RCE Structure and Governance Survey:

An Analysis of Results and Recommendations

April 24, 2016
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Purpose of the Survey

In recognition of the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (2005-2014), UNU researchers found many advantages to being an RCE and the contributions they have made to ESD (Fadeeva, Payyappallimana, Tabucanon, and Chokar, 2014).   When RCE Greater Portland formed its regional network in 2013, its coordinators wanted to know if there was an ideal governance structure that Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) on ESD had discovered. With the current acknowledgement of 146 RCEs by the UNU-IAS around the world, there remains a paucity of research on whether a particular form of governance has been identified as most effective. When we asked our RCE colleagues how we should organize RCE Greater Portland, we frequently were told that the model depended on the needs of the community and the resources available and, therefore, RCE governance structures varied. These variations seemed like the perfect opportunity for research and analysis.

This survey was developed to collect information on the varying types of existing RCE governance and management models, for the benefit of self-reflection for existing RCEs and to help inform new RCEs on recommended practices. Using a Survey Monkey tool, RCE Greater Portland leaders, Kim Smith and Jamie Stamberger, designed questions that they found to be core considerations and obstacles to their own RCE development. Given that organizational structures and governance models vary, this survey explores whether there are particular systems, practices, and challenges that RCE leaders think new RCEs should consider to sustain their organizations and enhance engagement.

Survey Results

RCE leaders around the world were asked 10 questions via Survey Monkey to assess their governance structures. Results were collected between November 2014 and September 2015, with 48 surveys received (See Appendix 1). With the help of UNU-IAS Program Associate Kyoko Shiota, the responses have been collated, reviewed, and analyzed, and are now available for our RCE colleagues.

Per survey guidelines, participants were informed that the information would be shared with the RCE community, for the benefit of existing and new RCEs. RCEs are identified by name in some answers, when they were shared, and made anonymous when the material appeared to be more sensitive. Contact information has been removed as well for privacy purposes. We appreciate all who took the time to share their knowledge with us and we hope that these results will offer worthwhile information for the benefit of the UNU-IAS and all RCEs.

1. What type of organization/institution(s) host(s) your RCE? Check all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses (48)
University	54.17% (26)
None: We are an independent organization; our RCE is not housed within another organization	29.17% (14)
NGO/Not-for-Profit	25.00% (12)
Government	18.75% (9)
Co-operative	6.25% (3)
Business	2.08% (1)
Foundation/Charity	2.08% (1)
K-12 School	2.08% (1)

Comments

- TERI - The Energy and Resources Institute
- RCE Ruhr is a rhizome-structure. The keyholder is atavus e.V.
- Poly centric organization
- City = Municipality
- The hosting rotates through all organizations that are stakeholders
- The Grand Rapids RCE designation was given to the City of Grand Rapids (www.grcity.us) and the Grand Rapids Community Sustainability Partnership ["CSP"] (www.grpartners.org). A new Grand Rapids RCE website is being developed (www.grandrapidsrce.org)
- Our RCE is a voluntary organization made up of multiple partners and typically has only specific projects hosted by particular organizations. In terms of core functionalities, University is likely the best choice for our RCE.
- It is hosted by the GreenOffice of Technological University=UTFPR as a meeting point, but it is NOT connected to the university administrative structure.
- Not sure about the TERM "HOST"...but these are our partners and supporters and from time to time do both HOST and support our events...but they are not the EXCLUSIVE organization that houses RCE Saskatchewan!
- Mauricie Regional Environmental Council and University of Quebec in Trois-Rivières

2. How does your RCE organize its management structure? Check all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses (48)
Coordinating/steering committee	75.00% (36)
Part of regular job duties at the host organization	45.83% (22)
Working groups	39.58% (19)
Support staff	22.92% (11)
Executive director(s)	16.67% (8)
Voting members	14.58% (7)
Board of Directors	12.50% (6)
Non-voting members	8.33% (4)

Comments

- We work in partnership with a university, who co-partnered with us to submit the application for RCE recognition. We have established a coordinating committee to oversee our activities.
- Heads of research and training, partnership and collaboration, informal and nonformal activities, communication and outreach, project and program etc.

- [We] do not have individuals with specific responsibilities to carry out this work. All work and funding requires shared resources.
- Projects are taken on by specific organizations with these managed in a modular way. A general facilitation group with working groups on specific themes and projects (such as our recognition event) and (co)-coordinators for these group do the main work.
- Committee structure with a chair.
- Some of our Steering Group have time allocated as part of their routine job, others 'find' the time where the work of the RCE is consistent with their paid employment, others have to make the time outside of their paid employment. It's a mix, and very challenging.

3. What is the funding model of your RCE? Check all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses (48)
University-funded	43.75% (21)
Private donations	35.42 % (17)
Built in to the operating budget of the host organization	31.25% (15)
Local grant funding	29.17% (14)
Government-funded	18.75% (9)
Private industry	18.75% (9)
Membership fees	18.75% (9)
National grant funding	4.17% (2)

Comments

- At present, our partner university gets a grant for RCE and related purposes. Our organization's funding is through our operating budget.
- There is a cost sharing model for expenses that is supported across the private, academic, and municipal sector as well as a time commitment from institutions
- EU funded
- No funding model exists
- International Funding
- Basically not funded, but handled on voluntary basis, or as part of another organization. Mainly each node in the poly centric network handles their own costs and if a larger activity is undertaken each participant pays.
- There is no specialized funding as such but there are a few facilitations for some outreach activities at the faculty level.
- No funding - people give time and organizations offer venues
- Our RCE does not have any funding from a specific organization. [A university] has given office space but office running expenses is nil.
- Self-funding activities.
- Specific interest group and individuals
- [We] develop funding requirements and sources from [our] members across the public, private, academic, and service sectors. Costs are covered through these shared resources and donations, as well as sponsorships and time release commitments.
- The RCE is not core-funded but funding is provided for specific projects. Individuals contribute their time as individual volunteers or organizational representatives funded by their respective organizations.
- There is a gap here. Every time we plan a new project we have to look for funding from regional organizations and it is quite difficult to get it. Thus we would like to learn about successful funding models.
- None, however most technical resources have come from our Higher Ed members.

