



Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit

CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLANNING

Step 1 Authority

Local Governments have a key role to play in helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. Local Governments can help their communities to adapt, and can adjust their own business through the powers they have to lead the local community on climate change adaptation, involve local people and promote ecologically sustainable development. The first step in developing a climate change adaptation action plan is to obtain the support and authority of Council.

Local Governments should:

- Enlist in-principle support from elected members for climate change adaptation action, including developing a policy position that is adopted by Council and signing the Western Australian Local Government Declaration on Climate Change.
- Liaise with Council and obtain sign-off at key milestone stages of adaption program developments.

The Climate Change Declaration Wording and other climate change policy templates and guidelines are available on the WALGA Climate Change website – WALGA Resources.

Step 2 Research

This step is the research phase of developing a climate change adaptation Action Plan. Local Governments should:

- Undertake an audit of information currently available to address climate change adaptation.
- Assess any apparent information gaps and needs for additional information.
- Take account of relevant advice and government planning and policies.
- Translate information about climate change into “what it means for our local area”, including identifying liability implications of climate change for Local Government.
- Identify existing tools and approaches for climate change adaptation. For example, review work already done for the Disaster Management Plan.

The following resources provide projections and advice about preparing for climate change.

Resources

The Commonwealth Climate projections tools are [available here](#).

The Sea-Level Rise page gives projections based on CSIRO's Oceans and Atmosphere Flagship and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) data, [available here](#).

The National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy is [available here](#).

The Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report and Summary for Policy makers is [available here](#)

Step 3 Building Relationships

Step 3 is concerned with building relationships with the community and other stakeholders in relation to climate change adaptation. Completing this step will help to facilitate shared understandings of the issues involved, promote positive climate change action, create new perspectives and solutions and foster a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by Council in managing climate change impacts.

Local Governments should:

- Coordinate actions across Local Government and with partners, government and other relevant organisations.
- Strengthen profile of climate change within Local Government, and combine with sustainability agenda.
- Develop and implement a process to engage the community.
- Encourage and empower the local community and local businesses to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The following resources for engagement and education can help build relationships within the community.

Resources

learningforsustainability.net provides information and tools to engage the community on sustainability issues, and is [found here](#).

The Community Engagement Handbook (2008) Local Government Association of South Australia is [available here](#).

Models of Success & Sustainability (MOSS) is Australia's industry body for corporate social responsibility and sustainability. MOSS supports the development of corporate social responsibility and sustainability with information, strategies, events, education and training. The page is [available here](#).

Step 4 Risk Assessment

Local Governments need to prepare for the impacts that climate change may have on human safety, property, infrastructure, services, industry and the local environment. Due to the complexity and uncertainty of climate change scenarios, assessing the risks associated with climate change is an essential approach to local planning for climate change.

The objective of this step is to identify and prioritise the risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities your Local Government faces from climate change. Local Governments should:

- Establish decision-making criteria for risk assessment.
- Assess the risks and opportunities climate change presents to the Local Government area and implications for Local Government functions and services to community.
- Identify the most significant risks and opportunities and prioritise areas for action.

Risk assessment and management is central to the principal framework for Local Government adaptation at the national level.

Resources

The Commonwealth Government's Climate Change Impacts and Risk Management: a guide for business and government (2006) sets out a framework for assessing and prioritising the risks related to climate change impacts and developing a process for effective management. This page is [available here](#).

A template Coastal Risk Management Plan from the Tasmanian Government, with a case study example of how to use the template is [available here](#).

The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) Risk, Uncertainty & Decision-Making Framework assists decision-makers to deal with the risk and uncertainties associated with climate change and identify good adaptation options. The page is [available here](#).

Step 5 Adaptation Responses

Step 5 is concerned with developing appropriate adaptation response measures for significant threats and opportunities identified during the previous stage. Local Governments should:

- Identify and appraise adaptive options for those risks, choosing measures that are no-or-low regret, incremental and build adaptive capacity.
- Assess adaptive options that need a regional approach.

