

# Green Jobs Networking Event

A Community based Leadership in  
Sustainability event

**Hosted April 2017**

This event is part of Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network (SPN)'s Community-based Leadership in Sustainability (CLS) educational series, which is supported through collaboration with McMaster University through the Academic Sustainability Programs Office.

The CLS initiative was created in the fall of 2014 as a joint initiative between a number of groups and organizations with the goal to develop a culture of sustainability through education, community engagement, and collaboration that inspires practical implementation. One of the main objectives of the CLS initiative is to offer these educational and networking at events without barrier. The events are open to all and free of charge.

# Event Summary

## Overview

The goal of the annual Green Jobs Networking Event is to connect students, recent graduates, community members, and Hamilton-based sustainability professionals to learn about and share information about green jobs and careers.

The fourth annual Green Jobs Networking Event was held on Friday April 7, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the McMaster University Centre for Continuing Education. The morning's agenda included a keynote speaker, introductions and roundtable discussions with sustainability professionals, and concluded with a networking session.

## Keynote Address

The keynote address from Jayde Liebersbach, Owner and Principal Designer at East 45th + Maple, discussed the current state of climate change around the globe and why we need green jobs. Jayde was trained to give the presentation by Al Gore through the Climate Reality Project. The key message from her presentation was that although extreme weather events are occurring more frequently, there is hope. Global emissions of carbon dioxide have stayed flat two years in a row — the first time in 40 years without the presence of an economic crisis. We are building capacity and big governments aren't the only ones leading the way. "The will to act is a renewable resource in itself" - Al Gore

## Pre-Event Survey

Following Jayde's keynote address, Liz Nield, CEO of LURA Consulting and our event facilitator, gave a summary of the results obtained from two surveys conducted prior to the event - one survey of the sustainability professionals, and another survey of registered attendees. A brief summary of the responses is included below and a full table can be found in Appendix A. Note that while we use the terms "attendee" and "emerging professional" interchangeably, this may not be the case depending on the individual respondent.

What skills are emerging professionals lacking?

- Interestingly, both attendees and professionals listed the same skills highest, including skills in Project Planning and Project Management; and Preparing and Delivering Presentations; and the Ability to Apply Knowledge and Skills to Real-world Settings. However, attendees listed Working Knowledge of Computers and Technology, while professionals did not. Professionals listed the Ability to Communicate Effectively in Writing, while attendees did not.

What skills do emerging professionals have most competency in?

- The only skill that both attendees and professionals rated highest was the Ability to Locate, Organize, and Evaluate Information from Multiple Sources. Attendees listed Interdisciplinary Teamwork Skills and the Ability to Collaborate with others, as well as Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning Skills, while professionals did not. Interestingly, professionals listed Working Knowledge of Computers and Technology, which was one of the skills that attendees felt lacking.

## Pre-Event Survey Continued

In addition to the questions above, attendees were asked to list their questions for sustainability professionals, and professionals were asked to provide advice for emerging professionals. One student posed the following question: “What are the barriers faced when implementing sustainable practices in business? What strategies have worked to overcome them?” One of the professionals gave the following advice to emerging professionals:

Continue to meet people and network, because you never know where the next opportunity is going to come from. It is an old cliché but it is true. Increasingly I am seeing firsthand how networking is opening doors for people. Also, continue to build your relevant experience. There are no shortage of places to volunteer to allow you to build your resume and learn new skills. Hundreds of people are applying to the same jobs, so gaining experience can help differentiate you.

A complete list can be found in Appendix A.

## The Sustainability Professionals

Following the presentation of survey responses and before engaging in roundtable discussions with attendees, each of the 16 sustainability professionals introduced themselves and gave a brief overview about their professional role within the field of sustainability. Each sustainability professional also provided one piece of advice to those looking to enter a career in sustainability.

