

TOGETHER ALBERTA

Mapping Alberta's Contribution to
the Sustainable Development Goals



ACGC
ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR
GLOBAL COOPERATION



About the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC)

The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) is a network of organizations and individuals, located in Alberta, working locally and globally to advance sustainable development and global citizenship. This network includes ACGC members, comprised of civil-society organizations and individuals, who share a common vision: that all people can become engaged citizens in peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, and thrive in a healthy, sustainable world.

The mission of ACGC is to mobilize Albertans to become global citizens engaged in sustainable development. ACGC does this by building the capacity of network organizations, representing members' interests with government and others, and increasing Albertan awareness of and engagement with global issues and sustainable development.

ACGC has supported public engagement and education activities that help Albertans develop awareness and understanding of global issues for over 45 years.

Visit our website: www.acgc.ca

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Executive Summary

In September 2015, world leaders agreed on a transformative global agenda for sustainable development at the United Nations, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commits countries to a universal, rights-based agenda that combines the economic, social, and environmental components of global development to benefit all people everywhere. Canada signed onto the 2030 Agenda in 2015, as Canada recognized the importance of the Agenda for progress on sustainable development in Canada and around the world. The Government of Canada is committed to implementing all 17 SDGs and the principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda, including “leaving no one behind” (United Nations, 2019b).

As part of its 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) has prioritized championing the Sustainable Development Goals in Alberta. In Fall 2019, ACGC launched *Together Alberta: Mapping the Sustainable Development Goals in Alberta*. This initiative aimed to better understand the ecosystem of organizations and individuals working on the SDGs in Alberta. Together Alberta also aimed to engage Alberta communities and stakeholders in dialogue promoting the local implementation of SDGs in the province and around the world. Through a series of roundtable dialogues held in 8 urban and 10 rural communities throughout Spring 2019, ACGC found that Albertans are indeed interested and committed to working on issues that are in line with the SDGs. Throughout the dialogues, a number of common concerns and matters of importance emerged, and form the key findings of the initiative. Specifically, participants highlighted:

1. **More public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals is needed.**
2. **Alberta-based Organizations are addressing the SDGs.**
3. **Albertans must shift their individual and organizational practices in order to achieve SDGs.**
4. **The needs of rural communities must be specifically addressed within the 2030 Agenda National Strategy.**
5. **Governments must embed the SDGs in policies and practices at all levels.**

The dialogues held during Together Alberta roundtables fed into national public consultations occurring across Canada in June 2019 as part of Canada’s efforts towards developing a common understanding and shared vision for Canada’s advancement of the 2030 Agenda (Canada 2030 Agenda, 2019). In June 2019, Canada released an interim document, *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy*. The interim document recognizes that every segment of society should be able to contribute to the advancement of the SDGs. The document highlights the importance of working across levels of government and communities to create an environment that fosters SDG ownership and collaboration (Government of Canada, 2019c). The Together Alberta project has been, and will continue to be, an important part of this effort to ensure local ownership and collaboration continues, and that citizens and communities are empowered to contribute to actions that ensure no one is left behind.

Together Alberta: Mapping the Sustainable Development Goals in Alberta

Together Alberta: Mapping the Sustainable Development Goals (Together Alberta) is a public engagement initiative conducted by ACGC to bring together Albertans who are contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), help them communicate their efforts, and drive further action.

The Together Alberta project is composed of three unique elements:

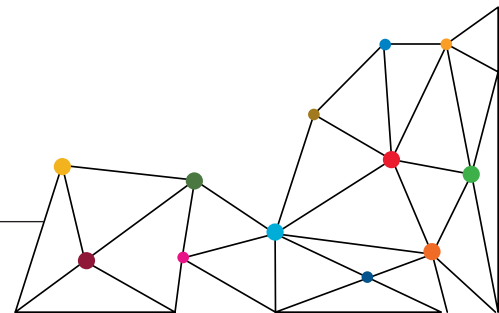
1. Community roundtables across Alberta - January to June 2019
2. [Together Alberta: In Profile - Video series launched April 2019](#)
3. [Together Alberta Online Map - Online portal launched September 2019](#)

The project began with community roundtable discussions across the province between January and June 2019 so that ACGC could better understand the ecosystem of organizations already working on the SDGs in Alberta. The roundtables were attended by 265 participants representing 190 organizations from a variety of sectors, including Civil Society (Non-profits), Academia/Post-Secondary, Education (Early Childhood to Grade 12), Government, Public Agency and Private Sector (See Table 1). Specifically, community roundtables were hosted in Banff, Canmore, Camrose, Calgary, Cochrane, Drumheller, Edmonton, Edson, Grande Prairie, Hinton, Lethbridge, Llyodminster, Medicine Hat, Morley, Milk River, Peace River, Red Deer, Rocky Mountain House, and Westlock.

