

The Egan review: skills for sustainable communities - definitions of generic skills

Inclusive Visioning

Innovative thinking and approaches to engaging and including the community. The ability to vision a future state for a community including all dimensions of the community. The ability to articulate a vision and get buy in from a wide variety of people. Imagining a future state and simultaneously the implications of getting there.

Project Management

Defining project objectives and providing the drive and determination to deliver successful, measurable outcomes. Building a project team and getting them to work towards delivery of a common goal. Using project plans and critical path analysis to assign tasks and timescales, monitor progress and quality of outcomes.

Leadership in sustainable communities

Inspiring others at all levels to contribute as much as possible in their roles. Leading change, communicating vision, coaching and mentoring, developing future leaders, dealing with poor performers and poor performance. Inspiring people to contribute to their communities to sustain them in the future. Enabling inward investment to support sustainable communities, and managing the finances.

Breakthrough thinking/brokerage

Creative thinking, making lateral connections, effective networking. Bringing together unusual combinations of people, skills and plans to leverage each component and ending up with much more than the sum of the parts. Brokering, facilitating, and managing deals between very different stakeholders in all aspects of sustainable communities. Thinking outside the box.

Team/partnership working within and between teams based on a shared sense of purpose

A genuine desire for the team, collectively, to win. A 'can do' attitude which looks at problems as challenges and opportunities, not risks and threats. The ability to create a networked environment where advice is sought and readily given, coaching is rewarded, and teams are created with the right skills, as well as the right paper qualifications.

Making it happen given constraints

Providing energy and focusing resources to ensure objectives are reached. Understanding and being realistic about constraints, but not accepting artificial barriers. Challenging unrealistic targets or timescales. Looking for practical work around, focusing on the 'vital few not the trivial many' and using the 80/20 rule. (Don't wait for 100 per cent perfection but go ahead when you are 80 per cent there). Much of this skill is rooted in project and programme management, with an emphasis here on achieving the sustainable community vision in spite of all the conflicting interests, individual agendas and adversarial behaviour that inevitably surrounds such complex situations.

Process Management/Change Management

Making sure that processes are managed and continuously improved. Understanding the processes, and how to improve them. Embracing change enthusiastically and working to drive out unnecessary processes or find process improvements.

Financial management and appraisal

Ensuring that financial, social and environmental costs are fully understood. Ability to create and manage a business plan and associated contracts. Understanding risk/reward approaches for all stakeholders. Being able to appraise business cases, proposals and contracts in order to make sound financial decisions. Understanding where finance for sustainable communities comes from, how to attract it, and how to construct a business case for long term sustainability and prosperity of a community. Specific emphasis needs to be placed on being able to develop the business case for ongoing sustainable communities, including the economic models which make long term sustainability possible.

Stakeholder management

Communicating and building relationships with and between relevant stakeholders, understanding their relative impact and importance. Knowing that stakeholder groups change all the time, so keeping pace with the new ones. Being able to bring key people and groups with you to retain critical mass support for the vision and to solve the problems. This skill applies especially to politicians and includes understanding how political motives drive people (including non-politicians) at different times and for different reasons.

Analysis, decision making, learning from mistakes, evaluation

Ensuring that decisions are taken in light of available facts and using relevant past experience. Being able to identify trends and make decisions based on them. Analysing data to determine appropriate evidence to support decisions. Encouraging informed risk taking, and not penalising failure where people are genuinely trying to do the right thing. Sharing examples of where projects have not worked out, and learning the lessons so they can be applied positively in new situations. Coaching and mentoring to grow the overall skills of a community, rather than just those of yourself or your immediate team.

Communication

Being able to communicate in diverse ways to a wide range of professionals, the general public, the media, local schools, politicians, and business people. Communicating vision, understanding how to manage information (the right message to the right people using the right media, then do it again), manage misinformation, rumour and gossip. Being one step ahead.

Conflict resolution

Understanding the dynamics of conflict and how to achieve mutual agreement. Demonstrating the ethics of good practice, including respect for all parties, tolerance of different people and perspectives, confidentiality and the importance of honesty. Listening actively to others, and working to formulate options and solutions.

Customer Awareness and how to secure feedback

Being able to identify customers (citizens), to engage in dialogue with them, and build enduring relationships. Ensuring everyone in your organisation sees it as their responsibility to meet customer needs. Establishing customer priorities and concerns by communicating in a way that appeals to them so that feedback is genuine.

Source: www.ascskills.org.uk/pages/about-ASC/generic-skills (now unavailable)

The Egan review - generic skills	Geographers' valued skill development	We do well	Could do better
Inclusive visioning	Developing geographical imagination		
Project management	Team working; decision-making exercises		
Leadership in sustainable communities	Critical understanding of change in the locality; values education		
Breakthrough thinking	Imagining alternative futures		
Making it happen	Analysing practical successes in bringing about change; eg. thinking skills exercises		
Stakeholder management	Political literacy; consultation		
Analysis - evaluation	Eg. situated ethical enquiry		
Communication	Eg. audience sensitive presentations, writing; bias detection, correction and creation		
Conflict resolution	Argumentation; understanding distinctions and allegiances		

Action note: