C-8. Creating Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Community Development[1]

This exercise introduces participants to principles and criteria – what they are and how are they developed. The exercise is particularly useful to communities which would like to develop their own principles and criteria for sustainable forestry. For communities that have chosen to use the Montréal Process Criteria the exercise can still be useful because it raises awareness about principles and discusses a slightly different type of criteria than the ones presented in the Montréal process framework. The latter uses criteria more like core principles for sustainable forestry, which identify specific conditions to be achieved for meeting the community's broader goals. This exercise defines criteria in a more general way – as a means of judging or a test by which something can be judged (see below).

principle *n.* – a rule of conduct, esp. of right conduct

> Sustainable Development principles are rules that a community uses to guide its choices. These principles reflect the key components of sustainable development: living within the limits of community capital; finding the long-term balance between economic, social, and environmental goals; and achieving inter- and intra-generational equity. These principles also provide a foundation for the community's values concerning social, economic and environmental health and well-being.

criterion *n.* – a means of judging; a test by which something can be judged

> Criteria can be designed to provide means of judging whether a particular choice, action or strategy is compatible with the community's principles for sustainable development. They also may be used to identify ways to revise a choice, action or strategy to make it more compatible with the community's principles. Often, criteria are stated in the form of questions.

When pursuing sustainable development strategies, criteria can help determine which businesses (or types of business) and projects or activities to promote or assist. They also may be used to set standards that businesses and community projects may strive toward to become more compatible.

Examples

The following examples below are specifically related to business development but could be modified to relate to other community development activities such as infrastructure development.

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[1] This exercise was adapted from the Center for Compatible Economic Development's Workshop on Compatible Business Development

Principle: Projects enhance (or do not diminish) the size and condition of key species, natural communities or habitat types

Criteria:
- Does the business, industry or project help enhance the size or condition of the local population of key species?
- Does it help decrease the flow of sediment or chemical pollution into the local rivers, lakes and streams?
- Does it help enhance the size and condition of mature forest within the local watershed?

Principle: Businesses enhance the long-term viability of the local economy and provide economic benefit fairly to community members

Criteria:
- Does the business or industry add value to local resources?
- Does the business or industry use local resources at a renewable rate?
- Does the business or industry create jobs with living wages and benefits?
- Can the business or industry use the skills and abilities of available labor or will labor need to be imported?
- Does the business or industry produce goods or services that benefit community members?
- Does the business or industry purchase supplies or other inputs substantially from individuals or other businesses in the community?
- Does the business or industry contribute to diversification of the local economy?
- Does the business reduce waste generation in the community?

Principle: Projects enhance the rural character of community

Criteria:
- Does the physical facility (appearance, noise, etc.) complement or enhance the character of the community?
- Does the location of the business and its operation fit well with neighboring land uses?
- Does the business use land that is not prime agricultural or resource land (such as habitat, natural area or timber land)?
- Is the business (owners, management or employees) actively involved in the civic life of the community?
- Does the long-term economic viability of the business require growth or change that is in harmony with the rural character of the community?

Principles for Sustainable Development

Consider the following statements of principles for business development. Which statements reflect the principles of sustainable development? Which do not? For those that do not, how could they be modified to incorporate some sustainable development principles? For those that do reflect sustainable development principles, which of the three basic concepts do they reflect? How can they be improved on? Write your answers below the statements.

- Businesses do not diminish the size and condition of key species, natural communities or habitat types.

- Businesses enhance local retail economy for the community's benefit.

- Businesses can thrive with existing local infrastructure.

- Businesses provide a substantial number of well-paying jobs.

- Business activities are consistent with a healthy environment.

- Businesses use the Internet and are in one of the high growth industries.

- Businesses provide opportunities for local young adults to stay.

- Businesses use local resources in a sustainable fashion to provide high quality products for the global economy.

- Businesses are technology savvy and are proactive about change.

Criteria for Sustainable Development

A community has selected the following statement as one of its principles for sustainable business development:

> Businesses will be compatible with and enhance the rural character of the community.

Which of the following criteria are relevant tests for judging if a new business idea is compatible with the principle? Why or why not?

- Does the business require additional infrastructure (roads, sewer or water lines, large buildings)?

- Will the business generate additional traffic?

- Is the business in a high growth industry?

- Does the business use existing natural resources in a sustainable manner?

- Does the business create new jobs?

- Does the business incorporate new technology in its employee development?

Note that a criterion may be good to use even if it is not relevant to a particular principle. In this case an additional principle may be necessary.

Exercise – Sustainable Business Criteria

This exercise introduces an approach that can be used by a community-based group to develop sustainable business criteria. Through the exercise you can practice developing one principle and several related criteria, and can "test" the criteria by using them to assess a business or industry. Based on this practice, you can work with your local team or group to develop a set of principles and criteria to guide your business development efforts.

Instructions

The larger group will be divided into three small groups for this exercise. For all three groups the instructions are the same, however, in Step 3, each group will be asked to apply the criteria developed to different types of businesses – manufacturing, services, and natural resource-based.

Step 1 – Develop Principles

1.A. List ideas for principles. Working individually, have each member review the definition and examples of principles and write one or more ideas for principles below. Think of these principles as operating rules that would determine the types of business that the community would try to grow or develop. Feel free to borrow from the examples.

My ideas for principles:

_____
_____
_____
_____

1.B. Record proposed principles. After each member of the group has had time to write at least one principle, have each member report one of their proposed principles at a time. Record the proposed principles on a flip chart. Continue the reporting until each member has reported all of his or her ideas.

1.C. Discuss proposed principles. Take a few minutes to discuss the proposed principles as a group. Ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand each of the ideas. You may consolidate proposed principles that represent the same idea.

1.D. Select one principle. Try to reach a consensus within your group concerning one principle to use for the next part of the exercise. Write the principle clearly on a flip chart.

Step 2 – Develop Criteria

2.A. List ideas for criteria. Working individually, have each member of the group review the definition and examples of criteria and write one or more ideas below. Think of these criteria as questions you could use to judge compatibility with the selected principle.

My ideas for criteria:

_____
_____
_____
_____

2.B. Report criteria ideas. After each member of the group has had time to write at least one criterion, have each member report one of their proposed criteria at a time. Record the proposed criteria on a flip chart. Continue the reporting until each member has reported all of his or her ideas.

2.C. Discuss proposed criteria. Take a few minutes to discuss the proposed criteria as a group. Ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand each of the ideas. You may consolidate proposed criteria that represent the same idea.

2.D. Select three or four criteria to test. Try to reach a consensus within your group concerning which criteria to select. Circle the selected criteria.

Step 3 – Use and Refine Criteria

3.A. Select business to assess for compatibility. Brainstorm examples of actual businesses that are operating, or trying to start up or to locate, in your communities. As a group, select one to consider against your draft criteria.

3.B. Evaluate selected business. As a group, discuss how well the selected business (or type of business) satisfies your criteria. What ideas do you have for ways the business might improve its standing against the criteria?

3.C. Evaluate criteria. Did the criteria help you in considering the compatibility of the selected business? What ideas do you have for improving your initial criteria?