

## The Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) Initiative

### What is ICSP?

The Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) is a provincial initiative which originated from the 2005 federal/provincial/UBCM Federal Gas Tax Agreement (GTA). It ties in very closely with provincial interests to address climate change and encourage the development of healthier, less costly and more sustainable communities. The ICSP Initiative goes well beyond the funding opportunities of the GTA. It is encouraging the development of partnerships within government and beyond to support the growth of community sustainability planning throughout the province over the long-term.

ICSP encourages communities to take a fresh look at their future and find ways to become more sustainable. With ICSP, communities can envision, plan and implement actions to secure their long-term well-being. ICSP builds on existing planning tools. It provides a framework that helps communities plan for their own needs while ensuring that the needs of future generations are also met.

Many communities in and beyond BC have identified a vision for sustainability and are engaging in ICSP processes. These innovative planning approaches emphasize:

**long-term thinking** – planning and/or plans are future oriented to enhance community sustainability (e.g. communities address the need to become resilient in the face of changing circumstances).

**broad in scope**– planning or plans consider the communities' environmental, social and/or cultural sustainability.

**integration** – planning processes or plans reflect a co-ordinated approach to enhance community sustainability through linkages between different types of plans or planning activities.

**collaboration** – planning processes engage community members and other partners to support community sustainability (e.g. First Nations, neighbouring communities, NGOs, private sector, other levels of government).

**public engagement and education** – designing processes that enhance public input into planning processes.

**implementation** – keeping plans off the shelf and putting them into action

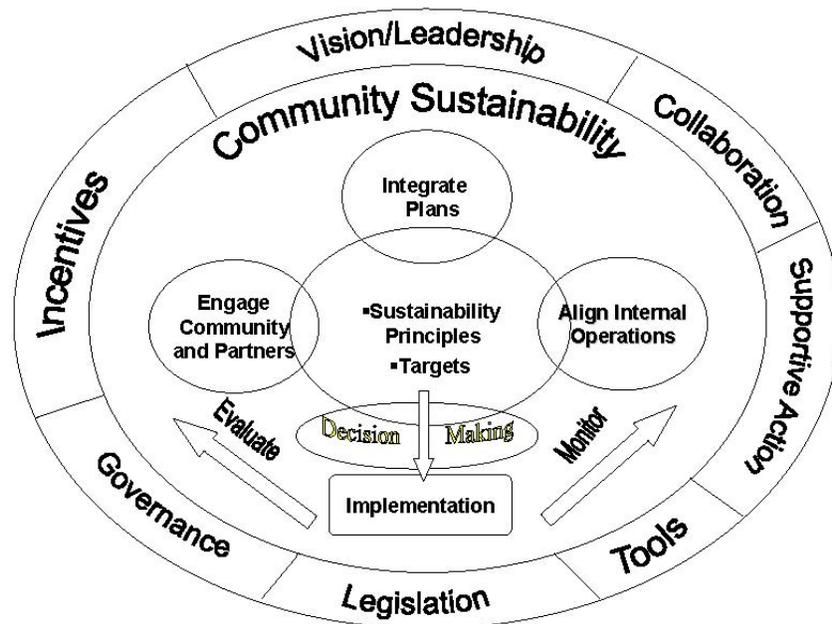
**monitoring and evaluation** – setting targets and tracking results to celebrate progress and focus efforts on areas that need the most improvement.

### Supporting Community Sustainability

The following describes how the Ministry of Community Services' (MCS) ICSP initiative is a long-term plan to support community sustainability.

The inner circle of Figure 1 identifies the various components of community sustainability as well as the processes local governments are encouraged to engage in. The outer circle recognizes what others can do (e.g. provincial and federal governments, and the private sector) to support local governments with their ICSP processes.

**Figure 1**



At the heart of community sustainability are sustainability principles that recognize the need to balance social, environmental, economic, and cultural interests. These are closely connected to:

- Integrating plan (e.g. linking land use designations to the impact on water supply and transportation)
- Aligning internal operations to ensure that the local government itself is a leader in sustainability (e.g. the local government operation embraces sustainability principles to guide its policies, regulations, purchasing practices and internal programs).
- Engaging with community partners and citizens to reinforce sustainability goals. (e.g. harnessing the synergies of other programs such as BC Healthy Communities Initiative, the Mountain Pine Beetle Program, Community Action on Energy Efficiency and the Real Estate Foundation's Communities in Transition program).

