

STEP 2 Assess Current State

Sustainability planning is supported with a sound understanding of the current state of the organization in relation to sustainability. What is already happening that you can leverage? Where are the missed opportunities? When you have completed this step, you will have:

- An understanding of your unit’s strengths and areas for improvement in sustainability
- A baseline of activity you can leverage

Sustainability Maturity Model

The Sustainability Maturity Model allows a unit to understand its stage of engagement with sustainability. The model also points to appropriate steps that can be taken to capture existing opportunities and ascend to the next stage. As you will see, the model presents four stages:

- Stage 1: Starting
- Stage 2: Implementing
- Stage 3: Integrating
- Stage 4: Transforming

We have found the model to be a quick and effective way to spur productive discussion.

Opportunity Finder

The Opportunity Finder is an online data collection tool that helps units develop a baseline of their current sustainability efforts and identify potential new opportunities. The Opportunity Finder takes a holistic picture of the activities of your unit that will be very helpful in your planning. One individual will not know all the answers. Plus, units that gather the information as a team and share it with a larger group for discussion get the most benefit from the Opportunity Finder.

It is strongly recommended that you first download and view the questions, gather the information, and then complete the Opportunity Finder to get your report.

Tip for the Facilitator

The Opportunity Finder will provide important details and further resources for this discussion.

Project the Sustainability Maturity Model on a screen or hand out hard copies. Ask people where they would plot their unit on the model. You can then do a round robin to let each person talk in turn.

Above and beyond: Benchmark with departments and units at peer institutions and/or research sustainability activities in your particular industry or discipline.

The screenshot shows a blue-themed web form for the Penn State Sustainability Institute. At the top left is the Penn State logo and at the top right is the 'sustainability INSTITUTE' logo. Below the logos is a paragraph of text explaining the Opportunity Finder tool. Underneath is a link to preview questions. The main section is titled 'Information About Your Unit' and contains three input fields: a text box for 'Your Name (so we may contact you if we have questions)', a text box for 'Your E-mail address', and a dropdown menu for 'Please specify your Campus.' with a 'Go' button to the right.

Access the Opportunity Finder here:
sustainability.psu.edu/strategic-planning

Maternity Model

The Sustainability Maturity Model (on page 16) was created by the Sustainability Institute to help the university and units within it to understand the various types and levels of engagement with sustainability. Units are at many different stages in their engagement with this new topic, and each unit relates to it differently, depending on the unit’s unique mission.

The goal here is not to go deep into an analysis of your unit but just to spur some discussion about where you are and where you might want to go.

Review the common characteristics for each stage. Where would you place your unit? Put a check mark in the boxes which best describe your current state.

	Stage 1: Starting	Stage 2: Implementing	Stage 3: Integrating	Stage 4: Transforming
Teaching & Co-Curricular	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disciplinary focus in curricular “silos”; little to no interdisciplinary work Very limited and isolated sustainability content appears in a few courses Co-curricular engagement is limited to environmental and/or social justice focused clubs 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative is taken by a small handful of “early adopter” faculty Sustainability learning outcomes are not yet measured A small percentage of interested students are engaged Co-curricular programs such as lectures and internships begin to feature sustainability 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are many initiatives in many departments Interdisciplinary approaches are common Specific learning outcomes are established and measured Robust faculty and staff development and training is in place Widespread adoption of the “living lab” concept of using the campus and community for learning 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is strategically integrated into all teaching and co-curricular programs A robust system is in place to measure learning outcomes Sustainability awards and recognition programs exist for students, staff, faculty, and alumni The unit’s story and model of sustainability excellence is shared beyond the department/unit with others within and beyond the university
Research	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research consists of environmental portfolio only Research agendas don’t take advantage of collaborations with other disciplines Little to no mention of sustainability research in unit publications Little or no discussion of discipline-specific contribution to sustainability 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centers begin with discipline-specific sustainability focus Engagement begins with other disciplinary areas Survey of emerging sustainability research topics, including global and local Research partnerships exist to address campus and community challenges 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research agenda considers emerging sustainability research needs Research partially directed to challenges on-campus, in the community Formal processes for documenting and rewarding sustainability research Common theme in communications and publications Development of impact criteria 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directing inquiry to sustainability challenges Rewards/recognition exist for sustainability-based research External partners recognize expertise Consistent theme in communications and publications Research agendas are reviewed institution-wide for synergies across disciplines and colleges Convene meetings and collaborations with other institutions
Service & Community Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undefined rhetorical reference to “service” Random or limited community involvement No mention of service and community engagement in unit publications Little or no relationship between unit and community sustainability challenges 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community service seen as “what we do as citizens” Community representation on unit advisory boards Community-based sustainability research and teaching valued by some faculty Community members can easily access unit resources 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community service seen as core to the academic agenda Stories of community/unit sustainability partnerships common in unit publications Mechanisms exist to support community-based research, teaching, and service The unit plays a visible role in facilitating dialogue around public issues 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service is a central to the mission Community knowledge is seen as essential to the education of students Community-based sustainability experiences are embedded across the curriculum Partnership work is intended to transform both the community and the university

