

# 1. FY23 Eco-Representative Program Summary

## Introduction

This Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) summary provides an overview of Oregon State University's [Eco-Representatives \(Eco-Reps\) program](#), a leadership development cohort-based program. Eco-Reps are paid student employees who deliver sustainability programming to the residence halls in which they live. This document highlights information specific to FY23, while providing links to previous reports. For more detailed program background and purpose, please see the [FY15 Program Report](#). The FY15 report contains information specific to program purpose, scope and history.

## Eco-Rep Scope of Work

While supervision and primary program support comes from the OSU Sustainability Office, the Eco-Reps program is a partnership between Campus Recycling, University Housing & Dining Services (UHDS), Community Engagement & Leadership (CEL) and the Sustainability Office. Together, these stakeholders develop the Eco-Rep position description, review the program curriculum, and provide funding for the program. A brief description of the Eco-Rep position is below:

*Eco-Reps are responsible for advancing and institutionalizing a culture of sustainability in the residence halls in which they live. Overall, this position is responsible for (1) educating residents about sustainable lifestyles and resources, (2) assisting with marketing and outreach efforts for OSU sustainability programs, and (3) planning and executing sustainability-focused events.*

For FY23, nine Eco-Reps were hired fall term in Bloss, Buxton, Cauthorn, Finley, ILLC, Orchard Court, Sackett, Tebeau, and West halls. These locations resulted from selecting the most-qualified applicants from a pool that spanned all residence halls. One Eco-Rep left their position in spring 2023, therefore programming was carried out in eight halls for the rest of the academic year.

A work plan serves as a general guide for programming. It includes a list of events, campaigns, programs and projects that Eco-Reps support over the academic year. The FY23 Work Plan is attached to the end of this summary.

During FY15, Eco-Reps produced a [video](#) highlighting what the job entails, what an average day looks like, why they chose to be Eco-Reps, their favorite parts of the job, what challenges they face and how their work impacts their residence halls.

## Orientation, Training and Support

The Eco-Rep cohort model maximizes depth of learning and retention by spreading training and orientation throughout the year, rather than one concentrated timeframe at the beginning of the year. The Eco-Rep Lesson Book, created and maintained by the Sustainability Office specifically for the Eco-Rep program, serves as the primary capacity building and learning resource. It is a compilation of articles, videos and other material from vetted sources. The Lesson Book provides an introduction to sustainability principles and aligns subject matter within a higher education context so Eco-Reps are

equipped with information, facts and the vocabulary to develop as leaders, become global citizens and communicate effectively to fellow residents. At each weekly meeting, readings or videos from the Lesson Book are assigned and the cohort discusses the relevance of the material in a facilitated discussion at the next meeting. Eco-Reps repeatedly indicate how key the Lesson Book is in their work, and report increasing satisfaction with its content, as the Sustainability Office, Campus Recycling, and Community Engagement & Leadership have attempted to broaden and diversify the subject matter. Eco-Reps each year provide valuable feedback that informs the next Lesson Book version.

Additional support in FY23 and in years past has come from Eco-Rep “alumni” who, as continuing OSU students, volunteer their time to support their successors. At the end of each year, it is common for Eco-Reps to speak passionately about wanting to see the program continue, expand and improve, and specifically offer to come to future meetings to help orient the next cohort. Other orientation activities include recycling how-to training, attending CEL and Sustainability Office team meetings/social gatherings, tours and other activities.

## Budget and Wages

The wage budget and actual wage expenses for FY23 wages are below.

Department	FY22 Budgeted	% cost share	FY22 Actual
Sustainability Office	\$3,700.00	16.0%	\$2,185.58
Campus Recycling	\$5,700.00	24.7%	\$3,293.71
UHDS – Housing	\$3,000.00	13.0%	\$1,764.70
UHDS – Dining	\$7,000.00	30.3%	\$4,067.51
CEL	\$3,700.00	16.0%	\$2,246.39
<b>Total Wages</b>	<b>\$23,100.00</b>		<b>\$13,557.89</b>
<b>Federal Work Study</b>	-	-	\$615.96
<b>Total Program Expense</b>			<b>\$14,173.85</b>

Table 1. Wage Budget and Wage Expense, FY23

As with every previous year, the program ended under budget. The underspend of \$8,926.16 was due to only having eight Eco-Reps at the end of fiscal year instead of the sixteen positions that were budgeted.

