



McGill

Office of
Sustainability

Bureau du
développement durable

REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABILITY

February 2022



DÉVELOPPEMENT
DURABLE
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INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder involvement and participation is crucial to creating a culture of sustainability within an organization. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the ways in which members of the McGill Community engage in sustainability.

Community engagement can be defined as “the process by which citizens are engaged to work and learn together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future”¹. In the context of this report, the community members are McGill students, staff, and faculty. Additionally, the report is focused specifically on community engagement efforts around the theme of sustainability.

While the report will highlight key community engagement endeavors in sustainability, it is impossible to provide a complete list of the activities and projects that members are participating, working on, and accomplishing across our campuses. The content selected was deemed to be the most fundamental to community engagement at McGill.



Former student Matthew McCormick speaking with a customer at the McGill Farmer's Market.

¹ Tamarack Institute (www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityengagement)

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The McGill Community's input is fundamental to the shared vision of sustainability on our campuses. Over the years, McGillians have helped create bold vision for University's future by dreaming of what a more sustainable McGill could look like for all students, staff, and faculty. Here, we particularly focus on how McGill's community is integral to the crafting and implementation of McGill's Climate and Sustainability Strategy.

Mobilizing the University community around sustainability in a concerted effort can be challenging. Due to the large number of stakeholders, the decentralized structure of McGill, and unique challenges that our campuses face, the work being done can seem ad hoc at times. Having a shared community vision of a brighter future can help align, guide, and strengthen these efforts.

The consultation process involved input from a Sustainability Survey, focus groups in strategy category areas, online communications channels, including a shared community vision board and a virtual consultation form (see Figures 1 and 2, below), as well as meetings with different stakeholders across our campuses. Over 200 people provided direct feedback during the consultation process. The final result is a document that embodies the community's sustainability ambitions and provides a direction for the collective efforts.



1.2. Implementing McGill's Climate & Sustainability Strategy

The implementation of the Climate and Sustainability Strategy – from its promotion to its deployment – is firmly centered on community engagement. For example, the Strategy design includes specific areas dedicated to engaging readers. At the beginning, a reflection on a student's first day on campus in 2025 allows readers to imagine what a McGillian's experience could look like in a more sustainable future. Afterwards, readers can reflect on their individual actions in the "How can I get involved?" sidebars for each category (see Figure 3, below). These two elements were designed to engage and inspire students, staff, and faculty.

After the Strategy's endorsement, a social media campaign was launched to distill the extensive document into a more digestible format. Starting in January 2021, 11 weeks of social media posts highlighted the three long-term targets, the eight categories of the Strategy and their embedded objectives and actions.

A Climate & Sustainability Roadshow was also launched to engage the community around Strategy themes. The 3-part interactive panel was hosted online during winter 2021 and featured students, staff, and faculty members well-versed in the topics: creating a circular economy, achieving carbon neutrality, and researching to foster sustainable communities. These were viewed over 570 times.

Additionally, a feature article on student contributions to the Strategy was published on the McGill homepage. This article shared how students were involved in all elements of the Strategy creation.

All these communications elements, and more, brought the shared, collective vision of a more sustainable university to the broader McGill Community.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?	Student	Staff	Faculty
Arrive to campus with a reusable drink bottle, mug, container, and utensils.	●	●	●
Acquire second hand textbooks, furniture, bicycles, and other goods on the SSMU Marketplace .	●	●	●
Ensure you are aware of proper waste management practices for landfill, recycling, and organic streams.	●	●	●
Encourage paperless communication.	●	●	●
Recycle McGill-owned electronic equipment by contacting your building's IT Asset Steward and/or IT Technical Steward.		●	●
Recycle your personal electronics through Reboot McGill .	●	●	●
Check out the Sustainable Event Certification , Plate Club and special event composting services to reduce waste from your events.	●	●	●

Figure 3: Example of an engagement prompt in the Strategy.

Developing a Shared Vision: A Closer Look

Case Study: Community Engagement around Zero-Waste

McGillians have shown a strong interest in making major changes in waste practices at McGill. Feedback regarding the topic of waste gathered from the Climate & Sustainability Strategy consultation process helped form the Waste Management category and actions, as well as inspired the creation of McGill's third long-term target: to become zero-waste by 2035.

One of the Strategy's flagship actions is the creation of a zero-waste zone on campus. This landfill waste-free space will provide an invitation to the McGill Community to take action and learn more about waste reduction practices. Defining this action allows community members to join in on work being done in this area, uniting towards the shared goal.

