

SUSTAINABLE PORTSMOUTH FIVE YEAR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

PHASE II ACTION CIRCLES

(January - March, 2010)

MEETING #1

(1 & 2 – 10 to 15 mins)

(1) Facilitator introduces him/herself and explains the role of the facilitator

(2) “Getting to know you” - Participants introduce themselves with some identifying factors such as:

- Occupation, hobbies,
- Family info
- Question for everyone to answer: What is the one thing about Portsmouth that must be sustained?
- Question for everyone to answer: I want to be involved in this Action Circle because . . .

(10 mins)

(3) Action Circle basics and logistics

- Set ground rules (see sample ground rules attached see SCRC Training Guide at Page 43). Set out the ground rules on a separate sheet of newsprint and post at each meeting.
- Meeting times and dates
- Location of meetings
- Four meetings (recommended)
- Prepare written and oral report out
- Start thinking about who will write? Who will present?
- Written report due March
- Report out on March

(15 mins)

(4) Introduce the Vision Statement

**Sustainable Portsmouth
Vision Statement**

**“Making Portsmouth a sustainable place –
by all, for all”**

**Our Community collaborates to
learn, adapt and evolve sustainably.**

- **By respecting, preserving and replenishing all resources.**
- **By fostering opportunity and economic prosperity for all while honoring the environment.**
- **By preserving and enhancing our cultural, historic and social assets.**

Digest the Vision Statement:

- What are the parameters?
- What stands out?
- Actions must be consistent with Vision?

(10 mins)

(5) The Question:

What actions must be taken over the next five years concerning (team topic) to make Portsmouth the most sustainable place for everyone to live, work and play?

Digest the Question:

- What words stand out in the question?
- “Five years” “everyone” “sustainable”

(60 mins)

(6) Creating Vision Statement for(team topic): Brainstorm ideas of what should be included in the Vision Statement for the (team topic) (see attached SCRC Brainstorm Guide at Page 46)

- Clarify ideas and consolidate common themes
- Prioritize ideas and themes (by consensus, dot vote ...)
- Remind everyone that the Vision may change over time, including the remaining meetings – it is intended to be a living and breathing document.
- Create draft of Vision Statement – reduce it to writing on a single page of newsprint – make sure it is posted at all sessions.

(7) Planting the seeds for next meeting. Introduce “baseline” - Now that we know where we want to go, we will need to evaluate where we are. That will help identify the actions we need to take to get to our Vision.

- What are the basic indicators of the (team topic)?
- How do you measure them?
- Where will we find the measurements?

(8) Homework: Over the next week, find important indicators and measures for our baseline. Bring examples next week. Think about specific actions that will change the baseline to the Vision.

(10 mins)

(9) Session wrap up:

- Evaluation of evening – comfort level, issues?
- Housekeeping?
- Next meeting – when and where?
- For overview, look at Report Template at end of Guide

(10) Next session: Establish baseline and then start dialogue of actions

MEETING # 2

(5 – 10 mins)

- (1) Welcome back - review ground rules and respond to questions and concerns about logistics or pending issues. Put ground rules, notes and Vision Statement up. Review Vision Statement – any questions or concerns.

(60 mins)

- (2) Establishing the baseline: What is the baseline for the (team topic)?
 - Brainstorm baseline indicators.
 - What are the most important indicators relative to our Vision?
 - Prioritize baseline for the (team topic).
- (3) Quantify the baseline indicators for Portsmouth?
 - How are the indicators monitored in Portsmouth?
 - What are the measures?
- (4) Apply the Vision to the indicators
 - What change is desired over five years?
 - What specific measure will be achieved?
- (5) Map the indicators from baseline to Vision on newsprint and have someone type it up and distribute to team members between sessions.

(50 mins)

- (6) Initiate dialogue about the types of actions that will facilitate going from baseline to Vision. The team should be looking for 3 to 5 specific actions to recommend to Sustainable Portsmouth
 - By end of Meeting #3, the priority actions should be identified.
 - Start brainstorm of possible actions.
 - How shall the team approach actions? Will everyone study and makes recommendations on all indicators? Or, does the team want to divide up into sub-teams to address particular indicator and action.
- (7) Wrap up - Evaluation of session. Summarize next session. Suggestions?