- From well-wishers including voluntary support from government and private sectors in kind and in cash. But there is no regular budget from a university as the host or any other organization for that matter.
- The FUNDING is ACTIVITY SUPPORTED by the various funders for various activities. Sometimes they fund their own research and we facilitate the partnerships.
- [Our] RCE is not funded at all, per se. The host university has agreed that it is happy to support the Secretariat, and thus funds the administration and co-ordination. For projects, funds have to be found from elsewhere - for example, by building into project bids the necessary resources to conduct added-value, synergistic/ complementary ESD activity. Hence our multi-sectoral stakeholders bring the project funds to the RCE - each project is shared as part of a stakeholder institution's or organization's project portfolios. This is because, in our first few years, the changing national and international contexts in which we operate have operated against [our] RCE gaining sufficient critical mass to support the development of a specific legal entity in its own right.
- We are a recently established RCE. At the moment, the RCE founding partners have all contributed a small amount of their respective budgets to finance a part-time coordinator (1 day per week until the end of March). We are looking into charging membership fees. However, we have much work ahead of us to gather up support for the RCE. Government budget cuts are making things difficult for us right now.

4. What is the staff capacity of your RCE? Check all that apply.

Choices	Paid positions	Volunteer positions	Responses (48)
Office assistants/ Secretarial services	36.11% (13)	63.89% (23)	36
Executive director(s)	37.50% (12)	65.63% (21)	32
Researchers	13.33% (4)	86.67% (26)	30
Academic faculty/staff	10.00% (3)	90.00% (27)	30
Event planner(s)	29.63% (8)	74.07% (20)	27
Project manager	29.63% (8)	77.78% (21)	27
Web administrator	24.00% (6)	76.00% (19)	25
Marketing/Communications	23.81% (5)	76.19% (16)	21
Outreach staff	15.00% (3)	90.00% (18)	20
Membership management	27.78% (5)	72.22% (13)	18
Sponsorship/grants staff	22.22% (4)	77.78% (14)	18
Interns	16.67% (3)	88.89% (16)	18
Accountant	25.00% (4)	75.00% (12)	16
Treasurer	6.25% (1)	93.75% (15)	16
Consultant(s)	0.00% (0)	100.00% (13)	13
Legal counsel	15.38% (2)	84.62% (11)	13
Political advocacy staff	20.00% (2)	80.00% (8)	10

Comments

- The Director role is integrated into the role of Director of Sustainability for the University. There is a paid RCE Coordinator role for which part of their responsibilities is to also coordinate partnerships and engagement for sustainability at the university. An unpaid chair and unpaid steering group also support the coordination of the RCE.
- Not really sure
- Contract research officer clerk
- As a municipal government, the [city] has capacity for all of the above within existing governance/corporate structures
- Other services are given honorarium.

- All these capacities exist within the university (paid by the university) BUT the RCE resources is not paying for these capacities. The only dedicated staff to the RCE is 3 researchers/project managers
- No staff is employed by the RCE. Also civil servant engaged.
- Translator
- Volunteer core group of 3+
- Integrated in the daily work and on top of the normal duties of the members of staff of the mayor.
- This capacity is in functions/roles, not in Full Time Equivalents (FTEs is 3 to 5, depending on the level of work).
- Student interns are typically paid to work on particular projects through partner groups.
- We are a Committee structure with a chair.
- Only the RCE Coordinator is on paid position. Any other activity or engagement is on a voluntary basis depending on interest.
- Mostly VOLUNTEER functions for various activities...and [a college] is providing financial management and accounting. Other functions are supported on an EVENT specific Basis and sometimes staff is hired to coordinate a particular event (Recognition Event) or students are hired to do research where funding supports this type of sustainable employment.
- All of these functions are supplied by the Chair of the RCE, working to the extent possible within their formal employment role. All other Steering Group members assist, as they submit funding applications, market the RCE, manage projects, organize events, convene working groups, and so on. We have NO paid staff per se. We are able to utilize the skills of up to 4 student interns for periods of 1 - 8 weeks, twice each year for specific pieces of work/research.
- Coordinator (paid position). Partners help out with administrative duties. They are paid by their own budgets.

