

## **Is this a climate adaptation project?**

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*REMEMBER: saying a project isn't a climate adaptation project is NOT the same as saying it isn't worth doing.*

### **1. Does the project specifically address or incorporate information about some element of climatic change?**

- a. Is it clear what specific climatic changes are being addressed?  
*Example: rather than referring generally to "climate change" the project refers to the specific elements of climate change that are relevant to the project, such as changing lake levels or increasing temperatures.*
- b. Does the proposal make clear what's known about projections are for those changes?  
*Example: the proposal addresses changes in rainfall, and states that in the project region it's probable that there will be more rain in winter and spring, but perhaps less in summer.*
- c. Does the proposal make it clear how those changes could affect the species, places, communities, or activities that are the focus of the project, both directly and indirectly?  
*Example: the proposal states that warmer lake water would increase the growth of harmful algae in the area of concern, leading to beach closures.*

**Key:** *if the answer to a, b, or c is "no," either your project isn't an adaptation project, or you haven't made it clear why it is one.*

### **2. Is it clear how the proposed project addresses specific climatic changes, effects of those changes, or people's responses to those changes?**

- a. Are at least some project activities clearly linked to specific climatic changes or their effects?  
*Example: a community disaster risk reduction plan makes sure emergency facilities are in locations likely to be high and dry even under projected increases in flood severity over the next 50 years.*
- b. Are the proposed activities designed to reduce or limit the vulnerability of target species, places, communities (human or natural), or activities to climatic change?  
*Example: a restoration project targets sections of a stream likely to provide cold-water refuges for aquatic animals, such as areas with subsurface springs.*
- c. Does the proposal use specific information about climate change and its effects to strengthen existing strategies?  
*Example: a group advocating against a proposed mine uses the projected increase in severe rainstorms to argue that the mining company's environmental impact assessment is inadequate.*

- d. Does the proposal adjust existing actions to account for climate change or its effects?

*Example: the mix of species used in a raingarden project is adjusted to include species likely to do well in a range of future climatic conditions*

**Key:** *If the answer to a is “no” and at least one of the remaining questions (b, c, or d) is not “yes,” either your project isn’t an adaptation project, or you haven’t made it clear why it is one.*

**3. Are the proposed goals, objectives, strategies, or activities themselves vulnerable to climate change or its effects?**

- a. If so, is the project designed in a way that reduces the vulnerability of proposed goals, objectives, strategies, or activities to climatic change?  
b. If so, does the proposal make clear why the effort is still worthwhile?  
c. How reliant is the project, implicitly or explicitly, on historical trends?  
d. Does the project allow for the integration of new information?

**Key:** *With this question, there’s more leeway. The key is that to make sure that climate change implications for project success have been considered from top to bottom, and that if you’re going forward with a vulnerable project you are choosing to do so for explicitly stated reasons.*

**For education/awareness projects**

**4. Are the implications of climatic changes for the focal issue or audience clear?**

Are climatic changes or effects incorporated into relevant activities, materials, or other program elements?

**5. Do project materials and the project overall clearly lead the intended audience to actions that can reduce their vulnerability to or take advantage of opportunities presented by climate change?**

**Key:** *If the answer to either question is “no,” either your project isn’t an adaptation project, or you haven’t made it clear why it is one. Note that for question 4 the issues don’t have to be presented as “climate change” per se.*

**The above questions address whether or not a project “counts” as an adaptation project, but don’t address whether it’s a good adaptation project.** Some questions to help you get at the question of quality include:

- Are there important climate vulnerabilities (direct or indirect) that are not addressed in the project?
- Does the project focus on the climatic changes/effects that are most relevant or important for project success?
- Is climate change presented in an effective and appropriate manner given the project goals and audience?
- If the project succeeds, will vulnerability to climate change have been reduced?

## Hypothetical project proposal A

### Version 1:

A wetland in my community has been heavily affected by phragmites, an invasive grass. This project will remove the phragmites. This will allow native plants to return and help restore natural hydrology, which will increase the resilience of the wetland in the face of climate change and other stressors.



### Version 2, rewritten to make it a stronger adaptation project:

In the past, native species were able to respond to changing lake levels tracking the shifting shoreline. If lake levels dropped, native plants colonize the newly exposed lake bed over time. In parts of the Great Lakes that have been invaded by phragmites, a non-native grass, this natural response may not be possible anymore. Phragmites can colonize newly-exposed former lakebed so quickly that it keeps native species from growing there. A wetland in my community has been heavily affected by phragmites, and I am concerned that the combination of phragmites and the lower lake levels projected for my region by many climate change models will cause many native species to disappear. Because there is not much phragmites in nearby wetlands, removing the phragmites in the wetland that is the focus of this project would prevent the significant likelihood of the spread of phragmites in the region where lake levels drop. This would allow native vegetation to track lake levels and help maintain at least a pocket of native plants and animals, whereas if the phragmites remains the wetland and surrounding shoreline will turn into phragmites monocultures.

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## Hypothetical project proposal B

### Version 1:

My organization does environmental after-school programs for disadvantaged youth. We will use this grant money to develop an activity focused on water conservation, and will provide free low-flow showerheads to students who complete the activity. Because water supply and quality will be heavily affected by climate change, our project will reduce vulnerability to climate change in disadvantaged communities.

### Version 2, rewritten to make it a stronger adaptation project:

It can be difficult to get disadvantaged communities excited about climate change, given that they have so many more pressing problems. Yet there are two big reasons to try: 1) given the large number of poor families in our cities, this demographic will be an important part of any city-wide climate adaptation effort; 2) poor families are particularly vulnerable to changes in price, availability and quality of resources, including municipal water and fresh produce. Some scientists suggest that the costs of many of these resources will increase as a result of climate change, making things even harder for already disadvantaged communities. We have found that working with youth is a powerful way to create lasting, community-wide change, so we will develop an after-school program to engage disadvantaged youth on the issue of climate change and teach them how to actively reduce their vulnerability to it. Topics and activities will include:

Topic	Associated Activity
Water conservation	Home installation of low-flow showerheads
Rainwater harvest	Visit a rain garden or rain barrel installation
Nutrition	Creation of a community garden and a guide for crops that do well in different conditions