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A PROactive approach for COmmunities
to enAble Societal Transformation

D6.3 – Manual for Implementation of change to overcome loss of biodiversity in coastal ecosystems

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BACKGROUND: ABOUT THE PRO-COAST PROJECT

The PRO-COAST project was launched to address biodiversity loss in European coastal ecosystems. Around 40% of Europeans live within 100 km of the coast and rely on ecosystem services threatened by environmental decline. Groups facing socioeconomic vulnerabilities may be disproportionately affected. PRO-COAST aims to empower local communities to restore and maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services, while bringing local knowledge into practice and policymaking. The project brings together 20 partners across 14 countries and draws on learning from ten coastal case studies. These studies examine different conservation approaches, governance arrangements and ways of engaging local actors in biodiversity action.

PRO-COAST takes an interdisciplinary approach that treats ecosystems, communities and institutions as interconnected. It examines how ecological conditions, local practices, stakeholder relationships and governance decisions influence one another. By combining conservation science with local knowledge and participation, the project seeks to identify practical opportunities for change that respond to both biodiversity needs and local community circumstances.

The PRO-COAST Deep-Change process underpins this manual. This deliverable, D6.3, translates the process and learning from the project's ten coastal case studies into practical guidance for Change Agents and others supporting community change. Although the framework emerged from coastal case studies, its approach to participation, collective action and learning can also be adapted to social and environmental challenges in inland communities. The coastal examples illustrate its use; they do not limit where it can be applied.

The full English manual is intended to be shared through the Community Sustainability Platform (CUSP), alongside other PRO-COAST tools and resources. Translated or shorter versions may be considered according to available resources. Any translation will require careful review of specialist terms and editable versions of diagrams and text.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRO-COAST developed this manual as a practical resource to support inclusive, participatory and collaborative approaches to biodiversity conservation and governance. It translates knowledge and lessons from the project's coastal case studies into guidance for practitioners working with communities, stakeholders and decision-makers. Although its examples come from coastal settings, the approach can be adapted to other communities facing related social and environmental challenges.

Coastal areas are complex socio-ecological systems where environmental objectives, economic activities, community needs, cultural values, and governance responsibilities intersect. Pressures associated with climate change, biodiversity loss, competing uses of marine and coastal space, and changing socio-economic conditions further increase this complexity. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires approaches that extend beyond individual sectors, disciplines and administrative responsibilities and enable different actors to jointly understand problems, negotiate priorities and develop pathways towards sustainable and resilient coastal futures.

Purpose of the Manual

The PRO-COAST Manual responds to this need by providing a practical framework and tools for stakeholder engagement, participation and co-creation. It supports practitioners throughout a participatory process: from understanding the local context and mapping all relevant stakeholders, including those who may be overlooked or hold different views, to designing engagement activities, addressing competing interests, developing shared priorities and turning dialogue into collaborative action.

Rather than prescribing a single methodology, the manual provides a flexible resource that can be adapted to different governance settings, stakeholder constellations and coastal challenges. The approaches presented can therefore be used individually or combined, depending on the objectives, resources, and stage of a particular engagement process.

From Stakeholder Engagement to Co-Creation

A central lesson underpinning the PRO-COAST approach is that meaningful participation requires more than inviting stakeholders to meetings or consulting them on predetermined solutions. The quality of participation depends on how the process is designed, who is represented, how different forms of knowledge are recognised, and whether participants can genuinely influence outcomes.

Particular attention is therefore given to questions of inclusion and representation. Coastal governance processes often involve actors with different levels of resources, knowledge, institutional authority and capacity to participate. Understanding these differences—and recognising whose voices may be absent or insufficiently represented—is essential to developing participatory processes that are both credible and effective.

The manual consequently promotes a progression from consultation towards co-creation and collaborative action. Stakeholders are understood not simply as recipients of information, but as holders of knowledge and experience who can help define challenges, explore alternatives, develop solutions, and support their implementation.

Supporting Place-Based Coastal Governance

PRO-COAST recognises that no universal model for coastal governance exists. Coastal communities differ in their environmental characteristics, socio-economic conditions, institutional arrangements, histories, stakeholder relationships and pressures. Approaches that work effectively in one location may therefore require substantial adaptation in another.

The manual adopts a place-based, adaptive perspective, encouraging users to understand the local context before selecting engagement methods. It provides practical tools, guiding questions, checklists

and examples that help users make these choices and adapt participatory approaches to local circumstances.

Throughout the manual, dedicated boxes highlight practical recommendations, points for reflection, lessons learned and issues requiring particular attention. These elements are intended to make the document useful not only as a project deliverable but also as a working manual that practitioners can return to when planning and implementing engagement activities.

Target Users

The manual is intended for a broad range of actors involved in coastal and marine governance, including local and regional authorities, policymakers, coastal and marine managers, researchers, NGOs and civil society organisations, facilitators, community organisations and project teams.

It is designed to be accessible to users with different levels of experience in stakeholder engagement. It can support practitioners designing an entire participatory process as well as those seeking practical guidance for a particular stage, workshop or engagement activity.

