Principles of Quality Climate Change Adaptation
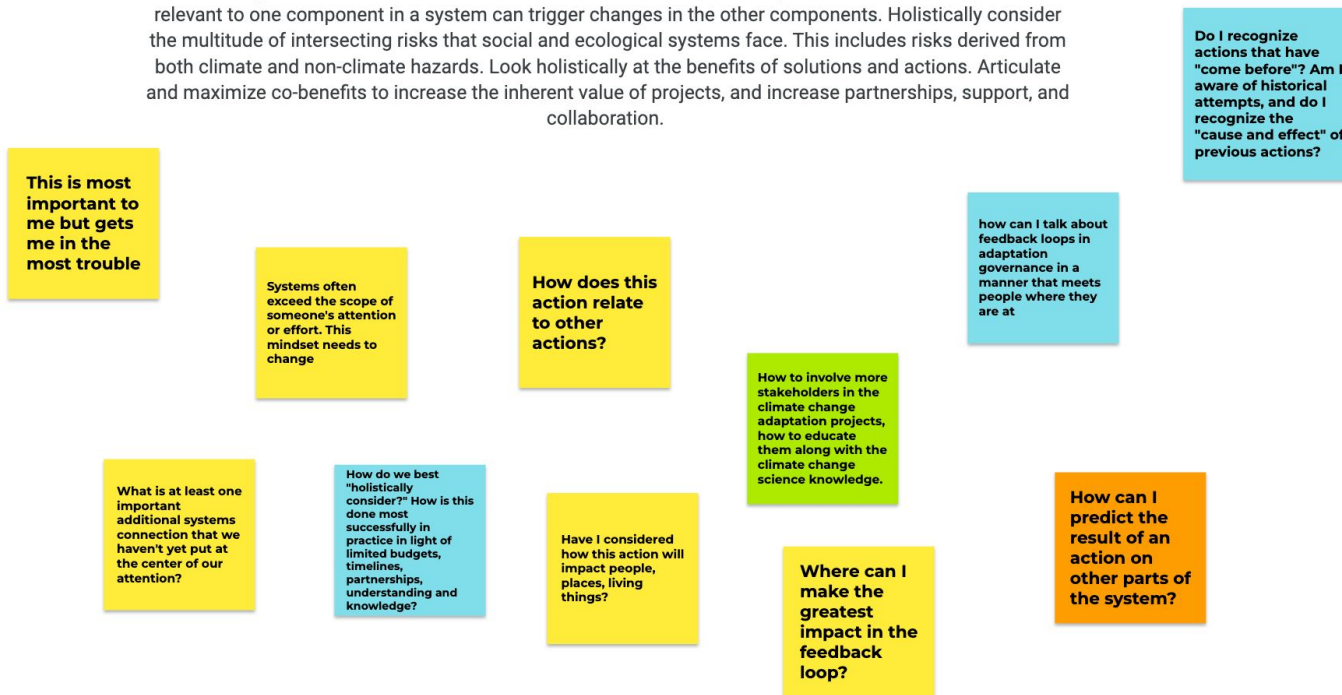
Participant Development Activity

Individually participants were asked to write down principles from "Section 4: Principles" of the Living Guide that resonated with them. From there participants translated each principle into a question that they could ask themselves in relationship to their own work and listed it on their jamboard. The responses were organized according to the principles from the Living Guide.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
ADAPTATION PROFESSIONALS

THINK IN SYSTEMS

Acknowledge that we live in an interconnected world, and consider how problems, actions, and solutions relevant to one component in a system can trigger changes in the other components. Holistically consider the multitude of intersecting risks that social and ecological systems face. This includes risks derived from both climate and non-climate hazards. Look holistically at the benefits of solutions and actions. Articulate and maximize co-benefits to increase the inherent value of projects, and increase partnerships, support, and collaboration.

Do I recognize actions that have "come before"? Am I aware of historical attempts, and do I recognize the "cause and effect" of previous actions?

This is most important to me but gets me in the most trouble

Systems often exceed the scope of someone's attention or effort. This mindset needs to change

How does this action relate to other actions?

how can I talk about feedback loops in adaptation governance in a manner that meets people where they are at

How to involve more stakeholders in the climate change adaptation projects, how to educate them along with the climate change science knowledge.

What is at least one important additional systems connection that we haven't yet put at the center of our attention?

How do we best "holistically consider?" How is this done most successfully in practice in light of limited budgets, timelines, partnerships, understanding and knowledge?

