



Guidelines for Climate Action

Prepared for the Legatus Group



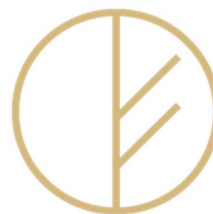
Guidelines for Climate Action

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The Legatus Group is the trading name of the Central Local Government Region which is a regional subsidiary established under the Local Government Act 1999 (SA). The Legatus Group aims to develop, encourage, promote, foster and maintain consultation and co-operation and to strengthen the representation and status of local government when dealing with other governments, private enterprise and the community.

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Cob and Co Corner - Photo by Rodney Phillips

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Purpose

Extensive work has already occurred across South Australia by councils to develop regional climate change adaptation plans. However, moving from planning to on-ground action has proved challenging. This experience resonates with local scale adaptation around the world.

While collaboration and leadership on climate change continues to be a focus at a regional scale, attention has moved to addressing local scale needs. There is growing recognition that the outcomes of regional planning processes need further refinement so that they can be readily implemented by individual councils.

Individual regional partners (including councils) need to determine what steps they should take to implement preferred options. As part of this, it is important to plan how to enable on-ground actions and reduce barriers to implementation.

The purpose of this Guide is therefore to assist local government to act on climate change. The Guide provides a framework for assessing current progress with adaptation and assistance in how to prioritise and implement actions.

The development of this Guide has been informed by with an understanding of how adaptation planning and implementation has progressed in practice, based on experience with developing and implementing regional adaptation strategies in South Australia. This is combined with a review of the literature on how to plan, initiate and implement climate change adaptation projects.

The Guide is targeted at people with climate change adaptation responsibilities in Local Government. We recognise that for some councils the role of taking action on climate change rests with one person who has many other responsibilities; in other councils or groups of councils there may be a whole resource dedicated to climate change planning and implementation.

The Guide complements a number of other climate change adaptation documents prepared for South Australia, including: (a) the Local Government Association of South Australia's (LGA SA) Climate Adaptation Planning Guidelines (1), which is the recommended starting point for South Australian local government bodies undertaking adaptation: and, (b) the LGA SA's Functional Guidance Documents. It builds on the Adaptation Planning Guidelines by providing a self-diagnosis step to gauge what progress has been made with adaptation action and what should be done next as well as providing an emphasis on options appraisal and implementation. Combined, these documents provide a broader framing for climate action in the local government sector.

