

CYCLE TO ELABORATE STRATEGIES TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE TARGETED AT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The Economy-Wide Adaptation to Climate Change Project is a partnership between the British Embassy, the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), the Center for Sustainability Studies at Getulio Vargas Foundation (GVces) and the United Kingdom Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP), housed in Oxford University. In this project, civil society organizations¹ developed the cycle and the tool to elaborate adaptation strategies for their projects and / or programs. In this document, we will present the methodological cycle to apply the tool to elaborate strategies to adapt to climate change, available in an Excel-based file².

Planning adaptation strategies is key to tackle climate change, since it adopts a systematic view of the issue, taking into consideration the climate change scenarios, the vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity. Thus, it enables identifying adaptation strategies including potential populations and ecosystems affected, as well as prioritizing according to their vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity. The Cycle and the Tool to Support the Elaboration of Strategies to Adapt to Climate Change Targeted at Civil Society Organizations have the purpose to increase resilience and minimize vulnerabilities in civil society projects and programs, through awareness, planned, systematic and strategic actions that are consistent with the local scenario, aiming at strengthening partnerships, developing collaboration relationships and, thus, optimizing efforts. Therefore, our proposition is that climate change and its potential impacts are taken into account while planning programs and projects conducted by civil society organizations.

Implementing the cycle and the tool benefits civil society organizations by promoting an understanding of the planning process to elaborate a strategy to adapt to climate change, enabling identification of risks and opportunities concerning climate change, strategic actors, as well as action plans your organization may adopt. It allows organizations to be aware of how important it is to incorporate climate change into their projects and programs and get prepared for potential risks and opportunities.

Development of the cycle and the tool was jointly performed by eight organizations that participated in the working group (Figure 1).

¹ In 2015, the Companies for the Climate Platform (EPC), a GVces business initiative, developed a similar work to elaborate a cycle and a tool for the private sector, which produced the publication entitled “Adaptação às mudanças climáticas e o setor empresarial” (Adaptation to Climate Change and the Business Sector): <http://adaptacao.gvces.com.br/>

² To download the tool, please visit: <http://gvces.com.br/projeto-adaptacao-a-mudanca-do-clima-no-brasil?locale=pt-br>. To help you complete the tool, we prepared support videos that can be found at GVces channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/gvces>.

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Figure 1. Civil society organizations that participated in the working group

The cycle (Figure 2) for civil society organizations shows a step-by-step diagram of how to elaborate a strategy to adapt to climate change, and it is the foundation for the tool, which provides support to perform each step proposed. It is worth noting that, although it is presented in sequential steps so as to facilitate the cycle understanding and execution, the content covered in the steps can be developed either following the tool or as an integral part of other organization existing processes, as applicable, in the order that best suits the characteristics and the reality of the organization project.

