# Action Projects

## for the Environment



ACTION!

Project Checklist

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Action Projects for the Environment

## How can I be part of an effective environmental project at school, in my community and at home?

Action Projects for the Environment (Action Level 2) takes you step-by-step through the processes of developing an effective and manageable environmental project. Action level 2 demonstrates a whole-of-project management structure, from early stages of idea development, to planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluating and maintaining the project.

This project planning process requires documentation! Part of this documentation involves working through questions and ticking a 'check box' when the questions have been answered. Working through each question and recording your responses will provide you with an appropriate framework for developing a sustainable project. It will help to make sure that you keep track of what you are doing so that in the future you can remember why you made certain decisions, and also so you can undertake monitoring and evaluation more easily.

This Project Checklist is provided for you to download and print out. Once you have the checklist, make a Project Journal. As you go through your project checklist, you will find that important thoughts need to be recorded in your Project Journal. Buy an exercise book to keep a record of all your thoughts that can be documented from the checklist. Whenever you see the Record Character make some notes in your Project Journal.

### Record in your Project Journal

Prepare a Project Folder to keep a record of all the activities your group undertakes. The folder will hold the Action Level 2 checklist and journal, and any information that relates to your project. This should include a list of important contact details, a copy of the project action plan, the project budget, monitoring results, a record of all receipts of purchases, notes from communications and any other relevant information.

Follow these simple steps to develop a sustainable project that meets your needs for a better future.

1. Getting started
2. Auditing the issues
3. Identifying the problems
4. Identifying the solutions
5. Developing an action plan
6. Implementing your project
7. Monitoring and evaluating your project
8. Celebrating and sharing your achievements

# 1. Getting started

## So you are interested in developing yo environmental project but don t know u

This page is designed to help identify the environmental issues you might want to tackle. Use the following links to lead you to the section that best describes what you want to do, and from which point you want to start.

1.1 Starting from scratch
1.2 Tackling a specific environmental problem
1.3 Building on your existing projects and information

## 1.1 Starting from scratch

So you want to get involved in a project, but do not have a specific topic or issue in mind, the State of the Environment Report 2008 can help explain environmental topics and issues that might be important to you. The State of the Environment

In South Australia these themes are: atmosphere, inland waters, coasts and the sea, land, biodiversity, human settlements, as well as built heritage. Each environmental theme has a main topic of concern called 'issues'.

the atmosphere theme for example, the major issues are air quality, and the enhanced greenhouse effect. For each issue, environmental indicators are used to measure the condition of the environment. You can also use the State of Environment Fact Sheets to identify the key environmental issues in South Australia. Some of these issues are specific to particular regions, and others are quite general. Fact sheets are available on the website address on the backcover.
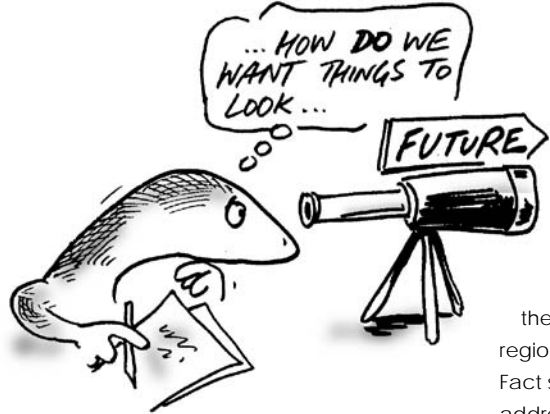
# Action Projects for the Environment

If you are planning this project in a group, it may be useful to meet with group members to discuss the variety of options available for moving forward. Developing a common vision within your group may be a good way to start. You can start by asking your group:

- What do we want our local environment to look like in 10 years time?

- How do we want our local environment to look in 50 years time?

By pinpointing how you want the environment to be in the future, you can identify the issues you think need addressing. For example, if you have a vision of a clean river, perhaps water quality is something you would like to address.

