



Alliance for Sustainability

Ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just & humane

Sustainable Metro 2040: Leading the Way to a Healthy, Prosperous and Just Future in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region

**Sean Gosiewski,
Alliance for Sustainability
www.afors.org**



Leading the Way

- The Met Council has the opportunity to bring about a fundamental shift to sustainability in our region by creating and championing a positive vision of a sustainable metro region



Alliance for Sustainability

Ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just & humane

Mission: Bring about personal, organizational & planetary sustainability

Founded 1983 - Free membership

Welcome Involvement:

- 1. Communities – Sustainable Communities**
Conference, Environmental Commissions, and help communities develop sustainability action plans using the NSF
- 2. Congregations – we support 100 congregations to green their campuses and engage their members**
- 3. Conscious Consumers/Citizens – Seminars the Natural Step Framework; Living Green Expo; Sustainability Campaign: Video, Website, Book & Radio**

Compelling Vision

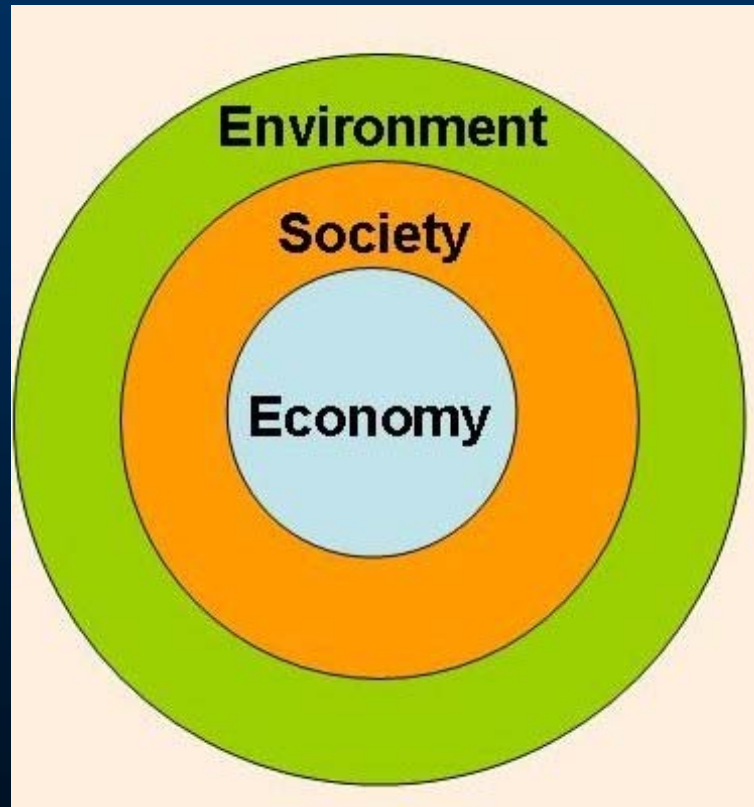
"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery





Sustainability should be the overarching frame for all the Met Council does





We Can Do All of This

- **Save Money, Time & Health**
- **Improve Performance**
- **Shift from Problem-Solving to Vision and Breakthrough Solutions**
- **Align Values & Practices**
- **Overcome Divisions**
- **Use by Private, Public & Nonprofit Sectors**
- **Inspire & Engage Entire Community**
- **Address All Aspects of Sustainability in One Effort**



Definitions of Sustainability

To achieve sustainability, a system must be ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just & humane (embodying our highest values – how we treat animals, people & the Earth)

– Alliance for Sustainability

Manna, 1984



Definition of Sustainability State of Minnesota Statute Used by League of Minnesota Cities

Development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity & community well-being while protecting & restoring the natural environment upon which people & economies depend.

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



– Minn. Stat. 4A.07, subd.1(b) © 2008 Sustainability Associates

Sustainability

LEED

Greenhouse
Gas Inventory

Natural

Capitalism

Ecological
Footprint

ISO14001

Miljömålen

Triple Bottom Line

Faktor 4

Carbon
Footprint

Agenda 21

Zero Emission

CSR

Factor 10

Ecoefficiency

Life Cycle
Analysis

Hannover
Principles

Cradle to Cradle

Natural
Capitalism



Importance of a Framework to Achieve Sustainability

Pollution prevention, product stewardship, and clean technology all move a company toward sustainability.

But without a framework to give direction to those activities, their impact will dissipate.

-- Dr. Stuart L. Hart, Cornell University's Johnson School of Management, "Beyond Greening: Strategies for a Sustainable World" *Harvard Business Review*, January 1, 1997

The Purpose of the NSF



To develop & share a common framework comprised of easily understood, scientifically-based principles that can serve as a compass to guide society toward a just & sustainable future.



1st Principle of Sustainability (NSF)

Limit what we *Take* from the Earth

Minimize Mining of Metals and Minerals and Burning of Fossil Fuels



costco.com
TRADE-IN & RECYCLE
PROGRAM



Get Green!

