

Guidelines for Developing a Living Laboratory Project

The following are some guidelines and important questions to consider for developing your own living laboratory project at Rutgers University. These guidelines are geared more toward students and faculty beginning a living laboratory project but can be applied to Facilities and others looking to start a living lab as well.

1. Research

The main question to guide research into a living laboratory is “How can my campus be used for teaching or for research?” Look into the resources that already exist on Rutgers campuses, and how they can be used more often or in new ways. Read some Rutgers reports, proposals, and contest submittals for information and inspiration. Take a look at what other universities have done for living laboratories. Contact them to learn more about their projects. Learn what challenges you might face making and maintaining a living lab, and how you can overcome them.

Questions to consider:

- What are the goals for the living laboratory?
- How will the living lab utilize campus?
- What resources and assets are available at the university?
- What benefits will the living lab offer to students, faculty, staff, administration, etc.?
- How will the living lab fit in with Rutgers’ mission and strategic plan goals?
- How will it connect to other university objectives, such as sustainability, stormwater management, future growth, and outreach?
- How will it connect with existing systems and departments at Rutgers?
- What are some challenges and barriers you might face?
- Will the living lab have support from the university community?

2. Plan

Good planning is crucial to the success of a living laboratory. Plan out details of your living lab and gather support. Talk to professors, students, Facilities, and staff to see who would be able to collaborate for the living lab. Consider who will use the lab, how it will be built, and who will maintain it over time.

Questions to consider:

- What is proposed for the living lab? Who will be using it?
 - For teaching or research or both?
 - What departments, what classes, what individuals?
 - If being used by multiple people, will any uses conflict?

- Make sure there is open communication between all involved parties!
 - What are some of the activities that are planned for the lab?
 - How often will they occur? How will they change over time?
- How will you determine the success of the living lab?
- What departments and organizations at Rutgers can help with the lab?
- Have you talked with Facilities and Planning?
 - Can the living lab be connected with one of their current or future projects?
 - Do they support the location of lab and its planned use?
 - Do they have data or other information that could be useful to the living lab project?
 - Are they expected to be involved in the maintenance? (If they are, they probably won't be too supportive of the lab because of the additional work)
- Have you talked with faculty and researchers?
 - Can their classes or research be incorporated with current or future projects?
 - How will curriculum connect with the lab?
- Appropriate location:
 - For the anticipated timespan of the lab?
 - Accessible for students and/or researchers?
 - Does not conflict with other uses?
- How does the living lab fit in with the appearance of campus?
- Does it connect with sustainability objectives?
- Who will be involved in establishing the living lab?
 - Could the creation of the lab serve as a teaching or research opportunity?
- Who will have long-term responsibility for the project? Who will maintain it over time? (If project is expected to last for more than two years)
 - Does anyone need to be taught how to maintain it?
- How will the living lab project connect to a campus-wide living lab program?

3. Implement

Once the living lab has been planned, it will need to be implemented on campus. A project should have support from the university before being implemented. More challenges will spring up during the creation of the lab than during the planning stages, but good foresight, planning, and open communication can help the living lab project move forward and be successful.

Questions to consider:

- Is there University support for the project?
- Is the University community aware of the project?
 - How will they be involved?
- How long will it take for the living lab to be established?
- Funding:
 - How much is the living lab expected to cost? (Initially, and each year for its operation and maintenance)

- Where will the funding come from?
- Is the living lab at risk for being disturbed or disrupted (intentionally or unintentionally)?
 - How are people aware of the living lab so that they do not accidentally disrupt it?
 - Can the living lab tolerate some levels of disturbance?
- If the project is expected to last more than two years, is the appropriate party aware that they will be responsible for maintaining it?
- Does the living lab connect with university objectives, such as sustainability?
- Are curriculum and/or research connections established for the living lab?

Remember: living laboratories need collaboration between people in order to be successful. It is extremely important to foster communication between everyone involved with a living lab project to help ensure its future management and success.

If you are a **student** looking to start a living lab, reach out to faculty, Facilities, and administration for how you can get your project started. If you are a part of **Facilities**, consider reaching out to Faculty or students for assistance with maintaining campus, innovative solutions, or to incorporate a living lab into a current or future project. If you are a **faculty** member looking to utilize the campus for teaching or research, reach out to Facilities, interested students, and fellow faculty members to see what your living lab could be.