

Darien Parker and Dr. Ashley Lavender
Office of Sustainability, College of Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Introduction

The College of Charleston's (CofC) Green Office Program is an initiative to promote sustainable practices which improve the environmental performance and enhance accessibility within working spaces by educating and empowering Faculty, Staff, and Students (Figure 1). Developed under the Office of Sustainability (OoS) over a one-year collaborative period, the Green Office Program is a framework and a set of resources which guide offices to conserve resources, reduce waste, and promote social inclusion on campus.

The Program uses the OoS's newly developed SustainCofC app to manage data and to increase Faculty and Staff engagement. While this Program functions like others to reduce the CofC's environmental impact and utility costs, it differs with its emphasis on social cohesion through physical and technological accessibility. Key stakeholders were consulted during development, including the Center for Disability Services, Office of Equal Opportunity Program, Facilities Management, and Sustainability Literacy Institute. The Green Office Program began the pilot phase with four offices in Fall 2019. Preliminary data will be collected, analyzed, and evaluated for the campus-wide rollout.



Image 1.

Program Overview

Program Goals:

- Integrate sustainability into the campus culture by engaging and educating Students, Faculty and Staff
- Conserve resources, minimize waste, saving energy and money
- Promote social inclusion through accessibility
- Set goals and provide resources for offices
- Recognize sustainable achievements made by offices

Key Components:

- Self-assessment Survey
 - Each participant will complete this survey through the Sustainability App to understand individual behavior.
- Office Checklist
 - This is the primary assessment tool that evaluates office practices. The Green Office Intern will complete through the Sustainability App during the office tour with Sustainability Liaison.
- Waste Audit
 - This captures data that can be used to monitor the progress of offices and the effectiveness of the Green Office program. Results help to develop an office-specific sustainability action plan through goal setting.
- Resource Guide
 - This document provides additional information to help complete some action items on the Office Checklist. The guide includes information about programs and services offered on campus and provides graphics to display in the office to encourage continued engagement.

