

# Green Seal's Theory of Change



A **Theory of Change** is a conceptual model that underpins an organization's program planning, execution, and assessment and summarizes how program activities are designed to achieve desired outcomes. Green Seal's Theory of Change is a tool for our teams and wider community, setting a clear pathway toward common goals and a framework for monitoring and evaluating programs.

## GREEN SEAL'S VISION

Our vision is to make safer, more sustainable products the norm. Our principal objective is to incentivize a market transformation toward the design, production, and use of safer, more sustainable products supported by safer and more sustainable supply chains. Our conceptual impact pathway is summarized below:



*Green Seal sets the bar for health and environmental leadership in the product category, based on science and stakeholder engagement.*



*Leading manufacturers demonstrate they meet the bar by earning Green Seal certification.*



*Manufacturers of Green Seal-certified products enjoy a market advantage due to environmentally preferable purchasing policies and consumer demand for third-party certified products.*



*Other manufacturers follow suit, producing safer, more sustainable products.*



*The market transforms. What once was leadership is now mainstream.*

## GREEN SEAL'S STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING MARKET TRANSFORMATION



**Standard Development:** Create consistent, rigorous leadership standards that signify top health and environmental performance for products used to clean and maintain our buildings and homes.



**Certification:** Conduct comprehensive conformity assessments to provide assurance that the product or service meets the relevant standard requirements, including reduced use of energy and water, incorporation of recycled materials, reduced impacts to air, water, and land, minimization/elimination of carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins, and reduced use of volatile organic compounds, asthma-causing ingredients, and other ingredients harmful to human health and the environment. Conduct periodic monitoring activities to ensure products and services continue to meet the requirements of certification.



**Capacity Building:** Implement programs such as raw material verification, which provide suppliers of raw material chemical ingredients a tool to communicate that their ingredient complies with Green Seal's health and environmental requirements, making it simpler for manufacturers to choose greener raw materials that provide the same functional benefit as their less sustainable counterparts.



**Outreach and Education:** Create resources and communications strategies that educate consumers and professional buyers about the health and environmental impacts of cleaning and facility care products, how to safely and effectively use products to reduce potential for injury and exposure, and how use of certified products can reduce health and environmental impacts. Promote education among corporate and professional buyers as well as individual consumers that Green Seal and other comparable third-party certifications require proof of a product's effective functional performance before awarding certification.

## OUR PATHWAY FROM STRATEGIES TO OUTCOMES

Implementing Green Seal's strategies and interventions results in the following outcomes.

**GREATER AWARENESS.** Education activities increase household and professional buyers' awareness of the negative health and environmental impacts of products they use each day (e.g., cleaning products, laundry care products, paints, etc.).



**SHARED VALUES & BEHAVIOR CHANGE.** Household and professional buyers change their behavior to more frequently buy products with reduced impacts.



**CERTIFICATION IS A VALUED TOOL.** Manufacturers certify their products to meet market demand. Manufacturers promote their certified products and product lines, allowing buyers to implement green cleaning programs and ensure they are purchasing reduced-impact products in product categories where they are available.



**GREENER SUPPLY CHAINS.** Increased demand for safer chemistries from manufacturers upstream in their supply chains results in greater availability of safer and reduced-impact raw materials for all manufacturers. Raw material ingredients can be verified as compliant with Green Seal requirements and increase the adoption of their use in reformulated products.



**SAFER PRODUCTS, SAFER ACTIVITIES.** Homeowners, office workers, students and hotel guests experience improved indoor air quality and reduced exposure to chemicals that can cause health impacts. Facilities staff experience safer working conditions, including fewer injuries and reduced exposure to hazardous chemicals.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES – GREEN SEAL’S COMPASS

The growth of certified products in the marketplace enables increased availability and adoption of products with reduced human health and environmental impacts, giving professional buyers and household consumers access to safer, healthier products. The widespread manufacture and use of certified products in place of conventional products results in the following impacts:



**A Preserved Climate:** Reduced climate impacts through reductions in VOCs, energy use, mineral extraction, and fuel use associated with transportation of undiluted commercial cleaning products.

**Cleaner Water:** Cleaner and more plentiful water through reduced manufacture and use of harmful chemicals in favor of ingredients that are not harmful to aquatic life, do not cause aquatic eutrophication, are biodegradable, will not bioaccumulate, and are made water-efficiently.

**Minimized Waste:** Reduced waste through greater use of recovered materials, increased recyclability, and improved product performance.

**Health Protections:** Improved human health through reduced exposure to toxic ingredients including carcinogens, mutagens, reproductive toxins, neurotoxins, endocrine disruptors, asthmagens, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs); avoidance of ingredients causing skin sensitization; reduced exposure to combustible or flammable products.

## DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION FOR SUCCESS

Green Seal will revisit its Theory of Change for input on a three-year cycle so that we may share, gather, and apply new knowledge, systematically testing underlying assumptions and verifying positive impacts. Via program evaluations, Green Seal will improve existing strategies, develop new approaches, and may retire programs.