



Final Report

Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative

2007-2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI)'s Regional Sustainability Summit, held April 17-18, 2008, marked the official close of the first year of the ACSI project. Thirteen Atlantic Canadian municipalities, businesses, and non-governmental organizations had journeyed together over the year as they worked to develop and implement sustainability action plans within their respective organizations. This report looks back on ACSI's formation and first year, and reports on the successes and lessons learned, and next steps for the project.

Following the introduction, the second section of the report provides some of the background and context to ACSI's development. Although the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative was officially launched in May 2007, much work and planning by the founding organizations (Genuine Progress Index Atlantic, The Natural Step Canada, the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone – see Appendix A for more information about these organizations) went into the project before it began.

The project grew out of a series of conferences, workshops, lectures, and other events that helped to build interest and momentum around sustainability in the Atlantic region. These events drew forward organizations who were interested in working together to make Atlantic Canada a leading region in sustainable development. The founding organizations worked collaboratively with these other organizations, most of whom become ACSI Sustainability Partners, to develop the framework and plan for the ACSI.

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative worked closely with The Natural Step Canada, and used The Natural Step (TNS) framework as a guide for its sustainability work. The Natural Step framework was selected because of its proven track record being used by communities, businesses, and governments, and because of its systemic thinking, design principles, and science base. TNS provided a practical framework that worked with and enhanced other ongoing sustainability-related activities and projects, and it helped participants think strategically about sustainability and identify new initiatives that can help move them further in the right direction.

The third section of the report gives a brief description of each of the 13 participating organizations. These organizations, ACSI Sustainability Partners, all signed a project charter committing their organizations to taking action on sustainability using The Natural Step framework as a guide (see Project Charter in Appendix B for more information). The Sustainability Partner organizations are:

- Aliant
- Antigonish Sustainable Development
- Bathurst Sustainable Development
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Halifax Shambhala Centre
- iNova Credit Union
- Jacques Whitford Ltd.
- Just Us! Coffee Roasters
- P'lovers, the Environmental Store
- City of Saint John
- Stewardship and Outreach Section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources



- Town of Stratford
- Town of Wolfville

Together with over 30 Network Partners, these organizations worked together over a year to build their capacity around sustainability, and to develop and implement sustainability action plans. The fourth section of this report outlines the ACSI program. The ACSI's objectives were as follows:

- build capacity and competence within their organization to become better leaders in sustainable development;
- implement a plan of action that advances sustainability within their organization through concrete actions;
- serve as role models by sharing their own organization's successes and lessons with respect to sustainability;
- build an effective network that collaborates and supports progress towards sustainability;
- build regional momentum towards sustainability by engaging citizens, organizations and governments within the Atlantic Region; and
- identify and act on opportunities collaboratively to help move the region towards sustainability.

Project partners aimed to fulfill these objectives through a program of capacity-building and training that included three workshops, several webinars, and individual coaching and mentoring for each Sustainability Partner organization with a coach from The Natural Step Canada.

The fourth section of the report also provides a financial overview of the project. The total project expenditures for ACSI for the 2007-08 year were \$195,492.58, and income \$207,468.10. The full budget is available in Appendix C.

The fifth and sixth sections of the report focus on the outcomes, successes and lessons learned during ACSI's first year. The ACSI's successes can be described in two ways, the first focusing on the specific outcomes within each Partner organization, and the second looking more broadly at what ACSI as a whole was able to achieve.

The Sustainability Partners all moved forward on sustainability over their year-long participation in ACSI. They implemented many different sustainability projects and strategies in their organizations. The key projects were focused around conducting baseline analyses of their current operations, building employee/stakeholder awareness of and engagement in sustainability, and the development of various sustainability plans, policies and decision-making filters that helped further embed sustainability into the respective organizations. In addition, the Partners undertook a wide variety of smaller actions on sustainability, everything from waste, energy and water usage reduction projects, to sustainable transportation plans, to incorporating a sustainability standard into performance expectations for employees.

While it is evident that each Partner was successful in furthering sustainability within their own organization, ACSI as a whole was also highly successful in creating positive change. ACSI helped to shift corporate culture in Partner organizations; to further embed sustainability into day-to-day decision-making; built a critical mass and created pressure for each organization to move forward on sustainability; and developed a network of people and organizations working on sustainability issues that can now collaborate, share information and ideas, and support each other in this critical movement towards greater sustainability.



As ACSI was started as a pilot project, the sixth section also reviews the lessons learned over the year and makes some recommendations for improvement going forward. The recommendations are:

1. Create additional opportunities for networking between ACSI partners.
2. Develop a comprehensive communications strategy.
3. Provide more support for partners on their internal outreach.
4. Continue to recruit diverse partners to participate in ACSI.
5. Develop clear expectations for project outcomes and Partner activities.
6. Develop a full year training plan at the beginning of the project.
7. Provide more opportunities for partners to learn from each other.
8. Secure long-term funding for ACSI in addition to shorter-term and project-specific funding.
9. Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all organizations involved (Sustainability and Network Partners, host, training partners, etc.) are clearly laid out.
10. Hire a coordinator trained in TNS and/or other sustainability planning frameworks.

Although ACSI was originally developed as a one-year project, the intention was always to see it continue to support sustainability in Atlantic Canada in the long term. Section 7 of the report therefore reviews the next steps planned for ACSI. A Steering Committee, composed of members from Sustainability Partner organizations, Network Partner organizations, and new organizations that want to participate in ACSI going forward, has been put in place and is now working to develop a strategic plan for ACSI for the next three years. The strategic priorities already identified by the Committee include:

1. Building capacity and competence in sustainability in Atlantic Canada.
2. Expanding and further developing the ACSI network.
3. Working with a second cohort of Sustainability Partners to take them through a process similar to that used in the first year.

The plan is expected to be completed in the summer of 2008. Following its completion, ACSI expects to re-launch in the fall of 2008.



II. Introduction

On May 14th, 2007 the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI) was officially launched at Oak Island, Nova Scotia. Fourteen Atlantic Canadian municipalities, businesses, and non-governmental organizations signed a project charter committing their organizations to taking action on sustainability, and beginning a year-long journey together to make Atlantic Canada a leader in sustainable development.

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹ Although the idea seems simple, it encompasses many intricate social, economic, and environmental issues. In the Atlantic region these challenges include resource depletion, air and soil quality, climate change, community sustainability, unemployment, and health, among others. In order to understand these issues, to examine them from a systemic point of view, and to begin to address the sustainability challenges facing Atlantic Canadians, cooperation and input from individuals and organizations at all levels is needed.

There is growing interest in sustainability from all sectors and from the public, and recognition of the need to take action in order to ensure long-term prosperity. The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative grew out of the interest of a number of organizations in taking a collaborative approach and working together on sustainability using The Natural Step framework as a guide. Partners worked together to develop a one-year pilot project, recognizing that moving towards sustainability is a long-term journey, but needing to have a practical timeline for funding and implementation. This report therefore looks back at the first full year of ACSI.

Throughout the year, the participating organizations, "Sustainability Partners", attended 3 intensive training sessions, and worked in between sessions with coaches who helped them develop and implement their sustainability projects. Sustainability Partners also worked to create a collaborative network to support each other, served as role models and champions of sustainability in their sectors and regions, and worked towards embedding sustainability into their own organizations.

The ACSI was very successful in achieving the goals it set at the beginning of the project. Each Sustainability Partner successfully implemented a number of sustainability strategies and actions within their own organizations. Each organization is further ahead on sustainability now than when it joined ACSI a year ago. In addition, ACSI has helped to build a long-term commitment to sustainability in the Sustainability Partners. Even if ACSI were not to continue past its first year, all of the Partners would continue with their sustainability work.

The report begins with a review of the history and context of the development of ACSI, and then moves into a description of the Sustainability Partners and the project itself, including the objectives, timeline, and budget. The next two sections look at the specific outcomes of the first year, the successes, and the lessons learned. While there were many successes, as this was the first sustainability project to be implemented across multiple provinces and sectors, a lot was also learned in this first pilot year. Further information on the specific outcomes and achievements for each Sustainability Partner can be found in the detailed case studies in Appendix D. The final section of the report focuses on next steps, as it has always been

¹ Bruntland, G. (ed.), *Our common future: The World Commission on Environment and Development* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987).



recognized and desired that ACSI continue to support and encourage sustainability in Atlantic Canada in the long term.



III. Setting the Context

Though the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative was officially launched on May 14, 2007, much planning and preparation went into the project before it began. This section provides an overview of how and why ACSI was created.

History

The original idea for the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative resulted from thoughtful discussions and action plans generated at two events that took place in Nova Scotia in 2005, organized by Genuine Progress Index (GPI) Atlantic. In co-operation with other partners, GPI Atlantic hosted a major international conference in Antigonish, Nova Scotia called *Rethinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing* in June 2005. Four hundred and fifty delegates from thirty three countries examined successful initiatives worldwide that attempt to integrate sustainable and equitable economic development with environmental conservation, social and cultural cohesion, and good governance.

The Atlantic Canadian participants who attended the June conference were inspired by the exemplary global models of development presented there and were eager to apply what they had learned to this region. As a follow-up, GPI Atlantic hosted a workshop called *Building Sustainable Development* in November 2005, which was attended by over eighty business leaders, federal, provincial and municipal government officials, non-government organization (NGO) representatives, scientists, academics, members of the general public and youth from the four Atlantic provinces. Participants gathered to discuss the broad topic of transforming Atlantic Canada into a model of socially and environmentally sustainable development. The objective of the workshop was to build momentum to position the Atlantic region as a global leader in sustainable development.

During focus-group discussions at the *Building Sustainable Development* workshop, a collective view arose among participants that The Natural Step (TNS) should be explored as a useful integrating framework and method of implementing sustainability in Atlantic Canada. This view emerged because of the relevance of The Natural Step framework to communities, businesses and governments, and due to its systematic approach, design principles, scientific basis and proven successes. TNS was identified as having good potential as an integrating and overarching mechanism for strategically guiding and supporting the adoption of a sustainable development ethos and practice in Atlantic Canada. It was held that TNS could provide a practical framework that would also work with and enhance all other sustainable development initiatives currently planned and underway in the region, and that it could support the development of important new initiatives that would help this region move towards sustainability.

Following the workshop, GPI Atlantic and the other founding organizations (The Natural Step Canada, the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and SENSE: Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone) began to organize events to promote awareness of sustainability and The Natural Step in Atlantic Canada, and to build a network of organizations interested in participating in a project together. The founding organizations hosted an introductory TNS lecture in December 2005, a TNS study circle in June 2006, strategy sessions in June and July 2006, and public sessions on The Natural Step at the Halifax Public Libraries in the fall of 2006.



The project continued to build momentum, and in September 2006 Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt, the founder of The Natural Step, visited Halifax. He gave presentations to a large public audience, to an audience of high-level government and business representatives, and to the Atlantic Mayors Congress.

In the winter of 2007, interested organizations (most of whom eventually became ACSI Sustainability Partners) met several times to develop the framework for what would become the ACSI. In collaboration with the partners, GPI Atlantic and The Natural Step Canada developed the project charter and began to fundraise for what would be a year-long pilot project. The ACSI was officially launched on May 14, 2007, and the first training workshop took place May 15-16, 2007.

Originally supported and coordinated by GPI Atlantic, in September 2007, for strategic and resource reasons, a new host organization, the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS), took over the guidance of the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative. CRS is a non-profit organization based in Wolfville that works at the grassroots to support the growth of sustainable communities and economies in Nova Scotia. CRS coordinated the project from September 2007 to the completion of the first year in April 2008, and continues to support ACSI as plans for the future are developed.

Why Sustainability?

