use procurement practices to foster local economic development, support small businesses, historically disadvantaged communities, and local, national, and international environmental stewardship goals.
- When contracting for labor seek to ensure that employers provide family friendly benefits.

9. Drive Environmental Sustainability:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive commitment to environmental sustainability in all company operations.
- Assess the environmental impact of company practices and implements methods for systematic and continuous improvement.
- Commit to reduce waste and energy and water use so to minimize adverse impacts on the environment, including climate change.

10. Promote Health and Safety:

- Comply with and seek to exceed federal, state, and local health and safety standards that are conducive to employee well being.
- Commit to maintaining exemplary air and water quality, lighting, and sanitary working conditions.
- Ensure fair labor hours for all levels of employees.

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**These principles are both practical and aspirational. By endorsing them businesses agree that 1) these principles represent the best practices of High Road Employers; 2) they currently practice more than one of the best practices outlined; and 3) they intend to adopt more of these practices in the future as their business model and policy changes allow. For more information or to sign-on please contact Richard Eidlin, Vice President of Public Policy & Campaigns at reidlin@asbcouncil.org or Julia Watts, Associate Director of Campaigns at jwatts@asbcouncil.org.*