## You could also find out how your behaviour impacts on these issues

Humans and the way they choose to live put great pressure on the environment. The more we understand about how our actions affect the environment, the easier it is to start to make changes for the better. One way of helping to understand the impact of our actions is to audit your group's impact on the environment. What impact do you make?

## Identifying your group impacts

Ask your group to think about an action they undertake everyday, such as driving in a car, having a shower, making a meal or using a computer. Get the group to write down all the impacts associated with that activity, making sure that they think through all the aspects involved. For example, making a meal can have many different impacts on the environment. If the ingredients have been packaged in plastic, think about the environmental impact of drilling for oil to make the plastic, shipping, manufacturing, and the eventual disposal of the packaging. What about vegetables and meat? There could be pesticides, herbicides and land degradation associated with their production. What about the transport which brought the goods from their place of production to the table? These are some of the impacts associated with simple processes and choices we make when preparing a meal.

Using these thinking processes will help your group to identify issues associated with your environmental concerns and enable you to think more laterally about the causes and problems associated with it.

## Record in your Project Journal
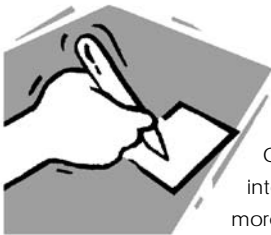
What elements of your environment would you like to be different in the future? What are the issues your group may address?

Once you have identified an environmental issue you are interested in addressing, go to Auditing the Issue to identify more about that particular topic. Good Luck!!

## 1.2 Tackling a specific environmental problem

This section is designed for groups that have a concern about a particular environmental issue in their local environment.

Record your responses to the following questions in your Project Journal.

### Record in your Project Journal

Tick the box when you have recorded your answers.

**1.2.1** Are you particularly concerned about a specific issue and want to take action? ☐

**1.2.2** Is something happening in your local area that you would like to change? ☐

**1.2.3** Are there any groups that are already working on this issue? ☐

**1.2.4** Is there a particular aspect of the issue that you think would be appropriate for your group to work on? ☐

**1.2.5** What can you find out about this issue? ☐

# Action Projects for the Environment

## 1.3 Building on your existing projects and information

Many school and community groups have already participated in environmental action programs. Many of these programs focus on monitoring the local environment for indicators that refl the health of ecosystems. Such programs are listed in the Action Level 1 section.

- Have you participated in environmental monitoring programs and would like to work on something more involved?

- Are you looking to apply your results from past environmental programs?

If you have answered yes to either of these questions, this is the section for you. Gather the information you have already collected and sit down with your group to think about the following questions.

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## Record in your Project Journal

Tick the box when you have recorded your answers.

**1.3.1 What program has your group been involved in? (eg Waterwatch, Frog Census, Our Patch)** ☐

**1.3.2 What data have you collected from the program you have been involved in? Keep a copy of this data in the Project Folder.** ☐

**1.3.3 Can you identify any trends from your data?** ☐

**1.3.4 What does the data that you have collected demonstrate about the issues that need to be addressed?** ☐

**1.3.5 Can you define some specific problems that need to be addressed?** ☐

*Once you have decided on an idea or theme for developing your project, go to the Auditing the Issue section.*

# 2. Auditing the issue



In Getting Started you identified the environmental issues you want to address. Auditing the Issue helps to focus on gathering important information about the issue.

## What information is available about these issues?

The more information you have about a specific issue, the more successful your project will be. There are a variety of ways in which you can find information, and identifying people in the community can be a good place to start. A Community Based Resources section is included in the State of Environment Education Resource, as well as an Internet Based Information section. Community Based Resources are available in the community. These resources could be a place to visit, tree planting assistance, advice from an expert or many other services that you and your group could use to learn more about the issues. The Internet Based Resources are designed to link you to key information sites, and resources available on the internet. Visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/education—online education resources (SOE education).

