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# ISF: RESEARCH
## BARRIERS AND DRIVERS TO SUSTAINABILITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

# BARRIERS & DRIVERS TO SUSTAINABILITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For The Urban Sustainability Support Alliance

By

Institute for Sustainable Futures

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## Citing this report

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## Acknowledgements

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# Abbreviations

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| **USSA** | Urban Sustainability Support Alliance |
| **CCP, ICLEI** | Cities for Climate Protection TM, a program of the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives, ICLEI |
| **ISF** | Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney |
| **DECC** | Department of Environment & Climate Change, NSW Government |
| **USP** | Urban Sustainability Program, NSW Environmental Trust |
| **KPI** | Key performance indicator |
| **LGA** | Local Government area |
| **LGMA NSW** | Local Government Managers Australia, NSW |
| **LGSA** | Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW |
| **ROC** | Regional Organisation of Councils |
| **M&E** | Monitoring & evaluation |
| **SOE** | State of the Environment Reporting (Also referred to as SoE or SoER). Currently required by NSW councils under the Local Government Act 1993. |
| **SCCG** | Sydney Coastal Councils Group |
| **ESD** | Ecologically Sustainable Development |
| **LA21** | Local Agenda 21 |
| **NRM** | Natural resource management |
| **CMA** | Catchment Management Authority |
| **TBL** | Triple bottom line |
| **QBL** | Quadruple bottom line |

## Report Summary

This report, Barriers & Drivers to Sustainability in Local Government, documents the research undertaken for the Urban Sustainability Support Alliance and covers:

- The main drivers and barriers in relation to achieving sustainability in Local Government experienced by council staff;

- The tools and approaches being used by NSW councils to measure progress towards sustainability; and

- A summary of evaluation frameworks and tools used more broadly in Australia and overseas.

The research presented here is the product of the application of two methodologies. Firstly, 'desktop' research reviews of the literature available in various media, and secondly, semi-structured interviews with individuals nominated by the 32 participating NSW councils, undertaken from late November 2008 through to early February 2009. The report is structured to represent the findings of each of the interview questions, and includes the findings on evaluation tools and frameworks as an appendix.

In order to appreciate the rich diversity of approaches, experiences and insights provided by those interviewed, the report findings should be read in their entirety. A summary of the main findings is highlighted below.

**Findings on drivers and barriers**

The main drivers and enablers identified were: general manager and senior management support, mayor and councillor leadership, media coverage of global and local issues, active and engaged communities, dedicated sustainability staff, a sympathetic organisational culture, effective management systems, external funding, supportive legislation and partnerships, and external agency support.

The main barriers identified were: lack of organisational support, the gap between sustainability theory and practice, inadequate systems for managing information, competing priorities, availability of internal and external funding, limited staff capacity and high turnover, research and development challenges, the language of sustainability, dealing with other government agencies, and limitations of legislation in relation to sustainability provisions. Barriers relating to size and geographic location, particularly for small, isolated councils, emerged as a major theme.

**Findings on support requested by councils**

Participants requested support with specific aspects of training, skills development and information provision, and provided suggestions for case studies, templates and evaluation tools. Assistance was requested with mentoring, benchmarking, accessing funding resources and advocacy around policy issues. The value of resource and information sharing between councils, and assistance with opportunities for networking, also featured in the responses.

**Findings on tools being used for evaluation and measuring progress**

In providing information on tools for evaluation and for measuring progress towards sustainability, participants referred to corporate frameworks and tools as well as specific tools for evaluating the sustainability performance of their organisation. They also provided feedback on environmental and sustainability reporting, the use of indicators for reporting progress, tools for evaluating projects and programs and

tools for assisting with decision making. Most participating councils face significant challenges with evaluation and measuring progress towards sustainability, and report that it is an area where they would welcome assistance.

The matrix of evaluation tools, provided in Appendix A, summarises  tools used by participating councils and six additional tools found through the desktop research.

**Next steps**

The research provides the basis for developing additional resources for councils, that is the focus of the next stage of the research to be undertaken by ISF for the USSA. ISF is further reviewing and analysing these findings and will prepare recommendations for consideration by the USSA Steering Committee.

The research findings outlined in this report and the detailed feedback provided by individual participating councils will also assist the USSA in planning how to most effectively assist NSW councils in the future.

# 1  Background and introduction

## 1.1  The Urban Sustainability Support Alliance (USSA)

The USSA is a partnership of organisations that together help councils move towards urban sustainability. The USSA is made up of the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), Eurobodalla Shire Council, Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (LGSA), Local Government Managers Australia NSW (LGMA), Manly Council and the Sydney Coastal Councils Group. The USSA helps NSW councils that are implementing sustainability projects to realise the full potential of their projects and ensure that lessons learnt by councils in their journey toward sustainability are shared. It is assisted by the NSW Environmental Trust, through its Urban Sustainability Program (USP), and is coordinated by the Local Government and Shires Associations.

## 1.2  Information about this project

The USSA initiated this research project with the intention of giving Local Governments in NSW a better understanding of the range of sustainability initiatives that have been developed by councils and the measures that are being used to assess how well they are moving toward sustainability. The intention is to help the USSA to develop resources that will be available for the whole sector and are documented through the experiences of councils of different sizes, in different locations and with varying resources at their disposal.

The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney was commissioned to undertake the project following a competitive tendering process. ISF is an independent Institute within UTS that works with industry, government and the community to create sustainable futures through project based research. It is funded by its research and consulting activities but operates on a not-for-profit basis. ISF is now also a member of USSA.

## 1.3  Purpose of this report

The following report documents the research undertaken for the first stage of the project. This research covered:

- The main drivers and barriers experienced by council staff in relation to achieving sustainability in Local Government

- The tools and approaches being used by NSW councils to measure progress towards sustainability

- A summary of evaluation frameworks and tools used more broadly in Australia and overseas.

The report also outlines ways that the USSA could support councils in overcoming barriers to sustainability in their council.

A review of sustainability initiatives within the Local Government sector was also undertaken by ISF as part of the first stage of research. The review, which was provided to the USSA as a separate report, is described below.

## 1.4  ISF report on sustainability initiatives being undertaken by NSW councils

As part of the first stage of this project, the ISF team undertook research into initiatives taking place in the Local Government sector as it moves towards sustainability.

The review of initiatives draws on three main sources:

1. A desktop review of sector-wide sustainability trends and initiatives.
2. Council websites – these were reviewed prior to each interview, to identify some of the specific initiatives taking place in each participating council.
3. Interviews with councils – interviews were used to provide examples of specific initiatives.

The review addresses the integration of sustainability principles by councils across policies, strategies, programs, projects, partnerships, engagement and education and public participation. It also briefly covers funding sources and concludes with some reflections on the integration of sustainability within Local Government.

## 1.5  Complementary research

It should be noted that the USSA itself and its various members have undertaken or are undertaking other research projects that cover related issues to the project reported here, including work funded by the DECC. The related research of particular relevance to this project includes funding for a consortium of six councils to look at organisational development for sustainability.

Findings of the *Sustainability education survey* (Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, 2008) and the report, *Environmental and sustainability education in local councils: a snapshot of current practice in eight NSW councils* prepared by ISF for DECC (Partridge, E and Herriman, J, 2008) also relate to this work. While focusing on education for sustainability, both reports provide feedback more generally on relevant initiatives and on drivers and barriers to sustainability.

Three other pieces of research that make observations relating to drivers and barriers to sustainability in Local Government are contained in the reports *Systems approach to regional climate change adaptation strategies* prepared for the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG, 2008), *Local Institutional Development and Organisational Change for Advancing Sustainable Urban Water Futures* (Brown, R, 2004) and the recent evaluation of the NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check (Asker, S & Coleman, V, 2008).