Contribution of PRO-COAST

Through this manual, PRO-COAST contributes to strengthening the capacity of coastal actors to develop inclusive, transparent and collaborative governance processes. The manual brings together methodological guidance and practical learning from the project in a format intended to remain useful beyond PRO-COAST's lifetime and to facilitate the transfer and adaptation of its approaches to other coastal regions.

The underlying message is straightforward: individual actors cannot develop sustainable and resilient coastal futures in isolation. They require institutions, communities, researchers, economic actors and civil society to build shared understandings, recognise different forms of knowledge, navigate competing interests and identify opportunities for collective action.

Participation should therefore not be viewed as a single event or an administrative requirement, but as an ongoing process of dialogue, learning, relationship-building and co-creation. By providing practical guidance for designing and facilitating such processes, the PRO-COAST Manual aims to support coastal actors in moving from stakeholder engagement towards meaningful collaboration and, ultimately, towards more sustainable, resilient and inclusive coastal governance.



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1. HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Coastal communities are facing complex biodiversity challenges that cannot be addressed through ecological or technical measures alone. Lasting change also depends on people: how they understand biodiversity challenges, how they work together, how they make decisions, and whether new practices can become embedded in communities and governance structures. This understanding is central to the PRO-COAST approach.

The **PRO-COAST Change Manual** translates the project's practical experiences and learning into actionable guidance for people who want to facilitate change in coastal communities. Its guidance draws on work across the PRO-COAST coastal case studies, where Change Agents engaged local communities, public authorities, civil society organisations, researchers, businesses, and other relevant actors to understand biodiversity challenges, strengthen collaboration, co-create locally appropriate responses, and reflect on the conditions that enabled or constrained change. It is particularly designed for Change Agents, community facilitators, local authorities, civil society organisations, researchers and other actors working with communities on biodiversity conservation and restoration.

The Manual does not provide a fixed recipe for transformation. Coastal communities differ in their ecological conditions, stakeholder relationships, governance arrangements, available resources and readiness for change. Instead, the Manual provides a **structured but adaptable process** that helps Change Agents understand their local context, mobilise stakeholders, build trust, co-create solutions, enable action, learn from experience, and strengthen the conditions for longer-term change.

Identifying stakeholders is an early and continuing part of this process. Before selecting participants or forming a core team, Change Agents should map all relevant groups, including those affected by the biodiversity challenge, those with knowledge or responsibilities relating to it, and those able to influence what happens next. This includes groups with different interests, limited visibility or reservations about a proposed change. Tool 1 in the Annex helps establish the local ecological and social context; Tool 2 helps identify stakeholders and examine their relationships, influence and levels of trust. Revisit the stakeholder map as understanding of the situation develops.

The guidance builds directly on the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach and the practical experience generated across the project's coastal case studies. During the project, Change Agents applied the approach to analyse local contexts, identify and engage relevant stakeholders, develop a shared understanding of biodiversity challenges, plan and implement activities, assess progress, and identify barriers and enabling conditions for change. These experiences appear throughout the Manual in "PRO-COAST In Practice" boxes, which provide concrete examples of how individual steps were applied in the case studies and summarise lessons learned for future practice.

1.1 How to work with the Manual

You do not need to read this Manual from beginning to end. Use the section that corresponds to the challenge you are currently facing. For each stage of the change process, the Manual provides:

PURPOSE	What are we trying to achieve?
WHAT TO DO	What practical actions can we take?
QUESTIONS TO ASK	What should we discuss with stakeholders?

PRACTICAL TOOL	What can we use to support the process?
WATCH OUT	What common challenges should we anticipate?
CHECKPOINT	How do we know whether we are ready to move forward?
PRO-COAST EXAMPLE	What can we learn from the case studies?

A central principle of the Manual is that **change is not simply about moving through a sequence of steps**. Change Agents may need to revisit earlier questions, adapt activities, involve new stakeholders or reconsider assumptions as circumstances change. Reflection and learning are therefore part of the change process, not activities that take place only at the end. This reflects the PRO-COAST workshop process, which combined practical implementation with peer learning, reflection and adaptation across different coastal contexts.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Do not start with the solution. Start by understanding the place, the biodiversity challenge and the people who can influence change. Build relationships, create shared ownership and enable communities to move from participation to sustained action.

1.1 The Manual at a Glance

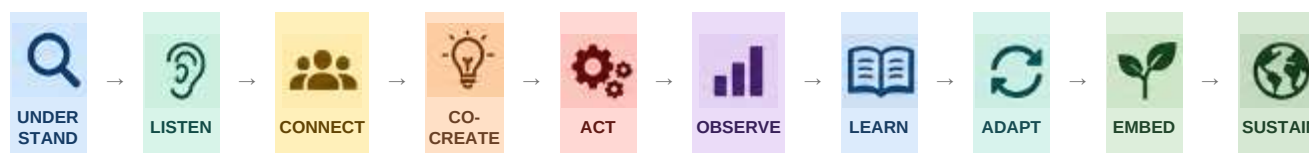


Figure 1. Manual Overview

The aim is not for every community to follow exactly the same pathway. Rather, the aim is to strengthen the **capacity of people and organisations to continue creating, adapting and sustaining change within their own coastal social-ecological system**. In PRO-COAST, Change Agents therefore act not simply as implementers, but as connectors who bring together communities, authorities, NGOs, experts and other stakeholders, helping translate shared biodiversity challenges into collective action.

