



SUSTAINABLE TUCSON SEEDing the Vision Workshop

Sustainable Tucson is a volunteer-driven organization committed to a positive and vibrant future for the greater Tucson area. The organization was established in January 2007, in response to current and anticipated resource, environmental, and economic challenges. Its mission is to inform and mobilize every level of the community to address issues and opportunities related to food, water, transportation, energy, urban design, political engagement, and spiritual and cultural renewal.

During the past two years, the organization has sponsored or partnered in a wide range of community events. It is slowly building a reputation as the “go-to organization” for information, counsel, and support on activities related to Tucson’s sustainable future. Thousands of individuals have been engaged. However, the organization itself has lacked consistent leadership, focus, commitment and financial stability. To address organizational vitality, a newly constituted Strategic Planning Committee was formed and SEED’s Barry Kibel was invited to guide the group through a new round of visioning and program planning.

On June 1, 2009, Dr. Kibel guided the 11-member committee through SEEDing the Vision—a 2-3 hour workshop of five exercises for groups to explore a shared vision, and define short and longer-term success markers.

Participants included two founding members and several individuals with only a few months of organizational association, each with strong and varied relevant experiences to share. The aim was to develop a common vision that would be sufficiently rich to hold their individual and collective sense of purpose, passions, and interests. They also were committed to devising and implementing activities that would raise their profile in the community.

The session began with a round of Check-In, with each person briefly sharing their background and the impetus that brought them to the organization. In a second round, they were asked to each respond to the specific probe, “What is the special spark that sets Sustainable Tucson apart from other organizations and initiatives?” To deepen understanding, their neighbor to the right was asked to reflect back on what was heard and offer a follow-up question for the current speaker to answer.

A set of original visual images (mandala drawings) was next presented. The participants were asked to each select an image that “best captures your vision of the impact and influence you hope Sustainable Tucson will generate.” They took turns sharing their choice and explaining why this image stands out for them. Their explanations helped draw out similarities and differences in their hopes for the future of the organization.

Using the images for inspiration, the group next brainstormed together how they see the organization and its influence growing, stage by stage. Consensus was quickly reached. The group then defined hard and soft measures that would be indicators of success at each growth stage. A matrix of these measures was created for future reference. As a final exercise, the participants identified the principles for engagement and project design qualities they intend to see reflected in all their work together.

The following feedback was provided at the end of the session:

- Well structured. None of the activities were a waste of time.
- It facilitated our listening to one another.
- It was especially helpful in drawing out similarities and differences of the group and to validate each other's perspectives and positions.
- The collective creativity was really inspiring. The structure of the session provided a framework for deep thinking and to rein us in and keep things moving forward.
- It helped me think of what we are doing in new ways. It opened up some different avenues for getting at the essence of what we are doing.
- This was a very good process for getting at the nuances of our individual and shared experiences as part of this organization. We are still trying to sense out the essence of what we are going for. This helped.
- I appreciate conversations when we allow opportunities for everyone's input. It is so much better to listen than to simply read what people have to share.
- This conversation moved us a lot closer to the things we ought to be thinking about.

The participants were unanimous in their enthusiasm for moving forward to the next stage in the process: the SEED Diagnostic.