For example, several students have engaged in creating a vision for this flagship action: first, by imagining the potential space through conceptual images, and currently by collecting ideas for designing and implementing different features of the zone. These ideas will serve as a foundation for future progress on the action during the upcoming year.



Student Sahil Adnan's conceptualization of a future McGill zero-waste zone.

Figure 4: Case Study: Community Engagement around Zero-Waste

2. SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Programs and initiatives that promote community engagement around the theme of sustainability are fundamental to the work done to make our campuses more sustainable. McGill offers several core sustainability engagement programs to empower students, staff, and faculty to get involved and take action. Other initiatives provide a conduit for engagement beyond our campus gates into the local community. Both avenues offer a structured approach to engagement, inviting community members to take action through a common framework.

2.1. Core sustainability engagement programs

- **Sustainable Workplace Certification**

The Sustainable Workplace Certification is a framework for offices to evaluate and then improve their workplace's sustainability performance. The certification uses teamwork to achieve four increasingly rigorous levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Examples of actions include avoiding the purchase of bottled water, encouraging paperless communication, and promoting proper recycling. In 2020, the certification was adapted to consider the remote work context.

Each workplace that goes through the Sustainable Workplace Certification needs to identify an ambassador within their team. These ambassadors become part of a network, where they share common issues, opportunities, and tips to embed sustainability in the workplace. As of December 2021, there were over 550 people working in units that received a sustainable workplace certification.

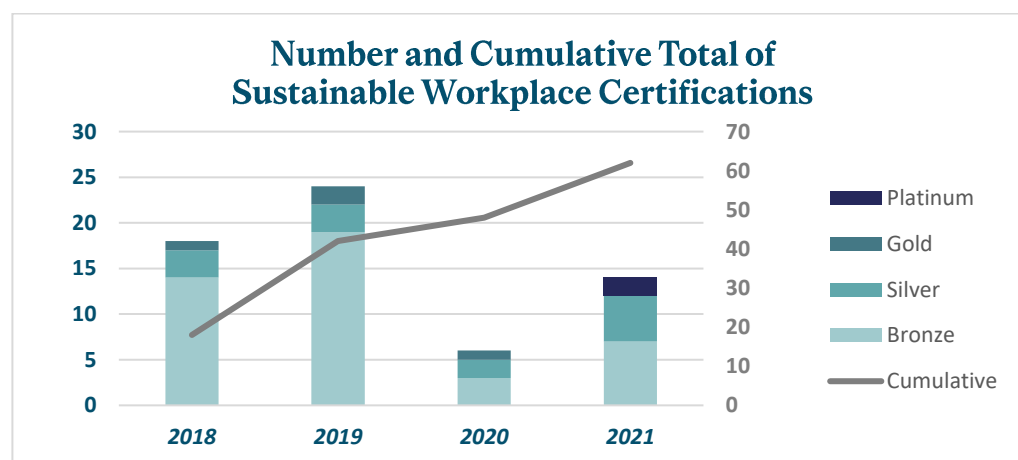


Figure 5: Number and Cumulative Total of Sustainable Workplace Certifications

- **Sustainable Events Certification**

The McGill Sustainable Events certification program encourages and supports more responsible events at McGill. The program focuses on three key areas: environmental impact (carbon footprint, waste management), inclusivity (diversity of organizers, programming, and participants), and accessibility (reducing barriers). There are four levels of certification (Bronze,

Silver, Gold, and Platinum) based on points obtained for targeted actions. In 2020, a special “virtual event” certification was added.

