



Skills for Sustainability



Manufacturing Skills Australia

Connecting with the community

What is this all about?

Traditionally businesses maintain a strong focus on factors that have a clear and direct effect on their economic performance, predominantly looking at financial measures such as costs, sales and profit margins.

Many enterprises are moving towards sustainability by taking a broader view of their performance including their relationship to the environment and the community. This is not just for the 'feel good' factor. It enables them to fully assess the potential and actual impact to their business – both costs and benefits – from their interactions with the local and broader community and with the physical environment.

These concepts are embedded in terms like the triple bottom line, people-planet-profit and social, environmental and economic sustainability.

People - social sustainability activities focus on maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with employees, customers and the community. These activities often have benefits in terms of positive profile and customer and community support.

Planet - environmental sustainability activities focus on the potential impact of resource usage, hazardous substances, waste and emissions on the physical environment. These activities may have a direct cost benefit for a business.

Profit - economic sustainability activities focus on business growth, efficiency and productivity supporting the financial viability of the business.

What's it got to do with 'community'?

Connecting with the community relates to the human and social aspects of sustainability and the concept of corporate social responsibility. It places the business within a community of people and recognises the impact that a business has on its employees and individuals in the local area and globally - both customers and non-customers.

Connecting with the community will be influenced by your approach to the social implications of your business activities and how you:

- incorporate sustainability principles into strategic planning
- provide leadership and model ethical practices
- manage your organisation's culture
- comply with access and equity, cultural heritage and land management requirements
- recruit and develop your workforce
- select contractors and suppliers.

What can I do?

Your approach will depend on factors such as the size of your business, your existing relationship with the local community, your reputation, your immediate needs and long term goals.

Community relationships

If you want to build stronger relationships with the local community you might focus on sponsoring events held by local schools or community groups, targeting your recruitment in the local area or setting up programs to encourage your staff to participate in community or charity activities.

It is important to listen and respond to any concerns about your operations in the community. This is usually managed by establishing mechanisms for consultation and communications with community stakeholders. These provide the opportunity to understand the issues raised by the community, provide information about the feasibility of making adjustments and to explain to the community how you are responding to their needs.

Community infrastructure and cultural heritage

If you are planning to relocate or establish a new site for your business you might focus on how you manage the impact on the local community. The impact could be increased noise, traffic congestion, lack of housing, resettlement requirements



or pressure on access to local services that arise from influx of personnel, site development work or operational processes that are new to the area.

Cultural heritage usually refers to buildings, precincts or objects that carry aesthetic and/or historic value by providing evidence of cultural practices or beliefs. Any site development or construction should consider the impact on culturally significant buildings and how to manage any artefacts that might be unearthed.

Marketing, communications and profile

Consumers and business customers are becoming more committed to sourcing products and providers that have a good track record in terms of sustainability.

You can raise your profile by communicating what you have done to source renewable energy and materials, purchase locally, reduce your energy and water consumption and reduce waste to landfill.

Promote your track record in improved work conditions, employing from the local community, sensitivity to workplace diversity and the use of cultural and ethnic icons, responding to community needs and using materials from fair trade or other non-exploitative suppliers.

Make information about your products available to customers. Sustainability information might include the supply chain and life cycle impact of your products, renewable or recycled materials used, clever features, energy ratings and options for product recycling and re-use.

Word of mouth and repeat customers are a significant support to any business. Communicate your sustainability activities through your formal marketing activities, product information, networking and relationship building activities.

More on sustainability

The Skills for Sustainability website provides more information about achieving sustainability improvements through managing your business's impact on the community. The website also shows how sustainability improvements can be achieved across other aspects of a business including:

- facility management
- product design, technology and process improvements
- day to day operational efficiency
- compliance
- governance and strategy

- eliminating waste
- supply chain management.

See www.sustainabilityskills.net.au

Skills for sustainability

Key areas of skills which support the viability an organisation while benefiting the environment in which the organisation operates include:

- managing relationships with the local community
- planning and implementing strategies to reduce water and energy use, waste and emissions
- developing opportunities for recycling, reuse and remanufacturing
- making product improvements and designing 'clever' products
- improving day to day operational resource efficiency
- measuring and reporting environmental/sustainability performance
- assessing environmental risks and developing responses
- managing the supply chain.

Manufacturing Skills Australia has developed leading edge skills solutions to help the manufacturing and related sectors achieve sustainability. These reside in the Sustainable Operations, Competitive Systems and Practices and Environmental Monitoring and Technology qualifications.

For more information about sustainability skills, qualifications and learning and assessment materials see [Skills for Sustainability website www.sustainabilityskills.net.au](http://www.sustainabilityskills.net.au).

To view the qualifications and information on Registered Training Providers see www.training.gov.au.

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