



It Takes a Comm-Unity: How Communications Can Advance Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

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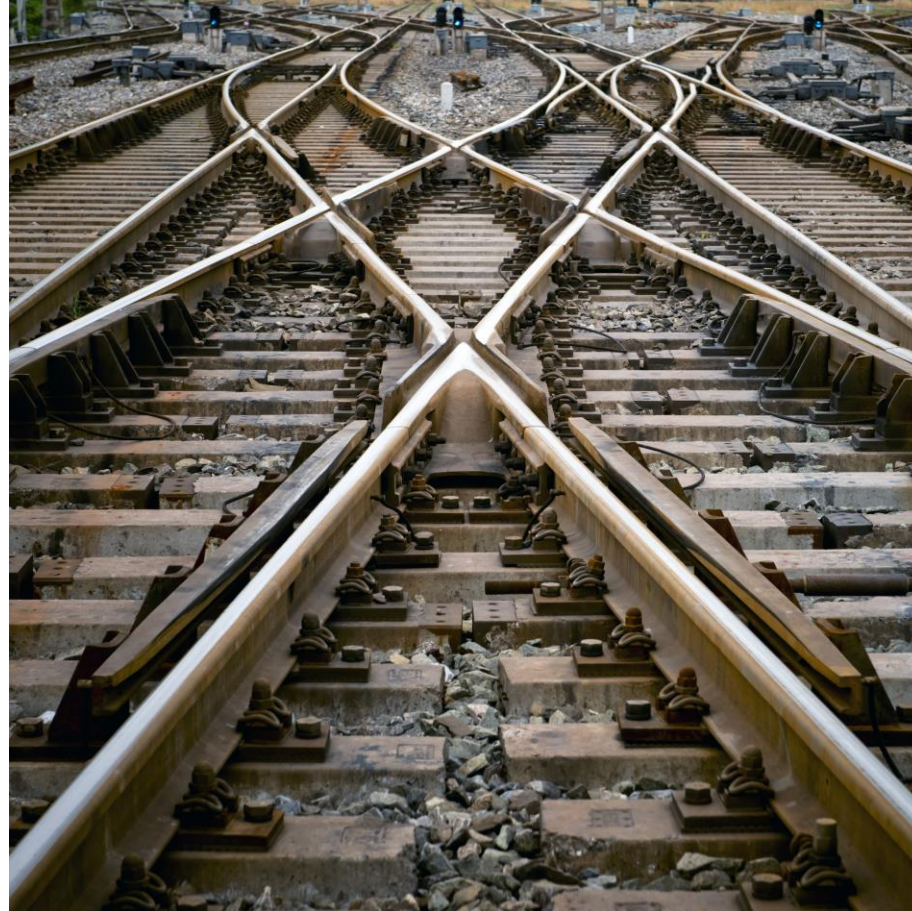
Director, National
Communication

Providence

Learning Objectives:

- **Understand the Importance of Environmental Sustainability in Health Care.**
- **Develop Effective Communication Strategies to Advance Sustainability Initiatives.**
- **Implement Sustainable Practices.**

