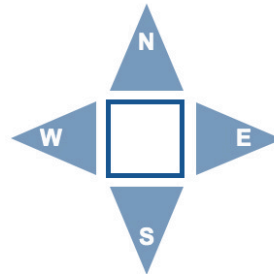


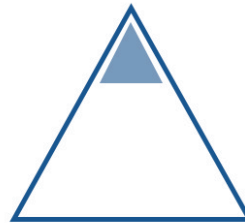
The ISIS Accelerator OVERVIEW



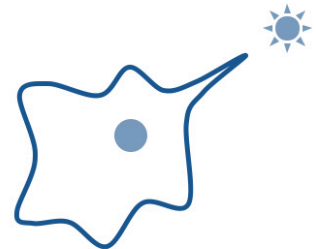
COMPASS



STRATESPHERE



PYRAMID



AMOEB A

Introduction to the ISIS Accelerator:

Tools for Strategic Sustainable Development



About

The AtKisson Group is one of the world's leading sustainability knowledge and consulting networks and has been a pioneer and innovator in the field since it was founded in 1992. AtKisson Group members include consulting and training companies, university centers for sustainability, non-profit foundations, and independent practitioners in over a dozen countries. See www.AtKisson.com for more information.

The ISIS Accelerator is the AtKisson Group's proprietary suite of professional sustainability tools. The ISIS Accelerator provides comprehensive strategy, planning, and assessment support to any organizational sustainability program or initiative. The tools are collected into four packages (Compass, Pyramid, Amoeba, and StrateSphere), and can be used by professional staff within an organization, or applied with the aid of an external consultant who is trained and licensed in their use.

The tools consist of a set of manuals, templates, presentation slides, spreadsheets, and other digital documents in .pdf, .doc, .xls, .ppt and other commonly used formats. Licensed users can print, copy, and adapt these documents by adjusting or adding content. The documents guide you in the use, facilitation, and presentation of the methodologies and workshops that are the heart of the tool set.

This overview is a short excerpt from The ISIS Accelerator Guidebook, the opening volume in the set of manuals. It describes what ISIS Accelerator is (and what it is not), how it is used, and what the tools consist of.

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"The ISIS Accelerator" was first developed and released as a complete toolkit, with manuals and a licensing model, in 2002. It has been in continuous use and revision since then. Many AtKisson Group colleagues and associates have contributed to its development (too many to list here).

The ISIS Accelerator is a robust, comprehensive, and unique suite of tools for practicing sustainable development from a whole-systems perspective

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Preface

If you are looking at this Overview, then you are probably very familiar with the word "Sustainability", and with its cousin, "Sustainable Development."

If you are trying to advance sustainability goals, if you are trying to do sustainable development, then you are also familiar with the difficult challenges often involved in creating real sustainability in the real world.

These challenges include:

- Understanding what is actually happening to the world around us – on topics ranging from global climate change to local community health – and what the future holds if current trends continue
- Building capacity for systems thinking, so that we can understand why these things are happening, and how they influence, and are influenced by, each other
- Using that systems-thinking capacity to integrate our care of nature, economic development, social health, and human wellbeing (instead of watching these different aspects work against each other or compete with each other)
- Figuring out what changes need to be made so that economic and social development can continue, but without drawing down the world's environmental capital or putting human health and wellbeing at risk
- Actually making change happen, at a significant scale, in government, business, community, education, etc.
- Creating capacity for inter-disciplinary, inter-sectoral collaboration and consensus development – often in charged or polarized atmospheres – so that change can be successfully implemented

Sustainable development *in practice* involves the enormous challenge of trying to create more sustainable economies, communities, organizations, and natural ecosystems. The nature/economy relationship is particularly problematic, as climate change and disappearing species attest. But the human challenge of meeting the needs and aspirations of up to nine billion people are equally vital, and difficult. Everything must be worked on at the same time, and quickly, if we are to create a world that can keep going for generations without suffering multiple collapses and disruptions.