5. Does your RCE have formal partners/members?

Choices	Responses (48)
Yes	83.33% (40)
No	16.67% (8)

Comments

- 135 organizations and 375 individuals
- 100+
- Seven organizations and their staff
- 43 organizational members
- 10
- More than 50
- 25 partner organizations
- A partnership covenant agreement has been drafted for the RCEs of the Americas. This was an outcome from the recent RCE Americas meeting in Grand Rapids. The Grand Rapids RCE is a working committee within the Grand Rapids Community Sustainability Partnership that has over 250 endorsing partner stakeholder organizations as members
- 10
- 25 organizational partners and hope to have 50 institutional and individual donors plus 500 Green Badge subscribing members
- 55 organizational partners 20 individual members
- The RCE is an essential component of the Healthy Community Cabinet which includes partners from a broad range of community agencies and organizations, including: education, health care, environment and NGO's

- Approximately 5-10 depending on the nature of engagements and projects.
- 9
- 7-8 organizational partners
- Paying members: 15; Non-paying members ~15
- 6 partners
- 5 organizational Partners - 0,5 paid position
- 38
- We have approx 45 organizations/companies and 100 single members.
- Under review but approximately 10 organizational partners
- 3
- 20
- 20 organizations but this fluctuates and 17 individuals
- The GR RCE has many partnerships and working relationships across the public, private, and academic sectors. The collaborations and partnerships are the primary strategy used to accomplish the project work.
- 8 Higher Education partners, 2 cities, representatives from towns in the region, patronage of Lieutenant Governor, approximately 20 as part of RCE Facilitation Group and approximately 100 general members.
- 8
- We have an MOU signed by FOUR of our KEY Institutions of Higher learning. The other various partner organizations, institutions and government departments are less formal yet quite supportive through their project and financial support for a variety of activities/research and events.
- 20
- We have what we call 'stakeholders'. Our RCE is an open network of ESD specialists and those who wish to become more engaged and to build their capacity as we learn together. No one pays a subscription; we all simply work together, with stakeholders leading on those aspects of work which they wish to progress or lead because of their interests / training / experience. Together, our aim is to research, develop and promote ESD so that this learning is at the heart of developing a sustainable Wales. We have different standing 'partners' on our Steering Committee who help guide us regarding policy contexts etc. These have included national government, UNESCO Wales, our HE Funding Council, National NGOs and other universities, among others. We are currently in the process of trying to recruit again from a wider range of sectors, to include business and other sectors that were once on our Steering Committee but have since dropped away as cuts have hit and our national political context has changed.
- At the moment, 7 founding partners continue to work actively for our RCE's growth.
- Approx. 80
- 54 organizational members, 20 individual members, and several additional organizational projects partners

6. Do you request formal commitment of resources or engagement from your partners/members? Check all that apply.

Choices	Responses (48)
Promotion of RCE events	62.50% (30)
In-kind donations (staff time, office resources, meeting space, etc.)	45.83% (22)
Committee engagement	41.67% (20)
Signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other signed membership declaration	35.42% (17)
Required time commitment	35.42% (17)
Financial commitment	29.17% (14)
No commitment required	20.83% (10)

Comments

- Members [give] their obligations towards achieving the RCE's goals and objectives using their resources.
- Not sure
- The RCE member organizations meet on a regular basis to discuss the key issues and look at opportunities to work in partnership
- We use our partners to help disseminate RCE activities to the public, to take part as members of the 3 Governance Structures namely Advisory, Steering and Working committees.
- Time commitment and Financial commitment are flexible and activity specific
- The RCE is an essential component of the Healthy Community Cabinet which includes partners from a broad range of community agencies and organizations, including: education, health care, environment and NGO's
- Very little commitment required
- We ask partners to assist with in-kind donations and prioritize committee engagement.
- Formal commitments are not required but have been made (as above) in the course of our activities.
- Again, this depends on the /nature/significance of the event and the level of participation that the organization wishes to take other than just financial support.
- Steering Group and Working Group members agree to Terms of Reference, but there are no sanctions if they fall short - we have no authority vested in the RCE at all. Stakeholders are treated as active participants and observers at the same time, depending on their area of interest and expertise. We wish to ENCOURAGE people from all backgrounds and with fresh ideas, as well as to benefit from established ESD experience.
- Individual members 50 EURO per year. Organizational members without own staff 50 EURO per year. Organizational members with own staff 100-2500 EURO per year.

7. What benefits does your RCE offer its partners/members? Check all that apply.

Choices	Responses (48)
Collaboration on events (or tables at related events)	91.67% (44)
Networking and communication opportunities	83.33% (40)
Publicity of partner initiatives	66.67% (32)
Trainings	64.58% (31)
Research opportunities	60.42% (29)
Mentoring	47.92% (23)
Sustainability curriculum	47.92% (23)
Advertisement of grants or grant partnership opportunities	31.25% (15)
Direct funding from your RCE (i.e. RCE grants)	8.33% (4)

Comments

- By being part of RCE Iskandar, partners enjoy point awards. e.g. for local authorities, they can get local authority 'star-rating' points for being involved in events organized through our RCE.
- RCE-Tirupati, India is a recently started organization and has not reached a stage of direct funding
- The RCE is an essential component of the Healthy Community Cabinet which includes partners from a broad range of community agencies and organizations, including: education, health care, environment and NGO's
- Design and implementation of fully regional projects that are more prone to private and EU financing. Please check an example: www.100milarvores.pt (some info in English: http://www.100milarvores.pt/resultados/relatorios)
- Networking and collaboration on projects / schemes
- We also offer marketing and promotional opportunities such as radio spots, sharing of sustainability success stories, and postings for members on our CSP website.

- These 'benefits" are usually in the nature of "networking" opportunities and connecting our various partners with the human resource capabilities and capacity building between these same entities
- Advocacy for ESD at project, local, national and international level; visibility of their ESD project work at international level; innovative educational opportunities; real-world learning. Help with sourcing ESD-relevant information.

8. Based on the goals of your RCE, how has your governance/management system led to particular challenges or achievements? For example, does your funding model feel secure and/or has your model facilitated ongoing engagement of your partners? Why or why not?

