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## The EBM Toolbox: So many tools! How do I choose?

**Editor's note:** The goal of The EBM Toolbox is to promote awareness of tools for facilitating EBM. It is brought to you by the EBM Tools Network, an alliance of tool users, developers, and training providers.

By Sarah Carr

There are several software- and web-based tools available to help coastal planners anticipate the impacts of climate change and decide how best to adapt to those impacts. In the guide *Tools for Coastal Climate Adaptation Planning* just released by the EBM Tools Network, we provide a systematic approach for selecting the best tool for your needs among the myriad available. We suggest:

1. **Characterize your planning questions.** When selecting a tool, start by considering the goals of your planning process. During the scoping phase, you should have determined the information you need for planning and specific planning questions you need to answer. Tools should help provide this information and answer these questions.
2. **Identify the tool functions you need.** Figure out the general functions you want the tool to perform and where in the planning process you will use the tool.
3. **Research available tools.** Read about available tools ([www.ebmtoolsdatabase.org](http://www.ebmtoolsdatabase.org) and [www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools) are good resources) to see if any tools seem to provide the functionality you need and outputs that help address your planning questions.
4. **Assess the data and topical expertise you need.** Once you have identified a tool that may suit your needs, determine the data inputs, information, and topical expertise you will need to use it.
5. **Assess the capacity you have available to use the tool.** In addition to considering the availability of data, determine if you have or can get the human and technical resources you need to use the tool.

For more information on these steps, see *Tools for Coastal Climate Adaptation Planning* guide at [www.natureserve.org/climate/toolsguide](http://www.natureserve.org/climate/toolsguide).

Sarah Carr is coordinator for the EBM Tools Network. Learn more about EBM tools and the EBM Tools Network at [www.ebmtools.org](http://www.ebmtools.org).

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