

# ECOGATHER ARCHIVE HANDBOOK

UPDATED June 2025



 **EcoGather™**  
*presented by*

 **Sterling**  
ECOLOGICAL THINKING & ACTION

# EcoGather Handbook

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### About EcoGather (active from March 2020 - June 2025)

EcoGather was a paradigm and practice-shifting collaborative learning network composed of beings and communities ready to courageously confront the collapse of both natural systems that we depend upon and human systems that are hostile to life. We recognized that all people alive today are experiencing an existential opportunity – a rough reckoning with a particularly ungrateful and unwise era of human development and a chance to secure and shape a sequel for humanity. Together, we explored the space between systems and stories, figuring out how to show up for the world(s) our hearts know are possible.

Most of us were meticulously prepared to navigate and extend a human future that no longer awaits. There is a massive misalignment between mainstream education and acculturation and the knowledge, skills, and sensibilities that we need to safely navigate the fraught and fractious 21st century. EcoGather offered refuge and renewable resources for those who desire a different relationship to the future.

- We co-created, curated, and provided access to heterodox educational resources that support relational capacity and change competence, encouraging our participants to develop a sense of belonging and possibility within the web of life.
- We tended a digital garden full of ideas, examples, and exchanges conducive to the restoration of place-based lifeways, the vitality of agro-ecosystems, the change-competence of communities, the transition to well-being economies, and the pursuit of collective liberation.
- We also held welcoming virtual spaces and guided journeys for learners to experience pluralistic exchange and resonant connections across geographies,

cultures, identities, worldviews, and (a)livelihoods.

EcoGather's offerings tended to focus on place-based lifeways, the vitality of agro-ecosystems, the change-competence of communities, the transition to well-being economies, and the pursuit of collective liberation. We gathered to learn from and transform our relationships with each other, the rest of the natural world, and life itself.

**A static archive of the self-paced, online courses created by EcoGather during its active phase remains freely accessible in the [Digital Garden](#) until June 2030.**

What follows in this EcoGather Archive Handbook details how we expect people to engage with EcoGather digital spaces, even after the conclusion of EcoGather's Active Phase.

## The Spirit & Practice of Lifelong Learning Toward Communities of Learning & Practice

EcoGather aspires to foster communities of learning, imagination, reflection and transformative practice that bring together people with varied experiences and perspectives connected to different places all meaningfully contributing to the sharing of knowledge and collaborative transformative practice. EcoGather also encourages learners to be active participants in their local communities. We do this by incorporating application, community engagement, and reflection in many of our learning activities.

When you participate in an EcoGather online course, you will not only gain knowledge from varied voices, you will also be guided to use that knowledge within your own communities to carry forward goals of that community with an ecological worldview, care for our earthly home and each other, and a radically imaginative spirit.

### Learning: the Work of Lifetime

No one can solve environmental degradation alone. Nor can we build economies that support well-being or tell stories that stimulate empathy & move us toward equity without sustained interaction. We need each other. Through EcoGather, we looked for ways to bring an even wider range of learners into transformative learning communities so they can reap the benefits of *intergenerational*, experiential, & cross-cultural exchange.

Most EcoGather courses are designed for adult learners, construed broadly. Some of our offerings have happily hosted groups ranging in age from 19 to 91 and stimulated rich exchange between people with very different vantage points on the human lifecycle.

Some mature minors may benefit from and be ready for these learning experiences. Often adults are inclined to co-enroll with older children and teenagers in their lives for a shared experience. To increase the likelihood of a positive, safe experience the following policies apply to learners under the age of 18 who wish to enroll in a EcoGather course through Sterling College.

- *Under 18 years of age:* Participation by a person under the age of 18 may be appropriate in a EcoGather course otherwise designed for adults with the



co-enrollment or support of an adult chaperone or companion, who does not have to be a parent or guardian but needs to take full responsibility for the student for the duration of the course. If you are considering enrolling or sharing EcoGather lessons with a minor, we encourage you to reach out to [help@ecogather.org](mailto:help@ecogather.org) first.