Challenges (42)

- Being mainly volunteer-run, we have a fair amount of turnover. People are enthusiastic and contribute a great deal and then face burnout or job opportunities which pay fair wages versus having to work pro bono. We are in the process of becoming partner-funded and want to hire a FT director. Transitions are challenging and scary.
- Being funded by the University, activities of the RCE must also be in the best interest of the University therefore it can be seen as too 'University-centric' at times.
- Bureaucracy problem on our partners
- Lack of adequate understanding of what RCE stands for.
- Hard to get everyone to the table in an equal way
- Faculty commitment to RCE activity on top of their work commitment in their respective faculty.
- Funding has been a regular challenge which has constrained regular ongoing activities with partner organizations
- It is based on research and governmental funding
- We are a new RCE, so these do not yet occur. The challenge might be coordination and the regular and active involvement of partners. However, at this early stage, it's not apparent yet.
- Funding resources always remain a challenge, but costs are usually met and shared. Key is to obtain the necessary time commitment from partners.
- It is difficult to include policy makers
- Not in a position yet to specify
- Through the RCE process, the community identified 11 challenges that were then categorized into four pillars: Human Health and Well-being; Environmental Sustainability; Economic Vitality and CIvic Engagement/Social Capital
- Due to the full implementation of the Philippines' K-12 Curriculum, our challenge is to continue with the RCE NorthMin's activities with the budget cuts for the next 2 school years.
- RCE activities are collaborated with the funded projects of partners.
- Encouraging partner organizations to come forward and anchor RCE activities
- We are adapting to and learning from challenges as we develop
- Funding
- Financial sustainability is the major challenge (dependence on local government's fees and grants)
- Develop projects.
- New role of universities, how to link science and society
- Members do not most often fulfil their financial commitments, so members take positions that they cannot really manage which impedes the progress of the network
- Funding is always an issue. We need a "BUSINESS PLAN" and operate as such to be sustainable
- We want to be a multiplier
- Very unsecure funding model for larger RCE events.
- No particular commitment from the university, it is based on the decision of the activities at the faculty level.

- No funding thus no admin support
- The main challenge is governance, since it is a network, no member organization feels obliged to take responsibility so most of the time the RCE is inactive because there is no money to host meetings. There then is no commitment on the part of stakeholders.
- Obtaining grant funding for administrative functions from the Partners who are mainly Higher educations or NGO sector representatives.
- Change in the administration of an organization that holds key position in the RCE, transfer and death affects activities adversely. Furthermore when it gets to the turn of a particular organization that organization may not have sufficient office accommodations and facilities to host the RCE secretariat. The internal processes and practices of a particular organization may not be favorable for hosting an RCE.
- Future funding resources and staff commitments
- Changing governments and organizational priorities in relation to ESD create uncertainty.
- Difficulties to have government recognition and consequently official funding
- No funding model as of yet....
- Our main challenge is funding which has grounded most of our activities, we are barely able to conduct our RCE businesses smoothly
- Funding is ALWAYS a challenge and we have looked at developing a business model…but there are philosophical variances in this approach
- Irregular meetings schedule due to lack of time by the main coordinator and other principal officers who often pilot the activities of the organization
- Funding and visibility - we have no legal identity / corpus; a 'network' cannot fundraise so effectively, or gain political support.
- Our funding model is not feasible in the long run. We have to find other sources of funding to keep the RCE afloat. Funding partners want to see the growth of our influence to continue their funding.
- In a range of challenges, the absence of a more effective, visible strong and professional alliance of RCEs, can be a threat for RCEs being there for over 5 years, having committed themselves to societal changes for which we also hold responsibility. RCE's capacity has not yet been unleashed – if this takes too long the credibility of RCEs achieving will be endangered. Fully acknowledging the community expands and therefore has start-ups that have to be cherished in all their diversity, it is the average strength, possible failing efforts and a lack of authenticity in some cases that are a concern. As small examples we refer to Facebook sites presenting 'global' RCE-communities with less than a 1.000 likes or RCE-events with little participants, let alone RCEs listed as such but not within reach of assessing sponsors and other stakeholders. These remarks come from a constructive approach and well-meant concern, a call to improve continuously.
- Too many individual interests. Main funding: each year new applying for local grant, to less engagement of members/partners

Achievements (42)

- We have grown quickly and are seen as a promising collaborative model for our region. We appreciate the legitimacy offered by being acknowledged by the UNU-IAS. Our community needs a solid network to help facilitate projects and initiatives across sectors, so we hope that our RCE can offer those resources.
- Having a paid 0.5 FTE RCE Coordinator enables the RCE to remain active and supporting partner members.
- Collaboration on research
- Facilitates networking and to an extent funding.
- Lots of people are interested
- Institutionalizing work with schools by forming a school club and also creating a local network for ESD.
- Have been organizing an annual youth YUVA Meet since 2009
- Holding a very successful event called "Iskandar Malaysia Sustainable and Low Carbon School Exhibition 2015" in Feb 2015 at University Technology Malaysia.