TABLE 1

Sector	Number of Participants
Civil Society	85
Government	42
Academia/Post-Secondary	39
Private Sector	37
Public Agency	10
Education (Early Childhood - Grade 12)	07
Other*	45

* "Other" includes sectors/organizations such as, but not limited to, churches, rotary clubs, private citizens, radio/news, museums, and tourism.





Recording of Results

During the roundtables, participants had the opportunity to learn about the Sustainable Development Goals, discuss organizational alignment to the 17 goals, and identify challenges to localizing the 2030 Agenda. A high-level summary of key findings from the Together Alberta roundtables is presented in the **Key Findings** section of this report. Smaller scale findings from within individual communities are highlighted in 18 individual community reports found on the [Together Alberta website](https://together.alberta.ca/) (together.acgc.ca). It is important to note that findings presented are a starting point, rather than a conclusion, in building understanding of the concerns and recommendations Albertans have towards achieving the SDGs. The information collected at the roundtables was also submitted to the Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development Ministry to inform the draft 2030 Agenda National Strategy. This submission gave Albertans across the province voice into this key national initiative.

Organizations that participated in the community roundtables are featured in the [Together Alberta online map](#), which allows the public to see the work local organizations are already doing to achieve the SDGs at home and abroad. Mapping also allows groups to see that they are not alone (and are in fact part of a movement) and provides a tool for groups to connect around shared goals. This map will continue to be updated with stories of Albertan organizations and individuals contributing to the SDGs.

Not only did the dialogues provide a unique opportunity for community members to discuss their role in contributing to the SDGs, but they also brought to light stories of everyday Albertans doing extraordinary things to enhance the well-being of their communities. A few of these stories were captured in the [Together Alberta in Profile video series](#), which can be found on the Together Alberta website or the [ACGC YouTube channel](#). These videos were watched 112,225 times online from their release until publication of this report. Across social platforms, the Together Alberta project reached 120,087 people overall and made 232,536 impressions as it inspired other Albertans to take action.

ACGC will continue to build upon the Together Alberta project by promoting multi-sectoral engagement and catalyzing the localization of the SDGs in Alberta by convening stakeholders, sharing stories of change, and advocating for action at all levels.

About the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A New Path Towards Sustainable Change

In September 2015, heads of state and government and high representatives agreed to set the world on a path towards sustainable development through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda has as its centerpiece a universal, indivisible set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with quantitative targets across the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development—all to be achieved by 2030 (SDSN, 2015). The SDGs recognize that ending poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to protect and preserve the environment. At the core of the agenda is one overarching principle: ensure no one is left behind (Government of Canada, 2018).

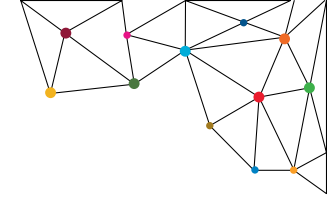
Building on the Legacy of the Millennium Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals build upon the success of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a global campaign from 2000 to 2015 that included a set of eight measurable goals ranging from halving extreme poverty and hunger to promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality and ensuring environmental sustainability. However, unlike the MDGs, which primarily applied to developing countries, the SDGs are considerably more comprehensive and ambitious, and apply universally to all UN member states, including Canada.



SDG Targets and Indicators

In order to monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs, 169 targets were established, and an initial set of 232 indicators was adopted by the UN in July 2017 (UN Statistics Division: 2019b). While indicators are continuously refined at the global level, each member country is encouraged to localize the indicators and data collection. Furthermore, establishing mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing SDG progress is critical to the effective benchmarking and assessment of progress toward each goal. It has been recognized that “a robust follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a solid framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability of all stakeholders” (UN Statistics Division, 2019a).



Ultimately, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global development framework of unprecedented scope and ambition, applicable to all countries, goes well beyond the MDGs, and presents an opportunity to bring together the development efforts of different sectors under a single agenda (WHO, 2015). The successful achievement of this agenda comprised of 17 SDGs and 169 targets is dependent on the national, regional and local efforts across all sectors of society, and the understanding of the importance of cross-sectoral work and the interrelatedness of goals and targets by all stakeholders.

