



GREEN SUPERHEROES

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Methodology Handbook For Youth Workers

*with concrete methods and
activities*



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Welcome to this handbook designed to spark ideas on how to integrate environmental principles into your organization and offer practical tips for maintaining an eco-friendly approach.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Organizations everywhere strive to craft impactful projects that resonate widely. But let's face it, sometimes things don't go as planned, and keeping everyone engaged and motivated becomes a challenge. That's where integrating sustainable principles into project management can truly make a difference.

Strategic planning is a tool for organization development and a systematic process that helps an organisation identify the direction where to go.

In the realm of youth work and sustainable development, many organizations draft plans for their activities, but what elevates a plan to strategic status?

A strategic plan encompasses a clear direction, both short and long-term goals, and a set of priorities spanning at least three years. For sustainable development within an organization, having a strategic plan is pivotal.

An organization is akin to a living organism, comprised of individuals striving toward a common objective. It both influences and is influenced by the external environment. Hence, a strategic plan becomes indispensable to ensure that all organizational efforts align cohesively, guiding everyone toward a unified goal. This cohesion not only amplifies impact but also fortifies the organization against environmental shifts.



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What additional benefits does your organization reap from adopting a strategic plan?

CLEAR DIRECTION

Youth organizations often contend with high turnover rates, with volunteers and staff frequently entering and exiting amidst a rapidly changing landscape. While new perspectives are invaluable, they can sometimes lead to a lack of clarity and long-term vision. Strategic planning offers direction and purpose, streamlining priorities and facilitating a seamless transition from plan to action. It accommodates new ideas and initiatives, provided they contribute to the overarching goals.

SHARED VISION

Diverse stakeholders within a youth organization harbor varying interpretations of its identity and trajectory. Hence, strategic planning becomes imperative, engaging the right individuals in crafting the organization's future. A vision statement delineates the organization's projected state in the coming years, distinct from its mission. Strategic planning fosters organizational alignment, ensuring everyone is aligned and propelling in the same direction. It strengthens organizational values, fosters team cohesion, and fosters a culture of idea exchange.

STREAMLINED DECISION-MAKING

Managing a youth organization becomes more manageable with a documented strategic plan. It clarifies priorities, facilitating shared understanding and consensus-driven decisions.

ENHANCED COMMUNICATION

A strategic plan serves as a communication tool, elucidating the organization's trajectory to potential stakeholders such as funders, sponsors, partners, and staff. It enhances comprehension of the organization's direction, increasing the likelihood of support and participation. In larger or international youth organizations, strategic planning aids in communicating with members, volunteers, and staff, ensuring alignment with organizational aims and decisions.



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SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS

You've probably heard of "green project management" - that's one aspect. But there's another side to it, focusing on ensuring that projects have a lasting impact, making them sustainable in the long run.

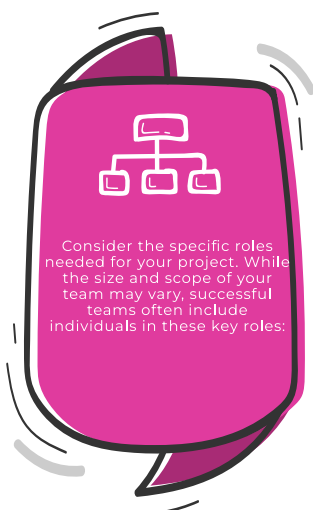
So, how can we make our projects more sustainable? Here are some interactive ideas to enhance your project management practices:

BUILD A DYNAMIC TEAM



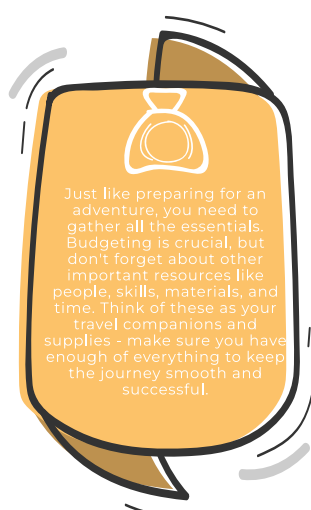
Select team members with diverse skills that complement each other. Look for folks who enjoy collaborating and are driven to excel. Establish clear lines of communication and responsibility to keep everyone aligned.

