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**Council of Smaller Enterprises Launches Green Plus™ In Ohio  
Program to Complement COSE's Energy Savings Assistance Efforts**

**Cleveland, October 12, 2009** — The Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE) has become the first business association to offer the Green Plus™ sustainability education and certification program to Ohio's smaller enterprises.

Green Plus™ is a three-part program to help smaller enterprises improve their performance through becoming more sustainable. In the first stage, employers take an online assessment which evaluates their management, environmental, employee and community engagement practices. In the second stage, participants become part of an online network and can receive advice from other business owners and university-based content experts on how to improve their sustainability performance. In the final stage, employers with exceptional scores across the Green Plus™ assessment's People, Planet and Performance sections become Certified Green Plus™ businesses, recognizing their specific efforts and providing exposure to their current and potential customers and business partners in communities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

"COSE's endorsement and support of the Green Plus™ process, is focused on helping small businesses take the first steps to greater profitability through sustainability," said Steve Millard, President and Executive Director of COSE.

Green Plus™ has been adopted as the official small and medium sized enterprise sustainability program of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). The program is available at a substantial discount through participating chambers of commerce throughout the U.S. and Canada in the 1,300 chamber ACCE network. The program costs \$550, but will be available to COSE members with five or more employees for \$350 and to COSE companies with four or fewer employees for \$75.

"There are many great home-grown sustainability efforts already going on in our region," said Millard. "Green Plus™ gives our members the opportunity to both learn new practices and share their own knowledge across North America – while also opening up new business opportunities," he added.

For more than ten years, COSE has been a provider of electricity and natural gas savings options to small and mid-sized businesses, helping them to save money and becoming a stronger partner for small business energy management efforts.

Additionally, COSE has been designated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio as the small business energy efficiency administrator for the First Energy Service territories. In this role, COSE is working to find efficient and effective ways to improve and lower the energy demand of small businesses, resulting in additional profitability for small firms.

Green Plus™ was developed by the North Carolina Research Triangle based Institute for Sustainable Development -- a combined effort of universities and chambers of commerce to provide smaller employers with affordable tools to improve their triple bottom line sustainability. The Green Plus™ model was developed by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler School of Business in 2007. UNC Chapel Hill and Duke University developed online sustainability tools for small business that were tested in Ohio and North Carolina throughout 2008. COSE was the Institute for Sustainable Development's partner in beta testing the Green Plus™ program with Ohio businesses.

"Smaller enterprises employ most North Americans and are the key engine of new job creation," said Chris Carmody, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Development. "Large employers have benefited greatly from their sustainability efforts. Green Plus™ was created to give small employers the same opportunities to save and make money while going

green and being sustainable,” Carmody continued. “COSE’s ongoing advocacy and innovative programs for smaller employers makes it the ideal Green Plus™ partner,” Carmody concluded.

Green Plus™ is not a product-specific certification program, but a broad small business sustainability certification. Employers currently participating comprise professional firms, restaurants, hotels, landscapers, printers, designers, small manufacturers and others. Green Plus™ is also designed to help non-profit organizations that want to improve their sustainability.

COSE member, The Taylor Companies was recently recognized as the first Ohio Certified Green Plus™ business on September 28, 2009 for its exceptional practices business, environmental and community practices. More on Taylor Chair’s certification can be found at [www.gogreenplus.org](http://www.gogreenplus.org). Other COSE members are beginning to participate in this program from the legal, landscaping and non-profit sectors.

For more information on Green Plus™, please see [www.gogreenplus.org](http://www.gogreenplus.org).

**About COSE**

*COSE is one of Ohio’s largest small business support organizations, striving to help small businesses grow and maintain their independence. Comprised of more than 17,000 member companies, COSE has a long history of fighting for the rights of all small business owners through group purchasing programs for health care, workers’ compensation, or energy; advocating for specific changes in legislation or regulation to benefit small business; and, providing a forum and resource for small businesses to connect with and learn from each other. ([www.cose.org](http://www.cose.org))*

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