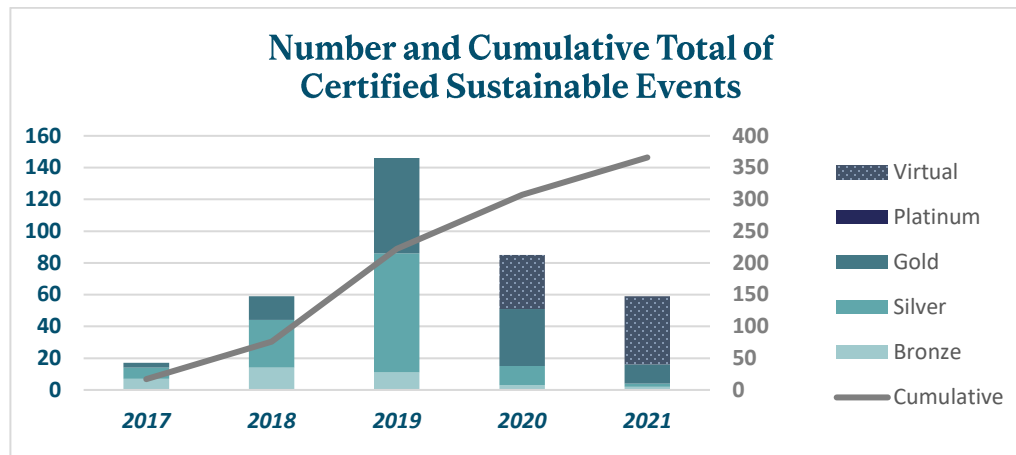


Figure 6: Number and Cumulative Total of Certified Sustainable Events

- **Sustainability Ambassadors Program**

Launched in 2020, the Sustainability Ambassadors Program is a year-long volunteering opportunity for students to promote sustainability by leading engagement activities with the McGill Community. Each year a cohort of ten students join the program to apply their skills and creativity in order to grow the sustainability movement. The program provides training in sustainable leadership by offering students opportunities to introduce the McGill Community to sustainable initiatives carried out by the McGill Office of Sustainability as well as those championed by other units on campus.

- **Urban Agriculture at McGill**

There are over 15 independently run urban agriculture initiatives across the downtown campus. These gardens are maintained by student groups, staff members, academic departments, and administrative units. The Staff Garden Program is one of the most well-known urban agriculture initiatives. This program offers community garden plots to teams of McGill staff on the downtown campus. Teams sign up for their plot and then are assigned a location and bins, given materials, and supported through regular interactions and workshops. This initiative provides community building opportunities and access to locally-produced fruits and vegetables.

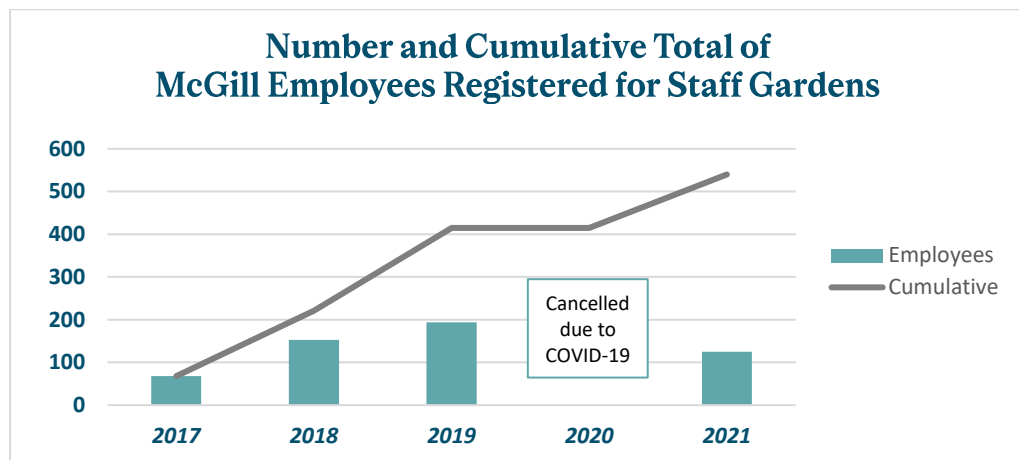


Figure 7: Number and Cumulative Total of McGill Employees Registered for Staff Gardens

- **Sustainability Projects Fund**

The Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) serves as a unique resource to support community engagement on campus and realizing the vision set out in the Climate & Sustainability Strategy. Created from a shared vision of students and staff, the Fund aims to build a culture of sustainability on McGill's campuses through the development and seed-funding of interdisciplinary projects. With an annual value of \$1 million, the SPF is the largest dedicated campus sustainability fund of its kind in Canada and is committed to collaboration between students and the University in its financing, decision-making, and project implementation. Since its creation in 2010, the Fund has supported over 275 projects ranging from small, one-off initiatives to institution-wide campaigns.

The SPF creates opportunities for the McGill Community to actively engage in sustainability initiatives on campus, empowering individuals to be change agents in their own studying and work environment. Any student, staff, or faculty member can apply for funding to start a sustainability project. Throughout the project implementation process, teams are provided with coaching and support. At the end of each project, a reporting process collects an overview of the project accomplishments, as well as key lessons learned, and skills developed by participants. Only looking at the 2021 fiscal year, it is estimated that over 70 partnerships and collaborations were developed thanks to the SPF.

