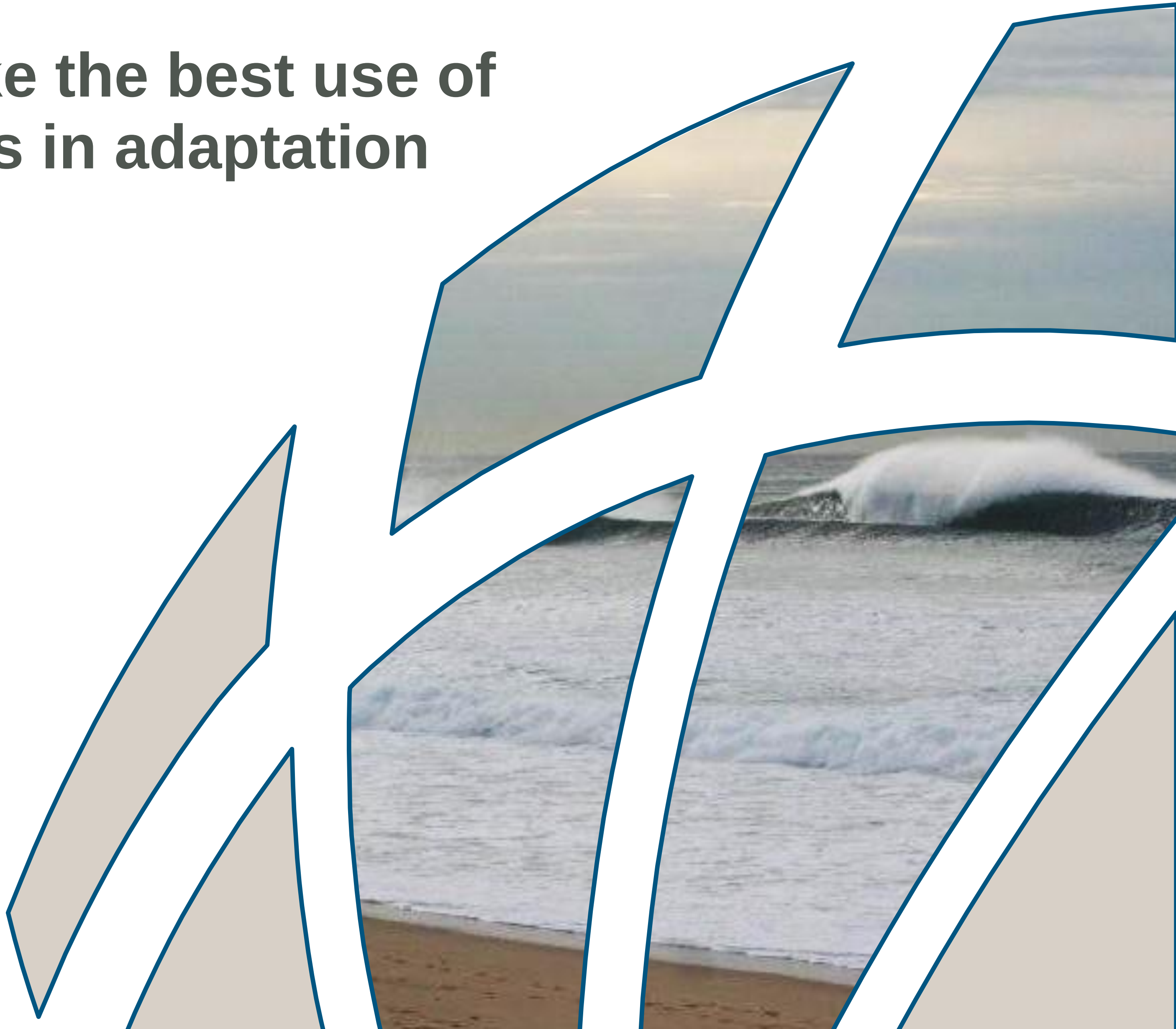
How to hire and make the best use of consultancy services in adaptation

Reference: T5M3
Date: June 2016



How to Hire and Make the Best Use of Consultancy Services

The complexity of the adaptation planning process means many organisations will use external consultancies for some or all stages.

When organisations first embark on the climate change adaptation process, it is generally new territory and the organisation may have limited experience or appropriate resources to undertake activities for themselves. As organisations progress through the process and continue to improve their technical understanding, they are still likely to need to engage specific expertise from external consultancies at various stages of the process.

Good quality consultants should be experts in their field, and remain up to date with relevant innovations in climate change and adaptation science (e.g. projections, models, analyses, data collection techniques, management options and so on).

This guide is intended to help client organisations such as local, state or federal government agencies to avoid common problems, and get the best product when engaging an external consultant for any stage of the adaptation planning process.

How to Use this Guide

This guide was developed through a series of workshops and feedback from end users, particularly local and state government staff. The approach taken was to ask a series of questions to identify key guidance for using external consultancies that is specific to climate change projects.

- First, *what makes consultancy for climate change adaptation different to standard consultancy engagements?*
- With the key differences for climate change projects in mind, *what are the common problems with climate change consultancy engagements?*
- Now that we understand the key differences and the problems common to climate projects, *How can the common problems be avoided or managed for climate change consultancies?*
- As a final checklist to understand *what does "Value for Money" look like?* a list of desirable skills and competencies for both the client and the consultant is given.

