



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Linking and leveraging multi-stakeholder networks for local ESD impact

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Australia

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Western Sydney University (host to RCE Greater Western Sydney)

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

sustainable development goals; education for sustainability development; multi-stakeholder networks

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Hosted by Western Sydney University, the RCE Greater Western Sydney network has been building collaborative place-based, partner-led programs and initiatives for 10-years to accelerate and mainstream ESD in our region to deliver local impact.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Coordinated by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) at the global level, Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are multi-stakeholder networks of existing formal, non-formal and informal organisations working together to facilitate ESD learning and action in a local setting (UNU-IAS, 2021).

RCE Greater Western Sydney (RCE-GWS), auspiced and hosted by Western Sydney University, is situated in one of Australia's most rapidly growing regions in Australia facing many social, cultural, economic and ecological sustainability challenges. As an anchor institution in the region the University brought together key partners to strategically link, leverage and strengthen work that was already happening in parallel. Endorsed by the UNU-IAS in 2011, RCE-GWS network has built collaborative and innovative place-based programs and initiatives for 10-years. Our aim is to educate and empower local people to take action in their local places.

Our strategy for implementation has been to collectively work to address our regional challenges identified as a network to deliver local impact. Since the launch of the global SDG 2030 agenda our areas of focus have been realigned to the global goals. Our current collaborate initiatives (2019 - 2021) fit under three thematics and are underpinned by the cross cutting SDG 4 and 17:

- Urban Heat and Climate Action (SDG 7, 11 and 13),
- Food Justice and Sustainable Agriculture (SDG 2 and 12), and
- Urban Biodiversity and Riparian and River Health (SDG 6, 14 and 15).

The RCE-GWS network is embedded in our institutional educational commitment to the SDGs. RCE-GWS is one of five RCEs in Australia, and one of over 170 RCEs endorsed globally (as of December 2021) – the majority of which are hosted by higher educational institutions - all working towards ESD.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Our ESD network has worked together for a decade to tackle our region's sustainability challenges since its inception in 2011. Our 23 external partners include the region's educational institutions, non-government/non-profit organisations, school networks, community groups, local government, and government agencies. Our initiatives are developed by our partners in collaboration with each other and focused on formal and informal education for school students, university students and community members. These initiatives are a combination of in-kind, internally and externally funded collaborations, ranging from professional development days for teachers to larger scale whole of region engagement programs.

As an endorsed RCE, our remit is in supporting ESD via the Global Action Programme (GAP) and SDGs, specifically through SDG 4.7 ensuring 'all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development ...' (United Nations, 2015). RCE-GWS brings together multiple stakeholders from different educational sectors to collaborate on and mobilise ESD initiatives across Western Sydney. It also generates a space to collectively contribute, learn, share and discuss the SDGs within our network. Within the university RCE-GWS provides the unique opportunity to initiate and facilitate leadership, engagement and action through discourse, education and stewardship on the importance of the SDGs and their implementation for our region and beyond. This has resulted in a number of our partners – local governments and school networks – adopting and position-ing the SDGs as part of their own strategic plans. It has also provided authentic, trans-formative learning opportunities for Western's students to engage meaningfully with the SDGs.

Our governance structure constitutes the central leadership of the RCE-GWS network and represents the interests of all our members, other than just the University. This governance model shares the responsibility of the operations and functions of the larger group, including endorsing new RCE-GWS partners applications, identifying potential projects, and determining key directions based on of widespread input of our larger group (i.e. our core areas of impact). We also undertake a membership and governance committee refresh every two to three years to revitalize the network with either new representatives or organisations.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

RCE-GWS has delivered 27 collaborative sustainability programs and initiatives since its inception in 2011. This has included outreach activities such as Schools for Sustainability fostering environmental stewardship with 60 local high school student leaders in partnership with local government; a 2-day Wetlands for the West community workshop attracting over 100 residents, environmental volunteers, industry professionals and Western academics and students; the award-winning, curriculum-based Youth Eco Summit engaging over 10,000 school students and their teachers; and our global RCE SDG Youth Challenge which has mobilised action for the SDGs through 138 youth leaders engaging over 20,000 youth in 12 countries, led by Western Sydney University. Our recent initiative, the Hawkesbury Resilience Project, is taking a whole-of-area approach and is expected to reach over 80,000 residents and is in partnership with five key organisations include a youth advocacy group and local government. Most projects have involved an evaluation process and reporting, with particular emphasis on the learner outcomes.

RCE-GWS has strong links with the Asia-Pacific RCE network, which in turn has created a number of curricular and co-curricular student opportunities; a platform to demonstrate our leadership by hosting the 11th RCE Meeting and Conference on 'Mainstreaming the SDGs' in 2018; and co-delivery of a virtual showcase of best practice on ESD through global seven-part COVID-19 webinar series.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Greater Western Sydney is recognised as an area of growing national importance and has one of the fastest growing populations in Australia. As such it faces the distinctive sustainability challenges associated with a rapidly developing, culturally diverse, peri-urban region. As an anchor institution in the region the University brought together key partners to strategically link, leverage and strengthen work that was already happening in parallel. This network has been beneficial for applying for competitive grants, working at scale across the region and supporting the existing work of our partners. However, it does add to the individual workload of individuals committed to the network.

While UNU-IAS does not provide project funding, it does offer a network to build meaningful partnerships with other universities and educational organisations at a local, regional and international level – all of who are committed to the implementation of the Education for Sustainable Development.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

RCE-GWS brings together multiple stakeholders from different educational sectors to collaborate on and mobilise ESD initiatives across Western Sydney - who would otherwise be working in parallel. It generates a space for our partners to collectively contribute, learn, share and discuss the educational practices and ESD. Within the university RCE-GWS provides the unique opportunity to initiate and facilitate leadership, engagement and action through discourse, education and stewardship for our region and beyond. It has also provided authentic, transformative learning opportunities for Western's students. Interested institutions or organisations can apply to become an RCE network through an open call by the UNU-IAS annually.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://westernsydney.edu.au/rcegws/rcegws>

<https://blogs.upm.es/education4sdg/2021/08/03/linking-and-leveraging-multi-stakeholder-networks-for-local-esd-impact/>