

Careers

Consumers, employees, customers and broader society are pressuring organizations to have policies and practices that address the economic, environmental and social dimensions of their business and the community in which they operate. Businesses, schools, non-profit organizations, and government agencies are recognizing the necessity and benefits of having a sustainability professional on their team. Energy costs and climate change are key drivers for many organizations. Whatever your field, chances are you can integrate aspects of sustainability into your career.

Types of Sustainability Careers

One of the exciting things about a career in sustainability is that there are so many different ways you can get involved and/or specialize in. Some position titles related to this work include:

- sustainability coordinator
- energy manager
- green building engineer
- policy maker
- climate change specialist
- solar designer
- land use manager
- waste manager
- recycling coordinator
- pollution prevention specialist
- conservation biologist
- environmental health professional
- environmental economist
- resource manager
- social impact assessor
- green procurement specialist
- environmental educator
- LEED specialist
- green marketer
- corporate social responsibility specialist
- sustainable design leader

Did you know?

As of 2010, approximately 17 per cent of Canadian establishments employ one or more environment employee?

Skill Requirements

Technical skills can be developed through study and training. However there are other hard and soft skills you will need to be a successful sustainability professional. Note that many of these skills are versatile, and would prove valuable in a variety of careers but are especially helpful when working towards sustainability.

Hard skills worth developing include:

- strategic planning
- project management
- change management
- program evaluation
- systems thinking
- facilitation
- sustainability reporting

Soft skills:

- problem solving
- communicating with stakeholders
- inspiring support for sustainability
- motivating engagement in programs
- balancing multiple priorities
- building collaborative relationships within and across disciplines
- overcoming resistance to change
- building consensus

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

– Mohatma Ghandi

Tips to Get Started in a Career

Thinking about a career in sustainability?

Here are some tips to help get you started:

- **Know the work involved.** There are many different areas within this field – sustainability reporting, strategic planning, auditing, and facilitating stakeholder dialogue to name a few. Get an understanding of the range of approaches and decide which ones are of interest to you.
- **Experience and qualifications.** Passion for sustainability on its own is, unfortunately, not enough. You will need qualifications or experience to back you up. Consider volunteering or serving on boards of organizations that are related to your area of interest. Consider incorporating a community service learning project or cooperative student experience into your studies.
- **Know the major players.** Spend time researching who does what in the field before approaching prospective employers. Do you want to work for an organization that designs solutions or do you want to join a company that implements solutions? One of the many questions you may ask yourself in your research.
- **Keep up to date.** There are many specialist magazines and websites that cover sustainable development issues. Be knowledgeable about new trends and emerging ideas.
- **Networking works.** There are conferences and meetings taking place all over the world where people get together to explore sustainability issues - not all are expensive to attend and many offer discount rates for students. Don't forget local associations and student clubs as well. Networking takes time and effort, but can really pay off when you develop connections and learn about opportunities.
- **Don't forget the fundamentals.** As with many other jobs, computer skills, writing ability, foreign languages, good communication skills and level-headed thinking are always desirable.
- **Submit a quality application.** When that job opportunity comes around, spend some time researching the organization and then tailor your resume and cover letter accordingly. Take advantage of resources like the university's Career and Placement Services (CAPS), who use their expertise in resume writing, interview coaching and much more.

CAPS

UAlberta's Career and Placement Services (CAPS) offers a variety of career services to students and alumni. You can visit their website at caps.ualberta.ca to learn more.

Online Career Resources

- **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education** aashe.org
- **Alberta Learning Service Information** alis.gov.ab.ca
- **Business for Social Responsibility** bsr.org
- **Environmental Careers Organization** eco.ca
- **Environmental Career Opportunities** ecojobs.com
- **Environmental Career Centre** environmentalcareer.com
- **Environmental Expert** environmental-expert.com
- **GoodWork** goodworkcanada.ca
- **Canadian Environmental Network** rcen.ca
- **National Council for Science and the Environment** ncseonline.org
- **OneWorld** us.oneworld.net
- **WorkCabin** workcabin.ca



Growing Sustainability at the U of A

For staff and faculty members employed by the U of A, the Office of Sustainability offers **ecoREPs**, a program that will give you a chance to dive deeper into sustainability, campus sustainability initiatives and tips for implementing projects in your work unit and personal work space.

Visit sustainability.ualberta.ca/ecoREPs for more information.

Did you know?

The University of Alberta was named as one of Canada's Greenest Employers for 2012.