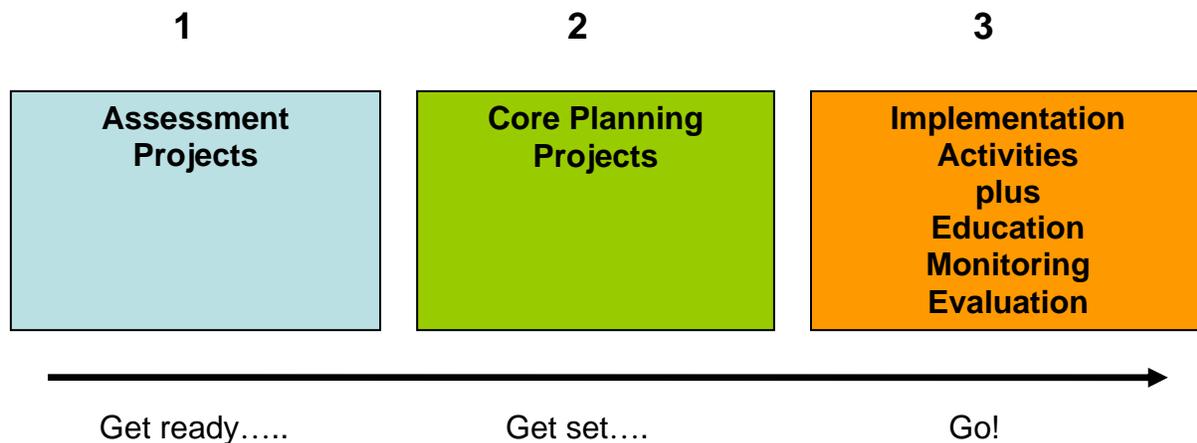
ICSP extends to implementation. It challenges communities to ensure that sustainability principles are carried forward into identified strategies and actions. Measuring and monitoring these actions is one further step in the ICSP process. This, in turn, informs future planning and implementation actions.

The outer ring in Figure 1 identifies the actions that need to be taken at levels beyond local governments. It recognizes the need for leadership and vision from senior governments, for collaboration within and between governments and the private sector, and for support for the development of capacity-building tools.

## The ICSP Continuum of Activities

ICSP can be seen as involving three phases. These phases are identified in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**



1. **The pre-planning** phase can involve a number of different activities from education of the community, staff and local government elected officials to assessment of planning capacity and what is needed to move ahead with ICSP. An ICSP community assessment enables local governments to develop a sense of where they are with current planning and what their capacity is to move forward with ICSP. It allows them to determine their gap and where they need to start in order to move ahead. Some communities might start by educating staff and council about sustainability; others might determine ways to ensure their planning processes are more integrated. MCS has currently designed a template to help local governments to identify where to begin in this first phase. GTA funding up to \$5000 will be available to do a community assessment. Consult the Capacity-Building and ICSP program guide on the UBCM website for information how to apply for community assessment funding.
2. **The core planning phase** can include approaching the development of a variety of different plans with a sustainability planning “lens” as well as the development of a community sustainability vision and the identification and development of a sustainability planning framework to assist in the establishment of targets and actions. *The Natural Step* and *Smart Growth* are two examples of ICSP planning approaches (of which there are many) that have been used in BC. The Natural Step focuses on working more

effectively with natural systems, identifying practices that are unsustainable, and implementing actions to address them. Whistler used this approach to guide its Whistler 2020 process and the City of Dawson Creek is using it to inform their sustainability planning process. Smart Growth encourages communities to engage in planning processes directed at land-use with a focus on reducing urban sprawl. The City of Maple Ridge, the District of Squamish and the Town of Oliver have used Smart Growth. Other communities that are moving ahead with sustainability planning have chosen to design their own approaches. Examples of this include the City of Rossland, the District of Ucluelet, and the City of Quesnel. Quesnel is focusing on the possibility of developing a “green economy.”

- 3. The implementation phase** moves plans into action and ensures that plans and actions remain fresh and relevant over time. Beyond the application of a sustainability planning “lens,” local governments are demonstrating that current decision-making frameworks and/or administrative processes may need to be revised to ensure successful implementation of new approaches. Improved governance is one. A number of communities in BC are developing sustainability checklists, measures and indicators to help guide decision-making.

## **Building Tools to Support ICSP**

MCS has created an Advisory Committee of leading experts in community sustainability. They have been asked to make recommendations on how to move forward with ICSP in British Columbia. One of their recommendations is to develop tools and a support system for local governments to help them with ICSP. In addition to securing additional project funding, MCS is looking for partners to help provide this support to local government. Two elements of this capacity-building are proposed at this time. These are discussed below.

