



Module 8 – Reviewing the Action Plan

1 Expected outcomes of this module

At this point in the planning process, your Council should have prepared and begun to implement a climate change action plan. The purpose of this module is to review and revise the action plan as necessary.

The expected outcomes of this module are that Council will have:

- Reviewed the status of internal (Council) and external (State and Federal Government plus other stakeholders) progress in acting on climate change
- Gained a greater understanding of the process of adaptive management and its relevance to climate change action planning
- Reviewed and revised the risks, assumptions and actions in the action plan
- Incorporated changes or improvements into the action plan

2 Resources required for module delivery

Delivery sequence	As prescribed by the climate change action plan Recommended: 12 months following the completion of the action plan and then as part of council planning cycles
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress review: Allow at least 2 weeks • Review meeting: Allow 2.5 hours • Updating plan: Allow at least 4 weeks
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Steering Committee Alternatives could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management • Climate Change Action Plan Working Group
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data projector and screen • A computer (ideally with internet access) • Completed Adaptation Action Plan Templates • Blank Adaptation Action Plan Templates • Completed Assumption Templates • Risk Assessment Tool • Progress Review
Assistance	Not required

3 How to complete the module

The following tasks should ensure that the expected outcomes of the module are achieved:

- Undertake a review of internal and external progress in acting on climate change (mitigation and adaptation)
- Present the progress review and an overview of adaptive management and its relevance to climate change action planning to a meeting of the Steering Committee
- Work with the Steering Committee to review and revise the risks, assumptions and actions in the action plan using the assumption templates and the progress review
- Update the climate change action plan to incorporate any changes and improvements

3.1 Module preparation

3.1.1 Outlining the concept of adaptive management

The purpose of this task is to ensure that the Steering Committee have a good understanding of adaptive management and its relevance to climate change action planning. In particular, the feedback loop that allows for the revision of management strategies as new information becomes available.

Climate change is an evolving science, which contains a great deal of uncertainty. Climate change scenarios and projections will change as new information becomes available. Organisations should not use the lack of certainty as an excuse to delay planning and take action on climate change, but they must be prepared to be flexible and adaptive in their management approach.

Adaptive management is a structured, iterative and scientific approach to optimal decision making when dealing with uncertainty. The adaptive management process aims to reduce uncertainty over time via systematically testing, monitoring and evaluating applied management strategies. It is an approach that has a built in feedback loop where lessons from tested management actions, as well as new scientific knowledge, are incorporated into planning and used to improve the next stage of management.

Three key principles form the basis of adaptive management:

- Testing assumptions
- Adaptation
- Learning

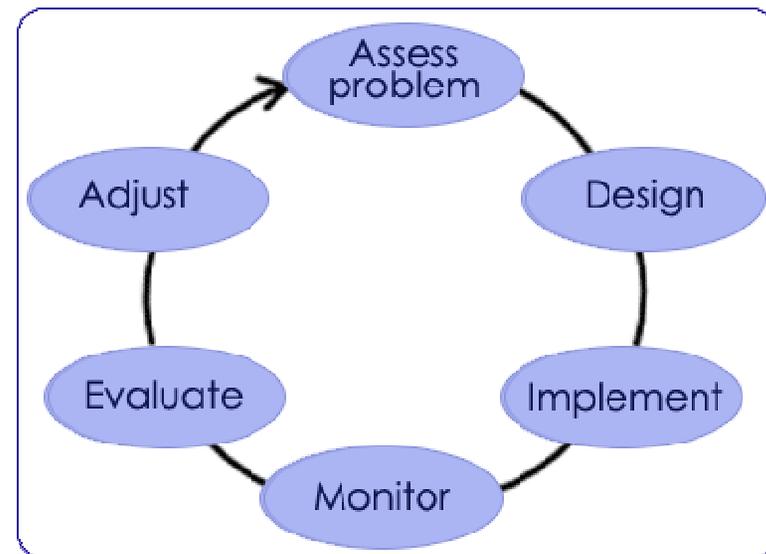


Figure 1: The adaptive management process (Williams *et al.*, 2009)

Testing assumptions

Management actions can be based on educated assumptions without having to wait for conclusive information to become available. Testing assumptions involves systematically trying different management strategies/actions to achieve a desired outcome. Results of management actions are monitored and compared to the outcomes predicted in the assumptions. The key to testing assumptions is to not only work out which actions work and which ones do not but also to understand why.