2.2. Other Key Community Engagement Initiatives

- **Impact200, the Bicentennial Student Sustainability Challenge**

Impact200 began in the summer of 2020, challenging teams of students and recent graduates to address sustainability issues through transformative projects. From the 44 initial proposals, 10 finalist teams were selected, each of which received \$5,000 and support from expert mentors to develop their proof-of-concept. In December 2021, the \$10,000 top prize went to the creators of an information-sharing platform that will connect small food banks, food donors, and people in need, with real-time geographical information on the availability, perishability, type, and quantity of donated food.

- **McGill Farmers' Market**

The McGill Farmers' Market is a weekly gathering spot for students, faculty, and community members to discover local foods. With more than ten local suppliers, the Market provides downtown residents the opportunity to connect and engage with the agricultural community of Quebec. The organizers source food that is healthy, affordable, and sustainably produced.

- **Sustainability Applied Student Research (ASR)**

Applied Student Research allows students to contribute directly to solving sustainability issues identified by a community partner. For example, in the fall of 2021, the McGill Office of Sustainability worked with students in ENVR 401 – an environmental research course. The project involved students undertaking a climate risk analysis for the infrastructure and operations of specific McGill facilities at the Macdonald Campus Farm and Bellairs Research Institute.

Sustainability Engagement Programs & Initiatives: A Closer Look

Case Study: The Ladder of Engagement at McGill

In 2019, McGill won the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Campus Sustainability Achievement Award for its sustainability engagement programs, together referred to as the "Ladder of Engagement."

The Ladder of Engagement consists of four programs, the Staff Gardens, Sustainable Event Certifications, Sustainable Workplace Certifications, and Faculty and unit plans and strategies, with each rung represented by a program more involved than the last.

Developed between 2016 and 2019, the programs work to increase collective actions by moving students, staff, and faculty from individual sustainability actions, like tending a garden, to organizing and envisioning large-scale systemic change, such as developing their own sustainability strategies. The programs also focus on moving beyond community members already interested and engaged with sustainability on campus, attracting those who might not have otherwise participated.

In those three years, about 1,000 McGill Community members, including about 600 staff, have engaged with one or more of the sustainability programs, many of them navigating up the Ladder.



Staff join in an orientation session for the Staff Gardens program in 2019.

Figure 8: Case Study: The Ladder of Engagement at McGill

3. SUSTAINABILITY GROUPS & COMMITTEES

Working together is a key facet of community engagement. Tackling sustainability issues involves the efforts of many, and McGillians often look to participating in groups or committees as a way to join in the collective sustainability movement. Across campus, groups and committees are constantly mobilizing volunteers, hosting events, and taking action.

3.1. Student groups & committees

As of December 2021, there were approximately 45 active student groups in sustainability at McGill. These groups involve hundreds of students that form an extensive network of community members working on all aspects of sustainability. Here are a few examples:

- [Desautels Sustainability Network \(DSN\)](#)

DSN's mission is to increase Desautels' presence within McGill's sustainability community, to build a strong local community of sustainable businesses, to make sustainability relevant to everyone, and to promote sustainability throughout Desautels.

- [Environmental Residence Council \(ERC\)](#)

The ERC serves to promote conservation in McGill residences through both education and example. The ERC hosts environmentally friendly events and initiatives throughout the residences and collaborates with other environmental organizations both on and off-campus.

- [The Flat](#)

The Flat is a collective that works to encourage cycling through the sharing of knowledge through workshops and events, as well as the sharing of tools, such as repair equipment.

- [Green Labs Initiative \(GLI\) at McGill](#)

The GLI at McGill promotes and supports environmental sustainability in research labs (wet labs and dry labs) across campus.

- [Macdonald Student-run Ecological Gardens \(MSEG\)](#)

MSEG is a student-run farm at Macdonald Campus that provides fresh and local community-supported agriculture baskets to registered members and sells at local farmers' markets.

- [McGill Apiculture Association \(MAA\)](#)

MAA maintains a small apiary on the Macdonald Campus. They focus on educating students in responsible beekeeping practices.

- [Plate Club](#)

The Plate Club is SSMU's free dishware rental service. They provide free loans of plates, cups, bowls, wine glasses, cutlery, and more to groups and individuals in the McGill Community, with the goal of reducing the waste generated from events held on campus. In a typical semester, they prevent over 10,000 disposables from being thrown out.

