Embedding Sustainability into the Culture of Municipal Government:

A resource for municipal change agents

Produced as a collaboration between the Network for Business Sustainability, The Natural Step Canada, and the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University

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Strathcona County

Charlottetown

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Vaughan

Canmore

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Whistler

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STATEMENT OF INTENT: MESSAGE FROM THE NATURAL STEP CANADA

Over the past number of years, many Canadian municipalities have created Integrated Community Sustainability Plans to enable the long-term sustainability and resiliency of their communities. Often, the municipality is one of many partners who are responsible for the implementation of these plans. Through the process of engaging with community partners, many municipal organizations are placing an increased emphasis on what they are doing internally to support a culture of sustainability. This focus is manifested in a number of ways: a significant increase in the number of sustainability-focused staff in municipalities across the country, many councils making commitments to move toward sustainability goals, and an increasing number of municipalities working to integrate a sustainability lens into their governance and decision-making practices.

At The Natural Step Canada, we have the privilege of working with many municipal partners as they grapple with these challenges. We've identified best practices in sustainability decision making and planning for the municipal sector that highlight the importance of building a shared vision and language around sustainability, showing senior level support, communicating consistently, and having a team with credibility throughout the organization to lead the initiative (Leung, 2009). As we work with our partners to integrate sustainability into the core of their strategy, we find that building a strong culture of sustainability is a crucial aspect of this work.

In 2010, the Network for Business Sustainability published a cutting-edge report, *Embedding Sustainability in Organizational Culture*, which has made a significant contribution in this field. Prepared by Dr. Stephanie Bertels and her research team at Simon Fraser University, the report presents a portfolio of practices gleaned from a systematic review of the entire body of research on sustainability and organizational culture. Rapidly gaining traction in the business community, the framework that they developed provides guidance to those leading the shift toward a culture of sustainability. Based on a synthesis of data from 179 studies, spanning 15 years of research, that review presents the most comprehensive and credible evidence to date on embedding sustainability in organizational culture.

In response to this research, we set about working with Canadian municipal members of The Natural Step Exchange[1] to test and apply the portfolio approach in municipal organizations. Together, we refined the portfolio approach to suit the municipal context and identified examples of the various practices that represent the best of what is happening in municipalities across Canada. We are pleased to share the outcome of this work with you, and hope that this resource provides practical guidance and fresh ideas to support a culture of sustainability in cities across the country and around the world.

Thank you to our partners, the Network for Business Sustainability and the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University, for providing invaluable resources to support this research.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue.

John Purkis
The Natural Step Canada

Karen Miller
The Natural Step Canada

[1] The Natural Step Exchange is a learning network of Canadian sustainability practitioners working together to accelerate change toward sustainability.

MESSAGE FROM THE PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

As municipal staff members who work proactively to address the sustainability challenge, we grapple with complex issues on a day-to-day basis. One that is currently at the forefront of our work is embedding sustainability into the culture of our municipal organizations. This work is challenging, but important, as our collective sustainability journey depends on leadership, innovation, and behaviour change at all levels of our organizations. We are leading that culture change, and learning and experimenting as we go.

We were pleased to contribute our time to this initiative, and we hope that you learn from our stories and examples. We encourage you to share your experience and ideas with us, as well, and look forward to continuing the dialogue.

May we learn from each other as we nurture cultures of sustainability in our organizations and communities.

Participating municipalities:

- City of Calgary, Alberta
- City of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
- City of Fredericton, New Brunswick
- City of Ottawa, Ontario
- City of Pickering, Ontario
- City of Vaughan, Ontario
- District of North Vancouver, British Columbia
- Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia
- Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia
- Strathcona County, Alberta
- Town of Canmore, Alberta

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Context

Over the past number of years, many Canadian municipalities have created Integrated Community Sustainability Plans to enable the long-term sustainability and resiliency of their community. While the municipal government is generally one of many partners responsible for the implementation of these plans, the focus on sustainability has led to increased awareness and emphasis on sustainability in municipal organizations. As a result of this, we have seen a significant increase in the number of staff focused on environment and sustainability issues in municipal organizations and in the attention sustainability has received from senior management. These internal change agents are grappling with how to integrate sustainability into the way municipalities do business and make decisions. The list of challenges they face is long: from building buy-in internally and developing alignment around a sustainability vision, to learning and modeling ways of working together that enable integrated and coordinated solutions to their sustainability challenges. Managers and staff members seeking to accelerate change toward sustainability in municipal organizations have their work cut out for them.

In 2010, the Network for Business Sustainability published a cutting-edge report, *Embedding Sustainability in Organizational Culture*, which has made a significant contribution in this field. Prepared by Dr. Stephanie Bertels and her research team at Simon Fraser University, the report presents a portfolio of practices gleaned from a systematic review of the entire body of research on sustainability and organizational culture. In response to this research, The Natural Step Canada, the Network for Business Sustainability, and the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University engaged municipalities from across Canada to update and adapt this work for the municipal context. This document is the outcome of that collaboration.

The momentum is growing for sustainability in Canadian cities. Many municipal councils have made commitments to move toward sustainability, and the mandate is growing for municipal staff to step up to the challenge. This represents the opportunity for a major shift in the way municipal organizations deliver services, manage their assets, and meet community needs. Shifting strategies and systems to integrate sustainability considerations requires change throughout the organization. If municipalities are serious about embracing sustainability and leading their communities by example, then nurturing and enabling an internal culture of sustainability is a key piece of that work.

What is a Culture of Sustainability?

To define what we mean by a culture of sustainability, it will be helpful to understand what we mean by sustainability and also what we mean by culture. While there are many different definitions of sustainability, the most frequently cited comes from the World Council on Economic Development, which advocates operating in ways that "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987). This definition can be elaborated upon, by looking at the social and ecological systems that human society depends on to meet our needs. In order for future generations to meet their needs, the actions that we take should enable these systems to remain healthy over the long term, and decisions should be made in ways that respect the constraints of social and ecological systems.[2]

Like sustainability, organizational culture is also defined in many different ways. Academic definitions make reference to shared assumptions and values, as well as expected behaviours and symbols. An organization's culture guides the decisions of its members by establishing and reinforcing expectations about what is valued and how things should be done. For this reason, culture is often described as "the way we do things around here." Over time, an organization builds up its own culture, providing a sense of identity to its members about "who we are" and "what we do." An organization's culture is both reinforced and reshaped through the daily practices of its members.

A culture of sustainability is one in which organizational members hold shared assumptions and beliefs about what sustainability means for their organization, where the organization stands today in relation to that understanding, and what they are doing to bridge the gap.

[2] The Natural Step Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development provides four system conditions for a sustainable society, which define the minimum conditions for sustainability. These system conditions were developed through a scientific consensus process, and are as follows:

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to:

1. Systematic increases in concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust.
2. Systematic increases in concentrations of substances produced by society.
3. Systematic degradation by physical means.

And in that society:

4. People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

A Portfolio Approach to Embedding Sustainability into the Culture of Municipal Government

The portfolio approach to embedding sustainability in organizational culture classifies the various ways that organizations are going about the work of building a culture of sustainability. The approach recognizes both formal and informal practices. It covers practices that aim to fulfill current sustainability commitments, as well as those that aim to innovate and move the organization further along the path toward sustainability. These two axes—fulfillment-innovation and formal-informal—delineate four quadrants of practices.

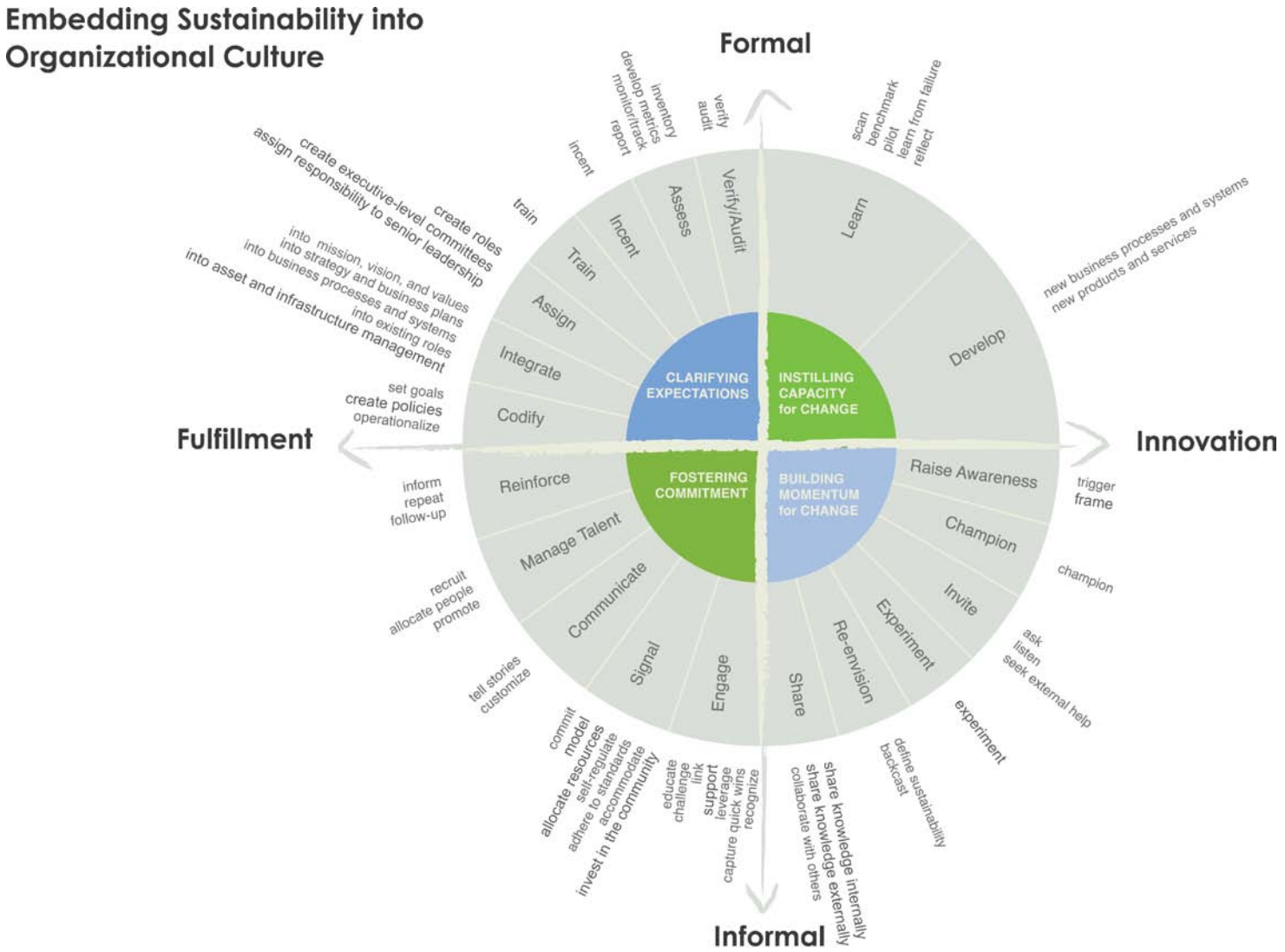
These four quadrants are as follows:

Fostering Commitment (Informal, Fulfillment)
Practices that affect values and behaviours to help the organization deliver on current sustainability commitments.

Clarifying Expectations (Formal, Fulfillment)
Rules and procedures that help the organization deliver on current sustainability commitments.

Building Momentum for Change (Informal, Innovation)
Practices that affect values and behaviours to help the organization do things differently or better.

Instilling Capacity for Change (Formal, Innovation)
Rules and procedures that help the organization do things differently or better.



Adapted with permission (Bertels et al., 2010)

To effectively embed sustainability into organizational culture, attention should be given to each of the four quadrants. The portfolio approach delineates categories of practices within each quadrant, as well as individual practices and examples. Each practice—accompanied by specific examples from Canadian municipal organizations—is elaborated upon in the body of this report.