Sustainability is the greatest challenge of our time. The scientific evidence is overwhelming and undeniable: climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response. Ecosystems around the world are in decline and the ability of the earth to provide life-supporting systems is being systematically eroded.² Around the world, one-fifth of the world's population goes to bed hungry and 1.2 billion people, mostly women, continue to live in abject poverty.³ Globally, societies are realizing that industrial progress and growth have social, economic, and environmental costs that can no longer be ignored, and that there are ecological and social limits to growth. The sustainability challenge is about ensuring prosperity and wellbeing for this generation and the generations to come, while living within those limits.

Here in Atlantic Canada, global sustainability problems are visible on a more local scale. Resource depletion and degradation is a major concern, as many Atlantic Canadians are dependent on the long-term sustainability of resources such as fisheries and the forestry sector for their livelihoods. The collapse of the cod fishery in 1992 illustrated to Atlantic Canadians the serious economic impacts of natural resource mismanagement. Mining and oil and gas projects are also important to the Atlantic Canadian economy, but can have serious environmental consequences.⁴ Farming is vital throughout the Atlantic region, but it is faced with the various

² United Nations, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

³ Oxfam Canada, "Hungry for Change." Available at <http://www.oxfam.ca/hungryforchange/index.htm>. Accessed 13 October, 2006.

⁴ See, for example, the environmental risks listed in the Environmental Assessment Panel Report for the Voisey's Bay Mine and Mill development in Newfoundland. Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. 1999. *Voisey's Bay Mine and Mill Environmental Assessment Panel Report*. http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/010/0001/0001/0011/0002/contents_e.htm



challenges of soil erosion, water scarcity, migrant labour, and the economic viability of small farming are ongoing concerns for Atlantic farmers.⁵

Atlantic Canadians are affected by other environmental issues as well. For example, Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley experiences some of the highest concentrations of ground-level ozone in Canada.⁶ Climate change can also have direct impacts for Atlantic Canada, including more severe storms and sea level rise due to polar ice melt.⁷

Maintaining and enhancing social structures and services is another key aspect of sustainability. Issues such as accessible and affordable transportation, education, and housing are relevant across the region. Atlantic Canadians, on average, have poorer health status than other Canadians.⁸ In part because of the rural nature of the region, Atlantic Canadians also experience particular challenges, such as high unemployment in some areas, and the out-migration of youth from rural communities.⁹

Polls show that Canadians have put the environment as one of their top priorities. Governments at all levels are debating the best way to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and ensure a healthy environment for future generations. The media has put sustainability on the front pages and public interest has never been stronger. Canadians want action. They want to do the right thing. But the challenge is enormously complex.

Sustainability cannot be achieved by one organization – one company, one municipality, one government – alone. It is a challenge that requires unprecedented collaboration between departments, between sectors, between levels of government, and at all levels of civil society. New organizations and new ways of thinking are needed to allow us to move beyond our own disciplines and areas of expertise to collaborate with others.

Meeting the challenge of sustainability requires systems thinking – examining how different systems are linked to one another, and how our own actions affect those systems; understanding the ways we have undermined the systems that support us; and focusing on how we can address those problems upstream, before they become serious, rather than looking only at impacts downstream.

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative was developed to help address the sustainability challenges we face here in Atlantic Canada, and to bring people together to network and share information as we move forward on these important issues.

⁵ The Canadian Encyclopedia. 2006. "Soil Conservation: Soil Health by Region."

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC828353>

⁶ GPI Atlantic. 2004. *The Ambient Air Quality Accounts for the Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index.*

<http://www.gpiatlantic.org/pdf/airquality/airquality.pdf>.

⁷ Lemmen, D.S., Warren, F.J., Lacroix, J., and Bush, E., editors (2008): *From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007*; Government of Canada, Ottawa, ON. http://adaptation.nrcan.gc.ca/assess/2007/index_e.php

⁸ Karen Hayward and Ronald Colman. 2003. *The Tides of Change: Addressing Inequity and Chronic Disease in Atlantic Canada.* Health Canada, Population and Public Health Branch, Atlantic Region.

⁹ Canadian Rural Partnership. 2005. "Our Communities . . . Our Successes!" *Rural Routes of Atlantic Canada.* Spring 2005. http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/newsletter/Spr05/ourcommunities_e.phtml#population



The Natural Step

While there is broad agreement on the concept of and the need for sustainability, there has thus far been no systemic, practical path or method for how to achieve the goal. The Natural Step framework provides a tested, practical approach that can be used to build on this interest and advance toward a sustainable future.

The Natural Step framework is being used by hundreds of organizations around the world to advance sustainability and facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration. The Natural Step framework provides three essential ingredients for meaningful progress toward sustainability:

- A shared language for sustainability.
- A rigorous, science-based understanding of sustainability rooted in systems thinking.
- A proven strategic planning process to help decision-makers translate that understanding into practice.

The Natural Step framework is based on four System Conditions, developed through a process of scientific consensus. The System Conditions state that in a sustainable society:

1. nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances from the earth's crust;
2. nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society;
3. nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means; and
4. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

In addition, TNS uses a four-stage planning framework called the ABCD framework to assist in strategically planning for sustainability. For additional information and resources on The Natural Step framework, please see the resources section of the ACSI website (<http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/resources/resources.htm#TNS>).

It is important to note that use of The Natural Step framework does not replace or contradict any other tool, concept or method designed to advance sustainability. Instead, it provides a structured way to understand and approach sustainability, and an integrated planning framework and set of guiding principles to strengthen existing initiatives and encourage greater collaboration.

Sustainability Partner Selection

As described above, several different events took place during 2005 and 2006 that helped to build momentum around the idea of a regional sustainability project. Organizations and communities that were interested in being involved in this process began to naturally come forward. In addition to working with these organizations, the founding organizations were also conscious of achieving diversity in the geographical location, sector, and size of the participating partners, so additional outreach and recruitment took place, in particular to potential partners in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is important to emphasize here that the ACSI was designed as a collaborative project. Partners worked closely together, especially at the beginning, to design the year-long program,



including the training sessions, the project charter, and the financial model. It was very important to the founding organizations that all partners were involved in this development process, and ACSI has continued to seek input and feedback from its partners throughout the project.



IV. ACSI Partners

Sustainability Partners

The ACSI was officially launched with 14 Sustainability Partners. Over the course of the year, one new Partner joined the project, and two of the original Partners withdrew from the project due to resource constraints. Several months after the first ACSI training workshop, as the halfway point in the year-long project approached, a decision was made not to take on any other new Partners because of the challenges in bringing them up to speed with the Partners who had been part of the project from the beginning. Instead, ACSI plans to launch a second cohort with a set of new Partners (see section on Next Steps for more information).

Each Sustainability Partner signed a Project Charter (see a copy of the Project Charter below in Appendix B), committing their organization to taking action on sustainability. The 13 organizations that completed the year as Sustainability Partners are:

Aliant

Environmental protection is a vital part of doing business at Aliant. Aliant is committed to minimizing the impact of our activities and operations on the environment while working to create a sustainable future by integrating long-term economic, environmental, and social considerations into the way we operate our business.

Contact: Marcus Goodick, Marcus.Goodick@aliant.ca

Website: www.bell.aliant.ca

Antigonish Sustainable Development

Antigonish Sustainable Development seeks to assist our community to identify and set goals related to sustainable development, and to come up with a framework required for success.

Contact: Kuli Malhotra, kmalhotra.asdp@gmail.com

Bathurst Sustainable Development

The concern for quality of life and water quality in our watershed led to the establishment of the Bathurst Sustainable Development Project in mid-July 1995. The overall objective of the project was to set up a long-term mechanism for the communication and action among government, business and the community. The project also encouraged residents to take a more active part in mitigating the impact of watershed effluent in the Nepisiguit Drainage Basin and addressing Climate Change. Bathurst Sustainable Development is a non-profit organization.

Contact: Brenda Kelley, rosewood@nb.aibn.com

Website: www.bathurstsustainabledevelopment.com

Halifax Regional Municipality

Halifax Regional Municipality, the capital of Nova Scotia, is committed to being a "healthy sustainable vibrant community" and is proud to be the one of the founding partners of the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI).

Contact: Stephen King, kings@halifax.ca

Website: www.halifax.ca



Halifax Shambhala Centre

The Halifax Shambhala Centre is the local centre of Shambhala, an international community dedicated to meditation practice and to the establishment of enlightened society inspired by basic goodness. Halifax is the capital city of Shambhala's worldwide centres.

Contact: Richard Peisinger, rpeisinger@ns.sympatico.ca

Website: halifax.shambhala.org/sustainability/index.html

iNova Credit Union

On April 1, 1936 twelve postal employees met on a porch on Parker St. in Halifax and formed the Halifax District Postal Credit Union Ltd. It was founded to give postal workers a place to save and obtain loans. After two name changes and another 70 years iNova Credit Union now serves the entire community.

Contact: Willy Robinson, wrobinson@inovacreditunion.coop

Website: www.nspostalcreditunion.com

Jacques Whitford

Jacques Whitford is a Nova Scotia based leader in environmental, engineering, scientific and planning consulting, dedicated to resolving challenges in the natural and built environments. Since 1972, Jacques Whitford's mission has been to listen and learn from their clients as the basis for delivering exceptional customized, value-added solutions. Their focus has always been on earth and environment, so it is natural that their commitment has evolved to place sustainability at the heart of everything they do internally, and with clients.

Contact: Karen Miner, Karen.Miner@JacquesWhitford.com

Website: www.jacqueswhitford.com

Just Us! Coffee Roasters

Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op is Canada's first Fair Trade coffee roaster, and is also one of Canada's most successful worker-owned businesses based on a firm belief in "people and the planet before profits". Fair Trade is an innovative model for international trade, which offers not only a fair price, but respect and empowerment for Third World producers. All Just Us! products – coffee, tea, chocolate and sugar – are grown naturally, without chemicals, to enhance the well-being of farmers, their communities, the environment and wild-life.

Contact: Debra Moore, deb@justuscoffee.com

Website: www.justuscoffee.com

P'lovers, the Environmental Store

P'lovers Environmental Store was created in 1992 in Halifax to help people live in harmony with the earth. P'lovers believes that the actions of each and every one of us can positively affect the quality of the world in which we live.

Contact: Liz Crocker, crockerbrainliz@eastlink.ca

Website: www.plovers.net



City of Saint John

The City of Saint John's process of continuous improvement called Vision 2015 Program of Excellence is underway. This program is a multi-year undertaking of planning, projects, and change strategy designed to set a clear and attainable course of action to align the services delivered by the City of Saint John to community goals and objectives.

Contact: Andrew Beckett, andrew.beckett@saintjohn.ca

Website: www.saintjohn.ca

Stewardship and Outreach Section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Primarily through education programs, the Stewardship and Outreach Section of the Department of Natural Resources promotes sustainable natural resource use and management to youth, woodland owners, hunters, trappers, guides, Christmas tree growers, other groups and the general public. It is a part of the Operations Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Contact: Tim Whynot, WHYNOTTW@gov.ns.ca

Website: www.gov.ns.ca/natr/extension

Town of Stratford

Stratford, Prince Edward Island, is a new community incorporated in 1995 through the amalgamation of several small farming and summer cottage communities. Though new in name, the area was first settled by Acadians in the 1750s. Farming, shipbuilding and brickmaking were its original industries.

Contact: Doug Deacon, DDeacon@town.stratford.pe.ca

Website: www.town.stratford.pe.ca

Town of Wolfville

Several years ago the Town of Wolfville and the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS) embarked on a collaborative partnership known as the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI). This initiative sparked exploration of The Natural Step framework and other strategic planning tools concerned with long term community vitality and viability. These early efforts laid the ground work for future planning projects and helped to create an environment that fostered acceptance by both management and Council, for the importance of community planning and development from a sustainability perspective.

