

## Capacity Building to Support Sustainable Local Economic Development in Canadian Municipalities - Executive Summary

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities ([FCM](#)), in collaboration with the Economic Developers Association of Canada ([EDAC](#)), has recently been investigating the extent to which sustainability considerations are being integrated into local economic development initiatives in Canada. [McSweeney & Associates](#) and [Grant Consulting](#) were engaged to conduct research and to design and facilitate a focus group of Canadian champions of sustainable local economic development.

The research and focus group identified several key barriers to the integration of sustainability into economic development initiatives. These included:

- A lack of awareness and common understanding of the concept of sustainability;
- Sustainability, as a longer-term goal, is often considered only after short-term priorities are met;
- Difficulty communicating the benefits of sustainability to the organization and the community;
- A lack of community champions;
- Obtaining stakeholder alignment and developing a plan that will obtain buy-in from all parties;
- A lack of municipal financial resources to assign to sustainable economic development;
- Defining reliable metrics to measure the integration of sustainability and economic development;
- Difficulty of assigning roles and responsibilities for implementation once a plan is in place.

Best practice communities are successfully integrating sustainability and economic development by:

- Embedding sustainability into everyday community living and working;
- Communicating the benefits and value proposition of sustainability to the whole community; and
- Integrating sustainability considerations into all municipal decisions, reports and plans.

The focus group identified two critical barriers to the integration of sustainability and economic development:

- A lack of a common understanding of the concept of sustainability;
- A lack of education and communication with regards to the concept and its benefits.

Based on these findings, the consultants recommended two actions for immediate implementation.

### **1. Create a “Road Map for Defining Local Economic Sustainability”.**

This would be core guidance on how to develop a common understanding to be rolled out as conference presentations, webinars, seminars, and/or economic development professional development.

### **2. Develop materials to facilitate communication of the concept of local economic sustainability to all stakeholders, as well as to educate them on the subject.**

Having a common set of materials will assist in developing a common understanding of the concept of local economic sustainability across the members of all municipal and economic development organizations in Canada. There are two distinct target audiences with different needs: Council and the community (at a high-level), and economic development and sustainability practitioners (at a more detailed level). Materials would include presentations, an online forum/community of practice, an EDAC LinkedIn discussion group dedicated to sustainable economic development, and a set of relevant case studies in local economic sustainability from both large and small municipalities, as well as rural and urban.