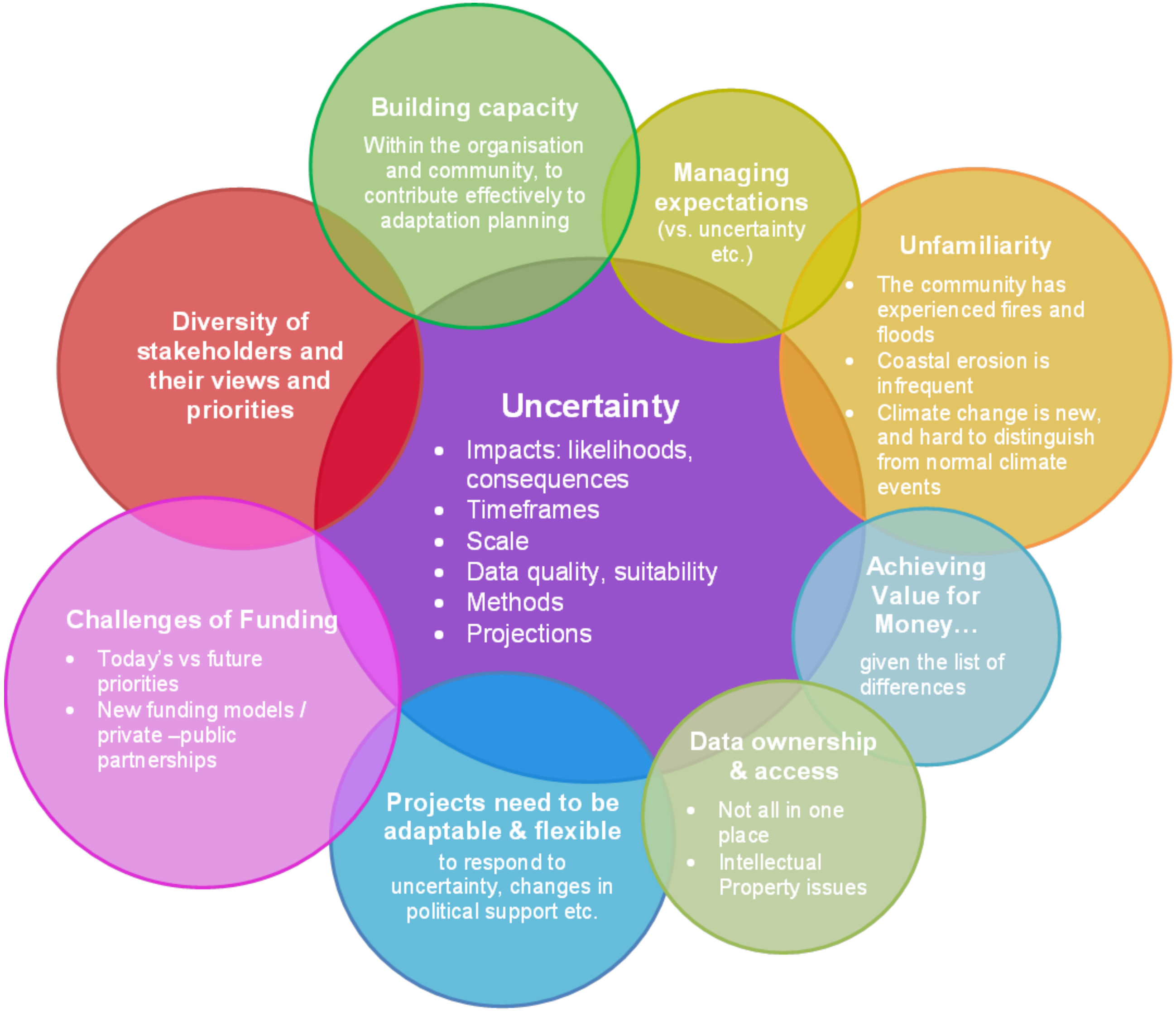
Users of this guide may wish to view all or one of these pages, as suits their needs.

Acknowledgement

This Guide was developed with funding from the Australian Government through the Department of the Environment.

BMT WBM

What makes consultancy for climate change adaptation different to standard consultancy engagements?



What are the common problems with climate change consultancy engagements?

Problems Common to Climate Change projects	What differences with climate change projects enhance these problems?									Approach to address the problem (page ref.)
	Uncertainty	Unfamiliarity	Managing Expectations	Building Capacity	Diversity of Stakeholders	Challenges of Funding	Project Flexibility	Data Access	Value for Money	
Problems During Project Scoping and Management										
The expectations of the client were not clear, or were unrealistic for the funding, time etc.	✓									9, 10, 11
The project changed scope as it evolved, leading to increased cost and time.	✓						✓			8, 9
Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology	✓									9, 10, 13, 14
There were barriers to data and model sharing: between new/old projects, between government agencies and the consultant; and / or between consultants.								✓		13
Government procurement processes delayed or hampered selection of the most suitable / qualified consultant		✓					✓			9
Limited pool of consultants with appropriate technical experience, local area expertise, knowledge of local, state and federal statutory context, knowledge of local government (service role, culture, resource capacity, etc.).		✓							✓	11
Problems with the Quality of Deliverables										
There was a change in political support and/or State / Federal policy settings during the project	✓				✓					8, 9
Limited availability of suitable data to conduct the assessment; or the deliverable demonstrated that more investigative work is needed to manage the issue.	✓									8, 9
The technical reporting / mapping was too complex to be understood by the required audiences; or conversely, the reporting was not adequate to explain analytical methods and technical results.	✓			✓						10, 14
The technical content was not credible, defensible or robust.	✓	✓		✓	✓					10, 14
The project recommendations were not practical, feasible or defensible (technically, financially or politically).	✓	✓			✓					10, 14
The deliverables did not address the required scope / meet the project's aims to the client's satisfaction	✓		✓							8, 9, 10, 11
Decisions arising from the project were limited / compromised due to a lack of funding.						✓				8