Record all the information you have found about your issue in your Project Folder.



Tick the box when you have recorded your answers.

Do other programs that deal with the same issue already exist in your area?

There are a number of environmental programs established in South Australia that aim to identify and address environmental issues. It is quite likely that there are other groups working on these programs in your local area. Use the Action Level 1 list of organisations that participate in environmental action to identify the potential programs that may already exist in your area.

2.1 **Record a list of the organisations that are working in your area, or that participate in issues similar to those you will be working on.** ☐

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## Are other groups working on these environmental issues already?

If there are other groups that are working on the issue you are concerned about, what are they doing? Can you contact them and find out how your group can coordinate and compliment the activities they are undertaking?

**2.2 Record the details of your communications, including the date and time of communication, and the details of what you have discussed.** ☐

## Why do these issues need to be addressed in your local area?

It is important that your group is clear about the importance of the issues you are addressing. If you can demonstrate the value of the work that you are doing, and the need for it, you will have a greater chance of maintaining enthusiasm in the group and gaining wider support.

**2.3 Record your ideas about the value and need for the work your group would like to undertake.** ☐

## What are the broader environmental issues involved?

When we work on a particular aspect of an environmental issue, it is easy to lose sight of the broader environmental picture.

However, it is important to ensure that the actions that we take do not have any adverse impacts on other aspects of the environment. We need to maintain an awareness of the intricate links within the ecosystems within which we work. Furthermore, if we keep the broader environmental issues in mind, it will be easier to convince others of the importance of our actions. For example, if your local council has a program with funds specifically for water quality issues, you may need to demonstrate how your revegetation program assists in repairing water quality to be eligible for the funds.

**2.4 Record the broader environmental issues that relate to your project, and how they relate.** ☐

## What are the different aspects of your chosen environmental issue?

It is easier to address an issue if you break it down into parts. For example, if you are trying to address waste in your school, you will need to think about all the different types and sources of waste, such as litter, recyclable materials and even organic wastes from garden management.
By identifying the different aspects of the issue, you can tackle it more easily.

**2.5 List all of the aspects of your chosen environmental issue.** ☐
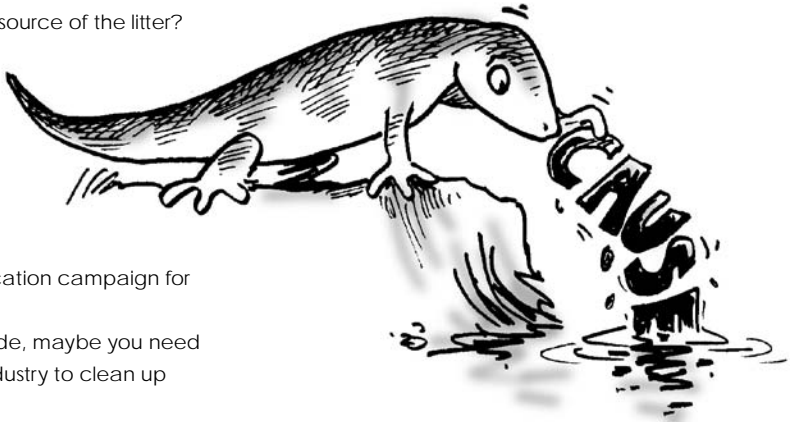
# 3. Identifying the problems

## What are the causes of the issue?

Unless we identify and address the causes of an issue, we will not be able to fix the problem. For example, if litter is a real problem in your school, you could design an environmental program to collect all the litter. However, if you do not stop and consider the reasons for the litter existing in the first place, it will keep being a problem and your solutions may only be short term. Perhaps you could monitor where the litter is coming from: Is it from school students or does the litter blow in from a

Are passing cars the source of the litter?

Once you have identified the source of the litter, you can start to address the causes the problem. This m mean that your foc also include an education campaign for students or passing

blowing in from outside, maybe you need to petition a local industry to clean up their act?

