Sustainable Libraries Initiative Glossary of Terms

Agents of Change working group: Will recruit leaders statewide, to educate them in "sustainable thinking" through a participatory learning process, empowering them with project tools and customized education.

Benchmarks: Measurements developed that provide a positive framework for how an organization or project can best achieve its stated goals. Within the context of the Sustainability Initiative, this may include measurable guidelines that relate to governance and policy, information technology, facilities, waste, procurement, community, collections, staff, finance and innovation. The Sustainability Initiative

Benchmarks working group: Will develop a tool to look at and measure critical operations such as governance, procurement, IT, facilities, community, and funding through a lens of sustainability. Phase 2 will develop a program to incentivize libraries to set and meet standards.

Co-Creator: The individuals involved with the creation of the Sustainability Initiative. Click here for complete roster.

Community: A social group with a common goal, locality, interest or other cultural characteristics. Within the Sustainability Initiative, this relates to the patrons, staff, trustees, friends of a library and those living and/or working within the area served by the library, such as a town,city or county school, college, or company.

Environmental Scan working group: Will research and document the work being done on sustainability within and beyond libraries. Team members serve as embedded librarians for each of the other four working groups, providing the research and resources they need to fulfill their performance goals.

Global Climate Change: Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or

longer). Climate change may result from: 1) Natural factors, such as changes in the sun's intensity or slow changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun; 2) Natural processes within the climate system (e.g. ,changes in ocean circulation); 3) Human activities that change the atmosphere's composition (e.g., through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g., deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification).

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs): Gases in the Earth's atmosphere that produce the greenhouse effect. Changes in the concentration of certain greenhouse gases, due to human activity such as fossil fuel burning, increase the risk of global climate change. Greenhouse gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, halogenated fluorocarbons, ozone, perfluorinated carbons, and hydro- fluorocarbons.

LEED: Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is a green building certification program that recognizes best-in-class building strategies and practices. To receive LEED certification, building projects satisfy prerequisites and earn points to achieve different levels of certification. LEED certified buildings save money and resources and have a positive impact on the health of occupants by minimizing the environmental? impact and the consumption of water by the site, as well as promoting energy efficiency from clean and renewable energy. More information available here.

Library Core Values: Sustainability Initiative co-creators agreed upon a set of concepts that all activities within the institution should support. They are access, adaptability, community, democracy, education and literacy, intellectual freedom, social justice, and financial stewardship.

Making the Case working group: Will craft clear and persuasive messages targeting community members, trustees and staff, and others about the urgent need for change and the value of sustainable thinking, policies and procedures. This is PR department of the Sustainability Initiative.

NYSERDA: The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, known as NYSERDA, promotes energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources. NYSERDA works with stakeholders throughout New York including residents, business owners, developers, community leaders, local government officials, university researchers, utility representatives, investors, and entrepreneurs. More information available here.

Regenerative: To bring new, energetic life; revive.

Renewable Energy: The term renewable energy generally refers to electricity supplied from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, geothermal, hydropower, and various forms of biomass. These energy sources are considered renewable sources because their fuel sources are continuously replenished.

Resilient: To bounce back after disruption.

Return on Investment (ROI): An evaluation of the benefit of undertaking an activity versus its cost. This measurement is often used to market library service to voters. For a relatively low investment on the part of each taxpayer, the population served by a library reaps much greater rewards than if the individual paid that same amount for direct services.

Roadmap working group: Will provide a "first steps" tool for libraries in the form of individual and organizational assessments and will guide libraries through the initiative.

Sphere of Influence: In geopolitical terms, this defines a region or country that has no direct power, but affects the decisions made by another region or country. Within the context of the Sustainability Initiative, we are referring to those people within an organization who set the tone for others. Once those individuals agree to sustainable thinking, it will be much easier to bring others along.
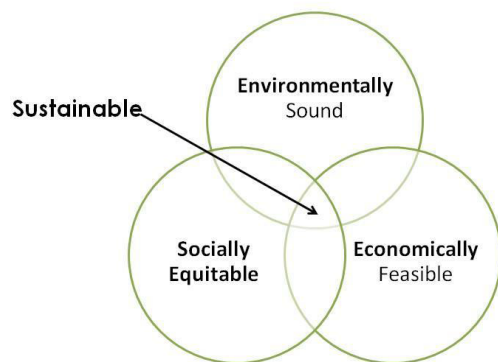
Stakeholders: Those individuals or organizations that have a vested interest in maintaining the longevity of a library and its community. There are five stakeholders groups: library patrons, co-creators (library staff and administrators), the community, investors (taxpayers, trustees, Friends), and Earth systems.

NYLA Sustainability Initiative: The Sustainable Libraries Initiative started out as the NYLA Sustainability Initiative. The mission remains the same: to get libraries to make decisions that are in line with their community's core values, economically feasible, and environmentally sound to ensure that libraries and their communities remain vital, visible, and viable. The Sustainability Initiative tools are now housed on the Sustainable Libraries Initiative website for libraries to use so they and the communities they serve can make decisions that ensure those entities are sustainable, resilient and regenerative and practice Whole Systems Thinking. The original NYLA Initiative was comprised of five working groups: Agents of Change, Benchmarks, Environmental Scan, Making the Case and Roadmap.

Sustainable: The capacity to endure.

Sustainable Thinking: Sustainable thinking aligns a library's core values and resources with the local and global community's right to endure, to bounce back from disruption and to thrive by bringing new and energetic life to the community through choices made in all areas of operations and outreach.

Triple Bottom Line

Triple Bottom Line: A concept that is best depicted by the Venn diagram above. To be truly sustainable, an organization must embody practices that are environmentally sound AND economically feasible AND socially equitable.

Whole Systems Thinking (or Systems Thinking): A process of understanding how things/parts/systems behave, interact with their environments and influence each other.