

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District - Integrated Sustainability Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an Integrated Sustainability Plan?

An Integrated Sustainability Plan (ISP) consists of a vision, strategic plan and process for creating the future we want for the region twenty years from now – in 2032. It is a high-level policy document that is comprehensive, long-term, and will guide the SLRD's legislative, policy and planning decisions, as well as government operations. It will also guide how we do things with partners and stakeholders in areas beyond our area of jurisdiction.

It will be developed and implemented by the SLRD, in partnership with other regional stakeholders, using a transparent process to ensure accountability. The plan will:

1. **Provide guidance:** It will articulate a vision and priorities that outline what the SLRD would like to look like and be in the future. It will also define what our sustainability objectives are so we can create a successful region and do so in a way that aligns with the principles for a sustainable society.
2. **Ensure action:** Meaningful public participation and ultimately on-the-ground action toward the vision will be enabled by establishing concrete strategy areas, a description of success within each, and an ongoing action planning process.
3. **Measure progress:** A monitoring system will be developed to track our progress and performance in order to learn and improve.
4. **Ensure continuous engagement and progress:** The ongoing action planning process and decision-informing tools will ensure continuous staff participation and improvement, building on existing and new approaches.

2. What does integrated and comprehensive mean?

An integrated sustainability plan (ISP) is a big picture, holistic plan that provides guidance for the development or alignment of all regional or government plans, policies and decisions

moving forward (i.e., waste management plan, energy plans, purchasing policies, capital planning, etc.)

An ISP is one integrated decision-making framework applicable to all other regional plans. It is comprehensive because it provides guidance for all aspects of the region. An ISP is also comprehensive in that it has the potential to provide inspiration and guidance for non-municipal organizations, citizens or businesses, as these regional partners see fit.

3. Why do we need an Integrated Sustainability Plan?

Creating a plan for a more sustainable and successful region may be one of the most important initiatives we undertake. The creation of an inspirational vision and process for moving toward that shared vision is, in effect, a strategic plan for the region that addresses economic, social and environmental goals. An accompanying decision-making framework helps to align regional resources and decisions with the vision, ensuring progress toward the desired future.

Sustainability planning helps gain insight into long-term goals for success – the goals then shape and inform investment and infrastructure decisions, reducing potential costly short-term and dead-end blunders. Significant benefits accrue to regions and communities moving in the direction of long-term success. As an energizing and motivating conversation for the region, it can help to elevate potential deadlock issues, attract new residents and niche businesses, as well as retain and motivate talent. Local economies are prepared for the long-term impacts of climate change, shifting global priorities for goods and services, and rising energy prices. Government can save significant money over time through reduced energy and waste management costs.

4. Don't we already have other plans that provide guidance for us?

Yes, with other plans and policies already in place, the ISP development process isn't starting from scratch. This will allow for a streamlined development approach, guided by a Steering Committee comprised of SLRD staff and Board representatives. The result will be the community's highest level and most comprehensive plan.

Existing plans and policies, which have had due public, stakeholder and partner consultation, will be used as the foundation for elements of the ISP. The ISP will draw a little material from all of these plans to help inform each of the vision, priorities, strategies, actions and indicators. The ISP will take some of the highest level direction from our existing plans to identify synergies, and add more or different directions where the community identifies gaps or contradictory approaches.

5. How is the Integrated Sustainability Plan different from an environmental or 'green' plan?

The ISP will consider the social, economic and environmental aspects of the region in an integrated, comprehensive manner. An environmental plan focuses primarily on the environment.

The plan is based on the assumption that social, economic and environmental system are completely interconnected – and therefore economic success is dependent on achieving social and environmental objectives.

This integrated planning approach sets it apart from other traditional regional plans. Because issues are often complex and overlapping, they cannot be solved in isolation and are best addressed using a comprehensive, systems-based approach that addresses the root of the problem, rather than only the symptoms. For example, toxic effluent in rivers affects fish health (environmental), which affects people's health (social) and their financial prosperity (economic). All of these elements and their connections must be considered to arrive at desired outcomes.

6. Can we afford to think about sustainability and environmental issues? Should we not concentrate our efforts on more pressing economic challenges?

Again, the plan is based on the assumption that social, economic and environmental system are completely interconnected – and therefore economic success is dependent on achieving successful, healthy social and environmental systems – and vice versa.

Sustainability planning and actions is not about choosing between economic, environmental and social issues. Rather, it is about making smart decisions today to achieve all three in the future.

