

Building the Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan's MERI Framework

Summary

The 2009 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) outlook report identified climate change as one of the most significant long-term threats to the Great Barrier Reef. The GBRMPA, in partnership with the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, has responded with a five-year program - the Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan. A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Framework has been developed to allow the progress of the Action Plan to be captured in terms of immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes. Information gathered under the framework will facilitate the continuous adaptation of the program, to enhance the delivery of its objectives.



Background

MERI frameworks are part of an international best-practice management for programs and projects. The GBRMPA recognised the need for a MERI framework for the Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan 2007-2012 (Action Plan) and its delivery program.

A scoping study was done in 2009 to identify and evaluate relevant best-practice MERI frameworks and recommended the United Nations Development Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change. The Australian Government's Caring for our Country MERI Strategy and Natural Resource Management (NRM) MERI Framework also provide useful guidance.

Objectives

This project developed a specific MERI framework for the Action Plan and its delivery program. The aim was to ensure that the GBRMPA has a workable and agreed plan for:

- Monitoring and evaluating progress against the Action Plan in terms of immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes (impact)
- Monitoring and evaluating the running of the program (implementation)
- Reporting on achievements and learnings
- Informing adaptive management of the delivery program itself to ensure continuous improvement.

Activities

Coutts J&R were contracted for their specialists skills in developing MERI Logical Frameworks and broad experience in the NRM field. The MERI Framework development project was run concurrently with a mid-term program review for the Action Plan and its delivery program.

Project Name: MERI Framework
Project Code: 039
Outcome: X2 & X5
Year: 2009—2010, 2010—2011
Bulletin type: Final



On 12 April 2010, a full day workshop was held in Townsville with five GBRMPA staff (three from the Climate Change Group) and the consultant working on the mid-term review.

The workshop took participants through a series of activities leading to the development of a first draft MERI framework. Feedback from attendees was that this was an interesting yet challenging process. The MERI Framework evolved further over May and June 2010 using internal channels and focusing on terminology, drawing from the Group's updating of the Action Plan's Program Logic and refining key evaluation questions.

A second Townsville workshop, held on 14 July 2010 and involving the whole Climate Change Group, finalised the MERI Framework. The Framework builds on the Program Logic to outline monitoring and evaluation questions, information required to answer them and data collection methods. The document also includes data collection tools and guidance for analysis and reporting.



Two workshops were conducted as part of this project

Outcomes

The GBRMPA Climate Change Action Plan MERI Framework allows progress against the Action Plan to be captured against short, medium and long-term outcomes. A big benefit of the Framework is that it clearly outlines what is planned to be achieved within the GBRMPA's delivery of the Action Plan – and how it is going to be done. It also clarifies what should be measured along the way, and what needs to be reported against.

Members of the Climate Change Group have grown their understanding and skills around MERI framework development and use.

The GBRMPA is now better able to effectively monitor and evaluate progress against the Action Plan. In turn this will help make telling the story of the delivery program and its achievements easier and more robust.

The MERI Framework is the beginning of a continuous improvement cycle which allows for adaptation of the Action Plan program, through monitoring and evaluation activities and reporting on achievements and learnings.



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