2 THE PRO-COAST DEEP-CHANGE APPROACH

Coastal biodiversity challenges rarely stem from one behaviour, one stakeholder, or one decision. They emerge within **social-ecological systems** in which ecosystems, communities, economic activities, institutions and governance arrangements interact. PRO-COAST therefore approaches transformation as more than implementing a conservation measure.

The **Deep-Change Approach** combines a structured process for facilitating change with a deeper process of listening, reflection and co-creation. It brings together Kotter's change process and principles from Theory U. In practical terms, Kotter helps Change Agents consider **what needs to happen to move change forward**, while Theory U encourages them to consider **how stakeholders understand the situation, listen to one another, question existing assumptions and develop new possibilities together**.

How the PRO-COAST Approaches Work Together

The Deep-Change Approach was developed through interaction and learning across PRO-COAST work packages. It complements, rather than replaces, the project's other methodological approaches. The Social-Ecological Systems Framework helps Change Agents diagnose the ecological, social, economic and governance context in which a biodiversity challenge occurs. The Bristol Approach supports locally grounded participation by recognising communities as partners in identifying issues, generating knowledge and shaping responses. Citizen science provides a practical way to connect biodiversity knowledge with participation, learning and locally led action. The Deep-Change Approach brings these elements together within a structured but adaptable process for moving from understanding the local system towards collaboration, action, learning and longer-term change.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Deep change requires both action and reflection. Move the change process forward, but create space to listen, question assumptions and adapt what you do.

2.1 The Deep-Change Process

The PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach consists of eight interconnected steps. They move from establishing shared awareness and a core team towards collective action, visible achievements, consolidation and longer-term embedding.

Table 1. The Deep-Change Process Framework

Step	Change task	Core question
1. Shared Awareness	Develop a shared understanding of the biodiversity challenge	Do we understand the problem together?
2. Build the Team	Bring together actors who can initiate and support change	Who needs to be part of the change?



Step	Change task	Core question
3. Develop a Shared Vision	Co-create a desirable and locally meaningful future	What future are we working towards?
4. Communicate the Vision	Expand understanding, dialogue and participation	How do we bring others into the process?
5. Empower Action	Remove barriers and enable stakeholders to contribute	What do people need in order to act?
6. Generate Short-Term Wins	Create visible and meaningful evidence of progress	Can people see that change is possible?
7. Sustain Momentum	Learn, adapt and strengthen what works	How do we continue and improve?
8. Make Change Stick	Embed practices, relationships and responsibilities	What will remain after the intervention ends?

The framework gives Change Agents a **common orientation**, but it should not become a mechanical checklist.

PRO-COAST Deep-Change Framework

Eight interconnected steps for enabling durable change in coastal social-ecological systems. The eight steps are organised into three phases: setting the stage, enabling collective action and sustaining change. Reflection, learning and adaptation continue throughout, so Change Agents can revisit earlier steps as circumstances change.

- **SETTING THE STAGE**

Understand context and establish shared direction

1 Shared Awareness

2 Build the Team

3 Develop a Shared Vision

- **ENABLING COLLECTIVE ACTION**

Engage stakeholders, enable action and show progress

4 Communicate the Vision

5 Empower Action



6 Generate Short-Term Wins

- **SUSTAINING CHANGE**
Embed responsibility and strengthen continuity

7 Sustain Momentum

8 Make Change Stick

DURABLE AND EMBEDDED CHANGE

REFLECT · LEARN · ADAPT · REVISIT WHEN NEEDED

A shared orientation, not a mechanical checklist

The image below presents the same eight steps and three phases as those presented above.

PRO-COAST Deep-Change Framework

Eight interconnected steps for enabling durable change in coastal social-ecological systems



Figure 2. The Deep-Change Process Framework

A coastal community may already have strong conservation networks but lack a shared vision. Another may have considerable scientific knowledge but limited community ownership.

A third may have highly engaged citizens but weak connections to formal governance. The starting point therefore needs to come from the local situation rather than be assumed from the framework.

PRO-COAST In Practice

Using the Deep-Change Process across Different Case Studies

Across the PRO-COAST case studies, Change Agents worked in different social-ecological and governance contexts and therefore did not all begin from the same position in the change process. Through the PRO-COAST workshop process, they examined their local biodiversity challenges, identified relevant stakeholder groups, reviewed existing relationships and activities, and considered the barriers and enabling conditions affecting progress.

Change Agents used the eight steps as a common framework to identify which aspect of the change process required the greatest attention in their own case study. The workshops also enabled them to present developments from their case studies, reflect on what had and had not worked, and compare their experiences with those of Change Agents working in other coastal contexts. The framework therefore served as a shared orientation for planning and reflection rather than a fixed sequence every case study had to follow at the same pace.