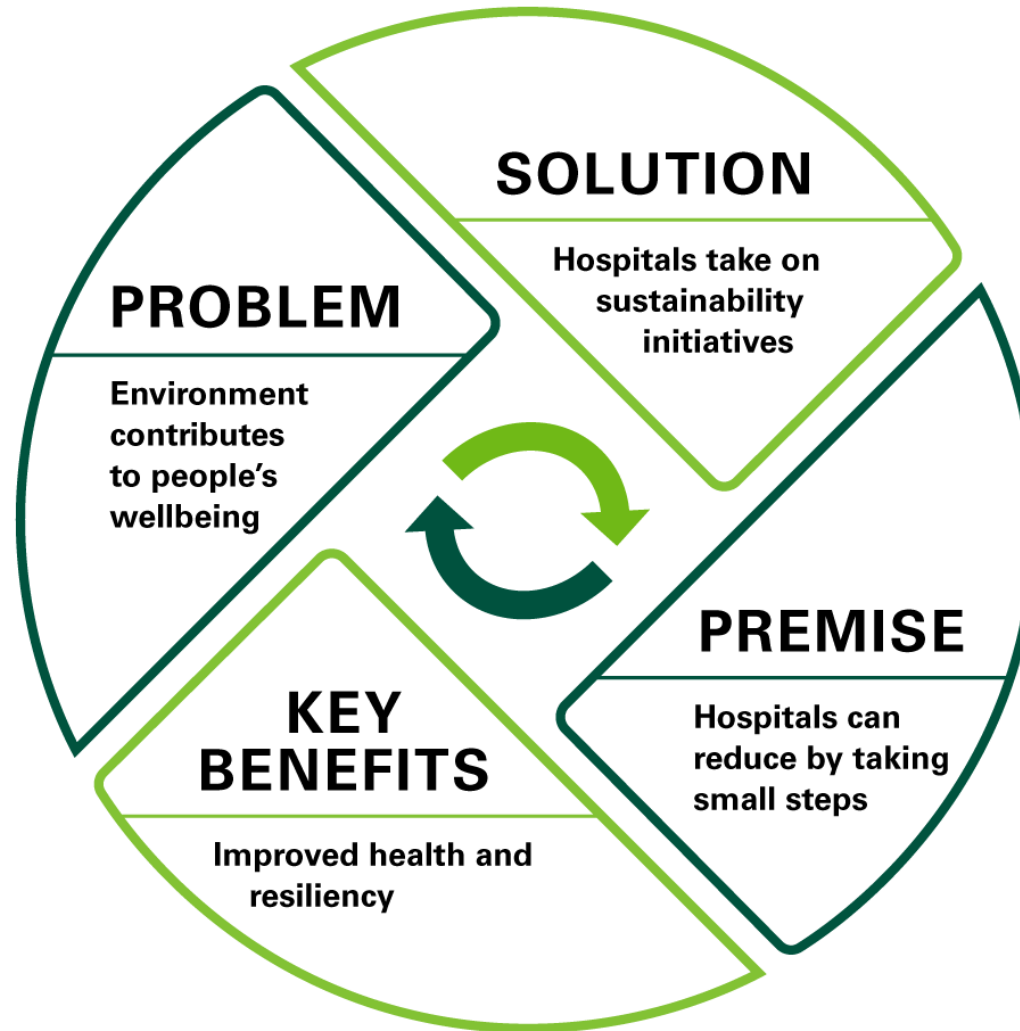
Intersection of health and sustainability



Why it matters...



Why prioritize sustainability?



Mission of Health Care

- “to advance the health and well-being by providing equitable, high-quality, and affordable care, improving health outcomes through prevention and treatment, and promoting overall public health for individuals and communities”

A sustainability-driven shift



Resilience



Preventative
Care



Innovation
and
Opportunity

Implementing and Scaling Sustainable Practices – Taking Action

Sustainability Teams

- Sustainability Champions
- Empowered to Lead

Sustainability Scorecards

- Visual tools
- Internal and External uses
- Aligns KPIs

Vendor Engagement

- Collaborate with suppliers
- RFPs and contracts

Implementing and Scaling Sustainable Practices – Overcoming Barriers

Budget Constraints

- Low cost and high impact
- Partnerships
- Cost-savings

Leadership buy-in

- Data and story telling
- Mission Alignment
- Visible Wins

Staff Engagement

- Training and recognition
- Gamification and competitions
- Feedback loops for ideas.

Implementing and Scaling Sustainable Practices – Measuring Success

Key Metrics

- Energy, waste, and water
- Health metrics

Reporting tools

- Dashboards like Energy to Care
- Visuals and patient-centered stories

Continuous Improvement

- Regular Reviews
- Celebrate and share



Pillars of Successful Sustainability Communications

Audience Relevance

Tailoring ES communications to specific group and stakeholder interests and values helps with message pull through and buy-in. Find angles that your organization and communities care about.

