Adaptive Learning Toolkit: an online resource for improving the practice of coastal organisations

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Coastal and marine management issues are characterised by high levels of dynamism, complexity, uncertainty, and a diverse range of stakeholder needs and aspirations. Organisations and practitioners operating within these contexts requires a comprehensive understanding of the social and ecological dimensions of these systems to respond to socio-ecological change cognisant of broader system goals such as resilience and sustainability.

Adaptive Learning draws on the practices of organisational learning, sustainability learning and adaptive management to institutionalise responsive learning processes and outcomes. It can be used within and across organisations at various scales (e.g., from individual to societal or from local to national) to achieve effective coastal and marine management.

Adaptive learning can facilitate adaptive and integrated management practices through the institutionalisation of learning processes that focus on improved outcomes for coastal and marine systems, including taking action based on the ‘best’ available information at the time, utilising diverse knowledge sources, and monitoring and evaluating system impacts to ensure the continued development of coastal and marine knowledge systems. In this regard, the CSIRO Coastal Collaboration Cluster Project developed an Adaptive Learning Toolkit – an online resource of tools and experiences designed to assist coastal and marine organisations (including community groups) to become adaptive learning entities. The Toolkit highlights the central role of adaptive learning in all stages of responsive practice, the creative role of networks and ideas generation in facilitating change, and the inspirational role of goal setting in focusing or guiding activities (Fig. 1).

The tool kit incorporates the work of over 17 researchers, and draws upon the complementary fields of organisational learning, sustainability learning, adaptive management, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the institutionalisation of adaptive learning. The tools developed are designed to foster an ongoing and inquiry-based approach to organisational processes, rather than a series of one-off or discrete applications. The toolkit is novel in focus and content, institutionalising adaptive learning for coastal organisations, yet it builds on the successful approaches of existing toolkits that have proven successful in guiding organisational change, particularly from an adaptive management perspective.

You are welcome to use the tools and experiences captured in the Adaptive Learning Tool Kit to improve the organisational processes and outcomes of your community group or organisation by visiting: <http://coastalcluster.curtin.edu.au/themes/toolkit.cfm>

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Figure 1: Adaptive learning cycle.