Lesson learned: A common change framework is most useful when it helps Change Agents diagnose their current situation and select context-appropriate actions—not when it requires every case study to follow the same predetermined sequence.

✓ PRACTICE RULE

Use the eight steps to navigate change – not to force every community through the same process at the same speed.

A quick positioning exercise

Before planning your next activity, consider the following questions.

Table 2. A Quick Positioning Exercise

✓	FOCUS	GUIDING QUESTION	NOTES
☐	Where are we now?	Which of the eight tasks currently requires the most attention?	
☐	What already exists?	Which relationships, initiatives, knowledge and capacities can we build on?	
☐	What is missing?	What currently prevents further progress?	
☐	Who needs to be involved?	Are important perspectives or decision-makers absent?	
☐	What should happen next?	What is the smallest meaningful action that could strengthen the process?	



✓ CHECKPOINT

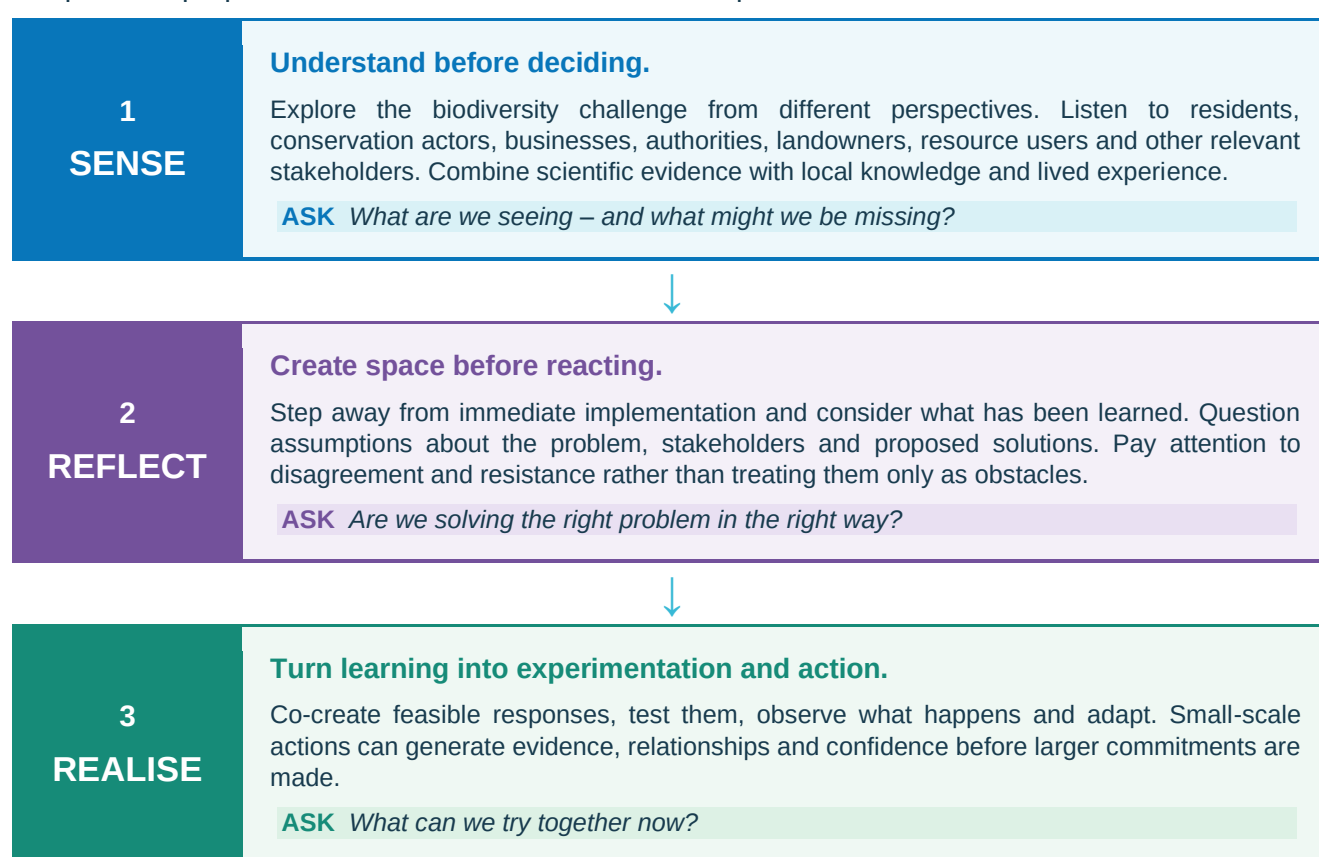
Are we choosing the next action because the local conditions support it – or simply because it is the next step in the framework?

2.2 Add Depth: Listen, Reflect and Co-Create

The eight steps provide structure. **Theory U adds depth to the process.**

PRO-COAST uses its principles to encourage Change Agents and stakeholders to move beyond habitual ways of defining biodiversity problems and solutions. This means observing the existing system, listening to different perspectives, reflecting on underlying assumptions and co-creating possible responses.