	What differences with climate change projects enhance these problems?									
Problems Common to Climate Change projects	**Uncertainty**	**Unfamiliarity**	**Managing Expectations**	**Building Capacity**	**Diversity of Stakeholders**	**Challenges of Funding**	**Project Flexibility**	**Data Access**	**Value for Money**	**Approach to address the problem (page ref.)**
Problems with Communication, Consultation and Engagement										
Communication between the client and consultant was poor due to a lack of leadership / ownership for the project, either from the consultant, the client's project officer, and / or the client organisation.					✓					10, 13, 14
Key staff assigned to the project (by the client and consultant) were not involved, or changed through the course of the project.					✓					13
Key staff from the client's organisation, partner organisations or key stakeholders were reticent to be involved, difficult to access / unavailable, or were reticent to embrace recommendations.					✓					12, 13
The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (e.g. due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc.)	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		8, 9, 10, 14
Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.					✓					10, 11, 13, 14
The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.					✓					8, 10, 11, 13, 14
The client organisation did not gain sufficient expertise from the project.				✓						12
The verbal communication skills of the consultant were poor: they were unable to explain technical elements of climate change / adaptation to the client's organisation or other key audiences					✓					13
Approach to address the difference (page ref.)	8, 9,10, 11, 13, 14	9, 10, 11, 14	8, 9, 10, 11.	10, 12, 14.	8, 9,10, 11, 12, 13, 14.	8	8, 9	9, 10, 13, 14.	11	

How can the common problems be avoided or managed for climate change consultancies?

Building flexibility into your project brief

Approach

The scope of climate change projects needs to be flexible and adaptive. But, this can be difficult when “you don’t know what you don’t know”. Ways to build in flexibility include:

- Run a pilot project to better define scope and funding for the larger project.
- Break the project into smaller pieces (e.g. vulnerability study, then risk assessment, then options study etc.). This allows the client to select appropriately qualified consultants for each segment.
- Specify hold points and milestones in the project. Hold points can be a chance to review progress outputs, and change project direction in response to new findings, technical quality of outcomes, effectiveness of consultation etc.
- Prioritise areas to study based on the consequence of climate change impacts, instead of the likelihood. For example, what areas of land, communities or environmental areas are the most valuable, and so have the most to lose? This is a different question to what section of coastline will be affected first.
- Conduct a background data review to collate and check suitability of all data, prior to analysis. This could be conducted as a separate project, or as part of the vulnerability study, with a hold point to review the methodology in relation to the adequacy of the data.

Problems Addressed

- The project changed scope as it evolved, leading to increased cost and time.
- There was a change in political support and/or State / Federal policy settings during the project.
- Decisions arising from the project were limited / compromised due to a lack of funding.
- The deliverables did not address the required scope / meet the project’s aims to the client’s satisfaction.
- The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.
- Limited availability of suitable data to conduct the assessment; or the deliverable demonstrated that more investigative work is needed to manage the issue.
- The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (e.g. due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc.).

Differences Addressed

- Uncertainty.
- Projects need to be adaptable and flexible.
- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities.
- Challenges of funding.
- Managing expectations.
- Data ownership and access

Ways to encourage flexible quotes from consultants

Approach

Using flexible hold points or separate stages for a project can be difficult for a consultant to quote for, as they must define a price and methodology for each milestone, or risk being excluded from consideration by the client. If the project is broken into stages, both the client and consultant must go back to competitive tender at each stage, which is costly and time consuming for both.

Ways to encourage flexible quotes and avoid returning to the tendering process for each stage include:

- Set up a panel of providers, that contains a selection of consultants that can be engaged for specific stages of the broader project, without needing to go to competitive tender for each stage. Setting up the panel may involve an initial Expression of Interest to allow the client to assess the qualifications, experience and expertise of the consultants to qualify for the panel. Once on the panel, the consultants no longer need to compete and so can be asked to work with each other if required, at agreed rates, for a specific stage of the project.
- Agree on an upper limiting fee with the consultant, rather than a specific project cost breakdown, to enable the client and consultant to respond to changes in project direction as required.
- Use a 2-stage procurement process. For example, an Expression of Interest can be sought. The responses can be used to better define the project's objectives, preferred methodology and deliverables for the funding available etc., as set out in a subsequent Request for Quotation.
- In the Request for Quotation, ask for a base price, then a non-conforming tender. This provides both a base proposal for comparison, as well as alternative approaches, methods and ideas to be recommended by the consultant.

Problems Addressed

- The project changed scope as it evolved, leading to increased cost and time.
- The expectations of the client were not clear, or were unrealistic for the funding, time etc.
- Government procurement processes delayed or hampered selection of the most suitable / qualified consultant.
- There was a change in political support and/or State / Federal policy settings during the project.
- Limited availability of suitable data to conduct the assessment; or the deliverable demonstrated that more investigative work is needed to manage the issue.
- Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology.
- The deliverables did not address the required scope / meet the project's aims to the client's satisfaction.
- The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (e.g. due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc.).

Differences Addressed

- Uncertainty
- Unfamiliarity
- Projects need to be adaptable and flexible
- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities
- Managing expectations
- Data ownership and access

Things that must be clear in a project brief

Approach

Even for flexible and adaptable briefs, certain items should be clear:

- Project aims and objectives;
- Expected deliverables and acceptance criteria for the deliverables;
- Stages, milestones and hold points (if used);
- Reporting requirements, and expected audiences (the format can be discussed later in the project, but general guidance should be given , e.g. an executive summary, "layperson" audience for body of report, and sufficient technical detail in appendices);
- The client's project manager / officer who will lead the project within the organisation;
- The required number of meetings (inception meeting, progress / milestone meetings etc. in face to face, or teleconference format) and the form of project updates (e.g. fortnightly, monthly emails);
- The groups to be consulted and the criteria for successful engagement (e.g. key points of contact from the client's organisation, state agencies, utilities, business / industry, developers, progress associations, chambers of commerce, tourism, community groups such as SLSCs, boardriders clubs, Dunecare, residents associations, and local residents generally);

Briefs should require consultants to demonstrate their expertise and experience, by providing details of:

- Recent similar projects showing their technical competence;
- Recent projects for local government, and in the local area;
- Recent projects showing their community engagement skills;
- Understanding of the local, state and federal statutory and policy context;
- Referees for recent projects; and
- Key staff contacts and their responsibilities (particularly project manager and project director).