Methods

Based on the portfolio approach to embedding sustainability in organizational culture, we asked 11 municipalities to comment on whether the approach was relevant to them, what they would adjust, and what their best practices and challenges were. The full wheel of practices was presented to the working group, and adjustments to the language and the practices were made to suit the context of municipal organizations. Following this, in-depth interviews with representatives from participating municipalities teased out examples of practices and approaches that municipal organizations are undertaking to support a culture shift toward sustainability.

Questions that guided the research include:

- What practices are municipal organizations undertaking to embed sustainability into their organizational culture?
- What's working well?
- What are the main challenges?
- What practices can be scaled up and shared?

How to Navigate this Report

This report describes a culture of sustainability and shares examples of practices that can help to nurture that culture. Following the portfolio approach, we provide a description of success for each of the four quadrants of practices, showing what the practices within each quadrant are aiming to achieve. To support this direction, examples and descriptions of each practice are provided to show ideas of how municipal organizations in Canada are going about the journey of embedding sustainability into their organizational culture. This presents a snapshot of examples of the best of what is happening right now in Canadian municipal organizations. These examples are intended to inspire ideas, spark dialogue, and provide input to those leading culture change initiatives in the municipal context.

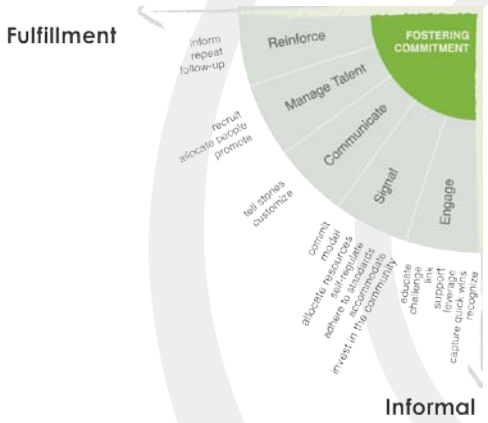
The report concludes with a summary of the patterns and trends distilled from the interviews, and a call to action for practitioners.

FOSTERING COMMITMENT

Practices that affect values and behaviours to help the organization deliver on current sustainability commitments (Informal, Fulfillment)

***Description of success**: An organization with mastery in this quadrant demonstrates values and behaviours aligned with sustainability as part of the way things are done. There is clear support and encouragement for staff to deliver on current sustainability commitments, and acting in alignment with sustainability values[3] is celebrated and recognized, both implicitly and explicitly.*

Practices in this quadrant aim to nurture and reinforce the importance of sustainability for the organization, and to support and encourage employees who are leaders in making efforts to embed sustainability by demonstrating values aligned with sustainability. There are five categories of practices: engage, signal, communicate, manage talent, and reinforce.



PRACTICES

Engage
- educate
- challenge
- link
- support
- leverage
- capture quick wins
- recognize

Signal
- commit
- model
- allocate resources
- self-regulate
- adhere to standards
- accommodate
- invest in the community

Communicate
- tell stories
- customize

Manage Talent
- recruit
- allocate people
- promote

Reinforce
- inform
- repeat
- follow up

[3] In this context, we consider sustainability values to include social values and the creation of societal value within ecological constraints.

Engage

This category consists of informal practices that attempt to raise the level of employee engagement throughout the organization. They aim to generate interest and excitement among employees about the journey toward sustainability and to encourage the active participation of all employees in sustainability initiatives. These practices help motivate employees to act in a way that brings the organization closer to its sustainability goals. The practices that relate to engagement include: educate, challenge, link, support, leverage, capture quick wins, and recognize.

Educate

Raise the level of awareness and understanding of sustainability through the provision of information in informal ways.

- Include sustainability information in memos, newsletters, on bulletin boards, and/or on the municipal intranet.
- Include sustainability on the agenda at general staff meetings.
- Create community newsletters.
- Bring in speakers to talk about sustainability issues.
- Host internal workshops, conferences, and/or trade shows.

Example: The **City of Vaughan** is focusing on internal education to raise employee awareness and understanding of sustainability. Quarterly newsletters are full of information highlighting energy-saving practices, sustainability tips, and organizational success stories, while the intranet has become a widely used vehicle highlighting key programs and initiatives. To complement these practices, the City hosts quarterly "lunch and learn" events that focus on topics related to sustainability.

Example: Recognizing internal education is a core impetus for shared sustainability values, the **City of Ottawa** is exposing its senior leadership team, its "Corporate Sustainability Working Group" (representatives from the majority of City departments), and its "Sustainability Champions" (over 200 self-identified staff from all levels of the organization) to advanced training, seminars, and intranet resources. To complement this learning and to broaden general staff awareness, the City has also incorporated sustainability into its new staff orientation packages, and has developed a sustainability road show presentation that can be delivered to departmental work teams. The road show presentation includes a definition of sustainability, Ottawa's endorsement of four interconnected dimensions of sustainability (social, cultural, economic, and environmental), highlights corporate achievements and investments made, and informs staff of current policies, programs, and initiatives they should be aware of. It concludes with a call to action for their participation. With over 17,000 employees, the City identifies customized communication avenues and materials as imperatives to achieving educational buy-in.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** established a cross-departmental sustainability team in 2007 to develop a shared language on sustainability, assess the operations of the organization from a sustainability perspective, and develop an action plan toward becoming a more sustainable organization. This foundational work and capacity building helped to support community engagement, visioning, and the preparation of a new Official Community Plan/Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, which was developed from 2008 to 2011.

Challenge

Encourage and recognize good ideas or effort through internal competitions.

- Organize sustainability competitions between business units or neighbouring municipalities to motivate sustainability performance.
- Use internal competitions as a means to generate and identify new ideas.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** is currently establishing an engaging forum for staff to develop and incubate their ideas for sustainability projects, called "So You Think You're Sustainable?" The top ideas will receive support and funding to move ahead as pilot projects.

Example: To build momentum toward actions that increase energy efficiency and dialogue around issues related to sustainability, the **City of Charlottetown** created the "City Hall Energy Challenge." The City put together a team of eight "power surgers"—individuals who, when they see employees taking exceptional measures to reduce their energy consumption, reward them with credits on their energy bills. Bonus challenges for creativity and idea sharing are also held, and it is garnering a lot of internal celebration. The program is constantly spoken about, repeated, and reinforced through story sharing. The team actively looks for people who are moving in the direction of sustainability and helps share their stories as an inspiration—and challenge—to others.

Link

Bring sustainability down to the individual level by connecting the impact of everyday actions at work with sustainability at home (and vice versa), and connecting organizational sustainability activities with personal sustainability activities (and vice versa).

- Encourage employees to bring their personal sustainability behaviours into the workplace.
- Encourage employees to carry the organizational sustainability message into their communities.

Example: Prior to the launch of its employee engagement strategy, the **City of Vaughan** conducted a survey of 1,100 staff to understand their sustainability efforts undertaken at home and at work. With an unexpectedly large disconnect between the two spaces, the City's first strategic step was to co-develop the "Power of Conservation" program. This program uses supplementary education material and a values-based approach to sustainability to relate employees' actions at work to their behaviours at home. By working to instil new social norms, the City is building momentum for the successful adoption of its employee engagement program.

Example: During the initial launch of its Corporate Sustainability Program—an effort to embed sustainability within the corporate culture—the **City of Ottawa** developed a video of elementary school children expressing their views on sustainability. This video was used as a tool to educate both management and staff on the importance of understanding and embedding sustainability into the corporate culture.

Support

Make it easier for employees to make choices that favour sustainability.

- Make it easier for employees to make sustainability decisions at work.
- Provide support for employees to make sustainability decisions in their personal lives, such as transit pass programs, ride sharing, and/or providing secure bicycle parking.

Example: The **City of Ottawa's** Department of Community Sustainability is removing barriers to training and improving knowledge-sharing forums to

facilitate the development and implementation of creative ideas related to sustainability. The Department continually encourages staff members to contact them for support, guidance, and resources that may help employees build effective business cases, purchase lower-impact products, and design policy recommendations to standing committees and Council. The practice of supporting employees drives positive change from the ground up.

Leverage

Acknowledge, encourage, and support grassroots efforts, and try to amplify the effect of activities initiated by individuals or small groups.

- Provide small grants or time off for sustainability projects launched by employees.
- Provide meeting time to develop and launch sustainability initiatives.

Example: The **City of Pickering** has leveraged the grassroots efforts of its benchmarking committee to fast forward the organization's adoption of sustainability. The team's original intent was to develop a baseline of City goals and targets. A few years later, however, not only has the committee helped to realize business objectives, but it has also evolved into the official Sustainable Pickering advisory team, and continues to contribute to sustainability work at the City.

Example: **Strathcona County** has a Sustainability Team made up of representatives from all County departments. This group is able to develop sustainability initiatives that span across traditional organizational silos.

Capture Quick Wins

Identify and complete changes related to sustainability that are less demanding of resources or that result in readily-identifiable benefits (also called "low-hanging fruit").

- Start with the "low-hanging fruit."

Example: As sustainability began to find its spot on the **City of Pickering's** agenda, key players were trying to build local interest in environmental and social issues. As these grassroots approaches incrementally transformed into ideal outcomes, sustainability leaders were creating ground-level projects and sparking the interest of local stakeholders. Eventually—with a bit of momentum behind them, including Council buy-in—the City adjusted its learning curve, quickly implemented a variety of ongoing initiatives, and launched the Sustainable Pickering program.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** has captured several quick wins, which include launching the City's "Energy Reduction Program," changing all City printer default settings to double-sided and economy mode, developing an internal mug campaign, implementing an eco-driving policy, and passing idling control by-laws.

Recognize

Show awareness, approval, and appreciation of efforts to implement sustainability through informal accolades.

- Publicly recognize employees at staff meetings.
- Create sustainability awards.
- Hold celebrations.

Example: Halifax Regional Municipality has proved that rewarding individual and team sustainability efforts can help embed a strong commitment to the Municipality's mission, vision, and values. For instance, because the Municipality recognizes key change agents at its Annual Chief Administrative Officer Awards, it can leverage the event's prestige and signal to employees the importance of sustainability to the organization. Meanwhile, on a less formal basis, directors and councillors praise staff members who take on smaller sustainability projects with words of encouragement and support.

Example: The **City of Vaughan** is building its culture of innovation through its "We are Vaughan" program. This program provides small gestures of recognition to employees who exemplify the City's core values. "Caught Green Handed" has been added as a component of "We are Vaughan" in order to recognize employees who make an effort to minimize environmental impacts while at work. With a budding interest in sustainability, the City is now publicly showcasing the awards and praising leading employees.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** recognizes the important efforts of employees who demonstrate initiative and leadership in projects that make significant contributions to advancing the City's commitment to a greener, more environmentally-friendly, and sustainable municipality. Every year, the City publically announces the winners of its Environmental Excellence Awards.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** has cited its "City Hall Energy Challenge" as an effective means to build excitement around sustainability. Small successes have cultivated enthusiasm toward the City's sustainability plan and proved to be an important tactic in encouraging staff involvement. Winners from the first "Energy Challenge" were profiled through a City-wide e-mail, while their photographs and green efforts were proudly displayed at City Hall.

Signal

Signalling practices are those that serve to identify sustainability as a priority for the organization. An organization's actions send strong messages regarding its position on sustainability to its employees. This category includes actions or gestures that serve to communicate the importance of sustainability to employees in informal ways. These practices include: commit, model, allocate resources, self-regulate, adhere to standards, accommodate, and invest in the community.

Commit

Have the organization and/or the senior leadership team make a public commitment to sustainability.

- Make your sustainability commitments public.
- Include sustainability messages in presentations and press releases whenever possible.
- Include sustainability targets and performance in municipal publications.

