



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research is a research organisation working at the science-policy interface. Increasingly, our research considers the complex system within which environmental issues arise; seeking to support both policy-makers and the full spectrum of “implementers” to bring about the desired improvements in environmental outcomes. Implementing freshwater policy is acknowledged as challenging because freshwater ecosystems are complex, adaptive, non-linear, and unpredictable. There is no “one size fits all” solution for either the water body or for the community that cares for it. Policy implementation is the actions that occur after a policy is developed to ensure the policy results in on-the-ground practice change. Over the past decade, New Zealand has innovated through new freshwater policies, but implementation of this policy has been slow, patchy, and uncoordinated.

Our research has explored the barriers to freshwater policy implementation in New Zealand and has identified:

- Tension between regional and national policy, as well as competing priorities at regional and national scale;
- Local governments lacking the financial and staffing resources to implement policy, and
- Lack of expertise – both professional and in the community.

To help overcome some of these barriers, Manaaki Whenua has developed a freshwater policy implementation framework specific to the New Zealand context.

Implementation of freshwater policy: a framework



The Implementation Framework

If you are currently implementing freshwater policy, this framework may help you to clarify your thinking. The framework contains a series of questions that are designed to be prompts about what needs to be done. To answer these questions, the framework provides a range of methods that might be helpful. However, it is important to know that the framework is not prescriptive or a step-by-step guide.

Questions are split into eight different sections: **the situation, building a systems view, purpose and outcomes, engagement, practice change, prototyping actions and monitoring, project organisation learning and evaluation.** Each section offers a series of questions designed to provoke reflection about the implementation process.

The framework questions were tested in draft versions of the framework and were validated through a series of case study investigations in the Hawke's Bay and Northland.

1 The situation

Here the questions help to bring the multiple participants and their aspirations, histories and values into the frame. The questions cover:

- Why is the implementation happening here and now?
- Who is undertaking the implementation and what is their mandate?
- What [and who] are the driving forces and how are these emerging?
- What are the biophysical and ecological characteristics of the area and how are they currently used and valued?

2 Building a systems view

Here you explore the factors that are influencing the issue – biophysical, social, institutional or organisational, and cultural factors – and how they work together in space and time.

3 Purpose and outcomes

What are the long-term outcomes that are the focus of your implementation effort? How will you be able to achieve these changes and what will hold it back? This is a great place to check any underpinning assumptions.

4 Engagement

Questions in this section ensure that you think about how to engage the community, networks, leadership, participation as

well as how broad, deep, or long engagement should be. Most importantly it prompts you to think about why you are engaging.

5 Practice change

This section focuses on who will make change in practice in order for the desired outcome to become a reality. It then helps to explore what is possible, why and how people can change, and who can assist and influence change.

6 Prototyping actions and monitoring

Are there opportunities to pilot or test actions, and if so, how will you monitor and learn from this?

7 Project organisation

Getting a project team together is essential. Think about appropriate membership, internal governance structure, constraints and resourcing.

8 Learning and evaluation

These questions help you to design a learning journey so that you can adapt the process to improve its outcomes. It also helps to share to implementation practice with others or apply it to other challenges in the future.

Questions?

If you have any questions or comments about the framework, please contact Dr Nick Kirk – kirkn@landcareresearch.co.nz.