Check these credentials prior to awarding the contract.

Problems Addressed

- The expectations of the client were not clear, or were unrealistic for the funding, time etc.
- The deliverables did not address the required scope / meet the project's aims to the client's satisfaction
- The technical reporting / mapping was too complex to be understood by the required audiences; or conversely, the reporting was not adequate to explain analytical methods and technical results.
- Communication between the client and consultant was poor due to a lack of leadership / ownership for the project, either from the consultant, the client's project officer, and / or the client organisation.
- Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.
- The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.
- The technical content of deliverables was not credible, defensible or robust.
- The project recommendations were not practical, feasible or defensible (technically, financially or politically).
- Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology.
- The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (e.g. due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc.).

Differences Addressed

- Uncertainty
- Managing expectations
- Building Capacity
- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities
- Unfamiliarity
- Data ownership and access

Getting help to write a project brief

Approach

The project's aims and objectives, stages / milestones / hold points, expected deliverables at each milestone, and acceptance criteria for deliverables need to be clearly defined in the project brief.

- To assist with developing clear objectives etc. for new and unknown projects:
- Set up a project working group (e.g. from staff within client organisation, project partners etc.) to develop aims, scope of works, expected outputs etc. The working group need only be a couple of people for smaller projects / organisations.
- Use peer organisations (local, state, federal agencies, peak industry bodies, even consultants) to seek example briefs, templates, experience with similar projects, understanding cost of tasks, list of relevant skilled consultants etc.
- Hire a consultant to design the project specification. If budget permits, the consultant could also be hired to run the project on the client's behalf. If so, the client will need to make sure that this does not create a bias towards or against the consultant appointed to undertake the project.
- While project aims and expected outcomes must be clearly defined, the project brief does not need to be highly technical or prescriptive about the methodology to meet these aims (e.g. what model to use, what activities to conduct to engage with the community etc.). This can be left to the consultant to demonstrate their expertise, and recommend a methodology to meet the aims within the available budget.
- Commence community engagement before writing the project brief, to capture key community concerns within objectives of the requested works.
- Establish a community reference group or gather local champions who can inform the consultants of local views etc.

Problems Addressed

- The expectations of the client were not clear, or were unrealistic for the funding, time etc.
- Limited pool of consultants with appropriate technical experience, local area expertise, knowledge of local, state and federal statutory context, knowledge of local government (service role, culture, resource capacity, etc.).
- The deliverables did not address the required scope / meet the project's aims to the client's satisfaction
- The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations
- Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.

Differences Addressed

- Uncertainty
- Unfamiliarity
- Achieving "value for money"
- Managing expectations
- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities

Ways to build the internal capacity of the organisation

Approach

- Begin communicating the project within the organisation at the project planning stage (e.g. as part of setting up a project working group).
- Include internal workshops, presentations and other capacity building activities within the client organisation as part of the project brief.
- Plan for follow up workshops (e.g. 0.5 - 1 yr after project completion) when budgeting the project. The workshops could focus on progress with implementation of recommendations, communicating lessons learnt and maintaining momentum for implementation etc. These workshops could be done under a new engagement with the consultant at the time required.
- Consider staging of projects to build experience within the client organisation, for example, having a consultant write the brief, do the work, and manage the project for the vulnerability study, then have less consultant involvement for the next study and so on. Overtime, the client can build its own capacity to write the brief, manage the project, conduct adequate review of deliverables, and manage implementation of actions.

Problems Addressed

- The client organisation did not gain sufficient expertise from the project.
- Key staff from the client's organisation, partner organisations or key stakeholders were reticent to be involved, difficult to access / unavailable, or were reticent to embrace recommendations.

Differences Addressed

- Building Capacity
- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities

Useful tips when awarding the contract

Approach

- Specify in the contract what consultancy staff will be working on the project, based on consultant's proposal. Specify the process to be followed for approval for alternative staff to work on the project.
- Request progress updates to specify what consultancy staff contributed to what milestones/deliverables.
- Prior to awarding the contract, conduct an interview/presentation (via telephone or face to face) with the consultant, to gauge communication skills, commitment and aptitude for delivery.
- In reviewing proposals, check the adequacy of the proposed methodology for consultation against the criteria for successful engagement (e.g. number of activities externally, internally etc.).
- Develop a consultation plan in collaboration with the successful consultant prior to commencement of the project. (Note: there may need to be budget negotiations if a change to activities is required compared to that proposed by the consultant).
- Clarify ownership and hand over of data and models in the contract, to ensure that the client will have appropriate access and future use rights after the project is complete.
- Climate change science is an emerging field, so there are regular improvements and additions to the methodology toolkit. It is important to understand the culture of the client's organisation for adaptation projects: does the organisation like to embrace the latest theories and models; or prefer to adopt tried and tested methodologies even if they have known limitations. Knowing this will assist in selecting the most appropriate consultant offerings.
- Consider setting up (or retaining after the brief is written) a Project Working Group throughout the project, to:
  - give support to the project within the client's organisation;
  - manage transfer of the project and retain project momentum, should the client's project officer or other key staff change;
  - support the client's project officer to meet project milestones.

Problems Addressed

- Key staff assigned to the project (by the client and consultant) were not involved, or changed during the project.
- The verbal communication skills of the consultant were poor: they were unable to explain technical elements of climate change / adaptation to the organisation or other key audiences
- Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.
- The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.
- There were barriers to data and model sharing: between new/old projects, between government agencies and the consultant; and / or between consultants.
- Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology
- Communication between the client and consultant was poor due to a lack of leadership / ownership for the project, either from the consultant, the client's project officer, and / or the client organisation.
- Key staff from the client's organisation, partner organisations or key stakeholders were reticent to be involved, difficult to access / unavailable, or were reticent to embrace recommendations.

