syncity Synergetic Cities for Europe

How to use the sustainability self-check

The sustainability self-check was created on the basis of eight sustainability criteria developed within the Syncity project. It is a practical tool for projects that aim at enhancing sustainability on the neighbourhood level, as well as raising awareness of sustainability topics among local residents with different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. It targets a project's core team and helps to assess how individual team members perceive the success of the project in relation to the criteria.

→ **Find the eight sustainability criteria on page 40 of the handbook**

The tool consists of a background questionnaire that is connected to net diagrams. The people completing the questionnaire respond to the questions with a scale from 1 to 10. The resulting net diagram is a powerful tool for visualising information and understanding it easily. Based on the average values related to each of the eight sustainability criteria, net diagrams will form: one diagram for each team member, and another one for the whole team. The results are a good basis to initiate a discussion with all team members.

This is an efficient tool for reflecting upon a project either at its end, or multiple times during the project's lifetime to assess its sustainability impact on the way. When used as a mid-term reflection tool, it gives you an idea of which areas to focus on more in the upcoming project phase.

The eight SYNCITY sustainability criteria in the making © 2020, SYNCITY

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A guide for the workshop facilitator

Step 1: Self-assessment – the background questionnaire

The background questionnaire contains three questions for each sustainability criterion. Hand out the survey to each team member (print or digital form). On a scale from 1 to 10, each participant can now assess different aspects of the project progress/results on his/her own. Each participant enters the marked values into the provided tables on the side of each criterion and calculates the means.

Length: approx. 30 minutes.

Step 2: Visualise the results – the net diagram

Collect the scores/calculated values and fil them into the "Fill Me In net diagram" provided in excel and ods. If completed on paper, there is also the option to fill in the net diagram with a marker and take it to the subsequent discussion. Length: approx. 10-20 minutes, depending on the number of participants.

Step 3: Interpret the results

The net diagram is composed of eight axes, each corresponding to one of the sustainability criteria. It displays the average values of the three questions assigned to each criterion in a spider-net like form. This allows for comparison on how individual team members rate the success of the project towards the sustainability criteria. In addition, a separate net diagram for the whole team will be displayed, which makes visible how the team perceives the project's contribution to sustainability-related goals.

Step 4: Discuss

You now have an idea of how the team perceives the project. Should the results be shown including the name of the person who filled it in, or should they stay anonymous? The decision depends on how well the team members know each other, or how the dynamic in the project team is. Be sure to consider this, as the wrong choice could lead to frictions inside the team.

The results of the individual self-reflection process are a good basis for further discussion in the team. Differences in perception and opinions on the project progress/result will most likely appear. How sustainable was your project really? Did you include enough stakeholders? Did you encourage participation sufficiently? Examine where the team members' opinions correspond and where they diverge. In which categories did the team members assess the project to have performed well and in which ones insufficiently?

Ideally, set up a workshop to discuss the results. Visualise them: e.g. create a mind-map and place the categories where the project was assessed to perform well on the top and the ones where the project was assessed to perform insufficiently on the bottom. Gather input from the team members on each category.

The possibilities on how to conduct this post-evaluation process are endless. Remember to give it a cooperative and stimulating design. The process will show where improvements are needed and which areas should be focused on specifically in your future projects.