Eco-Reps are compensated just above minimum wage, and able to accomplish a surprising amount with very few hours. Eco-Rep average hours worked per week in FY23 varied from person to person, as it has in past years, with a low of 2.29 hrs./week to a high of 9.03 hrs./week. FY23 included approximately 25 weeks of paid work. The trend in average hours worked per week is below.

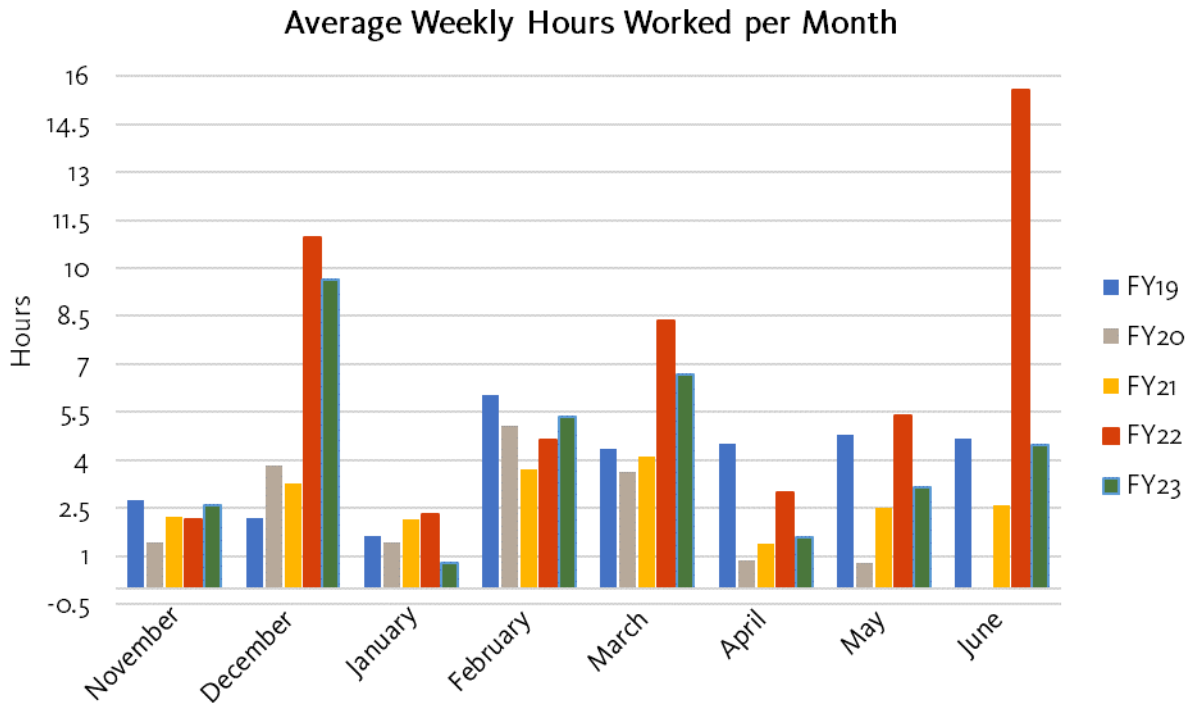


Figure 1. Average (per Eco-Rep) Hours Worked per Week by Month, FY19-FY23

In addition to the wage expense, printing, supplies and other materials were provided at each department’s discretion. During the academic year, other staff and faculty support for the program included training; one on one consultation, coaching and problem solving; meeting attendance; payroll and hiring. Tasks typically conducted in the summer include budgeting, program planning, assessment, reporting and recruitment.

## Outcomes, Successes and Challenges

### Outreach Totals and Methods

In addition to developing students as sustainability leaders, peer-to-peer outreach is a key outcome of Eco-Rep work. While some outreach methods vary from Rep to Rep, a large core of tactics are standard and required for all Eco-Reps. Communication vehicles include “Eco-Rep boards,” personalized door markers, social media presence, posters, tabling, flyers, impromptu interaction with fellow residents, business cards, nametags and attendance at hall staff and area council meetings.

The chart below shows the count of the most frequently reported types of constituent contact in the five years for which data are available. For a more detailed discussion of outreach methods, please see the relevant section of the [FY15 Report](#).

