

US Federal community marches into a sustainable 2012



The scene for a sustainable 2012, with sustainability management and disclosure high on the agenda. These Federal agencies are examples of a wider trend towards disclosure in the US.

With the Federal Government occupying approximately 500,000 buildings, operating over 600,000 vehicles, employing more than 1.8 million civilians, and spending more than \$500 billion on products every year, these agencies can have a big impact on sustainability in the US. They also face some complex decision making when it comes to reporting. In October 2009, President Obama placed a landmark for sustainability in the US, with an Executive Order that sets out sustainability goals for Federal agencies to make improvements in their environmental, energy and economic performance. More specifically, the Executive Order requires Federal agencies to “set a 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target within 90 days; increase energy efficiency; and leverage Federal purchasing power to promote environmentally-responsible products and technologies”.

Following this Executive Order, Federal agencies have started to track their sustainability performance using the GRI Framework, and have also sought ways in which to green their procurement policies. The US Army and the US Postal Service have both issued sustainability reports, the US General Services Administration has been internally trained by one of GRI's Certified Training partners and the US Airforce have issued a report on how to manage their 'operational sustainability'. The US Postal Service had their report checked by GRI; you can find out which topics they covered, and their approach to reporting, by visiting GRI's Sustainability Disclosure Database.

The US Army's latest sustainability report is aligned with the GRI Guidelines and the President's Executive Order 13514. The Order asks agencies to reduce their petroleum use by 30 percent and to improve water efficiency by 26 percent by 2020. By using the GRI Guidelines, Federal agencies can measure, track and report these achievements. The Executive Order also requires 95 percent of all contracts to meet sustainability

requirements: The internal GRI training done by the US General Services Administration is a powerful example of how GRI's Framework can be utilized to affect change in supply chains across a major economy such as the US.

Connected to these developments, GRI is pleased to announce that LMI, a research institute for the public sector in the US, has joined GRI's Organizational Stakeholder Program. LMI has been instrumental in providing the Federal community with research insights into the growing relevance of sustainability reporting. LMI started to track international developments in terms of sustainability reporting in 2001. In their follow-up study of 2005, LMI identified the GRI Framework as the leading framework.

John Selman, Program Director of LMI, commented: "LMI became a GRI Organizational Stakeholder to help advance the GRI Reporting Framework into the US federal community. Many federal agencies have made significant progress in building upon sustainability initiatives required by Executive Order. Using the GRI Framework would represent another important step in this direction."

Due to the growing interest in sustainability from the public sector, LMI will be conducting a survey in February and March 2012 about attitudes and actions toward sustainability in the Federal Government. LMI will publish the findings, and compare the results to the private sector. The goal is to help identify impediments, barriers and solutions to implementing sustainability initiatives in the Federal Government.

These US developments are closely aligned to international developments. The European Commission recently published its 'Renewed Strategy for CSR 2011-2014' which also encourages public authorities to take steps to improve disclosure of their own social and environmental performance. This has been reinforced by EU member states, including by the German government's Action Plan for Corporate Social Responsibility. According to the Action Plan, "individual federal ministries will issue informative CSR reports, in keeping with their role as models and pacemakers in the area of social responsibility. The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs will submit its first CSR report (...) in compliance with the criteria of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)." It is expected to be published in the first quarter of 2012. At a global level GRI is working with strategic partners - the UN Global Compact, the UN Environment Programme, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - to make use of their synergies, develop cooperation in areas of mutual interest, and put sustainability and transparency on the international public policy agenda.

Fonte: Global Reporting Initiative, 1 Feb. 2012. Disponível em:
<www.globalreporting.org >. Acesso em: 16 Feb.2012.