Example: The **Town of Canmore's** Council has publicly pledged their commitment to sustainability. It has been integrated into its vision, high-level documents, and press releases. To make this commitment a reality, the Town's senior leadership team has also signed on to a Sustainability Declaration that is based on The Natural Step Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development.

Example: Strathcona County's Vision Statement is based on balancing social, environmental, and economic perspectives. This has been embraced in public decision making by requiring all Council Reports, which are public documents, to include a section outlining how the decision reflects social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

Model

Enact the roles and behaviours organizational leadership wishes employees to emulate.

- Demonstrate sustainability leadership by "talking the talk" and "walking the walk."
- Participate in ongoing discussions about the journey toward sustainability.
- Prioritize sustainability in discussions and decision making.
- Support colleagues and employees when they prioritize sustainability.
- Show interest in the work of sustainability committees.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown's** Chief Administrative Officer has conveyed sustainability as a priority. An internal working group of 16 senior managers attend a sustainability-focused workshop approximately every six weeks to set goals and prioritize actions. In addition, managers in various departments—such as Public Works, Finance, Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Water and Utility—signal their support by being a part of this group and by reinforcing positive steps that employees take to reduce their impact. This includes reminders to turn off electronics before long weekends and to consult the sustainable decision-making guidelines when purchasing products or services.

Example: To model sustainable behaviour in its broader community, the **City of Charlottetown** powers its City Hall facility with 100% EcoLogo-certified energy from Bullfrog Power. Not only has this initiative generated public awareness and interest in renewable energy and energy responsibility, but it has also reinforced the legitimacy and value of innovation and efforts toward conservation. This initiative was kicked off by a partnership with East Coast Music Week which, for the first time ever, saw all festival venues and showcases powered with 100% clean, renewable electricity from Bullfrog Power.

Allocate Resources

Support the commitment to sustainability with an allocation of time, money, and people.

- Provide staff with time to participate in sustainability committees.
- Allocate personnel to execute sustainability initiatives.
- Provide financial resources for upgrading equipment or developing new processes.

Example: Halifax Regional Municipality is proud of their culture of innovation, where directors, senior managers, and deputy chief administrative officers really encourage collaboration, innovation, and thinking of new and better ways to do things. The Sustainable Environment Manager has the support of leadership to pilot new ideas and to pursue and learn from initiatives that have potential. One example is the "Solar City Project," where homeowners are encouraged to install domestic solar hot solar water systems and pay for them as a supplement on their tax bills.

Example: Strathcona County has allocated personnel and financial resources to support its ongoing "Sustainable Plan-it" program. This outreach program aims to engage grade six students and educate them about community and urban planning issues through a series of workshops hosted by County staff members. Not only is the County embedding the value of sustainability across its education system, but the program is also serving to boost employee commitment and morale.

Self-regulate

In the absence—or in advance—of regulation, implement voluntary initiatives and adopt best practices.

- Adopt voluntary codes of practice developed internally or at the sectoral level.
- Place constraints on how the organization operates in order to make faster progress toward a desired future.

Example: The **City of Calgary** has developed a set of internal principles for how they intend to work together. The sustainability team brings these principles along whenever they work with groups internally and are integrating them into their business planning document. They aim to have the principles embedded prominently in the City's three-year business plan.

Example: When municipalities in British Columbia were getting their carbon tax money back with no strings attached, the **Regional Municipality of Whistler** put their own policy in place so that half of the money received from the carbon tax went to incentivize internal and external greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This self-regulation sparked other municipalities in the province to review what they were doing with their carbon tax funds and pass similar policies of their own.

Adhere to Standards

Comply with a recognized set of standards related to environmental and/or social performance.

- Gain certification from outside agencies such as Fairtrade, EcoLogo, Forest Stewardship Council, and LEED.
- Gain certification for your environmental management system or sustainability management system, such as ISO 14001.

Example: The **City of Calgary** cites the implementation of the environmental management system ISO 14001 as a critical practice for reinforcing sustainability objectives, supporting continuous improvement, and enhancing employee morale. Because this outside management system has been widely accepted, it signals to both internal and external stakeholders that the City is taking a leadership approach toward sustainable investment.

Example: Having been ISO certified for several years, the **City of Fredericton** has developed a systematic approach to setting and measuring service provision goals. Such an internal management system, designed around program effectiveness, serves as a key component to building the capacity for incorporating sustainability into its programs and services. This enables City leaders to link previous initiatives to in-house solutions, and to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** has committed to a Green Building Policy for the construction of its corporate buildings, where all new City buildings larger than 500 m^2 (5,400 ft^2) must be designed, delivered, and certified by the Canadian Green Building Council to at least a LEED-certified rating. In practice, most new City buildings target a rating of LEED Silver or higher, including twelve of eighteen buildings that have been built since the policy was instituted.

Accommodate

Make an effort to address family-life commitments, provide social benefits to employees, and regard each employee as a whole person and part of the community.

- Provide social benefits to employees.
- Support job flexibility.
- Support the personal growth of employees.

Example: As with many communities, the **Resort Municipality of Whistler** supports work-life balance for their staff. They offer flex days where staff can work an extra hour each day and take every other Friday off. They support their staff's well-being with comprehensive health benefits, including active living perks like cross-country ski passes in the winter. They have been named one of the top employers in British Columbia from 2008-2011, and were named one of Canada's greenest employers in 2010.

Example: **Strathcona County** offers employees a "Flex Spending Account for Health and Learning," which can be spent on gym passes, fitness equipment, computers, and a range of other options. They also offer an "Individual Learning Plan" program which has helped many staff take on new training or degree programs to advance their careers, with financial support from the municipality.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** is piloting a "Mobile Workforce Solutions Project" that will allow some office workers to work remotely—providing greater flexibility in work hours and locations. In addition, the program will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution due to a reduction in travel.

Invest in the Community

Contribute to sustainability-related initiatives in the community, and encourage and enable employees to do the same.[4]

- Support community-led and grass-roots initiatives.
- Contribute to community causes.
- Offer grants to community groups.
- Allow employees to take paid or unpaid time off to volunteer.
- Match contributions made by employees.
- Select a corporate cause and involve all levels of the organization in supporting it.

Example: When the **City of Charlottetown** went through all of the goals and actions within their Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, they noticed that while many of the actions fall under City jurisdiction and core services, some extremely important actions fall outside of the City's capacity to take ownership for implementation. Instead of ignoring these actions, the City set out to create opportunities to enter into partnerships with community members and groups with expertise in the area. To enable these collaborations, they added some grant money to the new budget. The City launched a "Community Micro-Grant Pilot Project" to create partnerships in some areas to help advance the goals of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. A concrete example is food security, which does not fall under the City's core services of health or education. However, organizations working on community health promotion should

[4] Municipal organizations exist to support the community and this is ingrained in the way they work. Investigating the links between community groups and the culture of the municipal organization was outside of the scope of this project and would be a rich area for future research. In particular, we did not investigate practices related to community outreach and involvement, though these likely influence the culture of sustainability within the municipal organization and are practices worth exploring.

have the opportunity to be involved in some of these projects. The City recognizes that investing in the community is a fundamental role of the municipal organization.

Example: In an effort to be more environmentally sustainable, the **City of Ottawa** empowers residents, businesses, and community organizations to do their part through various funding programs. These include "Community Environment Project" grants, partnership tree planting, and clean water grants. The City also supports community-led initiatives, such as: Capital Vélo Fest, which aims to inspire people of all ages to ride a bike more often; and the This Blue Dot campaign, which mobilizes residents to detect and repair common toilet leaks using simple environmentally-safe kits.

Communicate

The informal practices presented in this quadrant rely on the ability to communicate the value of sustainability, as well as the changing priorities and expectations for how work gets done. We identified two core practices related to communicating: tell stories and customize.

Tell Stories

Convey desired sustainability behaviours through the use of examples and stories, and use relatable anecdotes and examples to communicate sustainability concepts.

- Discuss case studies of successful sustainability initiatives in your organization.
- Create stories about what the municipality could be like in the future.
- Create simple stories and repeat them often and using different means.
- Start every meeting with a quick sustainability story.
- Use metaphors and symbols.

Example: In 2011, the **City of Vaughan** promoted the unveiling of its new LEED-certified City Hall building through an interactive video tool. This video enabled the City to translate LEED's technical details into meaningful subject matter and further signal to employees that the City is actively moving toward sustainable development. This digital storytelling has also opened up lines of communication, inspiring employees to share the building's message of integrity and innovation with the larger community.

Customize

Tailor the organization's message to ensure that it is authentic and relevant for different internal and external audiences.

- Translate and adjust your message for different groups and/or cultures.
- Adjust your message for delivery in different types of media.
- Transform your message by adjusting the terminology for different departments and levels.

Example: Recognizing the diversity of its departments and stakeholders, the **City of Charlottetown** is tailoring its communication strategies to its varying audiences. For instance, when the City hosted Randall Arendt, a landscape planner, to discuss infrastructure and urban design, the objectives were tailored to the needs of the invited regional developers and the Department of Transportation. The objective of this workshop was to create a space for dialogue on community streetscapes and, in particular, street design issues, as they pertain to the engineering of new subdivision road infrastructure and urban design.

Manage Talent

The practices in this category describe how staffing decisions support the transition toward sustainability. Managing talent involves hiring people with the passion, attitude, and competence to deal with environmental and sustainability issues in their daily work, and placing the right people in the right roles across the organization. We cover three practices in this section: recruit, allocate people, and promote.

Recruit

Identify and hire people with a sustainability orientation or sustainability skills.

- Refer to sustainability values, goals, and performance in recruiting materials.
- Integrate sustainability into all job advertisements.
- Make sustainability part of all job descriptions for new hires.
- Select new employees on the basis of a commitment to sustainability.
- Attempt to foster productive diversity through hiring decisions.

Example: The **City of Calgary's** Human Resources Department has aligned its workforce strategy with the City's sustainability goals to develop an internal pipeline focused on innovation and creativity. This kind of success required close collaboration and backcasting efforts to ask, "What kind of organization do we want to be and who are the people we need to get us there?" This has been an exciting opportunity to position the City as an employer of choice and to build internal capacity for change.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** is attracting like-minded individuals and building its pool of human capital by communicating the organization's sustainability values, vision, and goals in its recruiting materials. They have

also partnered with its Human Resources Department to embed this language in new employee job descriptions and performance evaluations.

Allocate People

Move staff members who are passionate about or skilled in sustainability into key roles.

- Identify people with a passion for sustainability and place them in key roles.
- Identify people with sustainability-related skills and technical knowledge and place them where their skills are needed.

Example: The **City of Fredericton** has been able to maintain momentum and implement change by selecting a cross-section of employees who demonstrate an interest or skill set in transformation and sustainability to join them in the design and execution of broad-scope projects. This approach has enabled the City to re-frame opportunities for advancement, to employ creative decision-making tactics, and to commit time at the division level for dialogue and discussion. Meanwhile, selected employees are benefiting from the exposure to senior-level management and the forum to share their expertise.

Example: To uncover and to connect with employees who are passionate or knowledgeable about sustainability, **Halifax Regional Municipality** is continually scanning its internal resources. Its Sustainability Committee recently leveraged the expertise of Andy Filmore, the Municipality's Urban Design Project Manager, to provide knowledge to the Urban Sustainability Directors Network and to share his expertise across the City's various departments. The allocation of his time also signals to employees the importance of sustainability.

Promote

Move people with sustainability values and skills into higher positions in the organization.[5]

- Make sustainability performance a criterion in promotion decisions.
- Reward employees demonstrating a commitment to sustainability through promotion.
- Include sustainability principles and goals in promotion criteria.

Example: When the **Resort Municipality of Whistler** hired its last Chief Administrative Officer, the distinguishing characteristic in the hiring process was a strategic understanding of sustainability. With the new Chief Administrative Officer in place, sustainability has extremely strong senior-level support at the Municipality, and this was intentionally part of the hiring process.

