Four Green Business Practices that Save Money

How can government afford to go green when scarce funds are needed for education, healthcare, and public safety? "Actually, many practices that are good for the planet tend to also be good for budgets," says Jennifer Bremer, with Cisco's government group.

Here are four ways that governments are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and costs at the same time.

Meet Across the Network Instead of Across the Highway

Today's easy-to-use web sharing and video conferencing tools can often replace travel. For example, police officers with North Wales Police in the United Kingdom use Cisco® video conferencing solutions to meet with solicitors in a distant city to determine if criminal charges will stand up in court, and also for team meetings. In the first six months of the program, North Wales Police reduced carbon emissions by 2.8 tons, also saving 30 hours weekly in travel time, worth US$68,000. And that was for just one division.

Bring the Information to the Field Instead of the Fieldworker to the Office

Another way governments are reducing car trips is by extending the network outside the building walls to the field, a concept known as borderless networks. "When fieldworkers can retrieve and submit information from wherever they are, they don't have to make as many trips to the office, increasing productivity and decreasing fuel costs and carbon emissions," Bremer says. The city of Danville, Virginia, for instance, added a wireless extension to its network that will eliminate 27,000 service trips annually to read meters.

Build Smarter Buildings

Governments that construct new facilities with a single IP network instead of multiple separate networks for building controls also reduce energy consumption. Designed properly, these connected buildings can automatically adjust temperature controls, lighting, and more, based on whether people are present. Energy usage drops, and so do construction costs and ongoing energy bills.

Ave Maria University in Florida saw the benefits of connected buildings when it added thousands of network-connected sensors to monitor the environment in every building on campus. The sensors communicate with automated building systems to conserve energy while making sure people are comfortable. For example, lights turn on and off automatically depending on whether a motion sensor detects a person in the room. In addition to reducing energy consumption, the university saved an estimated $350,000 annually from personnel cost avoidance and another $600,000 in annual utility bills.

Set Up Employees for Telework

Reducing daily commutes to the office also reduces government's carbon footprint. At Cisco, telework saves more than 100 million commuting miles per year. It also brings economic benefits. When a Cisco office closed in Petaluma, California, for instance, most employees decided to telework instead of going to work every day in another office, taking cars off the road while also reducing real estate costs. Government contact centers are prime candidates to save on office space through telework because Cisco Unified Contact Center solutions can route calls to the first available, qualified agent in any location, including home.

Telework has also increased productivity at Cisco. On internal surveys, employees indicated that for every 60 minutes they saved on commuting, they worked an extra 40 minutes. In addition, employees who use Cisco Virtual Office estimated that they work an additional 8 hours per week, before and after normal working hours.

Calculate the Savings

Cisco has developed Green Business Value Calculators your agency can use to project economic as well as environmental benefits of several technologies. The projected green benefits have been validated by Domani, a leading environmental consulting firm, and are consistent with customers' real-life experience.

To use the calculator, visit:
http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac79/docs/ppt/Cisco_IBSG_Green_Business_Value_Calculators.ppt

To watch a video of Cisco chairman John Chambers describing technologies that help reduce carbon impact, visit:
cisco.com/go/green