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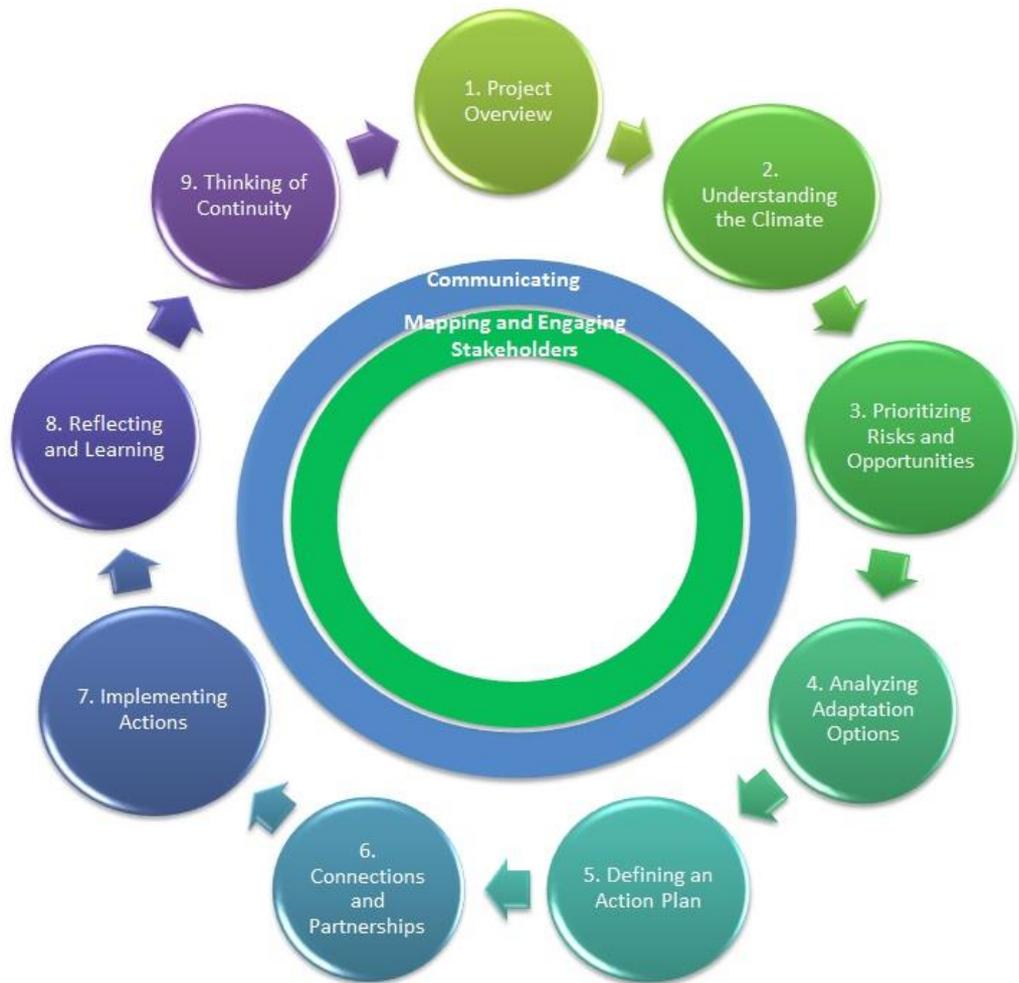


Figure 2. Framework: a path to elaborate strategies to adapt to climate change

Taking as reference the steps of the cycle, described in further details in the Tool, civil society organizations will be able to better understand how their projects can incorporate adaptation to climate change into their project and program planning and management, as well as into the organization as a whole, in an effective manner, through materiality analysis and prioritization of potential impacts for their processes and goals. Thus, the result of this process is the elaboration of a robust adaptation plan as part of the project or program strategy, and learning about a planning approach that can be incorporated into the organizational strategic planning.

It is critical to highlight that filling out the Tool is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The adaptation plan emerges from discussions held during the planning cycle, recorded in the Excel-based tool, and not merely by filling in the cells. The goal of a tool like that is to support and organize actions and discussions produced during the elaboration of the adaptation strategy. At the end of the process it is possible to review the records and have a chance for reflection and learning.

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There are two general guidelines that should be observed along the whole process, in order to help develop a robust adaptation strategy:

I. Mapping, Engaging and Communicating with Stakeholders

Engagement and communication about the adaptation strategy development process to different parties involved and interested, the so-called stakeholders, are extremely important activities during the whole process. Therefore, it is critical to map who needs to be involved or who can contribute to each step of the plan development and implementation process. Depending on the stakeholders and the moment of the process, it will be necessary to promote effective engagement and participation, whereas other stakeholders only need to be informed about the process.

For mapping, it is recommended to have a great brainstorming, which will feed the relevance and importance matrix suggested to understand what role each part will play, whether they should be involved and/or informed and when. This mapping should be used and updated throughout the process, for every step. It is worth noting that the mapping of actors should be inclusive, not exclusive: meaning stakeholders should be kept in the matrix throughout the steps of the cycle, although they may change their importance in different steps, according to their relevance and influence in a certain step.

Also, participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation is aligned with people's right to participate in decision making that will affect their lives. Thus, participatory processes may contribute to fair decision making and offer solutions for situations that involve conflicts.

So, to encourage a participative development of the adaptation plan, the tool that helps implementation of this cycle aims at organizing information concerning stakeholders collected during discussions and addressing it in the 'Connections and Partnerships' step.

II. Handling Uncertainties and Making Assumptions

In various moments while developing an adaptation strategy, you need to handle uncertainties, such as, given some climate scenarios, you have to spot risks and opportunities, and suggest adaptation measures and their potential effectiveness. Many assumptions are made during this process, and this does not pose a problem, just the opposite: they are vital for us to respond and act when there are uncertainties. Following the same rationale, you will make assumptions while developing the adaptation plan, entering climate trends and their impacts on stakeholders, and also while determining the climate risk and adaptation measures.