[5] While most municipalities have not formally promoted employees based on strong performance toward sustainability goals, there is growing interest in applying this practice. The perceived barrier to promotion lies in the precursory step of this practice: embedding sustainability into employee job descriptions.

Reinforce

The practices in this category emphasize the importance of sustainability or particular actions that lead to sustainability. The organization must constantly reinforce the sustainability message in various ways to embed it in the hearts and minds of all employees. Regular checkpoints and reviews should be performed to keep sustainability on the organizational agenda and to maintain momentum. In this category, we look at three practices: inform, repeat, and follow up.

Inform

Act repeatedly to keep employees informed, apprised, and up-to-date.

- Communicate sustainability progress widely across the organization.
- Keep employees up-to-date on the organization's current activities and future plans.

Example: To familiarize and engage employees with its sustainability priorities and successes, the **City of Ottawa** facilitates information-sharing sessions. The City has disseminated a living road map: a co-created strategy that outlines Ottawa's identification of what success will look like in 2014 when sustainability has been embedded into the corporate culture of the organization. The road map identifies key priorities to embed sustainability, such as the development of a sustainable procurement policy, a lens for decision making, and pilot project ideas. This document is shared across the organization and is continuously monitored to track its success.

Example: The **City of Vaughan** uses its electronic newsletter and intranet web site to update employees on current sustainability endeavours and future initiatives. By frequently communicating progress, key learnings, and important wins, the City is inspiring values of inclusiveness, accountability, and support, while reinforcing the importance of sustainability in day-to-day operations.

Repeat

Regularly and persistently engage in the activities and behaviours deemed important to the organization to ultimately embed these in the organization's culture.

- Communicate important sustainability messages repeatedly, frequently, and widely.
- Keep communication concise, but repeat it often.
- Use multiple media formats to reach a wider audience, reinforce your messages, and signal their importance.
- Repeat actions and behaviours that are desirable to the organization's sustainability vision.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** is experimenting with using various technologies to share core sustainability messages. It shares press releases and news stories internally and uses both Twitter and Facebook to share updates on projects, initiatives, and events. City staff members are invited to attend "Lunch and Learn" dialogue sessions and workshops so they can absorb new ideas and create their own context for how the City's sustainability plan relates to their roles and responsibilities at City Hall. The City also purchased a sustainability eLearning course for 50 staff members and hosted follow-up sessions to further explore ideas and concepts presented in the course material. Using a variety of means helps build awareness of sustainability issues and also improves employee understanding of the organization's plans and values.

Follow up

Ensure sustainability tasks are completed through monitoring, reviewing, and enquiring on the status of key tasks.

- Periodically evaluate your environmental results.
- Obtain employee feedback to understand their level of engagement.
- Review sustainability performance results at regular status update meetings.

Example: Under its Community, Sustainability, and Environmental Master Plan, "Green Directions," the **City of Vaughan** has developed 85 ambitious action items. However, as the City continues to evolve and grow, it becomes essential for senior management to monitor and assess the progress of the plan. As such, the City's Manager of Environmental Sustainability frequently evaluates performance results across six different functional areas, and offers resources and support to the City's various departments. From here, the Manager reports back to Council with status updates, challenges, and successes.

Example: **Strathcona County** reports annually to Council on the status of implementing its three sustainability frameworks, including updates on achieving the measurable targets outlined in these frameworks.

CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

Rules and procedures that help the organization deliver on current sustainability commitments (Formal, Fulfillment)

***Description of success**: An organization with a high level of mastery in this quadrant has clear signals about how things should be done by institutionalizing evolving behaviours and procedures in a structured way. This happens by continually taking the ever-evolving informal elements of sustainability culture and behaviour and integrating them into the core of the organization's formal strategies and processes. Staff are formally equipped and encouraged to meet sustainability commitments through training and incentives. The organization is continually measuring, tracking, and reporting on its progress, as well as checking to ensure that it is on track to meet goals.*

Practices in this quadrant involve establishing rules and procedures, with the goal of clarifying staff expectations regarding sustainability. The focus here is on the formal practices that support the implementation of current sustainability commitments. There are seven categories of practices: codify, integrate, assign, train, incent, assess, and verify/audit.

PRACTICES

Codify
- set goals
- create policies
- operationalize

Integrate
- into mission, vision, and values
- into strategy and business plans
- into business processes and systems
- into existing roles
- into asset and infrastructure management

Assign
- create roles
- create executive-level committees
- assign responsibility to senior leadership

Train
- train

Incent
- incent

Assess
- inventory
- develop metrics
- monitor/track
- report

Verify/Audit
- verify
- audit

Codify

Codifying involves capturing the informal and making it explicitly formal by setting goals, creating policies, and operationalizing these goals and policies in the form of practices and procedures. The intent behind codifying is to ensure order and uniformity of purpose throughout the organization as it embarks on a cultural shift. Codifying helps to build confidence and avoid confusion during a time of major change, by clearly spelling out the organization's position and ambitions regarding the importance of sustainability now and in the future. This category includes: set goals, create policies, and operationalize.

Set Goals

Develop organizational, departmental, and individual goals and targets for sustainability.

- Set explicit organizational goals for sustainability.
- Set sustainability goals at the business unit and department levels.
- Include sustainability in personal goal setting.
- Encourage individuals to set their own targets for sustainability.
- Build sustainability goals into scorecards.
- Ensure that the goals can be measured.

Example: As the first step in the development of the "Choosing our Future" regional sustainability planning initiative (2009-2012), the **City of Ottawa** identified sustainability principles and goals that are already embedded in the corporate culture. The long-term sustainability goals frame the Corporate Planning Framework and Council's Strategic Priorities and Objectives. As well, the "Choosing our Future" initiative produced a sustainability baseline—a current snapshot of how well the region is performing on many measures of sustainability. It serves as a starting point for monitoring change and progress toward the 12 goals the project partners set for a sustainable future.

Create Policies

Develop overarching organizational policies to guide behaviour.

- Develop environmental, climate change, ethics, and health and safety policies.
- Implement Sustainability Codes of Conduct.
- Create supplier sustainability performance policies or procurement policies.

Example: The **City of Calgary** credits its sustainability buy-in to the organization's Triple Bottom Line Policy. This policy has been instrumental in promoting a shared set of values and in moving employees from individual intent to collaborative action. It has signalled to staff that the City is entrenching sustainability within its operations, and that it is developing the resources and tools to support this shift. The City's Sustainable Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Plan are examples of strategies founded from this policy.

Operationalize

Develop the standards, procedures, and practices that enact corporate policies, and translate goals and policies into work practices.

- Translate abstract sustainability objectives into everyday work practices.
- Develop procedures and standards related to sustainability.

Example: Strathcona County has developed a comprehensive set of user guides and operational standards to clarify and reinforce its desired sustainability behaviours. For instance, when the County created its rigorous Wetland Protection Policy, developers understood that, in order to actually enact the desired changes, it was necessary to translate complex language into a concise user guide. As such, habitat degradation prevention procedures are now embedded into employee work. Ramification steps, should any land be compromised, are also in place as a reminder. For every hectare lost, the county must replace the community with three more hectares.

Integrate

Here we explore the formal integration of sustainability into the way the organization currently operates. Through this integration, an organization truly commits to cultural transformation by incorporating sustainability into its core. This includes integrating sustainability into the following: mission, vision, and values; strategy and business plans; business processes and systems; existing roles; and asset and infrastructure management.

Integrate into Mission, Vision, and Values

Incorporate sustainability values into the organization's mission, vision, and values.

- Establish a new mission if one does not exist or does not explicitly address sustainability.
- Update the organization's vision to reflect what it would be like if it were truly sustainable.
- Incorporate sustainability in the organization's values.
- Increase the level of priority for sustainability among the organization's values.

Example: By integrating social, environmental, and economic principles into its mission, vision, and values, the **District of North Vancouver** inherently considers sustainability in all aspects of its work. This core framework shapes Council's strategic priorities and, most recently, has formed the foundation for its new Official Community Plan/Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. Reporting on progress, based on this corporate and community framework, serves to keep the District's efforts relevant and meaningful to its diverse range of stakeholders.

Integrate into Strategy and Business Plans

Incorporate sustainability into the organization's strategic planning process.

- Prioritize sustainability in the strategic planning process.
- Incorporate sustainability into strategy.
- Involve those responsible for implementing sustainability (such as environmental managers) in the formulation of new strategy.
- Emphasize sustainability as a strategic priority.
- Directly integrate sustainability goals and deadlines into individual units' business plans.
- Require that business units address sustainability in their business plans.

Example: The **City of Calgary's** Sustainability Office has been fundamental in establishing a 10-year sustainability direction that links the broader 30-year "imagineCALGARY" targets with their 3-year business planning cycles. In the development of this plan, the team was very deliberate in connecting with the various business units and building relationships. They hosted a number of integrated workshops bringing together staff from different business units to develop targets. As an organization, they are modeling working together in a different way. Now that the plan has been approved by the senior management team, the sustainability team often gets involved in planning sessions for various business units. One business unit has even asked for help using the sustainability direction as the basis of their own 10-year plan, which indicates a real shift for the City.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver's** framework for their three-year corporate plan has sustainability embedded within it, including the tracking associated with the plan. A number of the priorities that they identified in their sustainability action plan have been incorporated into their overall corporate plan and a majority of their sustainability initiatives are done in an integrated and cross-departmental manner.

Integrate into Business Processes and Systems

Incorporate sustainability thinking into existing business tools and processes.

- Fully integrate sustainability throughout existing business tools and processes.
- Build sustainability metrics into day-to-day business processes.
- Adapt management systems to identify and manage sustainability issues.
- Enhance decision support systems based on sustainability factors.
- Integrate different management systems into one under a comprehensive sustainability framework.

Example: The **City of Pickering** has added a section to its council report templates that includes sustainability considerations. Now, every report that goes to Council comments on how the project or initiative supports the City's "Sustainable Pickering" objectives.

Example: The **City of Calgary's** Communications Department has integrated an internal system into its creative process, called "Onwards." It requires that all information shared by the City, whether internally or externally, must receive approval from the Communications Department. Interestingly, approval is garnered only when the submission's objectives link to a goal or target contained in one of the City's long-term sustainability planning documents or other long-term plans. If the docket does not identify which target the department is working toward, the Communications Department will send it back. This systematic improvement continually reinforces foresight and accountability, and it works to entrench sustainability in daily communication.

Integrate into Existing Roles

Add responsibilities and expectations related to sustainability to the description of every role in the organization.[6]

- Change staff job descriptions to incorporate sustainability.
- Make environmental innovation and performance a part of every employee's job.
- Work with the human resources team to bring sustainability into the job functions of every employee across the organization.
- Assign tasks to roles, not to people.

Example: Since the **Resort Municipality of Whistler's** Sustainability Plan is the highest-level policy that guides the municipality, it has been integrated into the responsibilities of all staff. The policy is included in the human resource package for employees, and each department goes through customized training to understand how the sustainability policy is relevant to their role. A staff survey goes out annually, which includes asking how well the Municipality's sustainability plan is understood. This allows the organization to gauge how well uptake is going and to provide additional training where necessary. While sustainability is part of some job descriptions, it is not automatic. However, by having sustainability embedded in the processes that departments are required to go through on a regular basis, sustainability is part of the requirement of all jobs.

[6] While few municipalities have sustainability formally integrated into job descriptions, many expressed that it is "part of the way of doing business" or that there is an expectation for staff to understand sustainability. Formalizing sustainability within job descriptions and targets appears to be an area of opportunity for Canadian municipalities.

Integrate into Asset and Infrastructure Management

Improve the sustainability performance of existing services.