ROLE ASSIGNMENT



Consider the specific roles needed for your project. While the size and scope of your team may vary, successful teams often include individuals in these key roles:

GEAR UP WITH RESOURCES



Just like preparing for an adventure, you need to gather all the essentials. Budgeting is crucial, but don't forget about other important resources like people, skills, materials, and time. Think of these as your travel companions and supplies - make sure you have enough of everything to keep the journey smooth and successful.

BUILD YOUR PROJECT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



Imagine your project as a house - you need a solid foundation to build upon. Establishing a project management process is like setting up the blueprint for your house. Sit down with your team and discuss how you'll work together. Talk about your individual working styles and what you expect from each other. This way, everyone's on the same page and ready to tackle the project with confidence.

The Manager: This is the backbone of your team, responsible for coordinating efforts and taking on the project's risks and challenges.

The Researcher: Tasked with gathering and synthesizing crucial project information, ensuring the team is well-informed.

The Monitor: An analytical mind who tracks project progress and keeps tabs on how things are unfolding.

The Supporter: A people person who excels at communication, networking, and conflict resolution, providing essential support and motivation to the team.

Lay out the steps needed to bring your project to life. Think of it as plotting a road trip - you need to know where you're going and how you'll get there. Create a timeline, marking important stops along the way. These stops are your milestones - they'll help you track progress and stay on course.



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RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Embrace the responsibility to manage resources efficiently while prioritizing environmental sustainability. Strive to minimize waste and optimize resource utilization throughout the project lifecycle. Adopt practices that reduce environmental impact, promoting eco-friendly alternatives wherever feasible. By integrating sustainability principles into project management, organizations can contribute to a greener, more responsible future.



Let's dive into some key concepts first. When we talk about environmental principles and eco-friendly practices, we often refer to the broader notions of **“sustainability”** and **“sustainable development.”**

Sustainability

Essentially means the ability to carry on certain behaviors indefinitely. It's about ensuring that what we do today doesn't compromise the needs of future generations.

Sustainable development

Is the journey toward achieving sustainability. One of the most renowned definitions, as outlined in the report “Our Common Future” by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, describes sustainable development as meeting present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own.



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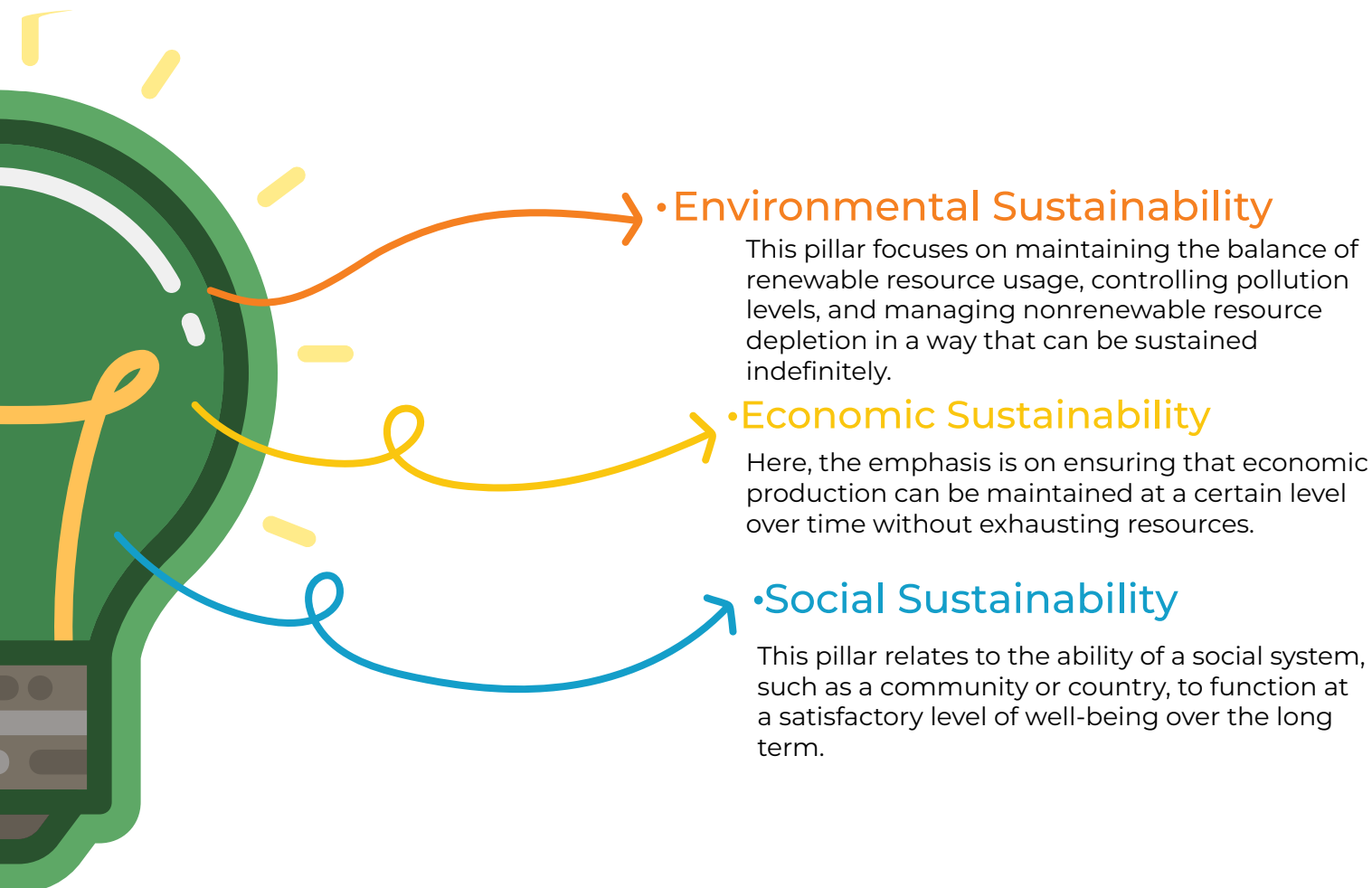