For practical purposes, this can be reduced to three simple movements:



This creates a simple working cycle for Change Agents:



Figure 3. The PRO-COAST Reflective Action and Learning Cycle

This reflective cycle was also embedded in the PRO-COAST workshop process (see D6.2).

PRO-COAST In Practice

Learning through Action and Reflection

The PRO-COAST workshop process applied the same reflective cycle promoted in the Deep-Change Approach. Change Agents implemented activities within their case studies and then brought their experiences into workshops that combined case-study presentations, practical exercises, peer exchange and group reflection. They considered what had happened, what barriers or unexpected responses had emerged, and what might need to be adapted in subsequent activities.

This process brought together experience from different social-ecological settings. Rather than transferring a single predefined model from experts to the case studies, it enabled Change Agents to learn from one another while deciding which insights were relevant to their own local context. Reflection was therefore connected directly to planning and implementation.

Lesson learned: Reflection becomes useful when it changes what happens next. Peer learning can expand the range of possible responses, but each Change Agent must adapt those insights to the relationships, biodiversity challenges and governance conditions of the local case study.

! WATCH OUT

Reflection does not mean delaying action indefinitely. Equally, action without reflection can reproduce assumptions, exclude important perspectives or continue an intervention that is not working.

Deep Change in Practice

The two dimensions operate together:



Figure 4. The Shared Awareness Map

A structured yet adaptive process of collective action, reflection and learning.

This distinction matters especially for biodiversity interventions. A technically successful conservation action does not automatically create lasting societal change. Longer-term transformation also requires changes in behaviours, stakeholder relationships, social norms and institutional practices. This is why the PRO-COAST framework treats transformation as both **a practical implementation process and a social learning process**.

→ TAKE-AWAY

Do not choose between action and reflection. Use both.

STRUCTURE AND DEPTH

The eight steps help you organise the change journey.

Deep listening, reflection and co-creation help ensure that the journey remains connected to the people, biodiversity challenges and institutional realities of the place.



3 A PRACTICAL MANUAL FOR CHANGE AGENTS

Change Agents are central to the PRO-COAST approach. In PRO-COAST, we use the term “Change Agent” to describe a person or team that helps create the conditions for collective change in a coastal community. Change Agents are not expected to deliver change on behalf of stakeholders or to provide all the answers themselves. Instead, they act as connectors, facilitators, translators and catalysts, bringing together communities, researchers, public authorities, NGOs, businesses and other actors who influence coastal biodiversity.

Their role is to help stakeholders develop a shared understanding of biodiversity challenges, bring different perspectives and forms of knowledge into dialogue, build relationships and trust, co-create locally meaningful directions, remove barriers to participation and translate knowledge into collective action. As the process develops, Change Agents also help stakeholders reflect on progress, adapt activities and strengthen the relationships, capabilities and responsibilities needed for change to continue beyond the initial intervention. This role therefore combines biodiversity and governance knowledge with process capabilities such as communication, facilitation, networking, reflection and conflict management.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

A Change Agent does not create change for a community. A Change Agent creates the conditions in which people can understand, shape and sustain change together.

The following eight steps translate the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach into practical action.

3.1 Step 1 – Create Shared Awareness

PURPOSE

Before people can act together, they need to develop a **shared understanding of the biodiversity challenge**. Shared awareness is more than providing scientific information. Different stakeholders may experience the same coastal ecosystem very differently. Residents, fishers, farmers, tourism businesses, visitors, conservation organisations and public authorities may have different knowledge, interests and concerns.

PRO-COAST therefore starts by bringing these perspectives together. Across the case studies, challenges included biodiversity loss, tourism pressure, marine pollution, habitat degradation and conflicts between human activities and ecological conservation.

WHAT TO DO

- Combine **scientific evidence with local knowledge and lived experience**. Map the biodiversity challenge together with stakeholders rather than presenting a predefined problem statement.
- Use conversations, interviews, walks, community meetings, observations, citizen-science data or visual mapping to explore how different people understand the place.
- Make the challenge locally meaningful: What is changing? Who notices it? Who is affected? What could be lost? Why does it matter?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What biodiversity challenge are we trying to address?
- ☐ How do different stakeholders understand the problem?
- ☐ What do local people know that existing scientific data may not capture?
- ☐ Who benefits from the current situation – and who bears the costs?
- ☐ Where do perspectives differ?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Shared Awareness Map

Create one page with four fields:

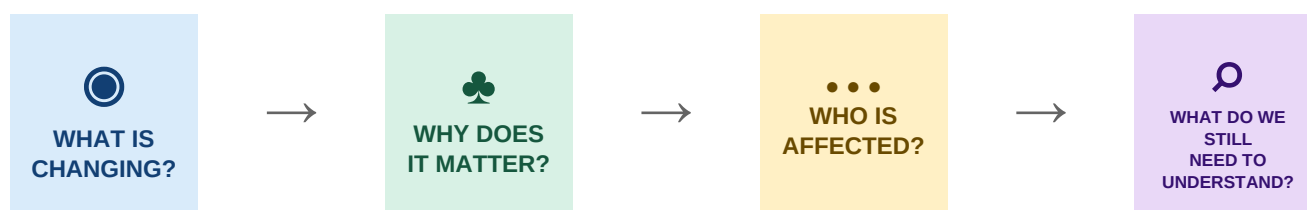


Figure 5. The Shared Awareness Map

Complete it with stakeholders, not for them.