Contact: Karen Dempsey, kdempsey@town.wolfville.ns.ca

Website: www.town.wolfville.ns.ca

Network Partners

In addition to the 13 formal Sustainability Partners who signed the project charter, there are many other organizations that are part of the ACSI network and have a shared interest in supporting this project and in making Atlantic Canada more sustainable. These organizations include:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- AuCoeur\Occur Sustainable Communities
- Canadian Business Ethics Research Network (CBERN)



- Canadian CED Network
- C-CIARN Atlantic
- Coastal Communities Network
- Ecology Action Centre
- Environment & Sustainable Development Research Centre, University of New Brunswick
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Genuine Progress Index Atlantic
- Halifax Global
- International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC)
- Memorial University
- New Brunswick Environmental Network
- Nova Scotia Environmental Network
- Ocean Net
- Province of New Brunswick (Department of Environment)
- Province of Nova Scotia (Departments of Environment, Natural Resources, Municipal Relations, and the Office of Economic Development)
- Public Works and Government Services Canada
- Rural Secretariat and the Nova Scotia Rural Team
- St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association
- School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University
- Shambhala Institute
- Sierra Club of Canada – Atlantic Canada Chapter
- Sustainable Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone (SENSE)
- Sustainable Energy in New Glasgow Project
- The Co-operators Insurance Company
- Two Countries, One Forest
- Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, Municipality Sustainability Office
- Windhorse Education Foundation
- White Point Beach Resort

Network Partners participated in ACSI in a number of different ways. They participated in training and networking sessions; they promoted ACSI's work and advertised our events; they provided resources and information to the ACSI network; and they supported ACSI with their time and energy. The participation of Network Partners in addition to the Sustainability Partners made the ACSI network richer and more diverse, and contributed to the learning experience of all participants.



V. The ACSI Program

This section provides an overview of the one-year ACSI program. As described above, the objectives, timeline and funding model were developed in collaboration with partners.

Objectives

The ACSI was seen as a first step in an ongoing commitment and journey towards a more sustainable future in Atlantic Canada. Project partners committed to the following objectives:

- build capacity and competence within their organization to become better leaders in sustainable development;
- implement a plan of action that advances sustainability within their organization through concrete actions;
- serve as role models by sharing their own organization's successes and lessons with respect to sustainability;
- build an effective network that collaborates and supports progress towards sustainability;
- build regional momentum towards sustainability by engaging citizens, organizations and governments within the Atlantic Region; and
- identify and act on opportunities collaboratively to help move the region towards sustainability.

Timeline

Launch Dinner – May 14, 2007

- The purpose of the dinner was to build high-level awareness of, and support and enthusiasm for the project. It provided an opportunity for senior managers from participating organizations to participate without having to commit to a two-day training session.
- Leaders from Sustainability Partner organizations, potential partner organizations, businesses, provincial and federal government (i.e. Mayors, CAOs, CEOs or Presidents, Ministers etc.), and the participants at the first ACSI workshop were all invited to celebrate the launch of the ACSI. Approximately 85 people attended.

Strategic Sustainability: Helping Atlantic Canada Move Toward Sustainable Development (Workshop #1) – May 15-16, 2007

- The purpose of this workshop was to provide participants with awareness and understanding of, and a common language for sustainability. The two-day workshop focused on learning about The Natural Step framework and how it can be used for strategic planning for sustainability; meeting all of the ACSI network members and learning a little more about the Sustainability Partners; hearing about the ACSI project and process over the next year; and learning about organizational change and evaluation.
- This workshop was attended by 88 people, including facilitators.
- Resources: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#wkshp1>

Coaching – May to November 2007



- The Natural Step Canada provided 8 hours of coaching for each Sustainability Partner organization. This time was used to help each partner organization to develop and implement their sustainability initiative.

Sustainability in Action: Sharing, Learning and Implementation for Sustainability (Workshop #2)

– November 13-14, 2007

- This workshop was designed so that Sustainability Partners could check in with each other at the half way point, share success stories, learn from each other, receive additional TNS training, and continue building the network.
- This workshop was attended by 53 people, including facilitators.
- Resources: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#wkshp2>

Coaching – November 2007 to April 2008

- Coaching with individual Sustainability Partner organizations continued. Each Partner received an additional 8 hours of coaching during this period.

ACSI Regional Sustainability Summit (Workshop #3) – April 17-18, 2008

- The final event in the year had two main goals. The first was to bring together participants to celebrate the successes of the past year and to share outcomes with each other and with the network. The second goal was to provide additional learning and expertise on topics of interest identified by partners, such as organizational change and strategic planning for sustainability.
- This workshop was attended by 65 people, including facilitators.
- Resources: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#summit>

Other events

ACSI also coordinated several other events over the year, including:

- Two webinars on sustainable procurement, one held on January 29, 2008 and the other on March 13, 2008.
- A public lecture with Bart Robinson of the Bow Valley Sustainability Hub, Canmore, AB.
- A tree-planting event to commemorate Earth Day 2008 (April 22).

Budget Summary

The total project expenditures for ACSI for the 2007-08 year were \$195,492.58, and income \$207,468.10. The balance of the funding remaining (\$11,975.52) is being used to support the continuing work of ACSI until full funding for a second year of operations can be secured.

The expenditures break down as follows:

EXPENDITURES	\$	%
Workshop #1	\$56,729.76	29.02%
Workshop #2	\$39,124.67	20.01%
Sustainability Summit	\$37,387.64	19.12%
Coaching	\$35,000.00	17.90%
Webinars	\$1,371.76	0.70%
Communications (website, etc.)	\$878.75	0.45%
Project Management	\$15,000.00	7.67%
Evaluation	\$10,000.00	5.12%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$195,492.58	100%



The income breaks down as follows:

REVENUE	\$	%
TNS Canada in-kind (McConnell Family Foundation)	\$60,000.00	28.92%
Fees for services (workshops, webinars, etc.)	\$51,193.10	24.68%
Federal Government funding	\$14,500.00	6.99%
Provincial Government funding	\$5,000.00	2.41%
Foundation funding	\$71,250.00	34.34%
Private sector sponsorship (Aliant, iNova)	\$5,525.00	2.66%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$207,468.10	100%

Please see the full budget in Appendix C for further details.



VI. Outcomes

ACSI's key objectives (listed above) focused on building capacity and leadership within organizations in Atlantic Canada to respond to and plan for sustainability, and on creating real movement forward on sustainability issues within each organization and across the Atlantic region. In addition, the development of a network of people and organizations engaged in sustainability work for the purpose of supporting each other, sharing information and collaborating was also a key objective.

Some of the over-arching successes of the ACSI project as a whole, such as building long-term commitment to and awareness of sustainability, changing corporate culture, and creating incentives and pressure for buy-in, are discussed below. This section will highlight generally some of the key outcomes that the Partners implemented in their own organizations. Further detailed information about the actions of each Sustainability Partner can be found in the case studies in Appendix D.

Building Awareness

Building awareness about sustainability was a key focus for all partners. Partners worked to both educate and engage at several levels, including staff, suppliers and clients, and the wider community. They developed educational campaigns and programs, and many used The Natural Step's Sustainability 101 on-line learning course as an educational tool.

Engagement of staff and community in the sustainability planning process was also a key aspect of building awareness. Partners hosted educational and consultation sessions to share information with and get input and ideas from their stakeholders. Several of the larger organizations developed cross-departmental teams of people focused on promoting and demonstrating leadership on sustainability. Smaller organizations worked to involve all staff in the sustainability planning process.

Baseline Analysis

During the year they participated in ACSI, a number of Partners conducted baseline analyses of their operations to determine how they were doing in relation to all aspects of sustainability. Many of the Partners had not conducted such a baseline assessment before, so this was a critical step in setting goals and priorities, and determining next steps.

Plans, Policies and Decision-making Tools

During the year, all of the ACSI Sustainability Partners worked on developing various plans, policies, and decision-making tools to help ensure that sustainable practices are implemented, and to help move sustainability forward in their organizations. Many of the Partners developed a comprehensive sustainability plan and reporting process for their whole organization, identifying goals, priorities and timelines for action.

A number of partners are also working on, or have completed the development of a sustainability decision-making filter. These filters take into account the necessary conditions for



sustainability, and help to evaluate all major decisions (for example purchases or capital projects) against those conditions. Putting in place a sustainability decision-making filter is a critical step in ensuring that sustainability is taken account in all decisions throughout an organization.

Two other areas of focus for policy change/implementation were sustainable procurement and transportation management and planning.

Actions

In addition to the initiatives described above, listed below are a few examples of other specific actions that the Partners took as a result of their participation in ACSI. This list is not comprehensive – for more detailed information please see the case studies in Appendix D.

- Outreach activities around water usage.
- Development of sustainability objectives and vision statements.
- Focus on green buildings.
- Plan for sustainable transportation.
- Development of an annual report on sustainability.
- Creation of a toolkit to assess environmental impact of offices.
- Becoming carbon neutral through reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and the purchase of carbon offsets.
- Waste reduction initiatives such as switching to compostable containers, program to reduce usage of bags, paper reduction programs, and reducing packaging on products.
- Developing Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs).
- Incorporating a sustainability standard into performance expectations for employees.
- Use of organic farming practices.
- Carbon and energy reduction projects, with several organizations setting specific goals and targets.
- Building a local support network of organizations that will feed into the ACSI network (and vice versa).
- Improving insulation and air sealing to reduce energy use.
- Ensuring social and environmental objectives are aligned.
- Implementing an anti-idling campaign.
- Creating a survey for local election candidates on their positions on sustainability-related issues.
- Working with other organizations to develop sustainability programs that have an expanded reach.
- Developing a pesticide reduction program.



VII. Successes and Lessons Learned

Successes

As described above and in the case studies in Appendix D, each of the Sustainability Partners had their own successes in terms of plans developed and strategies and actions implemented. There were also some major successes for ACSI as a whole that need to be highlighted here.

ACSI was very successful in acting as a catalyst for Partners to build a long-term commitment to sustainability. ACSI helped facilitate a shift in corporate culture in Partner organizations. In some cases, at the beginning of the project, there was one individual in an organization, a sole sustainability champion, pushing the agenda forward. Through their ACSI projects, Sustainability Partners have worked very hard to educate and engage all staff and stakeholders, to develop many sustainability champions across the organization, and to integrate sustainability into day-to-day decision-making. All of this serves to further embed and mainstream sustainability into an organization, and ensures that it becomes the responsibility of all. This successful shift is evidenced by the fact that even if ACSI did not continue to operate after its first year, every Partner plans to continue with their sustainability work.

ACSI was also successful in building critical mass and creating incentive and pressure to move forward on sustainability. Simply signing the ACSI project charter and being part of a group of organizations working on these issues helped push organizations forward. In some cases this meant increased time and attention to sustainability issues that had been on the back burner for some time. In other cases this meant getting senior level buy-in and commitment to sustainability projects that was difficult to get before.

The other major success of the first year of ACSI was the development of a diverse network of people working on sustainability issues that can support each other, share information and advice, and work together on projects. While there are improvements to be made in this area as ACSI moves forward (see lessons learned below), during the evaluation process many participants in the ACSI network commented on how beneficial the network was for sharing their own work, learning what others are doing, generating new ideas and partnerships, and building contacts and relationships. In addition, several Partner organizations mentioned that the ACSI events provided an opportunity for their own sustainability teams to meet and share experiences as well. The networking aspects of ACSI, and the diverse range of partners that participated in the network, are major strengths of the project.

Lessons Learned

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative was a pilot project, the only regional, multi-sector sustainability project in North America. As with any new, innovative and forward-thinking project, many lessons were learned over the past year. This section reviews the key lessons learned and recommendations for improvements as ACSI moves forward.

