



## Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative General Blueprint for Topic Team Process

### Overview

The Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative, being developed now, will provide a comprehensive, voluntary program to help K-12 schools move toward sustainability. The Initiative is being managed by the Zero Waste Alliance. For more information, go to: [www.zerowaste.org/schools](http://www.zerowaste.org/schools).

Topic teams play an important role in establishing this initiative, conducting leading edge work regarding the issues of sustainability that affect schools. The team process will begin with a review of sustainability in general and a framework for its application, so that all team members can begin with a clear and common understanding. The team tasks include setting boundaries on the topic area, defining the sustainable endpoint, identifying sustainability indicators, evaluating what's needed to move forward and what's already available and creating resources that will help. This process will be carried out in a series of meetings as described below. The number of meetings may vary depending on each team's progress.

### Team membership:

Individuals active either within the topic area, within schools or within the sustainability field.

### Schedule:

Each team will establish its own meeting schedule. Generally, expect to begin with a half- to full-day meeting (in-person if possible), followed by 5-8 two-hour conference calls, scheduled every 2-3 weeks to complete the work plan.

### Benefits of Topic Team Participation:

- An opportunity to meet others working in the topic area.
- An opportunity to consider what sustainability entails for this area.
- An opportunity to learn more about how our schools work.
- An opportunity to share your knowledge for the benefit of our schools and kids.
- You are supporting the success of the Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative.
- Helping Oregon continue to be a national leader in sustainability matters

### Topic Team Process:

- Establish background information: Present SOSI to the team, the role of topic teams, the concept of sustainability and frameworks, including The Natural Step.
- Follow the Topic Team Workplan (presented on the back side)

## Topic Team Work Plan Format

This format should be used by the Topic Teams to guide and document their work. It is meant to serve as a general process guide for the Topic Teams and can be modified as needed.

### **STEP ONE: Identify Team Members, Define Topic Scope and Team Work Plan.**

Outputs:

- **Topic area**
- **Topic team members**
- **Topic scope to be considered**
- **Related topic teams with overlapping issues**
- **Others to invite**
- **Meeting plan** (length, frequency and number of meetings)

### **STEP TWO: Define the Sustainable Endpoint (Vision)**

Create an input-output diagram/flowchart of activities and current practices within the topic scope.

Analyze each stage for violations of the Natural Step System Conditions. Create a vision of a perfectly sustainable future endpoint. Outputs:

- **System Input-Output diagram or flow chart**
- **Vision statement of the sustainable endpoint condition**

### **STEP THREE: Identify Indicators to Measure Progress**

Identify the indicators that will help schools know where they stand and measure their progress over time toward the vision. Define an appropriate measurement method for each indicator. Outputs:

- **Key indicators, with performance levels**
- **Unit of measure** (Include normalization such as kilowatt-hrs of electricity/student-day.)
- **Measurement methods** (Include sources of data or other guidance)

### **STEP FOUR: Identify existing resources and create new resources.**

Identify resources such as best practices, guidelines, tools, case studies and curriculum that are already in use or available. Consider local, national and international resources. Evaluate how well the available pieces can assist schools in their progress toward sustainability. Identify resources that are not available and need to be developed. Outputs:

- **Existing best practices, guidelines, tools, case studies**
- **Potential future case studies**
- **Curriculum**
- **New resources created by the team**
- **Other needed resources**

### **STEP FIVE: Tying it Together**

Recommend potential criteria for a statewide award in this topic area (for later use by the award program team). Identify barriers to progress for schools and consider countermeasures. Create a marketing and roll-out plan for the team's final product. Outputs:

- **Criteria for the state-wide award**
- **Barriers to progress**
- **Countermeasures to the barriers** (If known)
- **Marketing and roll-out plan**

### **STEP SIX: Endorsement**

Obtain endorsement of the finished product by key groups. Outputs:

- **Key groups**
- **Endorsements obtained**