BIRD FRIENDLY
CITY
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So Your Municipality is Certified—

Now What?



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Introduction

This short guide is for local community groups within Bird Teams that have already earned Bird Friendly City or Town Certification. It will help you advance to a higher designation level (Intermediate or High), engage municipalities in your project, and keep building momentum to protect, defend, and restore bird populations.

This guide contains three sections:

1. Reviewing Progress;
2. Setting a Shared Direction; and
3. Shaping Future Plans

Nature Canada is here to help you along the way! You can reach us anytime by emailing engage@naturecanada.ca

We look forward to working with you.



COMPLIMENTARY RESOURCES

BIRD FRIENDLY CITY RESOURCES

Nature Canada:
Bird Friendly City Booklet & Companion Guide

Nature Canada:
Bird Team Structure Template

Nature Canada & Ecological Design Lab:
Gardening for Biodiversity

Stewardship Centre for BC:
Cats & Birds, Local Government Action Plans

ORGANIZING AND MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT

Ontario Nature:
Tipsheets for Municipal Engagements

Michael Gantz:
Organizing Handbook: People, Power Change

Tree Canada:
Enabling Legislation, Municipal Bylaws and Regulations



Reviewing Progress

First off, congratulations on your current Bird Friendly City or Town Certification! Your team's hard work, passion, and commitment to save bird lives has paid off and you should pat yourself on the back for this accomplishment.

Reflecting on what worked well, what didn't, and what challenges persisted is an important part of strengthening your next efforts and advancing your municipality's commitment to Bird Friendly City Certification. Taking time to do this as a group will help to identify practical next steps to support birds and biodiversity in your community.

SUCCESSES SO FAR

To begin we recommend reviewing your current Bird Friendly application as a team and write down all of your successes that led you to this accomplishment. Some of these wins may look like: finding like-minded partners who have a shared goal; getting support from your municipal staff or council; securing a meeting with local government officials; increasing Bird Team size or your reach on social media; high attendance rate at a local event; supporting or advocating for the implementation of nature-positive policy etc.

AREAS TO IMPROVE

Next, what gaps in your application are present? Was any section left blank? Is there a desire to work towards those empty sections? Why or why not? Are there any blank criteria that could be considered 'low-hanging fruit' to increase your Certification level? Are there areas that your group really cares about that are still missing? Highlight gaps that are priorities to your Bird Team. Knowing where there's still opportunities to do better and what you care about most will help you in your future efforts. A group discussion is best for this.

ROADBLOCKS ALONG THE WAY

Thirdly, jot down any roadblocks that were experienced leading up to obtaining your initial Certification. You are not the only Bird Team or grassroots community group to experience these. How did these setbacks make the team feel? What lessons were learned from them to improve in the future? These struggles are learning opportunities for where to go next. They may also identify serious barriers that you will benefit from acknowledging.

Setting a Shared Direction

You now have your Bird Friendly City/Town certification and a clearer sense of what worked and what's still needed. The next steps are to align on a shared vision, set measurable goals, and outline your theory of change to guide the next certification cycle. This will focus your efforts and support your progress. This list is a simplified list, and if you are interested in diving deeper, we suggest reading the Strategizing section of Michael Gantz's

Organizing Handbook: People, Power Change



A SHARED VISION

In one or two sentences, describe what you envision your community looking like in the future when your municipality is fully committed to protecting and supporting birds and biodiversity.

Are you closer to this vision now that you are certified? Why or why not?

If you were to address some of the gaps from your application, would your municipality be closer to that vision?

MEASURABLE GOALS

Vision is where you want things to ultimately go, and goals are the steps along the way to get there. Goals can shift through time based on internal and external factors.

Using your gaps and roadblocks previously defined, and your shared vision, write down together your goals for the short and long term, leading up to your renewal application due date. Try to write these specific enough so that you can look back and know whether you achieved your goal or not.

What are the big steps to make your next renewal application of even greater success?

