

Proposal for NEW Membership Approach for Sustain Ontario

Sustain Ontario provides opportunities for groups and individuals to work together towards a sustainable food system. Membership and other supportive relationships are essential to the ability of the Alliance to facilitate innovation and change. The main types of relationships are:

- [Members](#)
- [Supporter Circle Groups](#)
- [Supporter Circle Individuals](#)
- [Campaign Supporters and Working Group Collaborators](#)
- [Newsletter recipients](#)

Members

Sustain Ontario Members are groups, organizations and businesses that work in the food and farming sector and are committed to creating a food system in Ontario that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable.

Sustain Ontario Members form the heart of the Alliance. These groups direct the work of the Alliance, identifying emerging and continuing priorities, setting policy directions and recommendations, and informing the agenda for the Alliance's activities. These groups also help to advance the work of the Alliance. They participate in communications, advocacy, research, capacity building, events organizing, and more. Members with the capacity to contribute monetarily provide the financial core support to ensure that the Alliance is able to remain responsive to emergent needs and opportunities. Members will be listed on the Sustain Ontario website alongside individual profile pages. Members are also eligible to win biennial Sustain Ontario awards.

Benefits

Members benefit from being part of an Alliance that connects them to others in the province with similar interests and enables them to amplify their voice and their capacity. Additionally, Sustain Ontario responds to emerging member needs, developing services that are accessible only to members, and at affordable prices. These fees will be collected to help maintain the financial sustainability of the Alliance's operations. Services that Sustain Ontario currently offers for a fee include:

- Webinar Hosting Services
- Provincial advocacy support
- Support to organize regional events
- Strategic planning support
- Project development support
- Regional and Provincial Events and Webinars
- Research Support
- Provincial outreach support

Sustain Ontario will work to develop further supportive services as members identify other needs. However, should a Member request any of these listed or future services, Sustain Ontario is not obligated to provide them. Sustain Ontario can

be contracted to provide these services, but to the extent of the organization's capacity. The organizational priority is the provision of core support to Sustain Ontario's mandate in the interest of all Members.

All Members are welcome to nominate themselves to join the Sustain Ontario Advisory Council. The Advisory Council provides program and policy direction and feedback to Sustain Ontario staff intensively throughout the year. All Members have a vote in the elections of the Advisory Council and the Co-Chairs of Sustain Ontario.

Eligibility

Groups interested in becoming Members must apply and be vetted by the Membership Committee. Membership is open to incorporated and non-incorporated non-profit groups and organizations as well as to businesses that are owned exclusively by Ontario residents or located wholly within the borders of Ontario. Part of the Members' work must include food and/or farming. These criteria are inclusive of a very wide range of groups, businesses and organizations. Some examples of groups that might become members include buy local groups, food security organizations, anti-poverty groups concerned with food security, private catering companies, environmental organizations that work with farmers or support local and organic food, research groups and institutions, seed companies, educators, farmers, food distributors, institutional purchasers, food consultants, and many more.

National groups that do work in Ontario ARE welcome to be Sustain Ontario Members.

To become a member, groups must sign their pledge to the following statement: "As a member of Sustain Ontario, we commit to working collaboratively with diverse groups from across the province to help create a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable."

Responsibilities

Members are expected to support the work of the Alliance in three ways.

First, Members are expected to communicate their support of the Alliance's work to their constituents (clients, customers, members, etc.) in some way. Some ways that they may do so is through:

- Occasional communication and updates via newsletters or social media
- Indication of support on the member's website or through communications on the website
- Sharing paper flyers about Sustain Ontario with constituents

Second, Members are expected to participate in some aspect of activities a minimum of 5 hours/year. These hours can be spent on the following activities:

- Providing feedback on strategy/policy
- Reviewing documents
- Supporting policy development
- Participating in a working group
- Helping to organize an event

Third, Members are assumed to endorse Sustain Ontario-led policy and advocacy initiatives but will be given the opportunity to opt out. All members will be notified of policy and advocacy activities for which Member support is wanted. Members will be given at least one month’s notice prior to an initiative's launch to indicate that they would like to opt out of formally supporting the specific initiative. Members who are unable to participate in advocacy or have strict advocacy limitations are able to state this restriction on their membership application, and will automatically be assumed to opt out of any and all policy and advocacy initiatives unless indicated otherwise for specific initiatives.

As a registered non-profit project of Tides Canada Initiatives, Sustain Ontario does not and will not take partisan positions, in accordance with Canadian charity law.¹ Non-profit members should not be put at risk of losing their charitable status by being listed as endorsers of policy initiatives.