- Design services to meet needs within socio-ecological constraints.
- Ensure that investments in assets and infrastructure move the organization toward their sustainability goals and set the stage for continual progress toward full sustainability, while providing a return on investment.

Example: While deciding on the appropriate infrastructure to supply their community with a reliable energy supply, the **Resort Municipality of Whistler** engaged an energy company in a dialogue about the Municipality's long-term community sustainability vision. Together, they re-worked the existing proposal for a natural gas pipeline to lay the platform for the Municipality to transition to a sustainable and renewable energy system over time. The resulting solution involved a much smaller natural gas pipeline at a significantly-reduced cost. This allowed the Municipality to invest in local and renewable energy sources to move them toward their community vision.

Example: At the **City of Vaughan**, a group of staff approached the task of replacing a water main with a sustainability lens. They came up with a plan to negate greenhouse gas emissions, use existing materials on site, and develop a product that was very cost effective and addressed a number of sustainability issues. This particular project was attributed to the initiative and interest of a few key individuals. This example showed the benefits of looking at projects from a sustainability perspective and integrating sustainability components into decision making at the project level.

Assign

Practices in this category involve allocating the responsibility for sustainability to new or existing roles within the organization, including roles at the most senior levels. This may include the creation of new roles within the organization to address new responsibilities, such as: managing environmental compliance, dealing with stakeholders, investing in the community, tracking and reporting on progress toward sustainability, and leading sustainable innovation. The organization can both create new roles and hold senior leaders and council members accountable for sustainability deliverables. By assigning the responsibility for sustainability to specific roles and at senior levels, the organization signals that sustainability is a priority. This category includes the following practices: create roles, create executive-level committees, and assign responsibility to senior leadership.

Create Roles

Expand existing roles or develop new roles within the organization to capture essential sustainability responsibilities.

- Assign full-time personnel to lead sustainability or environmental programs.
- Create new management roles to deliver on the sustainability agenda.
- Expand or upgrade existing health and safety, environmental, reporting, and quality assurance roles.
- Give these roles direct exposure to senior leadership, the chief administrative officer, and council.
- Ensure these roles do not operate in isolation, but collaborate and integrate with the rest of the organization, such as through cross-functional teams or sub-committees.

Example: Demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, the **City of Fredericton** has created a new role: Manager of Sustainable Development. This full-time position reports directly to the Director of Development Services and works with an advisory team comprised of department heads and the Chief Administrative Officer, signalling the legitimacy and value of sustainability within the organization. Development Services is the group responsible for all planning processes, climate change audit functions, economic development, heritage, and culture. Ultimately, this role has helped to connect the City's diverse work team to corporately-shared goals, and to communicate on this progress holistically.

Create Executive-Level Committees

Formalize executive-level committees to direct and sponsor sustainability efforts throughout the municipality.

- Create committees that have the ability to move sustainability forward within the organization.
- Ensure that sustainability is regularly on the agenda of senior-level meetings.
- Ensure that sustainability efforts throughout the organization have the support of these senior-level committees.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** has an Environmental Working Group, chaired by the Deputy City Manager of Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability. This working group is comprised of department heads responsible for ensuring responsible stewardship for the environment.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** has two senior groups to lead and support their sustainability work: a standing committee and a sustainability-working group. The standing committee was established to direct the implementation of their sustainability plan. This committee is

made up of three members of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Sustainability Coordinator, and a manager who actively champions sustainability issues. The working group consists of 16 people, including the Chief Administrative Officer, three directors, and all of the managers and department heads. Each department is represented within this group. A steering committee—made up of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Sustainability Coordinator, and two managers—was key in the beginning stages of establishing the work plan and is now brought together to provide insight and expertise when needed.

Assign Responsibility to Senior Leadership

Allocate the responsibility of delivering on the sustainability agenda to senior leadership roles within the organization, including council.

- Assign responsibility for sustainability to council members and/or a council sub-committee.
- Assign responsibility for sustainability to the chief administrative officer.
- Assign responsibility for sustainability to roles within the senior leadership team, such as including it in the portfolio of a deputy city manager.

Example: The **City of Pickering's** Sustainability Director reports directly to the Chief Administrative Officer. The sustainability team sits in the same part of City Hall as the Mayor and councillors, helping them stay informed on current issues, and enabling the sustainability team to be a core provider of services and ideas for the organization. The commitment to the "Sustainable Pickering" program now extends throughout the organization, and environmental, economic, and social success is everyone's responsibility.

Example: The **City of Calgary's** Office of Sustainability is situated in the City Manager's office with a mandate to embed sustainability within the corporation, with the City Manager's backing and support. They play a strategic and coordinating role within the corporation, as many aspects of sustainability are de-centralized throughout the organization, including the City's environmental policy and transportation plan, for example.

Example: In the **City of Ottawa**, the Community Sustainability Department's Director reports to the Deputy City Manager of Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability. Reports for Council are tabled at either the Environmental Committee or the Finance and Economic Development Committee. The Deputy City Manager for Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability is the corporate sponsor for leading the sustainability agenda for the City.

Train

Training provides employees with the additional skills and knowledge to help them accomplish tasks, work with systems, or carry out procedures related to, or involving, sustainability. Training clarifies expectations and creates consistency in behaviours.

Train

Train employees in systems or procedures related to sustainability.

- Include sustainability training in employee orientation programs, emphasizing how sustainability is at the core of the organization's values.
- Invest in ethics, environmental, and sustainability training for all employees.
- Train managers in ethical and sustainable decision making, consistent with the organization's mission, values, and goals.
- Customize training to different audiences using appropriate language.
- Train employees to implement and operate sustainability management systems.
- Provide motivation by describing learned lessons.
- Supplement formal training with mentoring and coaching.
- Provide regular training updates to keep sustainability at the forefront of staff members' thoughts.

Example: Employee training has been an effective way for the **District of North Vancouver** to communicate the importance of its sustainability values and strategy. Several years ago, the District established a large cross-divisional sustainability team and, along with its senior leadership group, supported them through The Natural Step Canada's training course. The District has supported sustainability courses and learning across all department groups. In addition, the District is actively connected to upcoming conferences, workshops, and training opportunities. Such activity and support builds capacity for employees to advance the District's goal toward sustainable development.

Example: While developing the "Choosing our Future" regional sustainability initiative and establishing their Corporate Sustainability Program, the **City of Ottawa** initiated training on the use of a common language related to concepts of sustainability. This helped the project teams and the community better understand the goals, commitment, and expectations.

Incent

Incent

Link compensation to the achievement of set sustainability objectives.

- Include sustainability metrics in employees' performance appraisals and assessments.
- Link compensation to sustainability performance.
- Re-design promotions, raises, bonuses, and benefits to reward sustainable performance.
- Be clear about how employees will be measured and ensure that the targets sought are within each employee's control.

Example: At the beginning of each year, the **City of Pickering** co-creates triple bottom line performance goals with its employees. When the fiscal year closes, each employee is evaluated against his or her pre-determined sustainability targets. The City also takes great care to set targets holistically. Everyone's input affects everyone's output, so departments must work together to meet the City's goals.

Assess

The practices in this category relate to understanding where the organization is, where it wants to go, and whether it is on track to get there. They also deal with developing an awareness of the organization's capacity for change and an understanding of how much change is required. Assessment practices also involve measuring and tracking performance, and documenting progress. The practices described here attempt to address these issues. They include: inventory, develop metrics, monitor/track, and report.

Inventory

Develop an understanding of where an organization is, where it may lead, and where it may lag, and conduct baseline assessments.

- Survey employees to understand their attitudes.
- Critically assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** understands the importance of developing baselines. Before committing to its sustainability strategy, the District conducted an analysis of all of its existing departmental and individual functions, and established a large cross-functional work team to synthesize the data and to identify gaps for improvement. Not only did this multi-year process raise significant awareness about its leading and lagging systems and goals, but it also prepared the organization to work collaboratively and interdependently.

Example: To evaluate employee readiness for change toward sustainability, the **City of Vaughan** conducted an online survey. The questions prompted employees to look introspectively at their current behaviours and to assess their perceived environmental and social impacts accordingly. Surprisingly, most staff members positioned themselves as

being more sustainable than they actually were. This gap between true actions and desired behaviours has allowed the City to customize its employee engagement strategy, including greater opportunities for staff to train, participate, and lead sustainability initiatives.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** developed a Sustainability Baseline Report and is planning to report on sustainability in subsequent years. As a part of the City's Sustainability and Resiliency Plan, they have launched a Monitoring and Reporting Program that will provide feedback necessary to understand whether or not the plan is being implemented successfully, and to determine what's working well and what needs adjustment or re-thinking.

Develop Metrics

Decide what to track in order to monitor progress toward sustainability and develop ways to measure those metrics.

- Translate ambiguous and poorly defined concepts into tangible objectives and metrics appropriate for the organization's products and services.
- Identify all forms of relevant sustainability data to be monitored and collected.
- Consider environmental factors, such as resource use and emissions, as well as process performance.
- Use discussions and negotiations over metrics as a way to refine collective understandings, goals, and priorities.

Example: The **City of Calgary** is actively looking to apply performance metrics to drive its sustainability strategy forward. Like many organizations, however, the City appreciates that the development and implementation of this practice requires a robust set of collaboration and support activities. The co-creation of a measurable and comparable set of sustainability indicators presents a strong opportunity for collaboration among leading municipalities.

Monitor/Track

Measure performance against pre-defined sustainability objectives and goals.

- Regularly gather relevant sustainability performance data.
- Leverage existing monitoring tools where possible.
- Be clear, transparent, and consistent with metric definitions and measurement.

Example: To identify gaps in its sustainability initiatives, and to recognize core areas of strength and success, the **District of North Vancouver** continually tracks cross-departmental progress. Targets monitored are those outlined in the organization's corporate plan/framework, for which progress is reported quarterly. Ultimately, this performance data is used to inform decisions, including budgeting and work planning, and to justify new initiatives. In addition to the corporate plan, the District's new Official Community Plan includes a series of targets and indicators to monitor progress toward achieving community goals for sustainability.

Report

Document sustainability performance and progress.

- Implement a corporate environmental reporting system.
- Publish internal and external environmental or sustainability reports.
- Report on sustainability progress, addressing previously set goals.

- Report on future plans and commitments.

Example: Although data collection, analysis, and reporting can be labour intensive, the **Town of Canmore** recognizes the importance of tracking progress and building clarity and transparency around communications efforts. Since 2003, the Town produces a bi-annual community report that includes five categories: identity, economic sustainability, social fabric, environmental stewardship, and civic engagement. This report demonstrates the Town's focus on continuous improvement, goal setting, and a journey toward success.

Example: The **City of Halifax's** Sustainable Transition Team uses the information collected by Corporate Knights Magazine's corporate social responsibility survey to complete its own annual sustainability report. The magazine's "Sustainable Cities" assessment has been developed in partnership with The Natural Step Canada and consists of five categories: ecological integrity, economic security, governance and empowerment, infrastructure and built environment, and social well-being. Because the indicators used to evaluate performance are nationally consistent, municipalities could use these as an opportunity to leverage metrics and assign customized internal targets. Cities can then report on their sustainability efforts through a united and comparable set of indicators.

Verify/Audit

This category involves more formal evaluations than the previous category. Practices in this section examine an organization's systems, processes, projects, or products for reliability, accuracy, adherence to standards, and compliance. An audit will scrutinize operations, systems, and procedures to check whether they meet external and/or internal standards. This not only drives improvement, but also signals an organization's readiness and commitment to meeting its obligations. An additional layer of scrutiny is gained from third-party verification. The practices include: verify and audit.

Verify

Engage an outside party to compare the organization's activities with corresponding specifications or requirements.[7]

- Engage third-party auditors to conduct performance verification.
- Engage third-party auditors to conduct report-content verification.

