

Sustainable Development Goals
Toolkit for Members





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Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a “blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.”¹ At the heart of this agenda are 17 interconnected sustainable development goals (SDGs) that serve as an urgent call to action for all countries to end poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle climate change by 2030.

Universities and other higher education institutions play a critical role in helping society achieve the SDGs through research, teaching and learning, partnerships and campus operations. Across the country, Canadian universities are responding to this challenge and advancing the SDGs both at their institutions and in collaboration with local, national and international partners.

The objective of this toolkit is to collect information and links on existing frameworks, networks, and tools to provide a repository of relevant resources related to the university sector and its engagement with the SDGs. The information contained herein is not exhaustive and instead provides an illustrative list of targeted resources and initiatives designed to support Universities Canada members looking to launch or deepen their efforts to advance the SDGs.

¹ The 17 Goals, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Charters, Principles and Accords



Below is a sampling of Canadian and international principles, charters, accords and other frameworks that may be helpful to universities as they outline their commitments and approaches to advancing the SDGs.

- **Universities Canada's social impact principles**

In October 2021, Universities Canada's 96 member universities unanimously adopted a set of eight social impact principles that highlight their commitment to improving and enriching the lives of Canadians and the critical role they play in tackling global and local challenges and building a more sustainable and equitable future.

For more information:

<https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/universities-canadas-social-impact-principles/>

- **Investing to Address Climate Change: A Charter for Canadian Universities**

Launched in June 2020, signatories pledge to abide by a set of four principles and practices designed to leverage their investments to address climate change and encourage other universities to do the same. As of February 2022, 17 Universities Canada members have signed onto the charter.

For more information:

<https://climatecharter.utoronto.ca/>

- **Joint Statement of Global University Leaders on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The joint statement was released by university leaders across the globe at the March 24, 2021 Virtual Forum on the Role of Universities in the 2030 Agenda. The statement was signed by 61 university presidents from around the world, including four Universities Canada members, seeking to reaffirm their commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

For more information:

https://www.zju.edu.cn/english/joint_statement/list.htm



- **Declaration on University Global Engagement**

A joint effort of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Association of Public & Land-grant Universities, the declaration was launched in 2017. Signatories reaffirm their universities' commitment to global engagement in pursuit of progress towards the SDGs and commit to educating students who can successfully live and work in our globally connected world and change it for the better. In 2021, there were 99 signatories, including three Universities Canada members.

For more information:

<https://globallyengageduniversities.org/>

- **SDG Accord**

The SDG accord was drafted by the Alliance for sustainability leadership in education and Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability for the purpose of celebrating and advancing the critical role that education has in delivering the SDGs and to serve as a commitment by learning institutions to deliver on the goals.

There are four levels of signatories ranging from university leaders to individual faculty, staff and students. Canadian university participation is concentrated at the leaders of support organizations and individual level.

For more information:

<https://www.sdgaccord.org/>

- **United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)**

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations supported initiative founded in 2007. Working through Six Principles, PRME engages business and management schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals, while drawing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact.

PRME has over 800 signatories worldwide, which includes the business schools of 27 of Universities Canada's member institutions.

For more information:

<https://www.unprme.org/about>

- **Principles for Responsible Investing (PRI)**

The PRI is an organization dedicated to responsible investing, which it defines as a strategy and practice to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors in investment decisions and active ownership. To do so, its Six Principles were developed by investors and supported by the United Nations. As of 2021, it has more than 4,000 signatories from over 60 countries representing over US\$120 trillion of assets.

Over a dozen Universities Canada members participate in PRI.

For more information:

<https://www.unpri.org/>



- **Talloires Declaration**

Composed in 1990 at an international conference in Talloires, France, the Talloires Declaration (TD) is the first official statement made by university presidents, chancellors, and rectors of a commitment to environmental sustainability in higher education. The TD is a ten-point action plan for incorporating sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, research, operations and outreach at colleges and universities.

It has been signed by over 500 university leaders in over 50 countries. As of 2021, 36 Universities Canada members have signed the Declaration.

