

Making an institute more sustainable



For everyone who has the bigger picture in mind • Never forget, it's a journey

Building a Team Can Make the Difference

Here, we hear from Dr. Nicole Francis, a group leader at a research institute who started a Green Labs initiative.

Some inspirational ideas for institute wide changes

Monthly Newsletter

We initiated a monthly newsletter to raise awareness and promoted eco-friendly lab practices. The newsletter provides practical tips and tricks for implementing sustainable measures within the IRCM community.



Encouraging Eco-friendly Cafeteria Practices

We posted signs encouraging people to recycle, to not use disposable containers, and to return kitchen utensils to maintain availability. Furthermore, we implemented composting (in conjunction with our Chef) and aluminum recycling (to raise money for our student association).

Group Purchase Of Reusable Glassware

We organized a group purchase of reusable glassware, replacing thousands of single-use plastic pipettes. This switch significantly reduced plastic waste and contributed to a more sustainable research environment.



Personal Experiences

Nicole's tips and tricks for you

Don't Rush, Take Your Time



I have to emphasize the importance of patience and persistence. Sometimes contracts run over multiple years or additional safety checks are necessary to be allowed to switch things up. The many people involved in all of these processes, of course, do not make anything go faster. As much as one would like immediate change, the big picture is more of a reorientation – and that takes time

Immerse In The Topic & Work Together

Gathering information is crucial. Understand how waste is handled, who takes care of it and what you actually can change. Contracting with non-profit organizations to review practices and provide recommendations for improvement can be a good option.



Just Do It – It Will Be Worth It

Although change might seem impossible upfront, do not be afraid. Would the washing facility be able to handle us changing to glass pipettes? Also, the up front cost was a bit intimidating (the canisters for the glass pipettes are quite expensive). We just tried and they pay for themselves quickly. The washing facility is fine with the extra load. And when I see how many times they get used, it is remarkable to think that a relatively small change cuts quite a lot of waste.



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Examples of What to Do for Laboratories



Optimizing Recycling At IRCM

To maximize recycling, we increased the number of recycling bins in labs and implemented detailed labels for clear identification of recyclable items. This ensured that products eligible for recycling were placed in the bins while non-recyclables were kept out.

Switching To Local Mask And Glove Recycling

Our research led to a shift from a US-based mask recycling company to a local one capable of recycling masks, gloves, and other PPE. This change minimized transport distances and allowed for comprehensive recycling.



In The Future

We are also beginning to talk about the possibility of having a green coordinator to accelerate implementation of good practices.

Nicole's Summary

The most important aspect of our initiative has been collaboration among people from all aspects of institute life. Our team is composed of researchers at all levels, and key institute staff. We collaborate with everyone from the building manager to our dishwashing staff. We have found that when we ask for help, people are happy to engage and share their experience and expertise.





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