Canada's Commitment to the SDGs

The Government of Canada stated, "Canada embraces the universality of the 2030 Agenda and is committed to supporting the implementation of the SDGs in Canada and internationally. Working with its partners, Canada is striving to end poverty and inequality, build prosperous and peaceful societies and protect the planet" (2018).

Canada's implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a work in progress and not without its challenges. In Spring 2018, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released an audit previously announced in Fall 2017. The audit, *Report 2—Canada's Preparedness to Implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals*, focused on whether the Government of Canada was prepared to implement the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2018). The audit found that the Government of Canada had not yet developed a formal approach to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and despite some specific action at the departmental level, there was still no federal governance structure based on clearly articulated departmental roles and responsibilities (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2018).

After the announcement of the coming audit in Fall 2017, Canada moved to quickly to take action and to align its work across government departments. In the Government of Canada budget presented February 27th, 2018, a new \$49.4 million was set aside to establish the Sustainable Development Goals Unit and to fund monitoring and reporting activities by Statistics Canada until 2030. Next, in July 2018, Canada submitted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs, a report aimed to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2019b). Canada's VNR states, "the Government of Canada's policies, programs and priorities are already well-aligned to the SDGs. Canada's 2018 federal budget allocated new funds to establish an SDG Unit to ensure effective 2030 Agenda coordination across federal departments and agencies and with Canadian stakeholders, and to track Canada's progress on the SDGs" (Global Affairs Canada, 2018). Canada's VNR demonstrates the Government of Canada's commitment to the implementation of all 17 SDGs and the principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda, including "leaving no one behind."

Globally, Canada performs relatively well on the SDGs, ranking 20th out of 162 countries in terms of sustainable development based on the 2019 SDG Index published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) (SDSN, 2019). Nationally, as noted above, Canada's policies, programs and priorities are already well-aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Commitments include: establishing the SDG Unit within Employment and Social Development Canada to act as a focal point for the Government of Canada; funding monitoring and reporting by Statistics Canada; and

administering an SDG funding program to support the implementation of the SDGs. There are also a number of additional policies, programs and priorities that go beyond those announced in the 2018 Budget, including, but not limited to:

- The establishment of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy that supports the main principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is to ensure that no one is left behind in the achievement of the SDGs.
- The publication of a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS), which was first published in 2010. The fourth FSDS was recently tabled by the Government of Canada in 2019, *A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada: 2019 to 2022*. The FSDS is Canada's primary vehicle for sustainable development planning and reporting. It sets out Canada's sustainable development priorities, establishes goals and targets, and identifies actions to achieve them (Government of Canada, 2019a).
- Support of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, investments in clean economic growth, and investments in international climate finance. Through these commitments, Canada contributes to **SDG 7** (Affordable and Clean Energy), **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities), **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production) and **SDG 13** (Climate Action).
- The development of departmental strategies for sustainable development. For example, Infrastructure Canada's *2017-2020 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy* integrates a 'Climate Lens' as part of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The Climate Lens requires assessments of GHG emissions and/or climate resilience in future funded projects. It will play an important role in encouraging applicants to consider and document how infrastructure assets contribute to, and are impacted by, climate change (Infrastructure Canada, 2019).

In June 2019, Canada released *Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy*, an interim document prepared by the SDG Unit and informed by a nation-wide consultation. This document is Canada's first step to developing its final Agenda 2030 National Strategy. It proposes 30 concrete federal actions, including supporting a national SDG Forum to allow for greater stakeholder collaboration, establishing an external advisory committee to help advise on Canada's implementation of the 2030 Agenda, reporting regularly, and submitting a second Voluntary National Review to the United Nations (Government of Canada, 2019b). This interim strategy highlights the various actors involved and the partnerships, innovation, and investment required to achieve the SDGs. It also establishes the foundation for developing a Canadian Indicator Framework that can accurately report on progress made with the SDGs within Canada. Although further engagement is necessary to move this interim document toward a national SDG strategy that reflects a whole-of-society approach, the document demonstrates Canada's commitment to achieving the SDGs (Government of Canada, 2019c).

Going Forward

Despite an overall high standard of social and economic development in Canada, millions of Canadians still struggle to satisfy their basic needs. Indigenous peoples, women, youth, elderly, the LGBTQ2S+

community, newcomers to Canada, and persons living with disabilities are more likely to face poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion. Canada is responding to these challenges through concrete actions to reduce poverty, advance gender equality and empower women and girls, narrow socio-economic gaps, foster inclusion, celebrate diversity, and improve equal opportunity for all (Sustainable Development Goals Platform, 2019c).