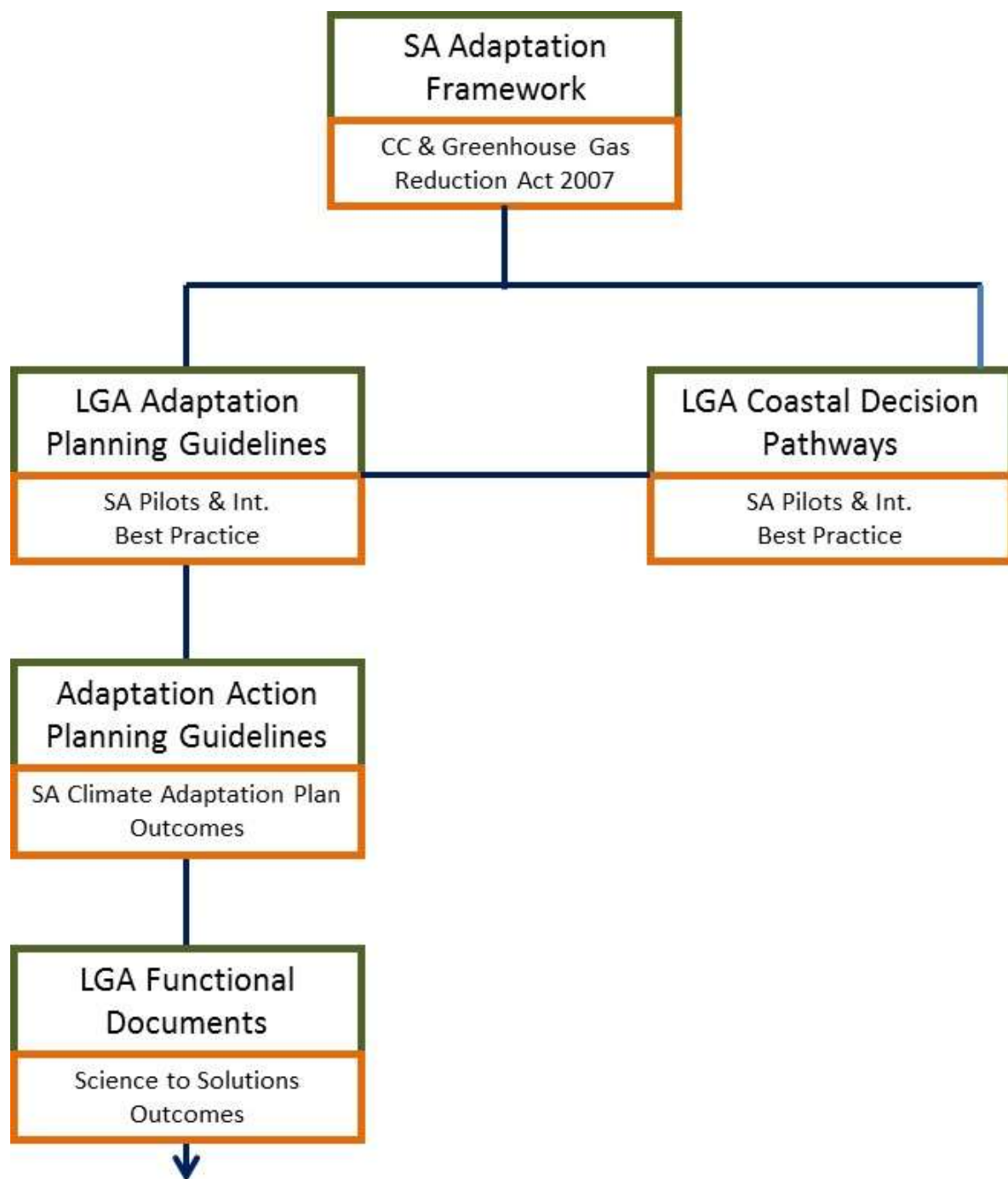


Figure 1. Relationship between key climate change adaptation guidelines and documents relevant to the Local Government sector in South Australia.

How is the Guide structured?

The Guide starts with a self-diagnosis and orientation stage. This asks users to consider where they are up to with implementing their adaptation strategy before commencing more work:

- What step in the adaptation action cycle is your council at? (Refer to information on adaptation cycles in the Orientation section);
- What level of adaptation has your council completed? and
- What barriers to progress have been identified following previous adaptation activities undertaken by your council?

The Guide has not been structured to be read from front to back in one sitting. Instead, it is expected that users will consult different sections depending on the outcomes of their self-diagnosis. As such, there is some repetition across the document.

The Guide was developed to support adaptation action for Local Government in South Australia, but is generally applicable to adaptation for government and medium to large private sector organisations.

Are there any key terms that I should know about?

While this is intended to be a non-technical Guide, there are some key terms that you need to be aware of that are used regularly throughout the document. Where they appear, they are highlighted in ***bold italics***. If you would like to better understand the definition of these terms, see the Glossary.

Do you want further information?

This Guide has been developed following an extensive literature review. Where relevant, key guidance documents are referenced that can be consulted to obtain further information about adaptation approaches, methods, and information and data sources. Each section of this Guideline also indicates which part of the LGA SA's Climate Adaptation Guidelines should be consulted for further information.

Key rules for moving from awareness to action

Climate change adaptation can be complex, especially coming to grips with the science of ***climate projections*** and the variety of approaches to risk assessment and options appraisal. This Guide identifies Key rules, which are key principles to follow in developing adaptation plans or activities that pick up on what is unique about climate change action planning as opposed to general planning.

The Key Rules have been derived from a literature review and are based on the experience of practitioners who have been involved with developing and implementing adaptation strategies within the Local Government sector.

ORIENTATION – WHERE IS MY ORGANISATION UP TO?

Climate change is and will continue to have a major impact on the operation of local government in Australia. Fortunately, many councils have already started to respond to the potential risks of a changing climate and are also exploring the opportunities.

However, while councils may have started responding to climate change, knowing what to do next to achieve action on-ground is not always as straightforward.

In practice, responding to climate change is not a linear process. Instead, once your organisation has begun, it becomes an iterative cycle of action planning, implementation and review. What's more, the amount of detail that should be covered in each step will vary depending on the decisions being made and the resources available to support the process.