- An example is the recent RCE Americas conference. The planning for this event came through a class project started at Kendall College of Art and Design. The costs for the conference were shared across various universities.
- We have organized a youth forum and we annexed another partner, Challenge makers
- Not in a position to specify
- Community social marketing campaign to raise awareness of challenges; community awards to recognize organizations that, based on a Healthy Community Lens, were active in supporting the pillars and the Healthy Community Concept
- Currently, the local city administration is a strong partner of the center. Hopefully, the current funding will be added by other research and development grants to augment the delivery of RCE NorthMin's services and programs.
- Several RCE activities have been involved in the funded projects of partners.
- Collaborative projects for ESD in the region
- We are a very small group, but have held several successful events notably a Sustainable Schools Expo last year where we had an attendance of round 500
- Research output and community impact
- Effective regional projects designed and implemented collaboratively and with a regional vision
- Increased communication between partners and external stakeholders. Shared activities, conferences and projects.
- The RCE Graz Styria provides a platform for science-society exchange in research and education
- Members take decisions on equal bases. Concerting on all issues with other members give them a sense of ownership and belonging.
- All achievements have been sustained through Working Groups getting their funding for their research and projects.
- More understanding in the field of ESD
- The nodes are very good in managing and we use the network for communication.
- Opportunity to showcase research and community outreach activities
- We are still going.
- RCE Greater Nairobi now has an official office with a secretariat allocated for its activities. The other achievement is that RCEGN has mounted short courses on Sustainability in the university website
- Self-funding conferences and the successful funding of two interns via the host university in the last 2 years.
- We achieved a cohesive group of operational partners in industry, schools, governmental organizations and societal organizations that are dedicated to the ESD goal and are effective in measurable output and transitions leading to visible change in education.
- Equal opportunity, open access, evenhandedness and fair play, all these led to the success and great [outcomes].
- One primary achievement has been the use of our Blackboard Collaborate virtual technology for use with annual virtual RCE Americas youth conference
- A lack of dependence on specific funds but primary reliance on volunteerism has allowed us to weather regional change.
- Volunteer engagement and cooperation of the partners, which enable the networking, events and projects.
- Many multi-sector projects which are advancing ESD and SD
- Working with learning institutions to reorient ESD pedagogy in their curriculum and advocacy on ESD
- We have managed to operate for 8 years without a FORMAL Business Plan
- Instant decision making that has enabled us to execute quite a good numbers of projects promptly. These have been possible because we do not have to go through a complex approval system before decisions are made
- ESD is contextual of time and space - we can be flexible and responsive, but this lack of clarity and apparent lack of consistency makes the establishment of our purpose and profile very challenging wherever E for SD is not well understood. It is important to understand that our AIMS and APPROACHES are consistent, but our ACTIVITY is diverse and not readily understood as coherent - such is a societally-responsive RCE!
- Having a paid coordinator has allowed us to organize a forum on energy efficiency in businesses. We are more present on the ground. Partnerships are being developed.

- See 9: we found this positioning and way of practice works.
- Common understanding of ESD. Knowing of the RCE in the Region. 1200 people get quarterly the RCE Newsletter. Bridging generations of ESD activists. Shared Vision of a sustainable regional development

9. What practices or strategies do you most highly recommend for an RCE to be successful?

Comments (42)

- Building a system that meets the needs of the community has been essential. Facilitating outreach through our newsletter, website, and social media has helped many partners. Taking advantage of community and university programs has helped us build staff capacity, particularly through CTE/TVET courses which have allowed students to participate in internships which help them learn meaningful skills and provide significant support to our RCE.
- An active/ engaged steering group to ensure partners' interests are being kept at the forefront of the RCEs activities
- Reach out to more partners and engage in advocacy
- The Triple Helix Plus concept
- Strong firm support from Vice Chancellor for RCE in University and faculties willing to champion ESD
- Tie ups with government (YUVA Meet is sponsored by the Govt. of India), good sound partner organizations, and focus on issues that are relevant to the target groups
- Funding from UNU
- Clear objectives, good governance, and good communications to the public and intended audiences
- Trustful working relationships and partnerships across the public, private, academic, municipal, and service sectors. Networking and capacity building are key as well as celebration of successes
- Exchange of ideas, research and technologies among the RCEs
- Cooperative and interacting relationship with Partners for implementing the agenda
- Membership, steering committee, multi-stakeholder forum on changing topics, and two employees per million inhabitants payed by the municipality
- Extensive community engagement and involvement and strong, clear leadership
- Collaboration, Communication and Celebration
- Food, Agriculture and Environment Education
- To have formal recognition of the RCE network in the region and to develop a common action plan among partners to raise funds
- Tapping in to people who are passionate about education for sustainable development.
- Think, design, implement, and evaluate collaboratively BUT have a dedicated staff team to take the leadership of the projects, to be the driving force, to make things happen...
- Close co-operation between partners. Common visions and goals.
- Applying a transdisciplinary approach of research and education, providing a flat hierarchy within the team and a lot of potential for individual unrestricted development, being an active part in national and international networks and communities
- It should have as many stakeholders as possible from different domains and levels but there should be a viable lead and host organization to ensure commitment and sustainability
- Frequent (quarterly) gatherings, sessions, keynotes and an Annual Recognition Event
- Good project management, clear funding planning, support of local government
- Work with a rhizome structure
- Be open and welcoming
- To have a created position and budget attached within university systems as part of the outreach program
- Commitment to the concept and wanting to work with others
- Clear governance structure with specific mandate and responsibilities -RCEs should also be set up as sustainability departments or schools in the universities. They can also work well as NGOs not for profits for successful fundraising and performance