### Honoring Our Inspiration & Moving Toward Thought Relationship

EcoGather is both hopeful and reverent about moving from a culture of “thought leadership” to one of “thought-relationship.” We are moved by Rowen White’s synthesis of Steven Sloman & Phillip Fernbach’s ideas, which they set forth in *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone* (2017):

*In using our individual brains, we rely on components from other brains in...‘a community of knowledge.’*

*...The interdependence we have on each other for problem-solving, decision-making, and even memory. This dependence means that we often outsource our information, relying on our connections with others to obtain information we need, rather than holding it ourselves.*

*We constantly connect with other brains, not only those in our immediate vicinity but across time and space... accessing information from other minds and weaving it into our own repertoires.*

*We can even take ideas from people who died thousands of years ago, as long as they left an ancestral record. When we interweave one another’s gathered knowledge strings into a mutually recognizable social pattern, we have culture.*

We recommend Rowen White’s substack newsletter, [Reseeding Imaginations](#), and in particular her entry on “[Cultivating a Personal “Idea Culture”](#)” to learn more about how one can build a practice of “linked and distributed notemaking to enhance relational memory and thinking.”

Like White, Sloman, and Fernbach, contemporary author [Courtney Martin](#) observes: “Everyone is building on a lineage of disciplines, influences, models, and anti-models. All of our ideas are born of infinite layers of information, experiences, relationships, that we took in and—little by little—made our own...” In her substack newsletter, [The Examined Family](#), Martin invites us to reflect upon: “*Who do you have conversations with that always light you up? Whose writing makes your heart skip a beat? Whose art makes your mind spin out in a million wonderful directions?*” Those people (or more broadly, beings) have the potential to be more than just your “sources,” they can also be considered your “noble friendships” (to use the phrase Martin borrows from Buddhist tradition).

EcoGather’s own authors and scholars Nicole Civita and Michelle Auerbach take this approach a step further in their book [Feeding Each Other: Shaping Change in Food](#)

[\*Systems Through Relationship\*](#), going so far as to say, “nothing we, or any other thinkers, say is ever truly individual. We believe ideas, theories, concepts and even thoughts are relational and no one, even if they tell you otherwise, ever came up with one in some individualistic isolation. Just as we are a part of a relational network, so are our ideas and we celebrate that.”

EcoGather encourages its participants to honor noble friendships and respect thought relationships by crediting sources with care even when formal citation is not required by academic convention. Informally identifying your sources is both a sign of your own integrity and a show of respect for members of your learning community, who may wish to trace the line of discourse or scholarship. (We’ve just modeled how to approach informal citation and crediting, throughout this section of the Handbook.)

### Formal Citation of Sources & Plagiarism

In formal academic, public discourse, and publishing settings, the act of representing another person’s words or ideas as your own is called *plagiarism*. Plagiarism is a violation of most educational institutions’ policies on Academic Honesty. To avoid plagiarism, whenever you write using direct quotes or paraphrased ideas from another source, you must always name and credit your source. It is helpful to ask yourself whether the concept or word you are using is wholly your own or taken from elsewhere. If borrowed or copied from any source, regardless of form, whether electronic, print, recorded, or spoken word, acknowledge the sources. Doing so is a sign of your own integrity and a show of respect for members of your learning community, who may wish to trace the line of discourse or scholarship.

### Decoupling Reference, Affiliation, Endorsement, and Critique

When someone cites, references, or mentions the work of another person or organization, this does not necessarily mean that there is an affiliation between the two. It doesn’t mean the source knows that the person making reference to them exists, is familiar with, or approves of their work or interpretation. Reference – whether affirmative, critical, or in-between – also does not imply unequivocal endorsement or rejection of the concept or of the source’s body of work. More than likely, it just means that there is a particular cultural concept, idea or project that is relevant to the discourse and the speaker wants to give credit where it is due or make it easier for readers/listeners to trace that concept/idea/project to its origins. (hat tip to [Kelly Diels](#) for this framing.)

We need to be able to discuss the world to understand it and our role(s) in it better. When someone quotes an idea from a person or organization that may be objectionable to others, it is important to both engage with the idea separate from and in connection with its originator. Engaging with ideas – good, bad, or otherwise – neither absolves nor contaminates us. It is important to tolerate differences in perspective. It is not necessary to agree with everything someone has written, said, or done to appreciate some of their ideas or to respect or engage with their work. Policing for or imposing aspirations of intellectual homogeneity or purity is are not

liberatory practices – and they do not help us to learn.

## Course Registration, Fees, & Accounts

### Course Registration, Accessing Course Information & Materials

EcoGather online courses will be **free** at least until June 30th, 2030. During this period, they will remain accessible to registrants unless there is a violation of this code of conduct.