So if your organisation is looking to move from planning to on-ground action, what should you do next?

There are at least three levels of adaptation, each involving different approaches, outcomes and requiring varying amounts of detail. Drawing on approaches proposed by CSIRO (2) and NCCARF's Coast Adapt tool, this Guide describes the different levels of adaptation as *Scan*, *Plan*, and *Delve Deeper* (see below) (2). For the purpose of this Guide, the level of adaptation can be considered from the perspective of scale (e.g. regional or local), organisation, function, or a team from within a council.

Scan level adaptation aims to engage the right stakeholders and frame subsequent studies appropriately (for very small organisations, this may provide enough information to act). An example of the output of a *Scan* level process would be a region or organisation scale climate adaptation strategy. On-ground action could include education and awareness raising activities.

Plan level adaptation explores a range of activities across a government, region, sector or organisation to identify where to focus further effort. An example of the output of a *Plan* level process would be a sector or discipline specific adaptation plan, with a focus on areas such as stormwater infrastructure, open spaces or community services delivery. On-ground action could include sector specific education and awareness raising activities, policy shifts, development plan amendments being incorporated into strategic plans, changes to asset management protocols along with low cost, "no regrets"¹ adaptation options for immediate implementation.

¹ "No-regrets" actions are actions by households, communities, and local/national/international institutions that can be justified from economic, and social, and environmental perspectives whether natural hazard events or climate change (or other hazards) take place or not. (20)

Delve Deeper level adaptation targets specific projects that have a well-defined goal and need to reach a specific investment decision, whether these are small or large. On-ground action could include moderate to higher cost adaptation options for immediate implementation or inclusion of climate resilience measures in new infrastructure.

For most councils, their regional climate change adaptation plan developed under the South Australian Adaptation Framework will have completed at least the ***Scan*** level of adaptation, and possibly the ***Plan*** level.

Use Figure 2 to undertake a self-diagnosis of what level of adaptation your organisation is up to. There are four questions at the top of Figure 1 to guide your assessment.

While your focus may be on how to implement climate adaptation actions, determining the level of adaptation that has occurred will help to understand whether your organisation has sufficiently progressed through the preparatory stages before further action can occur.

There is no need to go through all levels before action is taken. In some cases the resources available or amount of detail required to support decision making could be low and addressed sufficiently during the ***Scan*** level. For example, this may be sufficient to build the case for engagement and awareness raising activities. In other cases, a major assessment could be required to ensure that a high value asset has been designed to withstand long term climate impacts.

Once you have understood the level of adaptation activity that has already been undertaken, your organisation needs to determine what step it is up to in the adaptation action cycle. This Guide builds on common steps that are referred to in adaptation guidance documents from around the world and specifically builds on the LGA SA Climate Change Guidelines (1).

Be sure to check the climate change adaptation plan for your region, industry adaptation plans and see if your organisation already has its own adaptation plan. If you have completed all steps, but progress is slow, consider which level of adaptation you are up to in **Figure 2**. It may be necessary to repeat some steps, for example, to get better engagement from key stakeholders or to better understand vulnerability and resilience to climate change.

Use Figure 3 to determine what step in the adaptation action cycle you are up to².

² While referred to here as the adaptation action cycle, this step by step approach is also referred to as an adaptation planning cycle, and an adaptation planning and implementation framework.

Key rule: Conduct a self-diagnosis before your organisation commences further adaptation work to determine what step and level of adaptation is required next and whether there are any specific barriers that should be addressed first.