Certification Process

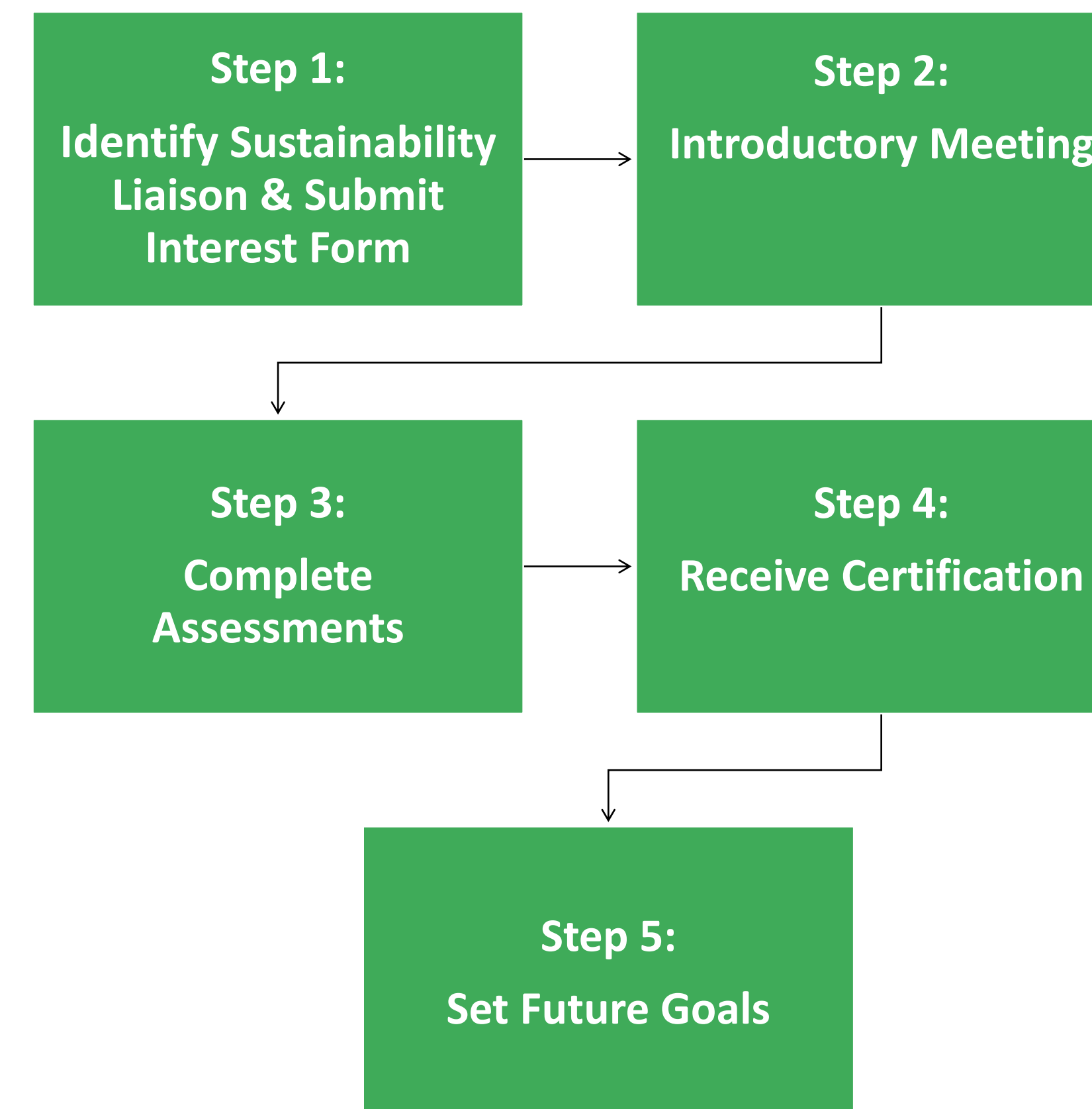


Figure 1. Certification is determined by a point-based system in which offices can achieve Bronze, Silver, or Gold level (Image 1). Points are assigned to these six areas of assessment: **Waste, Energy, Water, Human Health & Environmental Quality, Involvement, and Accessibility**. Participation is incentivized by recognizing certified offices with a plaque, a logo for display on webpage and email signature, and the addition to list of Green Offices on the OoS webpage.

Accessibility & Sustainability

The addition of an Accessibility assessment category creates a more holistic Green Office framework by elevating social inclusion as an equally important criteria to sustainability. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards have yet to be fully implemented at most college campuses, including CofC, and this unique GO framework offers an opportunity to address these federally accepted standards through direct action (Images 2-3). The need for prioritizing social cohesion at this urban, 250-year old college is punctuated by the City of Charleston's exclusive history.

Using the principles of universal design, the Accessibility criteria were created to emphasize equity, safety, perceivability, and convenient access. The action items aim to improve access to physical spaces and information for people with varying degrees of physical, auditory, visual, or cognitive disabilities. In addition, the criteria go beyond medical disabilities to bring attention to suggested trainings/workshops on discrimination and gender inclusivity offered at CofC.

Accessible designs are necessary for institutions to contribute to a resilient economy by fostering an environment that is welcoming of all people.



Lessons Learned

Key Considerations:

- Invite key stakeholders in the beginning of development to mitigate unforeseen issues.
- Anticipate roadblocks and plan timeline accordingly.

Challenges:

- Campus policies
- Creating equitable evaluation content that is applicable to modern and historic buildings
- Navigating differences in control over functions in each office