Often times, uncertainties are listed as an obstacle to adaptation and even used as a reason not to take any action, when people allege it is not possible to make decisions based on possibilities. However, it is worth noting that uncertainties are part of our routine, both in complex decision making and in simpler situations.

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And, the same way we deal with uncertainties in our daily decisions, we should also deal with them in decision making processes at the organizational level. Discussions around the level of information needed to make a decision will always vary according to the attitude the organization or the project has when it comes to risks, as far as their target area and stakeholders are concerned. Some organizations are more willing to take risks than others.

Thus, it is not a problem to make assumptions throughout the process. It is critical that those assumptions are robust, based on reliable sources and that they are recorded – so other people will understand what assumptions supported decision making; additionally, the assumptions can be monitored, making sure they are heading in the right direction or they are revised, as needed.

You will find below detailed guidelines for each step of the cycle to elaborate adaptation strategies to climate change:

1. Project Overview

- Think of the structural elements of the project or program selected as the scope (purpose, goals, actions and processes, abilities, resources and restrictions).
- Determine the adaptation strategy goal and scope, i.e.; what is the object for which we will think of possibilities to incorporate climate change adaptation.
- Consider the project or program purpose and pillars (i.e.; fauna and flora protection, riparian population health, among others) in order to clarify the strategic guidelines, goals and expected results from the adaptation planning (Chart 1.1).
- Select a working group that will be in charge of designing the project adaptation strategy, engaging other internal and external actors, assigning tasks and ensuring they will be performed. Start mapping stakeholders, thinking of a multidisciplinary working group to support the development of this work. Make sure the selected stakeholders are also entered in the 'Connections and Partnerships' worksheet (Chart 6.0).
- Map drivers and obstacles to elaborate the company adaptation strategy (Chart 1.3).

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Questions for reflection

- What is the organization current driver to respond to climate change? How can this change in the future?
- What elements are taken into account to determine the scope to elaborate the adaptation strategy?
- What are the obstacles for learning in the organization? What existing paths can be taken so new planning cycles are fed by this current experience?
- What kind of data and information about climate is needed for the organization to make decisions about adaptation? What sources of information are already available to the organization?
- Is there clear leadership for the adaptation agenda in the organization? What abilities and expertise are demanded from the working group that will be involved in the strategy elaboration?
- What policies and processes in the organization directly relate to the adaptation agenda?
- Are there programs or projects in the company to monitor the external environment, such as public policies, socioeconomic metrics, etc.?

Expected Outcomes:

- Define and engage working group.
- Determine the scope and establish goals and guidelines for the adaptation strategy that is going to be elaborated.
- Contact and share early stage information with mapped players, including trade associations, the academia, businesses and government bodies to start the dialogue.

2. Understanding the Climate

- List past impacts from climate events in the region determined in the scope and their consequences, such as potential losses and costs for stakeholders (Chart 2.0).
- Revise the stakeholder's map to establish technical partnerships, hire specialized service to design specific future climate scenarios for the target regions, or identify sources of studies and reports that show the required or similar scenarios for the scope.
- Analyze the models and/or potential climate, socioeconomic and environmental scenarios concerning the scope in order to select one or more scenarios, and list the most relevant changes in projected climate models (Chart 2.1).

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- Revise the stakeholder's map and analyze if there are other actors that might be exposed to the same challenges or might have complementary abilities, skills and resources to your organization.

Keep in mind...

Observing the climate up to this moment is not sufficient to anticipate future change, but observing the ways vulnerabilities to climate variation are being experienced helps see the wealth of details from direct and indirect consequences of those events, as well as possible ways to build resilience. Thus, build resilience to climate variation in the present time is a good way to start building resilience to future climate change as well.

Additionally, there is a need to build capacity to access information on future changes and climate trends. It is worth pointing out that we are not targeting at a specific point in time, but rather trying to understand a future climate change. This means we do not necessarily need to know specifically if the temperature will rise 2°C or 2.5°C, but we need to be aware there will be a significant temperature rise, and we must think of flexible adaptation measures, with low (or no) regrets.

In other words: although there is uncertainty about future climate patterns, and although it is not possible to state that the climate in the future will be just like the climate in the past, we cannot afford not making decisions, because in the long term there will be consequences related to them. Handling uncertainties is critical, and we need to make some assumptions in this step, and monitor and update the information as new data becomes available.