MEETING #3

(5-10 mins)

(1) Welcome back - review ground rules and respond to questions and concerns about logistics or pending issues. Put ground rules, notes and Vision Statement up.

(80 mins)

(2) Present and review proposed actions.

- Will the proposed action move Portsmouth from baseline to Vision?
- Is it feasible?
- Consolidate common actions.

(3) Prioritize proposed actions by consensus or dot vote

- Will the action meet its goal?
- Which actions are most urgent?
- Which actions will make the most significant impact?

(20 mins)

(4) Look ahead to the work to be concluded in Meeting #4. For each proposed action, you will need to:

- Identify the measure of baseline and Vision.
- How the measure will be monitored over five years?
- What resources will be needed to go from baseline to Vision?
- What groups, individuals, institutions, etc. are already involved with the indicator or action?
- How will we synergize “everyone” to achieve each action?
- How will each action impact the environmental, economic and social aspects of Portsmouth?
- How shall the team approach these issues? Will everyone study and makes recommendations on all actions? Or, does the team want to divide up into sub-teams to address these aspects for each action?

(5) Wrap up. Evaluation of session. Discuss who will write and who will present the team report. Should more than one person write? Should be shared with everyone before being finalized? How will we get consensus for the report?

MEETING #4

(5 to 10 mins)

- (1) Welcome; review purpose of final session. Logistics? Other questions?

(90 mins)

- (2) For each proposed action:

- Identify the measure of baseline and Vision.
- How the measure will be monitored over five years?
- What resources will be needed to go from baseline to Vision?
- What groups, individuals, institutions, etc. are already involved with the indicator or action?
- How will we synergize “everyone” to achieve each action?
- How will each action impact the environmental, economic and social aspects of Portsmouth?

(20 mins)

- (3) Finalize process for writing and presenting the final report

- Who will write it?
- How will it be approved/accepted by the team?
- Who will present it?

- (4) Logistics for follow-up and presentation – when and where?

FINAL REPORT TEMPLATE

What actions must be taken over the next five years concerning (team topic) to make Portsmouth the most sustainable place for everyone to live, work and play?

I. Our team's Vision for (team topic) in Portsmouth is:

II. The baseline for (team topic) in Portsmouth is:

III. To achieve the Vision, the baseline will have to be:

IV. We are proposing the following actions to achieve the Vision:

VI. For each action, set out the following:

- The measure of baseline and Vision are:
- The results of the action will be monitored and measured by:
- The resources needed to go from baseline to Vision are:
- The following groups, individuals, institutions, etc. are already involved with this action:
- We will we synergize "everyone" to achieve each action by:
- How will each action impact the environmental, economic and social aspects of Portsmouth?

Dialogue Circle Training Materials and Guides are available from the Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circle Resource Center) website @

www.everyday-democracy.org

Click on “Resource Room”

Attachments to this Discussion Guide include:

Sample ground rules (see SCRC Training Guide at Page 43).

Brainstorming (See SCRC Guide at Page 46)

- Reiterate that everyone’s ideas, all ideas, are okay and should be offered
- Don’t stop to talk about the ideas, get them up on the board
- Don’t judge the ideas
- Write them down in the words spoken
- Make sure everyone has a chance to offer their ideas
- Don’t worry if the offered idea is similar or repetitive, for brainstorming, get it up on the board
- After the search for all criteria has been exhausted, take a couple of minutes to let people review and reflect upon the ideas that have been posted
- After the reflection period, review each issue that is listed
 - Explore its meaning
 - Refine the way it is expressed
 - Combine similar criteria
 - ***Define and elaborate*** each criteria
 - Do not try to get to the ultimate conclusion ***about this criteria*** balance out, just ***elaborate and define the criteria***
 - Consider creating a new and separate page with the criteria at the top and the pros and cons listed below

Sample Ground Rules



Sample Ground Rules



- Everyone gets a fair hearing.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Share “air time.”
- If you are offended or uncomfortable, say so, and say why.
- It’s OK to disagree, but don’t personalize it; stick to the issue. No name-calling or stereotyping.
- Speak for yourself, not for others.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Personal stories stay in the group, unless we *all* agree that we can share them.
- We share responsibility for making the conversation productive.