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Now, let's break down sustainability into its three pillars:



So, how do these pillars apply to your organization's work?

By embracing environmental principles, your organization not only contributes to a sustainable lifestyle but also upholds accountability as an environmentally conscious entity.

Why are these principles important?

- They bolster your organization's reputation as an environmentally responsible entity.
- They provide a framework for day-to-day management.
- They ensure consistency with your organization's core values.
- They serve as a roadmap for environmentally friendly practices within both office operations and projects.



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To get started, consider adopting the following guiding principles:

Embrace Minimalism: Opt for secondhand materials, encourage reuse, and explore borrowing options.

Reduce Resource Consumption: Focus on conserving energy, water, and chemicals while minimizing waste production. Explore green alternatives and educate others on their benefits.

By incorporating these principles into your organization's ethos, you can contribute to a more sustainable future while maintaining your commitment to environmental responsibility.



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Here are some interactive and practical suggestions for making your organization more enviTronmentally-friendly:

PAPER

- Maximize paper use by utilizing both sides or saving clean sides for future use.
- Minimize document printing whenever possible.
- Consider purchasing recycled paper; if not available, explore eco-friendly alternatives like hemp or unbleached paper.
- Opt for whiteboards and projectors over flipchart paper at meetings.
- When flipchart paper is necessary, use both sides or repurpose old posters.
- Save space by using smaller font sizes when printing documents.
- Explore environmentally-friendly fonts that conserve ink.
- Transition from printed to online subscriptions for newsletters and magazines.
- When creating publications, consider if printing is necessary or if online versions suffice. If printing, choose space and size wisely to minimize paper usage.



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ENERGY



- Maintain indoor temperatures at eco-friendly levels, such as 21°C in winter and no lower than 24°C in summer.
- Utilize curtains or blinds to regulate indoor temperatures during hot summer days.
- Insulate office buildings to reduce the need for excessive heating.
- Choose venues powered by renewable energy sources like solar or wind power.
- Make the most of natural light during activities.
- Use energy-efficient electrical appliances and remember to turn off computers and lights when not in use.
- Opt for venues with energy-efficient lighting systems and bulbs.