The sustainability professionals that participated in the Green Jobs Networking Event include:

- **Laura Anderson**  
Program Coordinator and Funding Development, Green Venture
- **Alanna Aqui**  
Environmental Sustainability Consultant, Dupont Sustainable Solutions
- **Jay Carter**  
Hamilton Program Manager, Evergreen CityWorks
- **Chelsea Cox**  
General Manager, SoBi Hamilton
- **Trevor Goulet**  
Biologist, Dillon Consulting
- **Dave Heidebrecht**  
Manager, Office of Community Engagement, McMaster University
- **Corey Helie Masters**  
Marketing and Membership Coordinator, Community CarShare
- **Kate Flynn**  
Sustainable Food Systems Research and Program Coordinator, Mohawk College
- **Rachel Johnson**  
Transportation Management Planner, City of Hamilton
- **James Knott**  
Project Manager, LURA Consulting
- **Jayde Liebersbach**  
Owner and Principal Designer, East 45th + Maple
- **Brent McKnight**  
Assistant Professor, McMaster University
- **Liz Nield**  
CEO, LURA Consulting
- **Serguei Tchertok**  
Manager, Sustainability, Grand & Toy
- **Peter Topalovic, M.Eng**  
Project Manager, Transportation Demand Management Program Manager, Smart Commute Hamilton Mobility Programs and Special Projects | Public Works Department (HSR) | City of Hamilton
- **Kate Whalen**  
Senior Manager, Academic Sustainability Programs, McMaster University

## Attendee Demographics

In addition to the 16 sustainability professionals listed above, 55 people attended the event. Registered attendees identified as undergraduate students (32), community members (7), recent graduates (6), and graduate students (5). Students who identified with an academic faculty mentioned Science (14), Engineering (10) Social Sciences (3), Health Science (3), Commerce (2), and Humanities (1). College students referenced programs of Environment/Sustainability (1) and Law (1).

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## Event Feedback

In a follow-up survey, 30 attendees provided their feedback on various questions, which is summarized below. Attendees were offered the chance to win a one-year membership with Hamilton Bike Share for their participation in the survey.

Over half of attendees said they heard about the event through Facebook (24) or word of mouth (12).

When asked which aspects they found to be most appealing when choosing to register for the event, most said Networking/Professional Development (13), followed by Speaker/Content (6), Employment Opportunities (6), and Community Engagement (5).

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the event, attendees were Very Satisfied (13), Satisfied (13), or Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3). None of the attendees said that they were Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied with the event.

The highest rated event components, based on weighted average over five points, include Quality of the Sustainability Professionals (4.23), Fun and Enjoyment (4.23) and Accessibility of Location (4.23). These were followed by Relevance of the Discussion (3.97) and Quality of Keynote Speaker (3.97), Value of Networking Activity (3.93), and Promotion and Communication of the Event (3.83).

When given space for attendees to write what they liked most, coded responses highlighted that there was a good opportunity for both formal and informal networking (12), that it was a comfortable environment (8), and there was rich discussion (8) with interesting sustainability professionals (6). Many attendees also mentioned the organization of the event (5) and the food (4), as well as the ability to have access to each professional's bio in advance (2).

Some specific comments included:

"I found it very helpful to have the bios of the professionals to get an idea of who was going to be there. It also allows you to spend less time on the mundane questions and get to the meaningful discussions. The food was also awesome and followed the theme of sustainability, which was a nice touch."

"I really loved the layout of the event as it allowed me to get to know a bit about the professionals. It was a super comfortable environment that promoted discussion."

"The fact that there were Hamilton's top and 'go to' sustainability professionals was amazing! Having personal access to them was an absolute privilege."

When asked what could be improved, attendees mentioned that they would like more roundtable rotations to meet more professionals (6), more time to network (5), and more time at the roundtables (4). Respondents suggested a shorter keynote address to allow more time for networking (2). Respondents also mentioned that they would like more structure at the tables (3) and guidance about how to network (2). Additionally, individual respondents suggested better signage to the room, including an ice-breaker activity, offering employment opportunities, including a GIS professional, including an energy professional, and playing music during the informal networking portions.