In order to bring together all segments of society around the SDGs, Canada needs to strengthen efforts to include marginalized voices in the development of the national strategy. An inclusive approach to domestic implementation of the SDGs will need to span a cross-section of Canadian society in order to truly 'leave no one behind'. Also, recognizing local political commitments and priorities, local-level differences and limited local capacities will be conducive to Canada's success.

Localizing the SDGs

Improving Intergovernmental Coordination

If the UN is to help countries ensure that no one is left behind, robust models of engagement with local communities and civil society are required (UNDP, 2016). A bottleneck often identified with the MDGs was the weak management and coordination capacity between national-to-national, local-to-local and national-to-local institutions. It is important to strengthen local governance mechanisms and capacities for planning, delivery and monitoring of the SDGs and to further promote multi-stakeholder engagement in order to avoid experiencing this bottleneck again (UNDP, 2016).

At the Together Alberta roundtables, this bottleneck was frequently mentioned during discussions of policies and initiatives that require intergovernmental collaboration (such as the SDGs). Participants often mentioned the Federal-Provincial-Municipal relationships in Canada and the seemingly conflicting and misaligned priorities, policies and programs of these levels of government. The SDGs have substantial influence on the agendas of governments at all levels, and on non-governmental organizations of all sizes. Governments, citizens, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector all have roles to play in contributing to sustainable development outcomes. Ultimately, increasing the capacity of local actors (such as communities and civil society organizations) and establishing a governance structure that includes lines of communication across all stakeholders and between all levels of government will be critical to the success of the SDGs.

Developing Local Integration

To sustain the SDGs beyond 2030, we need a coordinated effort moving from internationally-driven development projects to locally- and regionally-driven operations: To sustain the SDGs beyond 2030, we need a coordinated effort moving from internationally-driven development projects to locally- and regionally-driven operations: undertaking a more integrated approach will help build cross-government coherence and ultimately contribute to the implementation of the SDGs (Patole, 2018). To develop innovative approaches, it is vital to promote multi-stakeholder engagement at the local level. Investments and policies made by national governments to implement the SDGs are more likely to yield positive results if they are complemented by innovative solutions that are locally-led, designed, and implemented. It is through the process of localization that local-level stakeholders become engaged and their responses considered in the implementation of the SDGs. It is widely recognized

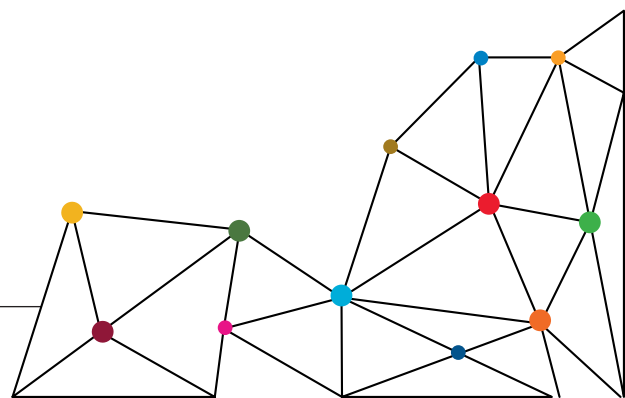
that successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda requires national, regional and local efforts across all sectors of society (Nunes, Lee and O’Riordan, 2016).

The process of engaging local-level stakeholders during the implementation of the SDGs has been coined “localizing the SDGs.” This process “relates both to how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up and to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy” (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2016).

Local and regional governments and organizations have a crucial role to play in achieving the SDGs and targets, despite the fact that the 2030 Agenda was not designed specifically for, or by, subnational governments or organizations. Most underlying policies and investments are a shared responsibility across levels of government. It is estimated that 65% of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments (OECD, 2019).

Independent monitoring and accountability to ensure SDG targets are met will also be critical to the success of the SDGs. Accountability needs to be strengthened at all levels, not just nationally (Kumar, Kumar and Vivekadhish, 2016). Approximately 23% of all SDG indicators have a measurable local component, indicating the important role local governments will play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the localization of the SDGs (UN Habitat, 2016). In Canada’s *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy* interim document, it is noted that “actors at the sub-national level can turn the broad 2030 Agenda into practical actions that have real, immediate impacts on communities and individuals” (Government of Canada, 2019c). One of the proposed actions noted in the interim document is to “support sub-national reporting to highlight new and existing actions locally that are making progress on the SDGs” (Government of Canada, 2019c). Sub-national reporting is “crucial for providing context to citizens and municipal decision makers” and “enables all Canadians to compare their local living standards and rates of progress to those in similar communities, and in turn, promote collaboration and peer learning across regions” (Government of Canada, 2019c).

