

Case Study: Sustainability Planning

Regardless of if you are leading a community sailing center, planning a thousand person regatta, or building an America’s Cup team, developing and implementing a sustainability plan can seem daunting! 11th Hour Racing’s Sustainability Advisor Jill Savery shared her tips on where to start, how to get others to buy into the plan, and what to track to measure success.

What are the benefits to creating a sustainability plan?

- Lower environmental footprint & increase social and economic benefits
- Lower operating costs
- Reduce risks (environment, communities, economic, regulatory)
- Improve brand, image, public relations
- Engage stakeholders in new ways
- Retain employees / volunteers

The following steps highlight the basic process of creating a Sustainability Plan:

1. Discuss Sustainability Vision & Goals

A vision statement can help guide your activities related to sustainability, and help communicate the long-term goal of the initiative to your larger team, staff, and board members.

Example: *“As an organization that places its passion and respect for the sea that surrounds its Island home above all else, [Sail Martha’s Vineyard](#) seeks to further develop and promote an environmentally responsible event model of sustainability that becomes the standard, not only on Martha’s Vineyard but, over time, across the entire United States sailing community.”*

2. Define Sustainability for your Organization

Sustainability can be defined in multiple ways, so it is helpful to have a common definition to work from when building a sustainability plan. The definition should touch on the environmental, economic, and social factors most important to your organization.



Discuss ideas with staff and other key stakeholders, as ultimately they will need to support and adopt the organization’s definition. The definition should be simple and resonate with your stakeholders.

Example: *“Optimizing the social, economic, and environmental impacts of all event activities, leaving a positive legacy on the local community and attendees, and protecting our natural environment.”*
(Newport Stopover Volvo Ocean Race 2015)



3. Stakeholder Engagement & Impact Identification

Including all stakeholders in sustainability planning is key to achieving buy in and ultimately supporting successful implementation. Stakeholders can include: members of your club/center or team, staff, event participants, vendors, sponsors and suppliers, boards and management teams, etc. Sharing with each of these groups the goals for your sustainability plan, as well as incorporating their feedback and concerns will, in the end, create a more robust plan.

In collaboration with stakeholders, identify the positive and negative impacts of your organization, team, or event. Be sure to consider impacts on the people/communities, the environment, and the economy.

- Determine which impacts are most important to achieving more sustainable operations.
- Rank impacts in terms of sustainability risks and opportunities.

Sustainability Plan Development Good Practices

- Authenticity
- Transparency
- Commitment to Monitor & Improve Performance
- Report to Stakeholders
- Encourage Feedback

4. Research & Gap Analysis- Identify Sustainability Strategies

Review your current activities and processes related to sustainability. Identify activities you are already doing well and areas in need of improvement (e.g., waste management, water use, food sourcing, local employment, etc.). Research what other similarly situated organizations are doing well in terms of sustainable operations, and become familiar with industry trends, innovative ideas and better management practices. Collect baseline operational data if it is not available, such as energy consumption and recycling rates. Use this analysis, as well as the information learned from stakeholder engagement and material issue identification, to then identify the priority sustainability strategies your organization will undertake to improve operations. These strategies can be grouped into a few themes or focus areas for clarity. Note: start simply!

5. Establish Performance Targets & Key Performance Indicators- A specific, quantifiable performance measurement intended to assess achievement of a target.

Set reasonable but challenging Sustainability Performance Targets that you are aiming for over the long-term based on findings from your stakeholder outreach and research (include social, economic and environmental areas). Discuss your draft targets with key stakeholders and solicit their feedback and ideas.

