Site Environment Management Plans

A guide for schools and preschools

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Introduction

A Site Environment Management Plan (SEMP) is a school and preschool-friendly tool for planning, implementing, tracking, reviewing and communicating your sustainability actions.

Your SEMP is a key part of the Education for Sustainability (EfS) approach that underpins Green Adelaide's Sustainable Schools program. It's a living document that keeps key information in one place, is simple to update and provides a coordinated approach to sustainability. We encourage you to actively involve students, staff and families.

By regularly reviewing and updating your SEMP, you will help ensure the ongoing viability of your site's sustainability focus and be able to plan future actions. Your SEMP can encourage a whole of school approach by bringing your site's sustainability actions and classroom learning together.

This guide outlines the different sections of Green Adelaide's SEMP template and gives suggestions on how to complete them.

They are:

- Vision and overview – your site's vision and aspirations for integrated action and learning
- Mapping – your starting point and indicators of success
- Action Plans – your sustainability projects

Your SEMP will help you and your site to plan and monitor progress, it's flexible and designed to be adapted to meet your needs. You can start with the sections that are relevant for you now and then work through the other sections or add your own as required.

This guide refers to the Education for Sustainability: Rubrics and Core Indicators. These are five developmental rubrics and associated indicators to help sites identify where they are on their journey towards sustainability. They have been developed to highlight priorities, suggest next steps and provide milestones for celebration.

Vision and overview

This section sets the scene for sustainability at your school or preschool. It highlights any unique aspects of your site that are relevant, indicates who is responsible for coordinating sustainability and lists other plans, policies and partners that will support your work.

- A vision is a positive statement about the future which harnesses the effort and drive of the school/preschool community towards an aspirational goal.
    - See the Developing a vision for sustainability resource for ideas of what to include and examples from other schools/preschools.
- Most schools/preschools have a mission or vision statement that underpins key values and commitments to the community. These often include values that are very closely linked to sustainability, so identifying and listing those in the SEMP demonstrates that sustainability is not just another thing to add to a teacher's workload, it is at the very core of what the school/preschool considers important.
- What are the characteristics of your site – physical, educational, geographical etc – that will affect how you implement any sustainability initiatives and policies?

  For example, existing infrastructure; ongoing building works; focus subject areas or special programs; socio-economic status; CALD communities; community context; location (for example, next to wetlands, on river, adjacent industrial area); land ownership and/or heritage listings.
- The SEMP is intended to work together with your current learning plans and other policies, not override them. Listing those that relate to sustainability demonstrates how your SEMP contributes to achieving them and may provide opportunities to strengthen the plans and policies and further integrate sustainability across the school.

  These may include a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP); Strategic Plan; Purchasing Policy; Quality Improvement Plan (QIP); Site Improvement Plan (SIP); Child Health and Safety Policy.
- Record all the people responsible for, or involved in, leading sustainability at your site. This could either be a comprehensive list of individuals or a broader list of groups, such as a student environment group, governing council or parents and friends' group.
- If you are also working with outside community groups or organisations (for example Friends of Parks, community gardens, health agencies, businesses, local and state government), it is useful to include them in your SEMP, so information and contacts are not lost with staff changes.

Mapping

This section compiles information you have gathered to assess what your site is doing well or needs to improve on.

Results from surveys can inform further learning or action. For example, incorporating feedback collected with the Education for Sustainability: Rubrics and Core Indicators enables you to assess where you are currently placed in your sustainability journey and will help you set goals to focus on key strategic projects and initiatives.

What to include in the mapping table

Learning *What learning has been undertaken on different sustainability topics and who is involved in teaching them?*	You might include: • Staff who teach units of work or inquiries related to your vision • Details of units/inquiries • Number of classes learning in the grounds, engaged with existing site infrastructure or in the local community • Workshops provided to families and the community • Training provided to staff.
Data (Evaluation pre and post) *What audits or other investigations have you undertaken around sustainability initiatives?*	Identifying metrics to monitor progress is an important part of your SEMP. Some options could include: • Bills - gas, water, electricity, landfill disposal, recyclables disposal, green organics disposal, maintenance of plant and equipment, fleet vehicle fuel • Audits - water, electricity, gas, emissions, vehicle use, bin, biodiversity - habitat quality, habitat quantity, species (introduced/native) • Income - recycling 10c containers, scrap metals, on-sale of used goods, sale of garden produce, sales of worm wee/compost • Ecological footprints and carbon calculators.
Surveys (Evaluation pre and post) *What surveys have you undertaken with the school or wider community to gauge their understanding of, interest in, or attitudes about sustainability initiatives?*	Understanding your site and involving your wider community is critical for identifying priorities, current level of sustainability, strengths and for monitoring progress over time. There are many aspects you may choose to survey including site culture, awareness of sustainability, cultural competency, family satisfaction, and staff, parent and school community skills and expertise. You can find pre-existing survey tools or create your own. You can use a range of methodologies including photo point monitoring, interviews, vox pops and surveys. Green Adelaide Sustainable Schools resources include: • Attitudinal Survey • Education for Sustainability rubrics and core indicators (child, student, staff, family) • Surveys and reflection questions for children, students, staff, parents and care-givers. • My Earth Footprint