The *ISIS Accelerator* is a set of tools for making that kind of sustainable development more possible.

What ISIS Accelerator Does...and Does Not Do

First, it is important to know what ISIS Accelerator is *not*: it is *not* an information guide on creating specific projects in energy, conservation, economic development, waste, or any other specific topic. *ISIS Accelerator* will not teach you (or your colleagues or clients) how to install solar panels, or how to implement standards and programs for the elimination of child labor. These things obviously relate to the *ISIS Accelerator*, but there are many other tools, methods, and programs that can support your work on specific issues.

What *ISIS Accelerator* is: A set of *generally applicable concepts, tools, processes, and methods* for teaching and learning sustainability, for assessing sustainability, for creating sustainable development (or “CSR,” or “ethical business”) plans, for helping people work together across disciplines and cultures, for speeding up innovation processes, and several things besides. In our experience, these tools and ideas can be used in virtually any kind of organization, community, or initiative, to focus and indeed speed up the process of finding and implementing change of all kinds, from technical solutions to new underlying values systems.

Using these tools skillfully and successfully will result in better understanding, clearer decisions, a stronger consensus, more well-developed plans, more effective strategies and implementation programs, better measures of progress ... and thus, a great deal of real and specific change to make our world more sustainable.

Most importantly, using these tools will result in the development of more effective “sustainability change agents” — people working actively to make the world a better place, for both current and future generations.

As in carpentry, *the tools do not do the work. People do the work.* “People” includes practitioners, like you, but also the people they serve, lead, or hope to influence.

We use the word “practitioner” because we look at doing sustainable development as a practice. Sustainable development is complex. The term is a relatively new invention. So our level of skill and knowledge will never be “perfect”. Like doctors, we are always “practicing” ... we are never finished learning ... and we must learn by doing.

The History of ISIS Accelerator

The tools in *ISIS Accelerator* have been under continuous development since 1990. Each tool has a story behind it. In some cases, the tool was created to meet a specific client need, or to respond to an invitation to deliver a workshop. Repeated use of the tool in other situations, and often in different parts of the world, provided the opportunity to polish and refine it over time.

Every tool in the ISIS Accelerator has been used intensively in professional settings, and proven itself effective. This does not mean that the tools are perfect, or that they are guaranteed to work for you, or that we are finished working on them. It *does* mean that we are confident that they *work*, when used properly and skillfully.

The spread of the tools to other parts of the world, through our own international practice and through our network of licensed affiliates, sometimes resulted in their developing into different versions – for example, a German version of *Pyramid*, or Indonesian scenarios for the simulation game portion of *Amoeba*. Tools were adapted and modified to fit specific groups, cultures, and circumstances. Through that process, we learned that they were *adaptable*, and that the process of adapting them was critical to their success.

ISIS Accelerator became a formal "suite of tools" with a licensing and certification program in 2002. As of July 2013, there were licensed users in Japan, Australia, several countries in SE Asia, Sweden, the UK, France, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Iceland, Costa Rica, and the United States; and trainings have also spread the methods to China, India, and the countries of SE Asia and Africa as well.

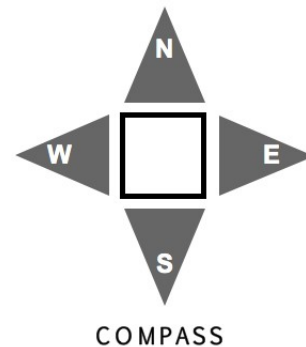
The ISIS Accelerator Tools

Imagine that *ISIS Accelerator* was an actual, physical toolbox. When you opened it, here is what you would see first: four separate toolkits of different sizes and shapes, each with a name and a small symbol on it. Here is a summary of those component sets of tools, and their core purpose and use.

Compass

Sustainability Indicators, Assessment, Stakeholder Engagement, Orientation

Compass is named for its central metaphor and framework, a compass with the four North-East-South-West directional points replaced by the four key dimensions of sustainability: Nature, Economy, Society, and Well-Being. This tool is used for framing, defining, assessing, and measuring progress towards sustainability. With *Compass*, you can create (or refine, or analyze, or communicate) indicators of sustainability for a company, city, or small community; assess the sustainability performance of a specific company or project; or simply communicate the basics of sustainability to people in terms they can easily understand.