### **1. A web-based “first-stop-shop” ICSP guide/toolkit**

The purpose of the website would be to serve as a flexible ‘first-stop-shop’ for information about ICSP in BC. It would be a place to find practical information, including guidance about how to engage in this type of planning and solutions for typical community sustainability problems, with links to people or other sites for more information. In addition to serving as a “first-stop-shop” for local governments, it would serve as support to a growing network of communities, practitioners and researchers involved in ICSP.

### **2. Sustainability Facilitators**

The ICSP Advisory Committee, local government representatives, and others have highlighted the need for individuals with expertise in integrated planning and sustainability to support local governments with their ICSP initiatives. A variety of approaches are being explored to address this need including the idea of creating a team of sustainability facilitators with different regional responsibilities.

## ICSP Funding Opportunities

There are some significant resources available to help local governments engage in ICSP. Through the GTA, five percent (approximately \$5 million) of the pooled funds have been reserved for ICSP for local governments outside the GVRD. Pooled funds include the Strategic Priorities Funds (SPF) and Innovations Funds (IF). GTA Community Works Funds can also be used for ICSP. Information about GTA funding including a program guide and application forms can be found on the UBCM website. ***While the deadline for applications to GTA funds has been identified as February 16th 2007, applications for ICSP funding through the GTA will be accepted beyond that date.***

There are two application phases for ICSP funding through the GTA. Applications will be received for ICSP projects up until **May 31, 2007**. Given that ICSP is a relatively new concept, a portion of the Gas Tax funding will be reserved for a second round of applications – expected to be invited in the fall of 2007.

There are a number of sources of funding for ICSP beyond the GTA. The Ministry of Community Services is committed to contributing funding for GVRD ICSP projects. MCS is also supporting other ICSP pilot projects through *Smart Development Partnership Program*. The Real Estate Foundation is interested in supporting ICSP projects through their *Communities in Transition Program*. Other sources of funding for ICSP are being explored with other Ministries as well as the private sector.

To recognize and profile leading-edge communities and provide them with further funding to invest in initiatives to make their environment even greener and healthier for their citizens the province has created the *Green City Awards*. Up to \$500,000 annually, over five years (a total of \$2.5 million) will be provided. The Green Cities Awards will be announced at the Union of BC Municipalities annual conferences.

## Regional Workshops

MCS is committed to sharing information on ICSP as widely as possible. In addition to working with organizations such as the Fraser Basin Council, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Real Estate Foundation and the Healthy Communities Initiative to identify synergies and share information on ICSP through existing programs, MCS delivered a number of regional workshops in March and April of 2007 in Smithers, Terrace, Nelson, Williams Lake, Cranbrook, Campbell River, Kamloops, Kelowna, and Abbotsford. Another workshop is planned for Dawson Creek on May 1, 2007.

## Links

### The Gas Tax Agreement:

[http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd/intergov\\_relations/gastax\\_agreement.htm](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd/intergov_relations/gastax_agreement.htm)



The Best Place on Earth

**UBCM Website - GTA Program Information and Guide:**

[www.civicnet.bc.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=294](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=294)

**Real Estate Foundation's Community in Transition Program:**

<http://www.communitytransition.org/>

**Green City Awards**

<http://www.greencityawards.gov.bc.ca/>

**Sustainability Websites:**

Natural Step Canada - <http://www.naturalstep.ca/>

Smart Growth BC - <http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/>

Smart Growth on the Ground - <http://www.sgog.bc.ca/>

ICLEI (International Clearinghouse on Sustainable Development) - <http://www.iclei.org/>

SFU CSCD (Centre of Sustainable Community Development) - <http://www.sfu.ca/cscd/>

UBC Design Centre for Sustainability - <http://www.dcs.sala.ubc.ca/>

ICSC (International Centre for Sustainable Cities) - <http://www.icsc.ca/>

Pembina Institute – [www.pembina.org/sustainability-measurement/index.php](http://www.pembina.org/sustainability-measurement/index.php)

West Coast Environmental Law - <http://www.wcel.org/>

FCM Centre for Sustainable Community Development - <http://kn.fcm.ca/>

The Centre for Whole Communities - <http://www.wholecommunities.org/>

The UN international Awards for Sustainability - <http://www.livcomawards.com/>

Fraser Basin Council - <http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/>