Some specific responses included:

“I would have liked to have more opportunities to sit at different tables. I think most constructive conversations happened in those sessions.”

“More rotations to allow for networking with more professionals. More guidance for attendees in terms of how to network with sustainability professionals...While I found the discussion very intriguing, I was unsure about what contributions I could make.”

“It would have been nice to see a balance in the professional line up. Energy is the single biggest driving force for sustainability and I feel like it wasn’t touched on at all.”

Finally, we are pleased and encouraged to know that 29 of the 30 respondents would be interested in attending another event in future.

Feedback from the sustainability professionals was extremely positive. They enjoyed the opportunity to meet with a passionate group of individuals around the topic of sustainability. Based on recommendations from respondents, we will be sure to include music to further enhance the mood of the event, strive to expand our breadth of sustainability professionals, and allow more time and opportunity to network. Additionally, as many of the comments focused on the desire to continue dialogue with sustainability professionals, we will be engaging in community consultation to determine how we can support ongoing discussions going forward.

## Collaborators

In addition to all of the Sustainability Professionals listed above, collaborators who contributed to the 2016/17 Green Jobs Event include: Fiona McGill, SPN Volunteer, and Elise Desjardins from McMaster’s Academic Sustainability Programs Office who provided dedicated project management support for the event; Jasmine Wong photographed the event, and Mandy Kaur and Tyler Marr ran the registration booth and managed the event set-up; the Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network Executive Board members supported overall strategic planning and direction, members include: Jay Carter, Jayde Liebersbach, Liz Nield, Maria Topalovic, Peter Topalovic, Janelle Trant, and Kate Whalen.

Funding support was provided by: McMaster’s W. Booth School of Engineering Practice; McMaster Student Success Centre; City of Hamilton’s Economic Development Department; and Smart Commute Hamilton. Further in-kind support was provided by SoBi Hamilton and McMaster’s Centre for Continuing Education.

We would like to thank and recognize Mes Amis Catering for providing the delicious, healthy, and conscious breakfast for the event.



## Event Photos



Green Jobs Networking Event session with students and sustainability professionals



Laura Anderson and students during a roundtable networking session

## Appendix A

Survey feedback highlighting the top responses from attendees and sustainability professionals. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of responses. Note that students did not select many skills that they felt emerging professionals were Not Competent in. Therefore, their ratings for Somewhat Competent are also included to demonstrate the trend.

<b>What Attendees Said</b> (20 respondents)	<b>What Professionals Said</b> (14 respondents)
<b>What skills are most important to achieving success in sustainability?</b> <i>(list of skills was provided)</i>	
Interdisciplinary teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others (16)  The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings (14)  Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (13)  The ability to innovate and be creative (12)  The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (11)	Skills in project planning and project management (11)  The ability to innovate and be creative (10)  The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings (10)  Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (10)  Interdisciplinary teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others (10)
<b>What skills are emerging professionals lacking in competence?</b> (Not competent, Somewhat competent, Very Competent)	
Skills in project planning and project management (4 not, 11 somewhat)  Preparing and delivering presentations (3 not, 11 somewhat)  The ability to innovate and be creative (2 not, 10 somewhat)  Working knowledge of computers and technology (1 not, 11 somewhat)	Skills in project planning and project management (7 not)  Preparing and delivering presentations (6 not)  The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings (6 not)  The ability to effectively communicate in writing (4)

## What skills do emerging professionals have most competency in?

(Not competent, Somewhat competent, Very Competent)

Interdisciplinary teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others (14)	Working knowledge of computers and technology (11)
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (13)	The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (7)
The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (12)	The ability to innovate and be creative (5)
The ability to effectively communicate in writing (11)	Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (4)

## Your questions for sustainability professionals

(asked of attendees)