Dialogue is ongoing to ensure that this project complements other research designed to assist councils in their sustainability journey.

# 2   Project methodology

## 2.1   Overall approach

The research presented here is the product of the application of two methodologies. Firstly, 'desktop' research reviews of the literature available in various media (including on-line material as well as more conventional published documentation). Second, semi-structured interviews with individuals nominated by the 32 participating councils undertaken from late November 2008 through to early February 2009.

The review of approaches to sustainability and the tools for evaluation also draws on the knowledge and experience of ISF in working with individual councils, and on that of the other members of the USSA.

The work with individual councils was designed to be undertaken in two stages. In the first stage, reported here, the semi-structured interviews were undertaken to gain a snapshot of what is being done in regard to sustainability, the issues being faced by councils and how they judge or measure how well they think they are doing.

In the second stage to be completed later in 2009, the project team will be looking in more detail at some of the approaches and projects identified in Stage One. It was intended that the second stage assess existing evaluation tools and approaches and determine if new (or adapted) tools are needed by councils. The focus of future work will be confirmed following a considered review of the findings by the USSA Steering Committee.

## 2.2   Selection of councils

In discussion with the USSA, it was agreed that the method to be used in identifying the councils for this first stage of interviews would be to invite expressions of interest from selected councils. The selection was undertaken to ensure representation of the full diversity of the Local Government sector in NSW in terms of size, geographic location and level of resourcing, as well as in the approaches to integrating sustainability. It was undertaken in three phases, with the assistance and advice of the Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-committee of the USSA, to ensure that where there appeared to be gaps in coverage in terms of this diversity a direct approach could be made to specific councils to fill those gaps. The selection and targeting was also focussed to ensure that the group did not merely represent the experience of councils that are known to have a well developed and implemented approach to "sustainability" or are known to be leaders in the field.

The invitations were sent to both the Mayors and General Managers in each council. Once the council had submitted an expression of interest indicating that it wished to be involved, the General Manager or the appropriate Director/Senior Manager was asked to identify the contact person for interview.

Councils taking part in the Stage One research were:

- Albury City Council
- Ballina Shire Council
- Bourke Shire Council
- City of Canada Bay Council

- Clarence Valley Council
- Eurobadalla Shire Council
- Gosford City Council
- Griffith Shire Council
- Greater Hume Shire Council
- Hornsby Shire Council
- Kempsey Shire Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Leichhardt Municipal Council
- Lismore City Council
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council
- Manly Council
- Marrickville Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Orange City Council
- Parramatta City Council
- Penrith Council
- Pittwater Council
- Port Stephens Council
- Rockdale City Council
- Sutherland Council
- Strathfield Shire Council
- City of Sydney Council
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Tumut Shire Council
- Wagga Wagga City Council
- Warringah Council
- Wyong Shire Council

## 2.3  Council interviews

Interviews were undertaken either as face to face meetings where feasible, or over the telephone when not.  In either case, the interview covered the same questions and took between one to two hours.

The interviewers addressed the following questions:

1. What is motivating or driving change towards sustainability within your council?
2. What is posing a barrier or obstacle to change? [internal or external]
3. What support do you feel you (or your council) would benefit from?
4. How is your council assessing progress towards becoming more sustainable?

5.  What methods or tools for evaluation are being used in regard to:
    (i)       Policies and strategies?
    (ii)      Programs and projects?
6.  In your opinion how useful are they?

## 2.4 Assumptions

There are many subtle differences in international definitions and views on what sustainability means. Councils in NSW currently operate under legislation that gives them broad obligations for consideration of ecologically sustainable development in their management planning (under the Local Government Act 1993) and for reporting on the State of the Environment. However, each council interprets these broad obligations in its own way. ISF's approach in working with a council is therefore to take the council's own interpretation and definitions of "sustainability" to determine the scope of the activities to be covered.

Stage One of this research project, including the interview process, was designed as a mapping exercise and was not intended as a comprehensive report of all participating council initiatives and perspectives.

# 3 Drivers and barriers to achieving sustainability in Local Government

As the USSA has been funded to help councils with their sustainability journey, this part of the research will provide valuable feedback for the alliance in reviewing its services to NSW councils and planning future activities. Interview participants were invited to reflect on both internal and external drivers and barriers.

## 3.1 Summary of reported drivers

The council interviews included the question: *"What is motivating or driving change towards sustainability within your council?"* The following ten themes describe the main drivers identified and are listed broadly in order of significance.

While this research question was only intended to provide a snapshot of the current situation, it highlights key success factors, including the influence of external trends. This information can assist the USSA to helping practitioners understand these drivers and work with them to embed sustainability within their organisation.

### i. General Manager and senior management support

One of the strongest themes in regard to enabling factors was the personal commitment, knowledge and leadership provided by senior management, in particular the General Manager of the council. As well as requiring managers to change old methods, supportive management recognise and reward staff achievements in the area of sustainability. Incorporating sustainability-related functions into managers' job descriptions helped to recruit senior staff with this focus.

Interview participants made the following observations:

> *The General Manager views sustainability as core business and requires the integration of a triple bottom line approach into the Management Plan.*

> *Our GM is a major driver; he is very knowledgeable and has the right team.*

It was also observed by one participant that the General Managers group within their regional organisation of councils was a real driver. As well as reinforcing the importance of peer influence, this highlights the value of forums for information exchange at a senior level.

### ii. Mayor and councillor leadership

The difference made by strong leadership from the elected council was stressed by a number of participants. Just having one or two new councillors who were open to, and positive about, sustainability was very helpful.

In some cases Mayors were personally involved, for example in chairing a Sustainability Working Party. However, even where councillors were more pragmatic they would support prioritisations of environmental sustainability. Interview participants made the following observations:

> *The Mayor was extra supportive – such an initiative won't move without political and executive leadership.*

> *The change in composition of our councillors- having more women councillors has made a real difference.*

Examples were provided of the external leadership provided by elected representatives, including media releases on new sustainability initiatives and the achievement of milestones.

### iii. Media coverage of global and local issues

Many interview participants referred to the influence increased media coverage of environmental issues had on their council, in particular coverage of climate change. By implication, this factor was also linked to the greater level of understanding of climate change and other environmental issues. Interview participants had this to say on the issue:

> *During our recent community consultation process, climate change was identified as a key priority.*

> *There was heightened awareness after the movie 'An Inconvenient Truth', by Al Gore, and the associated media.*

> *Climate change is a huge motivational issue for council.*

In some regional areas, salinity has been a 'real hook', as it is a major issue affecting everybody in the area, including developers.

### iv. Active and engaged community

The influence of active communities was a common theme. Some areas have a high number of Landcare groups and bushland conservation volunteers, which has had a major influence on the policies and priorities of the elected council. Another reported on the influence of letters advocating action on particular issues.

> *Active environmental community groups translates into political action.*

> *We have a green oriented community, which is reflected in the elected council.*

Other councils have formal community advisory committees, and although their representativeness was sometimes questioned, they were viewed as helpful on the whole. Those committees that included local people with scientific backgrounds or other relevant expertise were viewed as particularly influential. One interview participant spoke about the importance of their advisory committee in giving the community a voice.

Several people emphasised that when a community is well informed they are more likely to be engaged, and cited examples of council actions designed to build an aware community. One interview participant from a regional council stressed the importance of local knowledge and good informal networks when communicating with an audience beyond the established community groups.

### v. Dedicated sustainability staff

Many councils did not have dedicated sustainability staff, let alone sustainability units, but those who did identified as a major enabler. While these positions were based in environmental teams or natural resource management areas, an increasing number were positioned within the corporate area of council. Functions of dedicated staff included coordinating efforts across the council, managing interdepartmental teams, making links with external agencies, introducing new approaches and ways of thinking, and maintaining the momentum for change. Those working within corporate areas were seen to be effective drivers when they had sufficient seniority, delegation and content knowledge.