Local and regional governments and their associations at the national, regional and international levels are championing the localization movement globally (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2018). As we established through the Together Alberta project, in Alberta, this is also the case. Local and regional governments, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and individual citizens are quickly taking the lead on the implementation of the SDGs. Continuing to understand the local ecosystems of organizations working on the SDGs and providing support for their initiatives will be a critical component of achieving results within Canada.



Alberta and the SDGs

Although the Government of Alberta has not publicly adopted or endorsed the SDGs as a framework to improve sustainable development in the province, it has adapted sustainable development commitments. Climate change policies and commitments developed over the years aim to increase renewable energy capacity, reduce methane emissions, and cap oil sands emissions. As well, the Ministry of Environment and Parks “supports environmental conservation and protection, sustainable economic prosperity, quality of life and outdoor recreation opportunities” and Alberta Energy has funding programs in place that support further development of enhanced oil and gas recovery technologies and emission reduction efforts (Government of Alberta, 2019). There are also organizations that work closely with the Government of Alberta on environmental sustainability efforts, such as Alberta Innovates, the lead agency for advancing energy and environmental technology innovation in Alberta, and Emissions Reduction Alberta, an organization with a mandate to accelerate the development of technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and secure Alberta’s success in a lower carbon economy.

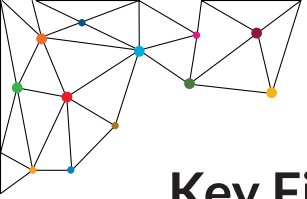
However, the SDGs are cross-cutting and are considered a system of interrelated dependencies. Beyond the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the SDGs include social and economic dimensions as well. In Alberta, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is one example of a government organization which demonstrates the cross-cutting nature of sustainable development. The ministry advances economic development strategies, policies, and programs that foster sustainable growth, encourages industry diversification, supports small and medium-sized enterprises, enhances market access, and leverages science and technology to provide economic, environmental and social benefits for all Albertans (Government of Alberta, 2018).

Despite a lack of public endorsement, the implementation of the SDGs in Alberta has still been moving forward. Stakeholders from a variety of sectors lead the way with both initiatives specific to the SDGs and general sustainability initiatives. The following, while not an exhaustive list, is a snapshot of the variety of stakeholders encountered through the Together Alberta project who are localizing the SDGs and sustainable development initiatives in Alberta:

- TransAlta, a private sector energy company, has aligned its sustainability goals and targets to support the long-term success of its business with the SDGs (TransAlta Corporation, 2018).
- Economic Developers Alberta (EDA), the leading economic development network in Alberta, promotes sustainable development in Alberta with a vision to “provide valued expertise that is integral to fostering an economically prosperous, diverse, sustainable Alberta” (Economic Developers Alberta, 2019). EDA has received an SDG Leadership Award in 2018 for its Economic Recovery and Resiliency Program (UN Global Compact, 2018).
- Change for Children Association, an international development charity based in Edmonton, has been building civil society capacity in Canada and the Global South for 42 years to promote health, human rights, and solutions to poverty through sustainable development. Change for Children operates with the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of all projects.

- Nutrien, a producer and distributor of potash, nitrogen and phosphate products for agricultural, industrial and feed customers worldwide, is focused on helping agriculture growers increase crop yields in an environmentally responsible manner, and works to improve sustainable agriculture practices globally in order to make a meaningful contribution to the SDGs and sustainable development (Nutrien, 2018).
- In Grande Prairie, the Salvation Army of Northern Alberta works to reduce inequalities (SDG 10) through its focus on promoting the dignity and inclusion of all people. Part of the organization's efforts includes the operation of the local food bank to directly address SDG 2 (No Hunger).
- The University of Alberta's *Building a Sustainable Future* campus sustainability initiative is in partnership with the Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. The initiative is guided by the University's sustainability plan focusing on leadership, education and research, operations and infrastructure, community and culture and health and wellbeing (United Nations, 2019d).
- Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo) is one of Canada's largest institutional investment managers with more than \$100 billion of assets under management (AIMCo, 2019). AIMCo uses the SDGs to guide investments and understand how companies are addressing climate change, human rights in supply chains, and gender equity on boards (AIMCo 2018).
- Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) is a Canadian charity and licensed engineering firm which acts as a centre of expertise in water and sanitation and provides technical training and consulting in the global south. CAWST addresses the global need for safe drinking water and sanitation (SDG 6) by building local knowledge on household solutions people can implement themselves.