Expected Outcomes:

- Organize impacts of climate events (Chart 2.0) and early vulnerability evidence from the target region (considering the scope chosen for the project).
- Determine the climate scenarios that are most suitable to the business reality, according to the working groups, leaders and partners involved; make a list of changes projected for the climate in the target location (Chart 2.1).

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3. Prioritizing Risks and Opportunities

- Using the stakeholders' map, select and mobilize collaborators, partners and/or beneficiaries who are experts on the region and with experience in risk assessment. Consider hiring external support, if applicable.
- Have a meeting with the selected group to make a comprehensive list of risks (potential negative impacts, i.e.; extinction of species, water supply shortage, and damages to health) and opportunities (potential positive impacts, i.e.; cultivation of crops that adapt better, investment in renewable energies, and strengthening the relationship with traditional communities) (Chart 3.0).
- Revise strategic factors for your project (Chart 1.1) and establish criteria to analyze the magnitude of the potential impact at the time of implementation, ensuring the regional and local realities and needs are taken into consideration in this exercise ('Support_Criteria' worksheet). Criteria selected for prioritization may have different weights, according to their relevance to the organization and to the project or program. If applicable, determine the weights along with the working group.
- Prioritize risks and opportunities considering the analysis of the likelihood of each impact and the magnitude of their consequences: using a scale, scores can be assigned to the likelihood of each risk and to their consequence and severity. Cross analyses will generate a ranking for the risks.

Keep in mind...

Ranking the same risk as high, medium or low may vary according to specific aspects for each organization and also to the target scenario. Therefore, it is critical to determine the analysis criteria (i.e.; health, biodiversity, agriculture) to define what high risk means in a given context, and what would be considered medium or low risk. In cases where there is not enough information for a clear mapping, it is critical to make assumptions and monitor them.

Expected Outcomes:

- Map key risks and opportunities for the scope of the work.

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4. Analyzing Adaptation Options

- Invite stakeholders to participate in this step, including local government, NGOs and surrounding communities, which will enable identification of actions and investments that can generate mutual benefits and alignment of business strategies and public sector plans for adaptation.
- Identify potential partners that are subject to the same risks and opportunities and establish partnerships for the adaptation options.
- Make a comprehensive list of potential measures to mitigate risks and develop opportunities (Chart 4.0).
- Find out how much investment is needed as well as the maintenance costs involved in the adaptation options concerning the analysis ('Support_Costs and Benefits' worksheet).
- Prioritize adaptation options for significant impacts according to the established criteria (such as effectiveness, feasibility, flexibility, generation of other benefits, among others) and alignment with the program or project strategic guidelines (Chart 1.1). It is worth noting that some criteria are proposed, but the organization should determine the ones that are most suitable for the project or program. At this time, you should also consider the resources available for implementation, deadlines and the urgency to mitigate risks and respond to impacts, the obstacles for implementation and potential incentives to implement the plan.
- Identify potential short-term positive and negative consequences.
- While elaborating assumptions for the adaptation measures, try working with positive assumptions (i.e.; there is enough capability, there is information available) rather than negative assumptions (low capability, information not available).
- Selection of adaptation measures can occur with different levels of participation: stakeholders helping both in the list of adaptation options and in the analysis criteria, or contributing only to list the options, whereas the criteria will be determined by the organization.

Keep in mind...

While analyzing potential adaptation measures through criteria to be determined for each organization, it is critical to keep in mind that an adaptation measure will hardly be fully implemented with no regrets or win-win situations from the perspective of all stakeholders. There are usually conflicts of interest involved in each measure considered. Therefore, it is critical to take into account social justice aspects in the decision making (i.e.; will the measure make it more difficult for some groups to have access to some kind of resource or contribute to decision-making processes?).

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Expected Outcomes:

- Implement priority adaptation measures (Chart 4.0).

5. Defining an Action Plan

- Establish concrete actions to be performed in order to implement the adaptation measures prioritized in Step 4.
- Establish the goals to be achieved with the implementation of adaptation measures and process metrics (they reflect the way the measure is being implemented) and the result (they reflect the measure and the quality of the results that are being produced). In order to help determine metrics, think first in assessment questions, which should test and challenge the rationale described throughout the project, helping understand what is working well and what is not, and why/why not.
- Elaborate the action plan to be implemented in the next months or years. We propose a template for that, including actions, people in charge, actors involved, deadline and activities along time. If your organization has an existing format to elaborate the action plan, stick to it (it is worth noting that the tool offers a proposition for the process and a template; use whatever makes sense and adds value to your organization existing processes).

