

A guide to catalyzing a circular economy in your comunity



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Introduction

What is the circular economy?

Building a circular economy is critical for addressing the climate and ecological crisis. Circular economies—which minimize waste by recycling and reusing resources instead of throwing them away—have the potential to address environmental challenges and decrease social inequities while creating business opportunities. Circular economy projects focus on designing waste and pollution out of our economic system, keeping products and materials in circulation, and regenerating natural systems to address climate change, biodiversity loss and social challenges.



Figure 1. In contrast to the diagram of the take-make-waste linear economy (left), the circular economy (right) circulates resources.

Interested in more models and approaches?

Take a look at the <u>Ellen MacArthur Foundation's website</u>. The foundation is dedicated to accelerating the transition to a circular economy and has published tools and information to help cities.

The federal government has several policies, initiatives and programs to promote the circular economy. These include:

- A Healthy Environment and Healthy Economy,
- <u>Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste,</u>
- <u>Retaining Product Value in the Circular Economy,</u>
- The Greening Government Strategy,
- Mining Wastes as a Resource and
- Forest Bioeconomy Framework in Canada

The role of municipalities in promoting the circular economy

Transitioning to a circular economy requires collaboration between businesses, governments, community organizations and change-makers. Municipal governments are in a unique position to facilitate the creation of a circular economy that supports the municipality's plans and vision, including its economic development and environmental goals. With access to provincial and federal government funding opportunities, as well as legal and policy know-how, municipalities can bring diverse groups together and support projects that help those groups design waste and pollution out of the economic system.

Wondering what you can learn from other Canadian communities?

Take a look at the <u>Circular Cities & Regions Initiative</u> for advancing the circular economy in Canadian municipalities.

Case study: building a circular economy in Guelph-Wellington

Overview

In 2018, the City of Guelph and County of Wellington (referred to as "Guelph-Wellington") developed a joint vision to build the first modern circular food economy in Canada. The communities sought to reimagine how they produce, distribute, sell and consume food.

The idea moved from a vision to reality when, in 2019, Guelph-Wellington was awarded \$10 million by Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge. The funding allowed them to solidify their vision and formally establish the <u>Our Food Future</u> initiative as a staffed team working out of the Smart Cities Office at the City of Guelph.

Our Food Future is a circular-economy-building initiative with a mission to develop a robust and just local circular food system. The initiative pilots and tests ideas, innovations and projects in Guelph-Wellington's local urbanrural lab. It aims to develop best practices and identify lessons learned to share with other Canadian cities and regions to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

By the end of 2024, Our Food Future aims to:

- 1. Increase access to affordable, nutritious food by 50 percent;
- 2. Create 50 new circular food businesses, collaborations and social enterprises; and
- 3. Produce a 50 percent increase in economic benefit by unlocking the value of waste.

Our Food Future has four focus areas:

- 1. reduce food waste,
- 2. increase food access and food security,
- 3. drive circular collaborations and
- 4. affect systems-level change.

These areas are detailed in the project's strategic framework below (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Our Food Future's strategic framework.

A second initiative emerged from the "circular businesses and collaborations" focus area that extended the reach of Guelph-Wellington's circular economy initiatives. In 2021, Initiative launched the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (<u>COIL</u>), an innovation platform and network aimed at developing, proving and scaling circular solutions across businesses and organizations in southern Ontario—starting with the food and environmental sectors. The initiative received \$5 million from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Though most municipalities do not have access to similar resources for circular economy programs, Guelph-Wellington's approach and its lessons learned can be replicated for projects big and small. This guide presents best practices and tools for municipalities with varying levels of resources looking to facilitate circular economy initiatives in their communities.

The challenge

"We imagine a food system where everyone can access nutritious food, nothing is wasted and the impact on our environment is minimal. We imagine a system where food experts and entrepreneurs come together to tackle our most complex food challenges."

- Our Food Future

Our Food Future seeks to reduce food waste by valuing it as a resource and facilitating the creation of circular collaborations, partnerships, businesses and employment. Our Food Future also identified an opportunity to tackle food insecurity. At the time the initiative was developed, one in six families in Guelph-Wellington experienced food insecurity even though one-third to one-half of the food in the region was thrown away.