Differences Addressed

- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities
- Data ownership and access
- Uncertainty

Useful tips for managing the project and milestones

Approach

- Be involved and proactive in communication as the project progresses. This will also assist in avoiding surprises in the deliverables, and in building the technical skills and capacity of the client to manage future adaptation projects.
- Conduct external peer review of outputs at hold points, milestones, and final deliverables. This could be done by suitably qualified state agency staff, external consultants, or peer organisations / councils.
- Require the consultant to demonstrate in deliverables that robust, credible sources of climate science / data, established approaches/methods and assumptions have been used in analysis.
- In the case where the analytical method originally chosen cannot be employed (e.g. due to unsuitable data), require that new methods are adequately explained and agreed to by both parties.
- Participate in the stakeholder engagement to observe how it is proceeding, and build relationships with the community.
- Require the consultant to demonstrate how community feedback was incorporated into project recommendations.
- Request reporting in a number of different formats / forums, e.g. simple explanations and key messages in fact sheets, webpages, detail contained in technical reports.

Problems Addressed

- Communication between the client and consultant was poor due to a lack of leadership / ownership for the project, either from the consultant, the client's project officer, and / or the client organisation.
- The technical content was not credible, defensible or robust.
- The project recommendations were not practical, feasible or defensible (technically, financially or politically).
- Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology
- Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.
- The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.
- The technical reporting / mapping was too complex to be understood by the required audiences; or conversely, the reporting was not adequate to explain analytical methods and technical results.
- The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (e.g. due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc.).

Differences Addressed

- Diversity of stakeholders and their views and priorities
- Uncertainty
- Unfamiliarity
- Building capacity
- Data ownership and access

What does ‘Value for Money’ look like?
A list of desirable skills and competencies for Clients and Consultants

The Ideal Consultant Should Be:

- Technically competent at a high level
- Multidisciplinary (within a single consultancy, or a consortium of consultancies)
- Trustworthy and credible
- Able to provide guidance on scenarios and data
- Knowledgeable about the latest methods and able to benchmark best practice approaches
- Knowledgeable about the legislation context and project context
- Able to translate the science for ‘lay people’, and engage the audience (not just communicate)
- Able to provide clear, concise, defensible and practical outputs and recommendations
- Understanding of local government culture and service delivery role
- Understanding and be empathetic towards the community affected
- Able to accommodate ‘layperson’ advice (e.g. ‘local knowledge’ from residents who have lived in an area for many years)
- Willing to share knowledge / data with the client, and with other consultants
- Appropriately resourced and skilled (e.g. staff, computing capability etc.)
- Able to provide a fixed quote for a known scope of works (and not constantly requesting variations), or otherwise willing to provide flexibility in their quote.
- Committing the staff who bid on the work to do the work.

Skills needed by both Client and Consultant include:

- Flexible: able to respond and contribute to changes needed in project scope, rather than being fixed on the project brief or winning proposal.
- Versatile and agile: able to adapt methods, skills and knowledge to new situations and contexts.
- Able to take constructive comment
- Communicating with each other throughout the project to respond to issues promptly
- Communicating with key staff in their own and partner / stakeholder organisations through the project.

Value for Money / Successful Project

The Ideal Client Should Be:

- Entrepreneurial: doing a lot with a little
- Clear about the objectives and desired outcomes for the project
- Able to provide a window into and interface for the organisation, e.g. explain views and concerns of senior management, provide insight into the culture and how the organisation operates etc. for the external consultant.
- Able to translate the views of the community and elected representatives
- Realistic about scope and budget balance (i.e. not expecting too much for too little), or otherwise able to request flexibility or seek assistance to set their brief.
- Appropriately resourced and skilled (e.g. committing sufficient staff time to the project.)
- Willing to approach peer organisations (e.g. other local government officers, state agency staff, peak industry bodies) for advice (examples, templates) on setting briefs, running projects, list of suitable consultants etc.
- Knowledgeable about who holds data and expertise
- Willing to share their skills and experience between staff / local government organisations.
- A conduit for project information between consultant and project partners / stakeholders (e.g. share point / webpage, with project aims, program of deliverables, who is involved at what stages, uploads of drafts, final reports).

Appendix 1: Summary of Results from Workshop 1 & 2

Table 1: What makes consultancy for climate change adaptation different to standard consultancy engagements?

Content derived from feedback from Workshop 1 and 2	As ranked by Workshop 2 (W2)
Uncertainty, in relation to: • Impacts: likelihoods, consequences, timeframes; • Impacts: type, scale; • Data quality / suitability for the assessment; • Analysis methods (including verifying new methods, lack of consensus on "best" method, subjectivity of inputs); • Projections and assumptions	**Ranked over and above the highest by W2** *Total Score: 11*
Challenges of funding climate change adaptation action, due to: • immediate priorities vs. saving for future climate change risks that may be large, but are many years away and cannot be fully defined; • maximising community benefit vs. cost and willingness to pay; • timeframes for potential impacts are beyond typical capital spend horizons; • implementing the preferred adaptation response is generally compromised by limited funds at present; • need for new funding models, to bridge complications with long timeframes beyond political / capital terms, and allow novel public-private arrangements; and • actions require triggers and staging rather than single point-in-time solutions.	*Total Score: 6*
Unfamiliarity with coastal and climate change impacts makes it difficult for the community to support and prioritise climate change actions. The community has experienced fires and floods on a regular basis. Coastal erosion is already infrequent and unfamiliar, and the impacts of climate change are slow and imperceptible (at first), and masked by the degree of natural variability.	*New at W2, but highly supported*
A diverse range of stakeholders, and their priorities, resulting in: • trade-offs between stakeholders' concerns when incorporating diverse views into recommendations; • different engagement approaches, to make the projects relevant and build ownership across diverse groups; • need for political support to avoid legal challenge / liability, and support project outcomes in the face of diverse community priorities; and • need for credible, legible communication of complex science / issues, to further build community support; and build capacity for stakeholders to provide informed input.	*Total Score: 6*

