

## HALEY & ALDRICH'S CLIMATE PRACTICE: FROM VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

*Haley & Aldrich's climate-related business is growing quickly, especially on the resilience and adaptation side.*

A mid-sized environmental and engineering consulting firm, **Haley & Aldrich** has built on its core environmental management and compliance business in recent years to climate change mitigation and adaptation, usually under the rubric of sustainability.

"Our work includes conducting greenhouse gas inventories and providing recommendations on where to reduce emissions," said Karin Holland, senior sustainability specialist. "We also have a geothermal practice that works with multiple clients, including universities and airports who are interested in reducing their heating and cooling costs as well as their carbon footprint."

The firm's sustainability practice is currently small, with a core staff of approximately 10 people, including Holland who work with project staff on engagements across the firm. But Haley & Aldrich's climate-related business is growing quickly, especially on the resilience and adaptation side. "Our clients in Boston and the San Francisco Bay Area are increasingly looking at resilience assistance to address new state and local laws," she said.

Holland classified her firm's climate work into three broad categories: 1) vulnerability risk assessments; 2) infrastructure and 3) strategic planning. In the first category, the firm draws on staff who have expertise modeling future weather patterns and sea level rise. "They do quite sophisticated modeling in terms of combining different data sets to come up with recommendations to address their key vulnerabilities," said Holland.

The strategic focus builds on these assessments but draws on multiple layers of client staff. "We bring different groups of people within the organization into the same room, environmental, legal, real estate, et cetera. We lay out some of the key vulnerabilities and come up with solutions in a workshop setting. With the variety of staff represented, we can better understand key vulnerabilities across the whole system in order to come up with more holistic and cost effective solutions."

These kinds of assessments are being performed with airports, property developers and institutions like higher education, according to Holland.

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Like larger competitors such as Arup and Arcadis, Haley & Aldrich seeks to provide intellectual leadership around climate resilience. In December 2014, Holland co-authored with Boston University Sustainability Director Dennis Carlberg a story for Sustainability: The Journal of Record on using climate resilience planning to mitigate risks and costs for campuses.

Last year, the firm did an internal research project in which it conducted comprehensive interviews with senior managers at more than 30 private and public organizations in the United States and globally. "We wanted their perspective

on what their key vulnerabilities were," Holland said, adding that most of the interviewees were clients and that they represented organizations in health care, airports, ports and other institutions, as well as manufacturing and oil and gas.

While the interviews covered GHG mitigation, most questions were focused on climate resiliency, which Holland and her colleagues had observed was a growing interest for clients. Among their findings: "most organizations were tracking their greenhouse gas emissions and taking on climate change mitigation projects, they were less sure as to where to go with climate change adaptation," Holland said.

"At the same time, those who had been hit by recent storms were doing an impressive range of things, for example performing vulnerability and risk assessments for their properties. Others were thinking about it and didn't know what direction to go." Holland said the firm may publish some of the results, although it was conducted specifically to educate clients and other staff at the firm "to be more aware of the marketplace and how we can best service our clients," said Holland. "We tend to work that way at Haley & Aldrich. We inquire with clients to learn what their key issues are and to improve our understanding of the challenges they're facing."

"The main message [from the interviews] was that vulnerability is a very difficult problem to tackle," said Holland. "Each organization had specific, individual vulnerabilities depending on where they were located. For many, a key vulnerability is supply chain management. Even if the company itself is not greatly impacted directly, they might be relying on suppliers from areas of the world at greater risk."

In November 2014, Haley & Aldrich announced that it was expanding its Operations Risk and Compliance Practice with a new practice leader and a four-member Product Stewardship team. To help private sector clients "ensure business continuity,

protect the brand, and reduce total cost of operations” the team will provide “vulnerability assessments with product and supply chain reliability consulting, as well as operational excellence practices, in order to ensure operational resilience.”

Risk management is clearly a trend in the consulting industry as can be seen in other profiles in this edition (see profiles of Anthesis, Four Twenty Seven and Cameron-Cole). Climate change brings vulnerability and opportunity. □

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