Regardless of which division they belonged to, their personal motivation and their skills in motivating staff at all levels of the organisation was viewed as a key factor. A range of creative and effective approaches were cited during the interviews. Examples included preparation of take-home kits for staff members, education via the intranet, internal staff surveys and promotion of achievements and awards.

### vi.      Sympathetic organisational culture

A related enabling factor was the organisational culture, specifically how open staff were to change and how sympathetic they were to a sustainability agenda. In some cases this had been built up over time through a history of strong leadership and a policy of recruiting people with these values and skills. A couple of councils spoke of having a high proportion of staff who live in the area and who valued the rich natural resources of that area. One council turned a staff shortage into an opportunity:

> *Quite a lot of our staff are recruited from overseas, and we find that they are very open to new and different ways of doing things.*

Sustainability committees were established in a number of councils and, where these worked well, were instrumental in building ownership across the organisation and a strong sense of motivation to come up with new and improved ways of doing things. A few people noted how rewarding it was when they learned of initiatives in other parts of the organisation that they hadn't been involved with.

> *Our sustainability committee is very active, with initiatives and ideas coming from all areas of council. We have staff keen to join!*

### vii.      Effective management systems

While organisational and administrative systems came up more often as a barrier, some interview participants highlighted the enabling impact of good systems in achieving sustainability outcomes. These included:

- Organisational structures that broke down silos, for example organised groups around themes.

- Requiring managers to undertake interdepartmental activities.

- Excellent induction programs and internal education to build awareness of sustainability as everyone's responsibility.

- Cross-council teams set up to deal with areas that were traditionally in one division, for example integrated water management and integrated planning.

- Effective use of databases to enable staff to keep up with developments and easily access information on all sustainability related work of the council.

Not all the responses concerned new approaches. A couple of interview participants spoke about the value of sticking with programs and seeing them properly implemented. One example was thorough the integration of an environmental management approach into all activities of outdoor staff, and the regular reporting that was part of that system. Another council with a strong commitment to a triple bottom line approach saw no need to change to a 'quadruple bottom line' approach, as it would only confuse staff with yet more change.

Council amalgamations were reported to have a positive impact. One interview participant said that the amalgamations were initially resisted but it led to greater efficiencies and new ways of doing things. Another said that amalgamation was an impetus for new sustainability initiatives, as everything was changing and it was a chance to review the way things were done.

### viii.    External funding

Several councils highlighted funding from DECC and the NSW Environmental Trust in supporting their sustainability work and allowing them to have a wider reach internally and externally. USSA initiatives were mentioned positively, in particular the intensive training program. Funding has allowed some councils to make use of external facilitators, which was particularly helpful in building senior management support.

Related initiatives supported by DECC were mentioned, for example the 2008 Conference *Integrating Sustainability in Local Government* (held at Luna Park), which was a key motivator for one mayor to go back to his council and inspire further action.

Federal Government infrastructure funding is a significant new source of funds, with some councils seeing the opportunity for sustainability related work.

### ix.    Legislation

While noting that it was not used as well as it could be, one interview participant referred to the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development outlined in the Local Government Act 1993 and related requirements as an important driver.  There was a general view that regardless of the weaknesses of State of the Environment reports, they did provide impetus for the dedication of council resources to this area, and for accounting to the community for some aspects of sustainability. This view was supported by evidence from councils who didn't have many of the enablers listed above, but who did meet their obligations in relation to reporting.

Several referred to the proposed Department of Local Government (DLG) Integrated Planning reforms and the new opportunity these reforms could provide to integrate sustainability. Because it is a NSW Government initiated change relevant to all councils, it has legitimacy with council executives.

Another made the observation that prescription by State Government provides a clear objective and more certainty for councils, for example the introduction of BASIX for new residential developments.

### x.    Partnerships and external agency support

On the whole regional partnerships were viewed very positively. Councils spoke of the long history of working with their local Catchment Management Authority (CMA). Others spoke of their regional organisation of councils (ROC) and the value of resource sharing, joint training and good information sharing.

The Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program was mentioned by several councils as a helpful enabler, particularly in earlier years when they were starting out in this area of work. In one case, the CCP modular approach assisted the council to restructure their management plan thematically rather than departmentally.

## 3.2  Summary of reported barriers

The thirty one council interviews regarding sustainability also included the question: *"What is posing a barrier or obstacle to change?" [Internal or External].* It should be noted that a range of approaches for dealing with these barriers were raised, which will inform the next stage of the research. The following ten themes describe the main barriers identified and are listed broadly in order of significance.

### i.      Lack of organisational support

While some participating councils reported that the senior management and elected representatives were major drivers, this was not the case for others. The following views reflect the lack of leadership in this area, or the failure of leadership to inspire others in the organisation with the same vision:

> *The prevailing culture is complacency and there's also uncertainty about the politics.*

> *Middle management see these issues as a problem for the environment department, and not part of their job.*

> *Council still needs to motivate and demonstrate the benefits to planners, engineers and outdoor staff.*

In a few cases, participants reported changes for the worse, with new councillors being less supportive and more reactive. Another council advised that despite a good reputation, the sustainability agenda relies on individuals and only occurs in pockets across council.

One reported that their organisation tends to have a short term focus, which was at odds with the notion for planning with future generations in mind.

### ii.     Theory versus practice

A common and related theme was a difference between what was espoused and what was practiced, and policies not being carried through to implementation. Interview participants made the following observations:

> *Sustainability needs to be part of business plans and job descriptions and as strong a driver as OH & S.*

> *Individual performance assessments need to be more consistent and formal.*

> *Staff find it hard to link their work and concepts of sustainability.*

Resistance to change was also discussed, with the familiar example given of the sense of entitlement to company vehicles (and to particular sized vehicles) in some sections of council. As well there were some remaining prejudices towards those staff with a "green" agenda - condescending attitudes towards community development and social service activities still remain and undermine efforts to have social aspects of sustainability taken seriously. The idea of the "comfort of familiarity" as a barrier to putting theory into practice was also noted by one interview participant.

### iii.    Inadequate systems for managing information

Even for councils with the right motivation and a range of good programs, there were challenges with putting in place systems that would best support their efforts and help with the planning, promotion, and monitoring and evaluation of initiatives.

For many participating councils, data management and IT systems presented real challenges. The problems of complex and incompatible systems, or lack of automation, added to the time involved in planning, coordination and reporting.

### iv.    Competing priorities

Related to the issue of organisational support were comments about competing priorities. Interview participants had these things to say:

> *We are so isolated that issues like public health are more important. Environment has a low priority.*

> *The community is growing so quickly that council is struggling to survive – we've had a major skills shortage.*

> *The main push from councillors is for economic development, often at the expense of natural values.*

> *Asset management and financial sustainability agenda is currently driving future planning.*

> *For business units competing with external consultants, sustainability is seen as a cost when competing for tenders. Even if sustainability criteria are adopted, there is still the issue of what weighting is given.*

It was understood that a lower priority for environmental or social equity issues was often a reflection of prevailing community attitudes, or lobbying by particular interest groups. Interesting examples were provided around the topics of economic growth versus protection of natural assets, and private car use versus public transport and cycling. These get to the heart of the triple bottom line decision making process, and would provide interesting case studies.

In some cases when the sustainability or environment agenda was being handled in the corporate area, it wasn't seen it as a priority. One example was where work on Environmental Management Systems was given to the Occupational Health and Safety unit to manage, and it was not given the same importance.

### v.    Internal and external funding

Most interview participants raised resourcing as a barrier to implementing actions detailed in sustainability plans. Several spoke about the current economic climate putting a strain on council budgets, with implications for staffing. While some councils have environmental levies that help fund sustainability related positions, an

example was given of a council that discontinued their environment levy in favour of an infrastructure levy.