Example: At the **Resort Municipality of Whistler**, an external organization, the Centre for Sustainability (Whistler), runs the sustainability measuring and monitoring program. The Centre was created by the municipal organization and is now a separate entity that manages the Municipality's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, "Whistler2020," in collaboration with community partners. The Centre collects data from established sources, as well as data to track custom indicators and monitor progress toward the "Whistler2020" vision. The indicators apply to both the municipal organization and the community as a whole. In addition to this work, the Centre provides sustainability expertise and professional services to other municipalities.

[7] Third-party verification is uncommon in the municipal sector at this time.

Audit

Have organizational members examine their own systems, processes, projects, or products for reliability, accuracy, adherence to standards, and compliance.

- Conduct regular internal audits of systems and processes.
- Create audit committees or departments.
- Ensure that the internal audit function reports to, or is represented on, council.
- Draw upon existing expertise in financial—as well as health and safety—auditing.

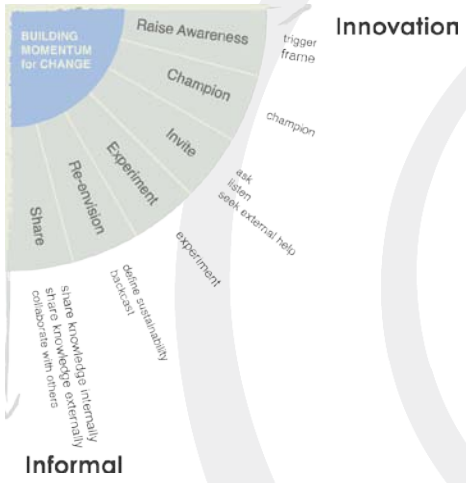
Example: In order to move from a reactive state to a proactive one, the **City of Fredericton** has set its own high standards for quality management systems and processes, environmental impacts, and organizational adherence, by regularly conducting robust departmental audits. These audits are based on a rigorous set of questions around sustainability and performance, as well as employees' commitment to environmental and social standards. Every level of the organization is involved and challenged in this process, and work groups are ranked based on their engagement and efforts toward continuous improvement.

BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

Practices that affect values and behaviours to help the organization do things differently or better (Informal, Innovation)

***Description of success**: Organizations with a high level of mastery in this quadrant have a vibrant, innovative culture, where values and behaviours demonstrate openness to learning and growth on the sustainability journey. These organizations have the capacity to question assumptions underlying the way that things are done, and to incorporate learning into developing new ways of doing things. These organizations have respect for diverse perspectives, and seek out new ways of asking questions to help them learn and evolve.*

Practices in this quadrant aim to support a culture of sustainable innovation by developing new ideas needed to bring the organization closer to its long-term sustainability goals. These practices inspire and reassure employees so that they can experiment, try new things, and build on each other's ideas. The categories in this quadrant are: raise awareness, champion, invite, experiment, re-envision, and share.



PRACTICES

Raise Awareness
- trigger
- frame

Champion
- champion

Invite
- ask
- listen
- seek external help

Experiment
- experiment

Re-envision
- define sustainability
- backcast

Share
- share knowledge internally
- share knowledge externally
- collaborate with others

Raise Awareness

This category looks at techniques used to encourage or convince individuals of the importance of sustainability for the organization and the need to take transformative action. These practices include: trigger and frame.

Trigger

Initiate and create events that help set things in motion. Disrupt the status quo to generate an understanding of the need for change. Demonstrate the risks of current thought patterns and build awareness of the benefits of alternatives.

- Disrupt people's patterns by creating experiences for them to connect with the implications of current behaviours.
- Make use of visual displays to demonstrate the implications of current behaviours.
- Provide opportunities for employees to experience the implications of currently unsustainable behaviour firsthand.

Example: At the **City of Vaughan**, about half of the municipal staff (550 people) moved into a new City Hall building which is proposed for LEED Gold certification. The sustainability team at the City saw this move as an opportunity to create some new norms. One of the new practices they created was including pre-stream recycling and pre-stream waste segregation within their office areas. Nobody has a garbage can in the new building and behaviour is changing as a result. The City is actively using the new space to involve and educate staff about sustainability-related initiatives. They continue to create recognition and up-front knowledge about the importance of tackling the sustainability challenge as a team.

Example: At the **Resort Municipality of Whistler**, a partial organizational restructuring took place to align with the five priorities of their "Whistler2020" Sustainability Plan. This created a strong signal of the importance of the sustainability mandate and touched all of the staff within the organization, whether or not sustainability was top of mind for them. This disruption certainly created a reaction, and led to some confusion and resistance. However, the team lead for "Whistler2020" recognized that it was an important step to embed sustainability throughout the organization, and marked an important gain for the Municipality to make progress toward sustainability.

Frame

Construct and present a fact or issue from a particular perspective.

- Frame sustainability in a way that links to people's sense of community and what they love about the place they live.
- Frame sustainability as being about resiliency, vibrancy, and health.
- Frame sustainability in a way that resonates with municipal staff.
- Frame sustainability as smart asset management.
- Frame sustainability as a financial opportunity or put it in quantitative terms.
- Frame sustainability in everyday business language.
- Frame sustainability as urgent.
- Consider framing sustainability as innovation or about being "cutting edge."
- Consider framing sustainability as being about quality.
- Consider framing sustainability as good publicity and contributing to a positive reputation.
- Consider framing sustainability as the right thing to do.

- Consider framing sustainability in terms of its benefits for employees.
- Avoid emotional language.

Example: After a number of years of making progress on their "Sustainable Pickering" initiatives, the **City of Pickering** is developing an innovative framework for looking at—and talking about—sustainability. They call this new framework "sustainable placemaking" and describe it as two related components: building a sustainable city, and living and working in a sustainable city. Their new framing reflects an evolution of thought and a maturity of thinking based on years of experience. They have found that this repositioning of sustainability concepts in a more purposeful and focused way, linked to the municipal services that they deliver, is garnering new attention and a reinvestment of energy. The City aimed to frame sustainability in a way that has relevance for the jobs that people are doing in the organization. As opposed to a general notion of sustainability, it's more of a societal-wide view. They very consciously selected the issues to frame sustainability around in order to get it on the agenda of senior staff and Council, and have had success with that approach.

Example: The **City of Fredericton** frames sustainability as good performance management. By adding more credibility to some of the variables around the environmental and social aspects of policy decisions, sustainability thinking sets the stage for good management and good decision making. They tap into the sense of pride in the natural environment within the city, including waterways, parks, green space, and the strong urban forest canopy. Because they have always invested strongly in these natural assets through a very strong Parks and Trees Division, and a Tree Commission that has been in place for decades, they have found a connection to a greener ethic.

Champion

Champion

Empower individuals to act to take up, support, or defend a cause or course of action.

- Build coalitions.
- Inspire others through dedication and commitment.
- Do your homework: learn as much as you can about sustainability and how it relates to your organization.
- Consider organizing teams of "Sustainability Champions."

Example: The **City of Calgary** has a "Sustainability Champions" network of about 25 managers, as well as an internal "Sustainability Network," which is a group of about 120 staff members who have voluntarily signed up. Both groups are made up of early supporters and champions who meet regularly to support the sustainability office, provide input and feedback, and disseminate information throughout the organization.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** has a "Corporate Sustainability Working Group" that consists of 45-50 people representing the majority of City departments. This group meets every 2 months and has developed a roadmap to embed sustainability into the culture of the municipal organization over the next four years. They continue to meet and strategize on the implementation of the roadmap. In addition, the City has a larger network of approximately 200 self-identified "Sustainability Champions." These Champions are provided with learning and networking opportunities around sustainability and are engaged at key points in the sustainability planning and implementation process.

Invite

The practices in this category reflect attempts to solicit and be receptive to ideas and input from employees and others outside of the organization. These practices range from inviting input, to showing genuine interest in employees' opinions and ideas, to being attentive to their suggestions and recommendations. The practices in this category are: ask, listen, and seek external help.

Ask

Proactively seek opinions and ideas about how to grapple with sustainability issues.

- Encourage dialogue and questions.
- Ask employees to articulate their deepest values and vision for the community.
- Hold staff meetings to generate ideas on sustainability.
- Request feedback from internal and external stakeholders.
- Bring in external consultants to hold employee feedback sessions.
- Allow anonymous feedback, such as through suggestion boxes or online mechanisms.
- Ask open-ended questions to generate talk about change.
- Ask employees how they would like to improve sustainability in an ideal world.
- Ask employees why they are proud of the organization.

Example: While developing their sustainability action plan, the **Town of Canmore** asked each department to think about how they could do things differently in light of the sustainability challenge. Virtually every employee in the corporation had a chance to bring their ideas forward. They found that these conversations opened up a lot of questions about why things were done in a certain way at the Town, and that the discussions led to more curiosity about sustainability.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** has created idea cards that encourage members of the community to be a part of the change and invite them to share their ideas for creating a more sustainable city. People can share their ideas on the cards and submit them either by e-mail or in person. They launched the cards at a tradeshow, and have them available at booths at all of their events. They have draws and prizes for people who fill out these cards, and are finding that they get a lot of great ideas from people through this program. The City has discovered that when you ask people what they think, everyone has an idea. They plan to share these ideas on their web site, in local storefronts, and at events, and welcome this as an opportunity to work with the local arts community, as well as local businesses.

Listen

Be receptive or open to opinions and new ideas about sustainability.

- Provide opportunities for employees to speak to the people leading the sustainability change process.
- Listen more and talk less.

Example: The **City of Calgary's** sustainability team focuses on building relationships and trust through listening and consultation. They developed their set of collaboration principles based on input from their network and their champions, and then ran it by senior management. They have taken the time in advance to build strong relationships with multiple internal stakeholders. Now, when they approach people for help, contributions, and feedback, they find that they are able to tap into invaluable support. They recognize that their team cannot do it all themselves, so they find

champions throughout the organization, and seek to both help and listen to them.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** went to great lengths to raise awareness and ensure community engagement during the creation of their newest Official Community Plan/Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, which was adopted in 2011. This was a major inter-departmental initiative involving guidance on community engagement from an interdisciplinary citizen's group and extensive community input to build a shared understanding of the community's values, current conditions, and a long-range vision. Because of this broad and deep engagement, the plan has facilitated a shift in direction for the municipality to pursue a "smart growth" approach. This has included the development of a network of town and village centres, which has been well received by the community.

Example: The **City of Pickering's** sustainability team deliberately builds flexibility into their programs. While they have a core work program, goals, and ideas of their own, they remain open to adjusting their plans based on feedback, new ideas, and emerging threats and challenges. If a group of people has organized itself around a good idea and want some assistance, then the sustainability team will listen to their ideas and support them. They will adjust their programs as they proceed to integrate input and feedback.

Seek External Help

Solicit input from those outside the organization to find ways to improve internal practices, processes, and systems.

- Bring in industry experts to provide training or assistance with sustainability issues.
- Invite guest speakers to talk about environmental and social issues.
- Consult with community members and local businesses for ideas.

Example: Building upon some initial sustainability learning and training, **Halifax Regional Municipality** is now taking a more targeted approach by helping people build sustainability capacity in specific professional areas, such as planners working on climate change and transportation staff. They reach out and support all of these areas of learning, which is driven by the goals in their Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and regional plan. They seek out help from various external collaborations and networks, including The Natural Step Exchange, the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, and others. To intentionally build capacity throughout the organization, the Municipality has different people participate in these various networks, depending on their roles.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** has hosted an Urban Forum for a number of years, with lectures on a wide variety of topics. The objectives of the lecture series are to: promote a dialogue between professional associations involved in development issues; create a public forum to debate new ideas; provide ongoing professional development opportunities; and raise the profile of planners, architects, landscape architects, and transportation engineers. The free public lectures bring together people from different backgrounds to discuss issues of community interest. The audience tends to change depending on the topic discussed. The sponsors also vary with the topics. Each lecture contributes to a community debate that generates incremental and positive changes. The lecture series has been successful by: encouraging an ongoing dialogue between professionals; fostering the discussion of new ideas among Council members, City staff, and the public; and raising the profile of professional associations.

