CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Building an Effective Environmental Sustainability Program Webinar

May 14, 2025

Champions for Children's Health

Stronger Together

CHA is the only pediatric-focused hospital association, bringing together more than 200 children's hospitals and health systems to advance child health and the delivery of care.

This year it will be important to continue to work together to protect and strengthen pediatric health care.



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Children’s Hospitals Are Stronger Together



Advocate

Advance, partner, and advocate for changes that enable children’s hospitals to best serve patients and families in their hospitals and communities.



Improve

Accelerate progress to improve health and health care outcomes for patients and families – and ensure organizational performance.



Learn

Connect with peers to understand and solve the biggest challenges facing children’s hospitals by learning and sharing together.

Children, Children's Hospitals, and Environment

Children are disproportionately impacted

- Childhood asthma incidence increases by 4-11% due to air pollution
- 1-2 million children displaced due to flooding
- Disproportionate impacts for low-income and minority children

The healthcare sector contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

- Contributes 8.5% of all U.S. GHG emissions
- U.S. health care sector makes up 25% of global health sector emissions

Sustainability Content



ARTICLE

One Way to Increase Environmental Sustainability Across an Organization

April 10, 2024

A diverse committee of residents and staff advances advocacy, research, and education on the effects of climate change on children's health.

/news/childrens-hospitals-today/2024/04/one-way-to-increase-environmental-sustainability-across-an-organization



ARTICLE

Sustainable Shuttle Drives Better Outcomes for Environment, Children

Feb. 03, 2022

Children's hospital's service uses driverless, electric-powered vehicle to solve transportation problems sustainably.

/news/childrens-hospitals-today/2022/02/sustainable-shuttle-drives-better-outcomes-for-environment-children



EVENT | ON DEMAND

Children's Health and Climate: A Children's Hospital Perspective

Aug. 15, 2024

Join Children's Hospital Association for "Children's Health and Climate," a two-part webinar series exploring the ways climate change impacts children's hospitals and pediatric...

/education/events/childrens-health-and-climate-a-childrens-hospital-perspective

Today's Presenters



Sarah Irwin
Associate Director of Sustainability Solutions, Practice Greenhealth, Health Care Without Harm



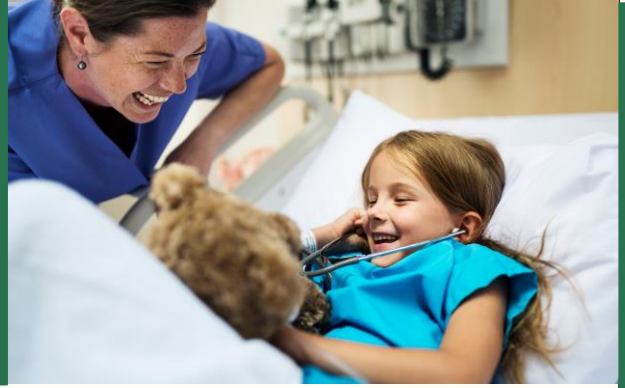
Kate Lewandowski
Director of Sustainability, Boston Children's Hospital

Strategies for kick-starting your sustainability program in healthcare

Sarah Irwin
Associate Director of Sustainability Solutions
Practice Greenhealth

May 14th 2025

PRACTICE Greenhealth



Health Care Without Harm



Practice Greenhealth

Practice Greenhealth is the leading sustainable health care organization, delivering environmental solutions to more than 1,700 hospitals and health systems in the United States and Canada. Partnership opportunities include hospitals, health
systems, community health organizations, NGOs, nonprofits, government, academic institutions, and the health care value chain.

Practice Greenhealth is the HOW.

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH)

Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform health care worldwide so the sector reduces its environmental footprint and becomes a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice.

Health Care Without Harm is the WHY.

About us

Reimagine health systems as anchor institutions building socially and climate-resilient communities



Advance health care systems change that includes and protects communities most vulnerable to climate impacts

Transform health care into a climate-smart, innovative sector that accelerates the transition to a zero-emissions economy

Impact and strategic areas of focus

Areas of focus for environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation.