Do something good for your **wallet** and your **planet**
when you recycle your old electronic equipment.

powered by
GreenSight
TECHNOLOGIES

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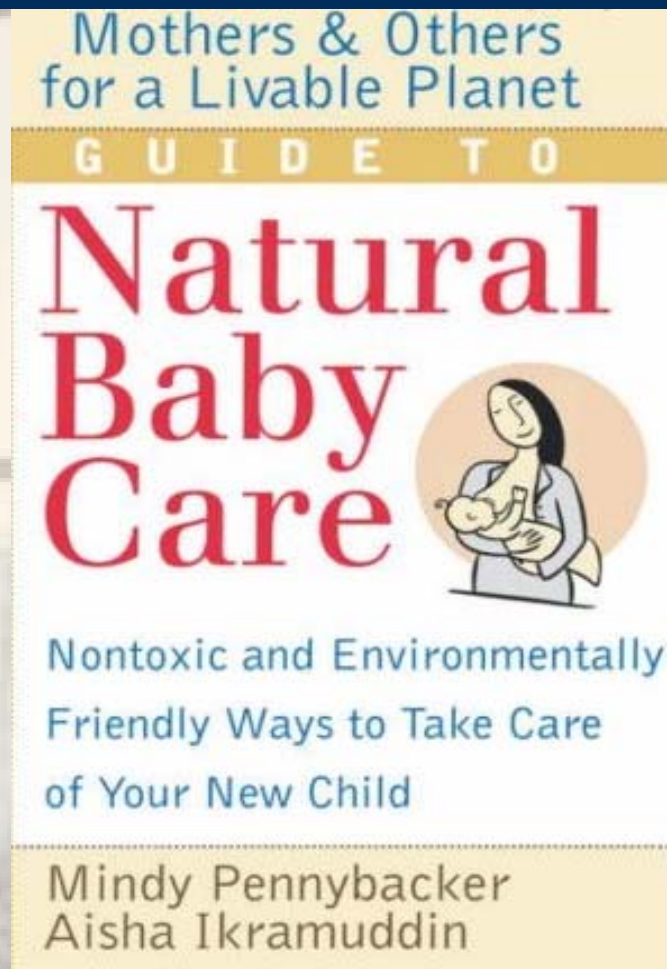




2nd Principle of Sustainability (NSF) Avoid Toxic Substances We *Make* Find Substitutes for Hazardous Pesticides, Plastics & Chemicals



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3rd Principle of Sustainability (NSF) Protect Ecosystems, Biodiversity, and Natural Resources

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Watershed
and Wetland
Protection
Information Kit
for County
Officials

CENTER FOR
WATERSHED
PROTECTION
NACO National Association of Counties
The Voice of America's Counties

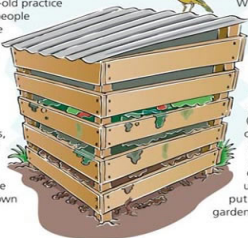


Start composting.
**And turn food scraps into
food for the soil.**



It's a waste to throw away vegetable and fruit peelings, leftovers and other food scraps – when you can feed your soil with them instead. Composting is an age-old practice which is coming back as people move on from the 'throw-away' society and see the value of fitting in with nature's cycles: by putting organic matter back into the soil – while growing fresh food for themselves as well.

Get hold of a compost bin
Here are some guidelines for those who have garden space. First you need a large squarish container - make one from old planks or pallets, or buy a purpose-made bin from the hardware store. The main thing is to allow air to circulate freely and keep the contents damp but not wet. A warm, moist environment is most comfortable for the worms, beetles and microbes to break down last night's leftovers into crumbly compost.

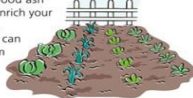


A kitchen tub for peelings

Have a medium-sized (half-litre or so) tub with a lid – such as those used for ice-cream – in the kitchen near where food preparation happens. When this tub is full of peelings and left-overs, take it out and empty into the compost bin. This helps keep the smells down, as old food is not left in the kitchen more than half a day or so – depending how often you make your meals and how much fresh or pre-packaged food you use.

Turn full circle

You can feed your compost bin with just about anything edible, and it's helpful to throw a handful of soil and garden clippings (not branches), old leaves or wood ash over the kitchen waste to help enrich your compost and keep flies down. After a couple of months, you can carefully spade out compost from underneath the bin – ready to put back into your vegetable garden. And keep the cycle turning.



Nature knows no waste - nor should we.
Reduce. Re-use. Recycle. Stop littering.



CITY OF CAPE TOWN | **LEERIE SAAYMAN** | **LEERIE SAAYMAN**
THIS CITY WORKS FOR YOU

City of Cape Town Solid Waste Department. For all information and enquiries, telephone the City's Customer Care Centre on 086 010 3089 Fax: 021 400 4302 Email: Enca.Gilbert@capetown.gov.za Post: Director Solid Waste, PO Box 298 Cape Town 8006



save water
shower with a friend

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4th Principle of Sustainability (NSF)

Meet Human Needs – Remove Barriers to People Meeting their Fundamental Needs



MOVE YOUR BODY
STRETCH YOUR MIND

One Cup at a Time

Poverty Alleviation and Fair Trade in Latin America



CENTRO DE
DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE Y
ENTREPRENDIMIENTO SOCIAL
Y EMPRESAS SOCIALES

Colorado
State
University

Center for Sustainable Development and Social Enterprise



Desarrollo Alternativo, A.C.



