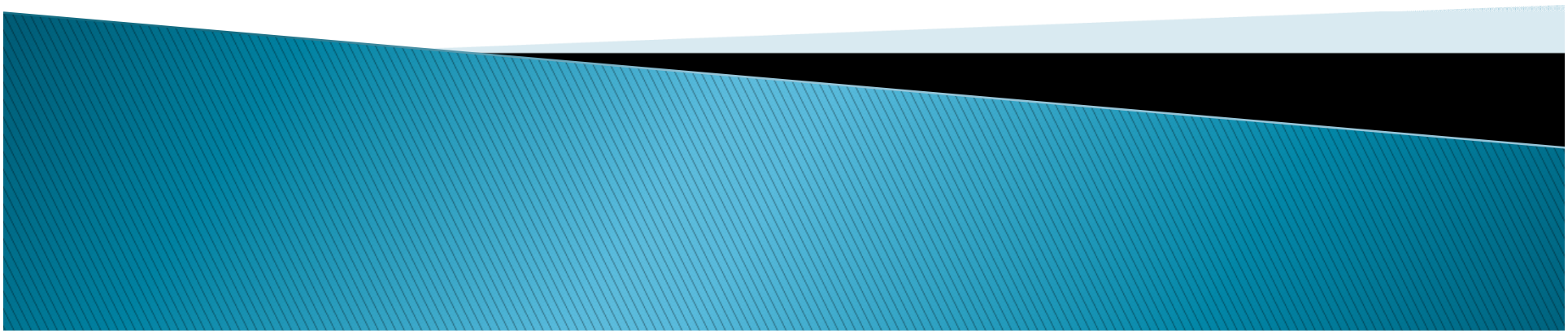
Building a Vulnerability Assessment

Defining Objectives and Scope



"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else." – *Yogi Berra*

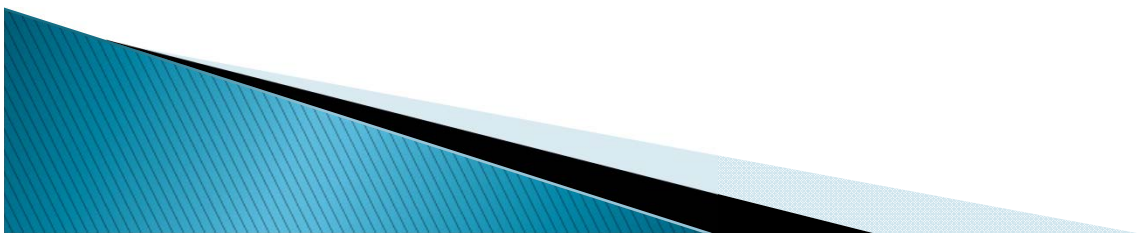
Good goals/ objectives help make sure you are solving the right problem

