

The background of the slide is a photograph of sunflowers in the foreground, with wind turbines visible in the blurred background under a clear sky. A teal rounded rectangle is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030



SPEC's 2026 - 2030 Strategic Plan

For more than fifty years, SPEC has been part of Vancouver's story of environmental action. What began in 1969 as a small group of citizens determined to protect the places they loved has grown into something broader, offering solutions in the areas of sustainable food systems, zero waste, and climate. Through decades of change, our purpose remains the same: to empower communities to act collectively on the environmental challenges of their time.

Today, that purpose is both urgent and hopeful. The crises we face are not only technical challenges but cultural ones, asking us to live within ecological limits and to act with reciprocity toward the land and other living beings. At SPEC, we believe the gap between concern and action closes when people have tangible, accessible pathways to participate and when individual effort becomes part of something larger. SPEC's role is to support building the relationships, creating the opportunities, and making sustainable living something people can reach.



Vision

Connected, thriving, and just communities living in balance with healthy ecosystems.

Mission

To empower people to take collective environmental action through education, community connection, and accessible opportunities.

Values

Rooted in Community

We are local and grassroots. We collaborate with other community members and organizations as a way to strengthen community and increase our impact.

Respectful

We work with integrity and an open mindset. We listen to others and work to include other perspectives.

Empowering

Through a positive and fun environment, we strive to support, nurture, enable and educate community members for action.

Purposeful

We value clarity, focus and a resilient structure that can make our work more effective and productive.

Guiding Principles

We recognize that the following principles have not always guided our work. In SPEC's 50+ year history, there are times when we've fallen short of our aspirations. These guiding principles are not stand-alone initiatives or outcomes, but serve as a starting point to articulate how we aspire to show up and approach our work. We acknowledge that these principles alone are not enough and that this work is never complete. We must consistently show through our actions, not just our aspirations, that we are accountable to these principles in our everyday work.

Environmental Justice

We recognize that climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss disproportionately impact communities that have contributed the least to these crises. While governments and corporations must be accountable for reducing harm, meaningful change happens at every level and is strengthened by broad participation. We strive to reduce barriers to participation and ensure our programs expand access to environmental action and avoid reinforcing existing inequities.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

We believe there is immense value in approaching our work through multiple ways of knowing, including lived experience, place-based understanding, Indigenous Knowledge systems, and Western science. We seek to hold these ways of knowing in relationship with one another, believing this leads to better environmental outcomes. We recognize that receiving Indigenous Knowledge is a privilege that must be earned, and that knowledge holders determine if, when, and how that knowledge is shared.

Relationship-Centered

We prioritize relationship-building as a foundation for meaningful systems change. We strive to strengthen networks across communities and sectors in ways that recognize power imbalances and support equitable and inclusive participation.

Truth, Reconciliation, and Decolonization

We believe that environmental stewardship and Indigenous rights are inextricably linked. With that understanding, we recognize the role that reconciliation and active decolonization play in repairing and renewing relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples. We recognize that our work, and the systems we operate within, have been shaped by a colonial history that has caused and continues to cause harm to Indigenous Peoples. We are committed to continually learning, unlearning colonial beliefs, and taking action to amplify Indigenous voices and support the ongoing environmental leadership of Indigenous communities, including host nations Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. As we strive to build meaningful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, we understand that these relationships take time and are built on trust; what they look like or how they develop is defined mutually and with respect.





Impact Goals

Equip every generation with the skills to live sustainably

Children, youth, adults, and elders demonstrate increased understanding of environmental issues, practical skills, and confidence to act on sustainability in daily life. Intergenerational learning strengthens community leadership, with elders, educators, and volunteers supporting knowledge-sharing across generations.

- Run 30 active community-based participation sites or initiatives (e.g., repair cafes, garden sites, local farms) annually.
- Host 100 applied sustainability participation events by 2030 (e.g. Repair Cafes, Small Farm Sessions etc.)
- Train or graduate 200 participants and achieve 6,000 community outreach hours through programs such as Master Recycler or equivalent initiatives by 2030.
- Train 200 apprentice fixers in repair skills by 2030.
- Divert or extend the life of 10,000 items from landfill by 2030.
- Engage 15,000 participants in repair activities whether via workshops or Repair Cafes by 2030.
- Achieve a 40–50% increase in participants reporting behaviour change related to waste reduction, repair, or sustainable food practices.