Contribution

Members are encouraged to make an annual donation to support Alliance activities. If organizations and businesses are unable to make the suggested donations, any financial support that they can manage is appreciated. No organization, group or business will be excluded from becoming a member because of inability to provide financial support. We suggest the following donations for organizations, groups and businesses, based on their annual budget:

Under \$100 000	\$25
\$100 000 - \$250 000	\$75
\$250 000 - \$500 000	\$125
\$500 000 - \$1 million	\$250
Over \$1 million	\$500

Membership is renewed annually.

¹ "Registered charities are prohibited from partisan political activity, because supporting or opposing a political party or candidate for public office is not a charitable purpose at law." See *Income Tax Act* 149.1 (6.1) and (6.2). Read more at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/dvsry-eng.html>

Supporter Circle

The Supporter Circle is made up of groups and individuals that want to help advance the work of the Alliance, but that do not meet the criteria for Membership or are limited by their own rules about membership. Supporters help ensure that Ontario has a healthy food and farming system by lending their voice, skills and time to the work of the Alliance. Differences in the participation of Group Supporters and Individual Supporters can be read on the following page.

All Supporters can help to create a healthy food and farming system by:

- publicly showing support for Sustain Ontario and its initiatives
- lending their time, energy, skills, and perspectives to the work of the Alliance
- supporting Sustain Ontario Members directly

Benefits

Sustain Ontario keeps the Supporters Circle up-to-date about food and farming developments and activities in each Supporter's specified regions and areas of interest. The Alliance also provides information about proceedings and initiatives at the provincial and federal levels so that Supporters can find ways to make an effective impact.

Each Group and Individual will also be publicly recognized as a Supporter on the Sustain Ontario website.

Responsibilities

Like Members, Supporters are assumed to endorse all Sustain Ontario policy and advocacy initiatives but will be given the opportunity to opt out. The Supporters Circle will be notified of policy and advocacy activities that support is wanted for. Supporters will be given at least one month's notice prior to these initiatives moving forward to indicate that they would like to opt out of publicly endorsing the initiative. Supporter Circle Groups and Individuals who are unable to participate in advocacy or that have strict advocacy limitations are able to indicate this restriction when they join the Supporters Circle, and will be automatically assumed to opt out of any and all policy and advocacy initiatives unless they indicate otherwise for specific initiatives. Read more about advocacy restrictions in the previous section, [Members: Responsibilities](#).

Sustain Ontario occasionally reaches out to the Supporter Circle for extra help and perspectives regarding initiatives and working groups. This extra help could include writing to MPPs, posting a sign, providing opinions, volunteering particular skills in any number of areas such as marketing, design, research, etc, or sharing specialized knowledge in areas such as law, finance, statistics, etc.

Supporters Circle Groups and Individuals are not required to renew their support, but can resign at any time.

Groups

If your group, organization, or business is not eligible to become a Member of Sustain Ontario, you are still welcome on the Supporters Circle.

Groups, organizations and businesses that can join the Supporters Circle despite ineligibility for Membership include:

- Non-profits operating primarily outside of Ontario
- For-profit businesses not owned exclusively by Ontario residents or not located wholly within the borders of Ontario
- Groups or businesses whose work does not include food or farming

National groups that do work in Ontario ARE welcome to be Sustain Ontario Members. See the previous section on [Members: Eligibility](#) for more detail.

Groups that sit on the Supporters Circle are also welcome to lend their financial support. We suggest that groups sitting on the Supporters Circle consider making an annual donation. We suggest the following donations for organizations, groups and businesses, based on their annual budget:

Under \$100 000	\$15
\$100 000 - \$250 000	\$50
\$250 000 - \$500 000	\$75
\$500 000 - \$1 million	\$125
Over \$1 million	\$200

Individuals

Sustain Ontario exists to provide a space for groups with common interests to collaborate to advance a healthy food and farming system for Ontario. Accordingly, Membership is restricted to groups, organizations and businesses. However, many individuals may support the work of the Alliance, and want to lend their strength, skills, and voice to that of the Members. These individuals are welcome to join the Supporters Circle.

We ask that Supporter Circle Individuals NOT make donations to Sustain Ontario, but rather to non-profit Members of the Alliance to better enable them to contribute their time and energy to the work of the Alliance. Please feel free to indicate that is the purpose of the donation when it is made.

Campaign Supporters and Working Group Collaborators

Groups that are not aligned with Sustain Ontario's vision and cannot sign on to the commitment statement, but find specific initiatives, campaigns, or working groups

complementary to their work on food or farming, are welcome to become campaign or working group supporters or collaborators. These relationships are topic-, event-, or initiative-specific.

Similarly, Sustain Ontario welcomes opportunities to act as a collaborator on initiatives that align with our goals, where other groups act as the lead.

Newsletter recipients

Anyone curious about what's happening at Sustain Ontario is welcome to sign up to receive our monthly newsletter. Anyone interested in following our Members' activities can sign up for our Weekly Good Food Bites – a weekly email digest of some of the most exciting and interesting things happening with food and farming in Ontario.