**New Jersey Sustainable Business Initiative**

**Sustainability**
The concept of sustainability recognizes the importance of environmental health, economic success, and social responsibility. Sustainability has been defined in many ways. But perhaps the most commonly cited definition is from the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development:

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A more business oriented description of sustainability is the practice of examining business operations and improving them so they consume fewer resources, operate more efficiently and deliver the kinds of products and services that today’s more socially and environmentally conscious consumers want.

A NJPRO Foundation report published in 2012 makes the business case for sustainability by identifying the following basic advantages of embedding sustainability concepts into businesses:

- Cost Savings
- Competitive Advantage and Improved Company Image
- Risk Mitigation
- Innovation
- Attraction & Retention of Good Employees
- Access to Capital

Source: April 2012, the NJPRO Foundation published a report entitle *Sustainability for Business: Innovation, Cost Savings and Opportunities*.

The Harvard Business Review said, “Smart companies now treat sustainability as innovation’s new frontier”!

**New Jersey Perspective**
Promoting sustainability in NJ’s business community supports the NJ Energy Master Plan. One of the first things businesses can do to become sustainable is to reduce their energy use. Reducing energy costs through conservation and energy efficiency lessens the cost of doing business and enhances economic development – both leading to sustainability. And it reduces pollution, which is good for everyone.
**Background**

The Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI) concept was created in 2011 by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection’s (NJDEP) Office of Sustainability and Green Energy in partnership with NJ stakeholders from public, private, profit and non-profit sectors. The program’s vision is to raise awareness, educate and motivate businesses to pursue sustainability as a competitive business strategy and a shared community responsibility, and account for its performance in terms of the triple bottom line - People, Planet, Profit.

The target audience for SBI is small to medium sized businesses (100 or fewer employees). Small businesses make up 90% of all businesses in NJ. They are diverse in their needs and generally have limited resources. These NJ businesses include “Mom & Pop” shops, retail stores and service providers.

**Primary Goals of SBI**

- To promote sustainability planning and practices among New Jersey small and medium sized businesses to enhance economic success, environmental protection, and an improved quality of life.
- To identify and share resources to educate and encourage the NJ small business community on the sustainable return on investment (SROI). SROI determines the full value of a project by assigning monetary values to all costs and benefits – economic, social and environmental.

**Long Term**

NJDEP created this program with the belief that it will be most consistently and successfully administered by a group of entities with expertise in different areas. These should include organizations with experience in education, business, conservation, energy, certification, verification and other relevant subjects. Therefore, NJDEP seeks to find partners to jointly refine, promote and operate SBI. In the long run we would like to find one entity to manage the program developed with on-going guidance and support from partners.

For more information contact Athena Sarafides at athena.sarafides@dep.state.nj.us or (609) 777-4211.

**New Jersey Sustainable Business Initiative Web Page**

[www.nj.gov/dep/sage/sustain_bus.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/sage/sustain_bus.html)