## Contact Count by Type

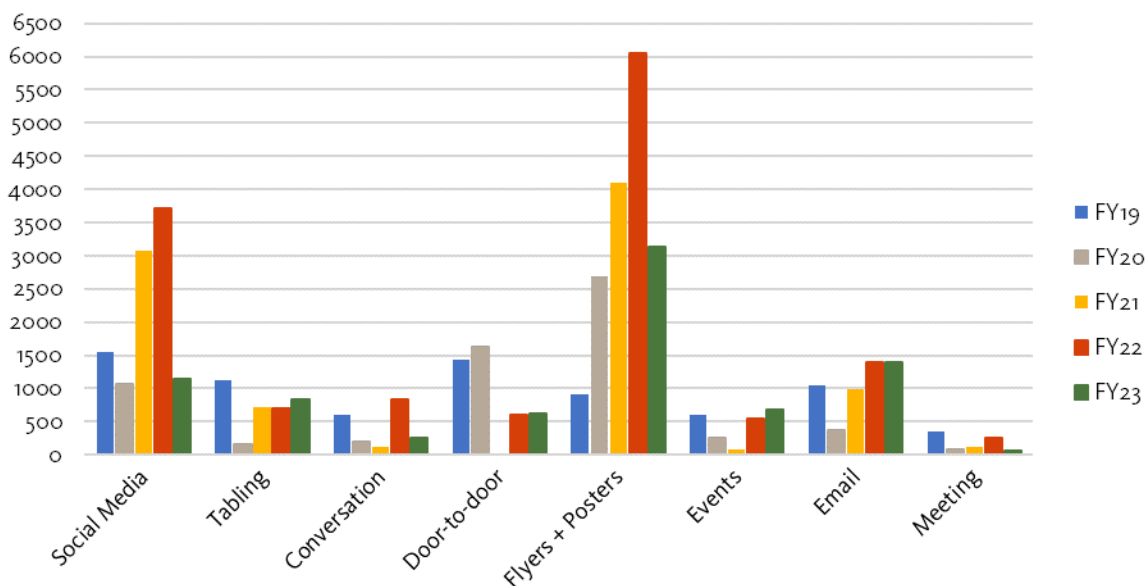


Figure 2. Contact Count by Type Trend, FY18-FY22

To produce the trends above and help track individual as well as program success, Eco-Reps are required to maintain an Outreach Log. The Log is particularly necessary since the cohort does not work in an office environment and the position requires the ability to succeed while working independently. The Log tracks contact counts, notable results and “takeaways.” It is useful for assessment purposes but also helps Eco-Reps identify patterns of effectiveness to improve outreach and share information between themselves. Effective use of the Log typically varies between Eco-Reps.

### Recycle Right

With the significant changes occurring to recycling markets that impact what materials are acceptable for recycling on campus, the Recycle Right program was first added to Eco-Rep programming in FY18. The objectives of Recycle Right are:

- Test different outreach methods to influence recycling behavior and assess the methods’ impact on actual levels of contamination in residence hall recycling stations.
- Determine ways to improve residents’ understanding about the acceptability of waste items in mixed recycling.
- Achieve a measurable reduction in contamination in recycling stations.
- Provide meaningful work for Eco-Reps that provides consistent hours.

The procedures and tactics used in FY23 are described Table 2.

Procedure/Tactic	Description
Plan and Implement Outreach Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Reps tested the following tactics in winter term:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-d signs above recycling bins to highlight common contaminants</li> <li>On-line quiz</li> <li>Tabling</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Recycling Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One or two randomly chosen recycling stations were selected in each residence hall. Eco-Reps counted total items and how many were contaminants.</li> <li>The results were recorded for each station.</li> <li>A photo was taken of each audit and filed.</li> <li>Baseline audits were conducted in weeks 7, 8, 9 of fall term, before outreach tactics began</li> <li>After outreach tactics, audits took place in weeks 7, 8, 9, 10 of winter term</li> </ul>

Table 2. Recycle Right Program Procedures and Tactics, FY23

The charts below shows the contamination rates by hall before and after the implementation of outreach tactics for paper, and bottles and cans.