Networking and Communications

- It was obvious from participant comments that they benefitted from the networking aspects of ACSI, and they would have liked even more opportunities and methods for sharing information, especially between in-person workshops.



- Because ACSI was a new project and because of some resource constraints, the external communications and outreach (with media and with other organizations, senior leaders, etc.) was limited. For example, the website and newsletter were not officially launched until the fall of 2007. This is an area that Partners identified as important, so could certainly be improved upon.
- Although there was significant diversity among partners, greater geographical diversity (including greater representation from Newfoundland), and more partners from other sectors (e.g. education), would have strengthened the project and provided more networking opportunities.

Training and Coaching

- The primary lesson learned in relation to the training and coaching was to start with greater clarity around goals and expected outcomes. The intention at the beginning of the project was to keep the goals flexible so that Partners could integrate their ACSI initiative into what they were already doing in regards to sustainability. This flexibility was important; however, it did result in a lack of clarity around what Partners should be doing, and it created challenges around information sharing, since Partners were not all going through the same process. Clearer expectations up front would have made coaching and training flow more smoothly, and would have facilitated coaches in supporting the partner initiatives.
- Lack of time and/or financial resources among partners was a barrier for some organizations in completing their sustainability work. Almost all of the participants were doing this sustainability work on top of their regular work and often just did not have the amount of time available that they would have liked to spend on their sustainability initiative. Going forward, it is important to acknowledge this and to set realistic goals and expectations for Partners.
- There was a tension between the amount of material to cover at each workshop, and the desire of Partners to keep the workshops shorter. This led to sessions sometimes feeling rushed or very full. Each workshop could have been extended, or the material covered in other ways to allow more time for networking and reflection.
- ACSI worked to take advantage of the significant expertise of the Partners engaged in the project. The second workshop, for example, drew on that expertise directly in peer-to-peer learning sessions. Partners could have been further engaged in sharing their expertise with each other both at workshops and in the interim times through various means.

Organizational

- When ACSI was being developed, partners were very enthusiastic about the project, and wanted to see it move forward quickly. The project therefore started without funding for the full year, with the understanding that fundraising efforts would be ongoing. This led to some insecurity around the continuation of ACSI. Had more time been taken in the earlier stages to plan and fundraise, the project would likely have proceeded more smoothly. This would also have facilitated a smoother transition to year 2 of ACSI.
- Transitioning to a new host organization at the halfway point caused some organizational challenges. Having one host and a full-time coordinator trained in sustainability planning would have helped the project run more smoothly.



Key Recommendations for the Future

Networking and Communications

1. **Create additional opportunities for networking between ACSI partners.** Some ideas for doing this are the use of online tools (e.g. listserv, online forums, etc.); by setting up a buddy system for participants to talk to each other in between training; by developing a list of people's expertise so other partners know who to call on for help in a specific area; by setting up smaller local or topic-specific groups that could meet and network in between workshops; additional smaller events such as guest speakers or short workshops/webinars between major workshops; developing best practices from each partner to share with the network; additional outreach to senior leaders in partner organizations to draw on and share their expertise; or any combination of the above.
2. **Develop a comprehensive communications strategy.** ACSI now has a public presence from which to build, including an excellent website and a regular monthly newsletter. ACSI needs to work on its media connections and develop a media strategy, and continue to do presentations and outreach to other groups and organizations.
3. **Provide more support for partners on their internal outreach.** This includes explaining sustainability and ACSI in plain language, coaching on an "elevator speech" on sustainability, assisting with pitches/presentations to senior management, etc.
4. **Continue to recruit diverse partners to participate in ACSI.** Target new partners specifically in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Look at the education sector (especially post-secondary) as well as NGOs and businesses.

Training and Coaching

1. **Develop clear expectations for project outcomes and Partner activities.** The next round of Sustainability Partners should begin with some clear goals for what they would like to achieve at the end of the project (e.g. a sustainability plan, a baseline analysis, greenhouse gas reductions, etc.). Coaching can then work backwards from the end goal and support partners in project development, strategic planning, time management, etc.
2. **Develop a full year training plan at the beginning of the project.** Developing a full year, flexible training plan at the outset that identifies key learning topics at each workshop plus additional in between learning opportunities (e.g. readings, webinars, etc.) will help participants better prepare for each workshop, and will ensure that learning is ongoing throughout the year. This will also make managing time and participation easier as participants will know what is happening when. Providing readings and learning events of interest can also facilitate networking between Partners. It is important that this plan is also flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of Partners over the course of the year.
3. **Provide more opportunities for partners to learn from each other.** This recommendation is reflected already in the increased networking opportunities described above, but it could also be reflected further in the training by taking examples and real challenges from the partners for use in workshops and training, and by providing more structured peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Organizational

1. **Secure long-term funding for ACSI in addition to shorter-term and project-specific funding.** Longer-term funding will help to provide security for ACSI's future as the project continues to develop. In the fundraising plan going forward, ACSI should seek multi-year funding whenever possible.



2. **Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all organizations involved (Sustainability and Network Partners, host, training partners, etc.) are clearly defined.** Having written documents, such as the project charter and an MOU, ensure that roles, responsibilities and expectations of each participating organization are clearly outlined and explained, and that all participants are accountable.
3. **Hire a coordinator trained in TNS and/or other sustainability planning frameworks.** The coordinator can then do more to directly support current and future ACSI partners working on implementing sustainability in their organizations.



VIII. Next Steps

When ACSI was launched, although the original commitment of the participating Sustainability Partners was only for one year, it was always understood that the process of moving towards sustainability is a long term commitment. At the final event in the first year of ACSI, the Sustainability Summit held April 17-18, 2008, there was a strong message from partners and stakeholders that they want ACSI to continue its work as a resource and a network for those doing sustainability work in Atlantic Canada.

Since the mandate of the project was only for one year, and the first year was a pilot project, this gives stakeholders an opportunity to reflect back on the year that has past, celebrate the successes and take in the lessons, and to re-launch ACSI again with a revised plan and new funding. To take on this important work, a Steering Committee for ACSI has been struck. Committee members are drawn from Sustainability Partner organizations, Network Partner organizations, and new organizations that want to participate in ACSI going forward. The committee members are:

Name	Organization
John Colton, Chair	Centre for Rural Sustainability
Julie Turcotte	Halifax Global
Justin Dearing	Ocean Net
Kuli Malhotra, Vice-Chair	Antigonish Sustainable Development
Keith Cossey	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada - Rural Secretariat
Amelia Clarke	Sierra Club of Canada
Willy Robinson	iNOVA Credit Union
Tamara Lorincz	Nova Scotia Environmental Network
Sarah Brooks	The Natural Step Canada
Clare Levin	ACSI (ex-officio)

The committee is meeting on a regular basis and is tasked with developing a strategic plan for ACSI going forward by early summer 2008. The key strategic directions that the committee, with input from ACSI partners, has already identified include:

4. Building capacity and competence in sustainability through events (e.g. workshops, webinars), the development of tools, outreach with the public, sharing best practices, providing peer networking and learning opportunities, and encouraging innovation.
5. Expanding and further developing the ACSI network by attracting more partners from outside Nova Scotia, and in sectors not yet represented (e.g. the formal education sector), and by providing ongoing opportunities for networking and collaboration.
6. Working with a second cohort of Sustainability Partners to take them through a process similar to that used in the first year: establishing a formal commitment to sustainability; undertaking training and coaching as the organizations develop and implement sustainability plans; and integrating these organizations into the existing ACSI network.

For the last six months, the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative has been housed and coordinated by the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS). While the CRS is committed to continuing to support ACSI as the strategic plan is developed, and through a transition period, it is not able to commit to ongoing hosting in the longer term. The ACSI Steering Committee is therefore seeking expressions of interest for a new host organization. It is expected that the new host will take on management of the project in the fall of 2008.



As the strategic plan is developed, ACSI's regular communications activities, such as updating the website and putting out the Sustainability Bulletin newsletter, will continue.



APPENDIX A: FOUNDING AND COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONS

Coordinating Organization

The Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS) is a community non-profit organization that facilitates learning, planning, and strategic decision making around issues of long-term and short-term sustainability for rural Nova Scotia communities. The organization envisions a not-too-distant future where the financially stable economies of rural communities are fuelled by ecologically sustainable means that foster quality of life, social justice, and health.

The Centre for Rural Sustainability Contact Information:

The Centre for Rural Sustainability
c/o School of Recreation Management & Kinesiology
550 Main St., Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia B4P 2R6
Phone: 902-585-1123
Fax: 902-585-1702
Website: www.ruralsustainability.org
Email: info@ruralsustainability.org

Founding Organizations

The Natural Step Canada

The Natural Step Canada is part of an international non-profit organization that works with various groups ranging from municipal governments to large multi-national corporations who are committed to understanding and integrating sustainable development into their day-to-day work. The mission of The Natural Step as an organization is to develop a genuine commitment to, and competence in, sustainable development throughout society, using The Natural Step Framework as a systems approach for dialogue and decision making.

The Natural Step Canada Contact Information:

The Natural Step Canada
355 Waverley Street
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 4W0
Phone: 613-748-3001
Fax: 613-748-1649
Website: www.naturalstep.ca
Email: info@naturalstep.ca

Genuine Progress Index (GPI) Atlantic

Founded in 1997, GPI Atlantic is an independent, non-profit research and education organization committed to the development of the Genuine Progress Index (GPI) – a new measure of sustainability, wellbeing and quality of life. Our mission is to conduct research on the GPI, and to assist leaders in business, government and communities in using the GPI perspective in their decision-making.



GPI Atlantic Contact Information:

Genuine Progress Index Atlantic
535 Indian Point Rd.
Glen Haven, Nova Scotia B3Z 2T5
Phone: 902-823-1944
Website: www.gpiatlantic.org
Email: info@gpiatlantic.org

Nova Scotia Environmental Network

The Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) was established in 1991 and is a non-profit organization registered under the Society Act of Nova Scotia. The network is comprised of non-governmental environmental and health organizations whose common purpose is the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and the pursuit of a sustainable future for Nova Scotia. There are approximately 50 environmental organizations in the Network. NSEN facilitates the forming of caucuses and working groups among our members. NSEN also organizes events, capacity-building workshops, annual conferences and roundtables to support the work of our members.

NSEN Contact Information:

Nova Scotia Environmental Network
55 Willowbend Court
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 3L3
Phone: 902-454-6846
Fax: 902-454-6841
Website: www.nsen.ca
Email: nsen@cen-rce.org

SENSE: Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone

Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone (SENSE) is a group of organizations, businesses and individuals dedicated to the promotion of ideas and practices which will help Nova Scotia become sustainable. SENSE is part of a national network of Provincial and Territorial Working Groups striving to achieve the objectives of the United Nations' Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) from 2005-2014. SENSE is a working group of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network.

SENSE Contact Information:

SENSE: Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone
c/o Nova Scotia Environmental Network
55 Willowbend Court
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 3L3
Phone: 902-454-6846
Fax: 902-454-6841
Website: <http://www.nsen.ca/education.php>
Website: <http://www.lsf-lst.ca/en/pwg/ns.php>
Email: esd_novascotia@magma.ca



APPENDIX B: THE ACSI PROJECT CHARTER

Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative – Project Charter

Purpose

This Charter outlines the commitment of our organization to the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative. This Initiative is intended to build capacity and commitment among a diverse group of Atlantic organizations who will advance sustainable development within our own organizations and the Atlantic Region as a whole using the Natural Step Framework as a guide.