For more information:

<http://ulsf.org/>

- **Race to Zero Campaign**

Race To Zero is a global campaign which was launched in lead up to COP26 to rally leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions and investors for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth.

As of January 2022, 27 Universities Canada members have signed onto the campaign.

For more info:

<https://www.educationracetozero.org/home>

- **Montréal Carbon Pledge**

Launched in 2014, the Montréal Carbon Pledge is a commitment by investors to measure and publicly disclose the carbon footprint of their investment portfolios on an annual basis.

The Pledge is supported by the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI). Overseen by the PRI, it aimed to attract commitment from portfolios totalling US\$3 trillion in time for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in December 2015 in Paris. As of January 2022, two Universities Canada members have signed the Pledge.

For information:

<https://www.unpri.org/montreal-pledge/>



SDG-focused networks and coalitions



Across the globe, networks and coalitions are being formed to enable organizations to learn from each other and combine their efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda. Below are examples of Canadian or post-secondary education-focused networks.

• **Universities Canada's SDG leads network**

Universities Canada facilitates a network of those responsible for leading efforts to advance the SDGs at its member institutions. In addition to regular information-sharing, Universities Canada convenes the leads network regularly for virtual events on issues related to the SDGs.

For more information or to request to join the SDG leads network, please contact: Maggie Rodrigues, Government relations officer, mrodrigues@univcan.ca

• **SDSN Canada**

SDSN Canada is part of a global SDSN movement to build a network of universities, colleges, and knowledge institutions to advance progress and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

For information:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/sustainable-development-solutions-network-canada/>

• **Alliance 2030**

Alliance 2030 is a Canadian network of organizations, institutions, and individuals committed to achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. It is building a searchable database of all the work being done across the country in alignment with the SDGs, amplified by a blog and podcast series.

For more information:

<https://alliance2030.ca/about/>



- **Accélérer 2030 pour le Québec**

Accélérer 2030 pour le Québec is a consortium composed of citizens and organizations that are committed to the vision of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a guide to Québec's prosperity. It seeks to meet the 17 SDGs in Québec by 2030 through innovative and efficient multistakeholder partnerships between all sectors.

For more information:

<https://accelerer2030.quebec/>

- **British Columbia Council for International Cooperation**

The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) is a network that engages in sustainable development and social justice issues. Its membership is made up of individuals, international development organizations and civil society organizations in British Columbia, Canada.

For more information:

<https://www.bccic.ca/who-we-are/>

- **Global Compact Network Canada (GCNC)**

Launched in June 2013 as the Canadian chapter of the UN Global Compact, GCNC advances the 10 Principles of the UN Global Compact and the implementation of the 17 SDGs. In addition, it builds the capacity of the Canadian private sector to embrace sustainable business practices. Though the GCNC is focused on the private sector, academic institutions are eligible to join.

For more information:

<https://globalcompact.ca/>

- **University Climate Change Coalition (UC3)**

UC3 is an international coalition of research universities committed to climate action and cross-sector collaboration on campus, in communities, and at a global scale. As of January 2022, it has 23 members, including four members of Universities Canada.

For more information:

<https://secondnature.org/initiative/uc3-coalition/>



- **University Global Coalition**

Inspired by the Declaration on University Global Engagement, a group of university presidents from across the globe met with representatives of UNITAR and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) in 2019 to create the University Global Coalition.

The objective is to form a global platform of universities and other higher education organizations committed to working together and in partnership with the United Nations (through UNITAR), SDSN, and other relevant organizations, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. As of January 2022, it has 160 members, including seven University Canada members.

For more information:

<https://universityglobalcoalition.org/about/>

- **United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI)**

Created in 2010, UNAI is an initiative that aligns institutions of higher education with the United Nations in supporting and contributing to the realization of United Nations goals and mandates, including the promotion and protection of human rights, access to education, sustainability, and conflict resolution.

UNAI has over 1400 member institutions in more than 147 countries, including 25 Universities Canada members. These institutions advance the SDGs by serving as incubators of new ideas and solutions to the many global challenges we face.

