'Culture of Sustainability Stages' 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 to consider as you embark on the journey of culture of sustainability (COS) engagement with your organization, that may be helpful in navigating each of the four identified stages of organizational COS development. This includes *Stage 1: Emergence*; *Stage 2: Visibility and Engagement*; *Stage 3: Institutionalization and System Alignment*; and *Stage 4: Collective Action and Practices Widespread Throughout the Organization*.

Each of these stages can present particular challenges as well as potential opportunities for engagement that you may wish to consider, address and take advantage of where they are relevant to your own organization's COS journey. In addition, there are reflective questions included on how to best engage feedback cycles and iterative learning in the COS journey, as well as considering contextual factors and maintaining a process orientation that may be most relevant to your organization.

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

Reflective Questions

Your Notes

Stage 1: Emergence

During the initial stage of COS development, *Emergence*, sustainability ideas and actions are brought forward by internal champions that can be motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors. From there, efforts need to broaden engagement and create visibility of the emergent culture across the organization. See *Stage 1: Emergence* in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations, p. 28.

1. Are there existing sparks of sustainability in our organization that we can build upon and foster?

2. How can we identify and amplify these sparks?

3. If no sparks currently exist, can we inspire them?

4. Are there external drivers for a COS that we can leverage?

Reflective Questions

Stage 2: Visibility & Engagement

The second COS development stage, *Visibility and Engagement*, sees the emergence of a new culture involving others within the organization. The key goal is aligning leadership and employees through both formal and informal engagement, and clear communication on the importance of sustainability. See *Stage 2: Visibility and Engagement* in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations, p. 29.

1. How can we spread the initial sparks to other parts/levels of the organization (e.g., to leaders if the spark originates from employees)?

2. What approaches to engaging employees/leaders have worked in the past in our organization?

3. What strengths in our organization can we build upon in fostering engagement?

4. What supports and training can we provide to the initial champions to better engage others?

5. Who are our internal informal leaders who influence others in the organization? How do we get them on board?
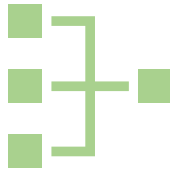
Reflective Questions

Your Notes

Stage 3: Institutionalization and System Alignment

In the *Institutionalization and System Alignment* stage of COS development, expressions of sustainability become more crystallized within organizations shaping shared identity and, in some cases, the organizational purpose. This integration extends to core management practices, strategic planning and day-to-day operations, making COS an integral part of the organization's functioning. See *Stage 3: Institutionalization and System Alignment* in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations, p. 31.

1. Are we actually practicing what we are communicating internally and externally about our commitment to sustainability?

2. What aspects of our organization (e.g., strategic planning, performance assessment, product development, and people management) need to be better aligned with sustainability principles?

3. What structures, roles, and processes can we put in place to enable further development of a strong COS?

4. How do we adequately resource the development of a COS in our organization?

5. Does our organizational purpose need to be shifted or broadened?
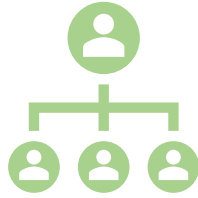
Reflective Questions

Stage 4: Collective Action and Practices Widespread Throughout the Organization

In the final stage of COS development, *Collective Action and Practices Widespread Throughout the Organization*, sustainability is fully integrated into all aspects, including physical features, leadership, purchasing, marketing, and day-to-day practices. This represents the most mature form of COS, marked by widespread collective action and holistic integration of sustainability into core organizational principles. See *Stage 4: Collective Action and Practices Widespread Throughout the Organization* in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations, p. 32.

1. How can we maintain our successful COS and how do we prevent falling back into a previous stage?

2. How can we support other organizations in their development towards a strong COS?

3. How does our strong COS contribute to our overall success as an organization?

Reflective Questions

Your Notes

1. What stage are we currently in and how can we move to the next stage?

2. What mechanisms do we have in place for ongoing feedback and learning from our experiences?

3. What aspects of our COS are falling short and could be improved?

4. What do we need to put in place early to prevent getting stuck or reverting to an earlier stage as well as to support later stages in our COS development?

5. How do we maintain what we have accomplished regarding COS?

6. How is the understanding of sustainability changing and how does our COS need to evolve?

Process orientation and contextual factors

Internal and external contextual factors can act as either facilitators or barriers to change, such as organizational characteristics, external stakeholders, supporting organizations, and the business case for sustainability, that can significantly influence the development of a Culture of Sustainability (COS) across different organizations. See p. 36 in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations.

Organizational Characteristics	External Stakeholders/ Societal Culture	Supporting organizations	Business Case
Characteristics specific to the organization, such as: • Origin/history • Org type • Industry type • Org size • Materials and resource use (e.g., building, supply chains) • Org culture & climate • Leadership style	Influence of external stakeholder support Influence of community/ societal culture	Influence of intermediary organizations and/or individuals supporting COS development	Business case / perceived ROI for sustainability

Table 1. Various contextual factors for developing organizational COS (as shown in the 'Developmental model of organizational culture of sustainability', Figure 3). Note that the list of factors is not exhaustive and can be added to further as relevant to distinct organizations.

Reflective Questions

Process orientation and contextual factors

See table above, and p. 36 in the COS Engagement Guide for Organizations.

1. Which of these factors are relevant and influential in our organizational context?

2. What other contextual factors may play a role in our organization?

3. How do these factors play out in either supporting or hindering the development of COS?

4. How can our organization increase the influence of the supportive factors and reduce the influence of the hindering ones?

5. What has worked for organizations with similar contextual characteristics?

6. What supporting organizations exists that can help us with our sustainability goals?

7. What is the business case for a culture of sustainability in our organization?