

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO AID SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The Sustainability Committee plays various key roles in embedding sustainability throughout the institution. A well-organized Sustainability Committee: focuses the institutions sustainability strategy, drives progress via enhancing institutional capacity and planning, delegates responsibility, and collaborates to make evidence based decision-making. The Sustainability Committee positions sustainability strategy and communicates how action is advantageous by adding meaningful value to the institution.

A well-rounded Sustainability Committee is comprised of representative, influential members from key areas of the institution. Combined, these individuals have the necessary breadth of skills, knowledge, and passion for sustainability to integrate the concept institution-wide.

Sustainability Committee Development Support

Below outlines four steps to guide formation of an effective, efficient, and action driven Sustainability Committee.

- Step 1:** Identify committee purpose.
- Step 2:** Identify areas of expertise.
- Step 3:** Identify relevant institutional areas and individuals.
- Step 4** (optional): Brainstorm potential subcommittees.

Step 1: Identify Committee Purpose

Clear understanding and communication of the committee's purpose will help prioritize relevant individuals and expertise to recruit. Once formed, the committee purpose may evolve as priorities and strategies are identified.

Use the bullets below as a starting point to brainstorming the committee's purpose. Will the committee:

- Help manage or increase sustainability initiatives.
- Create and implement an approved sustainability strategy and action plan.
- Communicate sustainability progress.
- Educate the institutional community about sustainability and climate change.
- Help monitor and report successes.
- Advocate for sustainability incorporation into academics.
- Others?

Step 2: Identify Areas of Expertise

Based on the committee's identified purpose, list the necessary skills and/or knowledge areas that are important to achieving the committee's purpose. These might include:

- Air quality
- Budgeting
- Business acumen
- Campus engagement
- Capital projects
- Climate change
- Communications
- Connections to the Senior Leadership Team

- Creating the business case for sustainability
- Curriculum expertise
- Energy management
- Facilities management
- Finances
- Funding opportunities
- Graphics Design
- Greenhouse gas accounting
- Incorporating sustainability into procurement
- Presentation skills
- Public relations
- Research
- Strategic planning
- Waste management
- Water use
- Others?

Step 3: Identify Relevant Institutional Areas and Individuals

Certain groups within, and potentially outside of, the institution will have the necessary skills and/or knowledge required to fulfill the committee's purpose. When the time comes to recruit, engagement can be aimed at specific individuals or whole Departments/Offices etc., if there is no known person of interest.

Brainstorm these areas based on the answers from Step 2: Identify Areas of Expertise. Feel free to take it a step further and narrow it down to specific individuals, if there are stand out candidates. These institutional areas may include:

- Alumni
- Board members
- Chief Facilities Officer
- Community representatives (NGO, municipal government etc.)
- Energy manager
- Faculty experts
- IT
- Passionate staff
- President's Office
- Key operations offices including facilities management, purchasing, transportation, public relations, etc.
- Student government staff
- Student environmental club representatives
- Sustainability staff
- Vice Presidents
- Others?

Step 4 (optional): Brainstorm Potential Subcommittees

It may be appropriate to identify any potential subcommittees within the Sustainability Committee, as this could influence ideal candidates and recruitment.

Ideas include:

- Carbon/Climate action plan
- Curriculum
- Energy
- Engagement
- Events and communications
- Quality/ monitoring
- Sustainability strategic planning
- Transportation
- Waste
- Others?

Potential Challenges

- Lack of interest from ideal candidates.
- Lack of available time from ideal candidates.
- Identifying committee chair with relevant experience.
- Lack of influence.
- Information overload.

Please visit this [link](#) to read more on the 11 most common issues within committees and potential solutions to overcome each issue.

Conclusion

Having a strong, decisive, and excited Sustainability Committee is critical to sustainability performance success, and ensuring the right people are at the table is a crucial starting point. Take time to establish the individual roles and people who would positively contribute if they had a seat at the table, keeping in mind turnover is inevitable. This is an important first step to building credibility and influence within the institution, and there are many people with the knowledge and expertise willing to support such an important cause.