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## **Executive Summary**

### **SSNE's Progressive Business/Government Roundtable Dialogues**

Sustainable Step New England (SSNE) has designed and convened a series of roundtable dialogues between executives from some of the region's most sustainable businesses and key government leaders from MA, NH, the City of Boston and relevant federal agencies. The statewide reports are downloadable at <http://ssne.org/PressRelease/pr46-roundtablerept.htm>, and the Boston report will be available in June, 2008.

The aims of the dialogues are to:

1. Connect government officials to a very different business mindset and community with which they do not normally interact, or even know exist.
2. Help government officials learn about how and why such businesses are incorporating sustainable practices.
3. Examine how existing gov't programs have helped or inadvertently become barriers to these businesses, and others like them.
4. Brainstorm about how existing or new government programs, policies or other actions can support and enhance sustainable business practices, and encourage other enterprises to follow in the paths of these green leaders.

Invited businesses come from three categories:

1. Traditional companies greening their practices, e.g., Interface, Consigli Construction
2. Social entrepreneurs e.g., Recycline, ZipCar, TechNetworks
3. Environmental technology companies e.g. Second Wind, Conigliaro Industries

These business leaders have: undertaken radical energy conservation, built and retrofitted green buildings, developed new technologies and green chemistry to make products from recycled materials, educated their markets and supply chains on environmental issues, practiced social entrepreneurship, established mentor relationships with schools, etc.

Participants overwhelmingly rated these events as "exceeding expectations," "very worthwhile," "expertly designed and facilitated" and "introduced me to a whole new business sector." Many no-or-low cost, geographically customized, specific recommendations emerged to boost sustainable business practices, grow green jobs, enhance existing gov't programs, and spark public/private partnerships, including:

1. Green branding/preferred provider lists, government recognition, etc. to support sustainable business leaders and to drive B2B, citizen, gov't and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector purchases of products and services from sustainable enterprises
2. Creation of one-stop shop resource centers, web portals and market aggregation services for environmentally-preferable products and services, such as green office audits, to empower the greening of the region's small and mid-sized business majority.
3. Lower barriers to energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy purchases and clean power generation and co-generation.

4. Creation of a volunteer core of sustainable business leaders willing to meet with gov't leaders, testify at legislative hearings, etc. to
5. Public private partnerships to reduce solid waste disposal costs, enhance commercial composting infrastructure and support urban farming/local food in restaurants and schools, reduce urban traffic congestion and waste hauler noise to improve neighborhood quality of life.

**Roundtable Dialogue project is unique in a number of ways including:**

1) The hand-picked participants come from a fully researched and vetted list of progressive business CEO's who have qualified to participate because they and their businesses meet specific criteria related to:

- the nature of their core business: e.g.
  - Social entrepreneurship
  - Environmental technologies, etc.
- the innovative nature of their business structure
- geographic, socio-economic class and diversity representation of the business, employees and other stakeholders

2) The preparatory materials, event structure and facilitation are all built around strategic questions (and a strategic questioning process) designed to uncover the sustainability strategies and opportunities embedded in the particular circumstances of the businesses and government entities in the jurisdiction, and/or with whom they interact.

3) Key government decision-makers get to learn from a quite unusual community of business leaders with whom they normally never interact or even know exist. Agency leaders and department heads come away with no-cost or low cost sustainable strategies that increase the size and number of such extraordinarily progressive businesses in their region, encourage others to follow in their footsteps, and which integrate seamlessly into existing governmental leverage points, such as permitting processes, business assistance programs, communications and informational materials.

4) The program generates a pool of "invested" thought leaders capable of making decisions, taking action, and committing human and other resources to implement the innovative recommendations the process brings to the surface. These governmental and progressive private sector leaders typically come away with a strong desire to continue the conversation in various groupings, from one on one to larger groups.

5) The process is applicable at the community, municipal and statewide levels.

SSNE has invested some \$188,000 in developing, piloting and implementing this program, and has an active ongoing contract with the City of Boston to help them evaluate and implement recommendations stemming from the Boston, September, 2007 Roundtable. There is an opportunity to develop an even longer term relationship with City of Boston after existing contract is done. New home organization will have an opportunity to market its services to the City and others, with options of Paul Lipke and Martha Kirkpatrick continuing to offer program delivery, and/or to train the new organization's staff in methodology and content of the Roundtable format in order to expand and grow the program.

Written proposals shall be received no later than July 30, 2008. Proposals may be set by email to:

**mpompeo@managementconsulting.or**