



Governments/Public Agencies

This section is for individuals and organizations that support, deliver, or provide environmental and sustainability education to individuals and groups who work for or with government (at all levels) and its agencies.

Outcomes

Governments and public agencies will:

1. Educate politicians, public servants, and staff on safeguarding ecosystem functions, integrity, biodiversity, as well as natural heritage in the course of their work

Sample indicators:

- Government training programs offer civil servants and politicians a framework for defining ecological priorities and **sustainability** as the basis on which economic and social priorities rest, and provide the knowledge necessary to apply this framework.
- They establish environmental criteria by which personnel exercise their responsibility in safeguarding biodiversity and the integrity of healthy ecosystems, as an essential part of the preservation of ecological integrity and natural heritage for current and future generations.
- They set expectations in decision-making processes that reflect an understanding of government responsibility in maintaining natural capital.
- They factor human health issues into government environmental reporting, and ensure that both ecosystem and human health are factors considered in government legislation, policies, and programs.
- Public employees are environmentally literate and responsible in their day-to-day actions in the workplace.



2. Create an expectation of factoring environmental health criteria into decision-making

Sample Indicators:

- Government shows leadership in the area of environmental protection.
- They use a systems approach to developing legislation, policies, and programs to ensure that all decisions factor in ecological **sustainability**.
- Environmental impacts are given equal weight with social and economic considerations in decision-making.
- Governments/public agencies use **sustainability** frameworks such as the **Bellagio Principles** to assess the degree to which their decisions move government towards **sustainability**.
- Governments/public agencies use the **ecological footprint** to measure the impact of their decisions.
- Governments/public agencies pass and enforce legislation and policies that reflect green economics, ecosystem approaches, and bioregional responsibilities.

3. “Walk the talk” of environmental legislation and policy

Sample Indicators:

- Governments establish implementation measures to reflect the environmental mandate of each agency and department, at all levels of operation.
- They set long-term (fifty year) environmental quality and planning objectives in which to detail medium (twenty year) and short-term (five year) plans for environmental health and **sustainability**.
- They develop sustainability indicators, such as those defined in **Agenda 21** and the **Bellagio Principles**, against which to measure the effectiveness of government legislation, policies, and programs. This mechanism provides measures that track progress towards sustainability, and includes targets and timetables against which the progress of the policy, program, agency, or department is assessed. Evaluation invites opportunities to change and better the approach to ensure environmental protection and sustainability.
- There is buy-in at all government levels to advance **ecological literacy** across society, including education of the public, and institutional and policy greening.
- Efficient, green programs operate across government offices, facilities, and operations (e.g., environment policies for government ministries, offices, and agencies; sustainable practices, green purchasing criteria, energy-saving retrofits, green workplace programs, green fleets, and waste reduction).
- Governments/public agencies are accountable for decisions about environmental quality.
- They recognize that science is not definitive in its knowledge: policies and programs incorporate the **precautionary principle**, ecosystem approaches, and **traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)** to strengthen governance structures and decisions.
- They provide transparent reporting on environmental hazards.
- They report to the public on the effects of urban sprawl on long-term ecological **sustainability** (loss of quality farm land, increase in carbon dioxide emissions).



- They establish urban planning and development guidelines on ecosystem protection and sustainable building practices (e.g., minimum standards for energy efficiency).
 - There is an increase in the percentage of protected lands (including environmentally sensitive areas).
4. Provide for a participatory approach to decision-making and policy-making on environmental issues

Sample Indicators:

- Governments/public agencies design open decision-making processes that ensure all stakeholders have equal opportunity to participate in resolving environmental problems, approving projects, and developing policy; there is regular public involvement in environmental health and safety issues.
- Governments/public agencies provide public campaigns to increase awareness of environmental issues and enable informed public participation in solving environmental problems.

Needs

Government and public agency representatives and staff need:

- An understanding of environmental issues and ecological concepts and how they relate to their responsibilities as politicians and civil servants
- An understanding of the meaning and value of natural capital
- Practical knowledge of how **environmental literacy** can guide legislation, policy, and programs
- A funding formula that recognizes environmental protection as necessary to quality of life
- An understanding of the interactions of economic, social, and environmental capital, and the dynamic of these interactions within decision-making, policy, and legislation
- Education and training that highlights the need to consider long-term impacts of environment related decisions made to fulfill short-term goals
- Incentives to adopt and promote sound environmental behaviour
- Familiarity with and understanding of the principles of **Agenda 21**, the **Earth Charter**, the **Bellagio Principles**, the **ecological footprint**, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (Rio+10), and Canada's environmental commitments
- A government culture that encourages open discussion of the ecological, environmental, and **sustainability** implications of legislation, policies, programs, and decisions
- Infrastructure which includes resources and funding to link all departments to a program of **environmental literacy**
- Resources to understand, support and enhance healthy sustainable ecosystems, economies, and communities based on natural boundaries such as watersheds or bioregions
- Systemic regulations and policies that increase environmental protection and **sustainability**



- Planning models that set out a **holistic** vision for achieving ecological **sustainability** (rather than a piecemeal approach by issue, by department) using common language, approaches, and goals that value—but also recognize the limits of—scientific data
- Regulatory frameworks for setting and enforcing ecologically protective standards, with support and incentives to take them beyond minimum requirements
- Transparency in environmental accounting
- Current, accurate environmental information that is readily accessible and understandable
- Mechanisms to increase participation and exchanges among a broader public sector, reflecting the diverse views of civil society
- Support in public media for information on full environmental costs and long-term impacts of products
- Public recognition for environmental leadership, vision, creativity, and risk-taking that fosters positive change