Both Our Food Future and COIL are also climate smart. Reducing, composting and upcycling food waste helps the region reduce methane emissions. Methane, which is released when organic matter decomposes, is more than 80 times as potent as carbon dioxide. Additionally, circularity reduces the need for new resources and associated emissions.

- The region is nome to a significant number of food entrepreneurs, community agencies addressing food insecurity and the headquarters of many agriculture and food organizations (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs).
- The University of Guelph and Conestoga college are internationallyrecognized for their work in food science, agriculture and agri-innovation.
- Issues related to rood transcend urban and rural areas, providing a foundation for the City and the County to collaborate.

The seed

The City of Guelph and the County of Wellington developed Our Food Future in response to Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge. The idea began in the City of Guelph's Department of Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services; department staff believed the program would enable the region to build upon work already happening in the local food system while sparking innovation.

Creating a community vision

"Recognize your strengths as a city and what you can do, and what other people in your region can do with their specializations. You need to look at the city as a collaboration platform for experts in your community to come together."

– David Messer, Manager, Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL)

Municipal staff undertook deep and wide community consultations to explore what businesses, non-profit groups, residents and experts, among others, thought about local food-system issues and how these might be addressed with a circular approach. They then proceeded to create a vision for Our Food Future. Finally, the team brought together an advisory group of core partners, including academia, public health experts, agriculture organizations and community leaders, who refined the vision and prepared the application.

Engage deeply and broadly

Continual and in-depth community engagement with collaborators has been key to Our Food Future's success. From inception through to implementation, Guelph-Wellington has created its circular economy initiatives with community members, non-profit organizations, large businesses, entrepreneurs and others. For example, initiative staff:

- Brought together over 50 community leaders and an advisory group to review the Our Food Future vision and approach before the initiative began.
- Contacted over 100 individuals and organizations for their input on the Our Food Future vision.
- Held large meetings regularly that brought together diverse collaborators while they created the initiative and vision. These meetings helped develop the theory of change and concept for Our Food Future.
- Engaged neighbourhood associations, academia, entrepreneurs, ag-tech organizations and businesses, social sector leaders, community organizations, food-related organizations, agri-food stakeholders and experts from the technology, start-up and social sectors.

Today, initiative staff are regularly in touch with collaborators and community members to improve programs, create new ones and involve more business and organizations in creating a circular future.

Implementation

A whole-of-systems approach

Our economy is part of a broader system interconnected with society and the environment. Guelph-Wellington's circular economy initiatives are based on a **systems thinking** approach. They found that focusing on the food system within the local context enabled them to create a vision for a circular food economy with collaborators ranging from anti-poverty advocates to food entrepreneurs. Mapping out the interconnections within the food system helped Guelph-Wellington identify areas in which to create change and test innovations.

Systems thinking is the ability to understand how the parts of a system interact to produce the behavior of the whole, explains a <u>primer by the Ellen</u> <u>MacArthur Foundation</u>, which is dedicated to accelerating the transition to a circular economy. The approach recognizes the interconnections between economic, social and environmental issues while designing a regenerative system.

Implementation model

Our Food Future and COIL both attribute much of their success to the collaborative approach they've taken, relying on project-delivery partners and collaborators to help achieve objectives. This emphasis and reliance on collaboration is further reflected in the governance structure of the initiatives.

The role of local government(s)

The Our Food Future and COIL initiatives are led from the City of Guelph's Smart Cities Office and its staff report to the City's Chief Administrative Officer. They collaborate with a County of Wellington manager, who represents the County's interests on the leadership team and is dedicated to spearheading circular economy projects.

Initiative staff at the City and County champion the initiatives and build strong relationships with several other departments, including solid waste resources, environmental services and economic development. Together, they aim to embed circularity across Guelph-Wellington's services, culture and strategy. Additionally, the team receives support from the City's corporate services, including IT, finance, HR and legal.

Initiative staff continue to facilitate action, convene collaborators and educate the community on the circular economy. They rely on partner organizations—called project-delivery partners—to implement most of the projects.