The Together Alberta project was able to facilitate the opportunity to bring together stakeholders working on the localization of the SDGs in Alberta as well as stakeholders interested in getting involved. While each community visited had unique concerns (a diversity of priorities was noted between sectors and organizations), over the course of the project, a number of common concerns arose which will be critical to informing the national strategy and SDG localization efforts.



Key Findings from Together Alberta Roundtables

Community roundtables were hosted in 8 urban and 10 rural communities, with a total of 265 participants representing 190 organizations. Key findings of these rich community cross-sectoral roundtable dialogues and recommendations to spur achievement of the goals are summarized below.

1. More public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals is needed

Participants indicated there is a major lack of general public awareness about the SDGs. Increasing awareness should become a priority of government and other actors working on the SDGs until the vast majority of Canadians are aware of them and see them as a significant priority in national discussions. The fact that the roundtables even drew attendees from small rural communities speaks to the fact that there is a desire to connect local priorities to national and international agendas. Eighty-five percent of participants indicated they increased their understanding of the SDGs and their interest in sustainability as a result of participating in the dialogues.

Participants of the roundtables were hopeful that the 2030 Agenda can make a difference. The agenda was seen as a blueprint that can be applied to cities and organizations, and a framework which represents intersectionality between social, economic and environmental factors. Building awareness and understanding of the goals across sectors and age groups will be critical in order to enable more informed contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

2. Alberta-based organizations are addressing the SDGs

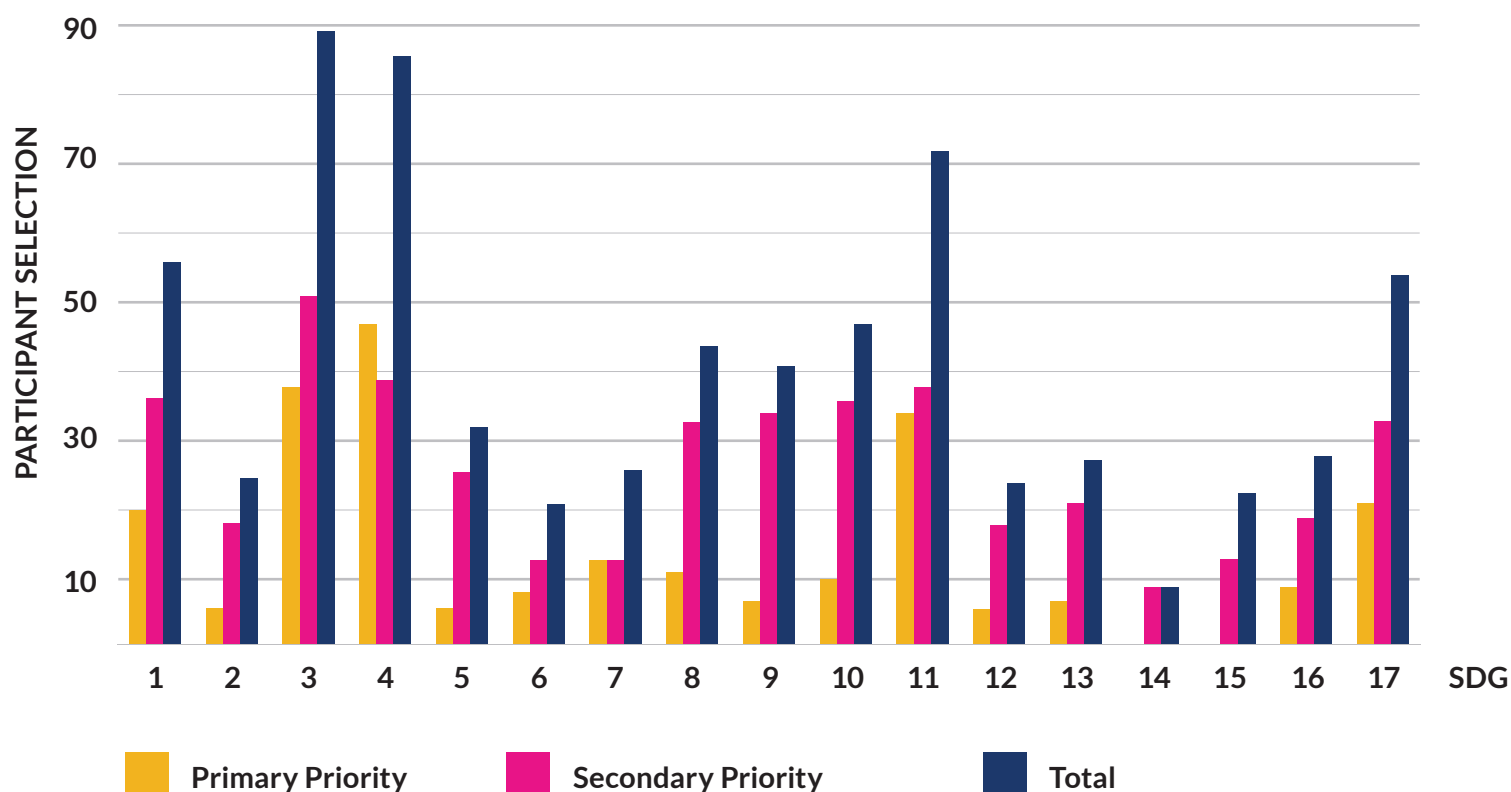
While awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals was low, participants of the roundtables were quickly able to identify their own organizational priorities within the SDG framework. Participants found the SDGs to be a practical framework that can help their organizations increase their sustainable practices and considered the SDGs a valuable tool to communicate to the public about their work. Participants spent time discussing their own organizational mission and how it fits within the SDGs and targets. Each participant was then asked to indicate three SDGs which best align with their organizational mandate by choosing one primary and two secondary SDG priorities.