For more information:

<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/page/about-unai>



Photo: Western University



Photo: Bishop's University



Measuring and Reporting on the SDGs



Below is a sampling of different approaches that universities across the country have adopted to measure progress and report on their SDG work.

• **The Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Assessment**

The THE Impact Rankings are global performance tables that assess universities against the SDGs. Participating universities are compared across four broad areas: research, stewardship, outreach and teaching.

The 2021 Impact Rankings is the third edition and included 1,118 universities from 94 countries/regions. In 2021, 15 Universities Canada members ranked among the top 100 universities in the world.

For more information:

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2021/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined

• **The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS)**

STARS is a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. Participating institutions can earn points towards a STARS Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum Rating, or earn the STARS Reporter designation.

In 2021, 51 Canadian universities were registered to use the STARS Reporting Tool, 40 of which had earned a STARS rating or Reporter designation.

For more information:

<https://stars.aashe.org/>



UI Green Metric World University Rankings (The Rankings)

Launched in 2010, The Rankings is an initiative of Universitas Indonesia. It was created following the April 2009 International Conference on World University Rankings, which had identified that, at the time, efforts to reduce carbon footprints and combat global climate change were not credited in existing world university ranking systems.

The Rankings provide participating universities with a numerical score to allow for easy comparisons. As of January 2022, 912 universities in 84 countries, including four Universities Canada members, participate in The Rankings.

For more information:

<https://greenmetric.ui.ac.id/about/welcome>

• Sierra Club Cool School Rankings

The Sierra Club releases an annual Cool School Ranking of participating universities. The ranking is open to four-year, degree-granting undergraduate colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, along with two-year community colleges. Scores are calculated using existing STARS scores and an additional survey on fossil fuels investments.

In 2021, 328 schools across the United States and Canada participated in the Cool School Rankings, including 18 Universities Canada members.

For more information:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/cool-schools-2021/cool-schools-2021-full-ranking>

• Voluntary University Review

As part of the 2030 Agenda, UN member states are encouraged to conduct regular reviews of their progress on the SDGs at the national and sub-national levels. Called voluntary national reviews (VNRs), these self-reports seek to share successes and challenges and provide data on their progress toward the SDGs.

The VNR approach is being adapted to the city level (called voluntary local reviews) and to the university level (called voluntary university reviews or VURs). While universities are not accountable like governments for the kinds of outcomes targeted by the SDGs, they are able to make significant contributions to their achievement. VURs can be helpful processes for plotting out how to maximize and align these contributions.

Examples of VURs include Carnegie Mellon University, Concordia University and UC Davis.



Annual progress reports

Many universities produce regular progress reports on their efforts to advance the SDGs. Below are a few examples of institutional progress reports:

- **Contribution de l'Université Laval aux 17 Objectifs de développement durables des Nations Unies (2019-2020)**
<https://www.ulaval.ca/sites/default/files/DD/PDF/ContributionULaval-ODD-2019-2020.pdf>
- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: A Snapshot of UBC Operations 2019/2020**
https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/UBC_SDG_Report_2019-20.pdf
- **University Sustainable Development Goals at the University of Toronto 2020**
<https://data.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT-conceptual-report.pdf>
- **York University UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021**
<https://www.yorku.ca/unsdgs/reports/>



Photo: University of Saskatchewan



University of Prince Edward Island



Resources and Toolkits



Below are a list of webpages, toolkits, and guides designed to support either Canadian organizations or the higher education sector as they work to advance the SDGs.

- **Canadian universities advancing the Sustainable Development Goals from Universities Canada**

This report provides an overview of the association's mapping efforts in 2020 to better understand the way universities are engaging with the SDGs and Agenda 2030, collect SDG and share promising practices.

- **Universities Canada's SDG webpage**

This dedicated webpage contains news items, resources, and other examples of how Canada's universities are working to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. It also features national-level data and a blog series in which university presidents share their thoughts on the role universities play in building a sustainable, inclusive future.

- **Moving Forward Together: Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy from the Government of Canada**

This website lays out the Government of Canada's national strategy and its approach to:

- accelerate progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Canada, and
- contribute to their achievement internationally.