Have I considered how this action will impact people, places, living things?

Where can I make the greatest impact in the feedback loop?

How can I predict the result of an action on other parts of the system?

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Climate Change Adaptation

ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Acknowledge that adaptation will only be successful in the long-term if concurrent mitigation efforts are successful at maintaining safe levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Ensure that climate change adaptation actions are consistent with and supportive of mitigation actions. Certify that adaptation actions are low-emissions. Work in synergy with climate change mitigation whenever possible. Appreciate limits to adaptation and push mitigation.

Is this something relevant to the context I'm working in?

Does this solution address both adaptation and mitigation?

Does my climate adaptation planning work center climate justice?

How can I engage with my peers about our Econ system and social system as the root cause of CC (green houses gases are just a symptom)

Is this project a band-aid, or will it actually address a root cause?

How to visualize root causes?

How can one certify adaptation actions are low emission?

Are my actions addressing "resilience" on multiple levels?

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RECOGNIZE CONTEXT

Contextualize adaptation research, policies, practices, communication, and actions to the appropriate issues, location, and scale. Understand existing, underlying conditions and vulnerabilities that climate change may exacerbate before deciding what adaptation action to take. Design strategies to adjust over spatial and temporal scales, and account for variability and extremes. Assess localized outcomes of adaptation actions.

I'm in a new position, with a lot of new context; am I getting it all?

Can we articulate the scales at which we are thinking or working and how they relate to each other?

Do I understand the historical context of a program, place, project?

How does my understanding of context inform community receptiveness of adaptation? How best to frame adaptation based on contextual understanding?

How can I learn and process all the info I need for my current bridging position?

Have we evaluated potential adaptation actions using a cost-benefit framework? Have we considered low regret, no regret win-win actions?

How am I ensuring that the context will resonate with those I am working with?

Are these specific strategies scalable?

Have we learned enough about a community before suggesting adaptation actions?

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SAFEGUARD PEOPLE

Safeguard the health, well-being, safety and existence of all people affected by an adaptation action. Focus on more vulnerable populations, engage those who have traditionally been disenfranchised, and consider multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities, systemic injustice, and oppression when identifying problems and solutions. Assess all strategies to ensure that they do not have disproportionate negative impacts on these populations. If possible, adaptation strategies should actively strengthen these populations.

Safeguard people, nature, avoid harm all in tension with systems thinking especially if one doesn't understand the systems. How does one put these principles in practice?

What can I do to better recognize intersectionality in my work?

Include 'equity' as a criteria with assessing the costs and benefits of adaptation options

Am I engaging those who have been disenfranchised in all aspects of my work?

Starting with the people who are most affected or for whom the "project" could have the most impact first and letting those who aren't as directly affected is a way of doing that

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SAFEGUARD NATURE

Explicitly address the needs of ecological systems, including fish, wildlife, and plants, in adaptation strategies. Assess all actions to ensure that they protect or enhance the capacity of ecosystems to sustain function over time, and that human communities can continue to sustainably derive benefits from them in the long-term.

Does the work I'm doing protect or enhance opportunities for native species to thrive?

Am I having realistic conversations about the implications of ecological transformations and if we should resist, accept, direct change?

How to create a common understanding of ecosystem services so they are prioritized in everyone's mind?

How do I navigate the tension between real estate development and working with nature in climate adaptation?

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USE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Ensure adaptation-related decisions are consistent with and responsive to the best-available science about climate change and current knowledge of how it will affect human and natural systems. Use the full range of scientific tools, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, community knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, collaboration among the sciences, and the informed co-production of knowledge. When given the opportunity to design or implement an adaptation process, follow a vetted adaptive management process. Update policies and shift priorities as new information becomes available.

Am I incorporating enough TEK into my own work? How can I start to use that knowledge?

Has the community/relevant stakeholder(s) been consulted on this issue before? What knowledge do they have that isn't represented in the science?

How do I define "best available"? How much effort does establishing this require?

Nimble is important because of scope and budget

Are we ensuring that non-western knowledge is part of our conversations?

Have we discussed the ways of knowing TEK with area Tribes?

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USE PROJECTIONS ABOUT FUTURE CONDITONS

Whenever possible, use projected future conditions, rather than averages over time, when planning for social, economic, ecological and other impacts, and in assessing prospective risk and vulnerability. Incorporate the full range of possible climate outcomes in assessments and plans, including highly uncertain events, acknowledging that conditions are becoming increasingly dynamic. Consider projected future conditions across all variables that may influence the outcome of adaptation actions, such as demographic and economic conditions. Continually re-evaluate underlying goals in light of new knowledge about projected changes.