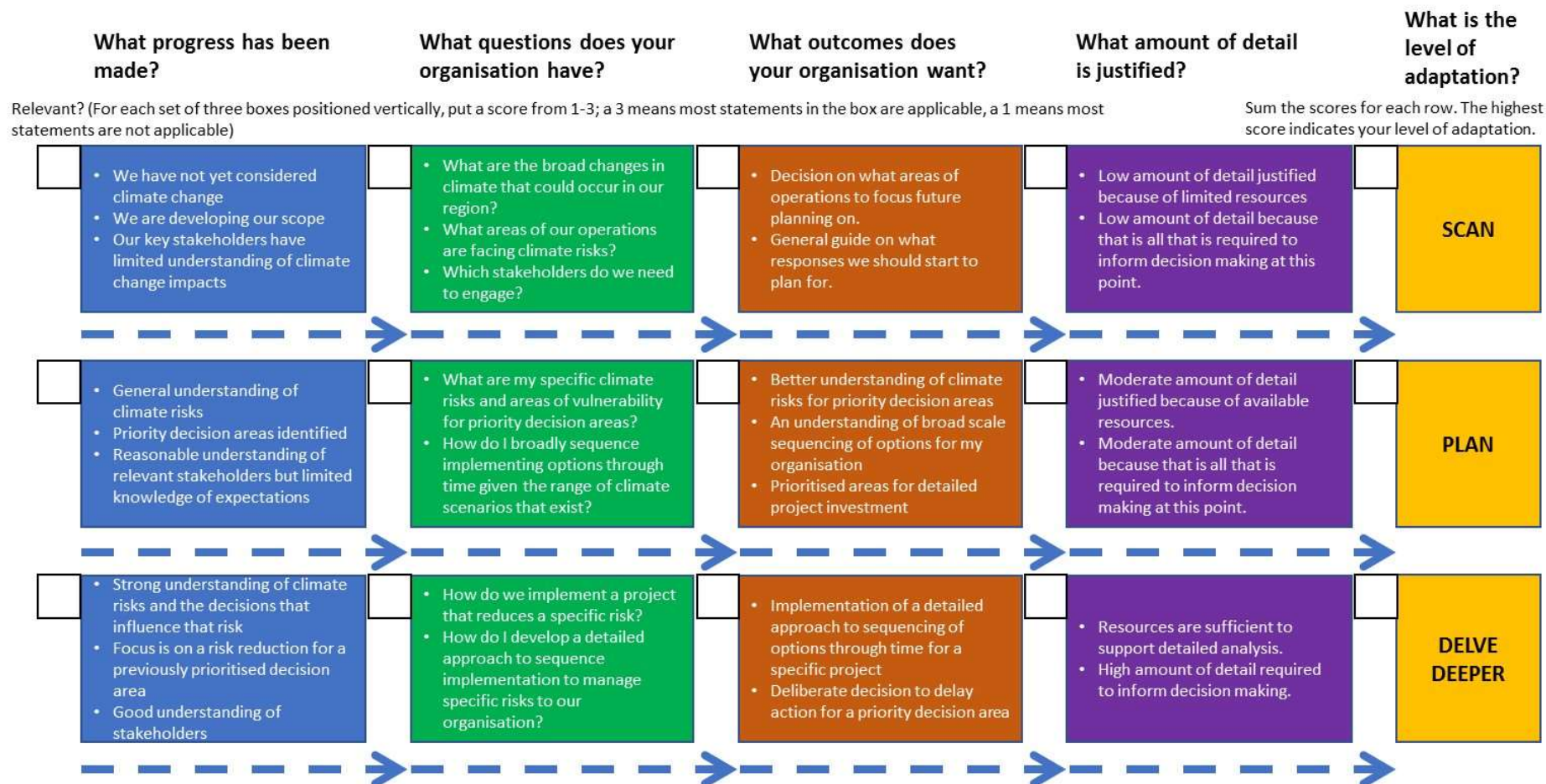
Given that most organisations have previously undertaken climate change adaptation projects, it is worth considering whether there are any barriers preventing or inhibiting progress. Barriers can occur, for example, because of social factors that have not been considered in the initial assessment. Assessing barriers becomes especially important at the *Plan* level and *Delve Deeper* level of adaptation.

Use the process described in Box 1 to help identify any barriers to adaptation that may exist.

If your organisation has found that there are barriers impacting progress on a major adaptation initiative, it could be helpful to explore the use of more detailed, institutional analysis techniques to further understand the barriers and ways of addressing them. Additional reading on addressing barriers to adaptation can also be found in the Science to Solutions barriers analysis on the LGA SA website.

If you conclude that a level of adaptation needs to be undertaken again, this does not equate to a lack of success, but instead may reflect the complexity of stakeholder groups being engaged and issues being addressed.

Case study examples of how to apply the Orientation assessment described in this section of the Guide are provided in Box 2.



Tip! Consider conducting assessment using a cross-functional group to ensure you have all the relevant background information from previous work at hand.