Objectives

We view this initiative as a first step in an ongoing commitment and journey towards a more sustainable future. We commit to actively participate in this project in an effort to:

- **build capacity and competence** within our organization to become better leaders in sustainable development;
- **create and implement a plan of action** that advances sustainability within our organization through concrete actions;
- **serve as role models** by sharing our own organization's successes and lessons with respect to sustainability;
- **build an effective network** that collaborates and supports progress towards sustainability;
- **build regional momentum** towards sustainability by engaging citizens, organizations and governments within the Atlantic Region; and
- **identify and act on opportunities** collaboratively to help move the region towards sustainability

Scope

- The scope of work associated with this initiative is as outlined in the Project Plan attached as Schedule 1.

Our Commitment

As a Sustainability Partner in the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative, we commit to:

- Collaborate on the design and delivery of this initiative.
- Commit time and finances for 3 – 5 individuals from our organization to attend training sessions and meetings as part of the program.
- Ensure that the senior leaders from our organization attend strategic functions of the program including the launch dinner.
- Advance sustainability within our organization by committing to do one or more of the following (informed by the Natural Step Framework):
 - Develop a Sustainability Action Plan
 - Develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan
 - Integrate sustainability into the community's Municipal Development Plan
 - Develop a program to incorporate sustainability into the culture of our organization
- Participate in an initial training workshop and two subsequent workshops, at six months and one year following the initial workshop, to share success stories and lessons learned, engage in additional learning from each other and/or from identified resources,



and to collaboratively identify and act on opportunities to help move the Atlantic region towards sustainability.

- Participate in peer to peer networking with other sustainability partners.
- Play a leadership role in the community and in the region with respect to sustainability.
- Covering the workshop fees for our own participation (\$250 per person per workshop), and the associated travel and accommodations.
- Also helping to ensure sufficient resources are in place to cover the costs of the entire project and assist with raising/investing funds to support the regional initiative (as outlined in the budget in Schedule 2).
- Assist with evaluating the success and effectiveness of this initiative.

The Natural Step (TNS) Canada agrees to:

- Provide high level direction and support, and assist with project management.
- Collaborate on the design and delivery of this initiative to ensure that project objectives are met.
- Design and deliver the training workshops.
- Recruit additional speakers and expertise as appropriate.
- Provide 2 days of coaching for each of the sustainability partners.
- Commit grant money to this initiative to support TNS Canada's participation.

The Project Coordinator will:

- Collaborate on the design and delivery of this initiative.
- Facilitate peer to peer networking amongst project partners.
- Co-develop and implement a funding plan for the initiative.
- Provide fundraising support and financial oversight of the project.
- Secure venues and provide logistical support for the initiative.
- Provide internal and external communications.
- Facilitate the development of a communications plan for the regional initiative.
- Assemble and maintain a resource centre (books, papers, case studies, PowerPoint presentations, etc.) to support sustainability partners.



APPENDIX C: ACSI 2007-08 BUDGET

EXPENSES	
WORKSHOP 1 -- May 2007 (2 days)	
Keynote speaker -- per diem and travel	\$2,850.00
Design and delivery of 2 day workshop (TNS Canada)	\$16,360.00
Workshop Facilities	\$20,337.91
TNS Travel and accommodation	\$3,480.29
GPI Time	\$10,209.52
GPI Admin Costs	\$1,623.34
GPI Travel	\$175.90
Materials and supplies	\$1,692.80
Subtotal	\$56,729.76
COACHING May-November	
	\$17,500.00
Subtotal	\$17,500.00
WORKSHOP 2 -- November 13-14, 2007	
Design and delivery of 2 day workshop	\$15,000.00
Workshop Facilities	\$12,909.02
Coordinator & CRS time	\$9,000.00
Materials and supplies	\$52.24
Offsetting the meeting	\$453.68
CRS Travel and Accommodation	\$371.76
TNS Travel and accommodation	\$1,337.97
Subtotal	\$39,124.67
COACHING November - April	
	\$17,500.00
Subtotal	\$17,500.00
REGIONAL SUMMIT -- April 17-18, 2008	
TNS - Design and delivery	\$10,000.00
CRS - coordination of summit	\$8,000.00
Guest speakers	\$935.61
Facilities -- includes meals and facility space but not travel	\$10,999.23
Materials and supplies	\$141.33
Offsetting the meeting	\$600.00
Halifax event	\$287.75
Travel Subsidy	\$150.00
CRS Travel and Accommodation	\$327.64
Presenter travel	\$1,946.08
TNS Travel and accommodation	\$4,000.00
	** estimate
Subtotal	\$37,387.64
PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OTHER EXPENSES	
TNS Canada Project Management (1 year)	\$15,000.00
Webinars	\$1,371.76
Website, communications (incl. conf calls & special events)	\$878.75
Evaluation	\$10,000.00
Subtotal	\$27,250.51
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$195,492.58



REVENUE	
CONFIRMED	
TNS Canada - (McConnell)	\$60,000.00
Workshop Fees	\$25,313.10
Workshop 2 Fees	\$12,875.00
Summit fees	\$12,325.00
Webinar fees	\$680.00
Canada Rural Partnership - for first workshop	\$14,500.00
Resource Recovery Fund Board	\$5,000.00
Catherine Donnelly Foundation	\$35,000.00
Aliant	\$5,300.00
iNova	\$225.00
Salamander Foundation	\$36,250.00
Subtotal	\$207,468.10
TOTAL REVENUE	\$207,468.10
TOTAL REVENUE - TOTAL EXPENSES	\$11,975.52 *

* Note that remaining funds are being used to support the continuing work of ACSI until full funding for a second year of operations can be secured.



APPENDIX D: ACSI PARTNER CASE STUDIES

The case studies below are based on information provided to ACSI by each of the partners on their experiences working with ACSI over the last year. Partners were given the flexibility to develop their own sustainability actions and initiatives that fit with their current objectives and priorities, so the actions carried out vary significantly from partner to partner. In addition, partners benefitted from the network and the coaching provided in different ways. Some were more interested in the networking and information sharing aspects of ACSI, and others in the more formal learning and training opportunities. This diversity is a strength of the ACSI network, and is reflected in the varied case studies below.

Aliant

About

Bell Aliant is one of North America's largest regional communications providers. Through its operating entities it serves customers in six Canadian provinces with innovative information, communication and technology services including voice, data, Internet, video and value-added business solutions. Through its xwave offices, Bell Aliant also provides IT professional services in Canada and the US. Bell Aliant's 10,000 employees are committed to deliver the highest quality of customer service, choice and convenience.

In Atlantic Canada, communications products and services are delivered to customers through the Aliant brand. Environmental protection is a vital part of doing business at Aliant. They are committed to minimizing the impact of their activities and operations on the environment while working to create a sustainable future by integrating long-term economic, environmental, and social considerations into the way the business is operated.

Prior to becoming an ACSI Partner, Aliant had a formal environmental management program in place and strong community engagement programs. Quarterly meetings were held with an Environment Council made up of senior executives and an Environmental Action Team made up of leaders from areas such as fleet, buildings, network, human resources, marketing, etc. Yearly environmental performance goals were set, and Aliant was engaged in projects such as calculating its carbon footprint. Each year their performance was shared through the publication of an environment report. Last year this report was expanded to include activities related to building strong communities.

Key Sustainability Actions

As a result of their participation in ACSI, Aliant focused internally on employee engagement and celebrating successes. Employees were looking for ways to participate in environmental programs and make a difference so communicating the efforts underway was a key part of their strategy. Aliant held a number of lunch and learn sessions focusing on internal employees and have since established a number of new employee "Keen to be Green" teams. They made the Natural Step Sustainability 101 on-line learning course available to all Aliant employees. Aliant also increased its participation in recognized programs and participated in Earth Hour with



climate change and energy efficiency communications, Earth Day with a Tree Canada white spruce sale, and Canada's Environment Week with internal and external activities.

Externally, Aliant benefitted from the ACSI network, sharing their achievements, and learning from other initiatives.

Major Successes

Aliant has continued its ongoing sustainability-related activities which include:

- Conducting a baseline carbon footprint study to allow the setting of measurable reduction goals
- Introducing hybrid vehicles into their fleet
- Reducing paper consumption by nearly 22% in the past year and a half
- Expanding their office recycling and organics collection programs
- Implementing additional green procurement initiatives
- Expanding their ongoing energy reduction activities
- Supporting the communities in which they live both financially and through volunteer initiatives.

The most valuable part of the ACSI network for Aliant was establishing contacts with other organizations and individuals that were working on similar projects.

Next Steps

Aliant plans to continue engaging employees and incorporating sustainability into the company's daily business activities. This will happen in areas such as energy usage through analysis of and strategic reductions to the carbon footprint for buildings, fleet, travel, and network operations. Expansion of green procurement initiatives will help to incorporate the broader lifecycle costs of product purchases. There will also be a focus on the delivery of products and services to customers that will enable them to reduce their environmental impacts.

Employee programs will be expanded to encourage and inspire staff to include sustainability concepts into their decisions both at work and at home. The annual employee awards program will be expanded to include recognition for environmental initiatives. In addition Aliant will continue to raise environmental awareness internally and externally and encourage participation in environment and community focused programs. These actions will contribute to achieving corporate goals while improving the organizations commitment to the environment and Atlantic Canadian communities.



Antigonish Sustainable Development (ASD)

About

Antigonish has a long history of community development. Since the 1920s, there has been a strong focus on driving change through building strong collaboration, a culture of volunteerism and taking a holistic view on community development. Initiatives such as the modern Cooperative and Coady movements have brought many leaders together over time to discuss areas of mutual interest in the pillars of environment, economy, society and culture. In 2005, a conference entitled Rethinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing was held at St. Francis Xavier University which helped to build momentum in taking an action-based approach on sustainability. Since 2006, the Antigonish area has been engaged with a visioning process through an initiative called Antigonish 2020 Foresight. Over 500 people have been engaged over two years in identifying visions and priorities for a sustainable future for Antigonish.

On May 1st, 2007 the Antigonish Sustainable Development Project was launched. A community-based steering committee with representation from the four pillars of sustainability (environment, economy, society and culture) in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors identified the need to have a framework for sustainable community development to put visions to action.

Key Sustainability Actions

A framework entitled “Framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community” was developed and shared with the community in July 2007 with four strategic goals:

Goal #1: Aid businesses and organizations in the Antigonish area in developing and implementing sustainability action plans.

Goal #2: Aid municipalities in developing and implementing sustainability action plans (Integrated Community Sustainability Plans).

Goal #3: Create opportunities by building educational awareness and providing solutions to the community at-large in becoming sustainable.

Goal #4: Share modular framework with other communities and aid them in becoming sustainable.

The Natural Step’s approach of the four systems conditions and the Early Adopter approaches taken in Whistler, BC and Canmore, AB provided a basis for building momentum on sustainability in Antigonish. The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative helped confirm the approach ASD has taken and provided a network to share best practices.

Major Successes

Antigonish Sustainable Development’s major successes in the last year of their participation in ACSI include:

- 20 Early Adopters participated in Antigonish, making Antigonish the largest Early Adopter group.
- Building a support network of over 45 partners and stakeholders in Antigonish, and plugging this into the ACSI network (and vice versa).



- Getting support from The Natural Step Canada to develop and implement their program.
- Sharing knowledge and learning about processes to advance sustainability in communities with other ACSI network members.
- Action-based approaches taken by the 20 Early Adopters in Antigonish.

Next Steps

Antigonish Sustainable Development will continue to move toward the vision identified in the Framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community (goals outlined above). For each goal in the framework, here are the following objectives:

Goal #1: Aid businesses and organizations in the Antigonish area in developing and implementing sustainability action plans.

- In 2008, ASD intends to launch two cohorts of the Early Minority stage, one in August 2008 and another in November 2008. ASD's goal is to have, in 2008-09, 65 organizations from the public, private and not-for-profit sector in Antigonish moving towards sustainability through an identified process and through the signing of a charter outlining their commitment. In 2009, ASD will launch the Early Majority stage.