WATER

- Regularly inspect water appliances and equipment for leaks.
- Implement water-saving techniques, such as efficient dishwashing methods or using energy-efficient dishwashers.
- Refrigerate drinking water instead of running taps for cold water.
- Serve drinkable tap water instead of bottled water at office and event gatherings.
- Encourage participants to reuse cups or glasses throughout activities.
- Install tap aerators to conserve water.
- Utilize environmentally-friendly cleaning products, like baking soda and vinegar.





FOOD



- Consider providing vegetarian meals at events and encourage colleagues to follow a vegetarian diet in the office.
- Purchase organic and fair trade products like tea and coffee.
- Opt for locally sourced, seasonal, and organic ingredients for event food preparation.
- Minimize food waste by controlling portion sizes and proper storage.
- Donate food waste to farm animals or choose catering services that prioritize eco-friendly practices.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

- Before ordering new promotional materials, research your target audience's needs and order only what's necessary.
- Choose environmentally-friendly materials like recycled plastic, organic cotton, or bamboo.
- Prioritize recyclable and health-safe materials.
- Select merchandise from companies that provide fair and safe working conditions.
- When sending materials, avoid air transport and ensure efficient packaging and targeted distribution.





TRANSPORT



- Craft a travel policy for your organization, outlining travel rules for employees, volunteers, and participants.
- Set strict guidelines for air travel, permitting it only if land travel exceeds 24 hours.
- Encourage staff to use public transport, bicycles, or walk to work.
- Require participants to offset their CO2 emissions if flying to your projects.
- Provide information on environmentally friendly travel options to participants.
- Source products from local companies and arrange one-time deliveries.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Minimize waste production and utilization of materials.
- Emphasize reuse and upcycling of old items.
- Implement recycling systems for paper, plastic, aluminum, organic waste, and glass.
- Educate participants on recycling practices at events.
- Install composting systems in your office.
- Invest in durable products and maintain equipment.
- Organize swap events to exchange goods.





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FINANCIAL VENUE MANAGMENT



- Select venues accessible by public transport.
- Choose venues aligned with your organization's values.
- Support small organizations and local farmers.
- Opt for venues offering vegetarian, organic food.
- Minimize towel changes at venues.
- Ensure venues have adequate recycling facilities and energy-saving systems.

Why is it crucial to involve young people in environmental and sustainability efforts?

- Young people bring fresh energy, innovative ideas, and solutions to address environmental challenges.
- Participation in Sustainable Youth fosters understanding of societal issues and their connection to the environment and global citizenship.
- Many young people are experiencing “eco-anxiety,” and positive action can help alleviate these feelings.
- Engaging with nature promotes positive health and well-being.



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LET'S EXPLORE SUSTAINABLE WORKING METHODS TAILORED FOR YOUTH WORKERS:

1. ISSUES EXPLORER:

- Engage young people in examining various issues in-depth and collaboratively decide on a focus for their social action project.
- Tailor the depth of exploration based on the group's age and level of engagement.
- Prioritize ownership of the project among young participants.

Aims:

- Facilitate group collaboration to refine project focus and initiate planning.
- Cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among young participants towards the project.



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Skills and Competences:

- Organization and planning abilities.
- Decision-making skills, including assessing information critically.
- Teamwork, fostering listening skills, consensus-building, and empathy.
- Communication skills, including public speaking and articulating thoughts effectively.



Task:

- Provide topic fact sheets and divide participants into small groups.
- Encourage reflection on past activities and issues raised during discussions.
- Each group selects a topic fact sheet of interest and discusses its relevance locally.

Resource - Topic Fact Sheets:

- Have each group present their chosen topic and share insights.
- Allow groups to provide feedback on each other's issues.



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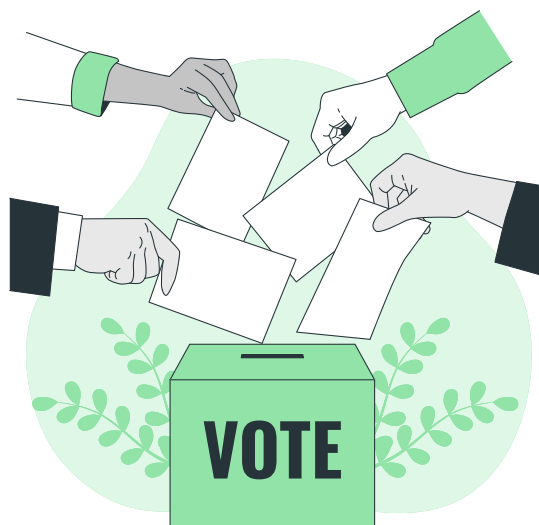


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Voting Process:

- Distribute tokens to each participant.
- Participants allocate tokens to the topics they're most passionate about.
- Encourage diversity in voting patterns, including allocating all tokens to one topic or distributing them across multiple topics.
- Facilitate decision-making if multiple topics receive similar votes, fostering group consensus.