Figure 2. What level of adaptation is my organisation up to? This assessment can be applied for an organisation as a whole, a function area or a specific project/site. Note that scores are indicative only.

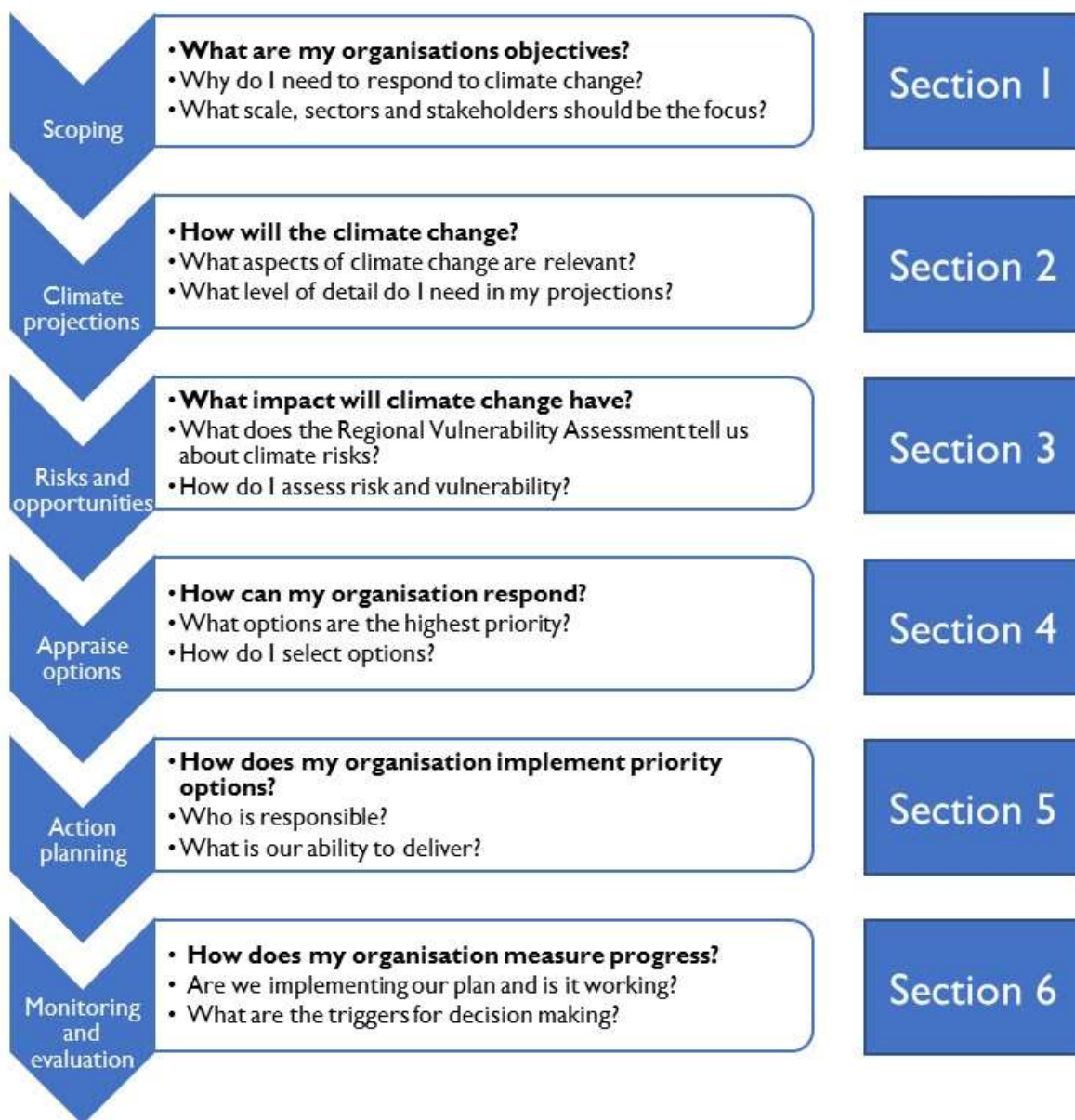
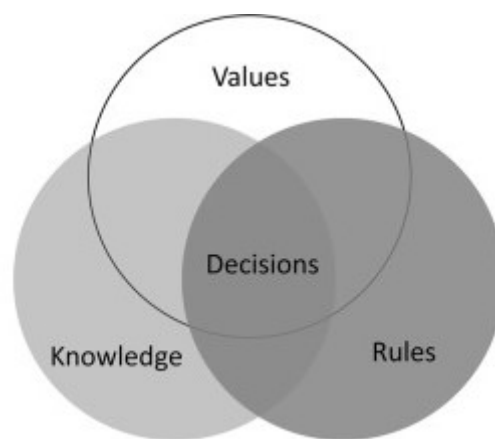