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Keep in mind...

Determining adaptation measures and corresponding actions needed to implement them comes along with many assumptions, i.e.; how they will reduce risks, how they will affect the society and the environment, how the groups involved will respond, or how they will contribute to achieve the project long-term goals and results. When we speak of climate change, we mean a continuous and long-term process and, therefore, it may be challenging to think of assumptions for a long time horizon. However, we also make assumptions all the time in our daily routine, and they are an important part of an adaptation strategy elaboration plan, so it is critical to monitor them and learn with the results.

Additionally, some actions produce results in the short term, whereas others contribute to achieve long-term goals. For instance: it may take years to find out whether cultivating shade-grown coffee is effective to reduce the vulnerability of that crop to temperature rise. Thus, in many cases, the project in which that adaptation plan is inserted will finish before the results can actually be measured. For this reason, it is critical for monitoring to rely both on process metrics (focused on the implementation of measures and actions) and result metrics (focused on partial and final results).

Expected Outcomes:

- Elaborate an adaptation plan with adaptation actions to be implemented, and establish the following co-related definitions: goals, metrics, responsibilities, partners for the implementation and schedule.

6. Connections and Partnerships

- Revise the relevant stakeholder's mapping that you fed throughout the strategy elaboration cycle up to this moment and point out which ones will be relevant in the organization adaptation strategy implementation, as well as the interests they may have in taking part or getting to know the process (Chart 6.0), their level of influence and corresponding importance (Chart 6.1).
- Elaborate a simple plan on how to approach the most relevant actors (Chart 6.3).
- Seek to establish agreements with both public and private partnerships to execute actions and obtain the necessary resources to implement the adaptation plan, particularly the most urgent ones.

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- Update the contact / communication plan (Chart 6.3) as the planned actions are executed.

Keep in mind...

Collaborative initiatives are more likely to be sustainable, since they build local capacity and knowledge, and participants feel they are part of the decisions made and are, therefore, more likely to execute them. Thus, collaborative initiatives are more likely to be compatible with long-term development plans.

Although the involvement of stakeholders usually requires more time than conventional processes, it may produce gains in the long term to justify short-term investments, since it allows for ideas to be experimented, tested and refined before they are actually implemented.

Thus, it is important to think of what actors are more relevant in each step of the process and what action should be taken to engage them. Keeping in mind that, often times, the ideal mapping is not feasible – some people should ideally be engaged, but they are not interested in being involved, or, let's say they quit during the process – so it is recommend to make a realistic mapping, to promote effective engagement of actors.

Expected Outcomes:

- Elaborate contact / communication plan with the most relevant stakeholders.
- List agreements, partnerships and resources available to deploy the action plan.

7. Implementing Actions

- Follow-up implementation of the adaptation actions described in the plan and their corresponding metrics and deadlines (Chart 7.0).
- Record status of each action and financial resources used throughout the process (Chart 7.0).

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Questions for reflection

- Do the adaptation plan goals and corresponding actions still make sense? Are they clear?
- Are the monitored metrics assertive? Do they reflect if the actions are being implemented as planned and if they have been achieving their goals?
- Is the frequency of monitoring appropriate? Are the intervals long enough to allow for advances in actions, and short enough to allow for adjustments to be made in a timely manner?
- How can intangible gains be accessed?
- Is there data and information missing in order to monitor and assess the adaptation plan? What sources could be searched for the next cycle?
- What other areas and actors could be involved in the monitoring and assessment process of the adaptation plan?
- What kind of lessons learnt and improvements could be taken to the next cycles and projects?

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Keep in mind...

Monitoring can have different purposes, and both processes and results can be monitored. When it comes to adaptation, the monitoring process is much more complex than for mitigation, because it is not possible to work with a single specific metric, since adaptation can occur for a number of purposes (i.e.; vulnerability reduction or resilience increase). In this context, it is recommended that the monitoring of a metric seeks to understand to what extent adaptation measures are contributing to achieve goals, and if they are heading in the right direction, rather than trying to establish a very specific cause and effect relationship between a certain measure and a given result.

It is critical to develop the monitoring and assessment plan as a learning tool, in order to refine and improve adaptation options and understand what activities contribute to build resilience. The reason is that plans that promote learning enable reflections about our own experiences as well as other people's experiences, helping to enhance adaptation measures and make adjustments in response to future changes. Adopt a few simple metrics: it is more important for them to start and feed the learning process than to show details about each and every action.