The SDGs that were selected as being most in alignment with organizational priorities include:

1. **SDG 4 (Quality Education) (18%)**
2. **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) (14%)**
3. **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (13%)**

The SDGs that were selected as secondary organizational priorities include:

1. **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) (19%)**
2. **SDG 4 (Quality Education) (15%)**
3. **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (14%)**
4. **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (14%)**
5. **SDG 1 (No Poverty) (14%)**
6. **SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) (13%)**



It is important to note that the top results were most likely driven by the large number of respondents representing agencies that focus on health and social services. Furthermore, representatives from social service and community organizations were more likely to prioritize **SDG 1** (No Poverty) and **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequalities), while representatives of government and private sector were more likely to prioritize **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and **SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

All of the SDGs were selected at least once as a secondary SDG, exemplifying the variability of organizational priorities within Alberta. Priorities are most likely even more variable at the national-level, especially when considering inter-provincial differences as well as inter-community and inter-municipal differences.

Not surprisingly, **SDG 14** (Life Below Water) was the least prioritized SDG, given that much of **SDG 14** focuses on oceans and seas, which may not have been seen as relevant to landlocked Alberta by respondents. Furthermore, while **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the Goals) did not make the top 3 primary priorities, or top 6 secondary priorities, it ranked 5th overall, showing Albertans prioritize working together to achieve the SDGs.

Overall, it is clear from these findings that the priority areas across and within communities, sectors, organizations vary greatly. This variability further demonstrates why it is important to take a cross-sectoral, local approach when implementing the SDGs: we must consider local contexts and needs. To add, although the Government of Canada is responsible for implementing the SDGs at the national level, it is also important to ensure there is a diverse representation of stakeholders across Canada involved in the development of the National Strategy and collaborating on innovative approaches to advance progress on the SDGs in Canada (Government of Canada, 2019c).

3. Albertans must shift their own individual and organizational practices in order to achieve SDGs

Areas where Canada underperforms—**SDG 13** (Climate Action) and **SDG 12** (Reduced Consumption and Production)—were not often selected as aligning to primary organizational priorities during the roundtables (SDSN, n.d.-b). It is important to note, however, that this does not mean Albertans as individuals are not concerned about those areas, but rather, there may be fewer organizations with the mandate to directly address those issues.

Participants noted that traditional financial practices are not conducive to contributing to the achievement of all the SDGs. Participants also discussed how different environmental and social assets have been undervalued in favour of economic growth. Furthermore, individual consumer options and behaviours must shift to reduce the environmental and social impacts of consumption choices.

Discussions highlighted that this barrier can be addressed by showcasing producers and suppliers who demonstrate leadership in the environmental and social impacts of their work. Awareness campaigns targeting increased intentional consumption habits should be led at the national level, participants agreed. While there is a desire amongst participants to make changes, it was noted that more examples of leadership and practical application of the SDGs are needed.