Transparent and Educational Messaging

Openly sharing both successes and challenges builds trust and credibility in sustainability efforts. Help audiences understand the “why” behind this work.

Data-Focused and Impact-Driven Storytelling

Using real-life examples, compelling anecdotes and data make sustainability topics relatable and underscores its importance.



Finding Common Ground: What is the Right Frame for Environmental Stewardship Communications in Health Care?

Environmental Health and Human Health are Interlinked

Environmental stewardship efforts are essential to protecting the health of our communities.

Health Care's Responsibility to Curb Pollution

As a major contributor to the country's GHG emissions, the health sector has a responsibility to minimize their environmental impact through sustainable practices.

Environmental Stewardship can Support Broader Organizational Goals

Connect sustainability messaging to measurable operational and financial improvements to demonstrate value.

Environmental Stewardship is an opportunity for innovation and positive transformation!

Paying Homage to our Foundresses



Mother Emillie Gamelin



Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange

At the heart of the Providence Mission lies a deep commitment to compassion, dignity, justice, excellence and integrity. These **core values** guide the way that we care for our communities, ensuring that our services enhance public health, promote environmental stewardship and provide long-term benefits.



The Importance of Transparency and Education

Transparency Fosters Trust

Openly sharing sustainability goals, progress and challenges through an organization's website/intranet, social media and even annual reports helps build credibility and accountability, which can lead to greater participation and engagement.

Don't be afraid to tell your story — both the good and the not so good!

An Educated Workforce is an Engaged Workforce

Communication teams can help build understanding through internal campaigns or by developing educational materials that explain sustainability goals and practices to employees and stakeholders who may not be as plugged into these initiatives.

Behavior changes start with greater awareness.



Paint a Clear Picture through Real-World Data and Examples

Compelling Stories and Tangible Impact

- Stories focused on real-world examples make sustainability efforts relatable and underscore their importance.
- Caregiver- and patient-centered storytelling can cut through biases and inspire action, making sustainability feel relevant and achievable.
- Remember, the type of stories you choose to tell may look different based on the audience.

Using Data and Visuals to Showcase Value and Support Narratives

- Data is another key element in helping people understand the direct impact of pollution and other climate threats.
- Presenting sustainability facts and figures provides legitimacy to your communications and builds confidence in the work itself.
- It's harder to dispute facts and figures! (... albeit *not* impossible)

Roughly 55 percent of Medicaid enrollees are working full or part time, and a number aren't eligible for health insurance through their jobs. Read more in an explainer here.