Goal #2: Aid municipalities in developing and implementing sustainability action plans (ICSP).

- ASD has a formal contract to develop the ICSP for the Town of Antigonish which is expected to be completed in December 2009.

Goal #3: Create opportunities by building educational awareness and providing solutions to the community at-large in becoming sustainable.

- In February 2008, Antigonish Sustainable Development launched the first of a series of open community sessions to share opportunities in sustainability. These regular sessions will continue to build capacity in the communities. Sessions focus on building awareness about sustainability; consumer decision-making power and promoting sustainable life-styles and homes; enhancing quality of life and supporting the well-being of society; and other topics on sustainability as identified by the community. Sessions also offer information on incentives and savings opportunities in the areas of eco-efficiency, alternative energy, home renovations and sustainable transportation.

Goal #4: Share modular framework with other communities and aid them in becoming sustainable.

- ASD shares its framework and the tools and resources it develops so that other communities can use them. For example, the Early Adopter and the ICSP processes are providing a methodology which is available for other communities that seek to become sustainable.



Bathurst Sustainable Development (BSD)

About

The concern for quality of life and water quality in the watershed led to the establishment of the Bathurst Sustainable Development Project in 1995. The overall objective of the project was to set up a long-term mechanism for communication and action among government, business and the community. The project also encouraged residents to take a more active part in mitigating the impact of watershed effluent in the Nepisiguit Drainage Basin and addressing climate change. Bathurst Sustainable Development is a non-profit organization, and works closely with the City of Bathurst to move the municipality towards greater sustainability.

Prior to becoming an ACSI Sustainability Partner, Bathurst was involved in several sustainability initiatives. The City was a member of Partners for Climate Protection through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and a Sustainable Communities Initiative member. BSD worked with the City to develop a Local Plan of Action for Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions for the City of Bathurst. BSD also operates an Environmental Resource Center to help the public learn about environment and sustainability.

Key Sustainability Actions

BSD developed seven key strategies as a result of their participation in ACSI:

- 1) build sustainability awareness and capacity;
- 2) move towards a sustainable transportation system;
- 3) reduce the community's use of fossil fuels;
- 4) move towards a sustainable water supply/system;
- 5) integrate sustainability into municipal hall operations;
- 6) have municipal hall take on the leadership role in implementing sustainability; and
- 7) have BSD play an advisory role in a way that is appropriate for Bathurst.

From these seven strategies, BSD carried out a number of actions, including:

- Educating municipal staff about sustainability topics such as The Natural Step framework and sustainable procurement.
- Developing a Sustainable Transportation Action Plan (STAP).
- Outreach activities around water usage, including door knob hangers on water.
- Working with the City to draft a green procurement policy and switch to a paperless council package.
- Developing partnerships with community businesses and organizations to work on sustainability issues.

Major Successes

Bathurst Sustainable Development was very successful in using ACSI to leverage further engagement and interest in sustainability from City officials. By the end of the year, the municipality had committed to joining ACSI as a partner, and had adopted a principle-based sustainability policy, a sustainable transportation action plan, and a draft green procurement policy.



Next Steps

BSD continues to have an ongoing dialogue with the City of Bathurst and to work with City staff to transition more of the leadership on sustainability issues to them. BSD is also in the process of developing a program for "eco-coaching" for the municipality, businesses and community organizations in Bathurst.



Halifax Shambhala Centre

About

The Halifax Shambhala Centre is the local centre of Shambhala, an international community dedicated to meditation practice and to the establishment of enlightened society inspired by basic goodness. Halifax is the capital city of Shambhala's worldwide centres. Local membership is in the 600 person range.

The Shambhala Buddhist teachings express a profound and gritty path of how to live a cheerful, caring and uplifted life on this earth, regardless of circumstances. This is spoken of as being warriors with open hearts and clear minds. Many of the Shambhala Buddhist teachings express what could be called an ecological view, as for instance teachings on interconnectedness, the myth of materialism leading to happiness, how consequences follow from any action, appreciation of all living beings, placing others before ourselves, sacred outlook, etc. For many Shambhala members, the practices of sustainability are important practices contributing to enlightened society.

Prior to participating as an ACSI Sustainability Partner the Halifax Shambhala Centre was taking some ad hoc steps towards sustainability, such as the use of CFL light bulbs and natural cleaning products, ensuring proper garbage and compost separation and recycling, turning off lights and computers when not in use, and using some recycled paper products.

Key Sustainability Actions

The Halifax Shambhala Sustainability Initiative, formed as a result of the Halifax Shambhala Centre's participation in ACSI, is a volunteer group of Shambhala community members that have worked together with the Centre and the wider community to use The Natural Step Framework to move towards greater sustainability.

The Halifax Shambhala Centre began by conducting a baseline assessment of their operations using the four system conditions from The Natural Step. They examined their existing practices and identified areas for improvement. The major areas of impact they identified were:

- Biodegradable cleaning products
- High energy use
- No green purchasing
- Heavy transportation demand

Following the baseline analysis, the group worked with the larger Shambhala community to do some visioning activities around sustainability. They began with several shorter education sessions to introduce The Natural Step to the community and to initiate dialogue on sustainability. They then held a full-day consultation event, developed a vision statement, and set out objectives for their work. The objectives they developed are:

- Express the principles of environmental and social sustainability in all aspects of our mandala.
- Act in accord with The Natural Step Four System Conditions for Sustainability
- As a community, we will direct financial and human resources to support our sustainability goals.



- Create sacred spaces that evoke the dralas and embrace environmental sustainability.

The vision statement is:

“The Halifax Shambhala Centre recognizes the sacredness and the protection of Earth’s precious life-supporting ecology as a fundamental quality of Enlightened Society. We understand environmental and social sustainability as an essential fulfillment of Shambhala Buddhist wisdom understandings of basic goodness, interdependence, and concern for the welfare of all beings. The Halifax Shambhala Centre, therefore, holds environmental sustainability as a foremost principle and intention in all of its governance, planning and affairs.”

Major Successes

In order to demonstrate the genuine motivation of the Halifax Shambhala Sustainability Initiative a number of sustainability improvements are being carried out directly by the Initiative members. Projects completed to date include the development of a “Green Purchasing Guide”, a policy on reducing the use of disposable kitchenware for community events, the conversion of heating oil to bio-fuel, the purchasing of recycled and Forest Stewardship Council Certified paper products, the insulation of the hot water tank and piping, air sealing under exterior wall outlets, reduction of toilet water usage, sustainability signage throughout the Centre, and the development of sustainability website pages.

A five-year action plan for moving forward with sustainability was also developed. It includes a number of projects related to the physical building and it also aims to generate further sustainability education in the community, and to build sustainability filters into decision-making.

Next Steps

The Halifax Shambhala Centre has identified a number of actions for next steps in their sustainability action plan. Some of these next steps include:

- Improvements in air sealing, insulation and ventilation to reduce energy usage.
- Raise awareness of energy use and ensure that computers, lights and appliances are turned off when not in use, and that new items purchased are energy-efficient.
- Reduce water usage by changing to low-flow and waterless toilets and urinals.
- Continue to provide opportunities for community engagement and learning on sustainability through workshops, meetings, communications pieces, etc.
- Develop a sustainability decision-making filter.
- Ensure there are adequate financial resources to choose more sustainable options and support ongoing work.
- Develop a ride-sharing system and other active transportation supports (e.g. more bike racks) to reduce transportation energy demand.
- Continue to participate in the ACSI network and to share the sustainability message with other Shambhala Centres around the world, and with the broader public.



Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

About

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) started on the road to sustainability a few years ago when one of the four corporate operating themes adopted by Regional Council included “Healthy, Sustainable, Vibrant Communities”.

The four pillars of sustainability for HRM include fiscal, environmental, cultural, and social. HRM has taken an integrated systems approach to clean air, land, water and energy under the environmental pillar. All four pillars of sustainability are inter-linked.

In 2004, using The Natural Step Lens, HRM completed a high level corporate wide sustainability analysis. Twelve corporate wide recommendations flowed from the Corporate Sustainability Analysis. These were reviewed by the Corporate Environmental Initiatives Group (EIG) and distilled down to three immediate priorities: Green Corporate Culture; Green Buildings; Green Procurement. A number of initiatives are underway in each of these priority areas.

The integrated systems approach towards HRM's Sustainable Environment Strategy is a dynamic process that includes a portfolio of concurrent and directly related plans, strategies and actions. Examples include:

Clean Land:

- Regional Plan
- Pesticide Use Reduction Plan and By-Law
- Solid Waste Management Plan

Clean Air:

- Clean Air Strategy
- Climate SMART (climate change mitigation and adaptation)
- Corporate and Community GHG Plans

Clean Water:

- HSP
- Water Management Strategy
- Storm and Waste Water Management Strategies

Clean Energy:

- Community Energy Plan
- Wind Energy Master Plan

Key Sustainability Actions

Halifax Regional Municipality saw the ACSI as an excellent window of opportunity to help build regional momentum and critical mass around sustainability. They also saw it as an opportunity to help further embed and mainstream sustainability into their own corporate culture. HRM followed the ABCD approach of The Natural Step in the development of their sustainability initiative.

The earlier Corporate Sustainability Analysis helped enhance awareness around sustainability and provide HRM with a consistent definition and priority focus areas.



HRM's baseline activities/ practices flow from a number of sustainability plans and strategies already in place, i.e. Clean Air Strategy; Climate SMART; Corporate and Community GHG Plans; Community Energy Plan; Regional Plan; HRM By Design; Green Buildings/ Green Procurement/ Green Corporate Culture; etc.

The compelling vision or opportunities for innovation is now happening with the roll out of the recommendations from the portfolio of corporate sustainability related plans and strategies mentioned above.

The down to action or direct application of the TNS Four Systems Conditions will be fully engaged as HRM rolls out a corporate Sustainability Filter for decision-making. This will be a measured and piloted approach to help HRM staff better understand the complexities of sustainability, and to measure the results of HRM's efforts. Effective performance measurement and outcome measurement is key in helping determine the reach and effectiveness of HRM's sustainability approach.

A framework towards a State of the Infrastructure and Environment (Sustainability) Report is also being completed in 08/09.

Major Successes

The ACSI was very helpful for HRM in enhancing regional collaboration, networking, and common goal-setting and problem-solving around sustainability. The added value has come from the journey and the relationship building, knowledge sharing and collaboration along the way.

One of HRM's major successes was the creation of a sustainability transition team which includes members from a number of different departments with the mandate of "greening the corporate culture through the promotion of sustainability practices, policies, education and awareness throughout HRM". This team is helping to drive sustainability forward within HRM, and is building internal sustainability champions and supporters.

HRM is also working on the development of a sustainability decision-making filter that will help incorporate sustainability principles into all major decisions. As a result of their participation in ACSI and their hard work internally, sustainability is becoming embedded and mainstreamed into the HRM corporate culture.

Next Steps

Key Actions and Initiatives identified for HRM in 2008/09 are:

- The continuation and expansion of Corporate Sustainability Training;
- Refining the role of the Corporate Sustainability Transition Team;
- Establishing a **Corporate Environmental Filter**;
- Performance Measuring - Community Energy Plan; Climate SMART; Clean Air Strategy; Corporate and Community GHG Plans, etc.
- Continuation of Green Building; Green Procurement and Green Corporate Culture Priorities and Initiatives



- Conducting a sustainability knowledge exchange with Sweden: Dr. Sofie Adolfsson, a senior Sustainability Advisor with Boverket, Sweden's national agency responsible for the built and natural environment, will be on a 5 month work stay with HRM from September 2008 to January 2009.
- HRM plans to host a Fall Summit on Sustainable Procurement aimed at the municipal/university/service/hospital sectors.