Leadership

Waste

Safer Chemicals

Food

Greening the OR

Transportation

Sustainable Procurement

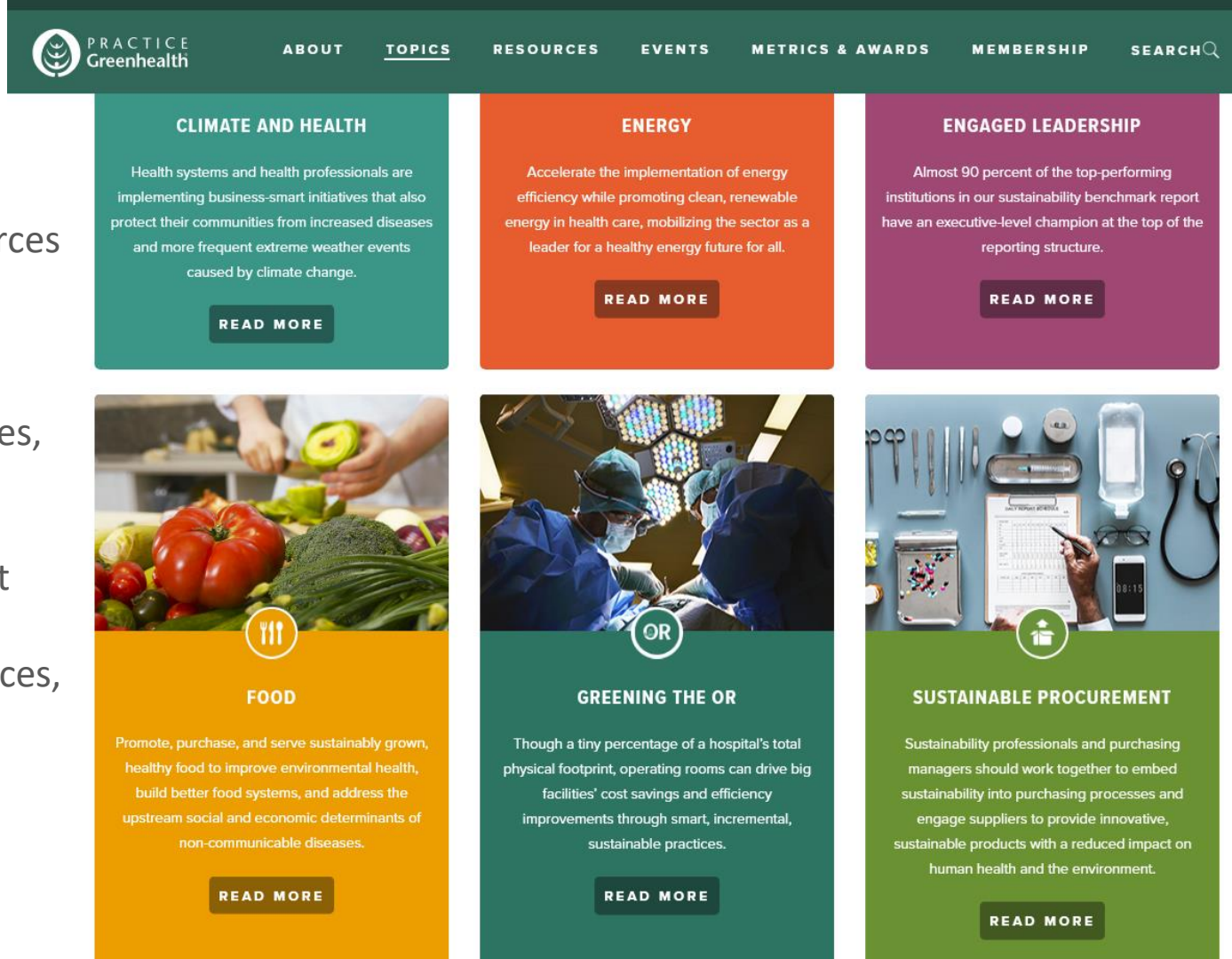
Energy

Water

Green Building

Climate

- Hundreds of accessible resources for Practice Greenhealth partners
- Tools, case studies, calculators (e.g. Health Care Emissions Impact Calculator, new resilience resources, etc.)



