
**Economic, Social, and
Environmental Sustainability**
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Policy Statement

BCIT is committed to operating in a socially equitable manner and within the limitations of the natural environment while advancing its educational mandate. To this end, the Institute will undertake the following. BCIT will:

- Foster and demonstrate economic, social and environmental sustainability on its campuses, in its curriculum, and research.
- Provide sustainability literacy to all students and staff.
- Utilize sustainability as a financial strategy and a business opportunity for the Institute. This strategy will generate entrepreneurial activities and seek innovative ways to foster economic sustainability.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive sustainability program.

Purpose of Policy

The purposes of this policy are as follows:

- To serve as an umbrella policy to guide the development and implementation of new projects and policies that will advance the sustainability agenda.
- To communicate the need for sustainable practices.
- To communicate the process by which BCIT will move towards sustainable practices.
- To define the roles and responsibilities within the BCIT community for developing and maintaining sustainable practices.
- To initiate change in behaviours and management towards sustainable practices.

For more information on the impetus and need for this policy, please see Appendix 1.

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Application of this Policy

This policy applies to BCIT students, employees, and contractors.

Related Documents and Legislation

Government of Canada:

Environmental Protection Act (and all associated regulations)

Province of British Columbia:

Environmental Management Act (and all associated regulations)

Definitions

sustainability:

1. operating within, or pertaining to, the ecological limits to the resources we can use without exceeding our planet's (or our region's) ecological carrying capacity; using Earth's limited resources conservatively, judiciously, and equitably. 2. operating within, or pertaining to, the interconnectedness of the three components of sustainability: the economy, the society and the natural environment (the triple bottom line).

economic sustainability:

1. a financial strategy that will ensure BCIT is exploring all forms of optimization, cost savings/minimization and is appropriately resourced. 2. using sustainability criteria in risk management and long-term planning to mitigate negative financial impact from future uncertainties.

social sustainability:

1. the condition of fostering or maintaining the well-being, safety, health, and development of our students and employees, and contributing to the vibrancy of our communities. 2. quality education that advances the state of practice and leads to rewarding careers and responsible, contributing citizens.

environmental sustainability:

1. limiting resource depletion and pollution rates to levels that do not exceed global or local ecological carrying capacity. 2. the long-term maintenance of healthy ecosystems which we recognize as essential for maintaining life and quality of life.

The three elements of sustainability are further defined in Appendix 2.

waste:

useless consumption or expenditure; use without adequate return. Examples: discarded materials; unused energy such as lost heat, unused light, etc.

Principles

The following principles and strategies will guide the sustainability initiative:

Analysis

BCIT employees involved with sustainability initiatives will:

- Base plans, decisions, and their implementation upon sound business, scientific, and technical analysis.
- Apply long-term and system thinking to mitigate unintended consequences.
- Include in their analyses full-cost accounting (i.e.: include all costs, including all social and environmental costs that might not be typically accounted for).

Progress and Reporting

The Institute will work towards defined sustainability goals while respecting its core business, current commitments, and the limits of BCIT resources.

BCIT staff involved with sustainability initiatives will monitor and report on progress, using measurable, quantifiable information.

A Business Strategy

BCIT will utilise sustainability as a business strategy to ensure optimal and effective use of resources and to create business opportunities and generate entrepreneurial activities that benefit the Institution.

This will be achieved by exploring new revenue sources and by lowering operating costs. Some of these strategies will include:

- Energy and material resale
- Waste reduction
- Savings from energy efficiency and preventive maintenance programs
- Cost savings and/or new revenues from emerging carbon markets and taxes
- Preparing proactively for new regulations and increasing cost of energy

The sustainability initiative should result in an enhanced corporate image and a healthier workplace that together make us the educational institute of choice. BCIT will seek to translate this into the following additional economic benefits:

- Increased donations to BCIT
- Higher productivity and lower absenteeism
- Risk reduction
- Reduced insurance policy premiums

Funding

Revolving Funds

Re-investing a portion of savings or revenue generated by successful sustainability programs (for example, energy efficiency) will help fund new sustainability initiatives. In support of this, the institute will create its own model for a revolving loan fund that provides up-front capital for projects that will help BCIT reduce its ecological footprint. Projects financed through this fund will pay back the loan from their savings.

The details for this fund including project criteria and eligibility will be documented independently. BCIT will create additional incentives that reward the adoption or achievement of sustainability-related goals.