Record the causes of your environmental issue in your Project Journal.

Tick the box when you have recorded your list of causes.

## 4. Identifying

Once you have identifie
the problems, it is time
for the fun and creative
part—working out the
solutions!

It is important that the
whole group has a shared
vision of the project.
Below are some questions
your group might like to
consider to clarify the visic…

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Record your answers in your Project Journal.

Tick the box
when you have
recorded your
answers.

4.1 **What can be done to address the identified issues in your area?** ☐

4.2 **What is the vision for your area? How do you see the area looking in 20 years? How do you imagine the issues you've identified being solved?** ☐

4.3 **What can be achieved?** ☐

4.4 **Do you have to modify your ideas to best meet the needs of your group?** ☐

4.5 **What may be some limitations for your group?** ☐

4.6 **How can you coordinate what you are doing with other groups working in this area?** ☐

# 5. Developing an action plan

## Setting Goals for y

Goals give a project direct[ion] and purpose. Without setti[ng] firm goals, the project may [get] off track. Goals also provid[e a] platform for measuring you[r] outcomes. Consider the questions below to develop some goals.



Record your answers to this section so you can refer to them later.



Tick the box when you have recorded your answers.

5.1 Does your group have a common purpose? And a common direction? ☐

5.2 What are the objectives for your group? Identify some goals/aims. ☐

5.3 Does being involved in an on-ground project fit in with the vision of the school or community? ☐

5.4 Does the project address the needs of all people involved and link in with the school curriculum (if appropriate)? ☐

5.5 Will involvement in a project complement where the school or community wants to be in the future? ☐

5.6 What outcomes do you expect to achieve? ☐

# Action Projects for the Environment

## Asking the Right Questions

While you are developing your action plan, it is very important to take into account all the different possibilities and issues that may be faced by the group. The next section highlights some key questions that your group may need to consider in developing an environmental action plan.

Record your answers to this section so you can refer to them later.
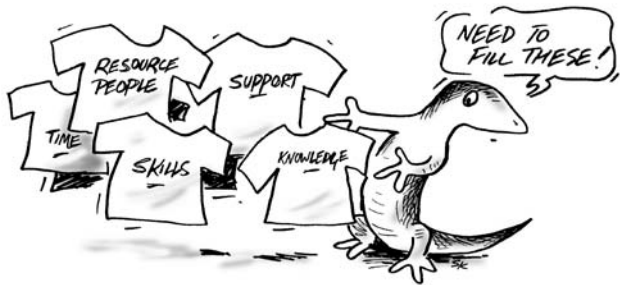


## People

**5.7** Who from your community needs to be involved/informed? ☐

**5.8** Which various groups are involved in the school? ☐

**5.9** Which various groups could potentially be involved with the project? ☐

**5.10** What skills do they provide? ☐

**5.11** Where can you get support – technical and financial? ☐

**5.12** Are people from the group committed to giving their own time and ongoing involvement? ☐

**5.13** Will someone defend the project against criticisms if they arise? ☐

**5.14** How many people will work on your project? ☐

**5.15** Do they have the required skills? If not, do you have resources to build people's skills and knowledge? ☐

# Time



Develop a time chart for your group. Break down your activities month by month or week by week as appropriate. Keep the following things in mind:

**5.16 How much time is needed to make the project successful?** ☐

**5.17 How much time do people need to commit?** ☐

**5.18 Have you planned stages for your project?** ☐

**5.19 Have you identified celebration points to encourage ongoing and continual replenishment of project workers?** ☐

**5.20 Is the project within the group's capabilities?** ☐

**5.21 Keep a copy of your time chart in the Project Folder.** ☐

**5.22 Distribute a copy to all members of the working group.** ☐

# Funding



PROJECT COST:

