

Early learning sustainability audit

Background information

Conducting a sustainability audit helps your centre gather information about whether it is embedding sustainable practices into its operations and also supporting children to become responsible and respectful of the environment.



A sustainability audit looks at different themes such as waste, water, energy and biodiversity. The audit below also reviews sustainability in your learning programs and how you engage your community.

You can conduct an audit:

- Visually – walking around your centre to identify the sustainability practices already in place and then observing what is working well or needs improving.
- Through conversations – talking to staff, children and families about what is working well or needs improving, and about new ideas.
- Looking at bills – looking at your centre’s waste, water, electricity and gas bills will tell you about resource use. Use this data as a benchmark to measure the savings you make after undertaking different actions.

A sustainability audit helps your centre create or refine its environmental strategy. You can use the information from your audit to create an action plan. The data that you collect can also be used as a baseline to compare any changes and savings that you make in the future.

You are welcome to modify any checklists in this audit to suit your centre’s situation.

Involving Children

Ideas for involving children in a sustainability audit include:

- Exploring – explore the different themes of the checklist (eg. water, waste) before the audit, using Cool Australia’s free-to-access activities.
- Looking – play ‘Spotto’ or ‘Eye Spy’ while you walk around your centre.
- Counting – count different items (e.g. light bulbs, bins).
- Naming – name and spell different items that you see.
- Graphing – create pictographs based on the data you collect.
- Celebrating – celebrate what you find out with your children and families.
- Taking Action – ask children to share their ideas for improving your centre and involve them in taking action for sustainability.

Audit Glossary

Here are some definitions for tricky words in the audit checklist:

Biodiversity	Health of an ecosystem eg. plants and animals.
Co-mingled	Mixed waste including cans, paper, glass and plastic.
Ecosystems	How living and non-living things interact in an area.
Flow restrictors	Help to restrict excess water flow from taps.
Indigenous	Comes from a specific area of Australia.
Interdependence	How living things rely on each other for survival.
Mulch	Chopped up plants and trees, spread on a garden.
Native	Comes from Australia.
Wildscapes	Learning in an existing natural environment e.g. forest

Our Partner

This audit has been developed in partnership with CERES Community Environment Park. CERES provides programs for learners of every age and background to help them acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. This not-for-profit organisation works with kids, teachers, youth and adults at the CERES site and in early childhood, schools and universities around Victoria (and across the world).

Find out more at www.ceres.org.au



Biodiversity audit

Note: this audit investigates the health of ecosystems, including plants and animals.

Habitat gardens	Yes	No	Comments
Indigenous and/or native plants, trees, habitat trees			
Pond, frog bog, wetland, dry creek bed			
Butterfly garden			
Nesting box for birds or small mammals			
Rocks and logs for reptiles and insects			
Signage in the garden e.g. plant names			
Indoor plants and gardens			
Food Gardens	Yes	No	Comments
Vegetable garden			
Herb garden			
Indigenous food ('bush tucker') garden			
Fruit trees			

Garden Maintenance	Yes	No	Comments
Plants grown from seeds			
Soil enriched with mulch and/or compost			
Weeds controlled using environmentally-friendly chemicals			
Nature Play	Yes	No	Comments
Natural materials used for play			
Mud play and/or mud kitchen			
Children play in garden			
Bush Kinder or wildscape program			
Paper Use	Yes	No	Comments
Electronic newsletters			
Electronic bulletins and memos			
Electronic reporting, child portfolios, learning stories (i.e. Storypark)			
Trays or tubs for re-using paper			
Double-sided printing/photocopying			
Other:			
Other:			

Energy and air quality audit

Appliances	Yes	No	Comments
Appliances turned off at power points			
Higher energy rated appliances e.g. 5 star white goods			
Washing is dried on the clothes line instead of using a dryer, where possible			
Lighting	Yes	No	Comments
Lighting and heating/cooling turned off when not needed			
Natural lighting eg. windows, sky lights			
Energy efficient bulbs			
Light fittings cleaned regularly			
Heating and Cooling	Yes	No	Comments
Building has adequate insulation			
Blinds on windows			
Double glazing on windows			
Trees, shade cloth, window awnings to protect building from the heat of the Sun			
Ceiling fans			

