

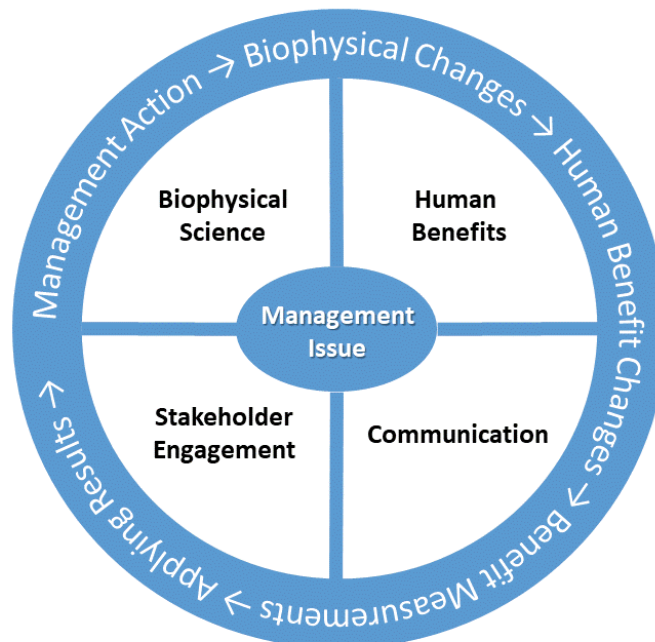
Assessing Alignment and Readiness for Your Ecosystem Services Project



“Ecosystem services” represents the human benefits that healthy ecosystems provide, including water purification, flood protection, and recreational opportunities. To better understand these services, officials and resource managers need a framework that integrates four elements: biophysical science, benefits to people, stakeholder engagement, and communications.

Use this worksheet to explore the four elements required for a strong ecosystem services project and how integrated those elements are in your project. The questions are designed to assess whether the ecosystem services framework is right for your project, as well as help you prepare to begin planning your project.

You may not have answers to all of these questions, but they should all be considered before you begin project planning. The answers to these questions will help determine what additional data and information you need to gather to inform project planning and design.



Section I. Alignment - How does your project align with the ecosystem services framework?

This section is meant to help you decide whether the ecosystem services framework is right for your project needs.

1. What are the biophysical changes and corresponding impacts to services and human benefits for each listed biophysical change? (Tie directly to your management issue.)

Note: an ecosystem services project characterizes a change in biophysical health and *estimates* the resulting changes to human benefits.

Biophysical Change	Services Impacted	Benefits to People
<i>Example</i> Increase in marsh size, improved function	<i>Example</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Enhanced protection from storms● Carbon storage● Nutrient retention	<i>Example</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Safer from hazards● Mitigating climate change impacts● Cleaner water

2. Who are the stakeholders and what are some ideas for engaging them?

Specifying people or groups who will be impacted by and/or benefit from your management scenario will help engage them as stakeholders from the beginning of your planning process. Regularly checking in with stakeholder groups throughout the project will allow for interim feedback and ensure the final results are accurate and useful. At the same time, care should be taken not to overburden stakeholders, so make the interactions with them convenient, enjoyable and meaningful.

3. How will you communicate the design, implementation, evaluation and project results?

Communication is one of the four key components of an ecosystem services framework and needs to be rigorous to ensure people understand the results and know where they came from and how to use them. Knowing your stakeholders (those who have an interest in or may be impacted by the project) and target audiences (those who would use the information from the project) and ensuring they understand the project plan, progress, and results is important. The communication mechanism must be able to anticipate and overcome these challenges and provide the assumptions and caveats that are necessary to accurately interpret the results.

Section II. Readiness - How ready are you to begin project planning?

Project planning starts with a conceptual picture of the project components. The answers to the questions in this section may change or be altered through the project planning process, but it is helpful to develop preliminary answers to guide you as you begin project planning.

1. What expertise do you need on your project team?

Having the required expertise (economists, social scientists, biophysical scientists, engagement specialists, communication experts, resource managers) available to work with you throughout the process is a key component of a successful project. Even if you only need information on particular services and benefits, you may want to expand the list based on collaboration and partnering opportunities. These relationships are often necessary to pool resources and obtain sufficient funding.

2. What data and/or information will you need? What do you already have? What will you need to collect?

Ecosystem services projects are data intensive. Having an idea of the data required and whether these data are currently available or will need to be collected will drive how long your project will take and how much it will cost. These questions will need to be answered early in the planning process.

Data Needed	Already have it	Exists but incomplete	Need to collect it

3. How will you quantify changes in biophysical health and function?

The methods you choose will link to the socioeconomic research components and are driven by the study scenario.

4. How will you measure the benefits to people?

Depending on your information needs in your management issue, you will need to determine the best way to measure benefits to people. They may or may not be economic.

5. How will the project results be used?

In preparing to plan an ecosystem services project, much will depend on the intended application of the results. It will drive the research, the way stakeholders are engaged, and the way the results are communicated.