- [Research and Sustainability Network \(RSN\)](#)

RSN seeks to inform and empower students at McGill, bridging the gap between researchers in sustainability and undergraduates interested in research. Through recurring conferences, speaker series, and networking events, they aim to connect like-minded individuals within a cross-faculty network.

- [Sustainability in Engineering at McGill \(SEAM\)](#)

SEAM is a committee within the Engineering Undergraduate Society that serves as a supporting platform, fostering and promoting a culture of sustainability within the Faculty of Engineering at McGill.

3.2. Staff and faculty groups & committees

Several staff and faculty sustainability groups and committees are active at McGill. These groups bring together employees and offer ways to get involved. They have a wide range of mandates from tackling specific sustainability challenges, to promoting the inter-faculty/unit exchange of information, to providing feedback on key initiatives, all with the goal of creating a culture of sustainability at McGill. Here are some examples:

- [McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative \(MSSI\)](#)

MSSI is a cross-disciplinary network of sustainability researchers that generates impactful research for solving sustainability problems at a global level, supports sustainability research at McGill, and prepares the next generation of researchers in interdisciplinary, sustainability focused research methods.

- [Advisory Council on Sustainability](#)

The Advisory Council on Sustainability provides a forum for faculty, staff, students, and external representatives to provide advice on McGill campuses' sustainability initiatives. The Council supports the University in its positioning as a leading institution on sustainability in North America.

- [Bike Infrastructure Committee](#)

This committee brings together staff from various departments, as well as a few students, to address bike infrastructure on campus. The committee was created to assess the current infrastructure, identify needs, and coordinate the improvement and expansion of bike infrastructure on campus.

- [Sustainability Exchange Group](#)

The Sustainability Exchange Group is composed of staff members from different sectors of the University that are involved in sustainability initiatives in some capacity. This group offers a platform to exchange and discuss new ideas and initiatives that are being considered and/or developed in various University units. It also allows members to communicate updates and key elements of sustainability initiatives at McGill.

- **McGill Fairtrade Committee**

The downtown campus has been a Fairtrade Certified Campus since 2013, and the Macdonald campus became Fairtrade certified in 2019. The Fairtrade committee is committed to overseeing the progression of Fairtrade purchasing on campus and ensuring that the minimum requirements for the Fairtrade Campus designation are met.

- **Sustainability of Operations at Macdonald Campus Working Group**

This group is dedicated to raising awareness of current and future sustainability initiatives at Macdonald Campus and to bringing transparency as Macdonald Campus sets and achieves various goals in the years to come. The group is comprised of employees and student groups from various parts of the campus (see case study).

- **Faculty of Law's Sustainability Committee**

This committee aims at overseeing the crafting and implementation of the Faculty's Climate and Sustainability Action Plan. It is comprised of faculty members and students.

Sustainability Groups & Committees: A Closer Look

Case Study: Sustainability of Operations at Macdonald Campus Working Group

Seeing the need for a coordinated effort around the theme of sustainability, the Sustainability of Operations at Macdonald Campus Working Group was initially formed in 2019 by the Dean of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Currently chaired by a faculty member, the group addresses sustainability at the Macdonald Campus by acting as a hub for ongoing sustainability projects, creating sustainability initiatives, and liaising with downtown sustainability groups.

To structure their actions, the group conducted a survey of the Macdonald Campus community to assess which themes and projects were of the most interest. One of the first initiatives that emerged from the work of the committee was the Bicentennial tree-planting project, led by a staff member from the Department of Plant Science. The goal of this project was to have 200 trees planted on Macdonald Campus by the end of 2021, which is both a way to celebrate McGill's 200th year, as well as support McGill's Climate & Sustainability Strategy.

This project brought together the community from both Macdonald and Downtown Campuses for three volunteer tree planting events. Forging new relationships and making positive environmental changes, the initiative was a success.

Building on this success, the group is planning to engage the campus community on the topic of waste in the coming months.



Students plant trees on Macdonald Campus.

4. SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement flourishes when students, staff, and faculty have access to learning opportunities to support their work. Outside of the academic context, trainings and workshops can give members new skills and knowledge that help them succeed in their efforts to make our campuses more sustainable. From honing their knowledge about sustainability topics to learning best practices in tackling challenges to meeting like-minded attendees, trainings serve as a springboard for community engagement work at McGill.

