

Guidance

Title:
The 3 A's for change at project level: Awareness, agency and association

Keywords: spatial plan, politician; technical expert; community groups; meaningful action; climate change; national; local; local authority; international; regional; change; change programme; change issues; meaningful change; change initiatives; partnership; champion; champions; champions for change; barriers; awareness; agency; association; 3As for Change; context; action and reflection; action; reflection; learning; learning process; cycles; learning level; organisations; organizations; change management; organisational change; organizational change; 4As; brand awareness; gnawing in the guts; mature understanding; motivated; empowered; behaviour change; changes in behaviour; strategic approach; stakeholder engagement; working together; thinking together; support change; support action; encourage action; encourage change; stimulate change; stimulate action; local authorities; action research

Audience:
 Organisations of any size operating at local, regional, national or international levels, including: Spatial Planners, Politicians, Technical Experts, Community Groups, Policy Developers, Decision-Makers, NGOs, Public Bodies, Private Companies, and many more. Any organisation or partnership intending to develop meaningful actions on climate change.

Messages in the ESPACE strategy to which the guidance applies:	1. X	2.	3.X	4.X	5.	6.X	7.X
	8.	9.	10.X	11.	12.X	13.X	14.X

Sentences linking the guidance to relevant strategy messages:

1. The *3As for Change* guidance gives an innovative approach to working with others to ensure that spatial plans address the social and political space in which planning occurs.

3. The *3As for Change* guidance contains innovative advice on how to manage change in a way that promotes and supports essential and sustained action on climate change issues. This forms the backbone of the change management processes.

4. The *3As for Change* guidance provides an integrated approach to developing real and sustained climate change actions that are applicable to both the internal functions of an organisation, and to the way organisations can work externally with stakeholders.

6. The *3As for Change* guidance provides an innovative approach to working in partnership with other people and organisations, and explains the conditions necessary for success.

7. The *3As for Change* guidance provides an innovative approach to working with stakeholders (including for example communities and politicians) to develop meaningful action.

10. The *3As for Change* guidance provides an innovative approach to working with stakeholders to develop meaningful action.

12. The *3As for Change* guidance provides an innovative approach to working in association with others (including for example spatial planning technicians, politicians, community groups and champions) to develop meaningful and sustained actions.

13. The *3As for Change* guidance provides politicians with an approach to being pro-active in developing climate change policy.

14. The *3As for Change* guidance is one of the major components of the “change management” processes expressed in this recommendation.

Photo/diagram/map:



ESPACE Partners applying the 3 As to real life case studies.

Overview:

This guidance explains that there are three fundamentally important components that must all be present for real change to take place: Awareness (of the issue at hand and what it means for us), Agency (what we can do about the issue) and Association (how we might work with others on the issue). Not only must all three be present, they must be managed simultaneously and allowed to reinforce each other in an iterative process to achieve, maintain and build significant progress.

Description:

INTRODUCTION

The challenge is simple: almost everyone, at some level, is aware of the reality of climate change, *yet very few are taking effective action.*

This brief outline explains that there are three fundamentally important components that must all be present for real change to take place: Awareness (of the issue at hand and what it means for us), Agency (what we can do about the issue) and Association (how we might work with others on the issue). Not only must all three be present, they must be managed simultaneously and allowed to reinforce each other in an iterative process to achieve, maintain and build significant progress.

The following table shows what can happen if only one of the three is absent from any change initiative:

Awareness	Agency	Association	Likely Result
✓	x	✓	'When all's said and done, there's a lot more <i>said</i> than <i>done!</i> '
x	✓	✓	'We're rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic while she sinks!'
✓	✓	x	'I'm banging my head against a brick wall!'

AWARENESS

The scientific consensus on climate change is now well established, yet still human change appears to lag behind the necessary levels. One reason for the lack of progress is that there are a number of 'levels of awareness', some of which preclude effective response. Alexander Ballard Limited, working for ESPACE, has identified four distinct levels of awareness of climate change:

