

Wrestling with the Big Issues

An Introduction to Sustainability Transition Lab

Saralyn Hodgkin

June 6, 2014



Accelerating Change. Together



Sustainability Transition Lab

- Let me tell you a story...
- Interventions are not changing our systems fast enough towards a sustainable society
- **Sustainability. Transition. Lab.**



Sustainability Transition Lab

A laboratory approach to transitioning to a sustainable society.



- Aimed at **addressing barriers** to sustainability in a system
- Facilitated to involve **diverse stakeholders** with the will to act and capacity to influence
- Focused on generating tangible **breakthrough results**
- Co-designed and co-delivered with **strategic partners**



How do we provide a platform for sustainability-driven collaboration in which participants are able to embrace complexity, and reframe ‘wicked problems’ as ‘wicked opportunities’?



Sustainability-Driven Collaboration...

...is best served when:

- Creating value
- Backcasting from principles of success
- Striving for innovation
- Embracing complexity rather than reducing it

...is best served by:

- Authentic leadership
- Strong process design that shifts people, who shift systems



Sustainability Transition Lab Projects

GTA Housing Action Lab

FutureFit Business Benchmark

Energy Futures Lab

Sustainability Literacy



There is a need...

- To define success
- To align and amplify impact
- To handle trade offs
- To create a shared language and mental model
- To drive innovative solutions
- To transition



A blend of concepts and approaches

- Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development
- Theory U
- Developmental Evaluation
- Social/Change Labs
- Partnership Brokering
- Collective Impact





Sustainability Transition Lab Process



Getting Prepared

What pressing sustainability challenge is too complex to solve alone?

- Identify and scope the challenge
- Secure potential partners and resources
- Design the phases and tasks

Outcome: A committed core team with a defined challenge

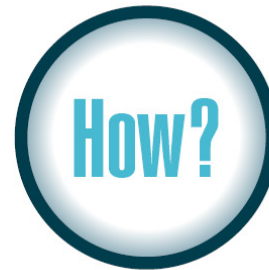


Exploring the Shared Value of Collaboration

What value can we create by collaborating to address the challenge?

- Conduct in-depth interviews
- Map existing initiatives
- Convene a foundational workshop
- Build shared language

Outcome: Clarified key goals that recognize shared and individual value



Learning Together and Building Shared Priorities

What are the relationships, barriers, and leverage points for change in the system?

- Conduct experiential learning journeys
- Map the system
- Identify leverage points
- Backcast from our shared sense of success
- Prioritize initiatives

Outcome: Identified and prioritized collaborative initiatives



Implementing Collaborative Initiatives

How can we implement our shared agenda to make a collective impact?

- Implement a portfolio of aligned activities
- Formalize partnerships
- Develop shared measurement systems
- Prototype projects, analyze data, share learning

Outcome: Breakthrough results which shift the system



Desired Outcomes

Breakthrough results (the splash)

- Changes in public policy or resource flows
- New programs, initiatives, new standards or partnerships
- Game-changing new business models
- Scaling current initiatives
- Rapid prototyping ideas and concepts

Ripples:

- Long-term commitment to system-level collaboration
- Sustainability literacy
- Widely held vision of sustainability
- Renewed sense of hope and interconnectedness



Choosing an issue

- Readiness for change
- The challenge
- Results are likely
- The “right” convenor
- Resources
- Fit for TNS



Our emerging practice...

- Placing the issue at the centre
- Learning and adapting to what emerges
- Practicing collaboration
- Enabling traits and skills
- Tribe and community



Skill Building

- Skills:
 - Failure
 - Authentic leadership
 - Systems mapping
 - Designing for results



Thank You!



The Natural Step Canada
4 Florence Street, Suite 203
Ottawa, ON, K2P 0W4
(613) 748-3001
www.naturalstep.ca

shodgkin@naturalstep.ca