! WATCH OUT

Awareness-raising should not become one-way communication. **Informing people about biodiversity loss is not the same as creating shared awareness.**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can different stakeholders explain both the biodiversity challenge and why collective action may be necessary?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Creating Shared Awareness in Comino, Malta

In Comino, shared awareness started with a challenge that different stakeholders experienced in different ways: increasing tourism pressure on a highly sensitive island ecosystem. Rather than treating this simply as a biodiversity problem, the Change Agent brought together perspectives from public authorities, environmental organisations, researchers, tourism stakeholders and the local community.

The process helped make visible the different concerns around tourism, conservation, and the island's future. Over time, this shared understanding provided the basis for more concrete activities, including stakeholder dialogues, biodiversity monitoring, waste audits, clean-up campaigns and visitor-awareness activities.

Lesson learned: Make different perspectives visible. Shared awareness emerges when stakeholders understand not only the biodiversity challenge, but also how others experience it.

3.2 Step 2 – Build the Team

PURPOSE

Change requires people who are willing and able to carry it forward.

The core team should therefore bring together **local knowledge, credibility, relationships, expertise, decision-making access, and the capacity to act**. PRO-COAST experience shows that Change Agents often need to bridge community members, public authorities, researchers, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups.

WHAT TO DO

- Before selecting the core team, map all relevant stakeholder groups using Tool 2 in the Annex. Include those affected by the biodiversity challenge, those with relevant knowledge or responsibilities, those who influence decisions, and those whose views may differ. The core team does not need to include every group, but it should establish how it will listen to and engage groups outside the team. Review the map as relationships and priorities change.
- Identify stakeholders who matter not only because of their formal position, but because they are **trusted, connected, or able to mobilise others**.
- Look for diversity. Include actors who understand the ecosystem, actors who understand the community and actors who can influence decisions or resources.
- Clarify roles early: Who convenes? Who communicates? Who provides knowledge? Who connects to the community? Who can open doors to decision-makers?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Who cares enough to remain involved?
- ☐ Who is trusted locally?
- ☐ Who has knowledge we need?
- ☐ Who can reach stakeholder groups we cannot reach ourselves?
- ☐ Who has influence over decisions, resources or practices?
- ☐ Whose perspective is currently missing?

The Core Team Test

Six complementary capacities for an effective change team

1		COMMITMENT	2		KNOWLEDGE	3		TRUST
4		CONNECTIONS	5		INFLUENCE	6		CAPACITY TO ACT

You do not need every person to score highly on everything.
The team as a whole should combine these capacities.

Figure 6. The Core Team Test

! WATCH OUT

Do not build the team only around the “usual suspects”. Formal authority does not automatically mean local trust, and strong community relationships do not automatically provide access to formal decision-making.

THE ARNE CASE ILLUSTRATES THIS RISK

Considerable effort was needed to restore the Parish Council’s confidence in the project, and Forestry England did not share the vision held by other stakeholders. Identify relevant actors early, listen to their concerns and check whether the emerging vision is genuinely shared.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Do we have a committed group with enough diversity, trust and influence to move the process forward?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Building the Core Team in Aquatina, Italy

In Aquatina, building the team started by bringing together actors around a shared interest in protecting the coastal ecosystem. The Change Agent connected stakeholders with complementary perspectives and capacities, combining ecological expertise with local knowledge and the ability to contribute to restoration and nature-based solutions.

Rather than treating stakeholder involvement as a one-off consultation, the team developed a collaborative process in which actors could discuss environmental pressures, explore possible solutions and jointly plan restoration activities. This helped turn initial stakeholder engagement into collaboration and strengthened ownership of the emerging solutions.

Lesson learned: Build the team around what people can contribute, not simply who should formally be represented. Combining different knowledge, capacities and perspectives creates a stronger basis for collective action.

3.3 Step 3 – Develop a Shared Vision

PURPOSE

A biodiversity problem explains **why change is necessary**. A shared vision describes **what people want to create together**.

PRO-COAST case studies developed visions around issues including biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism, ecosystem restoration and community stewardship.



The vision should connect ecological ambitions with the realities and aspirations of the people who live, work in or use the coastal area.

WHAT TO DO

- Ask stakeholders to describe what a desirable future for the place would look like.
- Start with possibilities before immediately discussing constraints. Look for common ground between ecological and societal objectives.
- Turn broad aspirations into a direction that people can understand and use when making decisions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What should this coastal area look like in the future?
- ☐ What should be different for biodiversity?
- ☐ What should be different for people?
- ☐ What do we want to protect, restore or change?
- ☐ What could different stakeholders contribute?

PRACTICAL TOOL – Future Coast

Complete three sentences collectively:

1	In the future, we want our coastal ecosystem to...
2	For the people who live, work or visit here, this means...
3	To reach this future, we need to change...