In relation to external funding, the view was put that while seed funding is appreciated, staff usually aren't allocated [by council] to continue any work begun. Others spoke of the difficulty of getting funding because of the costs of preparing submissions and administering grants.

In terms of council decision making processes, it was reported that councillors will often decide on projects that aren't itemised in existing plans and budgets, and so divert staff and budgets away from current priorities.

### vi. Staff capacity and turnover

Staff with responsibilities for engaging their organisations with this area of work, felt the pressures of their wide ranging responsibilities and the types of skills required of them.

> *It can be a barrier to try and do everything at once; it's easy to feel overwhelmed and end in inertia.*

> *We don't have the level of skills and expertise required.*

> *My position in the organisation means that I can't tell anyone to do anything so I need to use influence.*

There was feedback on the need for increasing skills of staff more generally:

> *Policy development skills are lacking and you can't buy a sustainability framework off the shelf. You have to build the capacity and confidence of staff in the process.*

> *Project Management itself is multidisciplinary and complex. It's hard for people to get their brains around this sort of stuff.*

> *In smaller councils staff with no training need to take on these extra responsibilities and mistakes get made.*

> *There's a general lack of knowledge, in particular in how to integrate social and economic factors with environment.*

It was also understood that what is being asked of everyone in the council is a different way of thinking and doing their work:

> *Holistic thinking, and understanding what QBL and collaboration mean in practice, is difficult for many.*

Staff turnover was specifically mentioned as a barrier to making progress.

> *With high turnover, staff can bring poor practices [from other workplaces] which aren't challenged.*

> *A lot of people are acting in positions, and it's hard to keep trying to engage with various people in the roles.*

### vii. Research and development challenges

There was a general acceptance that environment and sustainability positions required new knowledge and new ways of doing things, but time for reflection, reading and keeping up with developments was a real challenge. Participants reported the following:

*I don't have time to look at case studies; we need specific information for where we are at.*

*It's difficult to find time to explore what's out there, including other council initiatives.*

A number of people mentioned the difficulties with getting good data in order to be able measure and report on progress - particularly if they were relying on outside bodies to provide it - and their frustration with lack of good indicators. There were risks associated with promoting new or innovative technologies, and it was often difficult to do the research to support recommendations.

Associated issues were the costs involved in obtaining reliable data, and finding appropriate and affordable external assistance.

### viii.    The language of sustainability

While practitioners in this area understood that the word sustainability is convenient short hand for a set of well understood principles, the term often proved problematic when used more widely:

*There's confusion about the term "sustainability"; it is so general that it starts to mean everything.*

*It can be surrounded by elusive rhetoric which is not pragmatic or meaningful.*

*Lack of staff understanding – sustainability seen as a "green" agenda.*

*Motherhood statements in (TBL) reports are common.*

*Language can be a barrier, sometimes people are sick of the "s" word.*

*Terminology is sometimes not helpful, and jargon can be threatening - need to tone it down.*

The above comments indicate that it is not just the term sustainability that can be problematic. For example the term 'triple bottom line", while convenient short hand to convey an important concept, proved a barrier in one council.

### ix.    Dealing with other government agencies

While relations were often very good at a personal level with officers in other government agencies, the lack of co-ordination between Federal and State plans and agencies, and between state agencies, complicated work at the local level unnecessarily and often hindered progress.

A number of examples were provided of targets and schemes imposed on councils, for example the Metro Strategy targets, which involved major infrastructure and resourcing challenges for council. Yet guidance on matters where help was required was seen to be lacking.

The problem with duplication was also raised, for example with Catchment Management Authorities.

**x.      Legislation**

While legislation was recognised as a driver, it was also a common view that it is behind current practice and that the debates and issues in the Local Government sector now are at a very different stage from when the Local Government Act 1993 was drafted.

One participant commented that if councils are not simply to reflect community attitudes, which can often provide a barrier, there needs to be stronger regulation.

## 3.3  Barriers relating to size and location of councils

For some larger councils, the greater complexity of their activities and responsibilities presented challenges to staff in co-ordinating sustainability work and keeping up with activities occurring across the council. One participant saw that there was a potential for overlap between different areas and for some sections of council not to know what others are doing. Effective internal communications was seen as essential but sometimes lacking. One participant reported that having a very large workforce meant that cultures and procedures were slower to change.

However barriers for smaller and regionally more isolated councils came through very strongly during the interviews and highlighted the marked differences between the challenges they face (and the resources available to meet them), in comparison with larger, urban councils. The comments below are taken from the interview notes from smaller, more regionally isolated, councils.

- With State Government rate capping and no royalties for mining it's very difficult to be financially sustainable.

- We don't have anyone to do the work on council's own sustainability. Even if we have the information there is no one to act on it.

- Don't have the resources to apply for and manage grant funding.

- Consultants are too expensive.

- Staff have to take on responsibilities that they're not trained for and so mistakes get made. We're forever playing catch-up.

- No budget for training.

- Difficulty of getting to anything [held in other place] due to time and distance.

- Technical barriers, lack of knowledge, particularly an issue for councils outside the metro area.

- In regard to climate change, still dealing with sceptics amongst the elected council. Much of the information is way above their heads.

- Concerned we'll see a lot of stress-related issues in the near future.

- High staff turnover [25%] is indicative of low morale. Not big enough to have more than one person in a role.

- Our area has been growing so quickly, council has focused on trying to survive. We've had a major skills shortage.

- In city councils, staff can be specialists, but in regional areas staff need to be jack of all trades.

- We don't have capacity to attract staff, even engineers.

- Our area just too big to deal with all the issues covered in SoE.

- Council has very high roads to people ratio, therefore high $ in budget for road maintenance.

As noted earlier, a range of solutions are being developed by councils, particularly through regional cooperation, and special partnerships have been arranged between some regional and urban councils. However there are strong messages in this feedback for the ways that resources are allocated, and how support is provided.

## 3.4 Response to the feedback on drivers and barriers

As indicated previously, the brief for this stage of the research was to identify barriers and drivers and to provide that feedback to the USSA. Based on our research so far we suggest that there is potential for a project following up on the drivers and barriers identified here. This project could further analyse the drivers and barriers to find activities that can be undertaken by councils (or by groups of councils) to maintain these drivers and address these barriers. The following observations, drawn from the interviews, are relevant to the development of solutions to the barriers:

- The difficulty of generalising solutions given the different circumstances of councils.

- The importance of negotiated solutions with all those within council with the responsibility for a particular issue.

- The need for buy-in from senior management.

- The value of informal contacts and connections with staff from other councils in canvassing solutions, and the value of opportunities that help build these linkages.

While some of the barriers can only be tackled internally, or are beyond the direct control of councils, feedback was provided on a range of practical actions that the USSA can undertake directly to support practitioners. These actions are summarised in Section 6 of this report.

# 4   Tools used by NSW councils for evaluation and measuring progress

The second part of the research relates to the topic of evaluation. In addition to better understanding of what tools are out there, the project steering committee was keen to learn whether there are gaps and how this project could help fill those gaps.

This section covers the requirement of the project brief to summarise research into existing tools for decision making, evaluation and reporting of sustainability performance that are being, or could be, applied in the Local Government sector (both local and international).

While many of these tools are aimed at assisting organisations with accountability in relation to sustainability or sustainability issues, the researchers were also interested to find out what tools or processes are being used for self evaluation and reflection. It should also be noted that these tools relate to the activities of council as an organisation, as well as activities servicing communities and geographic areas. In some cases they are components of the way in which councils conduct or plan their activities in general as an organisation rather than dealing solely or specifically with 'sustainability'.