Cultivate environmental leadership through community connection

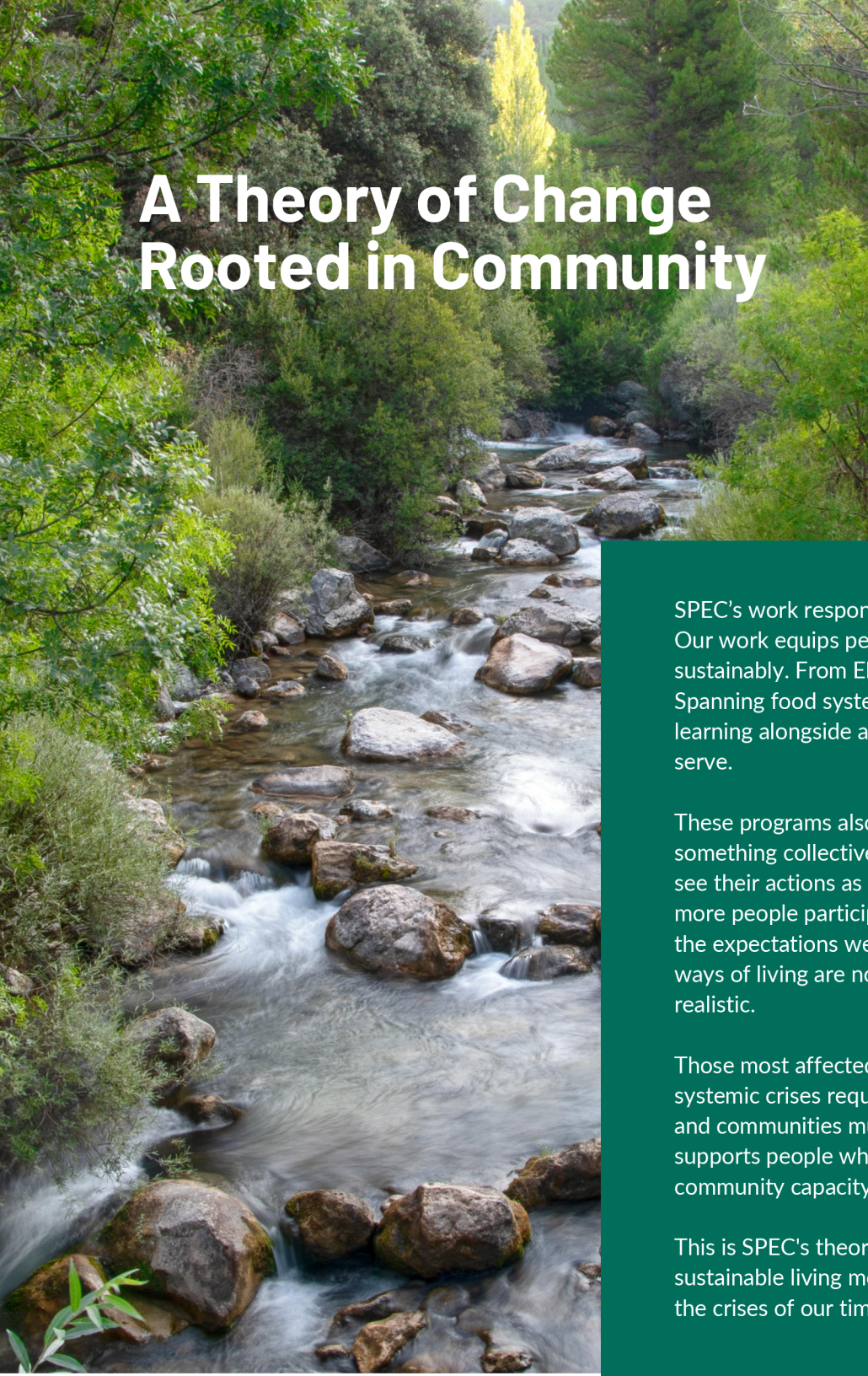
SPEC strengthens relationships across communities, partners, and sectors to amplify local action and inform broader systems change. By creating spaces for learning, dialogue, and shared practice, SPEC helps shift social norms and build the confidence and skills needed for communities to lead locally and influence change over time.

- Build and sustain 8–12 long-term cross-sector relationships by 2030.
- Support or contribute to 2–3 regional or provincial sustainability strategies, frameworks, or pilots.
- Share 3–5 SPEC-developed tools, models, or learning resources for replication or adaptation
- Track year-over-year growth in collaboration, knowledge exchange, or partnership depth.
- Document and report on how community insights inform program design, partnerships, or policy conversations.

Provide accessible interactive opportunities for participation

Community members actively participate in practical initiatives that promote circular economies, ecosystem health, waste reduction, and climate change mitigation. Sustainability shifts from abstract awareness to visible action that people can access locally and regularly.

- Deliver sustainability education programs in at least 10 schools or community organizations annually.
- Reach 5,000 learners per year across schools, workshops, and community programs.
- Engage 200–400 youth and 80–120 elders annually in intergenerational learning activities.
- Train or support 250–300 educators, facilitators, and volunteers by 2030.
- Achieve a 15–20% increase in reported sustainability knowledge, confidence, or agency among participants.



