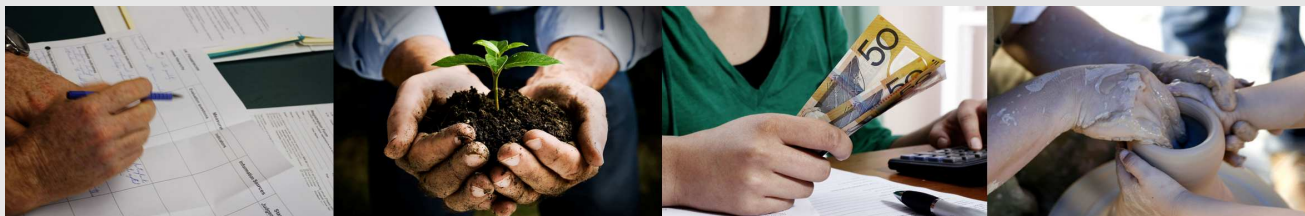


Supporting councils in their journey towards sustainability



10 ways to overcome barriers to sustainability in small and/or regionally isolated councils

About this guide

This guide has been developed to assist councils who are small and/or regionally isolated gain support and implement sustainability projects. However this guide could also be relevant to other councils as many will face similar barriers. The information collected in this guide has come from practitioners who have shared their success factors with the USSA. Special thanks to the members of CENTROC environment group who made significant contributions to this guide.

For more information visit the USSA website www.lgsa.org.au/ussa.

Why produce a guide?

Research conducted on behalf of the USSA by the Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS in 2009 highlighted many barriers faced by smaller and/or regionally isolated councils in progressing their sustainability work. This research identified the following key challenges unique to these councils. For the full report, go to the “Research” section of the USSA website at www.lgsa.org.au/ussa.

Challenges to sustainability projects in small and regional councils:

1. Lack of funding sources
2. Lack of sustainability staff in council
3. Consultancies are too expensive
4. Skills and knowledge shortage regarding sustainability
5. Challenges of distance and cost to attend training and network meetings
6. Still dealing with climate sceptics in elected council
7. High staff turn over and difficulty attracting staff
8. Large areas to manage
9. High roads to people ratio means high internal budget allocation to road maintenance
10. High level of demands on existing staff and wide range of skills required

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The following guide aims to assist those working in small and regional councils to overcome these barriers with strategies and examples that other councils have used to deliver successful sustainability projects.

Barrier:	How can it be overcome?	Examples:
Financial sustainability of projects (actual or perceived)	Projects must demonstrate payback for internal budget allocation. Use triple or quadruple bottom line to demonstrate sustainability. Embed sustainability into everyday practices rather than as an expensive add-on.	The Ryde Project Sustainability Assessment Protocol Penrith's Sustainability Revolving Fund
Lack of sustainability staff in council	Combine with existing functions. Redesign existing roles. Apply for grants if available. Form a Sustainability Committee with existing staff. Utilise staff in different sections that may have linkages to sustainability projects.	Cowra Sustainability Officer position established with requirement for a Trade Waste Officer. Climate Change and Sustainability Officer (p/t) created at Clarence Valley Council. Cabonne Sustainability Committee, Yass Valley Regional Council, waste staff, water staff, parks staff.
Consultancies are too expensive	Enter alliances with other councils and seek grant funds. Employ consultants across councils. Share experiences across councils for similar projects.	CENTROC Water Security Study CENTROC – That's a Good Idea (TAGI) project (TAGI) . Wellington, Blayney & Cabonne Strategic Alliance Climate Change Action Planning Workshop & Sustainability Action Plan . 'Regenisis' project between Liverpool Plains Shire Council and Blacktown City Council . Business Educator's Network
Skills and knowledge shortage regarding sustainability	Undertake sustainability training including online training. Utilise collaboration networks across region.	Sustainability Training Workshop Package from the USSA (online resource for in-house training). NRM , Climate Change and Sustainable Choice training from the LGSA. Central NSW Councils Regional Organisation of Councils (CENTROC),

		Bathurst Orange Dubbo (BOD), www.sustainablenet.org.au
Distance and cost to attend training and network meetings	Arrange web & telephone conferencing. Keep travel to a minimum with online training. A low travel time (late start and early finish). Rotate meetings around the region. Offer to host external training.	WebEx web conferencing www.webex.com.au Telstra telephone conferencing http://www.telstra.com.au/conferlink/ CENTROC meetings
Still dealing with climate sceptics in elected council	Remain persistent and motivated, be realistic – this will always be a factor (acknowledge organisational change won't happen overnight) Create various opportunities for engagement and access to information. Improve understanding & foster sense of responsibility for developing solutions. Approach it as risk management and as resource efficiency & demonstrated cost savings. Begin with lots of small projects to demonstrate achievements.	Focus on empowering the non-sceptics through staff and community behaviour change programs. Climate Change Action Planning Workshop Package (LGSA online resource) used by Bland Shire Council & Wellington, Blayney and Cabonne Strategic Alliance. The Weather Report (CENTROC) Payback periods with solar and energy efficiency improvements.
High staff turn over and difficulty attracting staff	Improve the employment conditions, offer incentives. Have more than one officer responsible for major sustainability projects. Train staff to multi-task. Participate in peer networks. Advertise overseas.	Pay university fees (Griffith City Council, Nambucca Shire Council). Sustainability Educators network http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/sustainabilityeducators/ , Waste Educators network waste_ed_subscribe@yahoo.com , Local Government Managers Associations (LGMA), www.sustainablenet.org.au
Large areas to manage	Training to work smarter, not harder.	Landcare

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	Empower community to take ownership and action on private and public land. Partner city councils to share resources.	Regenes Project partnership between Liverpool Plains Shire and Blacktown City Council.
High roads to people ratio means high budget allocation to road maintenance	Grant funding, projects across councils. Partner with local environment and community groups.	CENTROC – That's a Good Idea project (TAGI) Catchment Management Authorities (CMA), Landcare
High level of demands on existing staff and wide range of skills required	Share information across region, form regional committees, share responsibilities (i.e. waste legislation updates, NRM). Form alliances and network for information. Provide training opportunities for staff to broaden their skills and knowledge.	Central NSW Councils Regional Organisation of Councils (CENTROC), Bathurst Orange Dubbo (BOD), Sustainability Educators network http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/sustainabilityeducators/ , Waste Educators network waste_ed_subscribe@yahoo.com , Local Government Managers Associations (LGMA), www.sustainable.net.au

The USSA has developed a range of other sustainability learning guides. They are available from the USSA website at <http://www.lgsa-plus.net.au/www/html/3083-sustainability-learning-guides.asp>. Also check out USSA online case studies at www.lgsa-plus.net.au/www/html/2330-case-studies.asp

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

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