Am I helping agencies identify potential issues with their planning process?

How do I facilitate the best possible conversations between the data users and producers, to get a good match?

How can we help smaller communities to utilize projections without overwhelming them?

Am I keeping up on the science of climate models to ensure that I can explain the correct uses (and potential mis-uses) of climate projections?

Are we using the most appropriate projections in our conversations for adaptation planning?

Am I using the best data and modeling in my work?

This additive process is probably the most workable solution to aggregating small gains into meaningful differences

Would I bring enough plain language to talk about the scenario selection and time horizons to someone who did not know climate models before?

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AVOID HARM

Evaluate the impacts of adaptation actions on potentially affected systems, scales, and sectors for both shortand long-term time horizons. Guard against maladaptation by assessing potential impact across sectors, scales, and systems and by engaging multiple, diverse stakeholders in the process. Consider externalities, minimizing disproportionate impacts to some at the benefit of other regions, generations, social groups, or systems. Recognize that sometimes the optimal solution requires some level of harm to a sector, system, or population. In those instances, seek to minimize harm and maximize options of people with less political and social power.

Does the planning policy that I'm recommending have a realistic likelihood (unintended or intended) of perpetuating existing or new harm to community members?

Like other sticky notes; how to identify maladaptation risks upstream since it usually can be noted only when actions have been implemented

Have I consulted with all stakeholders who will/might be impacted by this decision/plan/etc?

Where can I find out more about maladaptation problems? The community, definitely - but are there other resources on this?

Do our plans for the reduction of GHG negatively impact sacred/cultural sites for our tribes? How do we avoid harm to culture?

Where are the most important entry points for integrating this principle into municipal decision making out of my direct control?

How can I be a better advocate for this principle at state levels (Dillon rule state) to achieve authority to make decisions at local levels?

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UNDERSTAND JUSTICE AND WORK TOWARDS JUSTICE

Grave injustices of the past, which have been allowed to perpetuate today, have created an unjust and inequitable society. Climate change exacerbates these inequities, as those who are the least responsible for climate change are often the most impacted. Widespread discrimination, promoted by histories of colonialism, white supremacy, domination of nature, and economic exploitation have created systems that inhibit otherwise capable communities and ecosystems from thriving. Understand systemic injustice and oppression and the resulting barriers to adaptation. Address injustices at their core whenever possible to remove these barriers and create the conditions needed for individuals, communities, and systems to be able to adapt.

Am I taking the time to fully understand the injustices experienced by the tribes? There is a very long history of injustice.

Is the information I am sharing easily understood? Am I using tools to ensure that the info is shared in plain language and accessible to all audiences?

Am I compensating people for their time?

How do I talk about injustice in my community?

How do I learn about injustice in my community?

How/who defines Justice?

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ENSURE FAIRNESS IN DECISION MAKING

Adaptation professionals inform and influence decisions, design decision making processes, and make decisions that affect people, nature, and the systems on which they depend. Decision makers hold power. That power is sometimes used to limit people's access to decision-making structures, particularly people and communities on the frontlines of climate change. It is critical that climate change adaptation creates opportunity for the people on the frontlines of climate change to build power through decision making. Use what power you hold to help ensure that all decisions and the processes by which they are made include representatives from all affected groups.Whenever possible, those in power should use the principle of "decide with, not for." In situations where one must decide "for," they should seek to maximize transparency, accountability, and follow-through and minimize harm and maximize options. Seek to especially minimize harm and maximize options for people who have little political power due to historical injustices.

Have I consulted with community-based organizations in my planning recommendations? Have I attempted to broaden the scope of the "usual suspects"?

Do I understand what power and/or privilege I have or do not have? Am I using my power/privilege to build collective power with others who do not have it?

Who will this decision impact? Are those impacted people in the room before and when a decision is made?

Have I taken time to ensure my climate knowledge messages are clear and useful for the community members I work with?

Have I designed a process that supports co-creation of knowledge and decisions with stakeholders I work with?

How do I recognize unfairness?

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ENSURE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Ensure that the costs of adapting to climate change and the benefits of adaptation actions are equitably distributed. This means paying particular attention to individuals and groups on the frontlines of climate change, those disproportionately affected by climate impacts, and historic inequities in the distribution of benefits.