American Planning Association

American Planning Association

Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability

**[www.planning.org/policyguides/
sustainability.htm](http://www.planning.org/policyguides/sustainability.htm)**



Commitment to Sustainability & the Natural Step Framework

- **IKEA**
- **Electrolux**
- **Interface**
- **McDonalds**
- **Starbucks**
- **Rohm & Haas**
- **CH2M Hill Engineers**
- **Nike**
- **Mitsubishi Electric America**
- **Bank of America**
- **Portfolio 21**
- **Benchmark Asset Managers**
- **US Army, Navy and Air Force**
- **State of Oregon**
- **Whistler, BC**
- **Santa Monica, CA**
- **Portsmouth, NH**
- **Madison & 24 other WI Eco-municipalities**
- **American Planning Association**
- **U TX - Houston**



MN Commitment to Sustainability & the Natural Step Framework

- Tennant Company
- Cuningham Group Arch.
- Emmons & Olivier
- Landscape Structures
- Ridgeview Medical Cnter
- University Bank
- Lakewinds Natural Foods
- Baltix Furniture
- White Bear Racquet & Swim (Lifetime Fitness)
- Solarflow Energy
- Angry Trout Café
- Ecopolitan Restaurant
- City of Duluth
- St. Cloud Region
- Living Green Expo
- Alliance for Sustainability
- French Academy MN
- St. Joan of Arc Church
- Basilica of St. Mary
- Lake Harriet United Methodist Church
- St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka



How Can We Climb Mt. Sustainability?



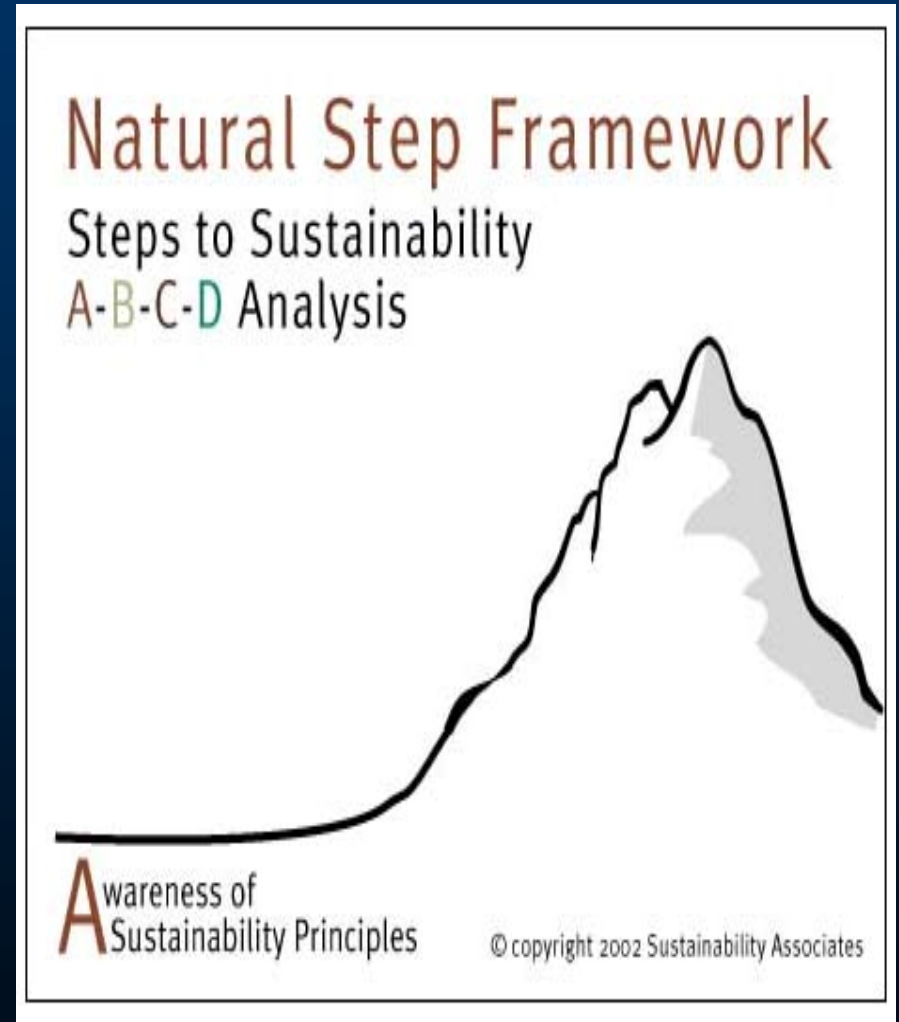


NSF A-B-C-D Analysis

Step A: Awareness
of Sustainability
Principles:

The Natural Step
Framework (NSF)

