

Decision-making in Adaptive Management: DAKI +

This guidance note is intended to help think through program decisions, a key part of adaptive management. It aims to support deeper thinking on what to Drop, Add, Keep, Improve (DAKI). Practical options are given to take forward each of these actions.

DAKI can be used at multiple points in the program/project cycle: deciding on new or existing projects, requests from government and stakeholders; comparing ideas; reviewing work plans; strategic approaches; and resourcing.

Questions to ask going into a decision:

New: a) Is this aligned with program outcomes and mutual government priorities? b) What are the chances of success?

Existing: a) Is this working? b) Is it still relevant?

DROP



Say no: Outline the reasons and trade-offs, see what the response is.

Swap: Offer to support an alternative project – consider if needs to be of similar value or not.

Redirect: Find another program or funding source that would be a better fit.

ADD



Pilot: Test a new solution.

Scale up: Take a proven model up to national level through a formal written guideline e.g. aim for a new policy based on proof of concept.

Scale out: Take a proven solution across the country through communities or sub-national institutions e.g. replicate a proven concept in new geographies.

KEEP



Continue: With existing timelines or extended implementation / contract extension.

Pause: Temporarily stop implementation for x months to see if environment/ political will changes.

Minimize: Extension with minimal staffing to see if situation changes e.g. strategically important work that can continue at low cost – strategic patience.

Wait: Decide in x months – be aware of decision avoidance though!

IMPROVE



Performance: Agree on x months' extension with performance improvement measures.

Review: Independent review of project feasibility considering technical and political feasibility.

Adapt: Redesign the project based on knowledge of what has and has not worked.

Add Value: Agree to the initiative but add/introduce a new idea as part of the program that can improve strategic impact or improve results.

- For difficult decisions, try a short list of options. Then think through what the assumption is behind each option – 'if I decide this, what do I think will happen?' E.g. question if giving six months more implementation is/isn't likely to make a difference, is it likely to be good value for money. Test it with colleagues, is this true, likely?

- For really difficult decisions, think long term. Sometimes, a two-stage process is needed—e.g., if Dropping an initiative will negatively affect a relationship, maybe seek to Improve through a Review. Then agree to Drop through a Swap.

- This is not an exhaustive list – if you come up with other options, add to your DAKI checklist.

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