Does the adaptation professional truly have any control over equitable distribution of costs and benefits? One might be able to try to do that in a plan or approach but ultimately isn't it up to local/regional politics, economics, structural

How can we help smaller communities with less capacity to learn about funding opportunities and apply for funds to increase their resilience?

Which costs and benefits do I and does the project I am bridging need to consider?

This requires some level of effort to actually measure costs and benefits - which we don't necessarily consistently/thoroughly do... How can this be applied in practice?

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NETWORK AND LEARN TOGETHER

We are all in this together, and our successes amplify and build on each other. Adaptation is contextual, but there are similarities in approaches across regions and sectors. Create templates and models that can be modified, tailored, or adapted to a particular context. Create the conditions for transferring and scaling solutions. Acknowledge that sharing best practices, learning by doing, and iterative and collaborative processes can help support local and overall progress. Use case studies, organizations spanning sectoral boundaries, and networks to connect and learn. Avoid reinventing the wheel by continuously communicating successes and challenges with peers and colleagues. Develop new, innovative ideas through dialogue and collaboration.

Have I asked for feedback from the tribes lately? Am I using the opportunity to connect with the tribes on their perspective on my work?

Who is here? Who should be here? How do we include them?

How am I embracing being an eternal learner and not going on auto pilot?

Am I listening to others opinions?

Know-it-all's are not good collaborators

How can we make sure we're learning from each other? e.g., publicizing instances of maladaptation and lessons learned?

Am I communicated RESPECT (TEK)?

When the stakeholder make decisions about the risks, would they understand enough for the full scope?

Are we checking ourselves to make sure we are eternal learners?

Am I showing up and prioritizing connection and peer learning or am I multi-tasking?

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COLLABORATE

Integrate a diverse set of individuals and types of organizations into adaptation work, including representatives from government entities at all scales, non-governmental organizations, corporations and businesses, community groups, and philanthropy. Create opportunities to include people at multiple levels of organizations, and unaffiliated individuals. Create a common agenda that is beneficial to all parties. Develop shared processes and align effort to maximize connection and efficiency. Involve all partners in all actions, from problem identification through evaluation. When feasible, create infrastructure and dedicated staff that cuts across sectors and organizations.

Have I collaborated enough with the tribal education leaders in our climate change curriculum? Do they feel they have a voice in this curriculum?

What are the standards and practices of the group with whom one is interacting regarding collaboration?

How can we ensure we are effectively collaborating and avoiding disconnected science delivery?

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USE EXISTING BEST PRACTICES

Many of the promising practices for adaptation work are general best practices that apply outside of the adaptation field as well.Two prominent categories are program design and management, and communications and engagement. The sections below describe best practices for each that should be applied in adaptation work.

Who has done this kind of work before? What can be learned from them?

Am I continuously reviewing and including best practices in my work? E.g. ISO 14092 - Adaptation to Climate Change Standard

"Best practices" is an oxymoron. There might be "favorable practices" tried somewhere but those might not be "best" here. Were those evaluated?

How can I make sure my adaptation strategies/plans stem from established best practices?

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TAKE CARE

We work tirelessly to address climate change everywhere – prioritizing communities on the front lines. We cannot unknow what we know and oftentimes, that can cause anxiety, grief, and trauma for professionals working in this field. In order to continue being of service to our planet, communities, colleagues, and families for the long-term, we need to take good care of ourselves.

Am I getting exercise, getting outdoors and eating healthy?

Am I listening to my intuition? Am I recognizing when something doesn't "serve" my truest self?

Am I taking time to be outside and reconnect with nature?

Am I giving myself enough time to process the information I am taking in? Much of the info is very sad and difficult to handle sometimes.

There is SO MUCH WORK. How can I set better limits for myself, without feeling guilty?

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Power to Make Change

Remaining Questions

I will just keep talking about climate change and using systems thinking so we make change in an equitable manner that hopefully doesn't leave anyone behind.

Our group discussed getting power by working together withing ASAP and partnering with other organizations like USDN and to make resources available like RFPs that have a strong outreach element, etc.

Focus on using power to change without harming others - both in personal space but also through my adaptation work

Could ASAP partner with the US Sustainability Directors Network to socialize key adaptation principles and practices e.g. how to ensure robust community engagement goes into an RFP?

How do we navigate the tension between urban development (rising housing costs etc) and equitable climate change (avoiding injustices of the past and changing those of the present)

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