AREA OF FOCUS
Improving Health Care Quality →

JANUARY 28, 2025

Measuring and Minimizing Health Care's Environmental Impact

Lessons from a Large, Multistate Health System



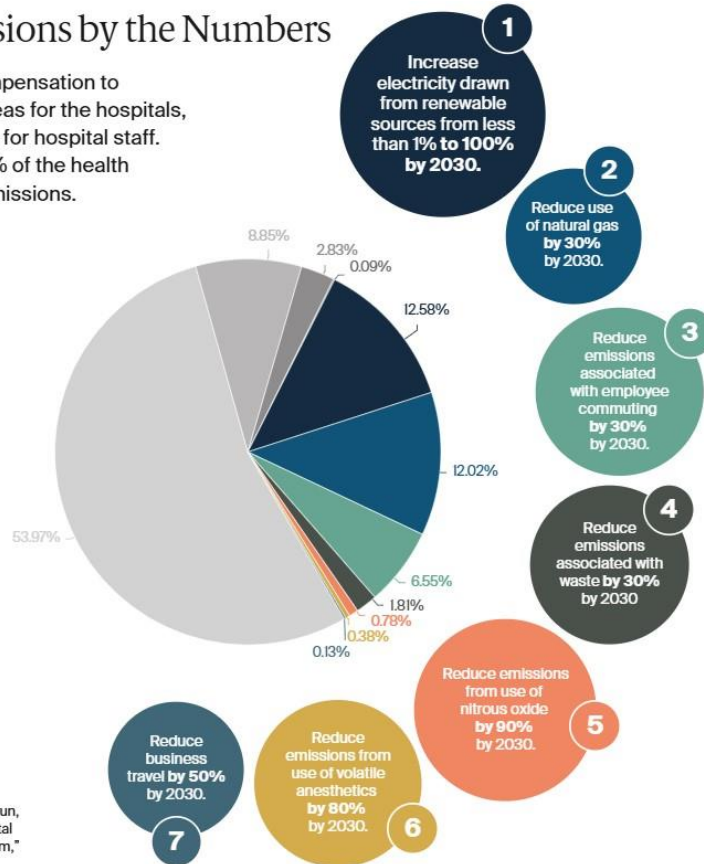
Source: [Environmental Impact of Health Care | Commonwealth Fund](#)

Greenhouse Gas Emissions by the Numbers

Providence has linked executive compensation to achieving targets in seven priority areas for the hospitals, which were deemed most actionable for hospital staff. Taken together, they account for 35% of the health system's tracked greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions linked to the purchase or use of:

- Purchased goods & services
- Capital goods
- Fuel not included in scopes 1 & 2
- On-site combustion: vehicle fleets
- Electricity & steam
- On-site combustion: gas, fuel, propane, & diesel
- Employee commuting
- Waste
- Fugitive emissions: nitrous oxide
- Anesthetic gases
- Business travel



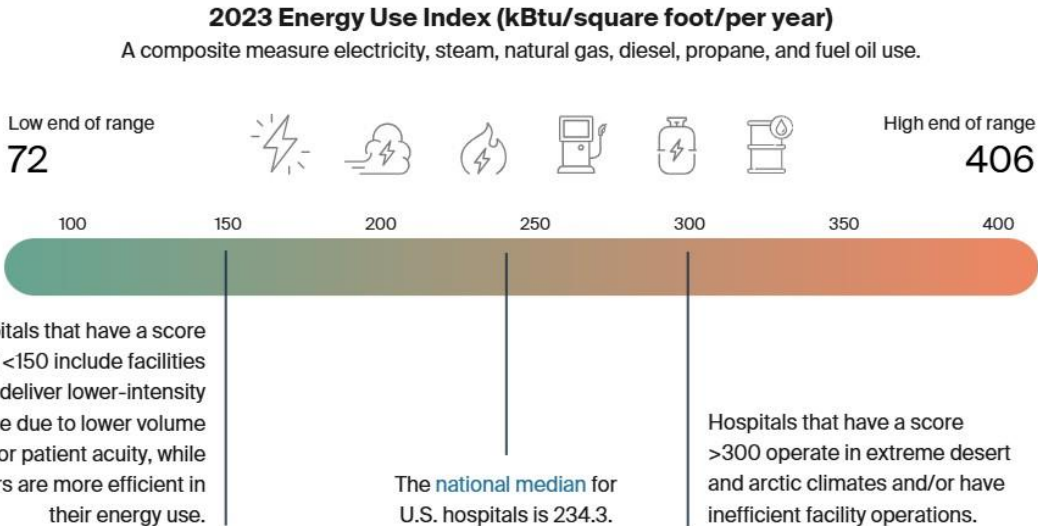
Note: Upstream transportation and distribution and investments are not yet accounted for.

Data: Providence.