Experiment

Practices in this category support the development of new ways of doing things.

Experiment

Encourage employees to try new things or develop their own solutions.

- Encourage research and experimentation that is aligned with the municipality's sustainability values.
- Provide autonomy to workers and managers to develop new solutions to sustainability challenges.
- Allow self-started projects to germinate.
- Allow employees some flexibility with regard to implementation.

Example: At **Halifax Regional Municipality**, the sustainability team has found that councillors have been incredibly supportive of new and innovative ideas. The leadership and support of the elected officials has given the team the ability to go out on a limb with some of their ideas. The attitude has been to support great ideas and let staff members develop them. If the ideas are successful, they continue to receive support, and if they don't work out, the Municipality will learn from the experience. This supportive atmosphere has set the foundation for experimentation and growth.

Example: At the **City of Vaughan**, the engineering services and transportation groups came up with the idea of tracking lighting in certain areas. They worked to control the lights in one of the industrial areas in the city so that they could dim them at off-peak times during the night. This pilot was as an innovative approach to look at controlling greenhouse gas emissions. The City encourages different departments to come up with ideas and experiment with implementing them, especially if it's related to climate change or resource use.

Re-envision

Periodically, the organization should step back from everyday operational issues and think holistically. Re-envisioning involves determining what sustainability means to the organization and how this impacts the next steps toward embedding sustainability. It also involves developing a new conception of how the organization could or should operate, imagining an ideal future state, and allowing this vision to drive current actions. The practices covered here are: define sustainability and backcast.

Define Sustainability

Develop an agreed-upon definition of sustainability for the organization.

- Develop a common language around what sustainability means.
- Ensure that the definition of sustainability is consistent with the organization's values and with ecological constraints.
- Articulate sustainability in a way that resonates with the organization's values and purpose.
- Build a shared understanding of sustainability within the organization.

Example: The **Resort Municipality of Whistler** adopted the science-based sustainability principles of The Natural Step Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (discussed earlier) as their guiding definition of sustainability. Through building shared understanding of these system conditions, as well as how the Municipality's activities affect these conditions at a local level, the Municipality was able to build multiple decision support systems that enable staff members to consider a robust definition of sustainability when they make day-to-day decisions in relation to their jobs. This definition of sustainability sets the constraints within which the community vision can flourish, and guides the Municipality's award-winning Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, "Whistler2020."

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** has developed a vision for sustainability for their community, as well as a corporate mission. They have moved beyond asking what sustainability means, to integrating sustainability into strategies and measurable actions. The groundwork put in place by the District, through the process of developing the community sustainability vision and the corporate mission, helps to build an understanding about sustainability among staff. Emphasis is on developing and implementing integrated plans and strategies with performance targets and measures.

Backcast

Envision a different future and identify the actions required in order to reach it.

- Imagine a desired future in which the organization is truly sustainable.
- Work backwards from the future vision to determine the necessary steps to get there.
- Set distinct milestones to help construct the path to the future.

Example: The **City of Calgary** has created a 10-year sustainability direction as a way of bringing the community's long-term sustainability vision into an actionable strategic timeframe. This plan links the 30-year "imagineCALGARY" targets—which are based on the community's long-term vision—to the City's 3-year business planning cycle. The 10-year plan provides mid-term milestones in line with the longer-term key strategy areas. Now that this plan has been approved by senior management, the signal is clear for all departments that sustainability will be the core direction for the City's business plan, which marks a huge success for the City's sustainability team.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** completed an Official Community Plan/Integrated Community Sustainability Plan based on a major interdepartmental initiative and an extensive public engagement process. Multiple groups contributed to the process, including an interdisciplinary citizen group, the general public, and other stakeholders. Council supported the planning and community engagement process and made decisions regarding the plan's directions at key milestones. Through the community engagement process, awareness was raised regarding current conditions and issues in the community. As well, a vision that responds to these issues and moves the District toward creating a more sustainable community was developed collaboratively. The breadth, depth, and transparency of engagement facilitated a shift in direction for the District toward more complete, compact, connected, and inclusive communities. Overall, the plan has been well received and supported in the community. The process of backcasting, combined with strong public engagement, has enabled this shift.

Share

At some point, organizations on the journey toward sustainability realise they often face issues that extend across departmental and even organizational boundaries. The practices in this category focus on sharing information, with the aim of furthering the sustainability agenda internally and working with external organizations on a broader sustainability agenda. In trying to address organizational issues, it may help to leverage internal and external networks and incorporate a variety of perspectives. Internal collaboration will allow employees to build on each other's ideas and allow best practices to disseminate throughout the organization. Similarly, sharing ideas and practices with other organizations can raise the sustainability performance of everyone involved. The practices discussed in this category are: share knowledge internally, share knowledge externally, and collaborate with others.

Share Knowledge Internally

Make use of the organization's diversity.

- Encourage the sharing of knowledge across different functional areas.
- Create cross-functional teams to work on sustainability issues.
- Ensure interdisciplinary representation when building working groups.
- Make use of the diversity of talent and ideas across the organization.

Example: In developing their 10-year plan, the **City of Calgary** hosted a number of integrated workshops where they brought together staff from different business units working on shared targets. For example, the Transportation Department has certain targets, but the team also brought in staff from who focus on economic, social, and environmental issues to

be part of the conversation around those targets. This allowed them to explore questions related to the impact of their decisions on the environment, natural areas, people, and the economy. They found that the collaborative, integrative process of developing the business plan made the result much stronger and better integrated throughout the organization.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** has prioritized internal engagement as part of the implementation of their sustainability plan. They hold monthly workshops on sustainability throughout the budgeting process, providing space for managers to ask questions and clarify the City's approach, as well as work through live case studies together.

Share Knowledge Externally

Exchange information about efforts to embed sustainability with other organizations to improve everyone's sustainability performance.

- Participate in knowledge-sharing opportunities initiated by industry associations.
- Join groups that bring together other organizations that are grappling with sustainability.

Example: The **City of Vaughan** is part of the Greater Toronto Clean Air Council, which meets once a month to address issues that are pertinent to everyone working toward the goal of clean air in the region. The group brings together topics of interest for members, such as green procurement and local forest scans, and provides the space for members to learn from each other's experiences. These monthly meetings have set the stage for collaboration on specific projects. For example, the City is working on a project with the nearby Town of Caledon on green procurement, and together they have come up with guidance materials for staff. The two municipalities are sharing resources as they each tackle a similar issue in their respective organizations. Similarly, the City's local energy distribution company meets regularly with their counterparts in other associated jurisdictions and, together, they come up with strategies to target energy efficiency for residents and businesses. These exchanges of ideas and the sharing of resources lead to partnerships around a variety of initiatives.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** has been inviting external stakeholders, such as the neighbouring Town of Stratford and the University of Prince Edward Island, to some of their workshops to share stories and updates on their sustainability efforts. This brings outside perspectives to the City and helps to build a shared understanding of sustainability issues that affect the community. They are also finding that people in the community have been approaching them for more information about the plan. When this happens, they are open to holding private workshops for local organizations, such as non-profits, the chamber of commerce, and local businesses. The City has been writing articles for the chamber of commerce and for local newspapers in the spirit of sharing progress and keeping the community well informed. They are finding that this open sharing of knowledge and information fosters experimentation and openness around sustainability in the community.

Collaborate With Others

Work with other organizations to try to achieve shared sustainability goals.

- Collaborate with other organizations.
- Create organizational partnerships.
- Cooperate with regulators, non-governmental organizations, and external stakeholder groups.

Example: Strathcona County was the pilot community for the "SuNLiving Process," developed by Natural Resources Canada and the Design Centre

for Sustainability at the University of British Columbia, which was created to foster sustainable urban neighbourhoods. The County has urban village projects based on the "SuN Process" and led by a "SuN Design Team," which are involved in the design of the County's neighbourhoods. This group meets once a month to review development applications based on sustainability, and people are there to represent the 12 themes of sustainability that are present in their Municipal Development Plan, including water, health and wellbeing, carbon, waste, and materials.

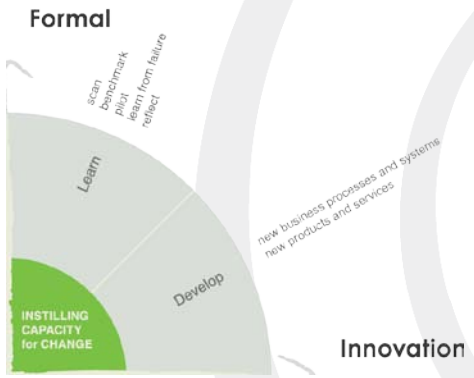
Example: At **Halifax Regional Municipality**, they recognize assets such as the local universities and a highly-educated population, as well as the community's size of less than 400,000 people. They reach out to different people to help the Municipality work through ideas related to sustainability. They test things through many of those collaborations—whether with the universities, environmental non-governmental organizations, or other levels of government—and find that they are able to work through ideas together to see if a collaboration will work.

INSTILLING CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Rules and procedures that help the organization do things differently or better (Formal, Innovation)

***Description of success**: An organization with a high level of mastery in this quadrant has practices and procedures in place that continually create space for collective learning and development along the sustainability journey. They learn from experience, seeking out both external and internal feedback, reflecting, and integrating the learning to adapt their practices and develop the way forward.*

Practices in this quadrant aim to create structures or supports that will form a foundation for future changes in the organization. They represent rules and procedures that lead to innovation. The categories in the quadrant are: learn and develop.



PRACTICES

Learn
- scan
- benchmark
- pilot
- learn from failure
- reflect

Develop
- new business processes and systems
- new products and services

Learn

The practices in this category focus on creating processes and mechanisms to gather knowledge or skills related to sustainability. The practices examined here include: scan, benchmark, pilot, learn from failure, and reflect.

Scan

Make use of systems or processes to perceive and recognize external information.

- Attend industry and environmental conferences.
- Join a sustainability organization where members share information and best practices.
- Observe the sustainability activity in other municipalities.
- Scan multiple sources habitually.
- Develop many diverse internal and external knowledge and opportunity networks.
- Research stakeholder needs and values.
- Scan for changes in legislation and upcoming regulatory requirements.
- Use focus groups and surveys to garner customer opinions on sustainability issues.
- Subscribe to newsletters or periodicals on sustainability issues.

Example: The **District of North Vancouver** builds capacity for sustainability accountability and leadership through corporate and community planning initiatives, along with a system of monitoring and reporting progress. Input from various citizen advisory and working groups and community consultations contribute to—and provide feedback on—these initiatives. Ongoing participation in local and inter-regional sustainability initiatives, as well as staff training and professional development, help the District remain current and proactive in this area.

Example: Since the inception of its sustainability vision, the **City of Calgary** has demonstrated the importance of scanning and observation. Today, the City is balancing its internal and external focus, and builds and maintains extensive links beyond its region, in order to stay informed about the latest practices and new developments, as well as to adjust and adapt if required.

Benchmark

Compare your organization's sustainability plans and performance to national leaders, best practices, and emerging practices from other countries.

- Select organizational sustainability metrics that are used by others to facilitate benchmarking.
- Decide which information should be made public so that the municipality's performance can be transparently compared to that of other municipalities.
- Consider benchmarking internally between various departments.

Example: Halifax Regional Municipality takes a balanced approach to benchmarking. While it facilitates internal learning by comparing its performance relative to other municipalities, the Municipality does not want to rely solely on its position within the rankings. Instead, benchmarking allows its internal divisions to set realistic targets by comparing identical performance indicators across inter-organizational departments. This friendly competition motivates employees to reframe their ideas around sustainability, which helps stimulate innovation and dialogue among team members.

