



Leverhulme Centre
for Nature Recovery



A Recipe for Engagement in Nature Recovery and Nature-based Solutions

Why the key to tackling the biodiversity and climate crisis is working together, and how we can do it

Agile Initiative Practitioner Guidance: **Executive Summary**
November 2023



Executive summary

Engagement is a cornerstone for Nature Recovery (NR) and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), offering a path to delivering multiple, integrated benefits for people, nature and climate. It applies to a range of initiatives including conservation, restoration, rewilding, urban greening, community gardening, sustainable forestry and agriculture. Engagement can involve approaches like consultation, collaboration, partnership working, and co-design: it is ultimately about how people can work together to deliver for nature. The power of engagement lies in its ability to foster more inclusive decision-making, build trust and transparency, and empower communities while improving environmental outcomes and enhancing democratic participation.

The Recipe for Engagement (RfE) is a versatile guide for effective engagement in NR and NbS projects. Its value lies in providing a balance between process prescription and flexibility: the RfE provides clarity and structure for engagement, while also allowing for creativity and adaptability to individual contexts and available resources.

It is designed for practitioners and policy-makers including landowners, land managers, charities, government bodies and agencies, non-governmental organisations, funders, scientists, other researchers, community groups, and consultants. Whether you are new to engagement or looking for ways to improve, this guide offers a flexible framework, not rigid rules, with key components (ingredients) and essential questions. Think of it as a flexible and adaptable recipe that embraces project-specific needs while fostering innovation, maximising opportunities, and working towards long-term improvement through capacity building. **Find out what practitioners have to say about their experience using the RfE in the quotes below:**

It was really useful to learn from these flexible ingredients for our own engagement work. The guidance helped to form the foundation of our engagement strategy, our 'Engagement Roadmap', ensuring that it aligned with our mission and vision for rewilding and rewilding. It is great to see this practical yet comprehensive guidance now available to support others' work, helping more organisations to effectively navigate and harness engagement to benefit nature and human well-being.

Calum Brown, Chief Scientist, Highlands Rewilding

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading the RfE. I found it refreshingly supportive instead of overwhelming. There were reminders of how to act when there are limitations on an organisation's ability to deliver all ingredients and how to commit to continuous improvement. Thank you for sharing this and helping non-experts like me understand the engagement process much better. I've already changed the way that I've been thinking about and preparing for engagement after reading this.

Nature Recovery Project Manager



The key Ingredients of the Recipe for Engagement are:

- 1 Scope and context:** tailor engagement to local factors, aligning with stakeholders needs for context-appropriate outcomes.
- 2 Clear purpose:** define roles and expectations, adapting the purpose to the project's unique context.
- 3 Identifying relevant parties:** recognise who is interested and impacted by the project. ensuring the representation of overlooked voices.
- 4 Socio-economic monitoring:** integrate social indicators, linking to impact strategy.
- 5 Community benefits:** Advocate for more place-based approaches, involving local people in (co-)defining and (co-)delivering positive impacts.
- 6 Effective methods:** Select engagement methods that are aligned with project goals, local context, and participant characteristics.
- 7 Digital inclusivity:** Use digital tools responsibly, addressing concerns related to digital divides, biases, and the quality of social interaction.
- 8 Feedback and evaluation:** Embrace continuous evaluation with clear feedback mechanisms, linked to impact strategies.
- 9 Culture of engagement:** Institutionalise participatory and democratic values, which may necessitate a culture shift and capacity building.

To successfully implement the RfE, practitioners should first grasp the significance of engagement as an essential element of NR and NbS projects. To help with this, the RfE addresses some key questions around the *'What, Why, Who, How and When'* of engagement. Practitioners can then consider implementing the nine key ingredients within the context of specific projects and situations, adapting them as needed to align with different priorities and objectives.

The Recipe for Engagement's value lies in its flexibility, offering adaptable components that can be tailored to diverse projects and decision-making scenarios. It complements existing engagement guidance and can be integrated with other resources. It also outlines how environmental organisations can support long-term success through embedding a culture of engagement, building the capacity and capability needed to engage well.

Practitioners can use the RfE by selecting sections relevant to their needs, considering available resources and capacity. Whether starting from scratch or enhancing existing processes, the RfE caters to varying levels of experience. The inclusion of case studies, links to additional resources, and supplementary material enhances its practical utility.

Embracing the RfE supports practitioners in fostering inclusive, impactful and meaningful engagement. It shows how engagement can be a dynamic force for positive change, ensuring that NR and NbS yield sustainable and equitable outcomes, contributing to flourishing landscapes, human well-being, and resilient economies.



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