**5.23 How much money do you have?** ☐

**5.24 Do you know where to go to get funding for projects?** ☐

**5.25 In the future, will you be able to get more money as it is needed?** ☐

**5.26 Is it possible to make the project self-funding?** ☐

# Action Projects for the Environment

## Involvement

**5.27** Is the project fun/ interesting? ☐

**5.28** Will people's efforts be acknowledged in the community? ☐

**5.29** Is the project promoted around the local area? ☐

**5.30** Is it integrated with lessons and/or other activities in the school? ☐

**5.31** Are all sections of the school community/ organisation involved? ☐

**5.32** Does everyone get a say in the direction taken and the choices made? ☐

**5.33** Do all participants have a sense of ownership of the project? ☐

**5.34** Is everyone in the project involved in decision making? ☐

## Resources

A resource could include things such as materials, labour, information and expert advice, professional development and training, and funding time.

**5.35** Are the necessary resources available? ☐

**5.36** Are your resources being used in a sustainable way? ☐

**5.37** Can further support be obtained from the local or wider community? ☐

# Safety



SAFETY – A VITAL PART OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

5.38 Have you planned for safety concerns? Is there a person responsible for ensuring everyone involved has protective clothing, hats, sunscreen, etc? Is the location a safe work environment? ☐

# Permission

5.39 Does the project require special permission or permits? ☐

5.40 Does the project site belong to someone? ☐

5.41 Will the project involve collecting seed or animals? If so, do you need to seek advice? Who from? ☐

# Future directions

5.42 Is your project ongoing or does it have an end? ☐

5.43 Will your project lead to other ventures? ☐

5.44 How will you measure the intended outcomes of the project? Are your outcomes measurable and tangible? ☐

5.45 Do you have reporting/ feedback techniques and timelines? ☐



PROJECT

## Developing the plan



Once you have considered the previous questions, you might want to make an Action Plan outside of your journal. This plan should be something that you can show to others outside of the group. Some of the things you may need to do include:

5.46  Form a management team. ☐

5.47  Define roles and responsibilities. ☐

5.48  Design and establish a feedback loop for project progress and effectiveness of the management team. ☐

5.49  Design the project budget. ☐

5.50  **Design the project timeline – set the project up into 'work bits'. Set up a project diary, plan for celebrations at each milestone, take into account factors likely to affect progress, allocate time for regular reviews of progress, etc.** ☐

5.51  Promote the project and consult widely. ☐

5.52  Establish sources of support and a support network. ☐

5.53  Assist in integrating the project into the school curriculum. ☐

# Developing the plan (continued)

**5.54** Set up photopoints for monitoring. Photopoints are specific places where you take a photo periodically. By taking a photo at the same point each time, you can see the changes over time. It is a good idea to choose a spot that is easy to access and where you are likely to see the changes. ☐

**5.55** Monitoring and evaluation should be built into your action plan. The actions and objectives identified in your action plan need to be measurable. Each action must have clear indicators that are measured on a regular and ongoing basis. ☐

# Record your details in your Project Journal



It can be easy to forget the details of the progress you have made. Therefore, it is a good idea to make sure that you record key events and processes along the way. These may include:

- the reasons for making certain decisions

- the time, place and date you have met with people and the commitments made

- ideas that come up now that may need to be implemented in the future

- participation from group members for reference later on

- commitments made from external sources.

Use your Project Journal to record all these details about your project for every step that you take.

# 6. Implementing your project



**Some of the key things you should keep in mind for the implementation of a successful project are:**

- All participants need to feel a sense of ownership of the project. This will also help to keep the project steady if some people leave. This can be done through educating and training participants, involving participants in decision-making processes and sharing trust and responsibility.

- Maintain open and ongoing communication. Everyone needs to keep up to date on why things are happening, what is happening, when help is needed, the agenda for each meeting and actions that are decided.

- Value and acknowledge contributions: volunteers, sponsors, on-site thank you events and incentives, such as food and drink.

- Maintain enthusiasm and flexibility. After establishing a project, it can often be difficult to maintain flexibility and be open to new ideas.

