

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPIONS

## WORKSHOP SERIES

### Why is the Edmonton Community Foundation supporting this initiative?

Non-profit organizations have strong social and environmental mandates and create a positive impact for their communities. However, at the same time they are scrutinized for their own ability to be role models whose strategy, programs and operations strongly reflect their sustainability commitment, i.e. walking the talk. Not doing this may undermine their credibility to their key constituents and create an impediment for further progress on their organizational mandates.

At the same time, non-profit organizations often struggle to find the funding and time to invest in capacity building to better understand and capitalize on opportunities to improve their social, environmental and, ultimately, financial performance, which presents an array of benefits to stakeholders.

ECF supports these workshops as a way to build non-profit capacity in a structured and cost effective manner with the support of seasoned practitioners and peers.

### Why a refundable commitment fee?

To provide an opportunity for participants to take a moment to reflect on their commitment to attendance in the workshops and working on the outputs. This aids in planning (e.g. catering and program design) as well as the group experience, e.g. fostering peer to peer support by participants who are committed and engaged. In previous years there have been waiting lists and the commitment fee has been helpful to confirm attendance. The fee is fully refundable and similar workshop series are valued at over \$1,500. Should the refundable commitment fee be a barrier to entry, please contact us.

### Why a commitment of two people from each organization?

The workshop is designed around dialogue and the opportunity to work on participants' organizing within the workshop itself. Having two participants greatly improves the workshop experience by having someone to work with.

Additionally, two participants makes it easier to engage colleagues in their own organization and

develop an action plan outside of the workshops. This has proven to be a highly useful way to further ground the learning and action from the course.

### What do we mean by 'sustainability'?

The workshop applies The Natural Step Framework as the definition of sustainability. This Framework has been used by hundreds of organizations worldwide, including many non-profit organizations, to better understand what sustainability means for them and to develop action plans. Importantly, for our purposes, sustainability is not defined as solely financial/economic, environmental or social but the interplay between ALL of these things. A unique aspect of this framework is that it begins with a wider social and environmental lens and then works its way towards financial/economic benefits and implications. In essence, this workshop emphasizes how being more strategic on social and environmental opportunities generates additional strategic opportunity financially.

### What will participants walk away with?

From a capacity-building perspective, participants will walk away with:

- A deeper understanding of The Natural Step (TNS) Framework (see above) and sustainability as a concept.
- A deeper understanding how sustainability relates to and can be integrated with their organization's strategy.
- Lessons about applying the TNS Framework to their organizations supported by peer and expert coaching.
- Relevant and useful organizational leadership and facilitation concepts that compliment the above.

From an output perspective, participants will walk away with an action plan that consists of:

- A working organizational vision of sustainability.
- A prioritized list of near-term assets, focus areas and challenges to reach this vision.
- Immediate actions that they can take to move towards the vision.
- An engagement plan to engage colleagues in co-creating all of the above.

Note that this work will be guided by expert facilitators and trainers from The Natural Step.