The NSF provides a
compass for
climbing Mt.
Sustainability



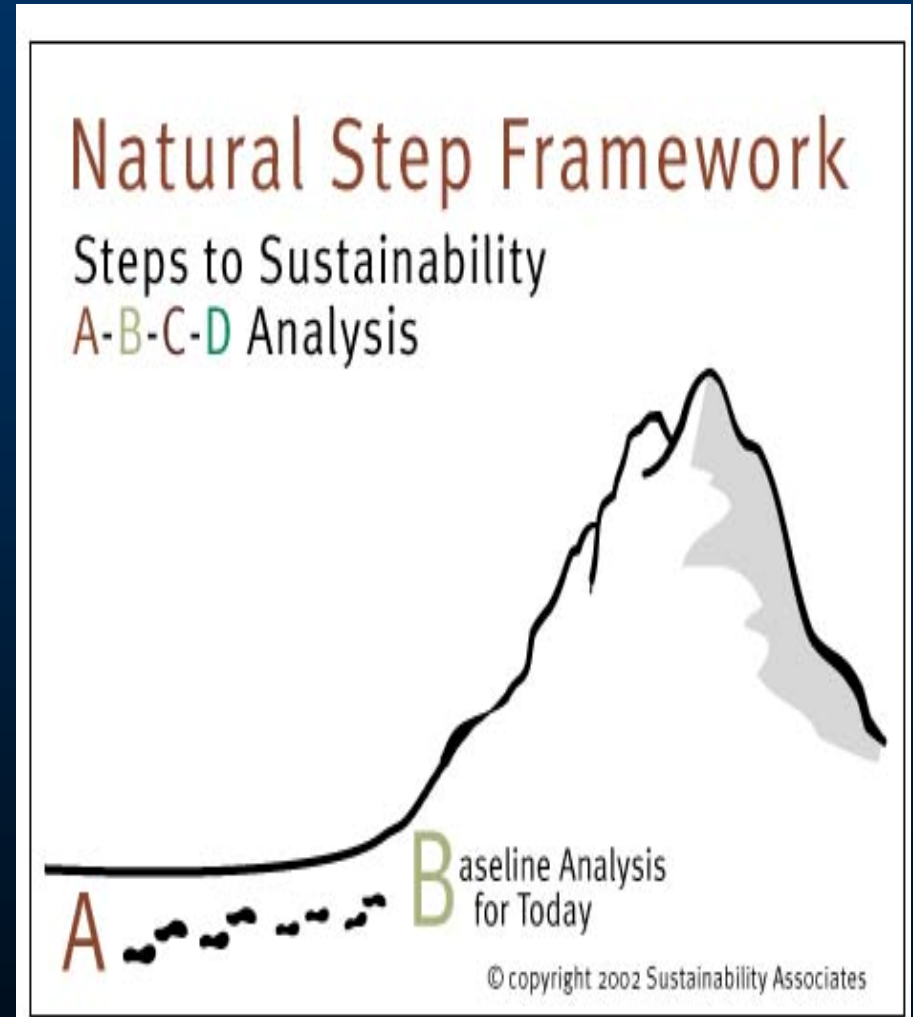


NSF A-B-C-D Analysis

Step B: Baseline

Analysis for Today:
Apply NSF Principles
to the Organization

List each of the 4
principles and assess
each aspect of
organization as to
where it is aligned &
where it is not

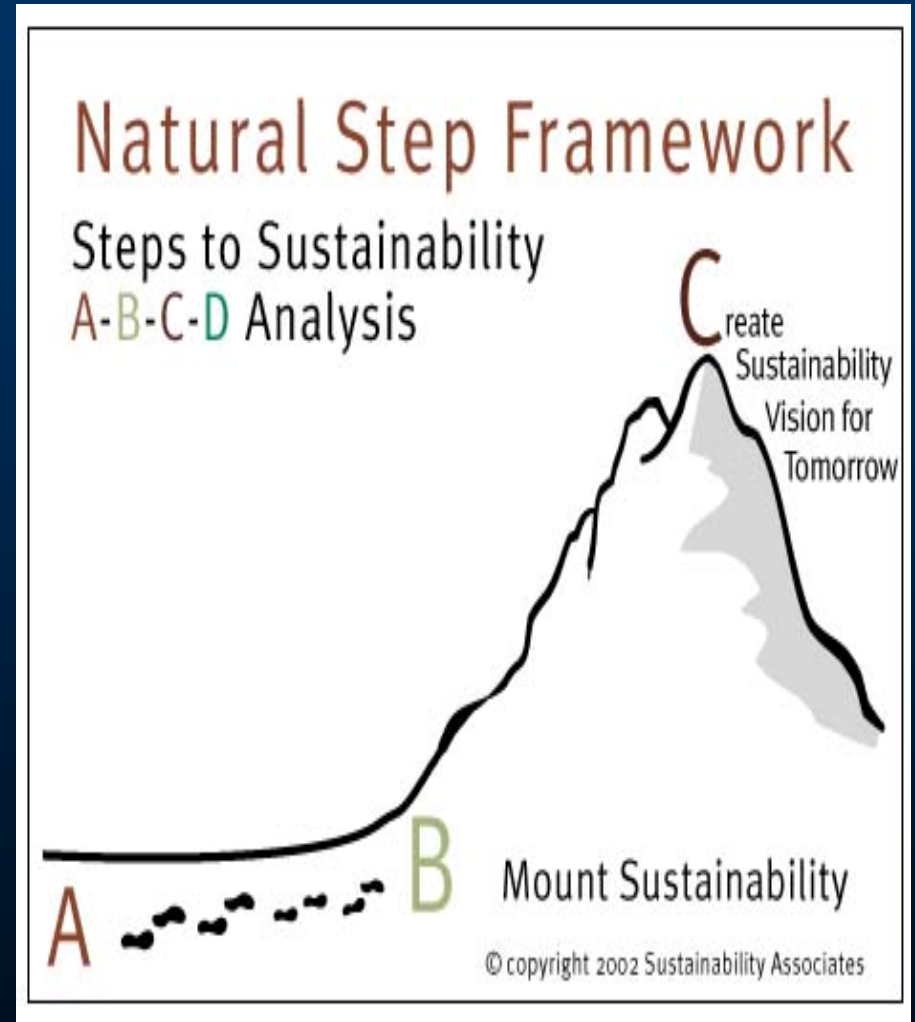


NSF A-B-C-D Analysis

Step C: Create
Sustainability Vision
for Tomorrow

Imagine project,
organization or
community as
sustainable, meeting
all 4 NSF principles