Examples of Key Performance Indicators & Targets				
Key Performance Indicator	Performance Target	Baseline Performance	Strategies	Current Status
Total environmental protection expenditures and investments by type.	<i>Example: 25% of total annual operating budget shall fund environmental protection efforts annually</i>	<i>Example: 15% of total budget funded environmental protection efforts in 2013.</i>	<i>Example: Replace creosote pilings</i>	<i>Example: Assessed existing creosote pilings for replacement. Project will cost \$25,000 (25% of operating budget) and will reduce pollutants surrounding facilities. Project to take place in Q4.</i>
Reduce energy consumption within the organization.	<i>Example: Reduce energy purchased from grid by 25% in year 1, and 5% each subsequent year through conservation measures</i>	<i>Example: 50,000 kWh and 1,000 therms of energy were procured from the grid in 2013</i>	<i>Example: Strategy 1: Replace light bulbs with energy efficient alternative. Strategy 2: Install occupancy sensors in all rooms.</i>	<i>Example: All lighting in office has been assessed and is estimated to reduce energy use by 5,000 kWh annually. Installation will take place in Q2. Motion sensors will also be integrated into the lighting system. These efforts will collectively reduce energy use by 12%, or 6,000 kWh annually.</i>
Total weight or volume of waste by type, disposal method, and disposal cost.	<i>Example: Reduce volume of waste sent to landfill by 50% by 2018</i>	<i>Example: 10% of waste by volume was diverted from landfill in 2016. Disposal costs totaled \$50,000.</i>	<i>Example: Launch educational campaign to ensure waste is being properly disposed.</i>	<i>Example: Implemented recycling education program for staff. Waste sent to the landfill has reduced by 5% in the first quarter as a result of these efforts. Approximately 5 cubic yards of waste is being sent to the landfill and 3 cubic yards is being recycled (an increase from 1 cubic yard prior to education campaign).</i>
Number, type and impact of sustainability initiatives designed to raise awareness, share knowledge and impact behavior change and results achieved.	<i>Example: Engage 50 members of the public quarterly in sustainability activities through event staffing.</i>	<i>Example: We staffed 1 event last year and reached 5 people</i>	<i>Example: Establish presence at weekly farmers market to educate public on X sustainability initiatives</i>	<i>Example: Conducted training for 5 staff members on sustainability best practices. Those staff members worked at 10 farmers market events and educated 75 people on water conservation and pollution prevention strategies.</i>



It is a good idea to create KPIs that align with the [Global Reporting Initiative's Indicators](#) (this is the global standard for tracking sustainability and this is a good place to get ideas for indicators that range from social, economic and environmental).

6. Monitoring & Reporting

Determine how you will measure and monitor your performance against these KPIs (daily, after specific events, quarterly), and the best mechanisms to regularly report your organization's progress to relevant stakeholder groups (e.g. create a reporting template for monitoring and annual summary document or webpage).

7. Create Education & Engagement Strategies

Develop specific education, engagement, and communications strategies for key stakeholder groups (e.g., members, staff, fans, athletes, etc.) focused on raising awareness about your goals and targets, and encouraging/inspiring the adoption of sustainable behaviors (such as avoiding single use plastic or recycling).

The path towards sustainable operations is a journey that requires collaboration, creativity, innovation and teamwork. Thinking sustainably is a lens through which individuals analyze options and make decisions that connect and balance environmental, economic and social factors. It requires entities to analyze costs and benefits in decision-making to ensure the most effective outcome. The ultimate goal is to operate in a manner that encourages human talent, restores the natural environment, and enables thriving economies now and into the future.

Resources within the sailing industry

The Green Blue [Guides for Clubs, Training Centers and Boating Businesses](#)

The Green Blue [Case Studies on Sustainability Initiatives in the Sailing Industry](#)

[World Sailing Sustainability Strategy](#)

[Ocean Conservancy's Good Mate Program-Green Boating Guide](#)

[Sailors for the Sea Clean Regattas Program](#)

[London 2012 Learning Legacy: Sustainability \(case studies, reports, helpful resources\)](#)

[34th America's Cup Sustainability Report](#)

[Atlantic Cup Sustainability](#)

[52 Super Series Sustainability](#)

[Volvo Ocean Race 2015 Newport Stopover Sustainability Plan & Sustainability Report](#)

For more information on sustainability in the sport of sailing see: 11thhourracing.org