

What makes an effective fire ecology monitoring program?

Angie Haslem¹, Steve Leonard¹, Andrew Bennett^{1,2}, Mike Clarke¹

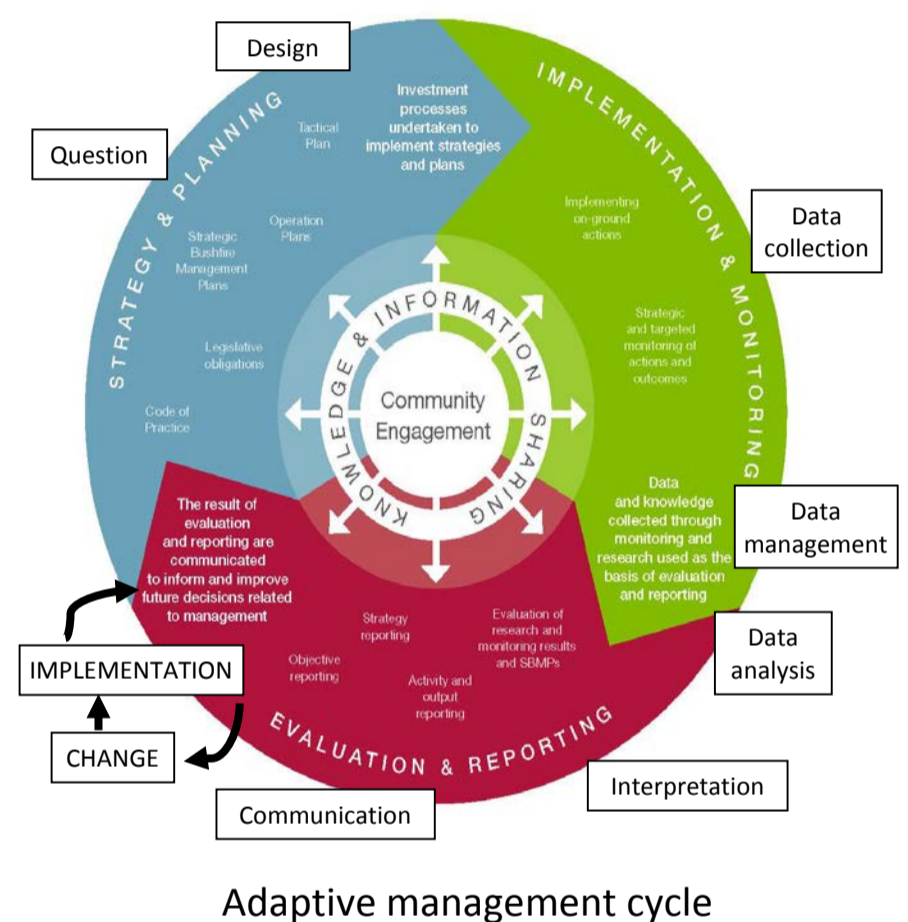
¹ Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolution, La Trobe University, ² Arthur Rylah Institute

La Trobe University is working with DELWP to design effective monitoring of the effects of bushfires and planned burning on biodiversity

We reviewed six past monitoring programs with respect to whether they completed the adaptive management cycle (right), and thus were able to inform management policy and/or practice.

Only one program resulted in change to policy or practice.

A common theme was that failure to adequately complete early stages of the adaptive management cycle compromised later stages and ultimately led to failure of programs to achieve their aims.



Effective program management (i.e. ensuring completion of all stages), and scientific leadership are essential for the success of monitoring programs.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

1. Good communication with field staff who collect the monitoring data; training is imperative
2. Excellent data management, undertaken by a small group of people responsible for the entire process
3. Explicit recognition of the importance of statistical analyses, and access to analytical expertise

INDICATORS OF FAILURE:

1. Lack of clarity of responsibilities and accountabilities for each stage of the cycle
2. Poorly-defined monitoring questions
3. Failure to account for other sources of variation (e.g. climate) in program design
4. Insufficient data to answer questions (e.g. insufficient number of sites or duration of sampling)
5. Poor communication/unproductive relationships between stakeholders

For further information contact Steve Leonard s.leonard@latrobe.edu.au