- Understand and accept that there will be high and low points, make provisions for getting through the low times.

- Celebrate milestones and achievements. Provide rewards and incentives for participants, such as certificates, dinners, dances, concerts, etc.

# 7. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of most projects and is often overlooked or undervalued. Monitoring and evaluation helps to improve projects over time, highlight where things have gone right and wrong and provide information for decision making.

Monitoring is the collecting and recording of information, both in the long and short term. It may involve making a list of criteria and following the list – similar to the steps involved in planning the project itself, but not as complicated. Identify a list of questions to ensure your project remains in existence and helps to achieve your vision. Once you've made an appropriate list of points to monitor, designate who will do the

For example, a group member may visit the site weekly and then report back (group members can be varied so a roster may need to be drawn up).

Alternatively, on a big project, such as making a wetland, a whole school class could visit the site every week or two with different class members carrying out different tasks. This must be a whole group decision with each member of the group being informed otherwise the monitoring will be ineffective. Other issues must also be considered: How will you get to the site? Do you need mum/dad to take you there? Does your class need to catch a bus or train? If so, how much will it cost? Do you have supervision if needed?

# Action Projects for the Environment

**Evaluation** is the assessment of information to determine if the outcomes have achieved the objectives. Evaluation is basically where you sit back and take a good, long look at your actions and see how well they achieved what you wanted them to do. Evaluation allows you to:

a) see any shortfalls which may stand in the way of you realising your long-term goals and vision

b) improve your methods ready for the next time you conduct an environmental project or continue with this one.

You should be constantly evaluating your project to ensure you remain focused on the vision behind your project. The identification of what was successful, what failed and what could be improved aids the planning of projects.

The following questions may help you to measure, monitor, evaluate and apply your project results.

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**Record your responses in your Project Journal.**

Tick the box when you have recorded your answers.

**7.1** Think of ways to monitor your project to check that the objectives are being achieved. ☐

**7.2** Use your project journal to record all monitoring information. Include:
  • Where you go
  • Date and time
  • What you are monitoring
  • Your results ☐

**7.3** Reflect on your monitoring results to decide whether the project has been effective. ☐

**7.4** What will the group do with the monitoring information? Your information may be really useful to another group or organisation. ☐

**7.5** Look at your monitoring information and think of ways to advance your project. ☐

# 8. Celebrating and sharing your achievements

An important part of project management is the celebration and sharing of your achievements. This allows for members of the group and your sponsors to be acknowledged for the work that they have done.

In order to celebrate your results, it is best if you have recorded your achievements and documented your outcomes as they relate to your aims. Make sure that you have incorporated opportunities for feedback loops while you are making your project action plan.

Some of the ways you can pro[ ] share and celebrate your ach[ ] could include:

- promotion of your activities

- presentations at school ass[ ] and at meetings of the gro[ ] and organisations

- writing articles and press releases

- surveying project participants and distributing results

- setting up a website

- keeping a photographic record in a prominent part of the school or in the community

- erecting on-site signage.

# Action Projects for the Environment

## Share with us

Share your ideas and successes with the Environmental Education Team at the Department for Environment and Heritage. We would love to learn more about the activities of schools and community groups and help to share your successes with a broader audience. If you have anything you would like to share with us, please forward the information to us at:

Environmental Education Unit

Department for Environment and Heritage

phone: (08) 8463 3911
email: env.edu@saugov.sa.gov.au

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This information has been produced for the Environment Reporting Education Resource 2008. Access our website to find more information about:

• Fact sheets about key environmental issues in South Australia

• Information and links about existing environmental programs (Action Level 1)

• Information about Sustainable Schools (Action Level 3)

• South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework ideas for practice

• Case studies to learn about what other groups are doing for the environment

• Resources available in the community (community based resources)

• Resources available on the Internet (online resources)

• Research ideas

www.environment.sa.gov.au/reporting/education

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