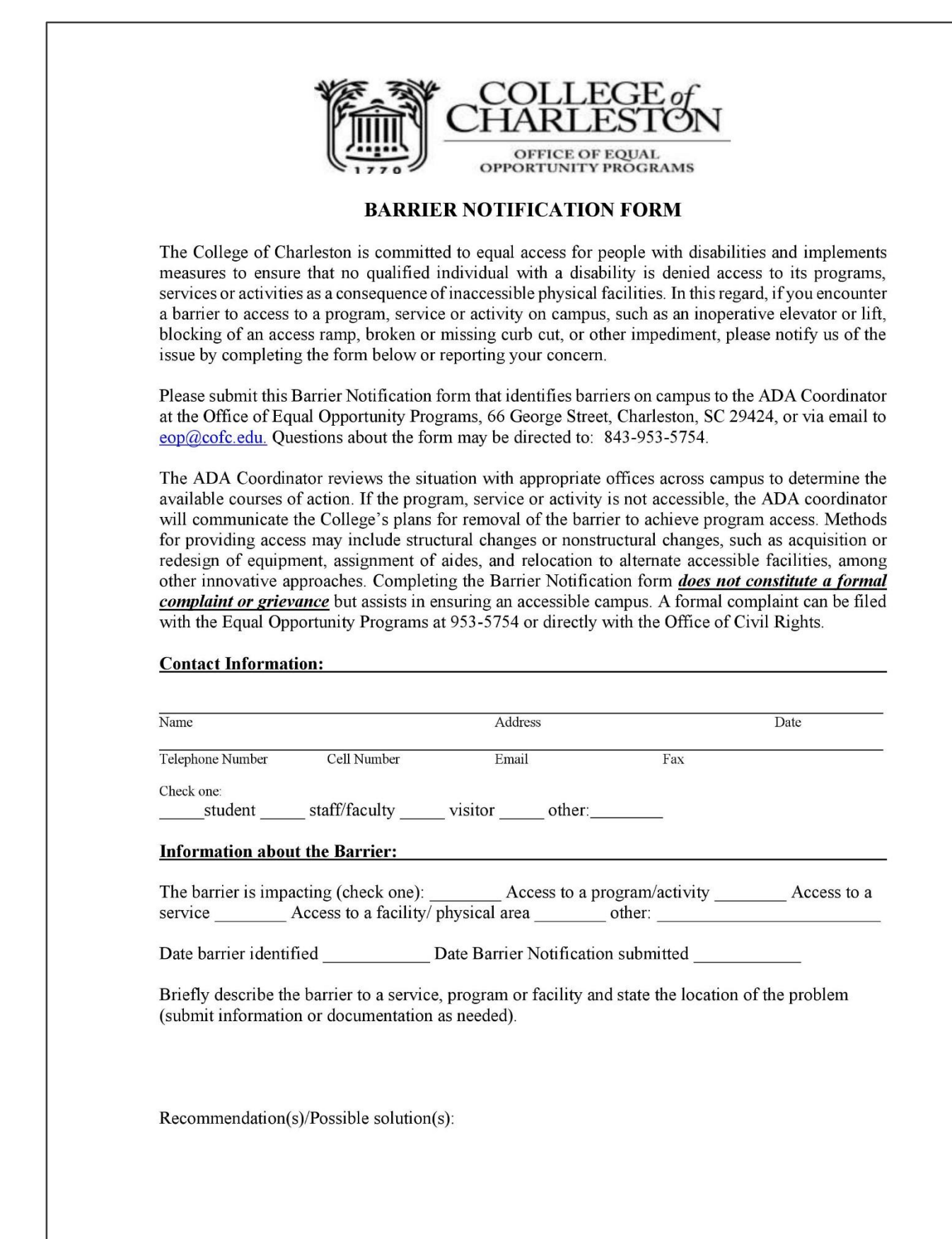


Image 2. Barrier Notification Form submitted to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs to identify barriers to facilities and spaces on campus.



Image 3. Inaccessible front entrance to the OoS. After submitting Barrier Notification Forms, ramps were installed in the back.

Future Directions

This novel approach to designing and implementing Green Office Programs has the potential to inspire Faculty, Staff and Students to set higher standards for environmental performance, inclusion, and accessibility on campus.

Next Steps:

- Finalize point-based scale and assessment criteria
- Embed GO materials into the SustainCofC app
- Roll out GO Program campus-wide in Spring 2020

Acknowledgements

Adam Zerbst and Deborah Mihal, *Center for Disability Services*
Steven Bell, *Office of Equal Opportunity Programs*
Christina Perez and Darcy Everett, *Office of Sustainability*