

INTRODUCTION TO THE STEP-BY-STEP FRAMEWORK TO CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY

Ontario colleges have an important role to play in building a more sustainable future through reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To have the most powerful impact, it is vital that organizational efforts are integrated into a sustainability structure that includes all functions within the institutional environment.

The Campus Carbon Management Initiative (CCMI) has identified six key Milestones in building an effective sustainability and climate management strategy that we suggest to help guide sustainability and GHG reduction planning and implementation efforts.

It is suggested that these Milestones be achieved in the order presented here, however, this is flexible and may readily be adapted to suit the individual needs and sustainability implementation status of each institution.

Milestone 1

Form Your Sustainability Committee

A Sustainability Committee is essential to developing sustainability strategy, driving progress, communicating with stakeholders, and delegating action tasks. A Sustainability Committee positions and communicates how sustainability strategy is advantageous to an institution. A well-rounded committee is comprised of representative members from key areas of the institution who have the key skills, knowledge, and passion for sustainability.

Milestone Purpose

- To support the creation of an effective Sustainability Committee in order to provide the advocacy and structure for integrated sustainability.

Goals

- Engage relevant stakeholders surrounding sustainability.
- Form a committee based on stakeholders who have the identified skills required for success.

Support Provided

- Step-by-Step Guide to Aid Sustainability Committee Development
- Sample Sustainability Committee Recruitment Email

Milestone 2

Establish a Vision and Goals

It is recommended that the newly formed Sustainability Committee create a short, high-level sustainability plan for the institution. The purpose of this plan should be to gather Senior Leadership impressions and approval to proceed before creating a more detailed sustainability plan and climate action plan (Note: the discussion with Senior Leadership should happen after Milestone 3, as at this point baseline data will be available). This high-level plan should align with the institution's overarching strategic and institutional goals.

Milestone Purpose

- Understand what it means to be a sustainable institution.
- Work towards leadership engagement and approval.

Goals

- Work toward defining sustainability as it relates to the institution.
- Create a sustainability vision that aligns with strategic goals.
- Use the vision to identify high-level sustainability targets and goals.

Support Provided

- Creating a High Level Sustainability Plan and Vision
- Defining Sustainability in Canadian Higher Education

Milestone 3

Complete Your Baseline

Generating a baseline provides the necessary information to compare, monitor, and assess future performance. Baseline data can be qualitative, quantitative, or both. A well-developed and thorough baseline will serve as a foundation for progress. It should reveal areas of focus, help to set achievable and realistic goals, provide support for initiatives, and drive effective decision-making.

In the context of sustainability and climate change, there are a few key activities to help identify the starting point and support progress. Defining the baseline will include undertaking one or more of the following:

Activity	Purpose
Greenhouse Gas Inventory	Starting point for emissions reduction plan.
Materiality Assessment	Understand stakeholder sustainability priorities.
STARS Overview	High-level understanding of overall sustainability performance.

Milestone Purpose

- Define the starting point that progress will be measured against or use to compare to already established baseline.

Goals

- Engage stakeholders.
- Understand current climate impact.
- Review and evaluate sustainability performance.

Support Provided

- Recommended Key Reporting Areas for a Post-Secondary Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- Guidance for Completing a Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- Sample Greenhouse Gas Calculation
- Software Recommendation: Greenhouse Gas Accounting in Post-Secondary Institutions
- Greenhouse Gas Data Request Sample Email
- Sample Greenhouse Gas Inventory Fact Sheet

- Completing a Materiality Assessment: Understanding Stakeholder Sustainability Priorities
- Understanding Current Sustainability Performance Using a STARS Overview

Milestone 4

Finalize and Formalize Your Plan

Senior Leadership input and approval for the goals set out in the high-level plan should be in place. To ensure the college's starting point is well understood, baseline creation should be complete or well underway before attempting to develop a final Climate Action Plan. Top-level support and guidance and essential baseline information lets the Sustainability Committee create a plan that outlines how goals and targets will be achieved.

The supports provided in this Milestone ensure documentation of the key items that should be included in an effective Sustainability Plan and Climate Action Plan, with examples.

Milestone Purpose

- Create documentation to guide sustainability and climate performance improvement.

Goals

- Work to create a sustainability plan.
- Work to create a climate action plan.
- Receive approvals for the plans.

Support Provided

- Creating a Sustainability Plan
- Creating a Climate Action Plan

Milestone 5

Launch and Implement Your Plan

The Sustainability Committee has done a lot of hard work organizing and planning to create long-term success. At this stage, support and awareness of the plan is essential to drive enthusiasm as well as create accountability and transparency. This is also the time to take action to begin to work towards the goals and targets that have been established.

In this Milestone, documentation identifies ways to launch a plan and ensure effective implementation.

Milestone Purpose

- Implement the sustainability and climate plans.

Goals

- Ensure stakeholders are aware of plans and commitments.
- Ensure all relevant individuals are aware of their responsibility for delivering on metrics.

Support Provided

- Launching and Implementing Your Plan

Milestone 6

Monitor Your Efforts

Data collection and monitoring of relevant metrics is critical to driving future sustainability focus and performance, both in the short and long-term. Targets and goals created within the sustainability and/or climate action plan should serve as an excellent starting point for areas to consider monitoring. Information gathered from monitoring can then be easily wrapped into sustainability reporting to inform and educate stakeholders and key decision makers.

Supports within this Milestone are meant to help guide effective monitoring and relevant reporting of sustainability performance in order to help engage and increase communication with stakeholders.

Milestone Purpose

- Create an effective, streamlined system for sustainability performance monitoring and reporting to support and communicate progress.

Goals

- Understand the information required to efficiently monitor activities to ensure progress towards improved sustainability performance.
- Understand the role and importance of sustainability reporting, including recommended areas to include in a sustainability progress report.

Support Provided

- Monitoring Progress for Success
- Reporting Progress for Success