Adaptation

'Adaptation' within adaptive management means taking action to improve and make changes to management strategies based on results from testing management actions and newly available knowledge. Adaptation involves revisiting assumptions to determine how appropriate they are and revising assumptions and management interventions based on the most current information. Adapting allows organisations to enhance institutional flexibility rather than being locked into a set of actions and helps to avoid under or over investment.

Learning

Learning is about systematically documenting management actions and the results achieved as the actions are implemented. The results should be mapped against the underlying assumptions. Learning by drawing linkages between actions and results can assist organisations to avoid making the same mistakes in future and thereby facilitating continual improvement.

The facilitator should:

- Prepare an overview of adaptive management and its relevance to climate change action planning to present to the meeting of the Steering Committee. The facilitator should determine the best way to present the overview (such as verbally, as a printed handout or as a discussion).

The overview should highlight:

- the uncertainty of climate change (refer to module 2)
- the ramifications of getting climate change planning wrong (e.g. under/ over investment)
- how adaptive management can manage uncertainty and allows for re-direction of actions and resources as required
- Prepare any printed material that may enhance the meeting

3.1.2 Reviewing internal and external progress

The purpose of this task is to undertake a complete review of all internal (Council) and external (State and Federal Government and other stakeholders) action on climate change (mitigation and adaptation) since the development of the plan. This process will require significant research and investigation.

The status of Council's progress towards implementing the action plan should be documented in detail. Results of monitoring and evaluation should inform the review. Any other relevant works, new projects, new Council resolutions, or other initiatives that have come about since completion of the action plan should also be documented.

Actions being carried out by external organisations should be documented against the relevant actions in the Council's action plan. It is important to understand what action is being taken by other organisations in case it impacts on Council's action plan. For example, a Catchment Management Authority (CMA) may have committed to a dune restoration project in the LGA to protect biodiversity from storm surge. Council may have also identified dune restoration as a priority adaptation action to protect beach car parks. In this case Council may be able update their plan and redirect resources to other actions (depending on the CMA's intentions).

In addition, any relevant advances in scientific knowledge and technologies should be documented.

The progress review should be compiled in a brief review document. Table 1 provides an example of a suitable review document.

Table 1: Example of adaptation action review template

Risk	Adaptation Actions	Progress	New Actions
Increasing sea levels resulting in inundation of low lying land and flooding of private properties decreasing community satisfaction	Scoping of a more detailed Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Adaptation Action Plan		
	Incorporation of future climate change impacts into Development Control Plans		
	Identify areas which are at risk and determine possible preventative strategies		

The facilitator should:

- Undertake a climate change action progress review at least one month prior to the review meeting
- Circulate the progress review document to all Steering Committee members at least two weeks prior to the review meeting
- Prepare spare printed copied of the progress review document for the Steering Committee meeting



Above: Recording ideas at the Wellington, Blayney and Cabonne Strategic Alliance's first workshop (February, 2010)

3.2 Meeting facilitation

3.2.1 Explaining adaptive management

The meeting should commence with an overview of the concept of adaptive management. The facilitator should tailor this to the Committee's prior knowledge and level of interest in understanding and discussing this concept.

The facilitator should:

- Provide an overview of adaptive management and its relevance to climate change action planning
- Provide any printed material that may enhance the meeting

3.2.2 Summarising the progress review

The progress review document will have been previously provided to Steering Committee members and should also be available at the meeting. A verbal summary will ensure anyone who has not read the document can understand the content. Council's progress and external progress can be discussed in the meeting as desired.