PRACTICE Greenhealth

BUILD YOUR SKILLS, ELEVATE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM, AND EARN A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION WITH

PRACTICE GREENHEALTH'S

ACCELERATING HEALTH CARE SUSTAINABILITY SERIES

- SUSTAINABILITY GOVERNANCE
- DATA & GOAL SETTING
- SECURING LEADERSHIP SUPPORT
- INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO CULTURE

practicegreenhealth.org

Stages of sustainability

Stages of sustainability

Nearly all organizations go through phases or stages of sustainability as they develop a new way of operating or doing business. Based on our work with hospitals and health systems, we believe there are five stages of the sustainability journey.



Securing Leadership Support: Channels of appeal

Strong executive engagement

96%

have an executive champion

25%

have added sustainability measures into performance objectives for leadership

96%

have a full time sustainability role at either the hospital or health system level

67%

have public sustainability goals

58%

have an environmental commitment included explicitly in strategic plan or mission

54%

have a strategic sustainability plan

Source: *2025 Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards*

Mission alignment

Mission, vision, value & strategy alignment

Climate change is the #1 public health threat of the 21st century, and health care's mission is to "do no harm." Also consider faith-based missions.

Equity, Justice & DEIB

Align health equity and justice priorities with environmental programming, prevent environmental injustices

Innovation

Access to new sources of ideas, expanded thinking. Potential for philanthropy dollars.



Public & community health

Improve air and water quality, reduce chemical burden, lessen food insecurity

Peer competition

Increased brand value, patient experience & satisfaction, company reputation

Industry landscape

Gathering momentum & engagement across healthcare & external pressures to decarbonize and increase resilience

Operational benefits

Operational efficiencies

Resource conservation & reduced waste

Talent & staffing- Diversity and Inclusion

Health professionals & the next generation of leaders demand action; improve attraction, satisfaction, wellbeing, & retention

Resilience

Prepare for, respond to, and prevent physical environmental impacts due to extreme weather



Cost savings & cost of capital

Lower input costs, reduced purchasing spend, access to new financial markets, investor value

Regulatory compliance

Local, state, and national policies increasingly require environmental action; accreditors are following suit.

Risk mitigation

Future-proof the business against long-term issues including environmental, regulatory, and compliance risks, such as occupational safety.

Sustainability program documents

Sustainability documents

Typically, these include:

- Environmental commitment statements
- Governance structure charters
- Sustainability strategic plans

Environmental commitment statements

Overview:

- Short and brief
- Inspirational and visionary
- Highlights connection between climate and health, as well as between sustainability and institutional risk, resilience and quality of care

Purpose:

To outline the organization’s commitment to sustainability, aligning with organizational vision, mission, values, priorities, structures and strategy

Charters

Overview:

Outlines the logistics, responsibilities, priorities, interdependencies and deliverables for the structure of the sustainability program.

Purpose:

To create a shared understanding of the program's goals, objectives, operations, and resourcing requirements needed for its successful implementation.

Sustainability strategic plan

Overview:

Sets out the SMART goals and data-driven targets to achieve the vision and mission of the sustainability program, including a clearly articulated action plan with associated projects, initiatives, leaders and team identified.

Purpose:

To set a direction for an organization and/or program and to make decisions on allocating resources to pursue this direction.

Sustainability governance structures

What are sustainability governance structures?

Formal or informal committees, councils, working groups, task forces and/or teams dedicated to advancing sustainability initiatives within the health system and/or facility.