We cannot afford to lose sight of environmental or social issues. Our futures are intricately tied to the ability of natural systems to function. For example, the health and integrity of natural areas and agricultural land in the SLRD is as much an economic imperative as it is environmental since the regional economy is tied to tourism and agriculture – economic drivers that are dependent on natural systems for their success. The economy will be a central theme to the ISP, as this issue demonstrates.

7. What does the Natural Step have to do with the success of our region?

The Natural Step (TNS) framework provides a robust, fact- and systems-based definition of sustainability. It also provides an economically sound planning process to strategically move toward sustainability. Both of these components will be integrated into the SLRD ISP development and implementation process.

TNS guidance will help us to achieve results by providing a shared understanding of what is needed for sustainability and it acts as a ‘compass’. Alongside our vision and specific community priorities and budgets, it will help us to assess recommended actions to ensure that our limited resources are used more efficiently, enabling us to achieve progress toward success and sustainability for the region.

8. How will the Integrated Sustainability Plan make a difference on the ground?

How will we ensure action and real progress?

The ISP vision and priorities set direction for progress – and the action planning process and decision-making tools will help lead to on-the-ground progress. Additionally, the plan will influence other regional plans and their actions in time, and a monitoring program will measure and communicate progress.

9. How will the Integrated Sustainability Plan be unique and tailor-made for our region?

The ISP for the SLRD will be unique to our region because it will:

- Draw on our region's vision and what is important to us
- Include a vision for the future that has been informed by citizen feedback
- Be implemented through actions identified and prioritized with input from citizens

At the same time it might be similar to other communities because:

- We are using a proven planning process also used by other areas in BC
- Communities and regions such as ours will have similar indicators for measuring performance
- Despite our cultural differences, we share similarities with our neighbours and other BC communities
- We have similar economies to other BC regions
- We are governed by similar Federal/Provincial laws and legislation

10. Will the Integrated Sustainability Plan provide clear answers on all regional issues?

The ISP is not intended to provide specific answers on every issue, as this would be inflexible and would not stand the test of time. Instead, it provides guidance and direction for decision-making.

Specific issues and situations will be assessed and discussed using the ISP criteria, along with the best possible current information that is available to arrive at optimal decisions for the region.

The ISP will provide guidance to ensure constant progress toward our vision – in the most feasible manner given the region's changing economic reality. There may be some short-

term trade-offs. However, all steps and decisions must contribute to our ability to meet success and sustainability in the long term.

11. Can an Integrated Sustainability Plan truly guide regional decisions? How?

Decision-making tools and frameworks based on the ISP vision and objectives can be used to guide Board decisions, purchasing and project decisions, etc., by the regional government as well as by all community organizations and businesses. For example, strategic questions such as “Does this action move our community toward our shared description of success?” requires thinking and alignment of decisions to the region’s articulated vision.

12. Implementing the Integrated Sustainability Plan might take a lot of work. How does our community resource this?

The ISP will help us to use community-wide resources in a more coordinated and strategic way, to work toward our shared vision. It may also help community organizations prioritize actions to better use their internal resources.

Rather than requiring new resources, it requires alignment of existing budgets and resources to ensure that all are dedicated to moving toward a shared goal, rather than working inefficiently or at cross-purposes.

13. How does the Integrated Sustainability Plan relate to other regional plans and policies?

All existing corporate reports, policies, processes and programs (including the Regional Growth Strategy, Electoral Area OCPs and DPA guidelines, the draft Area C Agricultural Area Plan, the Energy Resilience Task Force report recommendations, Corporate Energy Audit) will be reviewed to determine existing goals, objectives and strategies related to sustainability. These will be used as inputs when creating the vision (description of success statements) within the ISP. These existing plans and policies, which have had due public,

stakeholder and partner consultation, will be used as the foundation for ISP elements and will allow streamlined development for the ISP.

14. What are the key benefits of the ISP approach?

The ISP approach:

1. Will align regional direction toward a **shared vision**, using shared language, and a shared approach to implementation.
2. Will be a **proactive**, comprehensive, and science-based approach to long-term planning, effectively supporting collective and informed decision-making at all scales.
3. Will improve **transparency and accountability** through decision-making tools with clear criteria, as well as robust monitoring and public reporting system.
4. Will be an action-oriented tool to help the regional district use limited resources more **strategically and efficiently**.
5. Will position the region well for ISP-linked **funding opportunities**, and potential regulatory changes.