Collaborating for success

Partners and collaborators provide resources and help extend municipal capacity. Many of Guelph-Wellington's initiatives have been created based on ideas from the community and are implemented by community partners, who provide additional resources and expertise. For example, Smart Cities works with Innovation Guelph and 10 Carden (10C) to select and distribute project funds to businesses and entrepreneurs.

Each of the three pillars of Our Food Future (reduce food waste, increase food access and food security, drive circular collaborations) has its own work table convened by the Smart Cities Office to create a forum for local groups to discuss their individual ideas, fostering innovation and creating new opportunities to work together. The work tables are composed of local groups, many of which were previously working on issues in the focus area separately, rather than collaboratively.

Guelph-Wellington's circular economy initiative by the numbers

- A growing, diverse network of 49 partner organizations and 955 stakeholders.
- 52 data sets centralized in the Food Future Data Hub.
- \$1.4+ million in community donations and in-kind contributions.
- 50 broadcasts and events reaching more than 100,000 people.
- 14 new products and services created from diverted waste.
- 232 business collaborations strengthening the circular supply chain.
- 181 businesses that established or expanded their circular practices.
- \$960,812 in value saved and/or earned by shifting to more circular business practices.
- 60+ programs that are increasing access to nutritious food, growing circular businesses, or reusing waste.

Want to dive deeper?

The <u>Our Food Future</u> website provides extensive detail on how Guelph-Wellington developed its circular food economy initiatives, lessons learned and successful projects. The <u>Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad</u> website details its approach to accelerating circular business programs, success stories and the tools and resources COIL offers businesses.



This guide presents a seven-step model (Figure 3) for municipal staff to develop circular economy initiatives. The model draws on lessons and best practices from Guelph-Wellington's experience, as well as the **asset-based community development approach**. It can be used to support one-off circular economy initiatives, as well as comprehensive regional initiatives like those undertaken by Guelph-Wellington. In collaboration with community partners, municipal staff can use the model to identify opportunities, strengths and assets in the community that can be built upon to create circular economy initiatives.

Asset-based community development approach is a place-based approach to community development based on an analysis of local geography, resources, strengths, talents and opportunities.

The model presents an iterative approach. Steps can be adjusted and planned based on local needs. For example, some communities may find it useful to complete elements of Steps 1, 2 and 3 simultaneously. The guide provides three workshop worksheets with step-by-step instructions to assist you in completing the complementary model step:

- Worksheet 1 is designed for an individual municipal employee or internal working group to identify and brainstorm circular economy ideas during Step 1 (identify your focus area).
- Worksheet 2 can be completed with an internal working group to identify community partners and begin the process of establishing a Community Committee. This can be completed during Step 2 (identify and engage community collaborators) or in unison with Step 1.
- Worksheet 3 presents considerations for hosting a visioning workshop in Step 4 (develop the vision and pathways).

Taken together, the seven steps and worksheets will help you select the focus area, engage partners and collaborators, create a vision with community partners and collaborators, launch a pilot project, evaluate and review the result, and finally, continue to implement circular initiatives through an iterative process.

Looking for inspiration? COIL Stories provides examples of successful circular business collaborations from Guelph-Wellington.



Figure 3. The seven-step model for developing circular economy initiatives.



Step 1: Identify the focus area

Overview

Who: Municipal staff.

How: Complete <u>worksheet 1: identify circular economy opportunities in</u> <u>your community</u> individually or in an internal working group.

Outcome: Understanding of the community's strengths and assets to develop a focus area for the circular economy initiative.



To get started, you must identify a focus area. This focus area should be based on your community's strengths and assets, potential collaborators

and local economic sectors. The focus area should also align with community priorities, as well as municipal plans and strategies. Step 1 can be completed by an individual or an internal working group.

During the exploratory phase of the project, tap into local knowledge and peer-to-peer learning by joining the <u>Circular Cities and Regions Initiative's</u> peer-to-peer network, the local chapter of <u>Zero Waste Canada</u> or <u>Circular Economy Leadership Canada</u>.

