

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 require 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,

integrated coastal zone management and resilience. It is designed to enable coastal and marine practitioners to simultaneously consider individual, organisational and system elements to chart a logical pathway from current organisational contexts and realities to desired organisational processes and outcomes. The website is structured around the following core questions (see box below):

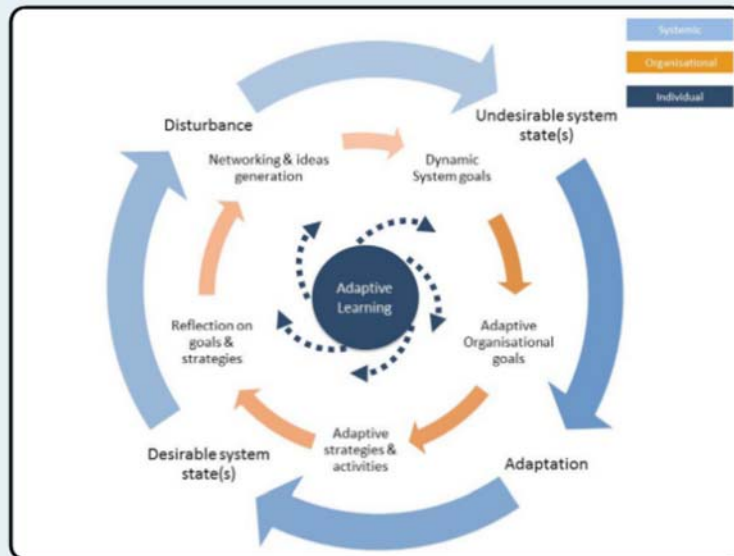


Figure 1: Adaptive learning cycle.

- What is adaptive learning?
- What are we learning for?
- What does an adaptive learning organisation look like?
- How do we become an adaptive learning organisation?

The toolkit comprises principles of adaptive learning (including a searchable annotated bibliography of over 100 references); mechanisms (tools) to enable adaptive learning; examples of adaptive learning (case studies of best practice from across Australia and internationally); and a

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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What is Adaptive Learning?

Adaptive learning draws on organisational learning, sustainability learning and adaptive management to institutionalise responsive learning processes for improved coastal zone management. As with most reflective learning practices, the processes of adaptive learning are cyclic and incremental with each stage providing the foundation for the next (Figure 1).

What are we learning for?

The coastal zone is valued by many communities who rely on these diverse systems to meet fundamental needs and established ways of life. Located in the dynamic and transitional space between the marine and terrestrial ecosystems, the coastal zone is one of the most biologically productive ecosystems directly supporting the nutritional needs of many communities and indirectly supporting many others through contributions to marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

What does an adaptive learning organisation look like?

An adaptive learning organisation demonstrates learning across organisational goals, structures, processes and core behaviours.