Charles Sturt University

Sustainability Grants: Key considerations for Researchers

Sustainability at Charles Sturt
Charles Sturt University

Purpose

This guide provides practical tips to embed sustainability into every stage of the research lifecycle—from planning and design to execution and dissemination. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promotes responsible, inclusive, and environmentally conscious research practices. The document is broken up into three phases of research development: Planning and design, Execution & application, and Publication & dissemination.

Planning and design

- Immerse yourself in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and determine how your research is providing solutions to global challenges.
- Consider Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in your research design to ensure you are not inherently disadvantaging underrepresented groups but instead ensuring that all perspectives are being considered.
- Consider First Nations Perspectives in your research design to ensure you are not inherently disadvantaging underrepresented groups but instead ensuring that all perspectives are being considered.
- Select appropriate data collection and storage and potentially open access for other users. Doing so contributes to improved equity and engagement with your research outcomes by disadvantaged groups.
- Incorporate user-centred approaches so the impacts of intended study can translate into practice and be continued by community.
- Forge external and cross-campus collaborations (local, national, and international) and maximise opportunities for discussion via video conferencing.
- Take the time to plan early and design a research program that will ensure efficiency, for example, by performing activities when seasonal conditions are most favourable or allowing a smaller piece of equipment to achieve the same outcomes via multiple replicates.
- Investigate existing equipment and materials already held by the university that may be available and consider leasing or purchasing pre-owned items where appropriate. Consider if equipment hire may be a cost-effective option for your project. When purchasing new items, consider the life-cycle cost of this equipment including operating resources and maintenance.
- Identify any negative environmental impacts of your research (e.g., waste production, wastewater, energy consumption, air emissions, noise or light pollution, biodiversity impacts) and implement a plan to mitigate these.
- Design appropriate use of resources and consider solutions for what will happen to these resources at the conclusion of your research. See Figure 1: Waste management hierarchy

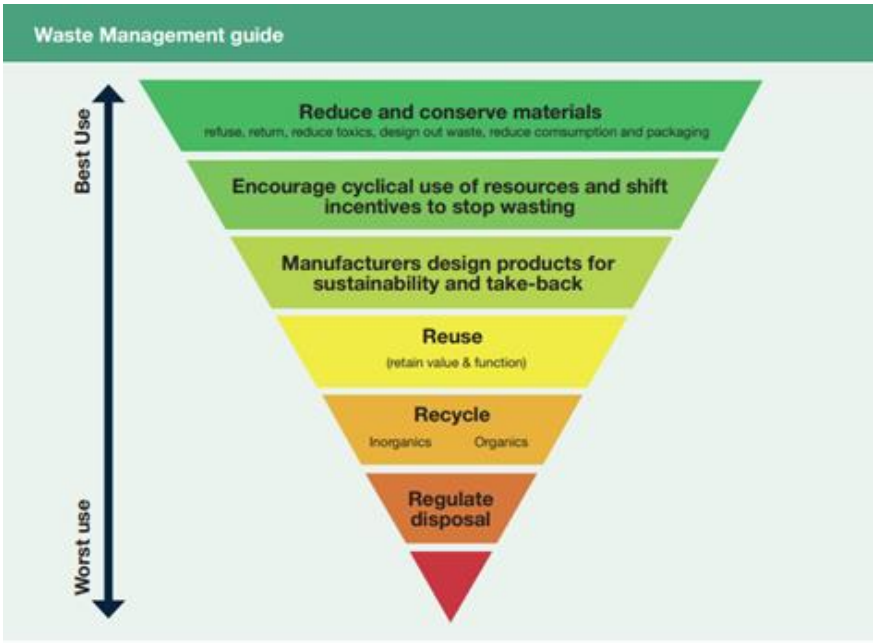

Figure 1 - Waste management hierarchy

Execution & application

- Conduct your research, communication, and data-collection online where possible and practicable. Measure and assess research data remotely wherever possible e.g., phone, video conference, email.
- Collect testimonies during your research for stakeholders and future applications.
- Purchase supplies as near as practical to support the local economy and if possible avoid products shipped from overseas, adhering to the Facilities and Premises Procedure - Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency.
- Create smarter travel plans to reduce your carbon footprint. Do you need to travel? If so, consider options for carpooling and contact the Fleet team ahead of booking your travel to see if there is an option to connect you with another traveller planning a similar itinerary.
- Avoid or reduce waste where possible. Minimise single-use plastic materials and packaging, animals, consumables, and other reagents.
- Reuse materials where possible. Talk to your fellow researchers to potentially share resources to benefit multiple projects through the same research site.
- Recycle. Become familiar with the full range of recycling streams available at Charles Sturt and make use of these. See: 12. Resource efficiency and waste - Sustainability

Publication & dissemination

- Improve research visibility by linking outputs to the SDGs. You can view the SDGs directly on the CRO landing page, and go through to linked content.
- Use digital media to disseminate your research findings and to engage with key stakeholders. Consider sharing research outputs through relevant LinkedIn profiles.
- Pursue opportunities to present research findings domestically and via virtual platforms as a preference to international conferences to reduce travel-related emissions

Further resources

- Seeing like a researcher, Impactful Research, Sustainable goals through innovation (recorded webinar, duration 52 mins)
- Annual Sustainable Development Goals reports