'Guiding Core Principles' Worksheets

Developed by the VERiS Research Centre

Supplementary Resource to the *Culture of Sustainability Engagement Guide for Organizations*

About this document

The below printable worksheets include key questions and principles to consider as you embark on the journey of culture of sustainability (COS) engagement with your organization. These key questions/categories include: *Why do guiding core principles matter to developing a shared COS?*; *Are you applying systems-thinking?*; *Are you engaging comprehensively?*; *Are you developing a long-term adaptive strategy?*; and *Are you practicing participatory co-design?.*

The questions listed here are also included in the full *Culture of Sustainability Engagement Guide for Organizations* with further information to consider as well, linked below.

Why do guiding core principles matter to developing a shared COS?

Guiding core principles are vital for developing a shared Culture of Sustainability (COS). They serve as a flexible foundation, enabling change agents to collaboratively shape strategies tailored to specific contexts. Unlike rigid, prescriptive steps, core principles facilitate adaptive responses to changing conditions, aligning with the organic nature of COS development. Identifying widely accepted principles enhances member buy-in, fostering a collective commitment to shaping a shared culture of sustainability over time — a more effective approach than relying solely on prescribed steps.

For more information, see the *COS Engagement Guide for Organizations,* p. 39.

Are you applying systems-thinking?

- COS development approach goes beyond changing a single aspect and considers the interaction of system components (e.g., employee behavior, company values, and HR practices).

- Identifies multiple key leverage points in the system for transformative and durable, long-term impacts.

- Leverage points may be targeted simultaneously or sequentially based on connections and potential synergies.

- Integrated interventions can target policies and regulations, social practices, individual behaviors, resource flow, internal and external relationships, power dynamics, and mindsets – among others.

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Are you engaging comprehensively?

- Effective stakeholder engagement is more likely through a comprehensive approach.

- Comprehensive engagement involves cognitive (thinking), emotional (feeling), behavioral (doing), and collective (being) dimensions.

- The approach considers various environmental and social aspects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- COS development through a comprehensive approach implies multiple interventions and engagement opportunities over time.

- Avoids seeking a single solution that fits all, recognizing the multifaceted nature of engagement and sustainability.

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Are you developing a long-term adaptive strategy?

- COS engagement processes are centered on relationships, mobilizing collective experimentation.

- The goal is to identify 'what works' for a specific organization and context.

- Shifting or creating cultures is a long-term process, requiring a strategic approach over isolated interventions.

- Certain prerequisites, such as establishing a sense of community, may be necessary for the success of specific initiatives.

- The strategy should be developed adaptively, balancing long-term visions with flexible planning for specific actions.

- Flexibility is crucial, acknowledging that plans may need adaptation based on changing circumstances and emerging opportunities in the organic nature of COS development.

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Are you practicing participatory co-design?

- Culture shifts for broad and sustained impact require collective ownership, not just mandates.

- Employees, managers, and members use their information, experiences, and capacities to develop 'local theories'.

- COS development involves a cyclical problem-solving and solutions-oriented process.

- Co-design and collective implementation of solutions empower participation by all members.

- Learning from results is integral to the process, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring long-term sustainability of the COS.

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