Open windows and doors used before air conditioners/heaters			
Thermometers used to guide when to turn on air conditioners/heaters			
Air conditioners/heaters centred regularly			
Draft proof windows and doors			
Renewable Energy	Yes	No	Comments
Solar hot water			
Solar panels			
Renewable electricity from energy supplier (check electricity bill)			
Wind turbine			
Transport	Yes	No	Comments
Excursions use walking/public transport			
Families use sustainable transport			
Other:			
Other:			

Waste audit

Landfill and Recycling	Yes	No	Comments
Co-mingled recycling			
Paper/cardboard recycling			
Signage for different types of bins			
Rubbish-free food ('nude food')			
Reusable drink bottles			
Reusable cutlery and cups			
Tea towels and containers used instead of plastic wrap			
Reusable hand towels used instead of paper towel or efficient hand dryers			
Paper is shredded and used for animals			
Food and Garden Waste	Yes	No	Comments
Compost bins			
Worm farms			
Animals eat food scraps e.g. chickens			
Garden waste composted or mulched			

Litter	Yes	No	Comments
Yard is litter free			
Outside bins have lids			
Litter signs on storm water drains (ask local council or shire about this)			
Reusing Materials	Yes	No	Comments
Unwanted household items collected for activities, art projects etc.			
Furniture/equipment reused or donated			
Electronic Waste	Yes	No	Comments
Photocopier/printer ink and toners refilled or recycled			
Computer equipment is recycled			
Mobile phones are recycled			
Electronic appliances are recycled			
Green Purchasing	Yes	No	Comments
Cleaning products ordered in bulk			
Cloth, biodegradable or compostable nappies used instead of disposable			
Second-hand products, instead of new, bought when possible			

Post-consumer recycled paper used in printers and photocopiers			
Organic and/or biodynamic products (look on the label)			
Fair trade products (look on the label)			
Locally made and/or sourced products			
Palm-oil free products			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

Water audit

Mains Water	Yes	No	Comments
Leaks identified and fixed			
Water pressure adjusted			
Flow restrictors and/or aerators installed			
Tap timers or auto shut-off taps			
4, 5 or 6 Star rated water appliances			
Dual flush toilets			
Waterless urinals and/or compost toilets			
Water waste minimised during water play			
Water Collection	Yes	No	Comments
Water tanks			
Grey water used on garden			
Buckets under taps collect waste water for garden eg. taps for handwashing			

Gardens	Yes	No	Comments
Composting and mulching			
Local, drought tolerant plants			
Drip, timed or underground watering system			
Gardens only watered in early morning or late afternoon			
Outdoor areas swept instead of hosed off			
Cleaning	Yes	No	Comments
Environmentally friendly cleaning products e.g. phosphate free			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

Learning Programs Audit

Communication	Yes	No	Comments
Educators provided with support and/or professional development for teaching sustainability education			
Children involved in planning and decision making about sustainability			
Children have shared responsibility for sustainability routines e.g. turning off lights			
Children given responsibility to care for animals and plants			
Children educated about environmental protection and conservation			
Children supported to show respect for the environment			
Children develop awareness of the interdependence of living things			
Children learn about and/or spend time in local ecosystems			
Excursions and outings help educate children about sustainability			
Incursions or guest speakers help educate children about sustainability			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

Community Engagement Audit

Involving Families	Yes	No	Comments
Signs helps with systems and routines e.g. labels on different types of bins			
Sustainability information and tips shared regularly with families			
Sustainability information included in the newsletter			
Sustainability information shared on noticeboard and/or in foyer			
Families participate in sustainability projects e.g. working bees			
Centre has sustainability committee or group that involves staff and families			
Centre celebrates sustainability events e.g. Tree Day, Earth Hour			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

Outside Your Gates	Yes	No	Comments
Centre shares sustainability information with others e.g. tours, case studies			
Centre works with local council or shire on sustainability project			
Centre works with local group/s or network/s on sustainability project			
Centre is part of local environment network/group			
Centre attends local sustainability events			
Centre participates in local sustainability campaigns or programs			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			