4.1. Student trainings

McGill's SKILLS21 is workshop-based skills development program for undergraduate students. Students can take workshops offered by units across McGill, focus their learning by choosing one of five workshop streams, and receive recognition for participation on their Co-Curricular Record. Through this program, students are provided a choice of trainings that will help them succeed while engaging with sustainability at McGill. These include:

- [Sustainability at McGill 101](#)

This workshop offers an overview of sustainability at McGill. The session shares how students can participate in the sustainability movement on campus and introduces sustainability programs, events, and resources.

- [McGill's Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025](#)

This session dives into McGill's three long-term targets, as well short-term goals set to be achieved in the next five years.

- [Climate Action at McGill](#)

This workshop gives an overview of the initiatives that McGill is taking to address climate-related issues. It highlights the main action areas to reduce emissions and showcases the different ways students can get involved in helping the University achieve its carbon footprint reduction ambition.

- [Leading Sustainable Projects at McGill](#)

This workshop gives insight into initiating and leading sustainability projects, using the framework of the Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF).

- [Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

This workshop introduces students to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (See below Case Study for more details.)

4.2. Staff & faculty training

Organizational Development offers a suite of workshops across a wide range of topics and interests. McGill staff can enroll in these trainings to enhance their understanding of sustainability topics and

learn best practices for engaging with sustainability in the workplace. There are currently seven different trainings offered through this program. These include:

- **Envisioning Sustainability at McGill**

In this workshop, participants learn what sustainability encompasses and how to get involved in campus initiatives, both in person and remotely.

- **Waste: What Goes Where?**

This training informs participants of how campus waste streams work, how to properly sort materials, and how this may differ from a remote working location.

- **Sustainable Events Training**

This workshop provides staff with the tools to plan sustainable in-person and virtual events at McGill by providing an overview of the McGill Sustainable Events program, including best practices and engagement strategies.

- **Getting Started with Sustainable Workplace Certification**

This workshop shares ways that a team can work together to get a Sustainable Workplace Certification.

- **Practicing Sustainability at Work and at Home**

In this training, participants learn about key sustainability concepts and how to incorporate these dimensions into their role.

- **Climate Action on Campus and Beyond**

In this workshop, participants learn about the basics of climate change, McGill's climate targets and initiatives, and actions they can take to reduce their own carbon footprint at work and at home.

- **Sustainable Purchasing 101**

In this workshop, participants become familiar with sustainable procurement concepts. This includes learning how participants can apply lifecycle thinking to purchasing decisions, and different strategies to use to identify more sustainable options.

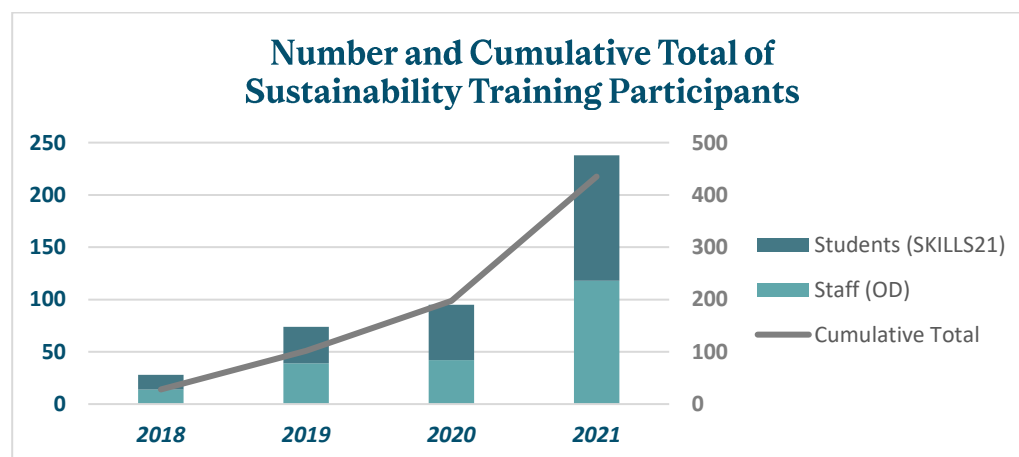


Figure 10: Number and Cumulative Total of Sustainability Training Participants

Sustainability Training Opportunities: A Closer Look

Case Study: An Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals Workshop Series

In Fall 2021, the President of the McGill Student SDG Hub, an upper-year student in International Development, delivered a four-part introductory workshop series on the Sustainable Development Goals to 46 students. The workshop was open to all students interested in learning more about the United Nations' 17 SDGs, which form an action plan to create a more inclusive, prosperous, sustainable future by 2030. The McGill SDG Student Hub was formed through support from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Canada. The Hub's goal is to connect existing student groups to engage and educate students on the SDGs and to organize solutions-oriented events.