- A focus on smaller scale events for distinct issues bringing people together to network (i.e the RCE as a catalyst).
- Networking, Publication of existing or independent projects in the region
- Being independent and full-time active is of strategic importance, as is effecting real change through day to day cooperation in primary transition processes.
- Evenhandedness, locally relevant program and projects, involving the people and communities that are most affected
- Continued use of virtual technology for global connectivity especially with youth; continued passion, service, leadership, and commitment
- Focus on tangible projects that provide energy to mobilize further volunteer contributions while building regional and inter-regional connectivity.
- Multi-sector approaches which not only promote ESD but put SD into practice.
- Advocacy and capacity building/training
- Have a strong formal partnership with formal funding commitments and contracts. DIVERSITY of partners and a variety of support structures (other than just financial) are crucial to success
- Have a central management system that is made up of committed coordinator or patron who has government ties for possible funding influences. The RCE must make projects with instant community impact its focal point. That is only how it can generate funding from both government and sympathetic donors
- Build slowly and with deep, shared understandings of purpose. The rest will follow in good time. Ensure the QUALITY of what you do, not the quantity. Where possible, act strategically, even where small projects are concerned - ensure that you can (and do) vocalize their added value in terms of their strategic contributions and benefits.
- Founding partners should invest a small amount to have a paid coordinator who will find other funding opportunities and organize the RCE's activities. It must be slow, but sure growth.
- In general: being an authentic alliance of a multitude of first-line stakeholders (schools, industry, cities, etc.) effectively cooperating and creating changes that can be showed and validated.
- Stretching regional educational landscapes (multi stakeholder networks), collaboration with local administration, shared vision of a sustainable regional development, paying members with responsibility for the general finance plan, service office with minimum two payed full-time staff for each million inhabitants of the region, working groups, public networking events

Analysis of Core Themes

As is evident from the charts and comments above, there is a great variety in RCE governance structures around the world. In addition, a variety of core themes emerged from the data. The following deserve particular focus and consideration in the management of existing RCEs and in the development of new RCEs. There are likely other themes and questions worthy of analysis, so we hope that this is the beginning of some worthwhile self-reflection and collective conversations.

The majority of RCEs are housed within a university

While universities offer a solid base in higher education, with their access to staff, faculty, researchers, students, and resources, they can inhibit the cross-sector growth of an RCE when perceived by the community to be a university program. This is particularly problematic where "town-gown" dynamics exist and nonformal education partners do not connect with their formal education colleagues. Consequently, the envisioned cross-sector model of RCEs are not able to be achieved as easily.

In addition, there are risks of being "siloed" within disciplines, departments, or projects. When this type of reductive framing of an RCE occurs, even potential partners within a college or university might not see their work as relevant to the RCE mission. These types of issues are amplified if funding structures are based on particular projects. Unfortunately, this significantly undermines the transdisciplinary ideals of ESD and can limit staff and resource capacity.

The majority of RCEs are coordinated by a steering committee

As one would suspect, there are pros and cons to this model. Having a steering committee, whether in the form of a formal Board of Directors or a collection of stakeholder representatives, allows for diverse input and a sharing of the workload among various committee members. Ideally, a steering committee will be inclusive and allow for voices from different sectors, professional skillsets, and demographic groups to be heard, e.g., administrators, researchers, governmental officials, youth, community members, etc.

On the other hand, without a formal director, whether paid or not, management issues can ensue, particularly in the form of a lack of coordination or burnout of volunteers and committee members, leading to turnover and attrition. A change of coordinators brings another challenge to the activities of RCEs. If coordinators who take over the work of the previous coordinators do not have the same motivation to run RCEs, those RCEs can become inactive. These issues will be explored further, below.

Most RCEs are university-funded, followed by private donations and funds from host institutions

Showing up as a frequent challenge is the question of funding. The data indicate a wide variety of sources of funding, with some RCEs feeling more secure than others, depending on access to enough, sustainable funding. Resource-poor RCEs tend to struggle more than resource-rich RCEs and are often looking for greater support to make their ESD efforts more successful.

A consideration for university or host institution-funded RCEs is whether these resources are embedded in the general budget of an institution or whether they are short-term discretionary funds. The security of an RCE depends on the buy-in from the institution and investment in its programs. Again, this can offer advantages in the ability to engage in ESD efforts, but there might be an impact if the funding is limited to a narrow definition of ESD, such as being housed in operations and facilities or disciplines such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs. This siloing effect is a commonly expressed concern that RCEs have, when funded by universities. It is complicated further if they need to align with the universities' missions and academic directions, thus influencing RCEs strategically and/or theoretically in the implementation of their ESD activities, such as indicated in the comment: "Activities of the RCE must also be in the best interest of the University; therefore, it can been seen as very university-centric at times."

In addition, private donations are a fortunate opportunity for some RCEs and might offer long-term commitments, but they also can be variable and time-based, along with having some strings attached and fostering dependency on specific funding sources. These might also come in the form of grants, which require significant staff time to develop, manage, and submit reports. Finding champions that support our ESD missions, such as through private industries, might well be an underrepresented sector, with significant opportunities for funding and partnerships, especially in efforts related to TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) and workforce training.

The vast majority of RCEs are volunteer-run, along with the top paid position being an Executive Director

Opinions really vary on whether a volunteer-based or paid-staff model is better. Many RCEs believe that RCEs should be run by volunteers. Volunteer-run RCEs allow for a lot of engagement and buy-in from diverse stakeholders and do not require an RCE to focus on fund-raising work. In the ideal form, all partners or members will have an opportunity to participate and will share the mission and workload across sectors and regions.