- **Level 0 – 'Brand Awareness':** the *idea* of climate change is very widespread indeed; almost 100% of people in Europe have heard of it. Many of these people, however, do not know – or accept – that human activity plays a role in climate change dynamics. This level of awareness is characterised by the phrase: *'It may be happening but I'm not interested'*.
- **Level 1 – 'It's Real!':** in the UK around 85% of people understand the stern *reality* of climate change and some of humanity's contributions to it. However, they don't think it will affect *them* personally. They believe, therefore, that there is no need for them to take action. Like smoking, there is an intellectual acceptance of the science but no sense of responsibility for helping to create the solution: *'It will be a real problem but not for me and not in my lifetime'*.
- **Level 2 – 'Gnawing in the Guts':** some people have come to feel a sense of urgency and a personal commitment to contribute to change. They have grasped the scale and severity of likely climate change impacts and have experienced emotional responses ranging from anxiety through anger to excitement at being able to take action: *'This may be very important; I must do something!'*
- **Level 3 – 'Mature Understanding':** a few have learned of the complex characteristics of the problem and of leverage points for change. These people understand the structure of the issues and are rather rare. It is they, however, who both comprehend the scale and urgency of the problem and can provide vital guidance to leaders (and as leaders) on how best to respond: *'This is where our efforts can be most effective – here's what we need to aim for!'*

One of the keys to effecting significant change is to help people to move to higher levels of awareness. However, this is by no means a case of simply 'pumping them full with more information' (indeed, research shows this is counter-productive). It is important to work with participants at the level where they currently are and allow realisations to take place when they are ready. For some this will mean recognising the short-term economic benefits that can emerge from addressing climate change issues.

When changes in levels of awareness do take place, there is often an emotional response. This is particularly true of the shift from Level 1 to Level 2 awareness. Great care, however, is required to manage their emotional shift to awareness of the potential impacts upon themselves, their children, their communities, humanity, the planet and much of the life they have grown used to. Well managed, however, this shift can help to produce extremely effective change agency.

AGENCY

At any given time, agency for an individual can be defined as: *'the ability to take action in a way that is meaningful to me right now'*. Depending on the level of awareness of the individual in question, this can mean anything from saving on fuel and transport bills and protecting the value of their home to devising strategic interventions for global-scale policy-makers.

Higher-level agency, as we have seen, requires a corresponding level of awareness of the nature, scale and urgency of the problem. However, it is important to learn how to work with people at any level of awareness. And this requires that each individual is:

- a) motivated to take action
- b) empowered to take action

Motivation comes from learning, at any level, *why* action should be taken and *what* types of change can realistically be achieved. Many will simply want answers to the questions: 'What's in it for me?' and 'How does this effect what I care about?' Empowerment requires that motivation is channelled towards specific existing opportunities or those that can reasonably be created or foreseen.

One irony of the learning process is that, as awareness increases, often participants become somewhat overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge. This, in turn, can deter many from taking action – or even from learning more. Again, what is required is that this understandable sense of powerlessness is acknowledged and the process towards agency carefully facilitated. An effective way of doing this is to help individuals to identify their own unique 'windows of opportunity'. These may be open only briefly and conflicting pressures – for instance demanding work schedules or colleagues' lower levels of awareness – may present barriers. In addition to skilful facilitation, a vital component in overcoming these barriers is appropriate collaboration.

ASSOCIATION

Association with others in pro-environmental groups has been shown to be the single most powerful predictor of effective action for change in this area. Such association is one of the most effective methods of overcoming the 'learning and action plateau' caused by participants' sense of powerlessness. It tends to produce many other benefits as well.

Individuals in groups collaborating on climate change tend to become more effective because:

- Changes in their behaviour are normalised – they aren't seen as counter-cultural as is often the case in the wider community or organisation
- Natural loss of motivation can be overcome, with or without active assistance from fellow group members – sometimes a sympathetic listener is all that is required
- 'Nobody is as clever as everybody' – colleagues' different views on challenges can help overcome barriers; new or enhanced opportunities may be identified
- Shared learning can create *new* learning – multiple perspectives on a topic can help to create breakthrough openings for all concerned: 'the wholes are greater than the sums of their parts'



- Learning and action grow ‘virally’ – all members have their own networks through which to spread the learning achieved and from which to attract additional participants, sometimes valuable specialists.

These benefits have been shown to accrue only if members of such a group understand that association, in this sense, is more than simply ‘showing up for meetings’. Participants need to feel part of a collaborative effort by a group of people committed to shared goals.

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Further information:

How can local authorities stimulate & support behavioural change in response to climate change? (Volumes 1 & 2) By Alexander Ballard Ltd in partnership with HCC

Volume 1

Volume 2- Appendices

Warm Hearts and Cool Heads: The Leadership Potential for Climate Change Champions (Volumes 1 & 2). By Alexander Ballard Ltd in partnership with HCC

Volume 1

Volume 2