To support this step use <u>Worksheet 1</u>. The worksheet presents a series of questions to help identify community strengths, assets and circular economy opportunities.

Tip: Continuous dialogue is key

Guelph Wellington's network was built through multiple, ongoing conversations with their personal networks, collaborators and partners.

Best practice: Build on local strengths and opportunities

Our Food Future was built upon work already underway in the community. Municipal plans, reports and projects ranging from Guelph's Solid Waste Management Master Plan to the Wellington County Economic Development Strategic Plan had already identified the agri-food sector, improving food security and reducing food waste as strategic priorities. Rather than develop something from scratch, Guelph Wellington tapped into the region's existing strengths and municipal priorities to create Our Food Future.

This enabled Guelph Wellington to draw on the experience and knowledge of local organizations. Our Food Future is based on input and materials from diverse organizations, including the Guelph Wellington Poverty Task Force, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce Food and Agriculture Committee, Innovation Guelph, the Ontario European Agri-Food Forum and others.

Call to action: Establish an internal working group

If you take the route of establishing an internal working group, follow these three steps to build an internal working group.

- 1. Make a list of staff and departments in the municipality that may be interested in working on a circular economy initiative related to the focus area. This list will be shaped by the municipality's unique context. Consider individuals working on waste management, economic development, communications and engagement, Indigenous relations, sustainability, climate planning and environmental conservation.
- 2. Create a terms of reference for the internal working group. The terms of reference should describe the group's objective, its role in developing the circular economy initiative and how often the group will convene and for how long. Convene regular meetings (e.g., biweekly or monthly) so that the group gains momentum to develop a project and can tackle issues as they arise.
- 3. **Invite colleagues to participate in the internal working group.** It is also critical to reach out to senior leadership and council members. Either directly recruit them to the working group or request their support for the project. Senior leadership and council members can champion the initiative and encourage other municipal departments to participate.



Step 2: Convene partners and collaborators

Overview

Who: Municipal staff.

How: Complete <u>worksheet 2: identify potential community partners and</u> <u>collaborators</u> to identify a list of potential community collaborators.

Outcome: A list of potential collaborators and the creation of a community committee.

Now that you have identified a focus area, you can identify potential collaborators within and outside your municipality and create a community working group to help develop the initiative.



Identify internal collaborators

If you did not create an internal working group in Step 1, you should begin by identifying internal collaborators and bring them together as an internal working group. The internal working group need not be static. Additional departments and members can be invited to join the group as the initiative evolves. See Step 1 for tips on creating an internal working group.

Best practice: Align circular economy initiatives with municipal priorities

Build support for the initiative by aligning it with existing priorities, plans and strategies. Circular economy initiatives can align with strategic priorities related to the environment, sustainability, waste reduction, climate action and economic development. Share these connections with colleagues, senior leadership and council members when you ask them for support.

Identify community collaborators

Working with your internal working group, begin identifying potential collaborators outside of the municipality. Joining hands with community leaders who are excited about and committed to the vision can help bolster support within the municipality and ensure community members are ready to implement circular economy projects.

<u>Worksheet 2</u> will guide you through identifying individuals in the internal working group's immediate and extended networks.

Best practice: Develop partnerships across the community

Initiative staff work with partners who are able to distribute funding to local businesses, provide mentorship and training, and provide local expertise and knowledge. They also build partnerships across silos. For example, they brought together public health agencies, post secondary institutions, neighbourhood group associations, a food rescue agency and businesses to figure out how they could work together to improve access to nutritious food while building a circular economy.

Develop your community committee

Next, the internal working group members can reach out to the potential external collaborators identified and have conversations to gather feedback on the focus area and identify additional potential initiatives and collaborators. Using this information, the working group can define the scope of the project.

Next, the working group can begin formally engaging with external collaborators by creating a community committee, including internal and external collaborators, that meets regularly to flesh out the project idea, assist with implementation, help improve and grow the project, and explore new ideas. The membership and size of this committee will depend on the

size and scope of the project. You might also opt to merge the internal working group with the community committee.