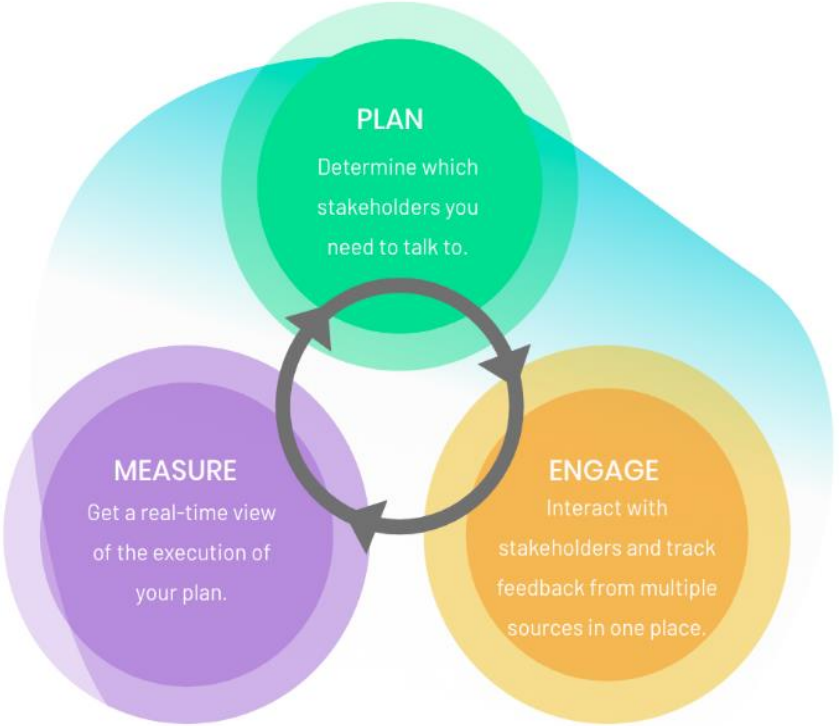
Why are they important?

The impact of an institutional sustainability program depends on the strength and foundation of its sustainability governance structures.

These serve to align priorities across stakeholders, build decision-making and responsibility/accountability structures, enhance the flow of information, build sustainability culture and processes, and provide programmatic oversight.

Stakeholders

Engaging stakeholders in sustainability



Source: Borealis, 2023.

Executive sponsors | Roles & responsibilities



Source: Changefolio, n.d.

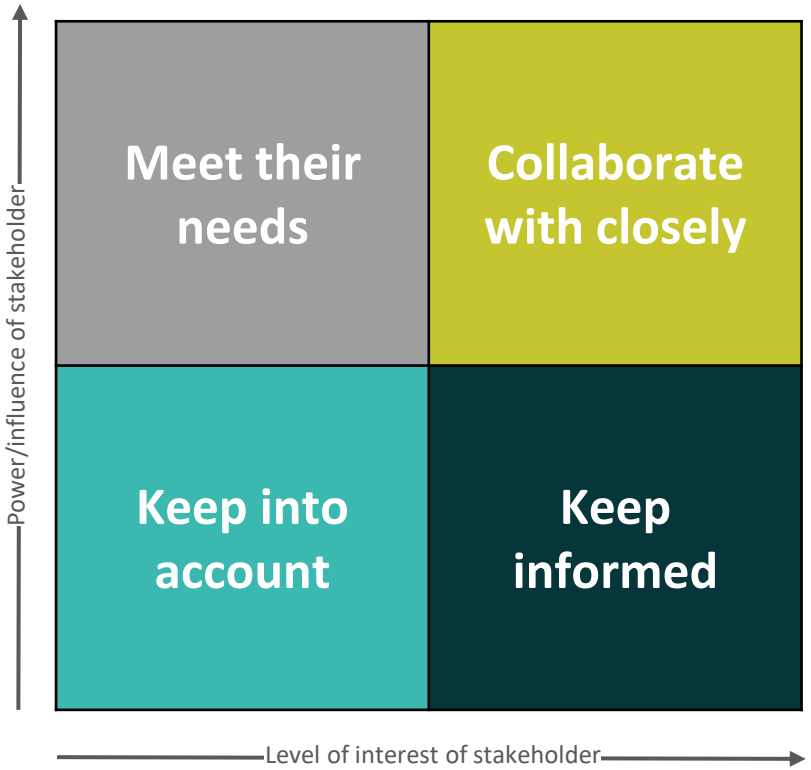
Stakeholder engagement tools

Sustainability committee stakeholder identification

Recommended stakeholders depend on existing organizational roles and structures. Consider using your organizational culture to analyze and map stakeholder opportunities.

