

Main Street Goes Green

Learn. Green. Go.

GREEN BUSINESS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR GROCERY STORES

Inspired by Isom IGA's Sustainable Comeback Story



INTRODUCTION

When disaster struck, Isom IGA, a beloved grocery store in rural Kentucky, didn't just rebuild — they built better. Owner Simon Christon used the opportunity after a devastating flood to turn his family business into a sustainability success story, proving that green practices can thrive in even the most economically challenged communities. Whether you're running a small-town store or a city-based business, this guide offers practical, proven steps for cutting costs, lowering your carbon footprint, and building resilience through sustainability.



STEP 1

SET YOUR VISION AND GREEN GOALS

Think long-term. What do you want your business to stand for — now and 10 years from now?

Simon's Goals:

- Cut electricity costs for long-term viability.
- Modernize equipment after the 2022 flood.
- Serve his community with dignity and reliability.
- Keep pricing affordable for low-income customers.
- Become a model for sustainable rural retail.

Set SMART Goals

(Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)

Example: Reduce monthly power bills by 40% within the first year after equipment upgrades and solar installation.



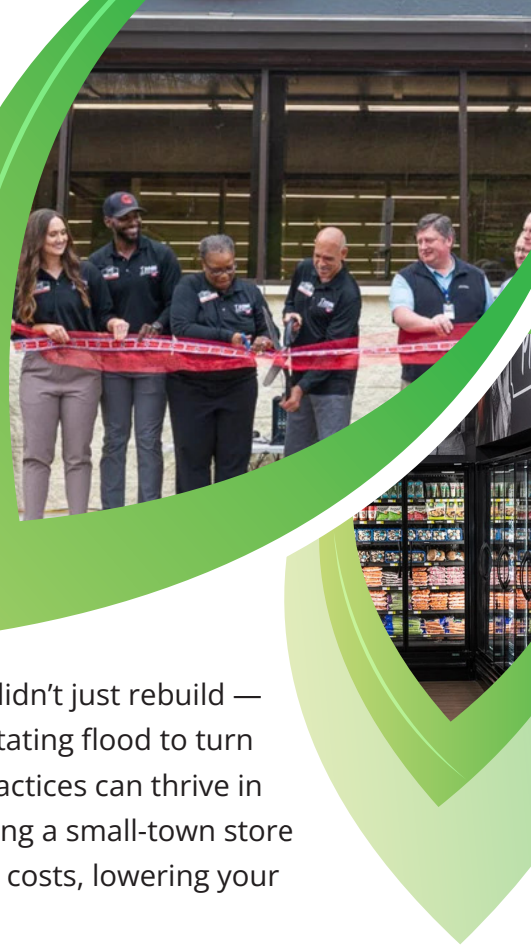
STEP 2

TACKLE ENERGY COSTS HEAD-ON

With energy bills as high as \$12,000 per month, Simon focused first on energy efficiency.

Action Steps:

- Install rooftop solar with help from a nonprofit partner.
- Upgrade to Energy Star-certified freezers, refrigerators, and coolers.
- Replace open-case displays with closed-door models.
- Apply for USDA equipment grants and local energy incentives.



Pro Tip:

Simon partnered with Mountain Association, a nonprofit that helped manage applications, conduct audits, and identify funding sources.



STEP 3

PHASE IN NEW EQUIPMENT

New equipment is expensive — but it pays off over time in savings and performance.

Where to Start:

- Start with the most power-hungry units, like frozen food freezers.
- Transition gradually across departments: frozen → dairy → meat → produce.
- Prioritize low-maintenance models to reduce repair costs.

Success Example:

Since upgrading, Simon has seen a sharp drop in maintenance needs — saving thousands in annual repair costs.

Pro Tip:

Simon's next step is to capture waste heat from refrigeration to power hot water — a smart way to reuse energy already in circulation.



STEP 4

REDUCE WATER AND HEAT WASTE

Even without a public sewer system, Isom IGA took steps to reduce waste and improve efficiency.

Smart Upgrades:

- Install low-flow toilets and faucets.
- Add an energy-efficient hot water heater connected to refrigeration heat waste.
- Use strategic plumbing upgrades during remodels.



STEP 5

ENGAGE WITH STAFF AND COMMUNITY

Isom IGA isn't just a grocery store — it's a gathering place. Simon treats his customers and staff like family, and that loyalty helped power the store's comeback.

Ideas to Try:

- Keep staff informed and excited about new green upgrades.
- Reinforce that sustainability is about community care, not just savings.
- Celebrate loyalty with customer appreciation and clean, modern spaces.

Success Example:

Isom IGA's hiring and retention improved after the remodel, with 8+ new employees and a waiting list of applicants.





STEP 6

MEASURE PROGRESS AND PLAN AHEAD

Tracking results isn't about perfection — it's about staying on course.

Tracking Tips:

- Work with local energy consultants or nonprofits to monitor energy savings.
- Compare utility bills year over year.
- Record grant applications outcomes and reinvest savings into future upgrades.

Two Big Wins from Isom IGA



\$4,000-\$5,000 in monthly energy savings after implementing solar and upgrading equipment



Major reduction in maintenance costs thanks to high-efficiency, low-repair cooling systems

4 Practical Implementation Tips

1

Start with the biggest cost:

For Isom IGA, that was electricity — so they tackled it first.

2

Find the right partners:

Mountain Association helped navigate, grants, audits, and engineering.

3

Upgrade in stages:

Start with what you can afford — every change makes a difference.

4

Prioritize people:

Sustainability works best when it uplifts your staff, customers, and community.

Summary: Implementation Checklist

Action	Completed
Conduct energy audit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apply for solar or efficiency grants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Replace outdated refrigeration units	<input type="checkbox"/>
Install low-flow plumbing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce maintenance costs with upgrades	<input type="checkbox"/>
Train staff on equipment use	<input type="checkbox"/>
Track monthly savings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore future expansion of solar	<input type="checkbox"/>

FINAL WORDS: SUSTAINABILITY IS SERVICE

Simon didn't just rebuild a grocery store — he rebuilt hope. By focusing on sustainability, he secured his family's legacy, created jobs, lowered costs, and built a business that his entire community is proud of. His story proves that small-town businesses can lead the way in sustainable, purpose-driven growth.

