

Red Costarricense de Instituciones Educativas Sostenibles – REDIES (Costa Rican Network of Sustainable Educational Institutions)

Community Engagement

National advocacy and management of environmental indicators in the Costa Rican Network of Sustainable Educational Institutions



About the project

Summary

REDIES is composed of 22 institutions including public and private universities, technical institutes and research centers. One of the essential elements of the network, as a public-private alliance, is the technical cooperation, ensuring the monitoring of indicators and strengthening environmental management of all member organizations. An important achievement of REDIES is the design, implementation and control of environmental management indicators that provide information on the progress of each member organization.

Project partners

In addition to contributions from member organizations, REDIES has been supported by some public institutions such as the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and at the regional level, has been supported by the UNEP Office in Panama.

The results

The problem

Nationally there are general regulations for water and waste management, as well as a guideline for the development of environmental management plans in the public sector but no guidance on integrated environmental management for institutions of higher, public and private, education.

The approach

REDIES' approach is cooperation, valuing the strengths of each member organization to share best environmental management practices.

Our goals

REDIES' general goals are to:

- Get the commitment of higher education institutions to achieve the sustainability of their campus.
- Establish strategic alliances on sustainability that favor technical exchange and cooperation.
- Promote and implement sustainable actions among member institutions and their communities.

Profile

- 245,550 students (includes full and part time students of all REDIES members).
- 14,268 administrative staff
- 6,203 professors
- Rural and urban action throughout the national territory

Obstacles and solutions

Changes in institutional representatives that keep down the continuity of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The network manages shared folders with historical information about actions taken and indicators reports made by all institutions.
Lack of financial resources for the implementation of activities and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members organizations make in kind contributions. Additional resources are procured by sponsorships.
Not all member organizations are committed on the same level with the work of the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct communication with institutional authorities. If the organization does not participate at all, it loses its accreditation as a REDIES member.

Performance and results

As a voluntary network, in which public and private institutions are involved, the active participation of the majority of its members and the commitment of the institutions has been higher than expected. An important achievement of REDIES is the implementation of environmental management indicators that include six management areas: water for human consumption, waste water, energy, solid waste, carbon neutrality and resources. By using the matrix of indicators of environmental management we know that 92.9 % of our institutions have their own environmental policies, 78.6 % run energy management plans, 71.4 % have water management plans, and 59.3% have implemented Environmental Education projects. Since 2010, under the leadership of REDIES, five national forums on environmental management and Education for Sustainable Development were organized with the participation of at least 520 people. REDIES has collaborated in the project for citizen education about solid waste management during the pilgrimage to Cartago. During the five editions of this event, a total of 2,107 volunteers of REDIES members have participated.

The future

Lessons learned

The agreement to establish REDIES was signed by the institutional authorities and requests for new incorporations must prove the commitment of the authorities. But at the same time, coordination must be at technical level, among people who are directly linked to the environmental management at each institution. Strengthening technical and management capacities of members has been important to strengthen the network.

Sharing your project

Since its creation, annual reports have been presented to the institutional authorities, these reports contain the activities carried out by the Network. Forums, projects or events are disseminated through communiqués published on the REDIES website and electronic media of member organizations.

What has it meant to your institution to be a GUPES Green Gown Award finalist?

Words of Daniel Sherrar, Provost, EARTH University: *“For EARTH University, an institution that has supported REDIES since its inception, this adds momentum to our efforts of strengthening the network and continuing projects we have undertaken. Furthermore, it will strengthen the relationship with other educational institutions, both public and private, promoting the development and management of environmental education in Costa Rica.”*

Further information

REDIES website: www.redies.cr

REDIES Coordinator contact: Manrique Arguedas, marqueda@earth.ac.cr