- Process improvement
- Wellness
- Infection prevention
- Health Professionals
- Supply chain/procurement
- HR
- Support services (Facilities, EVS, groundskeeping, parking and transportation, etc.)
- Marketing and communications
- Finance
- Risk management
- Community benefit or population health

Stakeholder analysis and mapping



Sustainability resourcing

Sustainability staffing

91% of Practice Greenhealth partners reported through the 2024 Environmental Excellence Awards application that they are part of a health system that has hired or appointed a sustainability leader to provide support to its affiliates.

91%	Have appointed or hired someone to lead sustainability efforts at the health system level
80%	Of those have a **full-time position** (at the system level)
6%	Of those have a **part-time position** (at the system level)
14%	Of those have something else (“Other”)

Source: 2024 Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards)

Medical and Clinical Directors of Sustainability

How many MDS/CDS are there?

- 21 MDS in the U.S.
- 2 MDS in Canada

Who do MDS/CDS report to?

- President, Vice-President, Chief Officer

What is the dedicated capacity for MDS/CDS?

- Ranges from 0.075 - 0.6FTE
- Some serve as volunteers

Resourcing sustainability in health care

38% of partners reported through the 2024 Environmental Excellence Awards application that they have formulated a sustainability program budget.

29% of applicants have developed a green revolving fund for sustainability initiatives.

PRACTICE Greenhealth®

Thank you!

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Boston Children's Path to Sustainability

Kate Lewandowski

Director of Sustainability, Boston Children's Hospital

May 14, 2025

Boston Children's

Where the world comes for answers



Fast ramp-up supported by strong building blocks

Work prior to 2022

Facilities, nursing, anesthesia, ESD, EH&S, research, PEHC

Spring 2022

White House/HHS health sector climate pledge sign-on

Summer 2022 to Spring 2023

Listening tour, formulating working group structure

Summer 2023

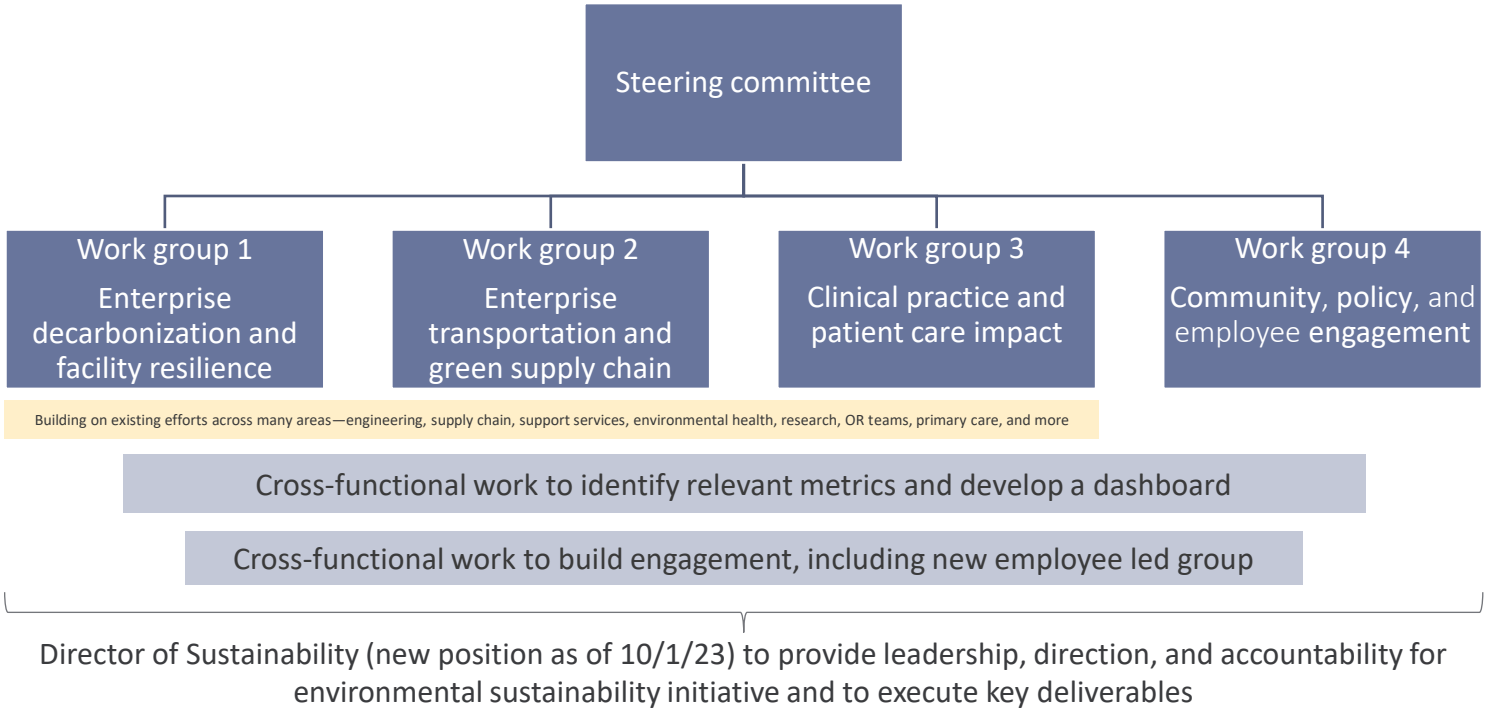
Steering cmte launch, leadership engagement