## 4.1  Summary of feedback from interviews

The interviews, although time constrained, provided a good overview of the tools that are currently being used in relation to reporting, evaluation and decision making, as well as management tools that incorporate evaluation. Any specific tools mentioned in the interviews have been included in the matrix of tools in Appendix A. This section provides a summary of the feedback from interview participants and reflects on the findings in relation to the overall project brief.

**i.      Corporate frameworks and tools**

A number of participants referred to management tools to help with planning, evaluation, reporting and continuous improvement across all functional areas of the council. The main examples provided were the *Balanced Scorecard, the Business Excellence Framework,* and *Triple Bottom Line reporting.* Some councils are also using comprehensive software packages such as *Outcomes Manager.* While not all these tools are specific to sustainability, they cover sustainability initiatives to varying degrees. Interview participants made the following observations:

> *Importance of baselines and targets must be emphasised.*

> *Our council directors are increasingly keen to see better integration of sustainability.*

> *We need systems and tools appropriate to the size and capabilities of our council.*

Albury City, Pittwater and Clarence Valley are examples of councils that have taken innovative approaches and developed their own comprehensive frameworks for implementing sustainability, with evaluation and reporting structured into the process.

Not surprisingly, there was a correlation between councils who demonstrate an advanced level of integration of sustainability within corporate systems and processes and those that have corporate planners with specific responsibilities relating to sustainability.

For feedback on indicators used in corporate frameworks see section below on the use of indicators.

### ii.      Evaluation of sustainability performance

The main corporate tool referred to by participants in relation to evaluation of sustainability performance *per se* is the NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check (SHC). As there is a separate process being undertaken by the LGMA to formally review and evaluate the SHC, this report will deal only briefly with feedback on this tool. Councils with experience with the tool were generally positive. Orange City Council reported using the SHC successfully for some years with very positive results. Some noted the time commitment to undertake the full process and were just using sections of the SHC as a diagnostic. Others were planning to use it in the future, at least in some form. Manly Council, for example, is thinking of using it in conjunction with work on integrated planning and reporting.

Another tool of particular interest and relevance to this project is the application by Penrith Council of the UK Sustainability Standard. This work could be explored further in the next stage of the project.

In addition to internal reviews of sustainability performance, councils (both large and small) actively seek community feedback. Methods used include:

- Annual community surveys, for example the wellbeing survey undertaken by Lake Macquarie Council and survey results published by Liverpool Plains Council.

- Annual reports including a feedback form and telephone follow up interviews of key community representatives as conducted by Penrith Council.

The work being done on ecological footprinting (a tool to help measure whether communities are living within or beyond the means of the planet) by Lake Macquarie Council, was an example of a tool being used by councils to assess the impact of a council program and activities on their Local Government area.

### iii.     Sustainability reporting

The majority of responses to the questions about evaluation and measuring progress related to reporting and to work on indicators. As State of the Environment (SoE) reports have been a legal requirement since 1993, and changes are likely with the new planning and reporting requirements, most respondents provided feedback on SoE reports and plans for their future use. Generally councils found the reports to be useful and felt they should be continued in some form.

Interview participants made the additional observations:

> *We put a lot of effort in the SoE so that we know what impact we're having.*

> *With continued work, our SoE reports are getting better and better.*

> *Regional SoE reports are often problematic because of the different way data is collected and different data sets, preventing comparisons.*

> *SoE reflects the environmental not the sustainability agenda and because they focus on separate components - what does it mean as a total picture?*

Clarence Valley Council is broadening the SoE report to cover other aspects of sustainability. Sutherland Shire Council is also developing the Shape of the Shire report to incorporate social indicators.

In seeking to respond to the needs of different audiences, Albury Council is planning to use a variety of reports from compliance based reports through to more innovative approaches.

Whatever form of reporting is being undertaken, there was general interest in ensuring the appropriateness and quality of the data collected. See below for more detailed feedback on this issue.

### iv.    The use of indicators

Several participants commented on the key performance indicators (KPIs) contained in management plans and processes for reporting against these on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. These are managed very differently. One council has 40 internal operational KPIs which are linked to individual work plans and performance reviews, while another advised that the KPIs in the management plan 'aren't taken that seriously'.

Much of the feedback related to the challenges of determining indicators for reporting on progress of their Local Government area in relation to sustainability, and in collecting the relevant information for reporting. This confirms the previous experiences of ISF in working with councils to develop indicators for sustainability (Herriman J, Partridge E & Paddon M, 2008). ISF has found that there are two common challenges for councils in this regard. Firstly, to achieve an alignment between their indicators and the goals or objectives to which they relate - Councils often have goals with no indicators, or are collecting KPI information that does not clearly relate to an objective.  Secondly, to select indicators for which information is actually available or is likely to be available to council.

Sources for indicators are addressed in the matrix provided in Appendix A. For example, Global Reporting Indicators (GRI) are used by a number of councils. Hornsby Council advised that GRI indicators allow a council to benchmark internationally.

The following comments indicate the range of views put forward about indicators:

> *The auditing of buildings and the resulting data assists our council in developing indicators that can be linked to responsibilities of specific staff.*
>
> *Indicators based on numbers are good because people understand them but they can't measure everything.*
>
> *Indicators need to be based on information already in the system and they need to be meaningful to the community.*
>
> *The core KPIs need to be consistent across government authorities at all levels.*
>
> *Indicators for [council] reporting and SoE reporting need to be reviewed to ensure they are the right ones and that it's clear what they're supposed to tell us.*

Tools to assist with data collection and analysis related mainly to energy, water and waste. Many councils set up systems as part of membership of Cities for Climate Protection (CCP). A number of councils pay for external consultants, most notably Planet Footprint, to provide assistance. Other councils modified existing financial software to measure water, energy and waste data. Pittwater Council reported being one of 10 councils (and the only NSW council) involved with a national reporting pilot aimed at creating a system to collect, analyse and report on data. It is expected that the findings of this pilot will be of great interest to most councils.

### v.     Evaluation at program and project level

There was quite limited reference to evaluation at the project level. One council referred to using the outcome hierarchy as promoted by the DECC publication *Does your project make a difference* (DECC 2004) to evaluate education projects and commented that it was difficult for staff to use without training.

It was noted that grant funded projects have their own evaluation processes. One that was of interest to several councils was the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (CRSI) which builds on work by Dr Rebeka Brown from Monash University. CRSI provides a good example in the area of catchment and sub-catchment planning. It is based on a collaborative planning model with the community actively involved in intensive planning with 4 of 26 sub-catchments and a built-in process of evaluation and review. The approach of this project will be examined more closely in the next stage of the project.

### vi.     Decision making

Based on the interviews, it is evident that most councils are grappling with incorporating sustainability into decision making - including decision making by the elected council. The most common tool or process being used is Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting. A few referred to Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL) reporting. Respondents reported varying degrees of effectiveness of the process and emphasised the importance of training and skills development for staff, report templates and having other staff with specific expertise to call on when required.

Tools to assist with decision making for specific operational areas included the weighting process for capital works used by Gosford Council and Canada Bay Councils, the TBL assessment of environmental levy bids used by Manly Council and bids for the stormwater levy funding used by Marrickville Council and standards for developers as part of the development assessment process. However some councils reported that they had no such processes to assist decision making with new projects and would appreciate assistance in this area.

### vii.     General comments

In relation to evaluation, interview participants provided the following perspectives on areas for improvement:

> *Evaluation is an area that could be done better.*

> *Currently there's not a great culture of evaluation.*

> *We have no resources to collect relevant data and report on performance.*

One council, which was very experienced in triple bottom line reporting and work on indicators, suggested that councils should look at what's happening internationally.

Overall, the feedback from these interviews support the position that evaluation is an area where councils would welcome support. The feedback on specific needs, as well as the examples of leading good practice, will inform the next stage of the project.