Brainstorm what it
would look like

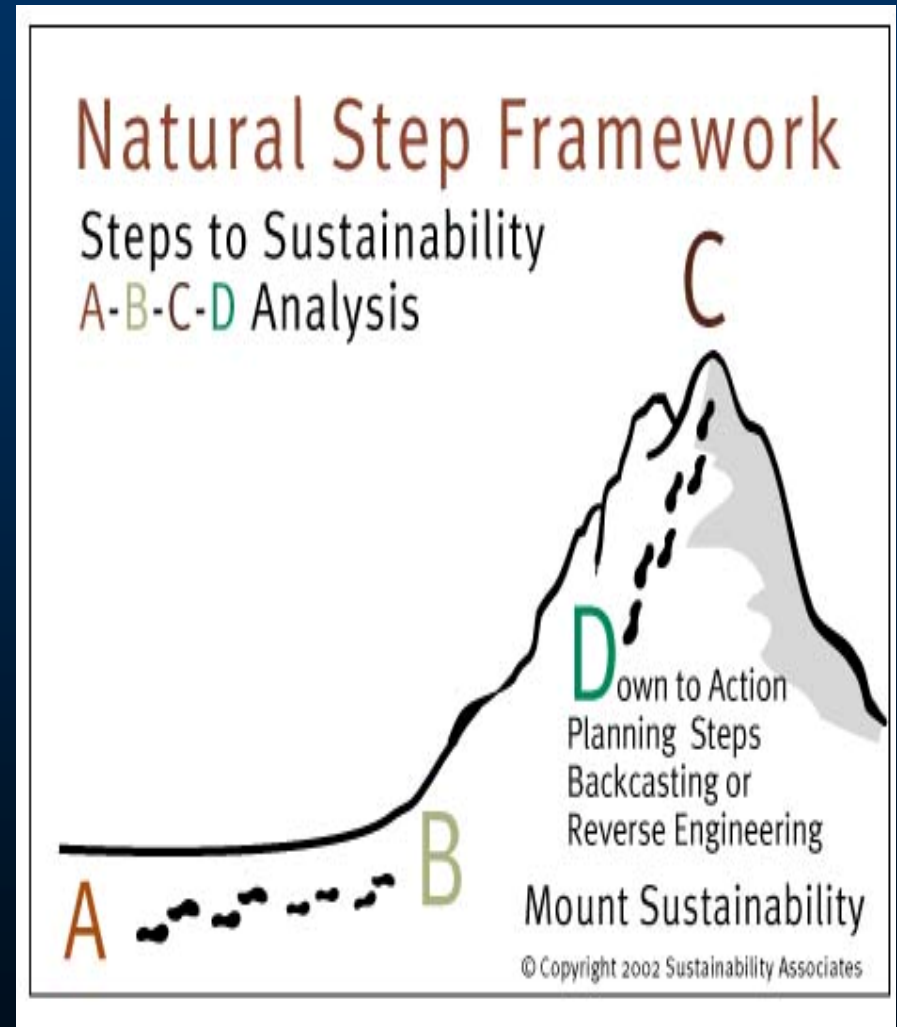


NSF A-B-C-D Analysis

Step D: Develop a Sustainability Action Plan

Utilize Backcasting or Reverse Engineering to get from C (vision) to B (present)

What would be the first steps to take?





Sustainability Principle #1

Envision the Twin Cities in 2040 thriving with renewably fueled transportation & location efficiency





Sustainability Principle #2

Envision Twin Cities Enterprises thriving in the areas of green chemistry, organic agriculture and product stewardship.





Sustainability Principle #3

Envision our Twin Cities with healthy forests, habitats and agriculture, accessible green space & abundant, clean water, lakes and rivers.





Sustainability Principle #4

Envision our Twin Cities with strong families, racial equity, all kids learning, a skilled workforce, good incomes & social capital for all ages.





The Natural Step pedagogy has proven itself to be among the most effective ways in the world to establish a foundation for the mind-set shift needed for twenty-first century enterprises to work.



– Peter Senge, Author, *The Fifth Discipline*, Chairman, Society for Organizational Learning



***Consider the Foresight of
Horace Cleveland, Charles Loring and
William Folwell. In establishing our
system of urban parks***



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Resources Available

www.afors.org

Alliance for Sustainability staff, trainers and national partners are available to offer trainings on Sustainability and the Natural Step Framework for

- Members of the Met Council
- Met Council Staff & work groups
- City staff that are preparing to update their comprehensive plans (using an integrative, systems approach.)



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Community Engagement

The Alliance for Sustainability works with many stakeholders. We are eager to connect them with the 2040 Framework

- Businesses
- Suburban Environmental Commissions
- MN GreenStep Cities
- Faith Communities and Youth
- Neighborhood Associations
- Energy Resilience Groups
- Watershed Groups



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“Linking citizens and cities for
sustainable communities.”

Manfred Max-Neef's Fundamental Needs and the Natural Step Framework's Fourth Principle for Sustainability

By Terry Gips, President, Alliance for Sustainability

The Natural Step Framework (NSF) specifies that there are four principles for planetary sustainability (see www.naturalstep.org). The first three are ecologically-focused and the fourth focuses on social considerations: "People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs."