A Theory of Change Rooted in Community

We are living through a triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. These crises are interconnected and disproportionately affect communities that have contributed least to their causes. They are not only environmental failures, but systemic ones shaped by social norms, economic structures, institutions, and collective habits that distance people from land, from one another, and from the consequences of daily life

Many people care deeply, yet care alone does not translate into action. Overwhelm, climate anxiety, social inequities, and the belief that individual efforts do not matter all create barriers to meaningful participation. Sustainable living can feel abstract, or burdensome, and is not accessible to everyone. Without visible pathways to engage, concern turns into paralysis.

SPEC's work responds to this gap between concern and participation.

Our work equips people across every generation with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to live sustainably. From Elders Circles to school programs, our programming reaches people at any age. Spanning food systems and ecosystems, climate action, and zero waste initiatives, we offer interactive learning alongside accessible opportunities to put that learning into practice within the communities we serve.

These programs also build the relationships and community connections that turn individual action into something collective. By creating spaces for shared learning, dialogue, and practice, SPEC helps people see their actions as part of something larger, helping bridge individual action and systemic change. As more people participate in values-aligned activities together, social norms begin to shift and with them the expectations we place on markets, institutions, and policy. Communities demonstrate that different ways of living are not only possible, but already underway. Collective action reshapes what is considered realistic.

Those most affected by environmental degradation are those least responsible for it. Addressing systemic crises requires action at every level. Governments and corporations must be held accountable, and communities must be empowered to participate. One without the other is not enough. SPEC supports people who want to act but don't know where to start. By reducing barriers and building community capacity, we strengthen the social conditions that enable larger structural change.

This is SPEC's theory of change: that by meeting people where they are, building community, and making sustainable living more accessible, we contribute to the cultural and systemic shifts needed to address the crises of our time.

Theory of Change

Our Work

Community Education & Empowerment

Workshops, school programs, and lifelong learning that strengthen understanding of climate, biodiversity, and pollution challenges, and cultivate the skills and confidence to act across generations.

Collaboration & Storytelling

Partnerships, community networks, and shared stories that connect people and amplify collective action.

Applied Sustainability & Circularity Initiatives

Repair cafés, zero-waste and regenerative food projects that model tangible, local circularity.



Will Increase Community Participation

- Increased knowledge, skills, and confidence to take environmental action
- Visible, scalable examples of sustainable community practices



- Growth in volunteerism, collaboration, and intergenerational participation
- Shifts in public attitudes toward repair, reuse, and regenerative living
- Early indicators of reduced waste and stronger local food resilience



Which will Strengthen and Scale Community Action

- Circular practices are normalized across households and communities
- Localized and resilient food systems emerging across BC
- Empowered community leaders sustaining independent initiatives