## 4.2  Desktop review of evaluation tools

The desktop review of evaluation tools is presented in a matrix format in Appendix A. The 28 tools referenced are grouped under the following provisional categories:

•      Toolkits - packages or programs which include a range of tools (5 listed)

•      Corporate and strategic planning tools (13 listed)

- Data collection and reporting tools (6 listed)

- Plan and project level evaluation tools (4 listed)

As mentioned above, the desktop review of tools was intended to provide a snapshot of tools that were being used by, or could be of interest to, councils in evaluating their sustainability work. The categories were developed to structure the list and are not a discrete classification system. The large number of corporate planning tools in comparison to the other tool categories reflects the greater presence of these tools both in councils' work and in the marketplace.

For each tool the matrix provides:

- the name of the tool developer or hosting organisation;

- a brief description of the tool; and

- examples of councils or others who use the tool.

Descriptions of the tools were based, where possible, on the description given in the official website associated with the tool. Where such a website did not exist, descriptions were based on other publically available information and informed by councils' descriptions of how they used the tool.

The tools listed in the matrix were further categorised by user into 'tools referred to by participating councils in interviews for this project' and 'additional tools discovered in desktop research'. Councils were listed as users if they referred to a tool in response to the interview question 'What methods or tools for evaluation are being used [by your council] in regard to policies, strategies, programs and projects?'. Additional information has been added in some cases regarding other users of the tool. The list of users is a snapshot and it should not be assumed from the listing that a council is necessarily an advocate of the use of this tool or that the councils listed are the only ones who are using a particular tool.

It is also noted that the Sustainability Learning Guides developed by the USSA, and available on the USSA website, which include examples of related initiatives of councils other than those participating in this research (USSA, 2009).

# 5 Feedback to USSA regarding support and assistance

In addition to being asked about barriers they faced, interview participants were asked the question: *"What support do you feel you (or your council) would benefit from?".* The summary of the responses to the question, grouped under ten main themes below, will be further discussed with the USSA.  It will determine what response it, or its individual members, can make.

## 5.1 Suggestions regarding support

### i. Training and skill development

There was general consensus about the need for good quality professional development, with training aimed at all staff, not just sustainability staff. As one participant stated:

> It's got to the point where the arguments have been won; now we need to focus on how to do it, and what is needed to make an informed decision.

A few mentioned the need for technical skills development in identifying options (e.g. a designer or engineer looking at incorporating ESD principles and wanting to make an informed decision) and increasing the technical level of current training. A couple of participants mentioned methods on how to engage communities, and how to bring about cultural change – with both indoor and outdoor staff.

Another point was made about training related to accessibility, with suggestions that it be provided on a regional basis (e.g. through the relevant ROC) and that it be organised in a block so that is easier for regional people to attend.

In regard to methods of teaching, practical demonstration projects and a capacity building approach to training 'where you take a project and work through it' were mentioned by different participants.

While not specifically training, one participant suggested an annual conference on sustainability, like the Newcastle *Pathways to Sustainability* conference held in 1998, which was regarded as a landmark in terms of being inspirational for councillors.

### ii. Information

The *Sustainablenet* email network, facilitated by the LGSA, was very well regarded, and some felt that more use could be made of that network.

Several councils expressed interest in information on indicator projects and the results, with a focus on indicators that are simple, easy to measure and also meaningful. There was interest expressed in what is being done internationally [by Local Government] and how tools are applied.

Councils had heard about specific projects, such as ecological footprinting, and were interested to learn more those programs.

A participant made the following comment and suggestion:

*Sometimes find out a bit late about opportunities. A central place to find out what's on offer would be helpful.*

### iii.    Case studies

While case studies were generally regarded as helpful, there was feedback about pitching these to suit different situations and stages. Councils wanted to learn from the experience of councils with similar characteristics to theirs.

*Case studies often skim the surface and don't cover the specifics of what people actually did. Less 'selling' is needed and more detail provided of the actual work that was done, including templates.*

There was interest in the integration topic and how councils are approaching TBL, with an interest in councils who are doing it well. Mention was made of interesting international conference topics and the value of international case studies.

### iv.    Templates

A few participants suggested that standard templates for reports, such as business paper reports incorporating TBL, would be helpful. Worked examples, rather than just references, was requested. Another suggested:

*A great DECC funded project would be to look at Local Government positions, criteria for recruitment, job descriptions and responsibilities and develop some standards. It would save every council reinventing the wheel.*

### v.    Support between councils

Networks were highly valued, with specific reference being made to groups established through ROCs and the Sustainable Leaders Forum.  One participant suggested that informal networks provide the best support.

Other suggestions for support between councils:

*Better policy dialogue between councils, particularly how to respond to state and federal policy changes.*

*Funding guidelines requires more alliances and therefore more networking.*

*Sharing a part time project manager as a way to manage resource constraints.*

### vi.    Mentoring

Some council staff who work in fairly isolated situations, and don't have guidance from experience to draw from within their organisations, expressed an interest in receiving mentoring. Related to this was a need for constructive feedback on draft policies and reports and the need for assistance with developing and reviewing KPIs. One participant suggested a 'roving sustainability resource' to provide encouragement, support, share ideas, and help improve networks.

### vii.    Assistance with evaluation tools

While the feedback around evaluation tools is covered in more depth above, there was a general view that assistance in this area would be valuable. One participant was looking for a more sophisticated evaluation framework for strategy documents, and expressed interest in a USP funded project - the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative. In relation to a community engagement and education initiative, another sought assistance in reviewing what data to collect, what to measure and how to collect it, and suggested they would be very interested in trialling evaluation tools.

**viii.    Assistance with benchmarking**

Based on general discussion, there was an interest by participants in how their councils were going in relation to others, and an acknowledgement that comparisons were a motivating force for elected councillors to make changes.

One participant felt that external auditing by an independent body should be required of councils, as benchmarking against other organisations helps drive change. The example used was the structured review undertaken through the DECC Sustainable Advantage program.

**ix.    Advocacy**

There were several suggestions relating to the need for policy changes, guidelines or standards introduced to apply to the whole sector. Suggestions included these:

> *DLG should acknowledge receipt of the SoE report and provide feedback to councils.*

> *The Local Government Act should contain a clear definition of sustainability, and also of QBL.*

> *Local Government as an industry needs to standardise the approach to sustainability and say this is the scope of what is covered.*

> *People at an individual level aren't getting it; let's tell councils this is how you carry out your role in a sustainable way. Councils need to know what makes a sustainable engineering department or parks department. It could be a project to develop such standards.*

**x.    Overcoming resourcing barriers**

There was a request for support accessing funds from a council that didn't have internal expertise in preparing applications. Support in making the link between external funding timeframes and internal budget cycles was also mentioned. There was also a request that assistance preparing submissions be given to those councils who were unsuccessful with grant applications.

## 5.2  Reflections on feedback regarding support

In addition to common themes around training and resources, the range of ideas that have been put forward will be helpful to the USSA in developing further stages of this project, as well as in shaping other priorities. Suggestions about actions that are outside the direct control of councils can inform the advocacy work of representative Local Government bodies.

Even for those who highlighted the many successes of their council in this area, the importance of encouragement was a common theme. One participant expressed it this way, "*It's pretty daunting. Some days you go home and think I'm never going to be able to do this. Most of the time it's pressure, pressure, pressure.*" Those involved in supporting councils and council staff cannot over-estimate the value of encouragement and acknowledgement of the excellent work of practitioners on the ground.

The USSA Project Steering Committee will also look at the more detailed feedback provided by individual participating councils in order to provide tailored responses where possible.

# 6  Next Steps

This report represents the completion of the first stage of work being undertaken by ISF for the USSA.