The committee's first meeting should be dedicated to developing terms of reference to manage expectations, and determine roles and responsibilities. In addition, this step could be used to explore the creation of a governance structure. Strive to understand strengths and resources in a way that promotes inclusion, builds trust and encourages broad groups of people to collaborate. Initiative staff had to build community awareness of their initiative and build trust with businesses. Following through on commitments was key in developing trust with the local business community.



Step 3: Research and data collection

Overview

Who: This will be defined by the terms of reference developed with the community committee members.

How: There are numerous techniques and avenues for data collection which can be customized to your initiative and community. A good starting point is to collect demographic, social, environmental and economic data on the focus area.

Outcome: Build collective understanding to inform the project vision.

With a clear idea and focus area, you can work with community members to build a collective understanding of what issues will be addressed and opportunities for tackling them, as well as collect relevant data. This step will help you map how the community interacts with and is affected by the focus area, and set the foundations for developing the vision in Step 4.



Defining the roles in the terms of reference will help determine who is responsible for leading the data collection phase. The scope of data collection will depend on the resources available and nature of the project.

For example, if you are developing an initiative to solve a specific circular economy problem, such as developing solutions for a specific type of waste (e.g., bruised produce, a specific type of waste from local factories), you would need to collect information on the amount of waste generated, businesses that generate that waste and impacts of that waste.

If you are looking at developing a larger project with multiple initiatives—as Guelph-Wellington did—or to identify a specific project within a larger focus area, the data collection would be more broad. For example, you might collect numeric data on demographic, social, environmental and economic variables, conduct interviews or consult experts. Once you have collected demographic data, you will have a baseline knowledge of community members who will be impacted and affected by the focus area. This will allow you to prioritize engaging with individuals with lived experience and community knowledge. They have as much, if not more, to contribute as those with relevant professional or academic qualifications.

For a list of data collection tools and methods, see <u>Appendix A: Data</u> <u>collection tools and methods</u>.

Step 4: Develop a vision

Overview

Who: Community committee members.

How: Using your knowledge of the community strengths and opportunities, host a workshop with committee members to develop a project vision and pathways. <u>Worksheet 3: key steps for hosting the visioning workshop</u> provides an overview of the key steps to develop a vision statement.

Outcome: A project vision that defines the actions, pathways, resources and key performance indicators.



The next step is to compile knowledge to establish a project vision and identify targets or pathways for achieving the vision. A vision will help answer the "why" of the project by clarifying the purpose, scope, pathways, activities and timelines. The vision is intended to inspire project partners and the community.

Some best practices to consider when developing the vision include:

- keeping it brief (no longer than one to two sentences),
- encouraging action,
- being specific and identifying your goal,
- keeping it future-focused and
- developing it collaboratively within your partners.

Once the committee has crafted a vision statement, it can move on to developing action pathways. Action pathways are interim goals

for achieving the vision. When designing an action pathway, think about what outcomes need to be achieved to reach the long-term vision. <u>Worksheet 3</u> provides guidance on this process.

> Work with committee members to develop a clear understanding of how the initiative or project will affect the community and find organizations that believe in that vision and are ready to support the initiative. Then, set a timeline to give the community a deadline to work towards.



Step 5: Launch a pilot project

Overview

Who: Committee members and pilot project leads.

How: Based on the vision and actions, identify a pilot project that connects to the pathways and is easy to implement.

Outcome: Launching the first circular economy project.

The pilot project should connect to the vision and pathways and be easy to implement and monitor. At this point, the committee will have enough knowledge to identify a pilot project and who could be involved.

Regardless of the project size, pilot projects are intended to act as a testbed for monitoring assumptions; prototyping roles, responsibilities and goals; and setting up the foundation for future projects to be successful.



Best practices for identifying a pilot project include:

- defining the project scope,
- developing the project objectives,
- identifying key resources,
- identifying funding sources and costs,
- generating a schedule of activities and
- defining success, metrics and evaluation criteria.