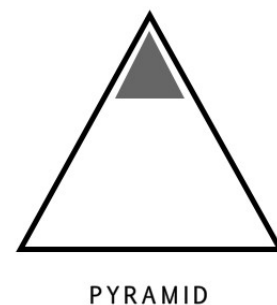


Note: Compass covers both technical and process management aspects for framing, defining, and measuring sustainability. It includes how to engage stakeholders, manage technical experts, and develop sustainability (aka CSR or corporate citizenship) reports.

Pyramid

Sustainability Workshops for Training, Planning, Developing Consensus on Action

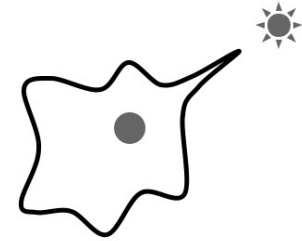
"*Building the Pyramid*" is a very versatile group-process tool that can be used in many ways: as an introductory workshop on sustainable development; as a planning workshop for creating new initiatives, projects, visions, or strategies; and as a multi-stakeholder process for building consensus around a course of action. When necessary, it can do all three of things at the same time. "*Pyramid*" is named for the three-dimensional model that is built during the course of the workshop. The model can be a real, physical object, or a "virtual", imaginary object. The Pyramid model is used to capture and reflect the results of the group process, and to symbolize the group's conclusions and resulting commitments to future action.



Amoeba

Innovation, Change Planning, Developing “Change Agents” for Sustainability

"Amoeba" includes a set of tools for accelerating innovation, planning for change, and building competence in the art of change agency. It includes a set of analysis tools and models, a training workshop with a roll-playing simulation game, and worksheets designed to support strategic thinking, planning, and decision making around how to introduce and spread innovative ideas in a culture or organization. Amoeba is named for its central metaphor: thinking of cultural groups as "amoebae", first sending out exploratory "pseudopods" towards new ideas, and then shifting the whole amoeba to a new position. The tool is based on classic innovation diffusion theory, augmented by twenty years of consulting experience in sustainable development.

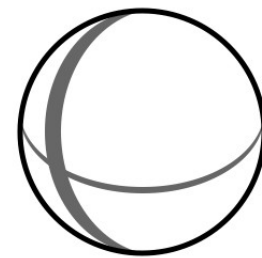


AMOEBEA

StrateSphere

Situation Analysis, Developing a “Theory of Change,” Strategic Planning, Evaluation

"StrateSphere" is an integrated system for creating and monitoring a comprehensive strategic plan, so that you can continuously adjust and improve it over time, based on evaluation and feedback. The "sphere" metaphor is used because the system — which is comprised of several different specific tools — can give you the 360-degree "global picture" you need for your initiative to be most effective. StrateSphere is especially useful for groups that need to develop basic strategic planning competency, as it comes with basic planning templates for setting goals and establishing performance metrics. But is also especially useful for larger scale initiatives that need to map a complex set of actors, assess where the gaps are in the field or sector in which they operation, and determine their most effective course of action to advance sustainability.



STRATESPHERE

ISIS (Indicators > Systems > Innovation > Strategy)

ISIS is the essence of the theory and practice that is at the heart of the Accelerator tools. ISIS is a powerful method for sustainability-related decision-making, planning, and learning. It underlies all the other applications in this toolkit. The ISIS Method can also be used independently of the Accelerator tools. ISIS Accelerator also includes a detailed handbook for understanding and applying the underlying ISIS Method, both for deepening your understanding of the ISIS Accelerator itself, for adapting it to new situations, and for those times when you need to put the power of the methodology to work in a more general way.

How to use ISIS Accelerator

Here is a partial list of the specific things *ISIS Accelerator* can help you to do. This is also a list of the topics covered later in this chapter.