Over the course of the workshop series, students learned about the origins and development of the SDGs, their significance to society, how different academic fields contribute to them, and what their limitations are. The online sessions featured a variety of interactive learning formats, including a panel discussion with McGill professors, a workshop, informal discussion, and a research sprint.

As a final project, students worked in teams to produce a poster to apply what they learned during the previous three sessions. Students that attended all four sessions and completed the final project received recognition on their Co-Curricular Record and an attestation of completion signed by the McGill Office of Sustainability.

In future terms, this workshop series will be condensed into one three-hour workshop available to students through the SKILLS21 program.



SDG Student Hub
McGill University

McGILL
SUSTAINABILITY

McGill SDG Student Hub & McGill Office of Sustainability present:

Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals

A 4-SESSION
WORKSHOP SERIES

EVERY TUESDAY
SEPT. 21 TO OCT. 12, 2021
5 PM TO 6:30 PM
Zoom

Communications material for the Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals workshop series.

Figure 11: Case Study: An Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals Workshop Series

5. SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS

Communicating with groups and individuals across our campuses is essential to fostering community engagement around the theme of sustainability. Through the many platforms available, communications can serve to share information, create a shared sense of purpose and identity, generate interest in getting involved, amplify the efforts of community members, as well as highlight bright spots and accomplishments.

5.1. Main campaigns on community engagement in sustainability

The Office of Sustainability ran four main campaigns on community engagement in sustainability throughout 2021. The campaigns include:

- **Sustainability Explainer Series**

A collection of multi-page infographics that elaborate upon sustainability themes present within the Office of Sustainability portfolio, notably in the McGill Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025. The stand-alone posts provide the audience with a prompt, often in the form of a question (such as: “How can I reduce food waste?” and “What is eco-anxiety?”) followed by both general answers, and how such theme relates to sustainability at McGill. The Office of Sustainability published 27 Explainers throughout 2021.

- **Sustainable Sparks Series**

Launched in June 2021, the objective of the monthly Sustainable Sparks profile series is to showcase McGill Community members who foster a culture of sustainability on campus and beyond. This solutions-oriented series is a celebration of their achievements. Through personal anecdotes, this series highlights the ways in which community members find inspiration to act against the climate change and create a more sustainable campus, city, and world.

The key message of this series is that sustainable solutions exist at all levels of our institution, and that no action is too small. By highlighting the McGill Community members who envision these solutions and are working towards turning them into reality, we hope to show that all McGillians can create positive, transformative change. The Office of Sustainability published six Sustainable Sparks profiles through 2021.

- **SPF Spotlights**

The ongoing SPF Spotlight photo series shines a light on the variety, both in type and scale, of projects supported by the Sustainability Projects Fund. Each week, at least one photo or video of a particular project is shared across the Office of Sustainability’s platforms, often with additional context about the project in the form of an interview with a team member or a call-to-action to join the team as a volunteer or by attending an event. The SPF Spotlight might also refer to a feature article about the project published in the McGill Reporter, providing the audience with the opportunity to learn more about the project. The objective of the Spotlights is to provide community members involved in sustainability projects on campus with extra recognition for their efforts. The Office of Sustainability published 33 SPF Spotlights in 2021.

- **Newly Certified Sustainable Workplace Column**

Beginning in 2021, the Office of Sustainability began publishing a monthly column highlighting the newly certified Sustainable Workplaces. The recurring column features examples of habits adopted by the newly certified teams alongside quotes about the impact of the certification from the team's Ambassador.

The objective of this series is two-fold: It is equally a tool to recognize those who go above the call of duty by promoting sustainability-oriented engagement among their teams, as it is a tool to promote positive behavior by demonstrating the ways in which our peers are incorporating sustainable habits into their daily lives, at home, and at work. The Office of Sustainability published five Newly Certified Sustainable Workplace columns in 2021.

These campaigns will continue into 2022.

Sustainability Communications: A Closer Look

Case Study: Communications for a more Sustainable Workplace

Many staff members are eager to get involved in the sustainability movement at McGill. An effective program in channeling the staff's interest in engagement is the Sustainable Workplace Certification program, which allows offices to evaluate and improve their workplace's sustainability performance. The success of this program is due in part to the communications efforts to promote the program, recognize certified teams, and support community engagement.