Funding your pilot project

Money helps bring people to the table. In addition to requesting funds from the municipality, you can look at opportunities from the provincial and federal governments and relevant government agencies. You can also reach out to businesses. Think about how you A successful circular project requires working across silos within the municipality and the community more broadly. When selecting a pilot project, analyze what partnerships already exist and can be leveraged, as well as opportunities to facilitate connections across silos, and identify partners to implement circular economy initiatives.

can build a circular economy initiative around existing municipal priorities. Creating a project that spans multiple departments—or staff members, if it's a smaller municipality—makes it easier to get financial support and human resources.

Funding Opportunities

The Government of Canada has several funding opportunities for businesses, projects and research related to the circular economy. These include:

- Agricultural Clean Technology Program,
- <u>Clean Growth Program,</u>
- Food Waste Reduction Challenge,
- Industrial Research Assistance Program,
- Innovative Solutions Canada,
- Low Carbon Economy Challenge,
- Smart Cities Challenge and
- Strategic Innovation Fund.

Additional funding opportunities may be available through provincial governments, local educational institutions and financial institutions.



Overview

Who: Pilot project leads report back to the committee members.

How: Evaluate the pilot project using the success criteria identified in the visioning workshop.

Outcome: Understand successes, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement.



Evaluating progress and measuring impacts is core to ensuring the pilot projects build momentum towards the community vision and goal. While developing the project vision, the committee members should identify key performance indicators to understand how to evaluate success.

Indicators use qualitative and quantitative data to assess whether the outcome is being fulfilled. These can include waste reduced, businesses engaged, number of circular economy events, event participation, revenue generated and number of participants involved with initiatives.

The circular economy is new and emerging. Sharing lessons learned with the local Zero Waste Canada Chapter or through the CCRI, including what went wrong and how you responded, can help communities take action across Canada.

Step 7: Scale up and continue

Overview

Who: Scaling up is a great opportunity to re-evaluate who's involved in the community committee and invite new community members to the process.

How: Iterate and reiterate. As you learn, revisit early steps in the model to update the processes, worksheets and actions.

Outcome: The launch of additional circular economy initiatives and projects.

Creating a circular economy is not a linear process. Rather, the process requires risk-taking, innovation and continually building upon pilots, prototypes and lessons learned to tweak and overhaul initiative. Iterating and reiterating are a key component of developing the community's circular economy. Sometimes, ideas fail—and that's okay. It's part of the process. The key is to learn from failures and mishaps and incorporate those learnings into your work.



Remaining flexible and continuously iterating allows you to adapt quickly and pivot projects as opportunities or barriers emerge. The success of Our Food Future came from the initiative's ability to remain agile and flexible and respond quickly to changes.

You can use the project vision as the initiative's touchpoint to identify opportunities and projects that can be scaled up to support the vision and pathways. As you continue to learn, revisit early steps in the model, such as bringing new collaborators to the table and deepening community engagement and knowledge. You can also scale your vision into a **theory of change**.

A theory of change is used to engage collaborators and partners in conversations about the relationship between the future vision and the actions required to get there. A theory of change is made up of a series of "If...., then..." statements that connect the dots between potential activities and intended outcomes.

The goal of this approach is to work with your collaborators to create a vision for the future and identify potential pathways for achieving the vision. A theory of change requires participants to identify their assumptions about the nature of the problem, why the problem exists, its impact on the community and how that problem can be tackled. Creating a theory of change will enable you to develop projects and initiatives that align with your vision.

From inception to implementation, Guelph-Wellington has used the theoryof-change process as a touchpoint to support strategic learning, adaptation and understanding of their initiatives' impact. Guelph-Wellington worked with a consulting team to design and facilitate a series of theory-of-change workshops to develop and prioritize their vision and action pathways in preparation for applying to the Smart Cities Challenge. Bringing their partners and collaborators together in one large group, rather than a series of small working groups, allowed them to create impact goals across diverse sectors.

Three work groups and a steering committee used the theory of change to capture interconnection between the three pillars of the project—nutritious foods, business development and waste as a resource. They also used the theory of change to prioritize short- and long-term outcomes for programs and activities. These were translated into a logic model that defined the prioritize for each of the three working groups.