It was envisioned that during the second stage of work, to be completed later in 2009, the project team would focus on developing resources to assist councils in the area of evaluation and measuring progress on sustainability. It was anticipated that this would involve looking in more detail at some of the existing evaluation tools and approaches identified during the first stage of research and  determining if new (or adapted) tools are needed by councils. Case studies that drew on the data provided through the interviews were also to be developed.

The feedback provided by participating councils is of great value to the USSA and the implications for this project, as well as for future planning, are now being given careful consideration. The ISF project team will review the brief with the USSA project steering committee in order to ensure that the deliverables for the next stage are consistent with feedback provided by councils, and are as useful possible for participating councils. The next step is to review the options for the next stage and to provide a report with recommendations to the USSA.

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## Appendix A: Evaluation tools matrix

The matrix of evaluation tools is attached.

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|------|------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| A: Toolkits - packages or programs which include a range of tools | | | | |
| | Tools referred to by participating councils in interviews for this project | | | |
| A1 | Sustainability Advantage | Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW (DECC). | Sustainability Advantage is a business support service designed to help businesses to identify what sustainability means to them and then provides a roadmap for environmental action. To participate in the program, you: 1. Make an initial commitment of 18 months participation; 2. Complete the Sustainability Management Diagnostic; 3. Choose and undertake three or four of the seven Sustainability Advantage modules. 4. Attend meetings with other businesses in your industry or geographic area 3-4 times a year; 5. Report your progress and take part in evaluation. Councils often act as brokers between DECC and their business community but may also sign up and participate as 'businesses' themselves. | Parramatta City Council Marrickville Council Sutherland Shire Council<br><br>Other council users include: Taree Council Willoughby Council |
| A2 | Sustainability Assessment Toolkit and Reporting (SATAR) format | Clarence Valley Council with Sustainable Futures Australia | Developed in house by Clarence Valley Council with Sustainable Futures Australia as part of the Sustainability Assessment and Reporting Approach in Clarence Valley's Sustainability Initiative. SATAR includes the use of an assessment matrix based on the Clarence Valley Council Sustainability Planning Web's key goals and principles. The SATAR toolkit is to be used by Clarence Valley Council for assessment of development application and proposals, for monthly activity and project reports to Council meetings, quarterly and annual reports for management plan review, and State of the Environment reporting. | Clarence Valley Council (NSW) |
| A3 | Sustainability Health Check | Sustainable Futures Australia for Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA NSW) and the Department of Environment and Conservation (2006) | The NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check is a tool designed especially for councils strategic planning and reporting. Councils use it to identify which aspects of their organizational systems and relationships are sustainable and which require further work. Whatever stage of the journey a council is at, the Sustainability Health Check aims to encourage a cultural change towards sustainability. There are two main parts to the tool – one looks at councils systems and processes, the other takes an outcomes approach across the five bottom lines of economy, ecology, community, governance and infrastructure (human habitat). | 26 of 152 NSW councils have identified themselves as using the SHC as at March 2008. |

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|------|------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| A4 | Sustainable Choice | Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW and the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW | Sustainable Choice is a sustainable procurement program designed to help NSW councils meet Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and triple bottom line objectives through procurement. The program provides support and guidance on products and services that save energy or water, contain recycled content, are non toxic, have greenhouse or biodiversity benefits, or advance council's social or environmental objectives in some way. The program is free and all NSW councils are eligible to join. | 47 NSW councils are current participating members of the program. Note: Program tools and resources are available for use by all councils |
| A5 | Triple Bottom Line Capacity Building Program (TBL Program) | ICLEI Oceania: Integrated Sustainability Services | The Triple Bottom Line Capacity Building Program (TBL Program) aims to support councils to incorporate sustainability and triple bottom line principles into the planning, decision-making and reporting practices of local government. The key objectives of the TBL program are to: build the capacity of local councils in the sustainability arena through expertise support, networking and knowledge sharing; developing new TBL tools for use and application in local councils; investigations and research into leading practice in sustainability and applying this to local councils;  and, facilitating partnerships and affiliations to enable the development and delivery of leading sustainability practices to local councils. The program consists of eleven core modules for working with participating councils to: undertake a sustainability review and gap analysis; develop TBL principles, objectives, targets and indicators; establish data management processes; identify training needs; and develop and implement monitoring and review processes. | Liverpool Plains Shire Council (NSW) Penrith Council (NSW) City of Sydney (NSW) Note: Councils from other states are also involved in this national program |
| A6 | Triple Bottom Line toolkit | City of Melbourne and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Australia/New Zealand | These tools are a set of checklists, guidelines, templates and case studies for the application of TBL decision-making and reporting and are based on the City of Melbourne's experience. Includes: Building the business case, Capital Works Sustainability Statement, Sustainability Assessment for Council Reports | Hornsby Shire Council (NSW) Manly Council (NSW) Pittwater Council, Clarence Valley Council and Tamworth City Council drew on TBL toolkit in developing their report templates. |
| | Additional tools discovered in desktop research | | | |
| A6 | PETUS – Practical Evaluation Tools for Urban Sustainability (2005) | A number of institutions with funding from the EU | PETUS is a website database developed to help people who are involved with, or affected by, building and infrastructure to consider impacts on the environment, society and the economy. This website includes information that can be used to analyse and improve the sustainability of urban infrastructure across a range of project sizes and types. The PETUS team have identified many tools during their research that are being used in practice and developed a classification system to describe different types of tool. For each tool type PETUS provides a summary of the type of tool, the stage of a project when the type of tool could be used, the type of output that is produced when using the tool and some comments on experiences from using each type of tool. (Note: This database is 3 years old, some projects listed appear to be discontinued by supporting organisations.) | n/a - can be accessed by registering on the site. Users are not listed. |

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| B: Corporate and strategic planning tools | | | | |
| | Tools referred to by participating councils in interviews for this project | | | |
| B1 | Australian Business Excellence Framework | SAI Global | The Australian Business Excellence Framework is an integrated leadership and management system that is based on a set of 12 principles of leadership and management, which are translated into a set of criteria.  The criteria cover the areas of: 'leadership and innovation'; 'strategy and planning process'; 'data information and knowledge'; 'people, customer and market focus'; 'processes'; 'products and services'; and 'business results'. The framework also includes a system of self-assessment to enable organisational learning. Resources explaining the framework in detail are available from SAI Global on a fee for access basis. | Penrith Council (NSW)<br><br>Other Council users:<br>City of Wodonga (VIC)<br>City of Belmont  (WA)<br>Hobart City Council (TAS)<br>City of Swan (WA)<br>Sunshine Coast Regional Council (QLD) |
| B2 | Balanced Scorecard | Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, Palladium Group | The Balanced Scorecard specifies that users should view their organization from four different perspectives: Learning and Growth; Business Process; Customer; Financial. Users then produce metrics, collect data and analyse with respect to each perspective.<br><br>Note: The QLD government recommends this to Councils in their councils' toolbox resource. | Bankstown City Council (NSW)<br><br>Other Council users include:<br>Temora Council (NSW) and Redland City Council (QLD) |
| B3 | Financial Loss Control - Energy, Water, Waste | Newcastle City Council | Financial Loss Control is a 14-step mentoring program that aims to increase profits and enhance in-house knowledge though a strategic approach to energy, water and waste management. Note: The program is available for other councils on a fee for service basis. | Newcastle City Council (NSW) |
| B4 | Global Reporting Initiative Framework | Global Reporting Initiative, hosted in the Australasia region by St James Ethics Centre | The GRI Framework provides guidance on how organizations can disclose their sustainability (economic, environmental and social) performance through public reporting. The Guidelines are the foundation of the Framework and provide guidance on: defining report content and quality, setting the report boundary, disclosure on management approach and indicator selection. Sector supplements are used to tailor the guidelines for use in different sectors. The City of Melbourne (VIC) is involved in developing the pilot sector supplement for public agencies. | Hornsby Shire Council (NSW) |