To address the issue of basic needs, the NSF utilizes the fundamental needs analysis of Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef ("Development and human needs" in *Real-life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation*, Paul Ekins and Manfred Max-Neef, London and NY: Routledge, 1997). His work has been at the core of human scale development in Latin America and Africa. Unfortunately, few Americans are aware of it. Max-Neef's concepts are used extensively by the NSF community facilitators in Sweden.

Max-Neef postulates that "basic needs are finite, few and classifiable" and that they "are the same in all cultures and all historical periods." Rather than there being a hierarchy of needs as presented by Maslow, he believes these needs are always present. "What changes, both over time and through cultures, is the way or means by which the needs are satisfied." He believes needs are not substitutable--you can have lots of one fulfilled but it doesn't help address the rest. At the same time, through our selection of satisfiers, we can fulfill more than one need at once.

He suggests there are nine basic human needs: subsistence, protection/security, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity/meaning and freedom. He believes there may be a tenth, transcendence, but is not sure that it is universal. I would suggest it is.

Some of the needs and their satisfiers (there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence) are very straightforward, such as protection (curative and health systems) and understanding (formal or informal education). But in other cases we confuse needs and satisfiers. For example, he believes food and shelter are not needs, but rather, satisfiers of the need for subsistence. There are different ways we can meet that need, such as infant formula or breast feeding. Bottle feeding will satisfy the need for subsistence, but breast feeding will simultaneously satisfy the needs for subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, identity and freedom.

Each society adopts different methods for the satisfaction of the same fundamental needs. "We may go so far as to say that one of the aspects that define a culture is its choice of satisfiers. Whether a person belongs to a consumerist or to an ascetic society, his/her fundamental human needs are the same."

The good news ecologically is that it is possible to actually have more satisfaction with less stuff. It's not the materials and energy that provide satisfaction, but the degree to which fundamental needs are met.

While many people practice voluntary simplicity, asking the public to sacrifice and live with less can be a challenge. Instead, we can speak with a powerful, attractive message of abundance: Would you like more of what you've always wanted (learning, laughter, meaningful work and safe, healthy, and attractive communities and environments) and less of what you never wanted (expense, stress, pollution, injustice and fear)? Who would say no to such a positive message? It doesn't take more resources, just a design meeting fundamental human needs. We can accomplish this as a society.

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Terry Gips Article on Natural Step Framework and Max-Neef Fundamental Needs, Continued Page Two

His approach allows for a reinterpretation of the concept of poverty. Rather than poverty just being defined as being below a certain income threshold, he argues that "any fundamental human need that is not adequately satisfied reveals a human poverty." He then suggests that "each poverty generates pathologies" that necessitate a constructive dialogue regarding both the effects of their deprivation and their potential for becoming a resource.

Based on such an analysis, he believes the US is among the poorest countries in the world. We're fooled by thinking that all of our economic goods will fulfill our fundamental needs. No wonder that once the elusive American dream is captured, so many people discover their lives are empty and meaningless.

Another place we're confused is with economic goods, which, due to advertising and the media, we see as fundamental needs. He believes that they are more correctly seen as objects that make it possible to increase or decrease the efficiency of a satisfier. He says that in a strict sense goods are "the means by which individuals empower satisfiers to meet their needs."

"When, however, the form of production and consumption of goods makes goods ends in themselves, then the alleged satisfaction of a need impairs its capacity to create potential. This creates the conditions for entrenching an alienating society engaged in a productivity race lacking any sense at all. Life, then, is placed at the service of artifacts, rather than artifacts at the service of life. The question of the quality of life is overshadowed by our obsession to increase productivity." This helps to explain the great sense of disappointment and alienation felt by so many people who have worked hard and succeeded in achieving the American Dream.

Max-Neef's approach has a built-in incentive for adoption: Everyone will benefit. Since the fundamental needs are shared by everyone, it is more likely to get broad support, especially if there are grassroots societal discussions about fundamental needs and how they can be met. Those who hold tight to power and money (which may be seen as an attempt to assure security and other fundamental needs are addressed) will have strong incentives to consider relaxing their grip. It is something that Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Greens and the Fed-Up can agree on and support.

They will recognize that we will never become sustainable unless we design a society that meets the fundamental needs of every person. If we do not, those in need will have no choice but to do whatever needed to survive, whether cutting down rainforest, killing endangered species, overfishing, stealing or committing violent acts.

As we see that every one of us affects our tiny Spaceship Earth and that there are economic and social opportunities for businesses and communities based on the NSF's four principles for sustainability, there will be powerful forces for a sustainable society in which every person's fundamental needs can be met. This is perhaps the most important conversation of our time.

Terry Gips terry@sustainabilityassociates.com is an author (*Breaking the Pesticide Habit* and *The Humane Consumer and Producer Guide*), economist, ecologist, Adjunct Faculty at the Minneapolis College of Art & Design, Natural Step instructor, President of the Alliance for Sustainability (612-331-1099, www.afors.org) and President of Sustainability Associates, an environmental consulting firm. Contact: 9000 W. 28th St., St. Louis Park, MN 55426; 612-374-4765; www.sustainabilityassociates.com.

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Sustainability and the Natural Step Framework: Creating a Win-Win-Win for Business, Communities and the Earth

By Terry Gips, President

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In the Hillel Center at the University of Minnesota, 1521 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414

So why be hopeful? Because we can create new jobs, restore our environment and promote social stability. The solutions are creative, practical and profitable.