Fall 2023

Workgroup launch, sustainability director position official



Work group structure



Boston Children's
Where the world comes for answers



Defining connection to our mission

Environmental sustainability is key to our mission.

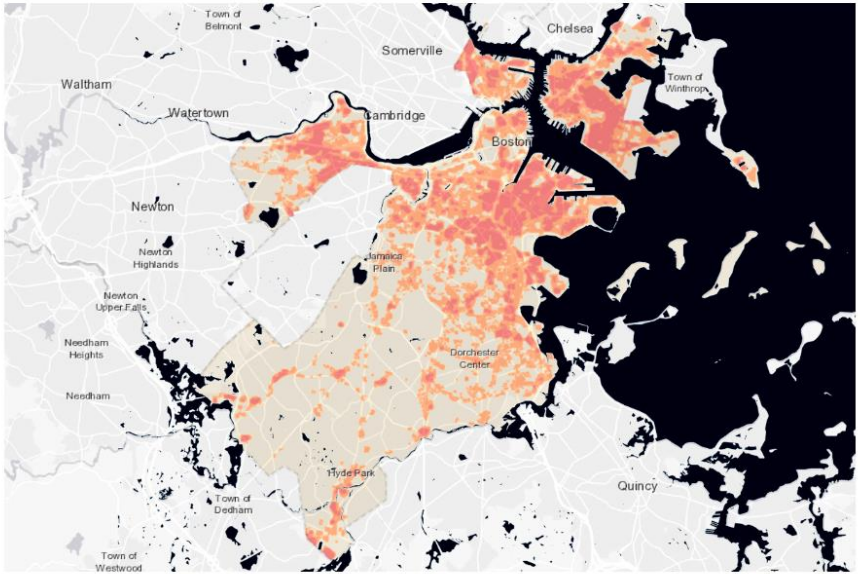
- Climate change poses an existential threat to humanity in the foreseeable future and its impacts are already apparent (more frequent extreme weather, global warming, sea level rise).
- **Children are uniquely vulnerable, are already experiencing impacts on health and wellbeing, and will continue to incur the full impacts of climate change over their lifespans.**
- The harms of climate change are disproportionately accruing to low income populations and communities of color, within the United States and globally. Environmental justice is a key component of health equity.
- Our organization is both susceptible to the impacts of climate change and an active contributor to environmental harm. We must be part of the solution.
- There is growing societal attention to the environmental impact of the health care sector and calls to action at multiple levels of government.

Boston's 'heat islands' turn lower-income neighborhoods from hot to insufferable

By David Abel Globe Staff, Updated June 22, 2021, 12:01 a.m.

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Extreme heat due to rising temperatures and the urban heat island effect.



