Measuring What Counts in the Social Economy

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Concern of the public and therefore the sector ...
Why is this important to the sector?

- Strengthen the business case
- This is at the heart of co-operation!
  - International Co-operative Principles (ICA 300)
  - Triple bottom line
  - Structure enables stakeholder/ member involvement
- Recognition and to brand the sector
What is the sector doing?

- Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Guidelines
- LEED Building certification
- Natural Step & InterPraxis
- Public Accountability Statements
- Internal measurements:
  - In-office recycling & MEC’s Dumpster Dives
  - Energy use
  - Procurement policies: using green/local products
  - Developing transportation policies
  - Staff, member and stakeholder surveys
  - In-house reports
Case Studies

LEADERS in the Sector:

- Mountain Equipment Co-operative
- Vancity
- Alterna Savings
- The Co-operators
What is being measured?

- Governance Structure
- Stakeholder & Member Engagement
- Management Systems
- Environmental - Emissions, Waste, Energy Use
- Social – Impacts on the Community
- Product Development – Use of Recycled Materials
- Economic – Sales, Cost of Goods, Economic Impacts
- Manufacturing – Factory Audits
Emerging CSR Co-ops

- University-based co-ops: Guelph Campus Co-op, Grand House
- Renewable energy co-ops: Ag Energy Co-operative
- Organic and fair trade co-ops: La Siembra, Planet Bean & Organic Meadows
Mountain Equipment Co-op

- Started 37 years ago by 4 students in B.C.
  - Today: Largest retail co-op in Canada with 2.7 million members
  - 4th largest polity in Canada
  - 12 locations across Canada
  - $240 million revenue

- Ethical purchasing and environmental sustainability
  - Integral to operations (Driven by Board, and Staff)
  - Key strategy to MEC’s business and strategic plans
  - Use Sustainability reports, web material and member education

- Benchmarks
  - Global Reporting Initiative
  - Walk the Talk
  - Long term strategy/ approach
  - Leader \( \rightarrow \) holistic approach and sustainability strategy
The MEC Strategy

- Members
  - Board Leadership and Governance
  - Accountability and Transparency Report
- Charter Goals
- Strategic Plan
- Actions Progress
- A. Product Service
- B. Supply Distribution Chain
- C. Marketing Education
- D. Employees
- E. Community
- F. Environment
Vancity

- **History**
  - Formed in 1946
  - Canada’s largest credit union, more than 390,000 members
  - $14.1 billion in assets (2007)

- **CSR Products and Services**
  - Commercial Investment Opportunities → investing in green buildings, alternative transportation, community power
  - Retail products → Enviro VISA, green mortgage
  - Reducing their own footprint → B.C. carbon neutral by 2010
  - Supporting the community → Vancity Community Foundation
  - Member education and advocacy → community partnerships

- Integrated strategy within Vancity and across all subsidiaries
Alterna Savings

- History
  - April 2005, Alterna the result of a merger between CS Co-op and Metro Credit Union
  - Operations from Ottawa to Toronto, more than 150,000 members
  - $1.8 billion assets

- CSR Pillars
  - Financial Literacy → Member Education Forums
  - CED → Micro-loan and Immigrant Loan Programs
  - Accountability
  - Environmental Sustainability
  - Philanthropy → Community Scholarship and Donation programs

- Work in Progress
The Co-operators

- History
  - Established in 1945
  - Actively developing a sustainability policy since 2005
  - Over $7 billion in assets
- Developing their sustainability policy through the Natural Step
  - Climate change strategy
  - Sustainability within the organization
  - Developing sustainability products and services → diversified and innovative insurance products
  - Strategic stakeholder engagement → community investment
- Long-term commitment

[Image: Designing for Sustainability]

[Logo: the co-operators]
Moving Forward...
What needs to happen next?

- How does this become part of co-op strategy?
- How do co-ops communicate what they are doing?
- What can small, medium, large co-op be doing to address ‘co-op’ social responsibility?

Next Step:
- Supported growth and development → CSR networks and toolkit developments