– Paul Hawken, Author and Founding Chair of the Natural Step-US

What is Sustainability?

The Alliance for Sustainability has long defined sustainability as being “ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just and humane, meaning to embody our highest values -- how we treat people, animals and the Earth.” (*Manna*, 1984) The United Nations defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” (U.N. World Commission on Environment & Development, *Our Common Future*, 1987)

More and more businesses embrace sustainability through the use of a triple bottom line that expands beyond financial to include social and environmental concerns. (John Elkington, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom line of 21st Century Business*, 1998) It is sometimes called the “3Ps: People, Planet and Profits”, and companies such as Shell are using it along with nearly every major corporation in Europe. It forms the basis for the Dow Jones Sustainability Index with more than \$5 billion under management (www.sustainability-indexes.com) and the Global Reporting Initiative with more than 1250 businesses in 60 countries reporting on their social, environmental and financial results (www.globalreporting.org).

Natural Capitalism by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins documents how we can have 10 to 100 times greater resource productivity, benefiting profits, people and the planet. American companies could cut national electricity consumption by at least 75% and produce approximate annual returns of 100%. Because only about 1% of all the materials mobilized to serve America are actually made into products still in use six months after sale, there is a huge opportunity to turn this 99% waste into profit.

Shift in Public Awareness

Hurricane Katrina, \$3 a gallon gas, Nobel Prize and Academy Award-winning Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth*, and extensive media attention have served to awaken the public to the challenges with climate change and the need for sustainability. The ImagePower Green Brands 2.0 survey released May 1, 2007 by WPP, one of the world’s largest communications services groups, revealed that Americans across all socioeconomic and ethnic groups display increasing degrees of green attitudes and behaviors. This is one of the greatest shifts in U.S. consumer consciousness in recent history. According to the study, 34% of Americans are “active green,” meaning they identify with the idea that taking care of the environment is society’s responsibility. This group is doing everything they can to make a long term positive impact on the environment—including making smarter purchasing choices.

Taking the Natural Step to Sustainability

One of the most widely used and successful approaches for bringing about sustainability is the Natural Step Framework, which was created by Swedish medical doctor and cancer researcher Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert, along with assistance from physicist Dr. John Holmberg. As a scientist at Sweden’s leading research

- continued -

Sustainability and the Natural Step Framework, Continued

Page Two

hospital, Robert was concerned that increasing cancer rates, especially among infants like those he was treating, were tied to environmental factors. He was frustrated by the lack of agreement among scientists about the cause or what to do, so he began a consensus process which resulted in 50 leading Swedish scientists agreeing on the underlying principles needed for sustainability.

He shared this information with major corporations who recognized the need for action. They supported the sending of an audiocassette and brochure to every home and school in Sweden--4.3 million. Leading artists, musicians and scientists produced a national TV special in 1989 to launch an educational campaign. The Natural Step became a nonprofit backed by the King of Sweden.

*My mission is to transform my company into a sustainable business—
one that does well by doing good – by using the principles of the Natural Step framework.*
-- Ray Anderson, CEO, Interface, world's largest commercial floor covering manufacturer

The Natural Step in Practice

IKEA, the world's largest furniture manufacturer, became the first company to utilize it, soon followed by Electrolux (world's largest appliance manufacturer), and Sweden's railway, largest hotel and supermarket chains, biggest oil company, and McDonald's. It was also adopted by rural communities and large cities like Stockholm who became "eco-municipalities." More than 500,000 young people became involved through the Swedish Youth Parliament for Sustainability, and thousands of farmers utilized the NSF to shift toward sustainable agriculture, saving money and reducing pesticide use 75%.

The Natural Step soon spread to numerous countries and was brought to North America in the mid 90s by *Ecology of Commerce* author Paul Hawken and MIT learning organization leader Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*. It was first used by \$1.4 billion Interface, the world's largest commercial floor covering manufacturer, which has saved more than \$400 million utilizing it. Sustainable forestry products manufacturer Collins Pine saved \$1 million a year. It also has been utilized by:

- Hundreds of businesses, including Starbucks, Nike, Rohm & Haas, Bank of America, CH2M Hill Engineering, White Bear Racquet & Swim, Baltix Furniture and Cunningham Group Architecture;
- Government agencies such as the State of Oregon and US Army and Navy;
- The American Planning Association;
- The cities of Whistler, Santa Monica, Portsmouth, Duluth, Madison and 24 WI "eco-municipalities";
- Hospitals such as Ridgeview Medical Center;
- Academic institutions such as the University of Texas, Houston; and
- Religious institutions, such as the Basilica of St. Mary and St. Joan of Arc Church in Minneapolis.