In addition, HRM plans to continue its active role in collaborating with others (other levels of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, business, industry, community, etc.) on sustainability, and will continue to participate in ACSI as the project moves forward.



iNova Credit Union

About

On April 1, 1936 twelve postal employees met on a porch on Parker St. in Halifax and formed the Halifax District Postal Credit Union Ltd. It was founded to give postal workers a place to save and obtain loans. After two name changes and another 70 years iNova Credit Union now serves the entire community.

iNova has a triple bottom line mandate extending the profit focus to include both social and environmental concerns. As a co-operative it is guided by Co-operative Principles and Values, the principle of “Concern for Community” and the value of “Equality” makes taking care of our environment and our social practices part of our co-operative DNA.

Prior to becoming an ACSI Sustainability Partner, iNova Credit Union was engaged in a number of ad hoc projects of a social and environmental nature. From a strategic planning perspective the Board and staff at iNova set co-operative social responsibility as a major focus. For example, they launched a micro credit program to assist small entrepreneurs and developed programs for those with lower incomes. On the environmental front they began implementing ways to conserve paper and were mindful of not adding to landfill when disposing of furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Key Sustainability Actions

iNova began with building awareness of sustainability; all staff and board took The Natural Step Canada’s e-learning course and viewed the film *The Inconvenient Truth* as backgrounders to a weekend-long session on sustainability and what it meant to iNova Credit Union. In addition, a committee of four was formed primarily to develop a sustainability plan for 2008 and beyond. The committee also attended the three ACSI workshops to keep us abreast of what the ACSI members were doing and to glean insight from that and the information sessions at the workshops.

A baseline analysis was conducted to see where iNova stood in terms of The Natural Step’s Sustainability Conditions; gaps were identified, and these informed iNova’s short, medium and long term plans as they finalise their sustainability plan for 2008 and beyond.

Major Successes

The development of a comprehensive sustainability plan for 2008 and beyond was a major initiative which occurred as a result of iNova’s participation in ACSI. This plan will entrench sustainability into iNova Credit Union’s strategic plans for the future.

Participation in ACSI has also helped to crystallize the Credit Union’s direction in regards to corporate social responsibility, and to ensure that they are addressing both social and environmental aspects in their work.



Next Steps

iNova's sustainability plan is expected to be ratified by the Board in late May 2008. Once the plan is formally approved, the next steps will all focus on implementation.



Jacques Whitford

About

Jacques Whitford is a Nova Scotia based leader in environmental, engineering, scientific, and planning consulting, dedicated to resolving challenges in the natural and built environments. Their mission is to listen and learn from clients as the basis for delivering exceptional customized, value-added solutions. Their focus has always been on earth and environment, so it is natural that their commitment has evolved to place sustainability at the heart of everything they do internally, and with clients. They have grown from two professionals (Hector Jacques and Mike Whitford) to a team of more than 1600 professionals and 45 offices across Canada, in the U.S. and internationally. They recognize that it is important to 'walk the talk' and set the standard for approaches and practices that exemplify societies' necessary transformation from environmental consumption to restoration and sustainable balance.

Prior to joining ACSI in May 2007, Jacques Whitford was developing its sustainability program for the company. In 2005 Jacques Whitford began developing preliminary sustainability services, and in 2006, Jacques Whitford presented the business case for sustainability to the executive leadership team and began to take action. An action plan was developed focusing on developing services in sustainability. As part of this plan an internal program was developed focusing on Education, Engagement, and Awareness; Corporate Policies and Initiatives; Baseline Assessing, Targeting, and Planning; Operational Integration; Communication and Marketing; and linking internal activities to consulting services.

Internally, an ad hoc Sustainable Action Team made up of volunteers throughout the company was developed early on in this process. These volunteers were individuals interested in integrating sustainability into company operations. An online survey was implemented to gauge interest throughout the company in sustainability issues. In early 2007 Jacques Whitford began quantifying its carbon emissions. To do this, a broad assessment of the company's carbon footprint was carried out. Following this, the company evaluated various options for action on GHG emissions reduction and as an intermediary action, carbon offsets. On June 1, 2007 Jacques Whitford acquired offsets and became 'carbon neutral'. Following this, a strategic framework was employed to continue measuring, managing and reducing emissions at Jacques Whitford, while continuing to offset what the organization cannot reduce.

Key Sustainability Actions

Since joining ACSI in May 2007, Jacques Whitford has continued to develop sustainability programming, both internally and externally. The ACSI initiative provided an opportunity to coalesce key staff working on sustainability initiatives and add momentum to efforts.

In the winter of 2007-08, Jacques Whitford began an environmental baseline assessment of the company's operations. January 2008 marked the completion of the first preliminary Jacques Whitford Environmental Baseline Assessment. A toolkit was developed to assess all of Jacques Whitford's offices by quantifying consumption as it relates to materials, energy, and water, in addition to quantifying the organization's GHG emissions, solid waste produced, and sustainable business practices. Monitoring and reporting programs were developed along with a comparative reporting system. This comprehensive office level assessment was substantively completed in May 2008.



Jacques Whitford's education and engagement program has also been expanded, and includes elements such as:

- guidance targets for each office;
- a refined environmental baseline assessment for each office, the development of 'Green Teams';
- programming designed for management;
- monthly education and engagement programs through office sustainability coordinators;
- the release of a sustainability pledge;
- sustainability information on the companywide intranet; and
- the continued development of online resources including training on overall sustainability.

The company also began developing sustainability policies including a company vehicle policy; procurement policies related to buildings, office furniture and furnishings, office supplies, office paper, travel, and food and beverages.

Major Successes

ACSI has been a forum to discuss sustainability within an Atlantic Canadian context, and an opportunity to hear what other organizations are doing to address sustainability across the provinces. It has provided a venue to build alignment within the Jacques Whitford core team and gain access to useful informants and information within other organizations

ACSI has provided an opportunity to learn about what other organizations in the Atlantic Provinces are doing in the way of sustainability. Additionally it has strengthened existing client relationships, opened new relationships with aligned organizations both as allies and prospective clients.

Next Steps

In the fall of 2008, Jacques Whitford will complete its first Corporate Sustainability Report, combining the carbon footprint assessment, environmental baseline assessment, and other social indicators.

Jacques Whitford also plans to continue on its path to becoming a leader and model of sustainable business operations and a pioneer in the 'next-generation' of consulting companies focused on sustainability. This will involve a broadly based and integrated whole systems approach across the firm. Jacques Whitford will continue to take action, reducing their carbon and environmental footprint, while beginning to address more complex sustainability solutions.

It will also be important to more fully engage line management so that they are able to make the links between integrating sustainability into the company's business model and long-term business success. Towards that end Key Performance Indicators that incorporate specific sustainability objectives have now been introduced into our management frameworks.



Just Us! Coffee Roasters

About

Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op is Canada's first Fair Trade coffee roaster. They are also one of Canada's most successful worker-owned businesses based on a firm belief in "people and the planet before profits". Fair Trade is an innovative model for international trade, which offers not only a fair price, but respect and empowerment for Third World producers. All Just Us! products – coffee, tea, chocolate and sugar – are grown naturally, without chemicals, to enhance the well-being of farmers, their communities, the environment and wildlife.

Sustainability has always been an integral part of the framework at Just Us!. Their mandate states "People and the planet before profits". Just Us! has organically certified production plants located in both Hantsport and Grand Pre, Nova Scotia, and their products (Fair Trade certified sugar, tea, coffee and chocolate) are all organically certified as well.

Prior to becoming an ACSI partner, Just Us!'s sustainability initiatives were mostly small projects such as a rigorous waste disposal efforts, greenhouse gas reduction by means of biodiesel fuelled transportation vehicles, locally sourced food for cafés, etc.

Key Sustainability Actions

Just Us!'s original Sustainability Initiative was to create a common language regarding sustainability throughout the co-operative in order to ease the transition towards becoming a sustainable organization. By educating staff regarding sustainability issues they would be better positioned to move forward as a whole.

Over the past year Just Us! developed a Sustainability Vision, educated staff regarding sustainability, and worked towards making changes within their sphere of influence.

The Natural Step framework was used as an educational tool during staff training. By teaching the Natural Step framework to all staff, it ensures that the TNS principles will become a part of day-to-day decision making. The mandatory sustainability training session has left employees with a sense of empowerment and desire to make changes within Just Us! operations.

Just Us! also introduced compostable cups into their cafés (sourced from sustainably harvested forests) along with a new customer loyalty program that only provides rewards for customers using re-usable cups.

Major Successes

Participating in ACSI has helped to make sustainability a top priority within Just Us!. They have learned from their involvement, and feel that the coaching and training, as well as The Natural Step have helped provide the needed framework and tools to help them take meaningful steps forward on sustainability.



Next Steps

Next steps on sustainability for Just Us! include a challenge to each department to make changes toward sustainability using the Natural Step framework. Each department has been asked to state the changes they plan to make along with a timeframe in which to do so. By leaving the desired changes up to the individual departments they feel ownership of their actions which increases their desire to move ahead.



P'lovers the Environmental Store

About

P'lovers Environmental Store was created in 1992 in Halifax to help people live in harmony with the earth. P'lovers believes that the actions of each and every one of us can positively affect the quality of the world in which we live.

Over the past 15 years, P'lovers has sought out hundreds of unique environmental alternative products which are non-toxic, natural, reused, recycled, and/or organic. By modifying lifestyles, using purchasing power to meet needs AND reflect values, and supporting activities which respect and protect both workers and the diversity of life, P'lovers believes that all can make a difference.

Because of the nature of the business – to offer natural, non-toxic, organic, reused and recycled products – P'lovers has always been involved in trying to promote sustainability. Over the years, their product selections have been adjusted to better reflect increasingly improved options for more sustainable products.

Key Sustainability Actions

As a result of their continuing mission and their partnership in ACSI, P'lovers did the following:

- Reviewed all products to determine if they should be dropped and/or improved upon.
- Attended a Green Festival in Washington, DC to identify new and improved products in the context of the above-mentioned review.
- Worked with some of our suppliers to invite them to consider alternatives to packaging to reduce costs and energy usage in shipping.
- Began discussions, within our Park Lane and Mahone Bay communities, with other retailers to identify possible initiatives they might take to improve the sustainability of their operations.
- Began discussions with the mall management to identify ways the whole building could become "greener".
- Implemented a "beans to bags" program in which customers who do not take a bag are rewarded by our making a 5 cent donation on their behalf to an environmental organization.

Major Successes

One major success for P'lovers was the improvement of their product selections as a result of the review of all their products, as described above. The "beans to bags" program was another big success. Both of these initiatives have also had a significant impact on customers in terms of providing information and education to them on sustainability.

Participating in ACSI created a sense of deadline, and gave P'lovers incentive to move forward on some ideas they had been considering for some time. ACSI also gave them a chance to learn about the initiatives of others and pass these 'good news' stories along, informally, to staff and customers.



P'lovers also developed a statement about the origin of their products, looking specifically at concerns around products imported from China. This gave the store an opportunity to be explicit about their attention to the social (i.e. fair trade issues) as well as the environmental implications of their product selections.

Next Steps

P'lovers plans to continue to follow through with the sustainability actions outlined above, in particular working with suppliers, with other retailers, and with mall management on opportunities for moving towards greater sustainability.



Saint John, NB

About

The City of Saint John joined the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI) in May of 2007 as a charter member. The city was interested in joining a broader social network that would support their efforts to have sustainability play a central role in the long-term planning for their community and their organization.

At the time the City joined the ACSI, they were in the final stages of a public engagement process aimed at developing a long-term vision for the community. As part of this engagement process, the need to develop a set of sustainability principles had been identified. After looking at several options, the City settled on the Melbourne Principles and their Environment Committee worked on a slight refinement of these principles to reflect the community interests.