They are essential in order to

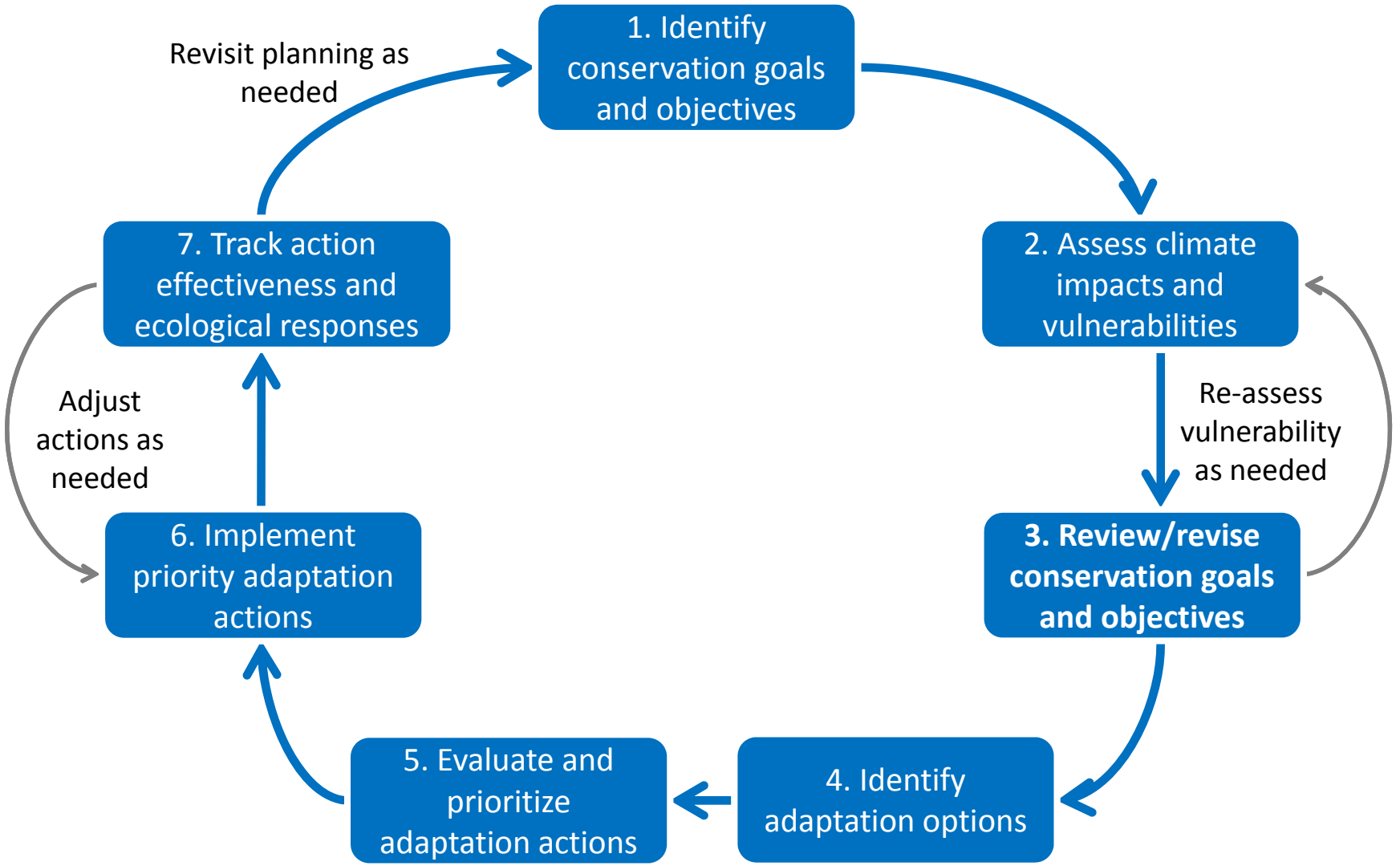
- **Select an appropriate VA approach**
- **Identify necessary information**
- **Make decisions during the VA process**
- **Get the VA results used**

Distinguishing VA Objectives from Conservation Objectives

- VA objectives are about determining focus and scope of assessment
- VA helps in evaluation and selection of appropriate conservation goals and management objectives
  - Some existing goals may no longer make sense or be feasible



Generalized Adaptation Planning Cycle



What Do We Mean by "Goals"?

Goals = *Overarching why*

- Conservation Goal
  - *Recovery an endangered species*
  - *Maintenance of biological diversity*

- Vulnerability Assessment Goal
  - *Inform strategy to recover an endangered species given climate change*
  - *Fulfill a requirement mandated by legislation*

What Do We Mean by "Goals"?

Objectives = ***More Specific Why***

- Conservation Objective
  - *Restore populations to an ecologically-sustainable number*
  - *Protect X acres of critical habitat*

- Vulnerability Assessment Objective
  - *Understand key reasons for species vulnerability*
  - *Understand relative vulnerability among species*

What Do We Mean by "Goals"?

