

Industry Association Sustainability Benchmark and Checklist

The following is a benchmark tool to help industry associations assess the comprehensiveness and coverage of their member sustainability programs. It is based on 2007 [research](#) into the roles Canadian industry and trade associations are playing to help their industry become sustainable conducted by Coro Strandberg, President of Strandberg Consulting, in collaboration with Five Winds International for Natural Resources Canada. It was updated in 2018 based on new best practices.

Sustainability / CSR Practice	Description	Strengths	Potential Gaps
A. Sustainability Vision and Position			
Association has adopted a long-term sustainability / CSR vision for the sector/ membership to rally around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision description and adoption date 		
Association includes sustainability in its mandate or mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of sustainability component of its mandate / mission statement 		
Association is aware of the long-term social and environmental sustainability trends, risks and opportunities that will affect the sector's future performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description and date of research conducted Research findings and implications 		
Association is knowledgeable about the business case and drivers for CSR / sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the business case and drivers 		
Association has identified how its	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of plans to scale and accelerate the sustainability solutions offered by the 		

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sector can contribute to a sustainable future and is implementing plans to address these opportunities	sector		
Association has a definition of CSR / sustainability approved by its members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of CSR / sustainability 		
Board has a role in sustainability / CSR strategy and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and mandate of Board Committee responsible for CSR / sustainability • Board receives training on CSR / sustainability • Association's commitment to CSR / sustainability has been communicated internally and externally • Association has adopted a CSR or sustainability policy or commitment statement 		
Association staff have dedicated responsibility for overseeing and implementing sustainability / CSR programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of full time employees assigned to manage program • Positions and title(s) of sustainability / CSR staff, e.g. VP of environment 		
Association forms linkages or partnerships with international standard bodies and/or other leading sector initiatives in sustainability / CSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic partnerships Association is involved with • Linkages / involvement with other leading sustainability initiatives (e.g., GRI, Global Compact or other international Code of Conduct, other Industry Association sustainability initiative) 		
A minimum level of sustainability / CSR performance has been set for members (e.g., mandatory performance criteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of required performance criteria • Description of monitoring/ verification/ corrective action or remediation process • Number of members in compliance 		

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B. Addressing Key Sustainability Issues in the Sector			
Association has process for identifying key CSR / sustainability trends, issues, etc. in its sector; association is knowledgeable about the social and environmental impacts of the sector along its value chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of strategy / process for identifying issues, e.g. trends reports, best practice scans, stakeholder engagement, materiality analysis, etc. Issues that have been identified in the most recent strategy development process Description of the social and environmental impacts of the sector and its value chain 		
Association establishes sustainability programs or activities to address priority CSR / sustainability issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe programs/activities to address priority CSR / sustainability issues Programs are included in the Association's Business Plan Annual budget for the sustainability/ CSR program How program is funded (e.g., member dues for sustainability / CSR program, core budget, member-fund-raising, etc.) Alternative: Association promotes member participation in sustainability programs operated by third-party non-profit organizations 		
Association is committed to contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of effort to prioritize key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Targets List of SDGs addressed by the Association and its members 		
Association has an action plan for addressing sustainability / CSR issues in and impacts of the sector, including goals, targets, metrics (e.g., indicators) and timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe action plan Describe goals, targets, metrics of the action plan Describe process for involving members, e.g. roundtables and working groups 		
Association adopts sustainability / CSR goals and targets for the sector to pursue together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe sector goals, targets, metrics Summarize progress 		

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<p>Association regularly reviews progress, checks in with members to ensure they are heading in right direction and that program is adding value, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of progress review and assessment • Member involvement in evaluation and review of sustainability / CSR program • Association regularly benchmarks its progress against other sectors • Significant changes to the program since its inception as a result of the review process • Evidence of review and update in past five years 		
<p>Association engages with governments on public policy measures to advance sustainability / CSR in the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe public policy initiatives of the Association that advance sustainability / CSR in the sector • List instances where association CEO and / or Board Chair took favourable public positions on sustainability topics • List public policy positions the association has taken in the last 2 years that advocate in opposition to sustainability / CSR in the sector 		
<p>Association has programs to pursue industry collaboration and innovation on sustainability / CSR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe industry collaboration projects that bring members together to tackle sustainability / CSR challenges and opportunities • Describe nature of agreements underpinning collaborations, e.g. MOUs, bilateral or joint venture agreements, etc. • Describe industry innovation pilots supported by the Association, including the Association's role 		
C. Engaging Key External Stakeholders			
<p>Association has a process for identifying key stakeholders and determining which stakeholders to engage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for identifying key stakeholders • Key stakeholders identified 		
<p>Association operates programs to actively engage stakeholder groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe programs / activities used to engage key stakeholders (e.g. identification of issues, policy and/ or program development, etc.) 		