### Contamination Rates Before Implementation of Outreach Tactics

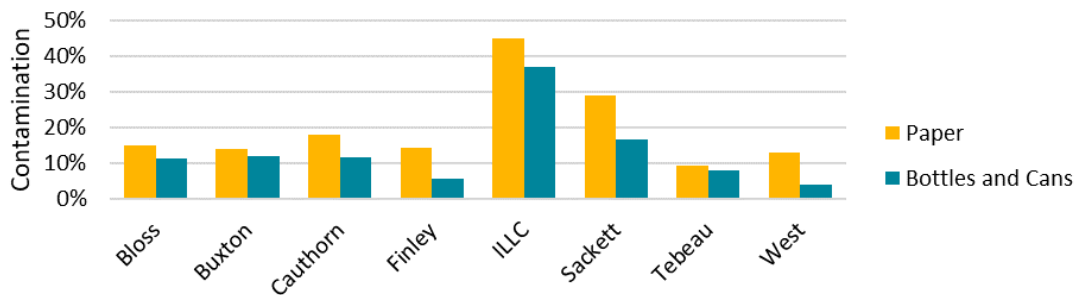


Figure 3. Contamination Rates Before Implementation of Outreach Tactics, FY23

### Contamination Rates After Implementation of Outreach Tactics

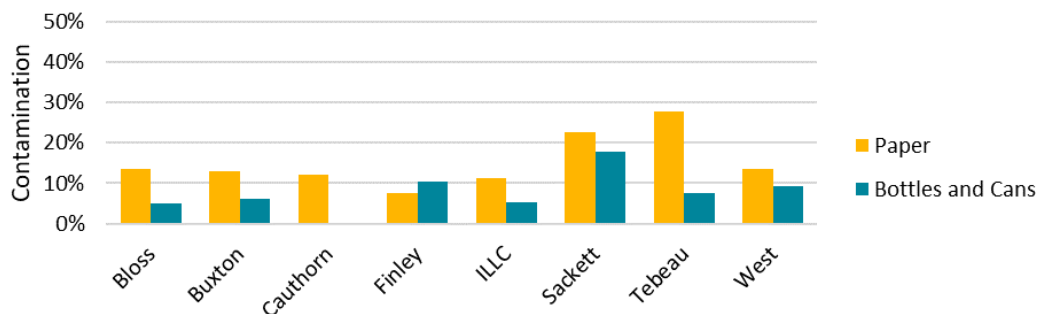


Figure 4. Contamination Rates After Implementation of Outreach Tactics, FY23

Most residence halls decreased their contamination rates after the implementation of 3-d signs above recycling bins to highlight common contaminants. Overall, West hall had the lowest contamination rate in paper, and Cauthorn had the lowest contamination rate in bottles and cans. The ILLC had the highest contamination rate in both paper, and bottles and cans.

Orchard Court, OSU’s family housing complex with traditional-style apartment units, is not included in these graphics because they use commingled recycling. Commingled recycling requires that residents place all recyclables into one bin. Before implementing outreach tactics, contamination of commingled bins were at 43.5%, and after implementation of outreach tactics, contamination went down to 28.30%.

### Composting

As with any similar program, quantitative assessment is critical but it is sometimes difficult to ensure accuracy. Quantitative results were tracked for the composting program and via Outreach Logs. Qualitative findings were derived from feedback and discussion from the Eco-Reps and other stakeholders. Quantitative results are summarized below.

	Bloss	Buxton	Sackett	West
Total weight (lb.)	16.0	48.9	70.8	50.6

Table 3. Composting Summary, FY23

Combined, the four halls composted **186.2 lbs.** of material in FY23. Due to staffing changes, the composting program was only implemented in spring term.

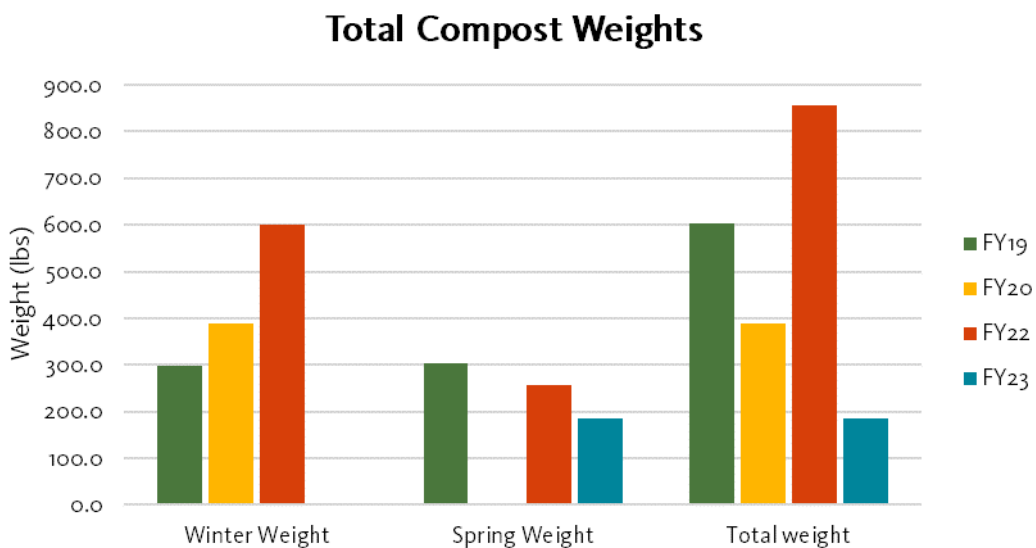


Figure 5. Total Compost Weight FY19-FY22

For more discussion and detail on compost program management, benefits and opportunities, please see the [FY15 Annual Report](#). It should be noted that due to pest, odor and other potential compost management issues – and regardless of numeric outcomes – the compost program would not be possible without a paid workforce in each building each day.

