

# ECOSPARK *Strategic* PLAN

.....  
2017-2021

JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE

# Executive Director and Chair of EcoSpark

In 2013, the annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario showed that our environmental ministries (the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Environment) were no longer able to deliver on their mandates with decreasing budgets.

This situation is not unlike 21 years ago when EcoSpark was formed by prominent scientists, including the late Dr. Ursula Franklin, to address provincial gaps in environmental monitoring through citizen science. In fact, the current operating budgets of the same ministries are less than what they were in 1996.

Our mission is as relevant now as it was then.

While EcoSpark has evolved, adapted and matured over the years, we continue to live and breathe our organizational mission: to empower people to take an active role in protecting and sustaining nature.

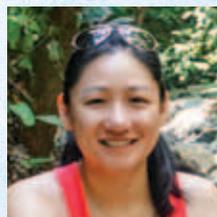
We are pleased to present our 2017-2021 Strategic Plan for EcoSpark. With this new plan, we are committed to:

1. Be the partner of choice for citizen science engagement
2. Inspire, empower and train the next generation of environmental leaders
3. Be the partner of choice for civic engagement in key land use issues
4. Ensure the resiliency and sustainability of EcoSpark

This five-year plan is based on the learnings from our previous strategic plan and through consultation with our trusted “EcoSparkers” – partners, collaborators, participants, volunteers and other friends of the organization. We thank all of you for your generous support in directing the future impact of this wonderful organization.

This renewed strategic plan for EcoSpark builds upon our organizational strengths and achievements including our face-to-face environmental engagement and our science-based systems approach. We will continue to operate in a trusted, credible and reliable manner with educators, scientist, planners and other like-minded organizations and individuals.

We invite you to join us on our journey as we embark on our next phase of discovery, action and change.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joyce Chau".

**JOYCE CHAU**  
*Executive Director*



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cindy Chau".

**CINDY CHAU**  
*Chair of the Board of Directors*

# Strategic Goals

*Building upon our relevant and enduring mission, vision and principles, EcoSpark is committed to achieve the following goals over the next five years within the Greater Golden Horseshoe.*

## WE WILL:

### **Be the partner of choice for citizen science engagement**

- 1.1** Become a regional hub for citizen science training, monitoring and data
- 1.2** Scale up our citizen science programs, particularly in communities with the most pressing needs

### **Inspire, empower and train the next generation of environmental leaders**

- 2.1** Engage youth in authentic science and policy processes on key environmental issues
- 2.2** Empower teachers to integrate authentic science and policy issues into their classrooms

### **Be the partner of choice for civic engagement in key land use issues**

- 3.1** Work collaboratively with different levels of government and community organizations to address the most urgent land use issues
- 3.2** Build community capacity around land use issues, and make land use policy accessible through educational tools and workshops
- 3.3** Facilitate a strong youth voice and participation in how our communities are shaped and grown

### **Ensure the resiliency and sustainability of EcoSpark**

- 4.1** Achieve financial stability and sustainability
- 4.2** Foster a culture of learning and development among staff and board
- 4.3** Increase involvement in key networks and collaborations
- 4.4** Increase the profile and presence of EcoSpark by developing a volunteer program and celebrating milestones and successes

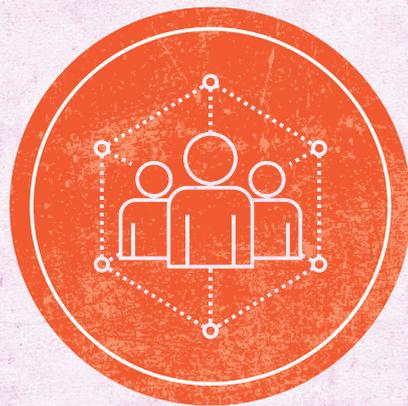
# Impact Statement

By 2021, EcoSpark will have educated, trained and inspired youth and their teachers (grades 6 to 12) and adults (in community groups) in the Greater Golden Horseshoe through local, outdoor, nature-based experiential education and citizen science to take action to benefit their local environment, with an ultimate goal of sparking life-long environmental action.

To successfully achieve our goals and intended impact, EcoSpark will continue to apply our engagement model of “*Discover. Act. Change.*” that produces on-the-ground results in terms of transformative and lasting change in our participants as environmental ambassadors, increased knowledge and understanding of the health of our natural environments, and stronger actions as a result (i.e., programs, policies and plans) to protect it.

We will continue to work with integrity using our approach that is:

- **Evidence-based:** we generate evidence and support to inform policies and decision-making that have a direct impact on our environment
- **Grassroots:** we directly engage with and empower concerned citizens while respecting their local knowledge and experience around key land use issues
- **Collaborative:** we foster partnerships and coalitions, and participate in networks and associations to achieve collective impact
- **Integrated:** we take a cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and watershed-based/systems thinking approach to our work towards sustainable solutions for our environment



# Strategic Plan Development Process

EcoSpark's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan was developed over the course of 2016. The process was led by a subcommittee of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director. An internal consultation was conducted with all staff and board members during the spring. External consultations were conducted by the strategic planning subcommittee during the summer through individual individuals, workshops and surveys. In total, we received external feedback from 30 individual representing conservation authorities, foundations, corporations, municipalities, school boards and educators, and other environmental non-governmental organizations. All of the results were compiled and analyzed during the fall, and the strategic plan was drafted over the winter and approved at EcoSpark's first board meeting in 2017.

# Strategic Plan Implementation and Review Process

EcoSpark's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually against objectives and metrics developed for each goal and reported on through our annual report. EcoSpark's implementation of this plan will also be evaluated at the end of the five years.



# About EcoSpark

EcoSpark was founded in 1996 by prominent scientists, including Dr. Ursula Franklin, in response to provincial budget cuts in environmental monitoring. For the past 21 years, EcoSpark has connected youth and their communities with the scientific ideas and skills for environmental monitoring. We have a strong reputation in the areas of education, citizen science, community engagement and collaboration. To date, we have directly worked with over 65,000 youth and adults from across southern Ontario in over 20 watersheds and 15 publically-funded school boards.

## MISSION

We empower people to take an active role in protecting and sustaining nature. We do this by giving people the tools for education, monitoring and influencing positive change. Together, we create a healthy environment for all.

## VISION

EcoSpark envisions a future where we are a leader in empowering individual and communities to actively protect and maintain a healthy, sustainable environment for future generations.

## PRINCIPLES

- EcoSpark believes that a healthy environment is an essential basic need for well-being.
- EcoSpark believes that experiential environmental education inspires people to be environmentally responsible.
- EcoSpark believes that developing and sharing environmental knowledge is a crucial step towards promoting more effective environmental stewardship.
- EcoSpark believes that people have the ability and responsibility to be stewards who work to effect positive environmental change.
- EcoSpark believes that individuals and communities are responsible for protecting, maintaining and restoring the environment for present and future generations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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