At the same time a number of initiatives were under-way within the City's municipal administration that were supportive of the sustainability theme. It should be pointed out however that at the time most of the projects had not been framed under the umbrella of sustainability, they were being considered more as a result of cost saving programs. The most notable of these was the Municipal Energy Efficiency Program. This program has saved the city millions of dollars and was recently recognized by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities with a national award.

Key Sustainability Actions

The City of Saint John presented the Vision 2015 final report - *Vision 2015 Our Saint John of the Future* to Saint John Common Council on November 26, 2007. The report outlined the background, process, and results of the Vision 2015 eleven-month public engagement lead by the Citizens Advisory Group. The Saint John Common Council received and endorsed the Community Vision Statement, Twenty Year Goals and Sustainability Principles for Saint John.

Saint John also collaborated with the Province of New Brunswick on the development of a *Sustainable Communities Case Study* for the Greater Saint John Region, a pilot project to inform the region and the province on sustainable communities. The case study was a partnership with the province and the five communities in the Greater Saint John Region. The Case Study built collaborative relationships; defined and fostered sustainable communities; established the various roles for the province, municipalities and other stakeholders in planning for sustainable communities; and determined ways in which sustainable communities will contribute to provincial self-sufficiency.

The case study was released April 15, 2008 and the Province of New Brunswick noted in the final report that Vision 2015 in Saint John had already launched successful dialogues to start on the path to becoming sustainable and self-sufficient.

The City of Saint John has also started to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. The ICSP timeframe is twenty to thirty years in the future and it will use a whole systems approach through the integration of economic, environmental, social, infrastructure, and governance needs. The ICSP will include an analysis of current issues, identification of community goals and outcomes, action plans with performance measurement, and an



implementation and monitoring plan. The ICSP will support the achievement of the community Vision and Goals for Saint John and it will incorporate the City's sustainability principles in a decision making framework.

Major Successes

The public consultations carried out by the Citizens Advisory Group were very successful. Feedback was received from approximately 4.2% of the community, translating into well over fifteen thousand ideas on the future for Saint John. This information became the basis for a community owned and developed vision statement and goals to describe our Saint John of the future. With the support of the Saint John Environment Committee, sustainability principles were developed.

The City of Saint John is also in the final stages of implementing a new governance structure that will see Municipal Council establish Standing Policy Committees. The mandates for these Committees have been designed around the pillars of sustainability to provide a mechanism for an on-going dialogue with the community in support of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. The City of Saint John is the first New Brunswick municipality to develop an integrated community sustainability plan.

The network component of participating in ACSI gave the City an opportunity to interact with a broad cross-section of organizations and learn how they were embracing sustainability within their operations. It was also beneficial to learn more about the Natural Step Framework.

Next Steps

In the fall of 2008, Saint John is planning to hold an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan Symposium in partnership with the International Centre for Sustainable Communities. This symposium will provide the City of Saint John the opportunity to share lessons learned and to receive feedback on the planning framework, public engagement, integrated community sustainability plan and decision making model.

The City has also started the process of developing a corporate plan which will guide decision-making within the municipality. This will be an opportunity to ensure that sustainability is identified as a key business imperative.



Stratford, PEI

About

Stratford, Prince Edward Island is a new community incorporated in 1995 through the amalgamation of several small farming and summer cottage communities. Though new in name, the area was first settled by Acadians in the 1750s. Farming, shipbuilding and brickmaking were its original industries.

Since the 1970s, Stratford has been a desirable place to live for many people working in Charlottetown for government, schools, hospitals and businesses. It is a few minutes drive from Downtown Charlottetown across the Hillsborough Bridge. The town is now PEI's most rapidly growing community and its population has above average income and education levels. The new Town Centre, opened in 2003, offers a recreation centre and also houses the offices for one of PEI's three school boards. Stratford, which means road over the water, participates in cultural exchanges with a network of other towns called Stratford.

In 2005 consultations with residents involved in the process of long term planning by the town determined that the critical path for future growth had sustainable development as a fundamental building block. During the past 2 years, while developing the long term plan for the community, sustainable development continued to be raised by residents as the fundamental for future development. Their determination to increase capacity in the community led to the hiring of a sustainable development staff person to work on building capacity. This capacity-building process identified participation in the ACSI as the best available path to respond to this community demand.

Key Sustainability Actions

In 2007, Stratford initiated a year-long process, which included joining ACSI at the outset and creating a steering committee of community residents and other local persons knowledgeable and interested in sustainable development. This group initiated training of town staff, town council, and interested sub committee members in The Natural Step framework, using the Sustainability 101 e-learning program. The capacity-building process also included field trips to the wind farm in eastern PEI as well as to local food producers.

The Stratford steering committee developed a work plan for the year to develop a sustainability plan and decision-making framework titled "Imagine Stratford – Towards a vision for 2028".

The town of Stratford used The Natural Step Framework to develop a work plan within the Community. The Natural Step was introduced into the community through the town newsletter, building awareness and inspiring feedback from residents and businesses. The development of a compelling vision had already progressed through the last several years as a background topic at many local meetings. A concerted effort was made to flesh this core vision out and to begin the backcasting process used in The Natural Step framework. This process involved developing plans for implementation of a sustainable vision for the community as a whole as well as a plan for specific actions that the administration could take within the organization to lead the community by example.



Major Successes

The ACSI process has initiated an organization-wide change in thinking and approach to business and community development. The resulting framework with sustainability as its focus has brought inclusion and generational equity into the town planning process.

Stratford's sustainability coordinator had excellent results using the educational material within the organization and in outreach work in the wider community. The process of developing a decision-making framework seemed to encourage all sorts of initiatives within the community which otherwise would not have occurred, and residents have responded with great interest and encouragement.

Next Steps

The Town of Stratford has put forward a three-year plan aimed at developing economic activity and growth plans based on the sustainability decision-making framework. The town is embarking on a review of the bylaws and policies through the sustainability framework lens, with the desired result being a renewed planning act and bylaws which incorporate the 4 TNS system conditions into the town's stated long term goals and development framework.



Stewardship and Outreach Section, NS Department of Natural Resources

About

As part of the Operations Division of the Department of Natural Resources, the Stewardship and Outreach Section supports the DNR mission to build a better future for Nova Scotians through responsible natural resource management. It is responsible for programs aimed at sustainable use of natural resources, including a Natural Resource Education Centre, a woodlot management education program, a hunter, trapper, and guide education program, and a Christmas tree grower support program.

The Stewardship and Outreach Section is engaged on a daily basis in educating others on sustainable resource use. Sustainability is part of their business, from a resource stewardship and management perspective. In 2007, Nova Scotia's provincial government proclaimed the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act which is expected to have a major impact on sustainability and on all government activities.

Key Sustainability Actions

For their ACSI project, Stewardship and Outreach focused specifically on the operations of their own section, and on the changes they could make internally. They developed their plans to incorporate existing government legislation and plans (for example, the Environmental Goals & Sustainable Prosperity Act, the Natural Resource Strategy, and the business plan for the Department of Natural Resources).

Their major goal was to increase awareness of the larger sustainability picture. They developed a sustainability action plan using backcasting and with input and ideas from staff. They also focused on educating staff by having all staff take The Natural Step's Sustainability 101 e-learning course, and through discussions at staff meetings. They have also incorporated a sustainability standard into Performance Expectations (the standard is "utilizes sustainable practices in the workplace").

Major Successes

Stewardship and Outreach's biggest successes are the development of their sustainability action plan, and really increasing awareness of sustainability in the bigger picture within the Stewardship and Outreach section.

The inclusion of sustainability in staff performance expectations is also a key success, and the section hopes it will spread eventually to the rest of the Department.

Next Steps

Stewardship and Outreach plans to continue with the implementation of their sustainability plan and ongoing education and awareness-building for their staff. They also plan to develop and follow a standard for holding green meetings.



In addition to their activities within their section, the Nova Scotia government as a whole has laid out several sustainability initiatives with time frames in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act that Stewardship and Outreach hopes to be able to contribute to as well.



Wolfville, NS

About

Several years ago the Town of Wolfville and the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS) embarked on a collaborative partnership known as the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI). This initiative sparked exploration of The Natural Step framework and other strategic planning tools concerned with long term community vitality and viability. These early efforts laid the ground work for future planning projects and helped to create an environment that fostered acceptance by both management and Council, for the importance of community planning and development from a sustainability perspective.

The Town of Wolfville had been involved in the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI) prior to becoming an ACSI Sustainability partner. WSI sought to heighten Council, staff, management and community awareness about sustainability in partnership with the Town. A variety of actions ranging from status as Canada's First Fair Trade Town to paperless Council, management and staff meetings as well as an anti-idling practice, pesticide free practices for parks and open spaces and the establishment of both a Sustainable Community Planning Task Force and a Pesticide Task Force preceded the Town's involvement in ACSI.

Key Sustainability Actions

The Town of Wolfville's most recent sustainability initiative within the context of the ACSI was to explore ways to better incorporate sustainable practices and a sustainability perspective into all levels of the Town's corporate culture and decision making processes. There was recognition at the management level of the need to take the many diverse sustainability initiatives undertaken by various Town departments and align them into some type of strategic plan for sustainability within the organization. The first step in this process was to develop a sustainability filter or decision-making tool.

In many ways the Parks Department has led the way using organic farming practices on parks and open spaces and encouraging Parks staff to consider the TNS systems conditions when making purchases. Several lunch and learns were held during the year to help build staff awareness about sustainability.

Both internally and in conjunction with TNS coaches the TNS system conditions and ABCD framework were used to guide the Town's efforts in exploring sustainability from both a corporate and personal perspective. Aspects of the TNS framework had also been used to assist in generating awareness, developing sustainable design principles and developing a compelling vision for the future of Wolfville.

Networking with other like-minded individuals dealing with many of the same problems, both within and outside of Wolfville, was a key positive contribution of being part of ACSI.

Major Successes

The greatest positive benefit from participation in ACSI was the opportunity to have various staff members from diverse departments share in learning and discussing what sustainability means



and how a long term perspective alters business as usual. Greater awareness was created within the organization resulting in discussion about the meaning of sustainability and how to integrate that perspective into all decisions and actions.

A variety of other initiatives have occurred in Wolfville over the last year. The Town of Wolfville in conjunction with CRS held an Eco-Fair to help build community capacity about sustainability and provide hands-on information and demonstrations. It is anticipated that the Eco-Fair will be an ongoing annual event. An old recreation building has been renovated and refurbished to provide the Town with a new community centre. Work continues on the review of the Town's planning documents and the new Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law will incorporate sustainable design principles into land use planning policy. An audit of corporate energy consumption is currently underway and aspects of the new Source Water Protection Plan are being implemented. The Town participated with other ACSI partners in a tree planting ceremony to celebrate Earth Day and has undertaken several public works initiatives with sustainability in mind such as the construction of a new downtown bus shelter. Specifically a bicycle and cart are being used by the Parks crew in place of a motorized vehicle and a fuel efficient small tractor has been purchased to replace larger less fuel efficient machinery. The Parks Department has also developed new practices that use manure tea as a fertilizer and horticultural vinegar to promote pesticide free parks management. The last year also saw the Town break new ground when it became the first municipality in the country to negotiate a long term conservation easement with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust for the area known as the South Mountain Watershed Preserve.

Next Steps

Wolfville's next steps from a corporate perspective include the completion of the decision-making tool and the eventual development of a green procurement policy. On other fronts it is anticipated that the new Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use by-law will be adopted by Council in 2008 and that work on other sustainability initiatives such as the development of a Comprehensive Transportation Plan and an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) will commence in the near future. Wolfville will continue to lead the way in demonstrating how small towns with limited resources can collaborate and partner with other organizations to address the sustainability challenge.