

# ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

April 2017







This is a set of three strategic priorities with associated objectives and action plans intended to guide the organization for the coming 5 years. We hope it will inform, inspire and improve our work by helping us be more integrated across action areas, helping us focus on what's most important and what we are good at, and strengthening our ability to share EAC's story and successes.





## OUR STORY

### GOAL

To strengthen our communications through an emphasis on consistency and storytelling.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Have and use consistent and effective language to describe our work.
2. Incorporate storytelling into our work and culture.
3. Establish systems for documenting past and current work and making those documents easily available.

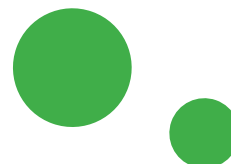
### ELEVATOR PITCH

The Ecology Action Centre is an environmental charity based in Nova Scotia. We take leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. We are grounded in community, and a strong voice and watchdog for our environment. We work to catalyze change through policy advocacy, community development and building awareness. We take a holistic approach to the environment and our economy to create a just and sustainable society.



### WHO

The "Our Story Action Plan" will be implemented by the Strategic Communications Manager, Managing Director and Community Giving Coordinator with oversight from the Communications Committee.





## FOCUS

### GOAL

To make more intentional decisions about how and what we work on, in order to build on our strengths and maximize our effectiveness.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To effectively integrate the cross-cutting themes – **biodiversity protection, climate change and environmental justice** – into our work.
2. To improve resource allocation through the use of systems and tools.
3. To improve organization-wide understanding of the strategies and tactics we use to make change.

### WHAT

We have envisioned a number of tools to help us build our focus as an organization. The existing tools are:

- **Focus Checklist:** a decision-making guide for staff and volunteers when exploring opportunities to take on or expand a project or campaign.
- **Tactics Chart:** the change strategies - **policy advocacy, building awareness and community development** - and sub-tactics we use to effect change

The tools in progress are:

- **Cross-cutting Theme Primers:** backgrounders for staff and volunteers on each of the three cross-cutting themes
- **Lens Tool:** a framework with a series of questions to encourage greater focus and integration related to three cross-cutting themes
  - **Tactics Bullseye:** the next phase of the Tactics Chart, which organizes the tactics to help clarify where our strengths lie in terms of the strategies we choose to make change.

### WHO

The "Focus Action Plan" outlines the particular roles and responsibilities for this work; the Managing Director is responsible for overseeing its overall implementation.







## EVALUATION

### GOAL

To create a stronger culture and practise of evaluation using a developmental evaluation approach.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that all employees and action area leaders are comfortable with and knowledgeable about traditional and developmental evaluation approaches
2. To incorporate a developmental evaluation approach into the work of each action area and the Centre's operations
3. To lay the groundwork for the creation of EAC-wide environmental goals

### WHO

The work of the "Evaluation Action Plan" will be overseen by the Managing and Policy Directors and undertaken by the (not-yet-formed) Evaluation Committee.





## STRATEGIC PLAN BACKGROUND

### EAC CONTEXT 1995-2016

**1995-2000:** Recovery from court case loss, rebuilding focus and committees

**2001-2006:** Growth in staff & issues / expertise and firm establishment of our collaborative ways of working using a diversity of tools

**2006-2011:** Fern Lane & radically changing the environment in which we work. Building public profile, maturing in processes and internal functioning of the organization

**2012-2016:** Rethinking how we engage, broadening our support base, and developing clarity of vision & integration of that vision in how we work. We also undertook a renovation of Fern Lane in 2015-16.

The **goal of the 2012-16 Strategic Plan** was to help EAC understand what it was doing well, what it could do better and to select a few areas of focus for the next 3-5 years. The process was not to overhaul the organization, but to improve upon what we were already doing, and help us mature as an organization, in both effectiveness and how we worked.

Based on considerable internal consultation and reflection it identified three focus areas: Committee Structure, Engagement & Ecosystem Thinking. In the intervening years, progress on all three areas was good. The committee structure was revamped to the present Action Area system, we hit a record number of members engaged and continued to prioritize integration across the organization.

### PROCESS FOR CREATING THIS PLAN

This is the third strategic plan in EAC's history.

In June 2016 we struck a small working group made up of two staff directors (Mark Butler and Maggy Burns) and 2 executive members (Grant MacDonald and Hudson Shotwell) to set the broad direction for our next strategic plan. One outcome of those discussions was the following objective: *Develop a practical and cohesive description of how we work, what we're good at and what we will focus on so it can inform and improve our work and provide inspiration.*

The first meeting of the full strategic planning group was held in September 2016. This group included employees (Susanna Fuller, Carla Vandenberg, Mark Butler, Marla MacLeod, Joanna Bull, Ryan O'Quinn, Maggy Burns, Aimee Gasparetto), Board members (Sheila Stevenson, Hudson Shotwell, Grant MacDonald) and volunteer (Jenna MacLeod).

This group developed the plan taking input from a number of sources: the Nov 2016 board meeting, Nov 2016 chairs meeting, Dec 2016 staff meeting, and the Environmental Justice Working Group (ongoing). The draft plan was presented at the EAC annual retreat in January 2017. Feedback from that gathering was incorporated into the final draft.

Throughout the process with explored different themes with staff and board. The following are the results from the Dec 2016 Staff meeting, in which we took a temperature gauge around tactics (keep the status quo vs. develop key strategies), geography (status quo vs. redouble our efforts in NS), and issues (status quo vs. developing decision making tools). The votes were as follows:

- 1. (Status Quo) -1
- 2. - 4
- 3. - 20
- 4. (Key Strategies) -2

- 1. (Status Quo) -1
- 2. -24
- 3. -2
- 4. (Redouble) - 0

- 1. (Status quo) - 0
- 2. - 8
- 3. - 14
- 4. (Decision-making tools) - 3

Ultimately, this helped lead to the development of a more focused plan and of the decision to develop specific tools – like the lens tool – to help support decision-making. It also helped us gain clarity around the discussion of geography – why we work where we work. We clarified that while all of our work is rooted in Nova Scotia, we work at the scale that is needed to make the necessary change.

The action plans for each of the three strategic priorities in this plan can be found in S:\Strategic Planning\2016-17\Action Plans.