Four Principles of the Natural Step Framework (NSF)

The Natural Step was established with the purpose of developing and sharing a common framework composed of easily understood, scientifically based principles that serve as a compass to guide society toward a just and sustainable future. The NSF emphasizes that the only long-term, sustainable manner in which business and society can operate is within the Earth's natural cycles. This can be accomplished by meeting four basic sustainability conditions:

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Sustainability and the Natural Step Framework, Continued

Page Three

The Natural Step Framework (Natural Step www.naturalstep.org) holds that in a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

- 1...concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust;
 - 2...concentrations of substances produced by society;
 - 3...degradation by physical means;
- and, in that society,
- 4...people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

To address the first three, strategies include both dematerialization (using less resources to accomplish the same task), substitution of alternatives, more efficient use of materials and the 3 Rs and 1 C: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Compost. To make these four principles more accessible to the public, the Alliance for Sustainability and other groups utilize an easy-to-understand, practical way of addressing the principles:

1. What We Take From the Earth: Mining and Fossil Fuels – Avoid “systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth’s crust.” Simply, we need to use renewable energy and nontoxic, reusable materials to avoid the spread of hazardous mined metals and pollutants. Why? Mining and burning fossil fuels release a wide range of substances that do not go away, but rather, continue to build up and spread in our ecosphere. Nature has adapted over millions of years to specific amounts of these materials. Cells don't know how to handle significant amounts of lead, mercury, radioactive materials and other hazardous mining compounds, leading to learning disabilities, weakened immune systems and stunted development. Burning fossil fuels contributes to smog, acid rain and climate change.

Action: We can reduce energy, purchase renewable energy and support sound public policies. We can walk, bike, carpool, use public transit and “eco-drive” (properly inflate tires, drive the speed limit and avoid sudden stops/starts - save 25-35% on fuel). We can reduce heating/cooling (save 20%), turn off computers (save \$120/yr) and use compact fluorescents (save \$25-50), LEDs, Energy Star appliances (30% energy saving), proper insulation, battery lawnmowers (save \$65/year), and “smart power strips” (save \$120/yr). We can decrease mined metals through recycling (cans, fluorescents, electronics), reused rings, rechargeable batteries (two save \$1000), non-mercury thermometers, soy inks, and sustainable building.

2. What We Make: Chemicals, Plastics, and Pesticides – Nature must not “be subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.” Simply, we need to use safe, biodegradable substances that don't cause the spread of toxins in the environment. Why? Since World War II, our society has produced more than 85,000 chemicals, such as DDT and PCBs. Many of these substances don't go away, but rather, spread and bio-accumulate in nature and the fat cells of animals and humans. Cells don't know how to handle significant amounts of these chemicals, often leading to cancer, hormone disruption, improper development, birth defects and long-term genetic change.

Action: We can use non-toxic, natural cleaning materials (chlorine-free), personal care products (no anti-bacterial soap), toys, paints and renovation materials (formaldehyde-free). We can reduce plastics with reusable bags, plates, cups, cutlery, and water bottles, while reusing packaging, recycling containers and purchasing bio-based, compostable containers. We can use safe, natural pest control in our parks, schools, workplaces, homes and yards. We can have chlorine-free spas/pools and use “green dry-cleaning”. We can eliminate factory farm feedlots and support sustainable agriculture by voting with our dollars by purchasing certified organic food and clothing. We can utilize used clothes and toys and then share them with others.

- continued -

Sustainability and the Natural Step Framework, Continued

Page Four

3. What We Do to the Earth: Biodiversity and Ecosystems – Nature must not “be subject to degradation by physical means.” Simply, we need to protect our soils, water and air, or we won't be able to eat, drink or breathe. Why? Forests, soils, wetlands, lakes, oceans and other naturally productive eco-systems provide food, fiber, habitat, oxygen, waste handling, and other essential goods and services. For millions of years they have been purifying the planet and creating a habitat suitable for human and other life. When we destroy or deplete these systems, we endanger both our livelihoods and the likelihood of human existence.

Action: We can reduce paper use through two-sided copying, electronic communication, cloth napkins, reusable shopping bags and getting off junk mail lists. We can purchase certified, sustainably-harvested forest products and use 100% post-consumer recycled content paper, tissues, towels, and toilet paper. We can eat lower on the food chain with an organic, plant-based diet and reduce or eliminate our consumption of endangered and factory farmed fish and seafood. We can protect and conserve precious water with low flow faucets, toilets and showers, native landscaping, green roofs and rain barrels and gardens. We can compost yard material and food scraps. We can encourage smart growth and protect wildlife habitat.

4. Meeting Human Needs - "People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs." Simply, we can meet the fundamental needs of every human and consume less. Why? The US makes up only 4% of the world's population but consumes about 25% of its resources. People living in the lowest 20% by income receive only 1.4% of the world's income. Just to survive, they see no choice but to cut down rainforests, sell endangered species, and use polluting energy sources. The alternative Nobel Prize-winning work of Manfred Max-Neef shows how we can meet the fundamental needs of everyone, address our consumption addiction or "affluenza," and transform our lives and planet.

Action: We can support policies promoting social justice, health and a local living economy. We can smile, treat everyone with respect, connect with our neighbors, make socially responsible investments, purchase fair trade products, and donate our time and resources to create a sustainable community. We can practice a healthy lifestyle and encourage discussions about meeting fundamental needs, ask if we really need more stuff, and design our workplaces, homes and organizations to give us more of what we want (healthy, attractive and nurturing environments) and less of what we don't want (pollution, stress and expense).

Next Steps

Consider attending or organizing an introductory presentation on Sustainability and NSF, one-day or two evening seminar or train-the-trainer. Individuals use it to save money and strategically reposition their life and organization, discovering a sense of hope and possibilities. Organizations and communities use it to bring together diverse participants to create a shared understanding of sustainability, inspiring vision and practical sustainability action plan. They reduce costs, improve performance, build safer, healthier environments, encourage innovative thinking, attract and retain employees, and create aligned teams.

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