Content derived from feedback from Workshop 1 and 2	As ranked by Workshop 2 (W2)
Project scopes need to be adaptive and flexible. For example, to respond to: • uncertainty (as noted above); • data quality; • changes in political will and direction (grant funding, guidelines, legislation); • changes in community priorities and perceptions; • unexpected outcomes from studies (at any stage in the adaptation process) that require a re-direction of the project, or novel work in a new area of expertise; and • projects in new/novel areas that are difficult to specify, may involve new untested methodologies, and may not fit standard procurement protocols of the organisation.	*Total Score: 5*
Managing expectations, versus uncertainty in data, methods, and outcomes	*Total Score: 5*
Building adaptation knowledge and capacity within the organisation when using external consultancies. Then, finding and selecting consultants with appropriate expertise, especially when the organisation does not have prior experience.	*Total Score: 4*
Achieving value for money when working with an uncertain project scope/concept.	*Total Score: 3*
Data ownership and access: • No single organisation (client, consultant, agency) holds all of the data and knowledge; there is no single repository / custodian. • Intellectual property issues, e.g. new models / methods developed or data collected by consultants.	*Total Score: 2*

Table 2: What problems with climate change risk / adaptation consultancies have been experienced in the past, and why? What measures can be used to avoid or resolve these problems?

*Is the problem specific to Climate Change and Adaptation (CC) projects, or otherwise enhanced by the differences with CC projects (compared with standard projects)? **1 – Yes**, the problem is specific to CC; **2 –** The problem is enhanced or is very common to CC projects (even though it is not specific); **3 – No**, the problems is not relevant/specific to CC projects*

Problem Description	Degree of Problem (Score 1 to 3)	Treatment Measures
Project Scoping and Specification		
Due to the uncertainty of climate change vulnerability / adaptation studies, a lack of knowledge and a standard “best practice” approach, the expectations of the client were not clear, or were unrealistic for the funding, time etc. (e.g. in terms of aims, scope of works, community consultation requirements, expected outcomes, deliverables etc.)	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.7*	The project brief needs to clearly outline the objectives, desired outputs (or acceptance criteria) and stages / milestones / hold points for the project. In order to develop clear objectives and desired outputs, the client may wish to: • Seek the advice of peer organisations (councils, state agencies, even consultants) to help design the brief, e.g. example briefs, templates, experience with similar projects, understanding cost of tasks and similar projects etc. • Set up a project working group (e.g. from staff within client organisation, project partners etc.) to develop project aims and expectations, scope of works and acceptance criteria. (Note the working group need only be a couple of people for smaller projects / organisations). If relevant, consult with appropriate community groups when developing project aims. • Hire a consultant to design the project specification. If budget permits, the consultant could also be hired to run the project on the client’s behalf. If so, the client will need to make sure that this does not create a bias towards or against the consultant appointed to undertake the project. • While project aims and expected outcomes must be clearly defined, the project brief does not need to be highly technical or prescriptive about the methodology to meet these aims (e.g. what model to use, what activities to conduct to engage with the community etc.). This can be left to the consultant to demonstrate their expertise, and recommend a methodology to meet the aims within the available budget.

The project changed scope as it evolved, leading to increased cost and time.	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.2*	The scope of climate change projects needs to be flexible and adaptive. But, this can be difficult when "you don't know what you don't know". Ways to build in flexibility include: • Run a pilot project to better define scope and funding for the larger project. • Prioritise areas to study based on the consequence of climate change impacts, instead of the likelihood (i.e. what areas of land, communities or environmental areas are the most valuable, and so have the most to lose? This is a different question to what section of coastline will be affected first). • Break the project into smaller pieces (e.g. vulnerability study, then risk assessment, then options study etc.). While this allows the client to select appropriately qualified consultants for each segment, if desired, it may also require a tendering process for each stage (see methods to manage this below). • Specify hold points and milestones in the project, to respond to changes in project direction over its course. This can be difficult for consultants to quote for, because of the future unknowns (see methods to manage this below). • Set up a panel of providers, that contains a selection of consultants that can be engaged for specific stages of the broader project, without needing to go to competitive tender for each stage. Setting up the panel may involve an initial Expression of Interest to allow the client to assess the qualifications, experience and expertise of the consultants to qualify for the panel. Once on the panel, the consultants no longer need to compete and so can be asked to work with each other if required, at agreed rates, for a specific stage of the project. • Agree on an upper limiting fee with the consultant, rather than a specific project cost breakdown, to enable the client and consultant to respond to changes in project direction as required. • Use a 2-stage procurement process. For example, an Expression of Interest can be sought. The responses can be used to better define the project's objectives, preferred methodology and deliverables for the funding available etc, as set out in a subsequent Request for Quotation. • In the Request for Quotation, ask for a base price, then a non-conforming tender. This provides both a base proposal for comparison, as well as alternative approaches, methods and ideas to be recommended by the consultant. • Reserve contingency resources to respond to unexpected findings or for novel work.