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|------|------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| B5 | ISO 14000 series Environmental Management Systems (2004) | International Organization for Standardization (ISO) | The ISO 14001 standard specifies requirements for an organisation's environmental management system (EMS). An EMS enables an organisation to develop and implement policies and objectives which take into account legal requirements and other requirements to which the organization subscribes along with information about significant environmental aspects of the organisation. ISO 14001 does not state specific environmental performance criteria, rather it guides criteria selection. ISO 14001:2004 aims to be applicable to any organization that wishes to establish, implement, maintain and improve an environmental management system and to assure itself of conformity with its stated environmental policy. Organisations which demonstrate conformity with ISO 14001:2004 criteria can apply for certification. | Rockdale City Council (NSW) |
| B6 | Melbourne Principles (2002) | ICLEI Oceania (in partnership with ICLEI-Canada) | The Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities provide a set of statements on how a sustainable city would function. The Principles were developed by the United Nations Environment Programme International Environmental Technology Centre. They are intended to guide thinking and provide a strategic framework for action. ICLEI Oceania is currently developing a mechanism/tool based on the Melbourne Principles that aims to assist local governments in long-term planning for sustainability. | Penrith Council (NSW) |
| B7 | Managing Urban Europe 25 (MUE-25) model for local and regional sustainability | Managing Urban Europe 25. (Co-funded by the European Commission DG Environment) | The European project Managing Urban Europe 25 worked with 25 European local and regional authorities to improve their environmental quality and sustainability performance. The project, which ran from 2006 to 2008, delivered a framework to support better implementation of already existing environmental management systems like EMAS, ISO 14001 and ecoBUDGET. It provides a method for how cities and regions can practically apply integrated management. | 25 European local and regional authorities |
| B8 | Sustainability guidelines for decision makers Vol. 2 Operational Review | SSROC (2000) | The guidelines aim to improve the overall sustainability of council operations. The guidelines act as a basic checklist to give a council a snapshot of the sustainability of council operations and move towards addressing least sustainable areas. | Tamworth Regional Council (NSW) |
| B9 | Sustainability Health Check | Sustainable Futures Australia for LGMA NSW and DEC (2006) | See description listed under Toolkits, Ref. A2 | 26 of 152 NSW councils have identified themselves as using the SHC as at March 2008. |
| B10 | Sustainable Seattle checklist (Indicators of sustainable community: a report to citizens on long-term trends in our community, 1995) | Formerly 'Sustainable Seattle' now the 'B-Sustainable Project' | This checklist is a tool for assessing whether a community is moving toward or away from conditions of sustainability. It was produced following the 1992 Rio Conference when information to empower the public was not easily accessible and rarely presented in a holistic manner. | Tamworth Regional Council (NSW) |

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|------|------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| | Additional tools discovered in desktop research | | | |
| B11 | Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool (Pilot 2009) | ICLEI  Oceania: Integrated Sustainability Services (ISS) | The ISS Sustainability Self-Assessment (SA) Tool is currently in the pilot stage. Funded by Sustainability Victoria, the SA Tool aims to help identify an organisation's strengths and weaknesses in relation to sustainability integration across processes and plans. The SA Tool aims to enable local governments to carry out a self-guided process of assessing their sustainability integration performance and needs, based on a series of questionnaires, consisting of two parts: a 'Rapid Assessment' and a 'Full Assessment'. | Pilot stage, currently inviting councils to participate (as at 16th Feb 2009) |
| B12 | Sustainability Road Map | Queensland EPA | The Business Sustainability Roadmap is a strategy map which provides a contextual framework for businesses wanting to take up the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. For each destination on the roadmap there are milestones by which businesses can check their systems and practices. The Queensland EPA's roadmap provides initial guidance to a business seeking to develop its own sustainability road map. | Wollongong Council (NSW) in partnership with Kiama Council and  Shellharbour Council |
| B13 | The Natural Step Framework | The Natural Step foundation | The Natural Step Framework is a systems thinking based methodology for organisational planning. It is centred around the concept of backcasting from sustainability principles. | International Resort Municipality of Whistler, Canada pioneered method with the Whistler 2020 plan |
| C: Data collection and reporting tools | | | | |
| | Tools referred to by participating councils in interviews for this project | | | |
| C1 | Climate Cam | Newcastle City Council | The Newcastle City Council Climate Cam is a publicly visible metre which displays the energy use of the city on the wall of the Council building - public indicator reporting. | Newcastle City Council (NSW) |
| C2 | Planet Footprint Energy and Water Program | Planet Footprint Pty Ltd | Councils that subscribe to Planet Footprint's Energy and Water Program have their electricity, streetlights, gas and water cost and consumption performance data collected, managed, benchmarked against other Australian Councils, and reported quarterly. This work is done by Planet Footprint's environmental and IT staff acting as consultants to a council. | Eurobadalla (NSW)<br><br>Other Council users include: Blue Mountains City Council (NSW), Shoalhaven City Council (NSW), Kempsey Shire Council(NSW), Kiama Municipal Council (NSW) and Hawkesbury City Council (NSW) |
| C3 | SoE Reporting | NSW Government | All councils in NSW are required to prepare an annual State of the Environment (SoE) report and submit the report to the NSW Department of Local Government as part of its formal annual reporting obligations.  The purpose of preparing a SoE report is to provide a summary of the attributes of the Local Government environment and the human impacts on that environment. It also provides a public record of the activities of government, industry and the community in protecting and restoring the environment. | Mandatory across the NSW local government sector. |

| Ref. | Tool | Developed by | Description | Used by |
|------|------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| C4 | TechnologyOne Financials (previously Finance One) | Technology One | TechnologyOne Financials is a financial management information system software package. Penrith City Council adapted this system by adding water, energy and waste data fields to their Finance One software package in order to collect environmental indicator data. | Penrith Council (NSW) |
| C5 | TechnologyOne Performance Planning (previously Outcomes Manager) | Technology One | TechnologyOne Performance Planning is a software package that enables tracking and reporting on KPI's and can be used to collect and report on environmental indicator data. | Wagga Wagga City Council (NSW) |
| | Additional tools discovered in desktop research | | | |
| C6 | VIC EPA Ecological Footprint Calculator | EPA Victoria in partnership with the Global Footprint Network | Tool for measuring household impact on the natural world and represents as an area. Used in an evaluation context Ecological Footprint can be used as an indicator to track the overall sustainability of the community or impact of household education programs | Bayside City Council (VIC) to develop community profile and City of Port Phillip (VIC) to evaluate the Sustainable Living at Home educational program |
| **D: Plan and project level evaluation tools** | | | | |
| | Tools referred to by participating councils in interviews for this project | | | |
| D1 | Outcomes Hierarchy framework | DECC NSW in the guide 'Does your project make a difference?' | This is a framework for evaluation which links needs, activities and outcomes with evaluation questions, indicators, information sources, standards and evaluation reporting. The framework is intended to guide organisations in establishing project indicators and measuring projects against internally developed goals.<br><br>Note: One user of this tool is the Environmental Trust which uses outcomes monitoring as a component of the Environmental Trust Grant Agreement. In this context the tool enables the Environmental Trust to measure projects against DECC's specific environmental outcomes and report to government. The grant agreement is completed by all Environmental Trust grant holders which includes numerous councils. | Hornsby Shire Council (NSW) Warringah Council (NSW) |
| | Additional tools discovered in desktop research | | | |
| D4 | Outcomes-based Evaluation online guide | United Way of America | This document provides guidance toward basic planning and implementation of an outcomes-based evaluation process (also called outcomes evaluation) in nonprofit organizations. This document provides basic guidance and is aimed at small nonprofits with very limited resources. This free online guide is designed to help nonprofits carry out their own basic outcomes evaluation planning. | n/a |