The facilitator should:

- Refer to the progress review document circulated to Steering Committee members prior to the review meeting, distribute copies of the review and provide a verbal summary (which will lead into 3.2.3)
- Facilitate any discussion about Council's progress and external progress

3.2.3 Reviewing the risks, assumptions and actions in the action plan

The purpose of this task is to get the Steering Committee to complete a full review of the climate change action plan to determine its currency, appropriateness and relevance. The Committee should look at the lessons/ issues identified in the progress review and revise the assumptions and management actions/ strategies as required.

To review the adaptation assumptions and actions ***the facilitator should:***

- Distribute copies of the previously completed adaptation action templates (only the relevant actions in the plan), all assumption templates and blank adaptation action templates
- Present a short progress report on the implementation of adaptation actions
- Note any achievements and explore opportunities to promote achievements
- Highlight external initiatives by other organisations (including funding opportunities) that may impact the implementation/ relevance of the action plan
- Work through the assumptions template completed during module 2. Review the assumptions about climate change impacts. Ask whether they still appropriate and relevant
- Based on the review of the climate change impacts, ask the Steering Committee to modify risk statements, remove redundant risk statements add new risk statements
- Ask the Steering Committee to evaluate new and modified risk statements (see module 3)
- Remove actions associated with redundant risk statements

- Ask the Steering Committee to develop actions for new risk statements in liaison with responsible council business units (see module 4) or to delegate the responsibility for devising actions for the new risk statements
- Identify any staff members who should be consulted in the review of the plan
- Identify any further information needs

To review the mitigation assumptions and actions **the facilitator should:**

- Present a short progress report on the implementation of mitigation actions
- Note any achievements and explore opportunities to promote achievements
- Highlight external initiatives by other organisations (including funding opportunities) that may impact the implementation/ relevance of the action plan
- Ask the Steering Committee to review the assumptions used to evaluate mitigation actions (especially the effectiveness of reducing emissions and cost assumptions)
- Ask the Steering Committee to identify or consider new mitigation options
- Ask the Steering Committee to evaluate new mitigation options (see module 6) or to delegate this task
- Identify any staff members who should be consulted in the review of the plan
- Identify any further information needs



Above: Belubula River courtesy of the Wellington, Blayney and Cabonne Strategic Alliance

3.3 Finalising module outputs

3.3.1 Updating the climate change action plan

The purpose of this task is to incorporate any changes into the climate change action plan and re-direct resources based on new information and actions. The Steering Committee should involve staff members in this process, particularly the Working Group.

The Steering Committee should:

- Prepare a new version of the action plan incorporating the new actions and deleting those actions that are no longer appropriate
- Send the revised action plan to senior management and/ or Council for approval
- Once approved, inform staff of changes and update relevant documents (this may be a stand alone action plan, business plans or a strategic plan)
- Inform relevant external stakeholders and undertake any stakeholder consultation deemed necessary
- Promote any achievements identified and not yet promoted (internally and/ or externally)



Above: Paddock 2009 courtesy of Bland Shire Council

4 The delivery checklist

Following completion of this module, Council should have achieved the following:

Task	Complete
Reviewed the status of internal and external progress on climate change action	Yes / No
Presented an overview of adaptive management to the Steering Committee	Yes / No
Reviewed and revised risks, assumptions and actions in the action plan based on the progress review	Yes / No
Incorporated changes/improvements into a revised action plan	Yes / No
Updated relevant documents and informed relevant internal and external stakeholders	Yes / No

5 Useful references

Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2004, *Does your Project Make a Difference? A Guide to Evaluating Environmental Education Projects and Programs*.

ICLEI Oceania, 2008, *Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit*. Australian Government Department of Climate Change.

Williams, B. K., R. C. Szaro, and C. D. Shapiro, 2009, *Adaptive Management: The U.S. Department of the Interior Technical Guide*. Adaptive Management Working Group, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

Links to useful resources are provided on the LGSA website (www.lgsa.org.au)