Involvement of the community *Are the school and wider community involved in communicating, assessing and planning action?*	This may include: • Students, staff, families involvement on working groups • Existing partnerships • Newsletter/web articles sharing learning and ideas with the community • Volunteers • Reconciliation Action Plan • Co-designing projects with the local Aboriginal community • Co-designing learning with local organisations and individuals • Sharing knowledge and sustainability ideas with the community.
Infrastructure *What assets do you have in place to assist with sustainability?*	Undertake an environmental and outdoor learning assets audit. Examples may include: • Biodiversity - butterfly gardens, lizard lounges, nest boxes, water sources for wildlife, number of trees (% canopy cover) • Climate resilience - drought tolerant plants, shading, water sources, green spaces, propagation nursery • Energy - energy efficient buildings and appliances, solar panels, LED lighting • Water - rainwater tanks, swales, wetlands or creeks in school or nearby, rain gardens, frog pond, permeable paving, timer taps • Food – food gardens, propagation nurseries, seed library, tools. • Transport – bike racks • Waste – recycling system, resource recovery area, composting, worms, bokashi bins, nude food, buying in bulk, upcycling.
Norms *Do you have agreed norms or behaviours to lessen your negative impacts on the environment?*	Examples may include: • Curriculum – teachers incorporate outdoor learning spaces into lessons • Biodiversity - prioritising local native plants to reduce water, fertiliser and pesticide use and to provide habitat for wildlife, raptor-safe rat baits, avoidance of pesticides, caring for wildlife • Climate resilience - favouring tree canopies over shade structures where possible, maximising canopy cover • Community - buying goods and services from First Nations businesses, buying Fair Trade products, buying local, asking the community for their feedback on new ideas and plans • Energy – improving passive design elements for buildings, turning off lights and appliances when not in use, choosing the highest efficiency rated products • Waste - procurement checklist, choosing recycled or recyclable over new products, buying organic, double-sided printing, choosing caterers that provide compostable cutlery, cups and plates or accept keep cups, minimising laminating • Water – valuing water resources through fixing leaks in a timely manner, irrigating gardens morning or night, capturing rainwater in tanks, swales, rain gardens. • Transport – encouraging and supporting active transport and car pooling • Food - buying local and in season produce, teaching propagation and edible gardening, growing food for the canteen.

Action Plans

This section provides a template for project action plans. Breaking up your SEMP into smaller projects and completing an action plan for each one helps you achieve your sustainability goals. The plans will help keep projects on track, visualise the next steps, and set deadlines, roles, and responsibilities.

They share the load across staff, students, families and the wider community by reminding you to invite others to take responsibility for different actions and ensure that knowledge and progress are not lost if staff leave.

They can be referenced into the future, recording what you set out to achieve, what steps you undertook, and what impacts were made. You can use them to celebrate your successes and evaluate where improvements need to be made. They are also useful evidence for grant applications.

The *project title* should describe what your site is focussing on to achieve the goal(s) you identified during your mapping.

The *goals* may be EfS outcomes identified using the Education for Sustainability: Rubrics and Core Indicators or they may be sustainability goals. For example:

- **Biodiversity** - caring for and increasing local biodiversity, connecting with nature, removing pest plants
- **Climate resilience** - reducing emissions, heat mapping, increasing greening and shading, responding to risks of a hotter, drier climate
- **Community** - developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, engaging families in learning, volunteering on site, contributing to local projects and initiatives, learning in local spaces
- **Energy** - energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, reducing emissions, reducing food transport through growing food on-site
- **Waste** - reducing materials sent to landfill, separating materials with bin systems, considering lifecycle of products, buying recycled/repurposed items
- **Water** - water efficiency, water conservation, water sensitive design, capturing and storing rainwater, reducing stormwater pollution, water sources for wildlife
- **Transport –** increasing student and staff active transport, improving school infrastructure to reduce barriers, providing active transport education
- **Food –** building and expanding school garden programs**,** increasing food growing skills, developing a local food system, developing a food purchasing policy.