Reflection:

- Encourage participants to brainstorm potential solutions or action projects if unlimited resources were available.





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Debrief:

- Acknowledge and address any anxieties young people may have regarding environmental issues.
- Highlight the positive impact of taking action to address these concerns, fostering a sense of empowerment and hope.

By implementing these sustainable working methods, youth workers can effectively engage young people in exploring and addressing environmental issues, fostering collaboration, ownership, and positive action.

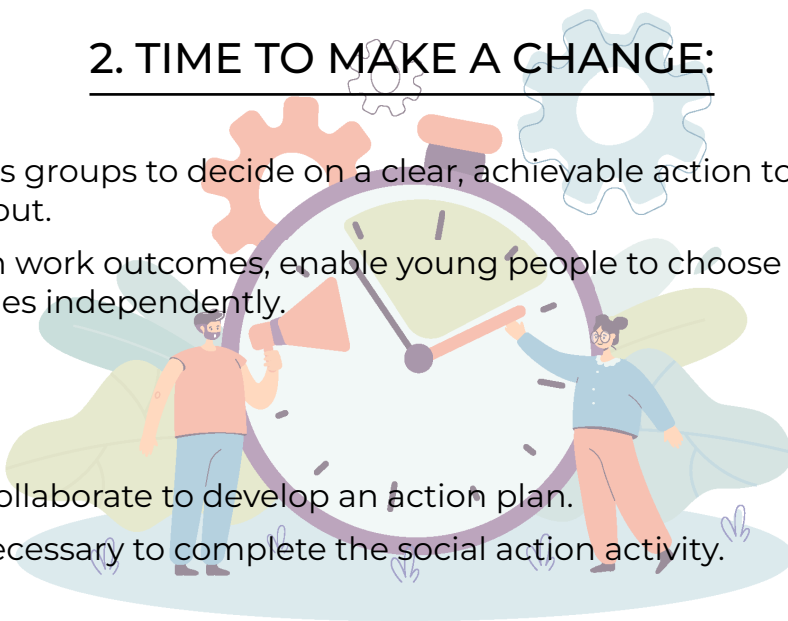
2. TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE:

This tool empowers groups to decide on a clear, achievable action to tackle broader issues they care about.

To maximize youth work outcomes, enable young people to choose and create their social action activities independently.

Aims:

- Young people collaborate to develop an action plan.
- Identify tasks necessary to complete the social action activity.



Skills and Competences:

- Resilience: Embracing new challenges.
- Creating Change: Taking social action.
- Teamwork.
- Communication.
- Leadership.



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Brainstorm and Decide:

- Encourage groups to brainstorm ideas and select their top three achievable actions.
- Focus on short-term goals that can be accomplished within days or weeks.
- Share ideas with the group, seeking common themes and solutions.
- Merge similar ideas to form a realistic, achievable action plan.
- Vote if necessary to decide on the group's chosen action.
- Develop an action plan and assign roles and tasks within the group.



Five Key Concepts:

- Climate and Biodiversity Crisis: Acknowledge human activity's role in global temperature rise and wildlife decline.
- Interconnectedness: Recognize that every action has consequences, fostering awareness and positive change.
- Sustainability: Balancing present needs with future generations' needs, aiming for fairness to future inhabitants.
- Environmental Justice: Striving for fair solutions in addressing climate and ecological crises.
- Active Hope: Engaging in positive social action to alleviate eco-anxiety and promote well-being.
-



3. SUSTAINABLE OR NOT?

This activity is best introduced at a point in the project when young people are beginning to understand their project and its impact on the environment.



Aims:

- Young people think about the environmental impact of everyday items.
- Young people begin to see that everything is connected.