Figure 3. Steps in the adaptation action cycle. This diagram can be used to determine the step in the adaptation action cycle for an organisation, region, functional area or project team. Councils can ‘enter’ at different steps in the cycle, for example, if they have already done *Scan* level adaptation they may enter at Step 4 (Appraise options) and proceed to Section 4 in this Guide to undertake further options appraisal.

Box 1. Barriers to adaptation

Although proposed adaptation options can be technically sound, progress toward implementation can be delayed because of barriers that exist in the decision making context.

One simple diagnostic being applied in Australia is the “Values-Rules-Knowledge” (VRK) framing (3), which aims to help users assess whether their adaptation situation is constrained principally by a knowledge deficit (knowledge), institutional arrangements or systems (rules), or unresolved or unknown societal preferences (values). For example, the diagnostic may help to identify that the values of elected members and asset managers, or the policies for financial management, are acting as enablers or barriers to action on-ground.



Using the VRK concept, conduct a discussion with key stakeholders to understand whether progress with implementation is being delayed because of barriers that relate to the decision making context. Note that the relationship between these factors can change through time as a result of changing social, environmental, and economic conditions.

An example of an action that has resulted from the use of this diagnostic is conducting elected member briefing sessions to explore the alignment of their values with technical understanding of options to respond to climate change.

If developing an understanding of barriers is considered a high priority, other relevant research on this issue can be found in the LGA SA’s Science to Solutions project reports and in several National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) projects (e.g. (4), (5)).

Box 2. Case study examples of how to use the Orientation assessment.

Case study 1 - Regional Climate Change Action Plan

Yorke and Mid North Regional Climate Change Action Plan was completed in August 2013. It was developed by Councils in the Yorke and Mid North region in partnership with RDA Yorke and Mid North and the Northern and Yorke NRM Board.

Using the Orientation process, the current level of adaptation was assessed as being Plan, based on the following observations:

- **How much progress has been made?** There is a general understanding of climate risks amongst key stakeholders and priority decision areas have been identified;
- **What questions are being asked?** What are the specific climate risks and areas of vulnerability for priority decision areas, and how should adaptation options be broadly sequenced through time?
- **What outcomes are being sought?** Prioritised areas for detailed future project investment at a council scale; and
- **What amount of detail is justified?** Moderate amount of detail justified because of available resources with regional councils.

With respect to the steps in the adaptation action planning cycle, the region requires further work to refine the list of options individual councils will use to build resilience to climate change (Step 4) and determine how the region's councils can move forward to implement priority options (Step 5). An assessment of barriers to adaptation suggests that further work is still required with elected members and council executive to build the business case for taking action on climate change.

Case study 2 – Sea water flooding adaptation pathways

In 2015, Yorke Peninsula Council completed a seawater flooding adaptation pathways project for Clinton, Price, Pine Point (Billy Goat Flat) and Coobowie. The project sought to identify the seawater flooding risks, assess current flood protection infrastructure and provide recommendations for future action to plan for seawater flooding.

Using the Orientation process, the current level of adaptation was appraised as follows:

- **How much progress has been made?** There is a strong understanding of climate risk and the focus is on risk reduction for a previously prioritised decision area (Level of adaptation – *Delve Deeper* level);
- **What questions are being asked?** The focus is on developing a detailed approach to sequencing implementation to manage specific risks of sea water flooding;
- **What outcomes are being sought?** Implementation of a detailed approach to sequencing; and
- **What amount of detail is justified?** Moderate amount of detail justified because of available resources with regional councils.

Box 2. (continued)

With respect to the steps in the adaptation action planning cycle, the region requires further work to determine how the region's councils can move forward to implement priority options (Step 5) and how to measure and assess progress (Step 6). An assessment of barriers to adaptation suggests that further work is still required with elected members and council executive to build the business case for taking action on climate change.