4. The needs of rural communities must be specifically addressed within the 2030 Agenda National Strategy

Medical and mental health resources were highlighted several times as needing further investment for rural communities to continue to thrive. In smaller communities, stigma surrounding accessing mental health resources or adult learning initiatives was mentioned as a major barrier limiting residents' participation. Multiple factors including stigma, lack of awareness, literacy levels, and unemployment were mentioned as having potentially compounding negative effects which may prevent successful participation in these initiatives. To address rural challenges, several interesting strategies were proposed. One proposal was to review the formulas which determine the equitable distribution of health resources and ensure these formulas balance both population density and distances to services. Another proposal was to hire regional representatives to act as liaisons between rural communities and support municipal resource sharing.

In addition to rural challenges, differences between urban and rural perspectives of sustainability were noted by participants. For example, some agricultural ranching practices are healthy for supporting natural grassland habitats, but human development into natural areas can be seen as negative for environmental health from an external perspective. Creating policies that reduce grazing in these areas can be detrimental to both the land and the rural economy, even though this reduced human activity may be seen by some as positive.

Establishing a national strategy on the SDGs will be a challenge as each community's needs and capacities vary greatly. Targets developed across Canada are impractical as one community may already fall within the target, while other communities may find it fully unfeasible to achieve by 2030. However, in developing and setting targets, regional considerations and perspectives should be understood and prioritized over national perspectives, in order to ensure a more inclusive and effective 2030 Agenda National Strategy.

5. Governments must embed the SDGs in policies and practices at all levels

Participants frequently noted that a lack of government policy and resource continuity between elections can significantly negatively impact members of civil society whose mandates directly impact the SDGs. The potential for influence of changing policies on citizens, business and other government bodies is also quite significant through any electoral transition. Shifting government spending and strategic focus from different areas has the potential to undo significant work and progress against the goals.

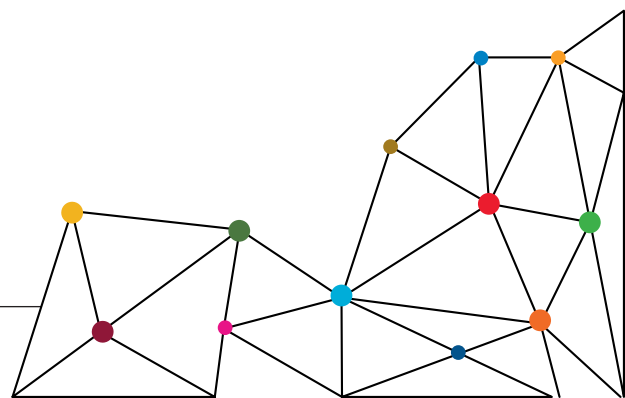
Long-term commitments are required across different levels and branches of government to ensure that the implementation of the SDGs are strongly within local and national policies. All government efforts on the SDGs should be established in such a way that they will remain entrenched until 2030, and continue to support the positive impacts of the SDGs. These efforts need to be coupled with the continual evaluation of the effectiveness of policy approaches towards achieving the goals and targets.

Conclusion

The work of the localization of the SDGs in Alberta has truly just begun. Since the launch of the Together Alberta project, ACGC has noted significant interest in the Sustainable Development Goals and increased momentum from organizations across a variety of sectors to align their work in a common vision towards the 2030 Agenda.

The establishment of funding mechanisms by the SDG Unit in late Spring 2019, aimed at supporting local organizations to increase awareness and action in local communities across Canada, is expected to play significant role in addressing some concerns outlined in the key findings of the project. Since the launch of the funding mechanism, ACGC has committed to building the capacity of Alberta organizations wishing to access this funding in order to champion the SDGs in their local communities. Furthermore, the connections established through the Together Alberta project have helped build a network of engaged and committed Albertans from a variety of backgrounds and sectors, ready and willing to share ideas and work together to ensure no one is left behind.

While the roundtables of Together Alberta project are completed, ACGC will continue to promote multi-sectoral engagement and catalyze the localization of the SDGs in Alberta through events and the dissemination of information to the ACGC's diverse network of organizations. Through the Together Alberta website, launched in September 2019, ACGC will play a role in engaging the public by sharing stories with concrete examples of the localization of the SDGs. By working together with the goals as a common vision, we are certain that Albertans will play a key role in helping Canada, and the world, achieve the 2030 Agenda.



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