To Register for one of our EcoGather lifelong learning courses you must first choose a class to register for in our catalog. You can peruse our offerings in the [Digital Garden](#) or on the [Course Catalog](#). Once you have chosen a class, you can create a free account by selecting 'Register.'

## Wellbeing Economy


Current Status	Price	Get Started
NOT ENROLLED	Free	Log In to Enroll

LOGIN OR REGISTER TO ENROLL

### Login

[Forgot your password?](#)

Login



Register

Once you make an account and/or Login, you can see all the classes you have registered for in 'My Courses.' (Yes! You may register for as many as you like!) You can access the login page and 'My Courses' by hovering over 'Digital Garden' in the main menu.

# My Courses

▼ Expand All

☐ Enterprise Viability and Right Livelihood



☐ Rainwater Harvesting & Management



Once you have registered, you can click into the course content in any order you wish, from the course page.

## Course Content

▼ Expand All

☐ Welcome to Wellbeing Economy!  
1 Topic

▼ Expand

☐ Orientation: Inner Wellbeing  
3 Topics

▼ Expand

☐ [Conventional] Economics 101  
3 Topics

▼ Expand

☐ Examining the Water We Swim In: Global Capitalism  
3 Topics

▼ Expand

EcoGather

Edit Lesson

Enable Visual Builder

Events

tester

0% COMPLETE 0/50 Steps

< Previous Topic

Next Topic >

Hello, tester!

Wellbeing Economy

1 Topic

Orientation: Inner Wellbeing

3 Topics

Introduction

Exploration

Application: Discussion

[Conventional] Economics 101

3 Topics

Examining the Water We Swim In: Global Capitalism

3 Topics

Ownership and the Commons (or Decommodyfying Survival)

3 Topics

# Orientation: Inner Wellbeing

Wellbeing Economy > Orientation: Inner Wellbeing

IN PROGRESS

Lesson Content

0% COMPLETE 0/3 Steps

Introduction

Exploration

Application: Discussion

< Previous Topic

Back to Course

Next Topic >

Course Home

Logout

EcoGather

Edit Topic

Enable Visual Builder

Events

tester

0% COMPLETE 0/50 Steps

< Previous Lesson

Mark Complete ✓

Hello, tester!

Wellbeing Economy

1 Topic

Orientation: Inner Wellbeing

3 Topics

Introduction

Exploration

Application: Discussion

[Conventional] Economics 101

3 Topics

Examining the Water We Swim In: Global Capitalism

3 Topics


Ownership and the Commons (or Decommodyfying Survival)

3 Topics

# Introduction

Wellbeing Economy > Orientation: Inner Wellbeing > Introduction

IN PROGRESS



When we began designing this course in Wellbeing Economies and Just Futures Beyond Capitalism, we set up a time to talk with EcoGather partners to get their feedback and input on the direction of the course. **Julia Kim** – our friend from the **Gross National Happiness Centre in Bhutan** and a member of the **Club of Rome** – sagely encouraged us to include this module on inner wellbeing, something we hadn't considered before diving into the bigger, structural issues.

But the connection isn't always clear, and isn't always easy to tease out; we often feel torn between looking inward and looking outward, choosing personal change versus global action. So we asked Julia another question: What does it mean to start our movement toward wellbeing economies with ourselves? Her answers will set the stage for the rest of our course.

## Learning Objectives

1. Articulate the connection between inner wellbeing and an economy centered on wellbeing.
2. Articulate the value of practicing inner wellbeing.
3. Identify and practice strategies for cultivating inner wellbeing.
4. Practice cultivating interdependence, and note how it influences our wellbeing.
5. Practice using tools for mindfulness.

< Previous Lesson

Mark Complete ✓

Next Topic >

Back to Lesson

Course Home

Logout



## Code of Online Conduct

EcoGather aims to ensure the safety, security and well-being of our community and its members. To this end, this Code of Online Conduct details both the appropriate and inappropriate conduct that influences the virtual spaces we inhabit together, even at our own pace. This Code of Online Conduct represents EcoGather's expectations of participants in EcoGather lifelong learning programming, faculty, staff, instructors and/or facilitators in virtual (online) environments.