- How would you describe your profession? What are the key qualifications and skill set required to succeed in a sustainable career? Are there any licenses or certifications required and is this a regulated profession?
- What is the most effective way to encourage sustainable practices in others who are skeptical of environmental change?
- How did you get your job working in sustainability - what courses did you take, who did you know, etc.?
- What are the growing trends in the industry? How important is stakeholder engagement in sustainability? Does technology improve a company's ability to be more sustainable? Any advice on networking at corporate events?
- What is the greatest challenge for professionals trying to encourage industries to take on new sustainability goals?
- How would you compare the compensation for a job in sustainability as opposed to a job in the corporate industry?
- How do you feel green jobs and technology will affect those working outside of the sector in a competing field as far as employment? Would you be open to retaining skilled employees from less than green industries to work in your fields? How many jobs do you believe will be created in Hamilton in the next 5 years?
- When striving for overarching sustainability in our built environment, what is one rule-of-thumb or particular piece of knowledge that should always be considered?
- How do you go about finding market demand or room for improvement upon current infrastructure?
- How did you learn about different areas of work in sustainability?
- Do you hire co-op students? What suggestions do you have for job searching in the winter?
- What are the barriers faced when implementing sustainable practices in business? What strategies have worked to overcome them?



## Your advice for emerging professionals (asked of sustainability professionals)

University students often lack hands on practical real world experience. College students often lack analytical thinking skills.

- No cover letter? Don't even apply Customize Everything! Have a customized section on your resume that talks about leadership and volunteering. Make sure spelling, grammar, and style are PERFECT! Go to Career Services and book a consultation. Have a friend or colleague do a mock interview. Only apply for jobs that makes sense for your career. Network, network, network, network.
- Choose real life experience, in a relevant field (internships, placements, volunteering) over pursuing a Masters degree.
- Be true to yourself and know the difference between what you are good at and what you like to do.
- Continue to meet people and network, because you never know where the next opportunity is going to come from. It is an old cliché but it is true. Increasingly I am seeing firsthand how networking is opening doors for people. Also, continue to build your relevant experience. There are no shortage of places to volunteer to allow you to build your resume and learn new skills. Hundreds of people are applying to the same jobs, so gaining experience can help differentiate you.
- Learn to think about the goals and challenges faced by those for whom you work (e.g. supervisors, clients, citizens, etc.). Strive to see things through their eyes; to see and understand the barriers between them and what they are seeking to achieve. Then consider how your skills/abilities/resources can align with their challenges and contribute to solving them.
- Find the subset of sustainability that you truly love and are passionate about. Once you find that most everything else will fall into place.
- Network and get involved. 80% of jobs are either not posted or you get them through a connection.
- Networking is key. I think also being more specific about what is interesting you. 10 years ago you might have been able to say, "I want a career in sustainability" and it make sense. Now, I think employment seekers need to look for more specific areas of interest.
- Every job has a sustainability component. If you retain your passion for the social or environmental initiatives, a sustainability project (and possibly a career) will find you no matter what you do.
- Get involved in what you are passionate about and also in projects/initiatives that will stretch your skill set and experiences.
- Be creative and flexible. Sustainability is such a broad term these days and encompasses many areas. Your [academic] background will not always determine your job role so be sure to think outside the box and draw from those with different areas of expertise.
- It's important to put yourself out there. Volunteer, go to networking events, take on projects or jobs that teach you valuable skills (even if they're not directly related to your dream job). It's important to try to open as many doors as possible. Invest the time and energy in building your skills and meeting new people. Then, when the time comes when an awesome job comes along, someone will immediately think of your name and offer you the chance to apply.
- Stay informed. Research your sources for reliability. Speak out at home, with friends and at work. Sustainability should be part of everyday conversations. If there isn't a sustainability mindset in the groups/people/employers around you then you have to be the person that makes that change in thinking. The field of sustainability doesn't end when you leave the office.