Lack of industry / consultant agreement on the most suitable methodology	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.5*	• Climate change science is an emerging field, so there are regular improvements and additions to the methodology toolkit. It is important to understand the culture of the client's organisation for adaptation projects: does the organisation like to embrace the latest theories and models; or prefer to adopt tried and tested methodologies even if they have known limitations. Knowing this will assist in selecting the most appropriate consultant offerings. • As part of the project specification, require that consultants demonstrate their expertise and experience in similar projects (e.g. require details of consultants' recent relevant projects, referees, curricula vitae of staff etc); and check credentials prior to awarding contract. • Conduct external peer review of outputs (at hold points, milestones, final report/product). This could be done by suitably qualified state agency staff, external consultant, or peer organisation / council. • Use other councils/agencies in your region, to seek the experience of others who have undertaken similar projects
There were barriers to data sharing: between new/old projects, between government agencies and the consultant; and / or between consultants. This may include the development and use of models.	*Workshop 2: noted*	• Clarify ownership and hand over of data and models in the contract (i.e. prior to project commencement) to ensure that the client will have appropriate access and future use rights after the project is complete.
The deliverables from the consultant did not address the required scope / meet the project's aims to the client's satisfaction (including where the deliverables did not meet expectations from the consultant's proposal)	*Workshop 2: noted*	• *As above, plus* • State project aims and scope clearly to consultant in all relevant correspondence, meetings (i.e. project brief, inception meeting, milestone meetings).
The assessment criteria and process for selecting consultants was unclear (to the client and / or consultants).	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Include details of how submissions will be assessed, including criteria and weightings, within the project brief.
Government procurement processes delayed or hampered selection of the most suitable / qualified consultant (for example, the need for multiple quotes above $ threshold, the need for detailed justification to procurement departments about why the cheapest submission is not being selected; procurement processes that do not match a new/novel type of project or cannot encompass evolving projects).	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Consider use of EOI and panel of providers, staged procurement process, etc. (as noted above), to circumvent key obstacles to creating an adaptable project scope and hiring the most suitable consultants.
Limited pool of experienced consultants, limited consultants with local area expertise, familiarity and sensitivity	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Contact peer organisations or peak industry bodies, to recommend suitable consultants.

Quality of Deliverables		
There was a change in political support and / or the State / Federal policy settings during the project	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.4*	• Reserve contingency resources to respond to changes.
Limited availability of suitable data to conduct the assessment; or the deliverable demonstrated that more investigative work is needed to adequately understand and manage the issue.	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.8*	• Conduct a background data review to collate and check suitability of all data, prior to further analysis. This could be conducted as a separate project, or within a single vulnerability study, followed by a hold point to review the methodology in relation to the adequacy of the data. • Invest further resources into data collection • Revise methodology to one that is suitable to available data (such as at a project hold point)
The technical reporting was too complex to be understood by the required audiences; or conversely, the reporting was not adequate to explain analytical methods and technical results. This may include mapping that is difficult to interpret, or conversely, is misleading.	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.8*	• Clearly state reporting requirements in brief, including audiences (e.g. an executive summary, "layperson" audience for body of report, and sufficient technical detail in appendices) • Provide reporting in a number of different formats / forums, e.g. simple explanations and key messages in fact sheets, webpages, detail contained in technical reports.
The technical content was not robust, defensible or credible (for example, the assumptions / analytical methods used in modelling, risk assessment, cost benefit analysis, options assessment etc.).	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.1*	• As part of the project brief, require that consultants demonstrate their expertise and experience in similar projects (e.g. require details of consultants' recent relevant projects, referees, curricula vitae of staff etc.); and check credentials prior to awarding contract. • Require the consultant to demonstrate in deliverables that robust, credible sources of climate science / data, established approaches/methods and assumptions have been used in analysis. • There may be instances where the analytical method proposed by the consultant or requested by the client cannot be employed (e.g. where the available data is not suitable to the proposed method). In this case, the client should require that any new method proposed is adequately explained and agreed to by both parties. • Define hold points in the project specifications to review project outputs (recognising that contingencies in the budget may be needed to address changes in scope). • Conduct external peer review of outputs (at hold points, milestones, final report/product). This could be done by suitably qualified state agency staff, external consultant, or peer organisation / council.

The project recommendations were not practical or feasible (technically, financially or politically), or defensible / credible. E.g. “retreat is inevitable at some stage, do it now” messaging, or selecting “protect” option, without recognising cost and “who will pay” implications for the options that make them impractical.	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.3*	• *As above* • Specify acceptance criteria for the deliverables
Decisions arising from the project were limited / compromised due to a lack of funding.	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Consider running a pilot project, to better define funding and requirements for the larger project.
Communication and Project Management		
Communication between the client and consultant was poor due to: • a lack of leadership / ownership for the project, either from the consultant, the client’s project officer, and / or the client organisation; and/or • a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities between the client and consultant	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Define a project manager / officer who will lead the project within the client’s organisation. • Specify as part of the project brief the required number of meetings (inception meeting, progress / milestone meetings etc. in face to face, or teleconference format) and the form of project updates (e.g. fortnightly, monthly emails). • Define the client’s key points of contact and their roles and responsibilities in the project brief. • Require the consultant to specify key staff contacts and their responsibilities (particularly project manager and project director) in their tender submission. • Require the consultant to specify a project timeline including the timing for delivery of milestones, required meetings and progress updates, in their tender submission. • Keep track of progress against the project timeline agreed between both parties. • Define hold points in the project to review project outputs and keep project on track. The hold points should be notified in the project brief. • Be involved and proactive in communication as the project progresses. This will also assist in building the technical skills and capacity of the client to manage future adaptation projects. • Set up a project working group to support the client’s project officer to meet project milestones.
Key staff assigned to the project at commencement (by the client and consultant) were not available, changed through the course of the project or were otherwise not involved in the project.	*Workshop 2: noted*	• Specify in the contract what consultancy staff will be working on the project, based on consultant’s proposal. Specify the process to be followed for approval for alternative staff to work on the project. • Set up a project working group, which can manage transfer of the project and retain project momentum, should the client’s project officer or other key staff change. • Request progress updates to specify what consultancy staff contributed to what milestones/deliverables.

