

RCE GREATER ATLANTA

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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RCEs

What are Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) on Education for Sustainable Development?

An RCE is a network of formal, non-formal, and informal organizations within a region that facilitates and delivers education for sustainable development (ESD) to local communities. Higher education institutions are often lead organizations, but RCEs also include other organizations as well as individuals (see next question). The RCE program is a global initiative of the United Nations University (UNU), designed originally to support the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

As of January 2018, there were [164 RCEs](#) worldwide.

Each RCE has four core elements:

- Governance -- addressing issues of RCE management and leadership
- Collaboration -- addressing the engagement of actors from all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education
- Research and development -- addressing the role of research and its inclusion in RCE activities, as well as contributing to the design of strategies for collaborative activities, including those with other RCEs
- Transformative education -- contributing to the transformation of the current education and training systems to satisfy ambitions of the region regarding sustainable living and livelihood.

For more information about RCEs and their important role in education for sustainable development, see:

- [Regional Centres of Expertise](#) (UNU-IAS)

Who participates in RCEs?

Organizations providing education for sustainable development within a region participate in RCEs. This includes higher education institutions, K-12 schools, businesses, government, the media, museums, zoos, gardens, and civic associations. Many individuals also participate, from scientists, researchers, students, and teachers to community members and life-long learners.

What is the goal of RCEs?

The purpose of an RCE is twofold: promote transformative education that encourages sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods in a region, and share knowledge and insights with other RCEs around the world.

What benefits do RCE participants receive?

RCEs allow local organizations engaged in education for sustainable development (ESD) in a region to collaborate with one another on events and projects, and also to learn from and link up with other RCE participants around the world. Partners are encouraged to identify key regional sustainability issues and develop educational initiatives that address these issues and align with sustainable development goals (SDGs) that have been identified by the larger global community through the United Nations. One of the

most important benefits for RCE participants is the collective impact they can have in a region by committing to a common, cross-sector agenda for solving specific problems, leveraging shared resources, and engaging in collaborative projects. Their shared impact will be far greater than any individual organization acting on its own.

RCE GREATER ATLANTA

When was RCE Greater Atlanta developed and formally recognized?

We submitted our final application to the UN in mid-September 2017 and were officially acknowledged by UNU in December 2017. Below are some FAQs.

Learn more through these resources:

- Visit our (temporary) [webpage](#) and download our full application
- [Georgia Tech Press Release](#)
- [Emory Press Release](#)
- [Saporta Report](#) article
- [RCE E-Bulletin announcement](#)
- [RCE Overview](#)

What are the vision and goals of the RCE Greater Atlanta?

We envision a robust and engaged network of all sectors of Greater Atlanta society, collaboratively working towards a region where the principles of sustainability - equity and justice, resilient ecosystems, health and well-being, and economic opportunity - are ingrained in its continued development; where opportunities for greater progress are realized through connected local partners and knowledge centers; and where the students in the region have expanded opportunities to learn about sustainability locally and globally, and participate first-hand in shaping a sustainable future.

What is the mission of RCE Greater Atlanta?

The Greater Atlanta RCE accelerates student and community sustainable development leadership and progress towards a more sustainable future by leveraging a network structure to connect, support and catalyze diverse collaborations.

What are the goals and objectives of RCE Greater Atlanta?

We adopt the stated goal of the UNU-IAS Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Programme, which is to bridge the gap between learning and development through the following objectives:

Objective 1: Accelerating local and regional solutions to sustainability issues

Objective 2: Re-orienting higher education for societal transformation into SD

Objective 3: Developing SD and ESD competencies and capabilities as well as a science-policy Interface.

Who is involved in RCE Greater Atlanta? How can I get involved?

RCE Greater Atlanta is a network of multidisciplinary stakeholders, including higher education institutions, businesses, non-governmental organizations, community associations, and local, regional, state and federal government. All RCE partners are committed to developing and advancing a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, focused on implementing the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the region. Emory University, the Georgia Institute of Technology and Spelman College are leading the RCE Greater Atlanta for the first two years.

We are just at the beginning stages and are eager to engage more institutions, organizations, and groups. Please contact us if you're interested in learning about opportunities to get involved:

<p>Jennifer Hirsch Director, Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain Georgia Institute of Technology jennifer.hirsch@gatech.edu 224-392-5608</p>	<p>Ciannat Howett Director, Sustainability Initiatives Emory University ciannat.howett@emory.edu 404-727-5020</p>	<p>Fatemeh Shafiei Chair of Political Science, Associate Professor Spelman College fshafiei@spelman.edu 404-270-5653</p>
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How is RCE Greater Atlanta supported?