Example: In addition to having its own set of performance metrics for sustainability, **Strathcona County** uses benchmarking techniques to learn from—and to leverage—past sustainability best practices. For instance, in developing its "The Way We Green" environmental plan, the City of Edmonton has implemented an anti-idling bylaw and a green building policy. By customizing these actions to meet Strathcona's needs, the County's senior management is learning how to best move the organization forward and how to build on other ideas for broader and deeper sharing across the municipal sector.

Pilot

Make a formal decision to undertake new initiatives or practices as a test or trial.

- Adopt initiatives that originated at the grassroots level as formal pilot projects.
- Welcome proposals and suggestions and follow through by allocating resources to piloting the best ideas.
- Set internal targets for finding and executing pilot projects.

Example: The **City of Fredericton** is piloting and incubating triple bottom line solutions to include the broader business community. For instance, its "Green Shops" program engages the local commercial and retail sectors to operationalize sustainability and to enhance their capacity for long-term change through training and one-on-one support. The City is also piloting an online certification program, "Green Matters Certified," whereby non-profit and non-governmental organizations can log on to a web-based portal and track their sustainability progress, measure their performance, learn from best practices, and share strategies for "next practices." Most importantly, however, the City continuously reinforces a community culture of experimentation, learning, and safety.

Example: **Strathcona County's** Environmental Advisory Council—a citizen's committee including representation from Council, municipal staff, and members of the public—initiated the "SCRAP Program" to increase the responsible disposal of materials in rural areas, such as old cars and farm equipment. This grassroots, citizen-led initiative was very successful in dealing with local waste management challenges.

Learn From Failure

Establish processes to gather new knowledge and skills from the analysis of past mistakes.

- Dedicate resources to investigating failures.
- Develop a process for making recommendations for improvement.
- Take advantage of failures and see them as opportunities for significant transformational and sustainable change.

Example: The **Resort Municipality of Whistler** recognizes that it's difficult to learn from failure unless you first define success for what you're attempting. By building clear goals, flexibility, and regular evaluation into their sustainability work, they have been able to adapt to lessons learned, while striving toward clear outcomes. They credit the success of their program to having a formalized review processes. The Municipality also prides itself in fostering a culture of learning from mistakes and remaining adaptive along the way. In this spirit, they set timelines for review, and are willing to adapt their model and approach based on what they have learned in the interim.

Reflect

Ask questions, and carefully consider what the organization is doing and why.

- Set regular opportunities to reflect on priorities.
- Stand back and assess with a macro perspective.
- Observe organizational trends and ensure they are consistent with sustainability values.
- Take a holistic view and be aware of the organization's surroundings.
- Implement formal feedback systems.
- Institutionalize time for reflection.

Example: The **Town of Canmore** demonstrates the importance of reflection, as part of its learning and growth process. The Town has created regular opportunities for organizational reflection, and ensures that events and processes are holistically interpreted by including a well-rounded group of participants. In one instance, the organizer of the Town's employee eLearning course observed the day's events from a macro perspective and noticed a wide range in engagement levels among various departments. After further analysis through its feedback system, the Town has taken a more customized approach toward staff education and workshop events. The Sustainability Team now appreciates that to build organizational momentum, leaders must first attract the people most likely to change.

Develop

This category looks at practices that create or implement new mechanisms to support future sustainability initiatives. These include putting in place new and innovative systems and procedures (internal), and products and services (external), as a foundation for future sustainability initiatives.

Develop New Business Processes and Systems

Implement new internal procedures and systems that will support sustainability.

- Implement new environmental management systems (EMS) or a sustainability management system (SMS), or integrate sustainability goals into an existing management system.
- Develop new decision support systems based on sustainability factors.

Example: The **City of Calgary** is developing a suite of tools, including a "Sustainability Appraisal/Matrix," to help staff employ a systems approach to project creation and execution. This new evaluation process also triggers staff to talk to internal and external leaders and specialists to consider how the deliverables link to the organization's long-term sustainability goals.

Example: The **City of Charlottetown** facilitated a workshop in which participants co-created the City's decision-making filter. This new system challenges work teams to consider the process of moving a new initiative through the budget, and to evaluate its alignment with the City's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. Employees also addressed how a proposed initiative provides a return on investment with respect to environmental, social, cultural, and economic capital. The City's Finance

Department used this model to review new initiatives and looks forward to the further development of powerful decision support systems.

Example: The **City of Ottawa** is working on the development of a "Sustainability Lens" that City staff and elected officials can use to guide their work and decision making by integrating environmental, economic, cultural, and social factors into City policies and operations. The objective is the alignment of decision making with the City's long-term sustainability goals, strategic objectives, and strategic directions identified by the "Choosing our Future" regional sustainability initiative and the City's Sustainability and Resiliency Plan. The "Sustainability Lens" may be supported by service-specific checklists or criteria.

Develop New Products and Services

Create new products and services that help realize the organization's commitment to sustainability.

- Develop new products and services that operate within socio-ecological constraints.
- Develop new products and services that meet unmet sustainability needs.

Example: **Strathcona County's** Community Energy System is a district heating system that provides heat and hot water to a downtown redevelopment area called "Centre in the Park." Once fully developed, the area will be home to a number of multi-tenant residential buildings, a mixed use commercial area, two high schools, the local theatre venue, as well as the County's community centre, library, County Hall, and a recreation building. While the Community Energy System currently operates on a central heating plant powered by natural gas, a biomass demonstration project is currently underway to test the use of locally-sourced wood waste and agricultural waste to provide base load energy for the system. By deciding to invest in the system, Council made a bold step to rely on innovative technology for heating in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They have also provided greater long-term resiliency for the community by reducing the County's dependence on fuels that have highly-fluctuating costs.

A CALL TO ACTION

The practices and examples presented in this report represent excellent examples of what is currently happening throughout the spectrum of the portfolio approach to embedding sustainability into the culture of municipal government. In light of the best of what is happening today, and in service of continued progress along the sustainability journey, this section distils some key lessons about what is happening on the ground, and what the implications are for practitioners in the municipal context.

Trends and Patterns

During interviews with the participating municipalities, some key trends and patterns emerged in relation to what is happening on the ground in Canadian municipalities to build a culture of sustainability.

- Municipalities all across the country are creating sustainability-focused roles and integrating a sustainability group into their organizational structure.
- In turn, these internal change agents are championing sustainability across departments and throughout the organization. This is leading to the creation of cross-departmental working groups to advance sustainability projects, tackle systemic issues, and collaborate and innovate in a range of ways.
- Many organizations spoke of key moments that enabled them to make significant progress on their sustainability journey. For example, community pressure around a proposed development, combined with an openness in council mindset, led to senior leadership buy-in and significant sustainability commitments. Municipal organizations are operating in a complex environment and several interviewees mentioned that the timing of various events/initiatives were key in setting the stage for the integration of sustainability into the organization.
- Federal and provincial funding sources have enabled municipalities to allocate resources and staff to sustainability, and to create and implement plans and projects. The trickle down effects of this support are evident in the amount of work happening around the country and are influencing the culture of municipal governments.
- Municipal staff and networks of employees are experimenting with sustainability-focused practices, initiatives, and pilot projects, which are both creative and diverse in scope.
- Interviews found practices that reflect the full spectrum of the portfolio approach to nurturing a culture of sustainability. They integrate a combination of diverse practices with aligned goals, including: formal and informal; strategic and tactical; and top-down and bottom-up.
- Regional knowledge-sharing networks are emerging in many places. Municipal representatives in various parts of the country are intentionally gathering to share best practices, learn together, and identify opportunities to collaborate on sustainability-related projects across organizational boundaries.
- Municipal governments are supporting community-based sustainability initiatives and intentionally nurturing community

involvement in their sustainability programs. Partnerships with community stakeholders are common, and there is a strong recognition that the culture of the municipality is strongly linked to the culture of the surrounding community.

- Interviewees who have been with the same organization for a number of years spoke of an evolution in the use of language surrounding sustainability. As their organizations have progressed along their sustainability journeys, their learning has evolved and their thinking has deepened. This is reflected in the way in which sustainability initiatives are undertaken and communicated.
- A culture of sustainability is strongly linked to a culture of learning. Organizations that model an openness to learning and flexibility, and that are willing to experiment and innovate—both in terms of what they do and how they do it—are well on their way to developing a culture of sustainability.
- In their various journeys toward building a culture of sustainability, many municipalities have progressed quite far and are making significant strides to embed sustainability into the way that they work. By monitoring progress and sharing lessons learned along the way, much can be discovered from the experiences of those undertaking these efforts.

Implications for Practitioners

This work provides practical municipal examples of the full spread of practices included in the portfolio approach to embedding sustainability in organizational culture. It includes a wide sample of the best that is currently happening and provides language around what an organizational culture of sustainability looks like. For practitioners, the next question is: How do I move this forward within my organization?

Culture change is a complex process—one that can be likened to "building an airplane while flying it." It requires space for continual learning and adjustment along the way, in response to new and unanticipated challenges and successes. The starting point or next step for any organization depends on where the organization currently is. What are the assets to build on? What are the major gaps that could impede progress? What elements of the current culture support sustainability? Is the current approach balanced across the four quadrants? Where are the seeds for change?

Creating culture change programs in service of sustainability is an ongoing area of experimentation—one that builds on best practices in the areas of change management, governance, decision making, and participatory leadership. For practitioners, this signals an exciting area of learning and practice over the coming years, as municipalities embrace the sustainability challenge and contribute to evolving the body of knowledge in the field.

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NOTES

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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As a Sustainability Advisor with The Natural Step Canada, Karen works with organizations, communities, and networks of leaders to design social processes that enable innovation toward sustainability. She has applied the portfolio approach to embedding sustainability in organizational culture in her work with municipal clients such as the City of Ottawa and the City of Edmonton.

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Sara Graves worked as a Research Assistant on the Network for Business Sustainability report, *Embedding Sustainability in Organizational Culture*. She helped to synthesize the latest human resource management and sustainability research, and to leverage it to design practical tools that business leaders can customize and integrate into their strategies. Sara's professional experience includes work as Corporate Sustainability Advisor to Earls Restaurants, Cactus Club Cafe, and Joey Restaurants, as well as Public Relations and Community Engagement Coordinator at lululemon athletica. She volunteers as a Special Events Host with the David Suzuki Foundation and facilitates community working groups with Vancouver's Tool Library Co-op.

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John Purkis is a Senior Advisor and the Senior Manager of Sustainable Communities for The Natural Step Canada. He has worked in the municipal sector for over ten years and advised over 50 municipalities across Canada and internationally on planning, change management, governance, and decision making for sustainability. John’s municipal experience runs deep. He previously worked with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), where he co-developed the Municipal Building Retrofit Guide and the Sustainable Community Profile. He also helped FCM lay the foundation for their Capacity Building Program and worked as the Development Manager for the FCM Green Municipal Fund.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

Network for Business Sustainability

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The Natural Step Canada

The Natural Step Canada is a dynamic non-profit organization with over a decade of experience helping organizations and individuals understand and make meaningful progress toward sustainability. The organization envisions a sustainable world in which individuals, communities, and businesses thrive within nature's limits. They strive to inspire, educate, and connect Canadian leaders to accelerate the transformation toward a sustainable world. Through award-winning learning programs and a unique suite of advisory, coaching, training, and process facilitation services, The Natural Step Canada translates the fundamentals of sustainability into practical steps businesses and communities can take to achieve lasting change.

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Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University

The Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University is a Canadian leader in research and industry impact in the areas of sustainability, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility. The school's longstanding commitment to sustainability is underscored by being a signatory to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education, a member of the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, and consistently included in Corporate Knights Magazine's annual ranking of top business schools. The school's prolific research environment—including its sustainability focus—has helped it emerge as one of the top 25 business schools in the world for management research, according to a University of Texas-Dallas ranking.

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