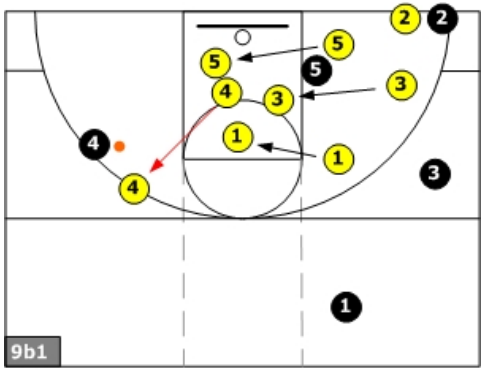
Targets = ***What***

- Conservation Target
  - *Species sub-population*
  - *Pre-identified set of species of concern*
  - *Specific habitat type in a given area*

- Vulnerability Assessment Target
  - *Same as conservation target*
  - *Subset*

What Do We Mean by "Goals"?

Strategies = ***How***

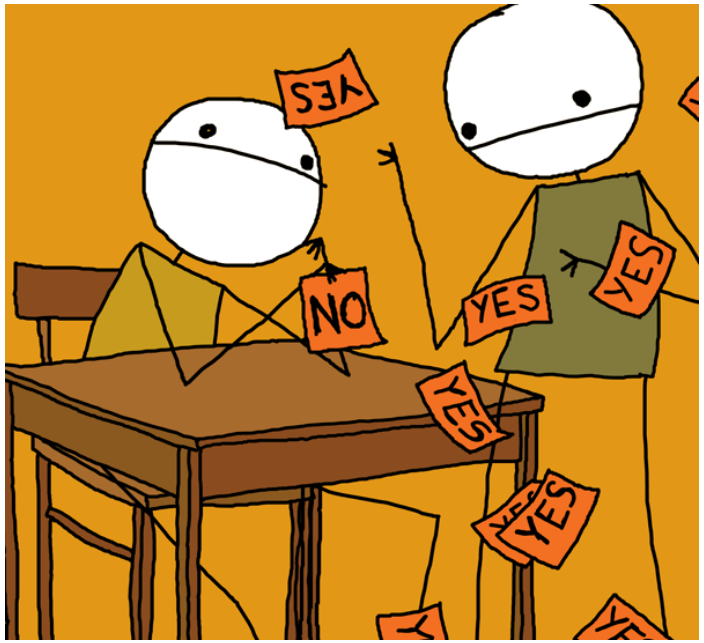


- Conservation Strategy
  - *Enhance connectivity*
  - *Reduce existing stressors*

- Vulnerability Assessment Strategy
  - *Conduct distribution modeling*
  - *Apply index*
  - *Expert elicitation*

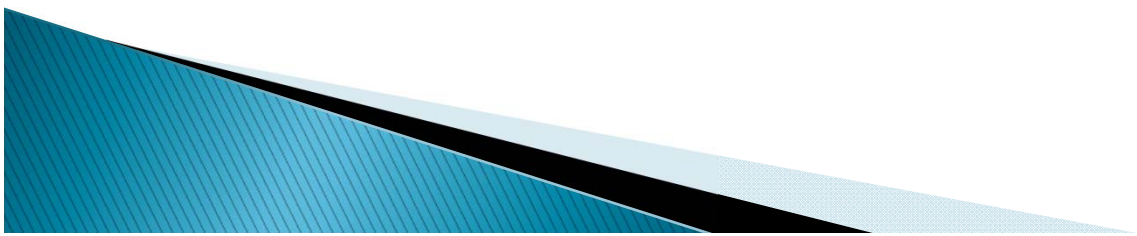
Setting Goals/Objectives/Targets for a Vulnerability Assessment

- What *problems* are you addressing?
- What *decisions* need to be supported?
- Who is *making* those decisions?



Tips for Writing Good Goals/Objectives

- Avoid ambiguity
  - What you want
  - When you want it
- Make them measurable
- Focus on fundamental objectives, not how you'll achieve them (i.e., strategies/tactics)



The objective of my CCVA is to understand the relative vulnerability of the species in my refuge to climate change.

My objective in performing a vulnerability assessment is to prioritize restoration projects.

My fundamental objective is to maximize the likelihood that the Ozark hellbender will be de-listed. I will do a CCVA to minimize the risk of selecting management measures that are highly vulnerable to climate change.