Source: Climate ready Boston

Boston Children’s statement of commitment to environmental sustainability

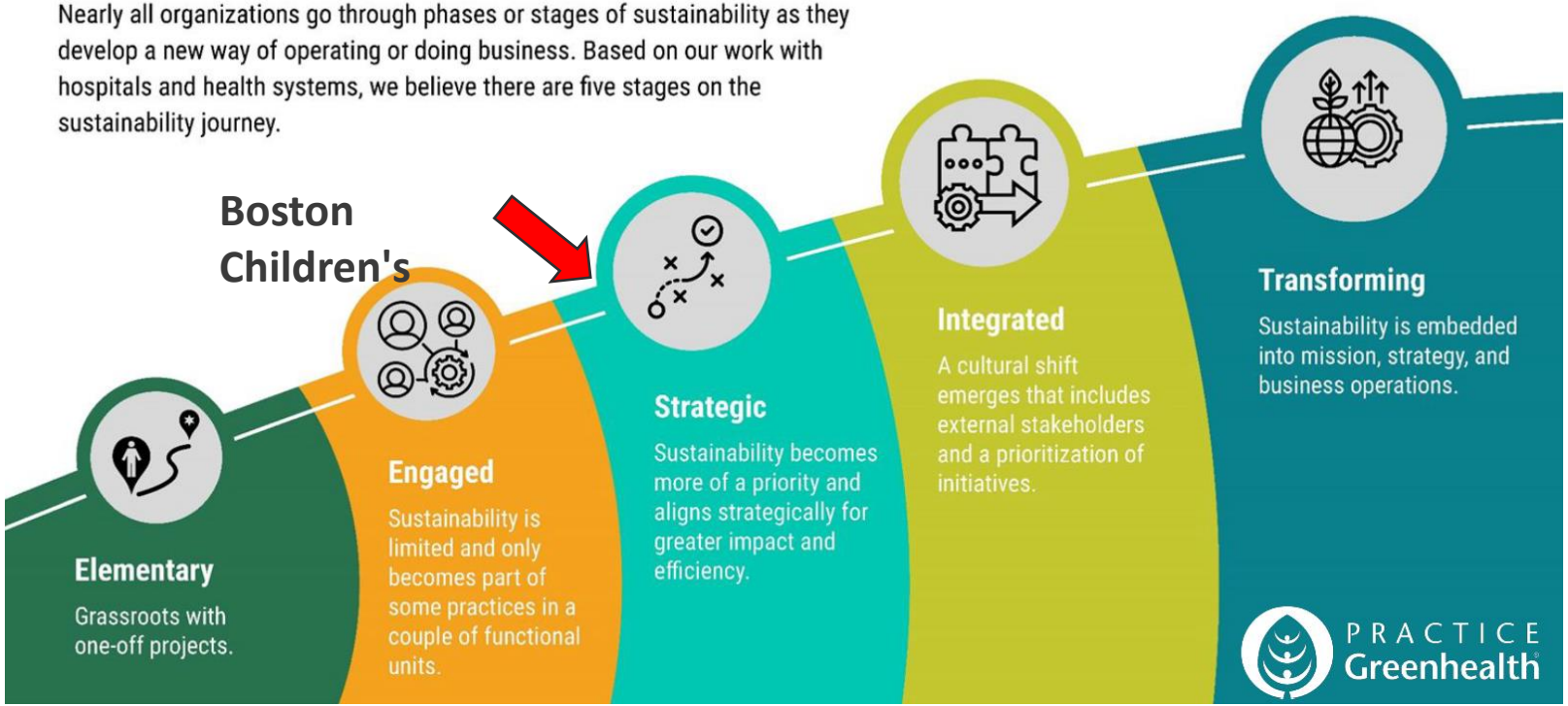
We are committed to making Boston Children’s a leader in operating sustainably, including through achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and addressing and mitigating the effects of climate change and other environmental harms on the health of children.

We envision a world in which our patients, families, staff, and community can thrive because we, alongside others, have centered environmental health as a necessary condition for human health and wellbeing and acted accordingly.