- The theory-of-change process is time and resource intensive; however, it elicits numerous benefits. The process:
- Provides a future-focused approach to improve social and economic systems;
- Allows you to identify the project scope based on the assets, needs and gaps in your community;

- Builds understanding, shared expectations and collaboration among partners;
- Clarifies the role of data and technology by articulating the alignment between other strategies and opportunities for achieving new outcomes; and
- Provides a framework for asking questions and interpreting data.

Interested in learning more about developing a theory of change? Take a look at the <u>Our Food Future's Envisioning a Circular Food Economy: Theory</u> <u>of Change for Smart Cities</u> report.



Worksheets

Worksheet 1: Identify circular economy opportunities in your community

This worksheet is designed to help identify a community's strengths, assets and circular economy opportunities. It can be completed as an individual exercise or with an internal working group. If you are completing the worksheet as an individual activity you can work through each activity at your own pace. If you are completing the worksheet collaboratively with an internal working group, the activities are designed to be completed over two workshops. During the first workshop, the internal working group will explore the community's strengths (activities one to three). During the second workshop, the working group will select a focus area for circular economy initiatives (activity four).

WORKSHOP 1: EXPLORE THE COMMUNITY'S STRENGTHS

1. What are the community's values? Consider the following questions

- What does the community care about?
- What does the council or leadership team care about?
- What beliefs are important to consider and respect?
- How are individuals engaged within the community?
- What makes the community unique?

2. What are the community's strengths and assets?

- What strengths and assets does the community have in the following areas?
 - Economic:
 - Social:
 - Cultural:
 - Institutional:
 - Ecological:
 - Political:
 - Other:

3. What are the community's key economic sectors?

- What are the biggest economic sectors in your community?
- What industries/sectors are emerging in your community?
- What is/are the most innovative sector(s) in your community?
- What economic sectors are connected to what your community is passionate about?

WORKSHOP 2: SELECTING A FOCUS AREA FOR YOUR LOCAL CIRCULAR ECONOMY INITIATIVE

4. Create a preliminary concept

Before the second workshop, ask internal working group members to review the answers from workshop 1 and begin developing ideas for economic sectors to explore in the second workshop.

At the beginning of workshop 2, ask the working group to select one to three economic sectors to focus on. The activities should be completed for each sector.

- Who are the key players in this sector? Who would be interested in coming together on this issue?
 - ^o Businesses (big and small):
 - ^o Post-secondary institutions:
 - ° Community groups:
 - ° Non-profits:
 - ^o Municipal staff/departments:
- What benefits does this sector provide for the community? What potential benefits could it provide?
 - Economic:
 - Social:
 - Cultural:
 - ° Institutional:
 - Ecological:
 - Political:
 - Other:
- What socioeconomic issues and challenges are connected to this sector?
- How is the local community involved in this sector (e.g., purchases from the sector, works in the sector, passionate about it, etc)?
- What external forces and trends are shaping this sector?

- What opportunities exist in this focus area? What are potential areas for improvement?
 - ° Economic (e.g., create jobs, attract investment):
 - ^o Environmental (e.g., nature conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, etc.):
 - ° Socioeconomic (e.g., advance equity, reduce poverty, etc.):
- Does the municipality have supporting strategic documents or policies for this focus area (e.g. climate plans, strategic documents, economic development plans)?
- Are there existing partnerships in the community that have already come together to work on this theme? Does the municipality already have relevant connections or partnerships?
- What kind of waste does this sector produce? Provide specific examples of organic, solid and liquid waste.
 - Organic:
 - Solid:
 - Liquid:
- Are there circular economy initiatives already in place in this sector?

Worksheet 2: Identify potential partners and collaborators

Using your internal working group, begin identifying champions for the focus area within and outside of the municipal government. The list will be used to identify potential community collaborators for creating your community committee. This step can be combined with the activities in Worksheet 1.

WORKSHOP: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

1. Identify an immediate network

Identify the individuals you interact with on a regular basis who might be interested in your initiative. For example:

• Who in your immediate network might be interested in collaborating or could help you understand your focus area (e.g., city departments, colleagues, community organizations, businesses, researchers)?

