ADAPTool

The Adaptive Design & Assessment Policy Tool (ADAPTool) for *Creating New Policies*

Darren Swanson
Dimple Roy

This Microsoft Excel-based tool is designed for policy-makers who are considering or are in the process of formulating a new policy, program, strategy or initiative. The Adaptive Design and Assessment Policy Tool (ADAPTool) for new policies will help policy and program designers articulate key future stressors that may affect relevant sectors, stakeholders and the policy performance. These future stresses can include climate change, volatile market prices, demographic pressures or any other driver of change that can potentially have a big impact on policy performance. *ADAPTool for New Policies* will help you create a policy that can adapt effectively and efficiently to changing conditions brought on by such stressors, a critical functionality for the turbulence and complexity of the 21st century. ADAPTool is intended for use in designing policies, strategies, programs, legislation or regulations. We use the term "policy" in this guidebook to refer to any or all of these categories.

ADAPTool for New Policies is based on the 2009 book *Creating Adaptive Policies: A Guide for Policy-Making in an Uncertain World*, which was authored by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

Policies that cannot perform effectively under today's complex, dynamic and uncertain conditions run the risk of not achieving their purpose; instead of helping, they may actually hinder the ability of individuals, communities and businesses to cope with and adapt to change. *ADAPTool for New Policies* is the first guidance tool to draw on the underlying principles for intervening in complex adaptive systems.

Using the tool, a policy's ability to help stakeholders adapt to the stressor—and to adapt itself to the stressor—is assessed using five worksheets:

POLICY OBJECTIVE WORKSHEET:
1) What is the goal of the policy? What are its specific purposes?
2) What sectors and stakeholders are meant to be affected? Who are the beneficiaries?
3) What specific policy instruments are already envisaged (regulatory, expenditure, economic or institutional)?

STRESSOR WORKSHEET:
4) What stressors or drivers might affect the performance of the policy in the years and decades ahead?
5) How might this stressor evolve in the years and decades ahead?

VULNERABILITY & ADAPTATION ANALYSIS WORKSHEET:
6) What are the main sectors affected by this policy?
7) In what ways are the sectors vulnerable to the stressor?
8) What adaptation actions might be necessary to address the identified vulnerabilities?
9) Could the policy objective and instruments potentially support this adaptation action?

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET
10) How can the policy be designed to be resilient to the stressors?
11) In what ways could the policy potentially enhance the capacity of relevant stakeholder groups to adapt to the stressors?
12) How could multistakeholder engagement be used in the scoping, design and implementation of the policy?
13) In what ways could the policy enable self-organization and social networking?
14) How could the policy be decentralized to ensure responsiveness to the adaptive needs of stakeholder groups?
15) What should be the mix of policy instruments directed at the policy objective and purposes?
16) What type of formal policy review process could be put in place to help ensure the long-term adaptability of the policy (including performance indicators and outcome frameworks)?

POLICY DESIGN SYNTHESIS WORKSHEET
An executive summary of the recommended adaptive policy design features is provided in this worksheet.

iisd International Institute for Sustainable Development | Institut international du développement durable

ADAPTool

THE PROCESS

The process of applying the tool is interactive and iterative. It should ideally should be led by a policy designer who has had previous training in adaptive policy-making. For maximum efficiency, this person should work closely with someone who has knowledge of the proposed policy and related issues. For information on **training courses** for adaptive policy-making, visit http://www.iisd.org/foresightgroup/training.aspx.

The tool is best applied in parallel with the overall policy design process, the latter being the means by which the overall policy objective and specific purposes are conceived and vetted.

The lead policy designer should convene an analysis team of anywhere from five to 10 persons with different perspectives and expertise relating to the policy issue. This team should ideally meet periodically to get through the various stages of the ADAPTool analysis. Approximately four meetings could be designed as follows:

- **Meeting #1: Introduction and Scoping.** This meeting is used to introduce the general concepts of adaptive policy-making, to preview the process for applying *ADAPTool for New Policies* and to complete the *Policy Objective* and *Stressor* worksheets. Some prior analysis on future scenarios of the selected stressors might be helpful for this discussion.

- **Meeting #2: Vulnerability and Adaptation Analysis.** This meeting is used to begin filling out the *Vulnerability & Adaptation Analysis Worksheet*. Additional participants who are experts in helping stakeholders adapt to the stressors identified in Meeting #1 should be included in this meeting. This meeting might require two sessions or a period of virtual follow-up to form a reasonably comprehensive view of potential adaptation actions for key sectors and stakeholders. The results of these sessions often help inform a broader and more comprehensive stakeholder engagement process to discuss key stressors and associated vulnerabilities and adaptations.

- **Meeting #3: Adaptive Policy Analysis.** This meeting is used to begin the *Adaptive Capacity Analysis Worksheet* and draws directly on the tools outlined in the *Creating Adaptive Policies Guidebook*. This meeting might require two sessions or a period of virtual follow-up to adequately address all of the questions in the worksheet.

- **Meeting #4: Synthesis of Recommendations.** This meeting is used to come to a consensus on the main recommendations for policy design. These recommendations will address two main facets: (i) policy design features that help the policy contribute to key adaptation actions for the sector and stakeholders to adapt to the stressor over time and (ii) policy design features that give the policy the ability to adapt to changing conditions brought on by the stressor over time. This meeting might also require two sessions or a period of virtual follow-up to finalize the text of the *Policy Design Synthesis Worksheet*, which forms the basis for a policy briefing note for senior decision-makers.
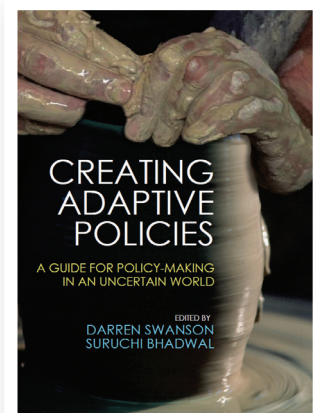
FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact Dimple Roy, director, Natural and Social Capital Program, IISD (droy@iisd.ca)

CREATING ADAPTIVE POLICIES

A GUIDE FOR POLICY-MAKING IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

EDITED BY
DARREN SWANSON
SURUCHI BHADWAL