The *Core Indicators* list the EfS goals have you identified using the Rubrics and Core Indicators.

*Target*s are any measurable outcomes you want to achieve from the project or initiative. For example, a 20% reduction in the school's water use or an increase in the number of pollinator species recorded in the school garden.

What to include in an action plan

Project title: Creating our beautiful butterfly garden

Goals:

- Why do you want to create this butterfly garden?
- How do you hope it will be used by students, staff, and the community?
- How do you want this project to strengthen relationships within the school and local community?

Core Indicators:

- Which EfS goals have you identified using the Rubrics and Core Indicators? For example:
  - Our school identifies the range of potential learning environments to support action-based learning inside and outside the school
  - Sustainability and educational outcomes are achieved through action-based learning in diverse environments
  - Our school, with its extended communities, is a model of sustainability.

Targets:

- Are there any environmental factors you want to increase or decrease by creating the butterfly garden?
- Do you want to increase the participation of any groups at your site through this project (students, staff, families, community)?

Action	Strategies to achieve action	Who	Timeframe	Status
Evaluation (pre)	What do we want to measure before we start creating the garden? For example, number of butterfly species currently visiting the grounds, caterpillar food sources, habitat quality, knowledge/attitudes towards butterflies and gardens. Where can we take photos for our 'before' records?			
Learning	What is the inquiry question?			
	Research the needs of butterflies and caterpillars. Research local native plants and how they provide food/shelter/habitat for butterflies and caterpillars. Explore Aboriginal traditional knowledge of native plants and butterflies.			
	How can classes contribute to the planning of the garden? What leadership opportunities exist for students?			

	How are teachers currently including the cross-curriculum priority of Sustainability in teaching? How can this be strengthened?			
	Decide on the location of the garden. How big do you need the space to be? How convenient is the location? How is the space used now? What do other people think of the proposed location?			
	Is the space sunny or shady? Is there access to water? What is the soil like? What would you want to keep that already exists in the space?			
	Can you visit another school that already has a butterfly/wildlife garden for inspiration? Are there examples of other butterfly gardens online or in books? What do you want to include in the space? What ideas do staff, students and families have, how will you ask for their ideas?			
	Create a draft design. In addition to the choice of native plants, features commonly included are seating, artwork, pathways and signage. Ask for feedback on the design from people with butterfly/local native plants knowledge as well as your school community.			
Involving our community	Who can you ask to be involved? For example, local community members, people with knowledge of local native plants and garden design, local community groups. How might they like to be involved? Think about relationships you can build with these people.			
	Who do you want to involve within the school community and what can they contribute? For example, student leadership, classes, families. For those not directly involved, how will you share the learning with staff, students and their families?			
	How might you share your knowledge, learning, skills, actions to influence the wider local community?			
Budget	How much will everything cost? Identify which parts of the plan are priorities if it isn't feasible to do everything now. Can you seek donations? Can you hold a fundraiser or apply for a grant?			

Implementation	What do you need to do to prepare the site? For example, clearing the site, weed control, preparing the site, ordering plants.			
	What infrastructure do you need to install? For example, pathways, artwork, irrigation, seating.			
	Organise a working bee to plant the site.			
	Install signage or develop materials for the space.			
	What name will you give to the garden? How will the name be decided upon? If using Aboriginal language, please ensure appropriate approval is sought.			
Celebration	How will you let the community know the garden has been created? For example, an article in the local paper, information on the school website, case study or celebration event. Who would you like to thank? Who from the community would you invite (local community members, local Member of Parliament)? Do you plan to have a Welcome to Country or a smoking ceremony? How will you share what the students have done? For example, display of student work, special assembly. How will you encourage families to learn more about backyards for wildlife/butterflies? How will you encourage families to plant local native plants?			
Maintenance	Who will be responsible for maintaining this space? For example, watering and weeding, additional plants and mulch, artwork.			
	How will you encourage others to use the space? How could the garden be used in learning in an ongoing way? What are natural connections to the curriculum for different year levels? What training may need to take place to ensure teachers feel equipped to teach in the space. How will new staff be inducted?			
	Are there any policies or systems that need to be updated to ensure the garden is maintained? For example, will it get added to the maintenance schedule, will different classes or the environment group be responsible?			

Reflection	What have been the benefits of having this garden? Have you achieved your goals and targets? What were the most effective strategies? What were the unexpected outcomes? What advice would you give another site wanting to create a butterfly garden?			
Evaluation (post)	Re-measure what you did before the project started. Have you succeeded in your goals and targets? How did you progress against the Core Indicator you were targeting? What evidence do you have to support your progress?			

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