## Expectations and Agreements

By affirmatively selecting to participate in any EcoGather programming, you agree to do the following:

- Help to establish and maintain a safe and compassionate learning environment;
- Treat all program participants, instructors/course creators/facilitators, administrative staff and their perspectives with respect and cultural sensitivity;
- Be responsive and participate in courses to the best of your ability;
- Make contributions to the course or session that are germane to the topic being discussed;
- Be open to receiving and giving constructive feedback to other program participants, instructors and/or facilitators and administrative staff; and
- Comply with all policies designed to secure and protect our digital spaces, including, without limitation, EcoGather's [prohibition on the use of AI-Powered Tools and Bots](#).

You also agree to refrain from the following behaviors or scenarios:

- Intimidation, bias-based behavior, bullying/cyberbullying, harassment, threatening behavior directed toward instructors, fellow program participants or administrative staff;
- Inappropriate or repeated disruption of teaching, learning, or idea generation and exchange;
- Disorderly conduct and/or disruptive behavior;
- Sexual misconduct of any kind:
  - "Sexual misconduct" means any type of sexual behavior that occurs in the absence of consent or that uses control or intimidation to cause harm to another person. Consent must be affirmatively given and not implied. Types of sexual misconduct include but is not limited to sexual harassment, sexual violence, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, nonconsensual sexual contact, stalking. Sexual misconduct in the online environment includes unwanted sexual advances, sexualization of participants, and the sharing of lewd, sexually suggestive, or pornographic materials in any form.
- Inappropriate use of learning and social platforms, discussion fora, and/or audio/video conferencing tools, e.g. spam messages, unauthorized advertising, dissemination of promotional material, attempts to pirate, duplicate or distort content;
- Plagiarism and academic dishonesty; and

- Dissemination of any EcoGather-exclusive content outside of closed social platforms.

### Online Étiquette

To support the co-creation of an inclusive and inviting virtual learning environment, EcoGather has established clear online communication expectations rather than presuming shared norms. These guidelines should inform how program participants and instructors or facilitators communicate with each other on online learning and social platforms. Above all, we seek to create an environment in which everyone is treated with respect while also generating conversations that have “[good heat](#)” (to borrow a term from [Priya Parker](#)), and increasing our tolerance for generative discomfort and respectful disagreement.

If this seems less than clear to you, choose kindness in the moment and reach out to [help@ecogather.ing](mailto:help@ecogather.ing) to further discuss or unpack the interaction.

- Use a person’s preferred name when addressing or referring to them. If unsure, check in with them;
- If using pronouns, ensure that you are using a person’s correct pronouns;
- Use clear, concise and respectful language;
- Use humor or sarcasm cautiously, as these may be misinterpreted unless you affirmatively indicate your tone or intent (emojis may help or may confuse);
- Share your own personal information with discernment;
- Do not share the personal information of other program participants, instructors/course creators/facilitators;
- Make posts or provide comments that are responsive to structured conversations, within the scope of the course, or closely related to course topics and themes;
- Read all of the messages within a thread before responding;
- Be respectful of the opinions of others, even and especially when they diverge from your own ideas;
- Never intentionally use racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, abusive or offensive language when communicating; and
- Cite your sources when sharing information that originated elsewhere.

### Take the Lessons, Leave the Identifiers

With respect to student contributions, all participants are expected to abide by a general confidentiality commitment designed to encourage a courageous space for shared exploration. When discussing or relaying interactions, conversations, and exchanges that happened in an EcoGather space, we expect that you “take the lessons, leave the specifics and identifying information.” (This is specific to the contributions of your fellow students/learners/participants. EcoGather instructors, personnel and facilitators who are specifically engaged and were compensated for designing/holding the space and sharing their specialized knowledge can be referenced specifically beyond the original setting.) In other words, do not attribute classmates’ in-class comments to them outside of class without permission. Resist the tempting pull of gossip, cancellation, abstraction, and decontextualized derision or judgment. A shared commitment to doing so is necessary to create and maintain the kinds of spaces that allow true discourse.

## Resources & Support for Continuing Education Students

**If you require assistance, or have other concerns, you can reach out to**

**[help@ecogather.ing](mailto:help@ecogather.ing)**. Though the EcoGather initiative is no longer an active project of Sterling College, **[help@ecogather.ing](mailto:help@ecogather.ing)** is an actively monitored inbox. Someone will aim to reply to you within 3 business days. .