Adaptation measures may vary considerably in terms of their cost and difficulty, as well as their effectiveness in addressing the consequences of climate change. It does not necessarily follow that more significant climate change consequences will require more difficult or costly solutions.

Climate change adaptation measures may include all or any of the following types of responses:

- avoidance of activity or development, e.g. foreshore setbacks
- temporary relocation or discontinuation of activity, e.g. recreation
- permanent relocation of activity, e.g. foreshore caravan parks
- changes to form and/or nature of development, e.g. building design
- changes to use of land, e.g. agriculture, fisheries, urban expansion
- physical protection, e.g. coastal engineering, building standards
- upgrading of public infrastructure, e.g. dams, pipelines, roads
- adjustment to activity and lifestyle, e.g. re-scheduling of outdoor sports
- emergency response, e.g. storms, bushfires, heatwaves
- awareness and expectation, e.g. information/understanding/education

A cross-service approach is needed to ensure most effective action, as the tools available to individual local government service areas may not always be the most appropriate. For example, urban development or urban expansion in an area which is likely to experience increasing water shortages due to reduced rainfall might be contra-indicated with reference to environmental planning, but might be justified on economic grounds and could be supported by improvements in water-supply infrastructure such as solar-powered desalination or piping of water from elsewhere.

Adaptation measures need to be customised to particular circumstances, taking into consideration both the instruments and resources available. In many cases, local responses may be most appropriate, while in some situations a regional or state-wide response may be required. In either case however, Local Government will have a role to play in identifying risks and responses and implementing or coordinating local action.

It is important also to ensure that any localised responses are well conceived in terms of their effects and possible side effects. In some cases this will involve detailed studies as a prerequisite to the detailing and application of measures. For example, in the case of sea level rise, assessment of coastal processes needs to precede any application of coastal engineering measures, which in some cases can have far reaching effects.

Resources

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability has a Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit. The toolkit is designed to help councils carry out an enhanced risk management process for the impacts of climate change, and is [available here](#).

Adapt NRM is an initiative formed to assist NRM groups to plan for adaptation to climate change. This website contains an adaptation planning checklist, along with resources related to the effect of climate change on weeds and biodiversity. The page is [available here](#).

New York City's climate change adaptation plan was cited as the 'world's most comprehensive climate change adaptation plan' when it was released in June 2013. The report is [available here](#).

Step 6 Action Plan

Step 6 involves translating the selected adaptation measures identified into a program of activity or Action Plan. Local Governments should:

- Obtain resources to develop an Action Plan with a scope that covers all Local Government functions, focusing on 50 to 100 year future. Include a programme, timetable and clear responsibilities for specified actions.
- Identify partners for the development of an Action Plan such as the community, industry, State and Federal governments.
- Appoint a leader to drive and coordinate an Action Plan for climate change adaptation.
- Establish and train a small group to coordinate the Action Plan within and across sections of Council, including aligning resources within relevant sections of Council with responsibilities for proposed actions.
- Obtain authorisation from Council for the Action Plan.
- Launch the completed Action Plan.
- Implement the Action Plan, including co-ordination of the Plan with Council planning cycles and ensuring actions (with timeframes) are allocated to appropriate divisions within Council.

An environmental management system (EMS) is a set of processes and procedures for managing the environmental impacts of an organisation's activities. If councils wish to obtain independent certification, a recognised EMS must be implemented. While various standards exist for developing an accredited EMS, the international standard ISO 14001 is the most widely used in Australia.

ISO 14001 is [available here](#).

Step 7 Review, Report and Revise

This is the final step in the process of preparing Council and the community for the impacts of climate change. Local Governments should:

- Assess, review, monitor and report results of climate change adaptation initiatives. Inform the Western Australian Local Government Association of progress to be included in the Local Government Project Map.
- Amend Action Plan to reflect climate change management priorities and new information.
- Celebrate by sharing your achievements.