Planning and execution of all activities will rely on network members' in-kind contributions of time and talents, with anchor educational institutions at the hub of the network. Initially proposed activities will largely be driven by voluntary efforts to achieve early wins with little to no hard expense. Relationships with the local philanthropic community have also been deepened through the application engagement process, and the RCE anticipates seeking funding to support network formation, coordination, facilitation; collaborative tool development; participation in the RCE global network; and scholarships to ensure diverse participation by our most resource-constrained members.

What is the management structure of RCE Greater Atlanta?

RCE Greater Atlanta will need to be organized in an efficient, collaborative, and flexible structure. At the time the application was submitted, the Steering Committee was led by Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS) at Georgia Tech, and by the Emory University Office of Sustainability Initiatives. Consultant support was secured to convene stakeholder groups and identify priorities, opportunities, barriers to success and engagement with the RCE. An outcome of these conversations is a richer understanding of how the organizational and governance structure will need to take shape, as well as how participants will need to be engaged.

What is the geographic region of RCE Greater Atlanta?

There are several definitions of what area comprises the Atlanta Metro region, but the geographic scope of this RCE is the ten-county area that makes up the inner Metro region as defined by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), our Metropolitan Planning Organization. These ten counties - Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties - as well as the City of Atlanta, comprise the most densely populated area of the state of Georgia, with a population of 4.4 million people. This regional delineation will serve to describe the five primary locations of the network stakeholders and the local context in which we work, but participation will be broader. For example, the University of Georgia is located in Athens, Georgia, which is outside of the 10-county area, but it serves all of Georgia and runs the agricultural extension services and provides other statewide resources that make it appropriate for inclusion in the Greater Atlanta RCE.

What are the issues identified by the region as a priority for Education for Sustainable Development?

We have identified the following major priority areas for the region's sustainable development:

- A. Approach governance with explicit inclusion, focus on equity in power dynamics and balance of sector participation.
- B. Use digital tools to elevate existing ESD collaborations for greater visibility and broader relevance

- C. Leverage momentum around existing collaborations to catalyze broader participation, greater impact and connection to ESD
- D. Identify and share wisdom of the network to heighten ESD in the region
- E. Infuse K-12, higher education and informal and non-formal education curricula with the SDGs in local context
- F. Empower local youth to create and execute ESD strategy through an RCE Youth Network

What are the priority SDG's for RCE Greater Atlanta?

RCE Greater Atlanta identifies the following SDG's as part of their primary focus:

- Good Health & Well-being
- Zero Hunger
- Sustainable Cities & Communities
- Climate Action
- Quality Education
- Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure
- No Poverty

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

What is “Sustainable Development”?

One of the most widely cited definitions of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition was first provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report to the United Nations General Assembly. The report was called “[Our Common Future](#)” and is also known as the Brundtland Report.

For more information on the concept of sustainable development and its importance, see:

- [Sustainable Development \(Wikipedia\)](#)
- [The Future We Want](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#)
- [UNESCO & Sustainable Development](#)

What is “Education for Sustainable Development”?

Education for sustainable development (ESD) helps learners develop the attitudes, skills, perspectives and knowledge to make informed decisions and act upon them for everyone's benefit, now and in the future. ESD is often used interchangeably with the terms “education for sustainability” (EfS) and “sustainability education,” though meanings may vary slightly. The following characteristics of ESD are adapted from [this definition](#) by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). ESD:

- is based on the principles and values that underlie sustainability;
- simultaneously addresses all dimensions of sustainability – environment, society/culture, and economy;
- uses a variety of pedagogical techniques that promote participatory learning and higher-order thinking skills;
- promotes lifelong learning;
- promotes intergenerational learning, and responsibility toward future generations;
- is locally relevant (based on local needs, perceptions and conditions) and culturally appropriate;
- acknowledges that fulfilling local needs often has consequences elsewhere, and takes into account global and other issues that may impact local priorities;

- includes formal, non-formal (outside formal school system) and informal education (e.g., the media);
- builds civic capacity for sustaining community-based decision-making, ethical governance practices, and systems thinking around problem-solving; and
- is interdisciplinary; no single discipline can claim ESD for itself - all disciplines can contribute.

For more information on the concept of ESD, see:

- [What is ESD? \(UNESCO\)](#)
- [UNESCO's Efforts for ESD](#)

We would like to acknowledge and thank [RCE Greater Portland](#) for sharing their FAQs, which we followed in developing our own.