

Sustainability Learning Guide: Working with your Community

About this guide

This guide has been developed to assist council sustainability practitioners as they work with community, who are part of the story in council's sustainability journey. It is intended to assist by identifying the ways councils in NSW engage with their communities.

The information collected in this guide has come from practitioners who have shared their initiatives with Local Government NSW (LGNSW). For more information visit www.lgnsw.org.au under "Ecologically Sustainable Development".

Why should sustainability practitioners involve community in council's sustainability journey?

It is an opportunity to build capacity in the understanding and skills required to build sustainable communities. It strengthens the notion of locally and culturally-appropriate sustainability solutions and builds networks for learning. It builds a strong sense of place within community and creates model citizenship. Councils are obligated under Agenda 21 to involve the community, but longer lasting outcomes in sustainability are achieved with greater political support.

10 key ways of involving community in Council's sustainability journey

1. Getting involved with policy
2. Getting involved with governance
3. Getting involved with NRM programs
4. Sustainability programs for community
5. Projects – with partner organisations
6. Providing sustainable events
7. Community Development programs
8. Connecting to Place programs
9. Projects with community sectors
10. Reward Programs

Action	Overview	Action
1. Getting involved with policy	Community Strategic Planning requires community involvement.	Deliberative Democracy – Nature Conservation Council project e.g. Warringah Council, Urrala Shire Council's Climate Consensus
2. Getting involved with governance	Community involved in cultural or sustainability committees	Encouraging community to be members of sustainability committee's, Local Agenda 21 committee
3. Getting involved with NRM programs	Where programs create an understanding of the local environment: "If you love your local environment you will care for it" Many councils have monitoring and research programs that community can become involved with.	Bushcare , landcare Walking programs, Catchment tours, Lecture Series, EnviroWorks, community nursery, Pool to pond, Catchment kids, Streamwatch , nature watch, fauna monitoring programs, stormwater – SQUID, estuary monitoring, Backyard Buddies , adopt a tree
4. Sustainability programs for community	TBL programs designed for community to get involved with	Sustainability Street, car share programs, community gardens, fair-trade, bike repair programs, Audit kit – energy, water take home kits, websites, know your catchment /know your council, Fact sheets, and Lecture series Icon species projects - know your local eucalypt, newsletter to residents
5. Projects – with partner organisations	Working collaboratively with other organisations to assist community to become more sustainable	Backyard buddies , Birds Australia, Ethnic Communities Council – Operation Blue Tongue , NPWS Discovery Program, Botanic Gardens, Our Earth our Stories – NCC, PhotoVoice , Special forever PETA , Green Home ACF, NCC Sustainability Challenge, Sydney Water Every Drop Counts, Fair Trade
6. Providing sustainable events	Using the green calendar to support and engage community in activities	Sustainability expo, Walk to work day, World Environment Day expos, bush walk, movie nights, trivia nights, clothes swap nights, Screening of environmental movies such as an Inconvenient Truth, Leichhardt Council pub trivia
7. Community Development programs	Corporate Social Responsibility fostered between council and its community with other communities	Friendship Groups – East Timor, Forums, regional reporting

Action	Overview	Action
9. Projects with community sectors	Involve the art community in innovative sustainability programs happening within community. Consider CaLD, business, etc.	Exhibitions, Wild place art trail, Drain stencilling, Sculpture by the sea, River art, Creek Art programs, Photographic competitions – Blue Mountains, film festivals, music in the park, Marrickville Riverlife, Canterbury riverworks
10. Reward Programs		Grants, Awards, Council Champions,

Developed from research gathered from educators in the 152 local government areas in NSW, and from the work Maitland Council undertook with their Sense of Place kit and SMCMA community engagement survey 2005.

Ways to engage with community:

Local government under the reforms to the Local Government Act now have to report on their Community Engagement Strategy. Increasingly councils need to look at new ways to communicate with their communities. Meetings and newsletters are necessary but some councils are taking up the challenge to work with “new” media. Mosman Council now has a twitter policy, and a Community Engagement Strategy that looks at E-communication. Many councils have Facebook pages that community can join. The more ways council can connect with community the easier the sustainability journey will be.