The best practices and accomplishments of the certified offices are communicated through the aforementioned Newly Certified Sustainable Workplace Column, which is distributed to the entire McGill community through the What's New communications. Through this column, staff can see the accomplishments of their colleagues while learning more about best practices and practical ways of implementing sustainability in the workplace.

Additionally, a suite of communications materials has been developed in support of the Workplace Certification program: a shared e-mail signature helps galvanize teammates around their accomplishments and offers a prompt for staff to engage with their colleagues around the topic; a certificate denotes sustainably certified workplaces by serving as a symbol of recognition; and a team photo at the program seal provides McGill staff the opportunity to share their successes among their personal and professional networks. Additional materials, such as desktop wallpapers and shareable infographics, encourage consistent engagement with the actions embedded in the program.

These tactics have helped increase the program's visibility and sense of community. In turn, program participation has increased and deepened. For example, Human Resources set a priority for all sub-units to reach Bronze certification by the end of the year—an indication of the program's success.



An e-mail signature created to bolster community engagement around the Sustainable Workplace Certification.

Figure 12: Sustainability Communications: A Closer Look

6. KEY TAKEAWAYS & LESSONS LEARNED

Different sources of information allow us to draw key takeaways with regards to community engagement in sustainability. The elements highlighted in this section are drawn from:

- Three focus groups on the topic of community engagement that were held in December 2021 and January 2022. Students, staff, and faculty participated.
- A Sustainability Survey that was administered from October 26 to November 22, 2021, with some specific questions related to community engagement.
- The overall performance of community engagement initiatives highlighted earlier in the report.

6.1. Preferences for Engagement

Workshops are the most popular means of engagement. Overall, 76% of Sustainability Survey respondents have been involved or would be interested in getting involved with an event, workshop, or training session on sustainability. More specifically, large institutional events such as Indigenous Awareness Weeks and the Staff & Faculty Health Fair were of interest among respondents. Also, McGillians are more motivated to engage in high visibility sustainability events and campaigns, such as the Refill McGill campaign centered around the ban of the sale of bottled water on campus.

Regarding specific sustainability projects and initiatives, unit-specific initiatives are the most common means of engagement in sustainability. These initiatives include reducing office paper waste, greening the workplace, and implementing compost or recycling programs in units and labs. Teams accomplish these initiatives without external coordination.

Survey results revealed less enthusiasm for joining sustainability clubs, groups, and committees. The prospect of joining formal committees and groups is less attractive to faculty and staff, perhaps because of their existing tasks and workloads.

6.2. Barriers to Engagement

The lack of awareness about McGill's sustainability efforts can be considered as a barrier to engagement. Overall, close to 50% of staff, students, and faculty are not aware of the various sustainability programs and initiatives taking place at McGill. For students, part of this lack of awareness is due to their short time at the University. Breaking through the noise of other communications and information is difficult, particularly in context of increased online interactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the lack of clear instructions and concrete ideas about how to make sustainable choices is also considered as a barrier. Focus groups participants mentioned that information on the impacts of sustainable and, conversely, unsustainable behaviors would help address this issue. They highlighted that personal actions could seem more insignificant when compared to needed systemic or structural changes. This can lead to apathy and cynicism about sustainability efforts at McGill. However, 74% the survey respondents said that they believe their actions have an impact on the University's sustainability performance and accomplishments, which indicates that most community members are still feeling engaged with action being taken on campus.

6.3. Looking Forward

Results from the 2021 Sustainability Survey and the focus groups strongly support the community consensus that institutional sustainability is important: 92% of survey respondents said that it is important to them that McGill has a strong commitment to sustainability.

We asked the focus groups how they envisioned an engaged sustainability community at McGill and three broad ideas emerged.

- Participants want to see sustainable decision-making occurring at the highest levels of University governance.
- Participants envisioned a sustainable community as one in which sustainability issues are widely discussed and sustainable behaviors are the norm rather than the exception.
- Participants liked seeing visual reminders of the University's sustainability efforts.

Future planning, programming, and communications will take these themes into account during the coming year.

Additionally, given survey respondents' interest in participating to different types of engagement activities, additional care will be given to making sure opportunities are well-developed, engaging, and widely shared with community members.

With these elements in mind, the University will continue to put significant efforts towards community engagement in sustainability in order to consolidate its leadership role in this area.



The McGill Bicentennial Plant Giveaway held during September 2021 (Macdonald Campus).