

The Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework

An integrated, holistic management approach to achieve outcomes that consider the biophysical environment alongside social, cultural, and economic outcomes

Background

The Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework

(the Framework) is a management framework that draws explicit connections between the biophysical environment (e.g. the [components](#), [processes](#)), the [beneficiaries](#) of the [services](#) provided by ecosystems and their [values](#). The Framework emphasises the importance of involving the people who use and value the system in planning and management, while also appreciating the [intrinsic values](#) of an area.

How is the Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework different from other frameworks, and how is it applied?

Many management frameworks focus on individual factors (e.g. economic, biophysical, etc.) for managing ecosystems, rather than using an integrated approach that incorporates all parts of a social-ecological system. Most management frameworks also concentrate on biophysical/eco-hydrological processes and do not adequately consider the social and cultural aspects of the environment. Other management approaches can focus on threats, with limited links back to the values impacted by these threats.

The Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework addresses these gaps by using an integrated approach to designing management interventions, which considers the system at multiple scales. This approach can generate outcomes that are biophysically and socially appropriate because the people who value the system are central to the Framework. Involving people in applying the Framework may increase the buy-in from beneficiaries and other stakeholders because their values are considered when the management interventions are developed.

To understand holistically how social-ecological systems work, the different parts need to be broken down and re-integrated. This is done by classifying the biophysical factors that underpin the system, including human modifications. Working together with ecosystem processes, these components deliver services that people (beneficiaries) value, as well as supporting and maintaining the intrinsic values of the natural system itself. People applying the framework can identify and fill knowledge gaps, restore broken linkages in the system and build a stronger relationship with the natural world that delivers benefits for us all.

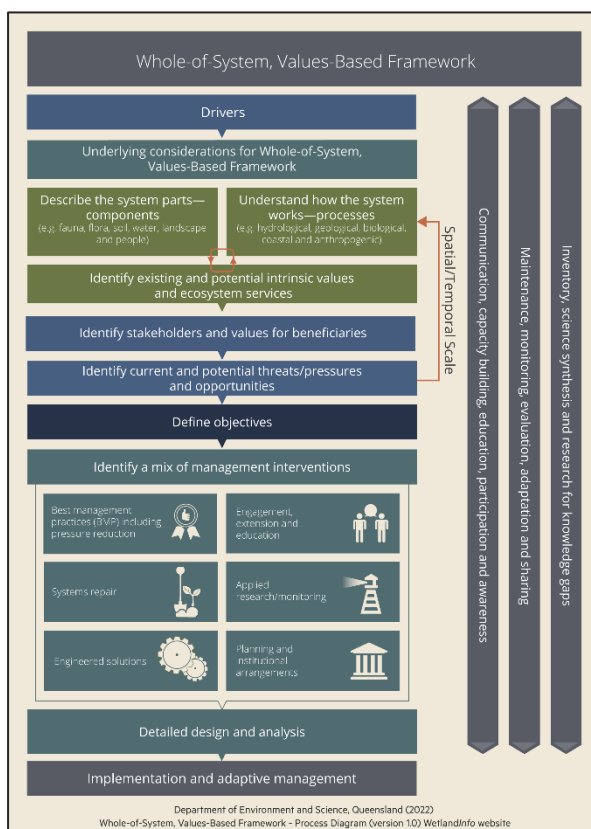


Figure 1. The Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework

The Framework assists the user in ensuring that multiple values and interests are considered when developing management interventions for a social-ecological system. The Framework is adaptive and dynamic and supports the development of management interventions that are informed by “learning-by-doing.” Hosting the Framework online allows for new learnings to be regularly incorporated into the Framework.

How does the Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework connect to other frameworks and methods?

The Framework is not intended to replace other frameworks and methods but is a means to implement and integrate complementary frameworks and methods into on-ground activities.

The Framework is informed by international frameworks for identifying ecosystem services and beneficiaries, such as [the Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services \(CICES\)](#), the [Final Ecosystem Goods and Services \(FEGS\) Framework and Metrics](#), and the [National Ecosystem Services Classification System Plus \(NESCS Plus\)](#). Assessment methods, such as [Aquatic Conservation Assessments](#), [ecosystem service assessments](#), and [beneficiary identification](#), can be used to synthesise information for different steps of the Framework.

The Framework underpins the joint Queensland and Australian Governments Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy under the [Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan](#). The Framework also provides the structure for the Queensland Government's [Aquatic Ecosystem Rehabilitation Process](#) and River Rehabilitation Guideline. Other frameworks, can be implemented using the Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework approach.

Where should the Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework be used?

The Framework should be used at multiple scales to generate an understanding of how the overall system works. This includes using the Framework at a site, catchment, and system-scale to understand

the impact that management interventions will have at multiple scales.

How much detail is required to use the Whole-of-System, Values-Based Framework?

There is no minimum amount of detail required to use the Framework. However, the more information that is incorporated into plans using the Framework will provide a better understanding of the overall system and will likely achieve better outcomes for the social-ecological system.

Much of the information required for using the Framework may already be available in existing datasets and reports, however additional surveys or other methods may be required to collect core data. Data should be synthesised in a way that allows for it to be used again in the future and efforts should be made to ensure it is easily understandable by stakeholders (e.g. through processes such as [Walking the Landscape \(PDF, 0.4 MB\)](#) and [Catchment Stories](#)).

Project participants:

Aspects of the Framework have been used within the Department of Environment and Science for many years. The Framework underwent extensive consultation with various natural resource management (NRM) organisations, researchers, local, state, and Commonwealth government agencies, consultancies, and other interested stakeholders prior to its development and publication.

Potential end-users include managers and decision-makers at all levels, such as local, state, and federal government agencies, NRMs, First Nation and Community Groups.

The Queensland Wetlands Program supports projects and activities that result in long-term benefits to the sustainable management, wise use, and protection of wetlands in Queensland. The tools developed by the Program help wetlands landholders, managers and decisionmakers in government industry. The Queensland Wetlands Program is currently funded by the Queensland Government.

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