Accelerating SDG Practice: The University of Auckland as a case study

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What was that bump?
Overview

How and why we’re engaging with the SDGs framework:

Our basic approach to organisational change & learning

- Key initiatives and how they use the SDGs framework
- Governance and structure
- Roles and responsibilities
- Benefits and impacts
- Internal/external factors
- Sustainability reporting
Meaningful & enduring organisational change

Strategic, long-range, planned, sustained ✓
Collaborative ✓
Interventions are reflexive, analytical, self-skilling ✓
Informed by organisational change theory & practice ✓
Goals improve organisational effectiveness ✓

AND

Change organisational culture ✓
Enhance reflection & self-examination ✓
Framework for change

1. Organisational context
   • Status & trends
   • Achievements
   • Benchmarks
   • Perceptions → Priorities

2. Customise programme accordingly

3. Focus on priority areas

4. Conduct relevant analyses/assessments

5. Action outcomes & measure results

6. Communicate results

7. Re-assess context & continue
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Priorities identified when we started (14 years ago)

Overall goal: Implement our Environmental Policy (1998-2013) with an initial focus on reducing resource use, wastes and emissions

Programme elements: Identified by 85 senior leaders, staff and student reps

Key issues:
- Rubbish
- Transport
- Buildings
- Equipment
- Energy
- CO₂ emissions
- Paper
- Water

Research and teaching were missing...
The University of Auckland’s journey

In process: New Strategic Plan 2021-2030
Times Higher Education Impact Ranking (#1) (2019, 2020)
Sustainable Development Goals Summit, and Report 2019
University Foundation Divestment from Fossil Fuels 2019
Universities NZ Sustainability Working Group (2018)
SDG-related research & teaching showcases (2017, 2018)
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2016-17)
Sustainability Policy (2014)
Strategic Plan (2013-2020)
Universitas 21 Statement (2009)
Environmental Policy (1998)

Efficiency
- Energy
- Water
- CO2
- Procurement
- Buildings
- Transport
- Solid waste

Compliance
- Buildings
- Hazardous wastes

Overall goal: Build resonance, pride and, therefore, commitment more broadly across the University by including our core educational purpose.

In process: New Strategic Plan 2021-2030

A sustaining university
Overview

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Governance, structure, roles and responsibilities?
Rather... maturity and the role of values-based change management
- Benefits and impacts
- Internal/external factors
- Sustainability reporting
Common measures of maturity of sustainability programmes in tertiary education
(and sources of challenges)

Categories:

• Leadership and governance
• Engagement and partnerships
• Research and commercialisation
• Teaching and learning
• Operations and service provision
• On-going improvement

For more on the use of these types of indicators in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and North America, see Learning in Future Environments (Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability, and the UK Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education) and the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education)
Values-based change management

(After Whiteley, 1995, 2007)
The matrix (of mechanisms for change)...

Measures of organisational maturity for sustainability

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<th>Elements of values-based change</th>
<th>Leadership &amp; governance</th>
<th>Engagement &amp; partnerships</th>
<th>Research &amp; commercialisation</th>
<th>Teaching &amp; learning</th>
<th>Operations &amp; service provision</th>
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Populate with context-specific institutional mechanisms for change
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  Or... maturity and the role of values-based change management

Benefits and impacts? OK, then

● Internal/external factors
● Sustainability reporting
Why the SDGs as catalysts for change?

- Maximises potential for *resonance* across the institution
- Resonance *builds culture* - shared stories, common ground, *pride*
- International framework for *showcasing* our work
- Membership of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) provides opportunities for *international partnerships*
- Builds *awareness, profile, community* and *contributions*
- *Relevance* at institutional, local, regional and international levels
- Includes operations and services, and *increases potential for success*
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- Benefits and impacts? OK, then
- Internal/external factors? Yes! And then there’s culture!

Internal/external factors? Yes! And then there’s culture!
Culture is everything
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● Benefits and impacts? Ah... SDGs as catalysts for change
● Internal/external factors? Yes! And then there’s culture!

Sustainability reporting? … OMG, why!?
Research inventory (2016-7)

- Reduced Inequalities (n=1,363)
- Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Quality Education
- Good Health and Well-being
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Teaching inventory (2017)

- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Gender Equality
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Quality Education
- Good Health and Well-being
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Courses (n=968)

www.auckland.ac.nz/sustainability
Sustainability as a journey...

Or, there’s just no way getting around it!

- To keep going requires **on-going improvement**
- On-going improvement requires **commitment**
- To be committed, we have to **internalise the values** inherent in sustainability
- To internalise those values, we need an **iterative journey of learning** that involves:
  - **Recognising** that there is a problem
  - **Accepting responsibility** for addressing it
  - **Taking action** to do so
Thank you

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