On the other hand, the risks in all volunteer-based models are burnout, high turnover, and attrition, especially when the projects extend beyond organizational capacity and volunteers do not feel adequately recognized for their efforts. It is essential for the leaders of RCEs to understand and appreciate the motivations for why their volunteers want to be involved in the RCE and to maximize their enthusiasm and contributions. This also is connected to having adequate ability to delegate tasks, share workloads, and manage volunteers.

Survey results identify some correlation between funding resources and the commitments of staff. This is especially challenging for coordinators themselves to keep their motivations high if they are expected to implement ESD activities, get funds for projects, and coordinate stakeholders and volunteers, if they are not paid and lack discretionary time for the many important tasks necessary to manage an effective RCE network. When RCEs are growing, it is even harder for coordinators to manage the many needs necessary to develop a respected organization focused on the broad and important topics embedded in ESD. As shown in the survey, coordinators usually have other paid jobs, which means that they are also volunteers. Therefore, it can be easily said that maintaining or promoting the work of RCEs can be very challenging if RCEs do not have any paid full-time coordinators.

RCE Greater Portland has struggled with these core questions, as have other RCEs. While volunteers may remain the bulk of the programming and management team, the size of a network and the capacity of the members and partners can influence decisions to professionalize the organization with paid staff. Therefore, the goal to have an Executive Director and paid staff to manage RCE initiatives can both legitimize the status of the work and offer fair compensation for the time involved in effectively managing and completing projects.

The majority of RCEs have formal partners or members

Over 83% of RCEs have formal partners or members, with numbers ranging from 3 to 250 partners, with most being organizational partners and some including individual partners. The average number of partners, based on the comments, is 41. Partnership agreements (covenants, Memorandums of Understanding [MOUs], pledges, etc) appear to increase the commitment of members, legitimizing the relationship with the RCE and expectations for engagement.

The size of an organization will vary based on the population and needs of a region. Honoring the reality that all members of a community are truly stakeholders in ESD, the opportunity to engage more partners and members is always a possibility. The methods in which to do so may vary, however.

The majority of RCEs request promotion of RCE events, followed by in-kind donations, and committee involvement

When considering the expectations of RCEs, the highest percentage of participation comes in the form of cross-promotion, in-kind donations, and committee involvement. These promotional efforts, shared resources, and participation levels make sense, especially within volunteer-run organizations. Even when an organization might not have a lot of money, their capacity is expanded by organizational resources, shared staff time, or volunteer work on committees.

One core task of RCEs, based on UNU-IAS expectations, is outreach. Having a network allows organizations to share their projects and events with each other. Whether this comes in the form of a shared calendar, newsletters, promotional campaigns and/or social media, simply knowing what other members in our communities are doing offers a significant increase in the collective impact of collaborative networks and thus maximizes the value-added benefits of RCEs.

In-kind donations, committee member involvement, and volunteer time also have significant benefits. For example, now that RCE Greater Portland is a formal non-profit (NGO) and can receive charitable donations, these resources have financial value. When writing grant applications, these in-kind donations can be calculated as matching funds. While the valuation of in-kind resources and volunteer time may vary across countries, they indicate a strong commitment from community members and strengthen applications for funding. Such contributions should not be underestimated and would be worthy of further research.

Collaboration is a valuable benefit

A core benefit of having an RCE is definitely collaboration. The most common responses identified the predominance of collaboration of partners on events and networking. Research shows that the power of networks lies in collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011). Through leveraging resources, shared missions, and synergies, the sum of the whole can be larger than its parts. Among many benefits, working together increases efficiencies, reduces redundancies, develops opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas, and allows for greater engagement across disciplines, organizations, and sectors. Recognizing how RCEs contribute to the power of collaboration is part of our powerful story and should be highlighted in our regional, national and international efforts.

RCEs need systems that work and support their efforts

It is evident from the survey data and the UNU-IAS research on the accomplishments of RCEs during the UN Decade on ESD (Fadeeva, Payyappallimana, Tabucanon, and Chokar, 2014), that building systems that work and are properly supported are essential to helping us meet the sustainability needs of our communities. When RCEs express that their main challenges lie in a lack of funding and a dependence on volunteers, a pattern emerges that threatens the very foundation and effectiveness of RCEs. When these are combined with bureaucratic barriers, RCEs really struggle.

Given that our individual and collective goals are to succeed in increasing the sustainability of our regions and our planet, it is clear that none of us can do this alone. As Dr. Charles Hopkins, Ubuntu Committee Member, UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability, and Advisor to the RCEs of the Americas, recommends, we can achieve an enhanced level of success by using collaborative processes such as the Strengths Model (McKeown, 2002). This transformative model highlights several core assertions for how all stakeholders can contribute:

1. No one can do it all; no organization, institution, nor individual can do everything
2. Everyone can do something
3. We need innovative leaders to step forward to build interdisciplinary and interdependent approaches
4. We need policy-makers, funders, and infrastructure to support the work

Therefore, recognizing the challenges that RCEs commonly face can both limit progress and offer a roadmap for identifying opportunities to strengthen our work. Establishing programs, systems, and relationships allow for greater collaboration and the broader facilitation of community engagement, the nurturing of leadership capacity, and the expansion of a much-needed infusion of resources into the development and success of RCEs.

Conclusion

The results of this RCE governance survey paint a diverse and thematic picture of RCEs around the world. Whether reflecting upon well-established or new RCEs, patterns have emerged which indicate that there are structural variables that all RCEs should consider related to advantages or barriers they may face which might enhance or inhibit their success. Recognizing the variations in regional challenges and resources, RCE networks will want to address core governance questions that best meet their needs and fit their capacity to support ESD efforts.