Further Information

Ground rules (also known as guidelines or agreements) help the group members conduct civil, productive discussions. Each study circle sets its own ground rules at the beginning, and uses them in all

sessions. These guidelines “belong” to the group—they can modify them at any time, and group members are expected to help enforce them.



Leading a Brainstorm

Brainstorming is a way for a group to come up with lots of ideas in a short period of time.

Purpose

- > To help the group be creative
- > To come up with many different ideas in a short time

Guidelines

- > All ideas are OK.
- > Don't stop to talk about each idea.
- > Don't judge ideas.

How to Do It

- > Anyone can offer an idea.
- > People don't need to wait for their "turn."
- > Write down every idea.
- > Write ideas in the speaker's words.

Brainstorming—Variation

- Invite people to reflect quietly for a moment.
- Ask people to jot down their ideas on a piece of paper.
- People can also use markers, clay, paper, etc., to create a picture or symbol of their idea.
- Go around the circle and invite each person to share **one** of their ideas. Repeat until all ideas have been shared with the group.

Beginning with the Future in Mind: Backcasting

“The future is not a road to be discovered, it is a place to be created.”

–Göran Carstedt, Chair of The Natural Step International and Senior Director of the Clinton Climate Initiative

This first half of this primer has defined what sustainability is, described the root causes of our unsustainability, and outlined a set of principles for a sustainable society. The following sections focus on how we can plan, make decisions, and take action for sustainability. The first step is to understand the concept of 'backcasting' or *starting with the end in mind*.

Backcasting is a fancy term for something we are all familiar with. It simply refers to the process of deciding on something we want in the future and then figuring out what we have to do today to get there. We usually backcast whenever we think about some future possibility, whether it be a change in career, buying a house, or planning for retirement.

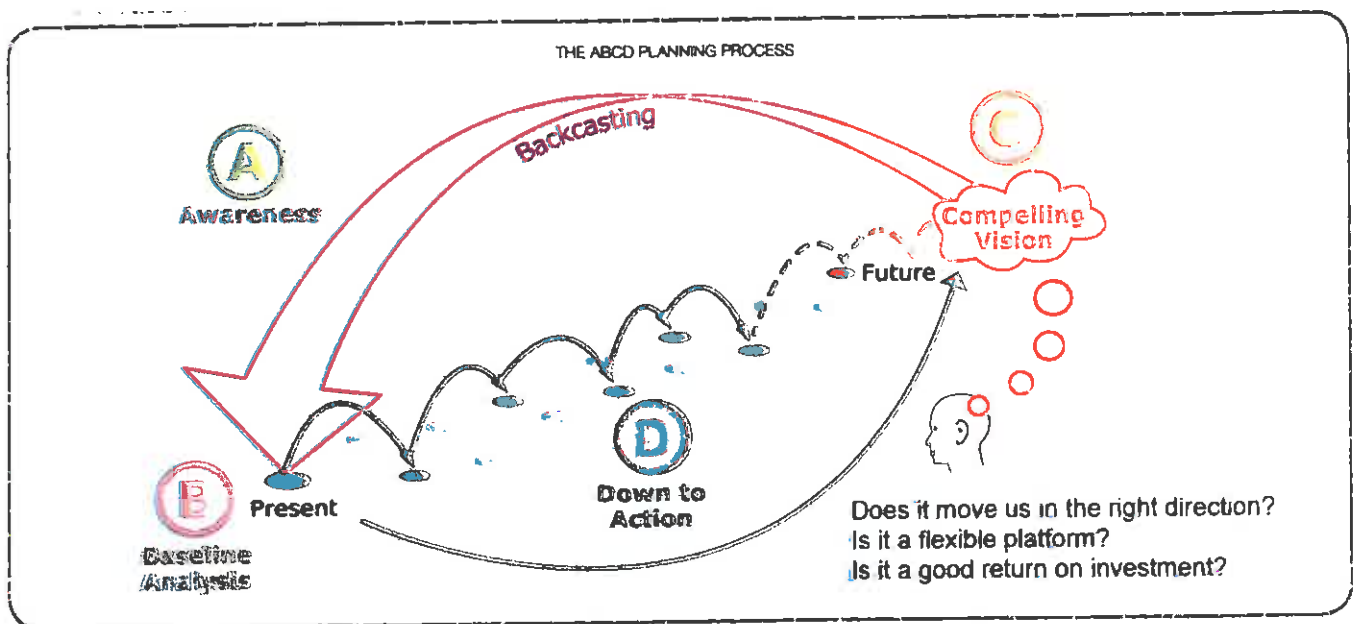
For example, let's say that you are working as a dishwasher but want to become an electrician. There may be a number of options for proceeding, but it is likely that they will involve going to college, finding an apprenticeship, then passing your exams, and so on.