SOME EXAMPLES OF GOALS TO WORK TOWARDS IN THE FUTURE MAY INCLUDE:

1. Getting to know your local government staff and council by scheduling a coffee-chat meeting or inviting them to an upcoming event;
2. Increasing community engagement or social media reach by ___% by collaborating with allied community groups;
3. Creating a sign-on letter or petition for a specific policy or bylaw that protects birds and advances your certification level;
4. Sign up to delegate at an upcoming council meeting regarding a biodiversity-related cause in your community;
5. Undertake projects to restore natural habitats, including wetlands and green spaces, which are vital for bird populations.

YOUR TEAM'S THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change statement brings consensus to your Bird Team's belief in how to influence progress. It can be written in the following format:

If we do (SPECIFIC ACTIONS)

Then (STRATEGIC GOAL or CHANGE WILL OCCUR)

Because (REASON)

AN EXAMPLE COULD LOOK LIKE:

If we demonstrate to municipal decision makers that there is overwhelming support from the public for nature-positive policies to be implemented,

Then our municipality will create better policies for biodiversity protection,

Because municipal decision makers will listen to public opinion.

OR

If we educate the public on why birds in our city matter and what are their threats,

Then people will want to ensure we maintain a high standard of bird friendly practices,

Because people act in favour of what they care about.



Shaping Future Plans

You've looked back at what you've accomplished and identified where you want to go next. Now it's time to map out how to get there.

A **campaign strategy** is the overall approach your Bird Team will take to reach your goals. It provides focus and helps guide decisions over time.

Tactics are the specific actions you use to put that strategy into practice. While your strategy usually stays consistent, your tactics can change as opportunities and challenges arise.

KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR CAMPAIGN WILL LIKELY NEED TO HAVE THREE BRANCHES:



COMMUNICATIONS:

Sharing your campaign message through social media and media coverage;

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Building relationships and support with residents;

ADVOCACY WITH DECISION-MAKERS:

Influencing policy and promoting change.

If you have made it through the previous steps, you should be ready to walk through these guiding questions to build your campaign ideas.



YOUR KEY ISSUE(S)

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM(S) THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

- Eg: Bird-window collisions; outdoor cat predation; pesticide use

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION YOU ARE SEEKING?

- Eg: Bird-Friendly Design Standards; no-roam cat bylaw; pesticide bans

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES & KEY MOMENTS?

- Eg: Are any municipal plans or by-laws slotted to be updated? When does public comment on them close? Is a local government election coming up?

WHAT MIGHT BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OR CONSTRAINTS?

- Eg: Perceived cost of Bird-Friendly policies; no political interest; industry influence

YOUR KEY AUDIENCES

WHO IS ALREADY ON YOUR SIDE?

- Eg: Your Bird Team members, local businesses, nature lovers

HOW CAN YOU LEVERAGE THEIR SUPPORT?

- Eg: Presentation to local government; write to council; sign-on letter or petition; share information with local businesses

WHO ARE THE IMPORTANT AUDIENCES TO CONVINCE?

- Eg: Local government; General public; community members

WHAT POWER DO THEY HOLD?

- Eg: Creating bylaws and policies; education; general awareness to change everyday actions to protect birds

WHO MIGHT BE SOME UNUSUAL ALLIES TO COLLABORATE WITH?

- Eg: Glass developers; building manufacturers; local artists; local institutions

WHAT DOES THIS COLLABORATION LOOK LIKE?

- Eg: Service pitches; painting on windows

YOUR KEY FRAMING

WHAT ARE YOUR KEY MESSAGES AND FRAMING?

- Eg: Protecting birds protects biodiversity and human health

WHAT COMMUNICATION MESSAGES WILL YOU USE FOR EACH AUDIENCE?

- Eg: Social media; local government; general public; opposition

HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGES?

- Letter campaigns to council and businesses; social media



Conclusion

This guide is designed to support and advance your community's efforts to create a more Bird Friendly City or Town—one where people, birds, and nature can all thrive together. Achieving Bird Friendly City Certification isn't just about protecting wildlife; it's about fostering stronger community connections, empowering local voices, and advancing biodiversity protection and sustainability in the spaces we share with birds.

Thank you for being part of this growing movement. Your leadership and commitment make a real difference. We'd love to hear from you—reach out any time at engage@naturecanada.ca with your questions, updates, ideas, or feedback. Nature Canada is here to support your journey to becoming a Certified Bird Friendly City or Town!