Sustainability Goals

Through the application of this policy and the sustainability program, BCIT aims to improve its performance in sustainability in all areas, including education, research, operations, and community engagement. Examples include:

- Food procurement, preparation, and waste-handling
- Building design, construction or renovation
- Land use planning
- Landscaping
- Transportation
- Enhancement of human well-being, equity, health, safety, and productivity

The actions taken to advance sustainability will be oriented towards the following seven goals:

1. Greenhouse gas neutral
2. Net energy producer
3. Zero waste
4. Water conservation and local watershed protection
5. Restoration of campus ecosystems and native species
6. Equity and social responsibility
7. Accessibility and safety for all students and faculty

This can be achieved through strategies that:

- Protect and strengthen assets
- Balance use and renewal of resources
- Account for all costs and benefits
- Reduce waste and eliminate toxics
- Eliminate barriers to accessing BCIT facilities and services
- Support opportunities for improvement and enjoyment

Duties and Responsibilities

The Institute will work towards defined sustainability goals while respecting its core business, current commitments, and the limits of BCIT resources.

BCIT employees involved with sustainability initiatives will monitor progress, using measurable, quantifiable information to report in an objective, transparent manner.

All members of the BCIT community have responsibilities toward achieving the Institute's sustainability goals.

Procedures Associated With This Policy

To be determined through the work of the Sustainability Committee.

Forms Associated With This Policy

None

Amendment History

1. Created 2010 MMM DD

Scheduled Review Date

2015 MMM DD

Appendix 1: Impetus for this policy

Human Life depends on nature's goods and services produced through an intricate web of natural processes. These natural processes, or *ecosystem services*, create clean air and water, produce wood, food, and fertile soils. Insufficient natural resources result in unsatisfactory lives, while inequitable distribution of resources can cause conflicts and degrade societal stability.

Despite continuous technological improvements and economic growth, resource consumption has reached historically high levels. Additionally, degradation of global natural resources is accelerating, as shown in the striking examples of climate change and ecosystem services degradation.

The trend for consumption to increasingly exceed ecological capacity is unsustainable. A new approach is required where economic development contributes to meeting the basic material needs of each person on earth and gives all people an equal opportunity to realize their potential. The goal is a world with the highest possible quality of life for all, while not exceeding the planet's ecological capacity to absorb wastes and provide resources.

The BCIT Response

BCIT will provide leadership in striving for these goals by both fostering and demonstrating sustainability on its campuses, and by incorporating sustainability into its curriculum and research. BCIT influences generations of students, who then influence the decisions and behaviours of others when they join the workforce. BCIT has the potential to provide sustainability literacy to all students and staff and contribute to their good citizenship.

In sum, BCIT's commitment to sustainability encompasses advancing the state of practice through education and research, improving campus operations and planning, and strengthening employee and student stewardship and wellness programs.

Appendix 2: Three Elements of Sustainability

Sustainability has been variously defined since its initial popularization years ago. At BCIT, sustainability is founded on the values of social equity and recognition of ecological limits to the resources we can use without exceeding our planet's carrying capacity. BCIT believes Earth's limited resources should be used conservatively, judiciously and equitably.

Also, BCIT recognizes the importance and interconnectedness of the three components of sustainability: the economy, society and the natural environment. BCIT believes that better business decisions are made by looking at this triple bottom line, as shown in BCIT's commitment to being integral to the economic, social and environmental prosperity of British Columbia.

To respect the full interconnected nature of sustainability—the economic, social and ecological components, any decision should be evaluated against all three components, though they are all parts of a whole. The same principle must apply when incorporating sustainability in our educational and research activities. For clarity, the elements are defined individually below:

a. Economic sustainability:

Economic sustainability means:

- A financial strategy that will ensure BCIT is exploring all forms of cost savings/minimization and is appropriately resourced.
- Decisions concerning sustainability must be economically sound and integrated with established management and financial systems.
- Using sustainability criteria in risk management and long-term planning to mitigate negative financial impact from future uncertainties.
- Superior returns on students' investment.

b. Social Sustainability:

Social sustainability means ensuring overall well-being, safety, health, and growth of our students and employees, and contributing to the vibrancy of our communities. BCIT aims to fulfill its mission by providing education leading to rewarding careers as practitioners and responsible, contributing citizens. BCIT intends to prepare its students to have positive impacts on their working and living environments, and to contribute to the building of a sustainable society comprising trust, reciprocity and accountability. BCIT aims to be a great place to study and to be an employer of choice as a result of its sustainability practices, including enhanced organizational health and employee wellness programs. Finally, BCIT will continue to develop relations with its alumni as a means to contribute to its vibrant community objective.

c. Environmental Sustainability:

Environmental sustainability means contributing to the long-term maintenance of healthy ecosystems on Earth, which we recognize as essential for maintaining life and quality of life. This means reducing resource depletion and pollution rates to levels that do not exceed global ecological carrying capacity. Considering the nature and size of the current systems, and the size of the world population, implementing this change is a colossal task.

Though it is not perfectly clear what the resulting society would look like, BCIT believes immediate initial steps that make good business sense are: minimizing waste; conserving resources by maximizing efficiencies and matching supply to true needs; meeting or exceeding regulations to minimize any soil, air, and water pollution due to our activities; and whenever possible, enhancing on-site biodiversity through preservation and restoration.

BCIT believes these first steps can be achieved with the use of technology, good management systems, policies and regulation, and behavioural change.

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