Skills and Competences:

- Confidence.
- Decision making.
- Communication.

Description

- Gather a set of everyday items e.g. pencil, pen, reusable cup, bottled water, drinks can, fleece top, cotton hoodie, local fruit e.g. apple, fruit from abroad, chocolate, etc. and anything of interest to the young people in your group. Place each item on the table and ask everyone in the group to pick one. Once everyone has an item ask them to describe how sustainable they think the item is and why? This activity is about stimulating discussion and critical thinking, there are no absolutes. The group can think about the wider impact of each item including where the raw materials came from, who made the item etc.



4. LITTER CHALLENGE

This activity helps young people think about litter and packaging. They can think about the packaging that is sustainable compared to that which is unsustainable.

Aims:

- Young people work as a team to make a decision on the challenge.
- Young people are confronted by the issue of litter.

Skills and Competences:

- Teamwork.
- Communication.

Description

Gather two sets of clean litter and place each outside the building, if possible somewhere where nice. Ask for a reaction when young people see the litter. Divide the group in two and ask each group to put the litter into order that it will decompose first to last. (decompose = break down into very small parts).

The following times may vary due to environmental conditions, density of product etc.

Paper - 2-6 weeks

Cardboard - 2 months to 5 years

Cotton - 6 months

Tin Can - 50-100 years

Aluminum Can - 200 years

Fleece clothing - a few hundred years depending on composition Plastic bottle - up to 450 years

Polystyrene - 500 years

Glass - estimates to one million years!

Use any other items you feel may be of interest to your group. e.g. disposable vapes, disposable nappy etc.





Debrief:

- Discuss how sustainable each product is. What products are better and what products are harmful to the environment? Ask about other solutions e.g. reusable cups.

5. REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE GAME

An activity suitable for children to help reinforce the concept of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Aims:

- Children enjoy an active game, can be played outdoors. Children remember the principles of sustainability, reduce, reuse and recycle and mainly refuse.

Skills and Competences:

- Listening.
- Physical activity.
- Decision making.



REFUSE
REDUCE
RECYCLE
REUSE



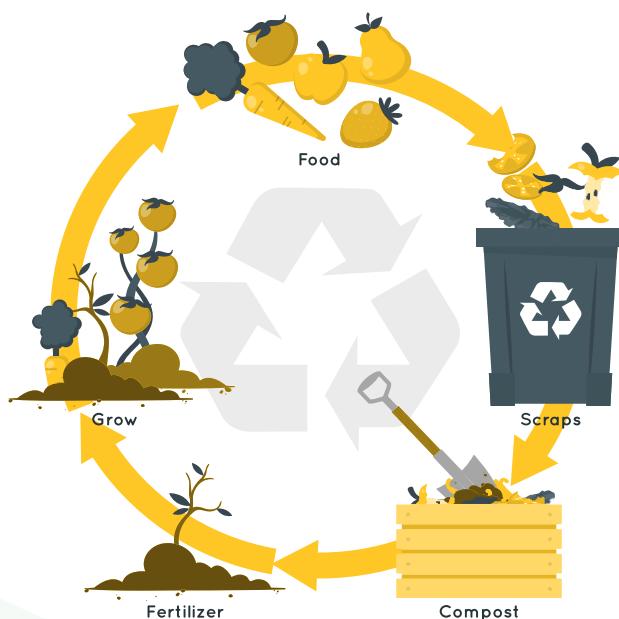


Description

- Explain the concept of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - The most important part is to reduce, the less products produced in the first place, the less the environmental impact. If reducing is not an option the next best thing to do is to reuse. Recycling is the third and least best option, many things are simply not recycled, are difficult to recycle or become poorer quality when recycled.
- Put three bases out around the area as far apart as practical.
- One each to represent reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Ask everyone to stand in the middle of the bases.
- Read out an action from the list below, or add in your own.
- The group then run to the correct base.
- Continue this with lots of different actions until the children get a sense of the different concepts.
- Expand the activity by asking group members to come up with ideas.

Idea list examples.

- A packed lunch, donating books to a charity shop, sewing, composting food waste, putting old batteries in a collection container, using plastic bags for shopping, borrowing a game instead of buying one.





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6. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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