2. Identify an extended network

Use your immediate network to identify links to an extended network. For example:

- Which city departments are connected to this sector or might be interested in collaborating on a circular economy initiative in this focus area?
- What departments or staff members might act as champions for work related to this focus area?

3. Identify community leaders

In Worksheet 1, you identified institutional pillars connected to the focus areas. Use the following questions to identify additional institutional pillars, such as Indigenous communities, school boards and public health agencies. Once you feel you have identified all institutional pillars related to the focus area, begin identifying individuals within those institutions you can reach out to.

- Which businesses are involved in this focus area (consider local business as well as national and international corporations)?
- What local educational institutions do research on and/or offer training programs related to this focus area?
- Which civil society groups are involved in or concerned about this focus area (e.g., non-profits, environmental advocacy groups, business organizations like the local chamber of commerce)?
- Who consumes the goods or services produced by this focus area?
- Have any council members endorsed innovation in this focus area?
- What other external groups might be interested in a circular economy initiative in this sector?

Worksheet 3: Key steps for hosting the visioning workshop

The following provides practical considerations for designing a visioning workshop to complete Step 4 of the guide. This exercise will set you up for success in steps 5–7.

Identify a vision statement	Using the community knowledge gathered in steps 1–3, the workshop facilitators should lead the group in identifying the problem that the initiative will address. Once the problem statement is crafted, the group should use this statement to define its desired vision. A vision statement can be identified by asking "What condition will result from the removal of the problem?"
	For example, Guelph-Wellington's vision to accelerate a regional circular economic system is inspired by nature's regenerative processes and by traditional cultures that live in harmony with the Earth.
Map out pathways	Pathways are the sequence of outcomes that must occur in order to reach your vision. Using backwards mapping, starting with the long- term outcome and working back to the earliest changes needed to achieve the outcome and identify connections between pathways.
	One of Guelph-Wellington's pathways for achieving their vision is to increase access to affordable, nutritious food by 50 percent.
Identify resources	Identify the resources required for your pathways to be successful. Resources include, but are not limited to, financial, partnerships, tools and software. Identifying community resources and drawing on the strengths and assets of the community will help you build successful pathways. This step will allow you to understand what's required for a pathway to be successful.
Identify actions	Actions are the activities, initiatives or programs the collaborators can undertake in order to meet the outcomes. These are identified along the pathways.
Identify key performance Indicators	Indicators use qualitative and quantitative data to assess whether the outcome is being fulfilled. These can include waste reduction, businesses engaged, number of circular economy events, number of projects from the initiative, event participation, revenue generated and number of participants involved with initiatives.
Craft the narrative	The final step is to craft a narrative that summarizes the vision and explains the pathways for change, major resources, actions and indicators. The narrative explains how the initiative will make a difference in the community.

Appendix A: Data collection tools and methods

There are a variety of tools and methods to move beyond quantitative data collection and deepen your understanding of your community's assets. When beginning your qualitative data collection, set clear research parameters to identify the granularity of data needed while balancing time and resource constraints.

Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-based approach to engage collaborators and partners in organizational change. Using a four-step cycle of discover, dream, design and deploy, appreciative inquiry aims to build positive relationships based on the existing strengths and assets of an organization.

Community mapping can be used by committee members to develop an interactive map to understand how neighbourhoods interact with your focus area. For example, Smart Cities used a map to identify priority neighbourhoods for improving food access based on retail food outlets, food access programs and supportive infrastructure.

Community voice and feedback can be sought through surveys and engagement events, such as workshops. Surveys are an efficient way to seek input from a diverse cross section of individuals with different lived experience and community knowledge.

Participatory appraisal is a community-based approach to research and consultation that emphasizes the lived experience and views of community members by training community members to carry out research within their community. It's completed in four stages: training and research, analysis, verification and collective action.

Policy reviews are used to identify regulatory barriers by reviewing government and institutional policies. In addition, linking your projects to existing municipal plans and policies can enhance support from leadership and counsel, as well as facilitate budgeting and funding opportunities.

Scans and audits can be used to review existing programs, educational opportunities and supporting infrastructure to understand the existing efforts and identify opportunities for improvements.

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