The consultant lacked understanding of local government (service roles and responsibilities, culture, resource capacity, etc.).	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.6*	• As part of the project brief, require that consultants demonstrate their expertise and experience in projects for local government (e.g. require details of consultants' recent relevant projects, referees).
The milestones and / or deliverables were not delivered on time (such as due to: difficulty in accessing relevant data; , changes in project scope arising due to project results, difficulty in accessing key stakeholders; changes in community support / response; changes in political environment / support, etc).	*Workshop 2: noted*	• Keep track of progress against the project timeline agreed between both parties. • Where problems arise, negotiate with the consultant how the issue will be resolved. Changes in timing or content of deliverables (and which may have budget implications) should be agreed between both parties, prior to commencement.
Consultation and Engagement		
Consultation activities were inadequate / poorly executed and failed to engage key stakeholders.	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Commence engagement before writing the project brief, to capture key community concerns in the requested works. • If required, establish a community reference group or gather local champions who can inform the consultants of local views etc. • Nominate the groups to be consulted and the criteria for successful engagement within the project brief (e.g. contacts in the organisation, state agencies, utilities, business / industry, developers, progress associations, chambers of commerce, tourism, community groups such as SLSCs, boardriders clubs, Dunecare, residents associations, and local residents generally) • In reviewing consultants' proposals, check the adequacy of the proposed methodology for consultation (e.g. number of activities externally, internally etc) against your criteria for successful engagement. • Develop a consultation plan in collaboration with the successful consultant prior to commencement of the project. (Note: there may need to be budget negotiations if a change to activities is required compared to that proposed by the consultant). • If possible, participate in the stakeholder engagement to observe how it is proceeding • Retain contingency resources to conduct additional consultation if required.
The consultant and / or client organisation did not adequately consider or was not sympathetic to stakeholder and community concerns in developing recommendations.	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.7*	• *As above, plus* • Specify requirement for consultant to demonstrate how feedback will be incorporated into project recommendations, as part of project brief. • Hold points in the project specification, to review adequacy of consultation and incorporation of feedback

Key staff within the client organisation or stakeholders (e.g. partner organisations) were reticent to be involved, or difficult to access / unavailable, or were reticent to embrace recommendations.	*Workshop 2 Score: 1.9*	• *As above, plus* • Set up a project working group to give support to the project within the client's organisation • Consider including internal workshops with the client organisation as part of the project brief, to build support and involvement during the project.
The client organisation did not gain sufficient expertise from the project.	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.0*	• Begin communicating the project within the organisation at the project planning stage (e.g. as part of setting up a project working group) • Include internal workshops, presentations and other capacity building activities within the client organisation as part of the project brief. • Plan for follow up workshops (e.g. 0.5 – 1 yr after project completion) when budgeting the project. The workshops could focus on progress with implementation of recommendations, communicating lessons learnt and maintaining momentum for implementation etc. These workshops could be done under a new engagement with the consultant at the time required. • Consider staging of projects to build experience within the client organisation, for example, having a consultant write the brief, do the work, and manage the project for the vulnerability study, then have less consultant involvement for the next study and so on. Overtime, the client can build its own capacity to write the brief, manage the project, conduct adequate review of deliverables, and manage implementation of actions.
The verbal communication skills of the consultant were poor: they were unable to explain technical elements of climate change / adaptation to the client's organisation or key stakeholders (e.g. the general community)	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.2*	• *As above, plus* • Prior to awarding the contract, conduct an interview/presentation (via telephone or face to face) with the lead consultant, to gauge communication skills, commitment and aptitude for delivery.
The consultant lacked understanding of the local, state and federal statutory context (such as local and state policies on sea level rise, coastal management, planning etc.)	*Workshop 2 Score: 2.5*	• As part of the project specification, require that consultants demonstrate their understanding of the local, state and federal statutory and policy context. This could take the form of recent local or nearby projects, and referees from the consultant. • Specify acceptance criteria for the deliverables
The engagement lacked formation and retention of a long term relationship with key stakeholders.	*Workshop 2 score: n/a*	• Long term relationships with key stakeholders will ultimately rest with the client organisation, after the consultant's role is completed. In this case, establish a community reference group and engage with them from prior to developing the project brief, and through all stages of adaptation planning and implementation.

Table 3: What are the skills and competencies required for a successful climate change consultancy?

<table>
<tr><th>Skills and Competencies for the Consultant</th><th>Skills and Competencies for Councils / the Client</th></tr>
<tr><td>
Workshop 1:

Technical skills, including knowledge of legislation context and project context
Able to translate the science into everyday language and layperson understanding
Guidance on scenarios and data
Liability – trustworthy consultants
Understanding local government values and context (e.g. providing services to the community)
Ability to take constructive comment
External peer review at various stages
Understanding / empathy to community affected
Ability to take on ‘layperson’ advice (e.g. ‘local knowledge’ where residents etc. have lived/observed an area over many years)
Ability to share knowledge / data between consultants
Ownership of data to go back to council / client organisation

Workshop 2:

Flexibility: not hung up on prescriptive project briefs/their proposal.
Appropriately resourced and skilled (which then assists to meet deadlines)
Timeliness / meeting deadlines and milestones
Adapting methods, skills and knowledge to new situations and contexts.
Versatile, agile, adapting to situation
Knows what leading practice is and can benchmark best practice approaches
IT abilities
Ability to engage audience (not just communicate)
Clear, concise, defensible, costed recommendations
Technical skills, with previous work examples
Demonstrating how community concerns have been incorporated in project recommendations
Multi-disciplinary (not just engineering)

</td><td>
Workshop 1:

Knowing who has expertise, who holds data
Templates (for briefs, etc), for those where in-house experience is limited
Set up project from start to build in-house capability (e.g. presentations, workshops etc from start of a project)
Sharing of skills between staff / local government organisations

Workshop 2:

Entrepreneurial: doing a lot with a little
Flexibility: not hung up on project brief, able to adapt to situation
Adapting methods, skills and knowledge to new situations and contexts.
Share point for project (e.g. webpage), for all project partners and consultants. Share point to state aims, deliverables, program, who is involved at what stages, even uploading drafts as delivery mechanism to client project partners
Clear communication pathways
Clear accountability

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</table>

Skills and Competencies for the Consultant	Skills and Competencies for Councils / the Client
• Quoting properly (not constantly requesting variations) • Able to help Councils to market their projects, and provide key messages • Clear communication • Clear accountability • People who bid on the work do the work	