Source: Sarah Klein and Patricia Richardson Schoenbrun, "Measuring and Minimizing Health Care's Environmental Impact: Lessons from a Large, Multistate Health System," feature article, Commonwealth Fund, Jan. 28, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26099/1n7r-vs48>

Using Measurement to Identify Outliers

Like the quality improvement scorecards that hospitals use to see variation in clinical practices, the Providence WE ACT scorecard enables the environmental stewardship team to investigate whether a hospital's outlier status is based on performance or a problem with data and then prioritize mitigation strategies.



Data: Providence and Energystar.gov.

Source: Sarah Klein and Patricia Richardson Schoenbrun, "Measuring and Minimizing Health Care's Environmental Impact: Lessons from a Large, Multistate Health System," feature article, Commonwealth Fund, Jan. 28, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26099/1n7r-vs48>



Internal v External Stakeholders: Different Approaches and Key Strategies

Internal Audiences

- Executive Involvement
- Leadership Modeling
- Feedback Mechanisms
- Education
- Recognition

External Audiences

- Human-Interest Storytelling
- Call to Action
- Community Engagement
- Partnerships



Key Communication Tools and Channels to Share Environmental Sustainability Efforts

Internal Modes of Communication

This may include staff intranet, bulletin boards, newsletters, or even regular employee meetings/leadership huddles to share updates and encourage participation.

Social Media

Social media platforms are a powerful spaces for storytelling that brings sustainability efforts to life in engaging and relatable ways.

Earned Media

Pitching stories to health care trades, local news outlets, or sustainability-focused media can spotlight achievements and brings third-party validation.

Print and Visual Materials

Posters, brochures, and infographics effectively communicate key environmental information and inspire action.



Scenario 1: Small Clinic—Reducing Paper Use

Project Objective: Reduce paper use and clinic waste

Organization Type: Independent primary care clinic with 20 staff members

Communication Team Size: 1

Key Challenges: Staff resistance due to habit and convenience; limited comms team resources

Stakeholders: Clinic staff & patients

Goals: Build staff buy-in, change habits and direct people to digital alternatives



Scenario 2: Regional Hospital—Implementing a Green Energy Transition

Project Objective: Transitioning hospital operations to renewable energy sources, including solar

Organization Type: 500-bed regional hospital with multiple departments and a diverse workforce

Communication Team Size: 4

Key Challenges: Communicating technical information to non-technical staff; aligning departmental priorities; managing public expectations

Stakeholders: Hospital leadership, department heads, clinical/non-clinical staff, patients, local media

Goals: Ensure staff and public awareness; promote the hospital's leadership role in sustainability; and encourage behavior change to support new energy practices



Questions?

Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!



Speaker Biography- Austin Wallace

- **Austin Wallace** serves as the Senior Specialist of Sustainability for the American Society for Health Care Engineering (ASHE) of the American Hospital Association (AHA), where he supports initiatives in environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and advocacy. Austin has experience in the nonprofit sector, as prior to joining ASHE, he was the vice chairman of an environmental organization focused on climate action and advancing a sustainable future. Austin holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sustainability and Political Science, a Master of Arts in Sustainable Development, and a Graduate Certificate in Leadership in Public Management. He is also a certified Sustainability Facility Professional (SFP) and is passionate about the intersection of public health, sustainability and environmental well-being.

Speaker Biography – Bryan Kawasaki



Bryan oversees national public relations at Providence, one of the largest health systems in the country. Bryan has an extensive background in media relations, implementing innovative strategies and tactics to protect and enhance the organization's public image.

In 2024, his team was recognized as one of the nation's top PR teams by Ragan and PR Daily.

Prior to his current role, Bryan led communications and served on the executive leadership team at several Providence hospitals throughout California. Before transitioning to the health sector, he worked as an editor at the Victor Valley Daily Press.

Bibliography/References

- www.aha.org/sustainability
- [Energy to Care | ASHE](#)
- [The Return on Responsibility PEC/WMBC](#)
- [Guide to communicating sustainability v3.pptx](#)
- [Environmental Impact of Health Care | Commonwealth Fund](#)