



18. Dream big, dream now:

Planning ahead for an energy efficient building

It's great to dream. Whether it's the idea of renovating and retrofitting your entire centre or building a new one from scratch, keep a dream up your sleeve – even when it feels like there are always more urgent matters to deal with.

Often when infrastructure funding or grants are announced you don't have much time to apply. Having big picture energy efficiency plans ready means you can respond quickly when opportunities arise.

Getting started

Dream together

Run one or a series of sessions that involves the board, staff, building users and experts from your community. Encourage people to imagine what their ideal energy efficient centre looks like.

Make a list of all the features you would all like to include. Present case studies and pictures of other centres who've made major improvements to inspire you.

Plan your space

Think about all the functions you need the centre and its grounds to fulfil. Think about the needs of all building users, including the disabled.

Identify all the energy efficiency features you would like to include.

Discuss how you would like users of your building to feel; how would you like them to behave.

List all the activities you want happening in the building and its grounds in the future.



Investigate other centres

Investigate what other centres have done, start a collection of ideas, add to it and publicise and discuss them with others.

Retrofit vs repurpose

Find out if it is more feasible to retrofit your current building, repurpose an existing building or construct a new purpose-built one.

Review all options

If you are renting your space, involve the building owner and work together to investigate energy efficient options.

Get expert input

Consider getting an environmental expert or sustainability student to help further your designs and strategy. Then put some money aside, if possible, to draw up plans.

Get a second opinion

Get a second opinion on the plans to check they are appropriate for your climate.



CHECK POINTS

- ▶ Even though it never feels like there is enough time ... dream now.
- ▶ Envision and document your ideal sustainable / energy efficient facility.
- ▶ Have your plans ready for opportunities.
- ▶ Get a wide range of stakeholders involved.
- ▶ Ask for help.

Ask for ideas

Let your local government, regional development groups and peak bodies know what you are wanting to do and ask them for ideas and leads.

Document your dreams

Get your plans for your ideal centre documented, even if you don't have full architectural plans. Then, keep your eye out for funding opportunities and have a team ready to respond.

Imagining the perfect, energy efficient building for your particular climate also helps identify things you could do now, even without funding.

Benefits of big dreams

Planning big helps people get excited about the benefits of energy efficient and sustainably designed buildings, including:

- lower running costs
- reduced impact on the environment
- more comfortable and enjoyable building
- improved staff retention and morale.

Case study

Byron Community College in Northern NSW had a large derelict depot shed that they wanted to retrofit for classrooms and offices.

Even though there seemed no opportunities for funding on the horizon, they started dreaming and planning. This included wanting to generate solar power on the roof.

When the financial crisis hit in 2008 and federal economic stimulus infrastructure grants were made available – but with a very short turnaround, the plans came out of the drawer and into a submission that was successful.

Your plans can include using your centre as a model and educating your community about the benefits of energy efficiency.

Further resources

Check out A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

www.agreenhouse.net.au/helpful-resources

Related fact sheets

For more fact sheets, go to A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

www.agreenhouse.net.au/fact-sheets