Figure 7. Future Coast

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

A strong vision connects biodiversity outcomes with a future that local stakeholders can recognise as meaningful.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can stakeholders see their concerns and aspirations within the shared vision?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Developing a Shared Vision in Kloogaranna-Laulasmaa, Estonia

In Kloogaranna-Laulasmaa, stakeholders worked towards a shared vision for more participatory coastal governance. The process brought together local communities, environmental organisations, public authorities and other actors involved in coastal management.

Through stakeholder workshops, meetings and collaborative planning exercises, participants explored their different perspectives on local coastal challenges and gradually developed a shared understanding of local priorities.

Rather than focusing on a single environmental intervention, the emerging vision centred on stronger participation, dialogue and collaboration in future coastal management.

Lesson learned: A shared vision does not require everyone to start with the same priorities. It can emerge by creating space for different perspectives and identifying a common direction for future action.

3.4 Step 4 – Communicate the Vision

PURPOSE

A vision creates little change if it remains within the core team.

Communication should expand **understanding, dialogue and participation**. PRO-COAST case studies used stakeholder meetings, community events, awareness campaigns, social media and educational initiatives to reach wider groups.

WHAT TO DO

- Identify which stakeholder groups need to be reached and select communication formats that fit them.
- Use accessible language. Connect biodiversity to issues people already care about. Work through trusted local organisations or individuals where appropriate.
- Most importantly, create opportunities for people to **respond**.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Who has not heard the vision yet?
- ☐ Which messages matter to which stakeholders?
- ☐ Which communication channels do they actually use?
- ☐ Who is the most credible messenger?
- ☐ How can people respond, question or contribute?



PRACTICAL TOOL

Communication Match

For every important stakeholder group identify:

1	Audience
2	Message
3	Trusted Messenger
4	Channel
5	Opportunity To Respond

Figure 8. Communication Match

! WATCH OUT

More communication does not automatically mean more engagement. **Communication becomes useful for change when it creates interaction.**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are stakeholders beginning to discuss, question and engage with the vision rather than simply receiving information?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Communicating the Vision in Corbu, Romania

In Corbu, the shared vision for biodiversity protection was communicated through the “Neighbours of Corbu” campaign, involving residents, visitors, schools, local businesses and community organisations.

Rather than communicating biodiversity as an abstract conservation issue, the campaign connected it to local identity and shared responsibility. Educational activities, community workshops, biodiversity events and citizen-science initiatives invited people not only to receive information but to see themselves as “neighbours” sharing responsibility for the coastal ecosystem.

What started as an awareness campaign gradually became a platform for participation and environmental stewardship.

Lesson learned: Make the vision part of people's own story. Communication can mobilise participation when people can see their own role and responsibility within the change.

3.5 Step 5 – Empower Action

PURPOSE

This is the point at which engagement needs to become **participation and ownership**.

People may support biodiversity conservation but still be unable to act. Barriers can include lack of knowledge, time, resources, confidence, access, authority or opportunities to participate.

Across PRO-COAST, Change Agents worked to reduce such barriers through training, citizen-science programmes, stakeholder engagement and collaborative planning.

WHAT TO DO

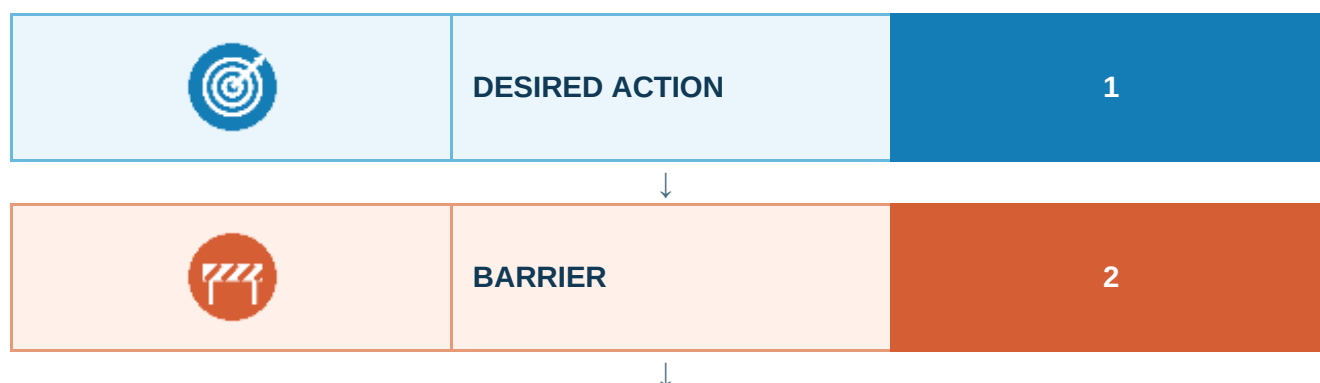
- Ask what prevents people from participating.
- Give stakeholders meaningful roles, not symbolic ones. Provide the knowledge, tools, access or training needed to act. Wherever possible, allow stakeholders to influence how activities are designed.
- Start with actions that are realistic within the local context.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What do people want to contribute?
- ☐ What prevents them from acting?
- ☐ What resources or knowledge are missing?
- ☐ What decisions can stakeholders genuinely influence?
- ☐ Who currently has too little opportunity to participate?

