Ten ways to use online tools for sustainability

About this guide

This guide has been developed to assist council sustainability practitioners use online tools to progress the journey towards sustainability. This journey can be defined as a process for providing the awareness, knowledge, skills, and values to help all current and future generations achieve good health, economic security, social equity and stability while restoring and sustaining the earth's life support systems. The information collected in this guide has come from practitioners who have shared their initiatives. For more information visit www.lgsa.org.au and look under "ESD".

Why produce a guide?

Online communication has become an extremely popular way for people to connect and share information. Many local government sustainability practitioners would like to harness the popularity of online tools to engage with the community on sustainability issues however there is little information about who, how and why councils have used online tools.

10 Online Tools:

1. E-newsletters
2. E-learning modules
3. E-surveys
4. Video and Photo sharing eg YouTube, Flickr
5. Blogs
6. Forums
7. Wikis
8. Social Networking Sites eg Facebook, MySpace, Twitter
9. Website Monitoring eg Google Analytics
10. Online Maps eg Google Maps

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Media type:	How can I use?	Examples:
1. E-newsletters	To inform your community of opportunities to get involved in council sustainability programs. You can also use internally to increase organizational support for your sustainability initiatives.	Business Treading Lightly E-News http://www.btl.net.au/latest-news/index.html Lane Cove Council Sustainability E-News http://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/ Mailchimp is one example of many email newsletter providers http://mailchimp.com/
2. E-learning Modules	Online sustainability courses can be a component of your council professional development or community education programs. E-learning is one tool you can use to help council staff understand what sustainability means and how to apply principles to their work.	TAFE NSW Northern Sydney Institute developed an online course called Green with ENV-E piloted by Warringah Council. The Compost Revoltuion, a project initiated by Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra Councils uses online turtorials to teach residents how to compost and worm farm. http://compostrevolution.com.au/
3. E-survey	A useful way of gaining feedback from your community. Councils have also used as a tool to gauge staff attitudes towards sustainability.	Survey Monkey is one of many helpful survey design and management tools www.surveymonkey.com
4. Video and Photo Sharing	You can use free sites such as Youtube or Flickr to capture the excitement of your sustainability event. You could also run a sustainability video contest.	City of Sydney Council Keep China Town Clean and Green http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/ Willoughby City Council Eco-ethical Fashion Show http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9mHvn8G6zY Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and Willoughby Councils GreenStyle Program http://www.youtube.com/user/greenstylenorth
5. Blogs	Blogs can be used to provide a commentary or news on a sustainability issue. Blogs tend to be a one way communication tool.	Penrith City Council Sustainable Penrith Blog http://www.sustainablepenrithblog.blogspot.com.au/ Goulburn Mulwaree Council City to Soil Program http://groundswellproject.blogspot.com.au/
6. Forums	Forums can be set up to foster a community of practice. Councils are using forums to gauge public opinion about relevant issues. Forums tend to be	Councils are using Bang the Table to facilitate community consultation http://www.bangthetable.com/

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	a two way communication tool.	Sustainablenet is a local government forum with over 500 members posting on sustainability issues http://www.sustainablenet.org.au
7. Wikis	Wiki's are website pages that allow registered users to modify and add content. Wikipedia is the popular example of a wiki. Wiki's can be used to help steering committees or community groups collaborate and share ideas online.	NRM Regional Knowledge Resource Kit – http://www.rkrk.net.au/
8. Social Networking Sites	Tools such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter can be used to facilitate the discovery, participation and sharing of content.	Ashfield Council Greenway Sustainability Project http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/GreenWay-Sustainability-Project/238288559609 Mosman Council Twitter Page http://www.mosman.nsw.gov.au/web/external/twitter
9. Website Monitoring Tools	Tools used to track the number of website hits, average length of time spent per view and most popular downloads.	Google Analytics is one free tool. http://www.google.com.au/intl/en/analytics/index.html
10. Online Maps	Online mapping tools can be used to illustrate the level of participation in your community in your sustainability programs.	Google maps are a free tool you can use. http://maps.google.com.au Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney and Willoughby map sustainable businesses through their Better Business Partnerships program http://www.betterbusinesspartnership.com.au/Find-a-better-business.html

It is important to involve your IT and communications team. You can use the examples in this guide to illustrate how other councils have used online communication tools.

For further assistance with your council's sustainability journey contact the Sustainability team sustainability@lgsa.org.au or phone 02 9242 4000.