- **Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals at Canadian Universities from the Canadian Bureau for International Education**

This report provides a snapshot of activities, initiatives and strategies adopted by institutions across the country.



- **Getting Started with the SDGs from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

This guide is a first and preliminary guide on how to “get started” with implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to help stakeholders, including governments at all levels (national, regional and local), to understand the SDG agenda, to start an inclusive dialogue on SDG implementation, and to prepare SDG-based national development strategies (or align existing plans and strategies with the goals).

- **Getting Started with the SDGs in Universities from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) – Australia/Pacific**

This guide outlines the key roles universities – and the higher education and academic sectors more generally – have in contributing to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the benefits of becoming engaged. It provides practical guidance on how to get started with deepening contributions.

- **Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities from Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

This guide aims to help universities, colleges, and tertiary and higher education institutions implement and mainstream this “Education for the SDGs” within their institutions. It updates and expands on the Education section of the widely referenced 2017 publication, *Getting Started with the SDGs in Universities*.



Photo: Mathieu Dupuis, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue



Photo: Martin Dee, The University of British Columbia



- **Mobilizing Youth for the Sustainable Development Goals from ReImagine17**

This interactive toolkit was created by youth, for youth, as a means of sharing student knowledge and amplifying national youth action on the SDGs. It is intended to be a guide and reference for post-secondary students looking to grow or start a Sustainable Development Goals Alliance (or similar initiative) on their campus.

- **Social Procurement: Amplify your purchasing dollars for a better world from Simon Fraser University, University of Northern British Columbia, BCIT, and Vancouver Island University**

This report is designed to help procurement professionals in post-secondary institutions drive positive social change through their procurement activities.

- **SDG Toolkit for Canadian Colleges and Institutes from Colleges and Institutes Canada**

The purpose of this inventory is to identify emerging practices in post-secondary settings across Canada that integrate the SDGs explicitly and to curate a selection of these into an Open Educational Resource (OER) toolkit and guide to the SDGs for Canadian colleges and institutes.

- **SDG Academy (SDSN)**

The SDG Academy is the flagship education platform of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a global initiative for the United Nations. It creates and curates free, open educational resources on sustainable development and offers them as a global public good.

- **Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda website of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Indigenous Peoples**

This webpage provides information on the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development of the SDGs and on how the needs of Indigenous Peoples are included within the 2030 Agenda.

- **The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute website**

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI) was created in 2000 by the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL). Its mission is to offer First Nations a dynamic service hub, supporting their actions towards maintaining healthy territories and resources, developing sustainable communities and promoting the recognition of their rights.



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- **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples in Canada report by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health**

This report provides a brief history of the SDGs and an overview of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It then assesses the current state of progress on the SDG targets for Indigenous peoples in Canada and suggests ways that the SDG agenda can be used to improve Indigenous peoples' socio-economic and health outcomes.

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- **A Guide for Advancing the SDGs in Your Community from the Tamarack Institute**

This guide outlines great ideas for advancing the SDGs locally, inspiring stories of communities that are leading the way, helpful resources, ways to get started, and more. It was written for leaders from across sectors including elected officials, staff within city or regional governments, community organizers, business leaders, and concerned citizens.

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- **The SDG Guidebook and Toolkit from the Community Foundations of Canada**

This package provides a detailed introduction to the SDGs in the context of community foundation engagement and philanthropy. It provides practical, real-life examples of SDG-based work in local community foundations, as well as ideas and steps for aligning current community foundation work with the SDGs.

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- **17 Rooms: A new approach to spurring action for the Sustainable Development Goals from the 17 rooms Secretariat and Brookings Institute.**

This report describes a new approach to stimulating cooperative action toward the Sustainable Development Goals. As an experimental method for SDG convening and problem-solving, 17 Rooms aims to surface practical next steps within each goal while also stimulating productive connections across all goals.



For more information or to request that your report, resource or tool be added to this toolkit, please contact Maggie Rodrigues, Government relations officer, mrodrigues@univcan.ca