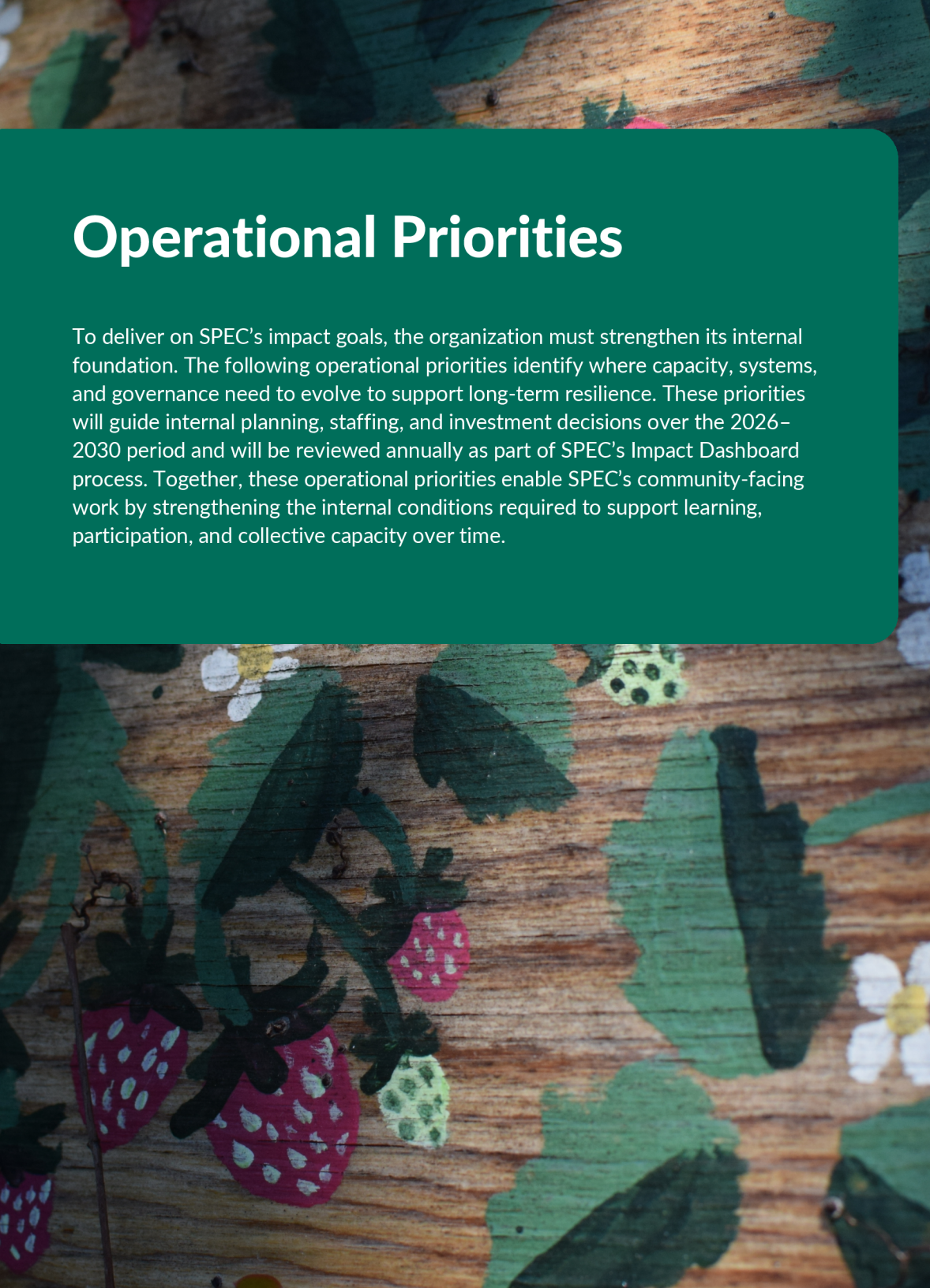


- Indigenous-led work is amplified
- SPEC is a provincial convener for community-led sustainability



Leading to Meaningful Change

Communities across BC are connected, regenerative, and resilient, living within ecological limits and demonstrating how collective, local action can restore balance between people and the planet.



Operational Priorities

To deliver on SPEC's impact goals, the organization must strengthen its internal foundation. The following operational priorities identify where capacity, systems, and governance need to evolve to support long-term resilience. These priorities will guide internal planning, staffing, and investment decisions over the 2026–2030 period and will be reviewed annually as part of SPEC's Impact Dashboard process. Together, these operational priorities enable SPEC's community-facing work by strengthening the internal conditions required to support learning, participation, and collective capacity over time.

1. Organizational Sustainability & Fund Development

Ensure SPEC's long-term stability by aligning funding and resources with our mission to empower people to take collective environmental action.

2. Governance and Leadership Renewal

Cultivate strong, inclusive leadership and governance that reflect SPEC's commitment to intergenerational learning, reconciliation, and systems of care.

3. Communications and Storytelling

Build SPEC's visibility and credibility as a trusted community connector and environmental educator, growing awareness that drives program participation and strengthens the donor and funder relationships that sustain our work.

4. Measurement and Systems

Strengthen internal systems and data to enhance accountability, impact tracking, and organizational resilience.

5. People, Culture, and Learning

Foster a values-driven organizational culture. Ensure SPEC's staff, volunteers, and Board have the support, skills, and shared purpose needed to sustain long-term community impact.



SPEC's Alignment the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

	SDG Alignment	Fit with SPEC's Theory of Change	How It Connects to SPEC's Impact Pathways
	SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities	SPEC's work centers on building neighbourhood-scale climate resilience, circularity, and localized sustainability practices.	Community Education & Empowerment → Applied Sustainability Initiatives → Climate-Resilient Neighbourhoods.
	SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production	Repair Cafés, zero-waste programs, and circular economy models directly advance sustainable consumption and waste reduction.	Applied Sustainability & Circularity Initiatives → Visible, replicable examples of sustainable practices → Culture shift toward repair and reuse.
	SDG 13 – Climate Action	SPEC mobilizes community-level climate literacy and mitigation through hands-on education and local solutions.	All three activity areas reinforce community-level capacity to act on climate change and contribute to long-term resilience.



Society Promoting Environmental Conservation

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On the lands of the x̣ṃəθḳʷəỵəm (Musqueam), Ṣḳẉx̣ẉú7mesh
Úxwumixw (Squamish), and sə́lilwə́təɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

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