The researchers hope that the survey questions and data offer some insights that can benefit RCEs of all types and models. The findings suggest that there are some governance and structural considerations that can facilitate success or undermine efforts. Whether an RCE is a formal independent organization, or not, has institutional support or paying members, or depends solely on volunteers has an impact on their ability to develop and implement ESD initiatives and projects in their communities. It is evident that having enough organizational resources and tools is key to the ability to achieve our sustainability missions, for the planet, our countries, our regions, or organizations and institutions, and our very selves. Therefore, it is an important goal to establish the resources and capacity necessary to sustain the foundations of a solid RCE over time.

We also discovered that key words like recognition, community engagement, shared visions and goals, clear governance structures, commitments, responsibilities, and advocacy were frequently mentioned by different RCEs. These patterns identify stakeholder needs and good practices for RCEs. They suggest that RCEs can benefit internally from establishing clear governance structures where stakeholders can share common visions and goals, participate in decision-making, contribute in a variety of ways, and feel acknowledged for their contributions. These findings also highlight the external value of implementing effective outreach campaigns to raise public awareness on ESD, seek technical and financial support from various sectors, including the private sector, and advocate for the integration of ESD into institutional and government policies. Such efforts can have the added benefit of providing better recognition of the contributions that RCEs make, which can then lead to increased funding for staff, operations, and programs, in addition to a collaborative buy-in and sharing of responsibilities and commitments among stakeholders, staff, and the broader community.

The challenges are daunting but are also surmountable. From environmental to economic to equity issues, RCEs are faced with the complex tasks of how to establish and expand partnerships that are embedded in the very sustainability ideals faced by our communities and reflect the purpose of why RCEs were invented in the first place. Truly, as social experiments within regional communities, RCEs offer an invaluable model of multi-sector collaborative networks of individuals, organizations, and institutions who are committed to using education, training, and public awareness to build a sustainable future. With our focus on regional challenges, needs, and resources and our mechanisms based in formal, nonformal and informal education, research, shared governance, and outreach, opportunities lie in our ability to be innovative, learn from each other, and strengthen our ability to achieve our missions. These aspirational goals should not be underestimated.

With the launch of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's Global Action Programme on ESD, the time has never been better nor more important for RCEs to establish themselves from a position of strength. While many of us still struggle with how to manage our programs, reach our regional challenges, and build capacity for the extensive goals we face, locally, nationally, and globally, it is clear that having a combination of an organized governance structure, shared resources and support, and the ability to recruit and maintain partners is necessary if we want to help create a sustainable future. Overall, this RCE governance survey shows that many people

are motivated to address sustainability challenges in their regions, but we must determine better ways to sustain our missions, work, and selves, in order to motivate engagement and commitment during this crucial time in history.

References

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Kania, J. and Kramer, R. 2011 (Winter). "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Stanford University: Menlo Park, CA.

McKeown, R. 2002. *ESD Toolkit*. Available at: http://www.esdtoolkit.org/ [Accessed 15 May 2015].

APPENDIX 1: *RCEs who Participated in the Survey*

Name	Website
City of Nuremberg	http://www.nuernberg.de/internet/schulen_in_nuernberg/rce.html
East Midlands, UK	
Grand Rapids RCE	www.grandrapidsrce.org
Greater Eastern Uganda RCE	www.busitema.ac.ug
London RCE	www.londonrce.kk5.org
Porto Metropolitan Area RCE	http://www.100milarvores.pt/
RCE Buea	www.greencameroon.org
RCE Curitiba-Paraná	CRIE - Centro Regional de Integração de Expertise, Curitiba-PR - Brasil
RCE Delhi	www.teriin.com
RCE Gipsland	https://rcegippslandblog.wordpress.com/
RCE Grand Rapids	http://www.grandrapidsrce.org/
RCE Graz-Styria	www.rce-graz.at
RCE Greater Dhaka	www.rcegreaterdhaka.org
RCE Greater Nairobi	www.ku.ac.ke
RCE Greater Phnom Penh	
RCE Greater Port Harcourt	
RCE Greater Portland	www.gpsen.org
RCE Greater Sudbury	www.greatersudbury.ca
RCE Iskandar	
RCE Iskandar Malaysia	
RCE KANO	www.rcekano.8k.com
RCE Kano Nigeria	
RCE Lucknow	www.ceeindia.org
RCE Mauricie/Centre-du-Québec	www.cered.ca
RCE Middle Albania	https://www.facebook.com/pages/RCE-Albania/296156000446895
RCE Minna	www.rceminna.com.ng
RCE Munich - BenE München e.V.	www.bene-muenchen.de
RCE Nizhny Novgorod	www.nngasu.ru/str/miepm/projekt/RCE/index.php
RCE NorthMin	www.xu.edu.ph
RCE Nyanza	
RCE Penang	http://www.rce-penang.usm.my/index.php/ms/
RCE Rhine-Meuse	www.rcerm.eu www.opeduca.eu
RCE Ruhr	www.rce-ruhr.org
RCE Saskatchewan	www.saskrce.ca
RCE Severn	http://insight.glos.ac.uk/SUSTAINABILITY/PARTNERSHIPS/RCE/Pages/default.aspx
RCE Skåne	www.rceskane.se
RCE Tiupati, India	www.profrallapalliramamurthi.com (temporary)
RCE Wales	
RCE West Sweden	http://rcewest.se/