Strategies

Programs, Projects, and Policies

1. Provide governments with a mandate to create a **sustainability** program or act that commits each level of government to increase their level of environmental responsibility to their constituency.
2. Use legislation and policy tools to create the conditions needed to move forward on an environmentally sustainable path (e.g., net metering legislation to allow green power renewables to compete on a level playing field).
3. Call upon opposition parties to include environmental and sustainability education as part of their election platforms.
4. Create an **environmental literacy** report card to hold government accountable for public **environmental literacy**.
5. Introduce environmental management systems (EMS) into government operations (e.g., ISO 14001); educate staff to participate in sustainable practices and auditing for continuous improvement.
6. Articulate long term environmental plans so that parties can govern in a consistent direction with respect to achieving ecological health and **sustainability**, and conduct public campaigns on how to achieve a coherent vision.
7. Create an ongoing program for politicians and public servants in environmental and **sustainability** literacy to, among other things,
 - a) emphasize the importance of the maintenance of ecological integrity to human quality of life;
 - b) increase each individual's understanding of our connection to and dependence on a healthy natural world;
 - c) improve ecological "big picture" thinking for politicians and public servants;
 - d) create the conditions necessary to move environmental legislation, policies, and implementation tools away from crisis response towards ecological security and crisis prevention;



- e) create a long-term (fifty year) environmental planning framework within which to draft medium-term (twenty year) and short-term (five year) environmental **sustainability** plans;
 - f) develop a program to accurately represent the short, medium, and long-term financial, social, and ecological costs of decisions, legislation, policies, and methods of implementation, in comparison to alternatives; and
 - g) educate civil servants in the use of full-cost accounting to include environmental damage and loss of biodiversity.
8. Provide environmental seminars for municipal planners and developers; train planners in the time scales that are occurring within the socio-political systems *and* the ecosystems within which they work.
 9. Develop and implement green plans for all department or agency catchment areas; include clearly defined goals, requirements for enforcement, accountability processes, and recognition for surpassing regulatory requirements.
 10. Develop a coordinated template for “state of the environment” reporting based on an ecosystems approach, with targets and timeframes, as well as opportunities for feedback and environmental learning for general and specialized audiences.

Resources

1. Establish a meta-database for environmental policies, projects, resources, contacts, experts, training programs, government initiatives, campaigns, and successes.
2. Provide resources to municipal and regional governments to adequately record the **ecological footprint** of their area of jurisdiction; establish plans to reduce their **ecological footprints**.
3. Create an environmental communications network to facilitate dialogue among public servants, politicians, and the general public.
4. Provide **environmental education** to the general public through the media, the school system, and through experiential education, to bring about a value shift in civil society toward ecological **sustainability**.
5. Implement indicators that measure losses (costs) of ecosystem function/biodiversity along with profits from natural resource use and conservation (benefits).
6. Raise funds through a fuel tax on vehicles that consume high levels of non-renewable resources.
7. Prepare materials to promote an understanding and application of an ecosystems approach, applying operational principles to specific areas (e.g., engineering and operations).
8. Create networks to share the knowledge, resources, and training needed to develop environmental and **sustainability** literacy.
9. Conduct speakers’ series that highlight human–nature connections, human impacts on the natural world, and sustainable choices.
10. Create a Web based catalogue to itemize and recommend best environmental practices by category.
11. Allocate time for government employees to participate in volunteer activities in **sustainability** projects; ecological education retreats in natural areas; and research field trips to areas that have been negatively impacted by human activities.



12. Create an **Agenda 21** Club to foster environmental engagement with a common direction for members of civil society.
13. Organize professional development seminars on the environmental implications of professions in broad terms (e.g., engineers, lawyers, planners, developers, resource experts, pharmacological researchers, and biotechnologists), and explore how practitioners can contribute to an ecologically sustainable future.
14. Make environmental regulations available in plain language and communicate them to the public.
15. Provide the media with information on the **sustainability** activities of government ministers, politicians, and departments.

Support

1. Dedicate a consistent percentage of budgets to the development of environmental and **sustainability** literacy in all government departments and agencies.
2. Make specific environmental elements part of government job responsibilities, with those responsible held accountable.
3. Infuse adequate resources (time, expertise, and tax dollars) to implement **sustainability** regulations and policies.
4. Gather public support for persuading the government to adhere to the **precautionary principle** in environmental decision-making, and to assign responsibility accordingly.
5. Build significant public support for **environmental literacy** to persuade the government to move on this issue.
6. Establish an official “people’s choice” award for exemplary environmental achievement by politicians who are recognized for shifts in policies.
7. Establish a politicians’ charter of **sustainability** rights and responsibilities.
8. Create a virtual “who’s doing what” sign-on web page of successful environmental and **sustainability** learning and action; use a social marketing approach (similar to that taken for climate change) to invite more public involvement.
9. Provide funding and tax support and incentives to institutions, businesses, volunteer organizations, and individuals to expand **environmental literacy** and promote environmental **sustainability**.
10. Develop government policy on environmental health education and practice, and political buy-in to implement it.
11. Provide tax breaks for individuals involved in volunteer work that advances **sustainability** and environmental quality.
12. Develop an environmental mentorship program for children and adults (the children mentor the adults!).
13. Recognize environmental champions in civil society; acknowledge not-for-profit sector participation and voice.

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of useful websites.

