

Guiding Questions for the Four System Conditions



In a sustainable society nature is not subject to systematically increasing the concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.

Does your organization...	Examples...
Rely on processes that use trace metals and minerals? What ultimately happens to these metals and minerals?	Mercury in electronics, cadmium in batteries, paint-dyes, etc.
Rely on fossil fuel-based energy for operations?	Coal-fired electricity, gas-fired electricity, gas for heating, etc.
Rely on fossil fuel-based transportation to move people and things?	Vehicle fleets, flights for visitors, commuting of employees, collection of garbage, transport of projects and supplies, etc.
Have any practices or programs in place internally that reduce energy use and/or flows of trace metals or minerals?	
Offer any products or services that reduce energy use and/or or flows of trace metals or minerals for others?	



In a sustainable society nature is not subject to systematically increasing the concentrations of substances produced by society.

Does your organization...	Examples...
Use or produce synthetic substances that contain persistent compounds?	PVC in piping, volatile organic compounds in cleaners, paints, and adhesives, CFC's in refrigerants, brominated fire-retardants in electronics and furniture, etc.
Rely on production processes that use synthetic substances that contain persistent compounds?	Dioxins, or furans in the pulp and paper process, etc.
Have any practices or programs in place internally that reduce flows of persistent compounds?	
Offer any products or services that reduce flows of persistent compounds for others?	



In a sustainable society nature is not subject to degradation by physical means.

Does your organization...	Examples...
Use or produce food and fiber from unsustainable harvested renewable resources?	Lumber from non-certified forests, food from farming practices that result in loss of biodiversity and topsoil, etc.
Rely on processes that require continuous direct encroachment into natural areas?	Urban design practices that result in urban sprawl, etc.
Rely on processes that introduce foreign and invasive species into an ecosystem?	
Rely on processes that modify ecosystems in such a way as to reduce their biodiversity and productivity?	Clearing land for monoculture, etc.
Rely on products or processes that use mined metals, minerals or fossil fuels?	Virgin metals, virgin plastics, etc.
Rely on landfills to manage waste and/or as the ultimate fate of its products?	
Rely on processes that use water? Is the draw on water systems larger than the natural flow in the watershed where the water is sourced?	
Have any practices or programs in place internally that reduce the physical degradation of nature?	
Offer any products that reduce the physical degradation of nature by others?	



And in that society people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

Does your organization...	Examples....
Rely on inputs that come from regions or companies where authorities create obstacles for people to meet their needs? Or have any practices itself that do so?	Prohibiting people from organizing themselves in unions, punishments and humiliating treatment, enforced labor, discrimination, etc.
Rely on processes that create economic conditions that hinder people from meeting their needs?	Child labor, low salaries, neglecting to pay social costs – education, health care – for employees, etc.
Rely on processes that contribute to unsafe and unhealthy work environments and/or that contribute to unsafe and unhealthy living environments for people in local communities?	Overly long working hours, workplace hazards such as chemical exposure and accidents, local water and air pollution, etc.
Have any programs in place internally that reduce or eliminate barriers to people meeting their needs?	
Offer any products or services that reduce or eliminate barriers to people meeting their needs?	