- Introduce sustainability to any group
- Help a group deepen its understanding of sustainability in practice
- Assess or evaluate sustainability management and performance
- Create sustainability indicators for an organization or community
- Manage multi-stakeholder input to a sustainability-related process
- Assess capacity for doing sustainability and for working with integrated systems
- Build capacity for doing sustainability more strategically
- Creating or designing a sustainable development initiative or plan
- Develop multi-stakeholder consensus on action steps and programs
- Help groups learn the how to successfully introduce change and innovation
- Build capacity for accelerating and managing change and innovation
- Assess capacities, options, and alternatives in a sustainability initiative
- Create a comprehensive strategic plan for a sustainable development initiative
- Integrate sustainability into existing operations

The specific elements of the *ISIS Accelerator* – detailed manuals, documents templates, and examples – will help you do a great many more things besides, from planning the practical logistics of a workshop, to creating an aggregated, performance-scaled, sustainability index from complex trend-data.

Obviously, no toolbox can do "everything." But the list above should signal to you that the tools in *ISIS Accelerator* are quite comprehensive: there is enough guidance here to support you from start to finish, provided you add your own skill, dedication, and capacity to learn and adapt things to new situations.

As with any tool, the tools in *ISIS Accelerator* are only as good as the skill of the people using them. Ultimately it is the carpenter's skill, and not the quality of the hammer or saw (as long as the tools basically work), that determines whether or not the house is well built.

And as with any toolkit, you will probably find certain tools that you use more than others, and some that you never use at all. You can add or mix in other tools, too. Over time *ISIS Accelerator* can become as personalized as an actual toolbox, banged up a bit, and re-organized to match to your personality. When you reach that stage, you'll know you've achieved a level of mastery as a sustainable development practitioner.

How Do We Know that the *ISIS Accelerator* Tools Work?

In the case of the *Compass*, *Amoeba*, and *Pyramid* tools, we have experience in using them in many different ways, contexts, and cultures — in some cases over a period of more than 20 years. If these tools had not worked very well for us and for our clients during all that time, we would never have created a licensing program to share them, and they would not have spread to so many corners of the globe.

More importantly, however, we know they work not just because we have used them successfully, but because *other people* have used them successfully. In most cases, this "transfer of skill" has happened through direct participation in an AtKisson training, but in a number of cases, effective transfer has happened without any direct link to us: the manuals and other materials alone have guided the user effectively.

In the case of *Compass*, *Pyramid*, and *Amoeba*, proof of effectiveness comes in the form of widespread, cross-cultural adoption, and many case studies. *Compass* and *Pyramid* have been the subject of Master's and PhD research projects as well.

In the case of *StrateSphere*, we used the whole system intensively over a period of several years with a major client (a large foundation), with very positive results. Elements of that system have since been used with a much larger number of organizations as well. In our consulting practice, *StrateSphere* is one of the most intensively used tools in our toolbox.

Of course, sustainable development is a complex and long-term process. No tool is any better than its user. Unexpected circumstances can always crop up. So we certainly cannot guarantee that the *ISIS Accelerator* tools will "work" for you 100% of the time, and it would be irresponsible to claim that they would. But we are quite confident that they will, in the great majority of cases, provide excellent support to your planning, training, and professional development initiatives, and produce very positive results, and we will do our best to help you, to ensure that they do.

We are quite convinced that *ISIS Accelerator* is the most *comprehensive and adaptable* toolkit for sustainable development available anywhere. It can support you — and a very large group of people — the whole way through an initiative, from initial awareness, to training, to planning and implementation. The tools are generally user-friendly, engaging, and immediately rewarding or educational, in addition to producing impressive results.

But note: We do not necessarily claim that you should "choose *ISIS Accelerator* over other tools." These tools were also designed to be adaptable, so that you can also use them *with other tools*. Unlike some other sustainability frameworks, committing to *ISIS Accelerator* does not mean shutting the door on other tools and methods that you find to be helpful.