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in a dialogue on the sector's economic, environmental and social performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe consultation platforms (e.g. stakeholder advisory panel) 		
Association reports on types and results of engagements and the use of information resulting from stakeholder engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe reporting procedures Provide links to recent meeting summaries Describe how stakeholder engagement activities have influenced policy or program development 		
Association establishes stakeholder collaborations to address sustainability / CSR issues, barriers and opportunities together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of multi-stakeholder collaboration initiatives Description of supply chain collaboration initiatives Describe nature of agreements underpinning collaborations, e.g. MOUs, bilateral or joint venture agreements, etc. 		
Association sponsors and provides funding for sustainability organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of sustainability organizations financially sponsored by the association 		
D. Supporting Members to Improve their Sustainability Performance			
Association offers training, education and peer learning programs for its members on sustainability / CSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe training and education programs, including certification/accreditation, if relevant Workshops, webinars, conferences, etc. List sustainability / CSR communities of practice or member peer learning platforms 		
Association produces "how to" sustainability / CSR resource documents and tools to support its members in implementing Association's sustainability / CSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document any that pertain (e.g., toolkits, manuals, best practice guidance documents, checklists, benchmarking exercises) 		

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program objectives			
Association offers incentive programs to encourage member participation in sustainability / CSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe incentive programs and level of member engagement in these programs (e.g., awards, etc.) 		
Association develops common sustainability / CSR metrics and metric protocols for members to track, measure and benchmark their performance and industry performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the metrics and metric protocols Description of approach to measuring overall sector sustainability performance, e.g. a sector sustainable development index 		
Association has a library of member case studies demonstrating best practices in sustainability / CSR; acts as a clearing house for best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and type of case studies 		
Association develops a sustainability / CSR rating system or brand for members to use in their marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of rating system or branding program 		
Association participates in third-party standards that encourage procurement from members with effective sustainability / CSR programs and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of standards programs that encourage sourcing from members with effective sustainability / CSR programs and products 		
E. Sustainability / CSR Reporting on Industry-Wide Initiatives			
Association has an industry benchmarking program enabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the benchmarking program and member participation rate 		

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members to compare their performance to another			
Association reports annually on its efforts to improve sustainability / CSR in the industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics addressed in the annual report 		
Association reports publicly on the sustainability / CSR performance of the sector (including impacts of its sector, initiatives the sector has in place to address those impacts, performance data about products, materials or processes, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method for reporting/ disclosing the performance of the Association’s sustainability / CSR programs for its members (distinct from the Association’s own organizational performance) • Scope of report (e.g. performance goals and progress in implementing the sustainability / CSR program) • Percent of membership represented by report (i.e., how many members contribute data and information to report) • Other formats used to communicate industry sustainability performance to the public 		
Association conducts branding and marketing campaigns to communicate the sector’s sustainability / CSR performance and build public support for the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description and nature of sustainability / CSR branding program 		
Association creates campaigns and marketing strategies to leverage the industry’s sustainability performance in national and international markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of sustainability marketing program 		
F. Association’s Sustainability / CSR Performance – Leading by Example			
Association profiles sustainability / CSR on its website home page and within a dedicated section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of website coverage and accessibility from home page 		

Sustainability / CSR Practice	Description	Strengths	Potential Gaps
Association has identified its own sustainability / CSR impacts (“House in Order” Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts identified by Association 		
Association engages and trains its staff on sustainability / CSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs to train staff on sustainability / CSR Internal programs to engage staff on their sustainability behaviours at work, at home and in the community 		
Association develops goals, targets and metrics (e.g., indicators) and timelines for specific programs addressing its own sustainability / CSR impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List goals, targets, metrics and timelines for specific programs addressing sustainability / CSR impacts of the association 		
Association supports the replication of its sustainability program within other jurisdictions, e.g. provincial, national and international	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of efforts to replicate the sustainability program Name and number of other jurisdictions adopting the program 		