### Other program outcomes, success and challenges

The continued presence of professional staff from partner units is critical to program success. Given that the goals of the program include developing students into sustainability leaders and global citizens, deeper engagement from UHDS's Residential Education unit would strengthen the institutional support of the Eco-Reps program, and better connect the cohort to relevant development opportunities.

To further formalize the program and maximize development opportunities both for the cohort and program broadly, the Sustainability Office and partners will develop program and/or learning outcomes that reflect the missions of the partner organizations and ensure a long term vision for student success. More detailed information about existing outcomes, successes and challenges can be found in [past reports](#) and for brevity are not repeated here. Additionally, while a high level summary of Eco-Rep work is available in the Work Plan, detailed notes were kept during each weekly Eco-Rep meeting in a Google doc that can be made available by request.

Summary highlights of Eco-Rep programming from FY23 is below.

- Recycling (discussed above)
- Kilowatt Crackdown energy competition between eight halls in April.
  - The Kilowatt Crackdown is a 2-week competition to reduce energy consumption.
  - Engaged several hundred residents through social media and printed marketing.
  - The winning hall, Poling, was able to reduce their energy consumption by 10.34%.
- Outreach for events like Repair Fairs, Beyond Earth Day, hiring and recruitment opportunities for on campus sustainability related student employment, Waste Watchers and Race to Zero Contamination.

## Conclusion and Summary

In its tenth year, the Eco-Reps program shows steady performance for most indicators. Based on feedback from the FY23 cohort and their constituents, the program clearly continues to assist in the institutionalization of sustainable practices in the residence halls and beyond. It also has resulted in developing Eco-Reps as leaders and high performers. At least eleven students from previous cohorts have gone on to deepen their involvement in OSU sustainability programming. Many have become employees of Eco-Rep partner departments; others have become advisory board members within an institutional governing body – all as the result of their initial introduction and development through the Eco-Reps program. The FY23 Eco-Reps cohort provided ideas on what worked best and should be repeated:

- Events in collaboration with Area Council
- Establishing connections with residents and other staff
- Team building and workshops

Suggested changes included:

- More programming in the fall
- Get to know the hall staff better
- More training for the position

Eco-Reps fulfill an important and unique need at OSU by working in the same place as they live and play and therefore reach peers more effectively than posters, handouts and other methods. Living on-site provides understanding of ideal timing and culture of their hall. Understanding this culture, which varies from hall to hall, is critical to any program delivery. Additionally, it helps further develop Eco-Reps' individual skills as adaptive, responsive student leaders who care about sustainability and know how to appropriately share their passion with others.



## Eco-Rep Work Plan FY23

### Training and Orientation

- Campus Recycling and Surplus Property Training
- Sustainability Office Training
  - Lesson Book weekly readings built on Northwest Earth Institute articles
  - General student employment orientation – ongoing
- CEL Training
  - Leadership

### Fall

Themes for this quarter include sustainability basics, recycling, composting, waste reduction, transportation

- Focus on training and orientation, global need for sustainability
- Planning and outreach for recycling program
- Other projects and outreach, as needed

### Winter

Themes for this quarter include waste reduction, food waste, embodied energy, energy conservation

- Outreach for recycling program
- Run recycling program – Ongoing
- Other projects and outreach, as needed
- CEL Training
  - Leadership

### Spring

Themes for this quarter include climate change, human health, water, systems thinking

- Beyond Earth Day marketing
- Kilowatt Crackdown
- Move-Out Donation Drive marketing
- Other projects and outreach, as needed

### Meetings

- Early year meeting with RD and Eco-rep leadership
- Weekly Eco-Rep meetings with Lety, Kaylee
- Meet with RD (at least once per term)

### Ongoing Activities (in priority order)

1. Attend meetings listed above
2. Outreach log entries twice per week
3. Timesheet entry at least twice per week
4. Weekly readings from Lesson Book
5. Social media updates and Eco-Rep message board updates