

Sustainability Learning Guide: Increasing senior management support

About this guide

This guide has been developed to assist council sustainability practitioners to increase senior management support when working towards sustainability. The information collected in this guide has come from practitioners who have shared their initiatives with Local Government NSW (LGNSW). For more information, visit lgnsw.org.au under “Ecologically Sustainable Development”.

Why create a guide?

Research conducted by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney [Barriers and Drivers to Sustainability in Local Government](#) identified one of the top barriers in relation to achieving sustainability in Local Government was lack of senior management support. On the other side of the coin having senior management support can also be your biggest driver or enabler.

Therefore is it extremely important that sustainability practitioners have guidance about the strategies and skills required to influence senior staff.

What is senior management support?

Senior management support can be described as the level of personal commitment, knowledge and leadership provided by senior management, in particular the General Manager of the council. Supportive management recognises and rewards staff achievements in the area of sustainability.

10 Ways to increase senior management support:

1. Case studies from other councils
2. Internal training and awareness raising
3. Communicate up regularly and meaningfully
4. Gain recognition and positive publicity
5. Harness community expectations
6. Involve GM and Councillors in sustainability programs and committees
7. Use external experts
8. Provide a business case
9. Use legislation
10. Build your personal relationships

Key area	Tip	Key area
1. Case studies from other councils	Use other councils as an example of what your council could be doing. Use their business case and/or project outcomes to make your job easier. Importantly improve on their programs and learn from their mistakes.	LGNSW's council case studies
2. Internal training and awareness raising	Internal sustainability training can raise the profile of sustainability issues. Involving senior management is essential to give training credibility. Senior management involvement is crucial to progress new opportunities that can arise from training.	Sustainability Training Package LGNSW Councillor Understanding Sustainability Training
3. Communicate up regularly and meaningfully	Council reports, senior management briefings and internal memos are all methods you can use to raise sustainability issues. Meaningful communication may mean cutting out the jargon. Present the facts, highlight the benefits and consider using graphs and pictures to help get your message across.	Penrith City Council Report "Support of Earth Hour 2011" . The report links activity to council key priorities listed in Penrith's strategic plan.
4. Gain recognition and positive publicity	Submitting and winning awards can help get sustainability recognised by senior management. Increased media coverage of sustainability issues can also increase the level of understanding and support for sustainability.	LGNSW Environment Awards Keep Australia Beautiful Awards
5. Harness community expectations	Active communities can have a major influence on the policies and priorities of the elected council For example the influence of letters advocating action on particular issues.	CENTROC Shiny Halo Blog
6. Involve GM and Councillors in sustainability programs and committees	Get your mayor to participate in your program. Use your mayor as speakers for council events. Encourage Mayor and Councillors to become a representative on sustainability committees.	North Sydney Mayor took the Climate Change Challenge

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7. Use external experts	An external expert can bring credibility and authority.	<u>Sustainability Health Check</u>
8. Provide a business case	You need to be able to sell the benefits to council. Present facts and figures and quantify the social and environmental benefits.	Gosford City Council's Buisness case for Managing Climate Change Adaptation.
9. Legislation	The Division of Local Government's Integrated Planning Reporting Guidelines require council to plan for the future in consultation with the community. Sustainability principles can be used to meet these requirements. The principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development outlined in the Local Government Act can also be used important driver.	<u>DLG Integrated Planning and Reporting</u> <u>The Local Government Act</u>
10. Build your personal relationships	Do not underestimate the power of personal relationships. Take opportunities to connect with senior management in an informal setting.	<u>The Art of the Elevator Pitch : Ten great tips</u>