	Stage 1: Starting	Stage 2: Implementing	Stage 3: Integrating	Stage 4: Transforming
Operations	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is only about compliance and cost avoidance Adherence to building codes and basic efficiency measures Regarded as the work of only certain people such as energy engineers Decision-making focus is on reducing upfront cost, not life cycle cost 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is about short term cost and risk reduction Commitment to national and international voluntary standards such as LEED, EnergyStar, ISO 14001 Short term, measurable goals are established for resource and environmental conservation and restoration Start to look beyond institution to supply chain impacts and opportunities 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is a source of innovation and long term value creation Life cycle costing is a requirement of all major decision-making Strategic collaborations initiated with on/off campus partners Establishment of sustainable procurement policy Long term measurable goals and metrics are established, made public 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is a strategic, integrating priority for the entire unit System in place to recognize and reward innovations Unit is regarded as a national and international leader in sustainable operations Mechanisms are in place for regularly sharing the model with other institutions
Planning & Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership is either unaware or suspicious of sustainability Environmental issues are seen as a cost and the work of facilities staff The culture is oriented toward doing only what is required by university policy, state or federal law, codes, accreditation requirements, etc. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership is tolerant of sustainability as a potentially important new area of focus Not integrated into the core priorities of the unit Initiatives exist but are not connected to any goals or overarching strategy 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership regards sustainability as an important area of focus A sustainability task force or committee exists There are goals and metrics for sustainability Sustainability is beginning to be a part of discussions of core values and strategy for meeting the unit's top priorities 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership embraces sustainability strategy as a key aspect of the unit's vision, mission, and long-term strategy Everyone has a basic understanding of sustainability and how it relates to her/his discipline and work Sustainability is integrated into the unit's strategic plan with specific metrics tied to core priorities Support systems are in place at the policy and administrative level Measurable, high level goals
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey those already interested and working in the area of sustainability at work and at home. Begin some pilot projects. Begin a process for learning about sustainability and its connection to your particular unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing and past initiatives to evaluate what worked and what did not. Form a task force or committee to look at sustainability more strategically. Establish a preliminary vision and rationale for pursuing sustainability. Set goals and preliminary metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather input from internal and external stakeholders on the unit's sustainability strategy. Embed sustainability into the unit's planning and review processes. Ensure all members achieve an understanding of sustainability and the skills, knowledge and tools they need to apply it to their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build internal understanding and competencies, reward structures, and more aspirational goals. Seek opportunities to share your accomplishments beyond the university. Extend external partnerships in industry, local government, etc. through higher levels of engagement and collaboration. Work with sector and national/international groups to change high level policy or standards that inhibit sustainability innovation.

Worksheet

Instructions: After reading over the characteristics for each stage in the **Sustainability Maturity Model** on the previous two pages, answer the questions below.

Stage 1: Starting	Stage 2: Implementing	Stage 3: Integrating	Stage 4: Transforming
Leadership, faculty, staff only do what is required.	Some basic activity with a small number of faculty and/or staff involved.	Leadership support and is connected to core values and priorities. Metrics and goals exist.	Embraced as a strategic organizing concept informing everything the unit does, with a system in place to support and manage progress and to share the model broadly.

Fill in the circles that apply.

1. Which stage sounds most like where your unit or department is with sustainability?

2. At which stage would you like your unit or department to be in 5 years?

3. At which stage do you think your various stakeholders want you to be? Examples could be faculty, staff, students, administrators, funding agencies, alumni, suppliers, customers, etc.

Discuss your answers as a team.



Go back to page 5 and write your conclusions in Step 2.