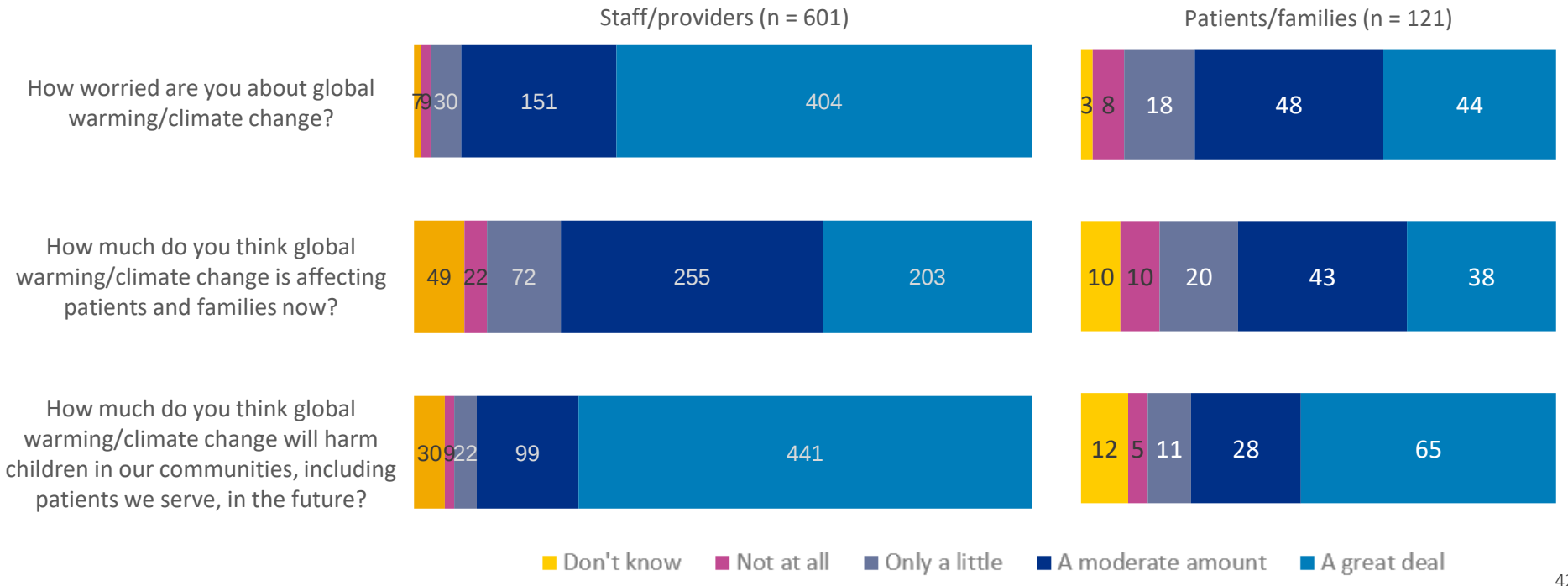
Stages of sustainability for health care

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2024 sustainability survey: what we heard about why this matters





Sustainability survey: what we heard from staff/providers about how to approach this work

"Boston Children's should take efforts to reduce energy use"
"We could use more renewable sources of energy"
"Incorporate sustainable design into facility construction and renovation"

"Electric vehicles should replace the employee shuttle buses"
"EV parking stations at all sites"
"I would like to have a better way to use my own bike for transportation"

"I would like to see the hospital reduce single use plastics"
"Support local/sustainable food growers"
"Boston Children's should be looking for ways to encourage recycling"

"How do our community benefits and investments align with community climate justice priorities?"
"We should focus on both political/policy-level advocacy AND support for individual patients and families."

"These efforts should focus on ORGANIZATIONAL responsibility with SIGNIFICANT support and feasibility work for any action/changes required by individuals. For example, don't simply tell us that we need to recycle or reuse… and then make it difficult and time consuming."



How are we thinking about community in the context of this work

Child and family health

How must we care for children and families who are at risk of or already affected by negative impacts of climate change on their health?

Resilient communities

How should we support communities in mitigating climate related vulnerabilities and responding to extreme weather events?

Environmental justice

How can we prioritize approaches to sustainability that benefit those who have disproportionately borne the costs of environmental harm?



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

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