Expected Outcomes:

- Implement the adaptation plan as close as possible to what was planned.
- Generate reports monitoring the adaptation action.
- Adjust planned actions according to the assessment of their effectiveness and adherence to the project goals.

8. Reflecting and Learning

- Assess the results of the adaptation plan, i.e.; the effectiveness of the adaptation measures adopted; identify external pressures and internal elements that contributed to that performance; and consider potential adjustments to the adaptation measures and the plan as a whole (Chart 8.0).
- Revise the adaptation plan engaging the most relevant actors, based on an update of climate models and scenarios, and risks and opportunities mapping.
- The assessment has a systematic view of the adaptation plan implementation process as a whole, and particularly of the results up to now. Along with relevant actors, you should reflect about the effects on the target population and region up to now. Also, you should consider searching if new

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information about the climate is available and if it somehow influences what has been done up to this moment.

- Reflect on the organization project or program adaptation process (Chart 8.1).

Questions for reflection

- What were the adaptation intervention goals? Were they achieved?
- Was there any contribution to the action purpose?
- Are the goals still relevant and appropriate?
- How can good adaptation principles be applied to your assessment criteria?
- Who needs to be involved in the assessment process, when and how?
- Can the engagement of certain groups help better understand the assumptions, or explore unexpected/unintentional results?
- Is it possible to incorporate adaptation in existing engagement processes?

Keep in mind...

There are many drivers for the assessment, such as demonstrate the goals are being achieved, share what is working well and what helps the process, improve decision-making processes and guide future actions. In the context of adaptation as a learning process, the assessment can help understand: how climate trends influence existing priorities and other stressors, how to interfere to improve resilience, how successful the interventions were, how the broader system operates, how effective your learning processes are, among others.

Understanding unexpected results is one of the various benefits of the assessment and, the more stakeholders are engaged in this process, the more rewarding it will be. Therefore, effective assessment should engage different stakeholders in order to understand the vulnerability of different groups and how relevant adaptation measures are to each one of them. At the same time, you should always take into account the expectations that are being generated and provide assessment feedback to the stakeholders consulted.

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Expected Outcomes:

- Record adaptation plan results and make them available for communication.
- Rethink adaptation strategy and plan, incorporating new elements and improvements, as needed.
- Adjust the adaptation plan for the next cycle.

9. Thinking of Continuity

- Identify governance instances that should be assigned so the adaptation cycle is implemented, with or without the participation of your organization. We propose three general instances here (leadership / coordination, implementation and involvement) that can be changed or analyzed in more details, as applicable (Chart 9.0).
- List potential sources of resources, information and expertise / technical support that will be necessary for the cycle continuity (Chart 9.0). Insights for potential sources may come from the stakeholder's mapping ('Connections and Partnerships' worksheet) – if new actors are identified, make sure they are added to the mapping.
- Reflect on the operation of the broadest system where the organization is inserted in order to think of ways to enable the process continuity and share the lessons learnt.
- Reflect on how much the adaptation agenda was internalized and incorporated by stakeholders, and think of the next steps to make the internalization advance, based on the 'Change Management Matrix' (Chart 9.1).

Questions for reflection

- How would withdrawal of the organization from the role of leadership in the cycle affect other actors in the system?
- What mechanisms have been currently used in this system to build adaptive capacity or share lessons learnt?
- How can they be used or replicated to create a legacy and enable the process continuity?
- What roles/functions are critical to ensure continuity?
- What is needed to have this actor play this role?

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Keep in mind...

In order to ensure process continuity, internal and external mechanisms to the organization are necessary to create adaptive capacity in the long term. Internally, you should think of opportunities or mechanisms to develop the organizational capacity to deal with climate change, whereas externally you should think of potential ways to incorporate the project into existing governance systems, policies, processes and strategies. At this stage, it is critical to think of broader governance, i.e.; how the system where the organization is inserted operates: has the (economic, political and social) context changed throughout the project? Are there new actors? Are there new opportunities or restrictions? Is there any new climate information available that might influence the results achieved up to the present moment?

Continuity should be a project goal, and it should be built from the beginning, meaning it should be understood as something that needs investment and attention during the project planning stages. Therefore, it is critical to determine who will continue the work, and how.

Expected Outcomes:

- Design potential governance for the cycle.
- Elaborate continuity strategy for the adaptation plan.
- Restart the cycle steps for revision / continuity of the adaptation strategy.

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