Depending on your financial situation, you may need to put your studies on hold for a while in order to save money for school, but even this step is part of your overall strategy to arrive at success – becoming an electrician.

At the individual level, most of us backcast automatically because it is the most effective way of figuring out how to get from where we are today to where we want to be in the future. But when we plan for the future in larger groups, such as communities, municipalities or businesses, we tend to use forecasting instead. This involves using past information to establish trends and then developing a plan based on projecting them out into the future. For example, if we notice that a growing number of people are using the food bank, then we might plan to increase funding for it or even open a second food bank.

Forecasting is very effective if we are happy with how things are going. But what if we want – or need – a very different future than the one we are headed toward? That's when we need to backcast. Returning to the food bank example, we need to look upstream and backcast if we want to eliminate the need for food banks in the first place.

Backcasting is particularly useful when current trends are part of the problem that you're trying to address. In the case of planning for sustainability, backcasting is a useful methodology because of the complexity of the sustainability challenge and the need to develop new ways of doing things to address the challenge.



Backcasting also helps ensure that we move toward our desired goal as efficiently as possible. The focus on beginning with the end in mind means that planners start by agreeing on the conditions for a successful outcome.

Think about the last time you moved to a new home. You may have started by deciding on some conditions that would make the home a success, such as whether it was close to school or work, whether it had enough bedrooms, and how much it cost. After defining your criteria for success, you probably began to look for your home as efficiently as possible by using the conditions as a screen to determine which homes to visit. This way, you kept your options open but didn't waste any time looking at houses you couldn't afford or would never want to live in.

Similarly, the principles for sustainability help us identify the conditions for success in a sustainable society. Since the principles are the result of broad scientific consensus, they help frame a goal that people and organizations all over the world can share. If we can agree on those principles as the basic criteria for a sustainable society, they become our starting point and help us evaluate our ideas and plan for the future while making the most effective and efficient use of our resources.



Photo: Melissa, WI State Capitol

The City of Madison's Common Council formally adopted the principles of The Natural Step in December 2005.



Photo by Pankaj - Flickr.com

In many ways, backcasting from principles is like a game of hockey. We don't know exactly what the game will look like, but we know what success is (scoring more goals than the other team). So we go about playing the game in a strategic way, working within the constraints of the rules of the game and always keeping that vision of future success in mind.

SUCCESS STORY

The city of Madison, WI is using backcasting to make their sustainability vision a reality. By using a common framework, the city could weave a number of diverse planning strands together, better aligning the actions of different city departments and agencies while still allowing them to work independently.

A cross-departmental team of 25 senior municipal employees identified their vision for a sustainable future and chose ten immediate actions to move towards their sustainability goals. These projects include commuting incentive programs for City employees, fuel efficiency standards for the City fleet, solar energy implementation at City facilities, and public housing upgrades.

Creating a vision and working backwards allowed the city to identify economically viable solutions for now, and to create a plan for the future.

For more information, visit <http://www.naturalstepusa.org/case-studies/city-of-madison-wisconsin.html>.