PRACTICAL TOOL – Barrier to Action

Use a simple sequence:



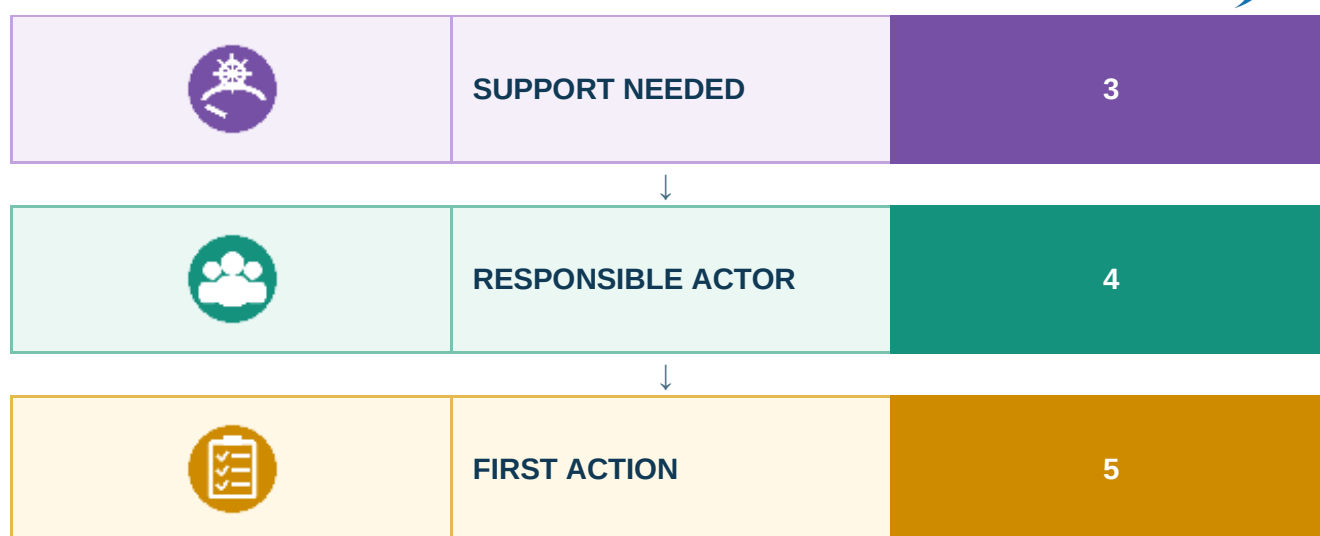


Figure 9. Barrier to Action

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Participation is stronger when people are not only invited to join an activity but have a meaningful role in shaping and delivering it.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are stakeholders moving from participants to contributors and co-owners?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Enabling Stakeholders to Act in Arne, United Kingdom

In Arne, local stakeholders were interested in protecting native red squirrels and their habitats, but effective action required more than awareness of the threat posed by invasive grey squirrels. Farmers, foresters, hunters and other local actors needed the knowledge and practical capacity to contribute to monitoring and management.

The Change Agent therefore combined community outreach with training, biodiversity monitoring and practical tools. Stakeholders increasingly moved from being recipients of information to active contributors, participating in biodiversity observations, awareness activities and squirrel management. The development of the REDS platform further connected citizen-science data with environmental decision support, enabling local knowledge and monitoring to contribute to management.

Lesson learned: Empowerment starts when people are given a practical way to contribute. Training, tools and meaningful roles can turn interest in biodiversity into action and shared responsibility.

3.6 Step 6 – Generate Short – Term Wins

PURPOSE

Transformation takes time. People therefore need credible signs that their effort is making a difference. PRO-COAST generated early achievements through stakeholder events, biodiversity monitoring, restoration activities, awareness campaigns, educational initiatives and community engagement actions.

Short-term wins can build confidence and demonstrate that collective action is possible.

WHAT TO DO

- Identify achievable actions connected to the shared vision. Make progress visible. Recognise stakeholder contributions and communicate what has been learned.
- But distinguish carefully between an **activity** and a **change**.
- A biodiversity workshop is an activity.
- New actors deciding to collaborate after that workshop is a change.
- A monitoring event is an activity.
- Residents continuing to collect biodiversity information or to use that evidence in local decision-making indicates a bigger change.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What can we realistically achieve soon?
- ☐ Would this matter to stakeholders and biodiversity?
- ☐ What would demonstrate meaningful progress?
- ☐ How will we know whether anything changed?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Win Test

A useful short-term win should be:



Figure 10. The Win Test

! WATCH OUT

Do not confuse being busy with creating change.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Do stakeholders have credible evidence that collective action can make a difference?

PRO-COAST In Practice

An Early Achievement in Streedagh, Ireland

In Streedagh, local stakeholders took part in Marram Grass restoration and monitoring activities to protect vulnerable dune systems. Workshops, field activities and community events helped participants understand the ecological importance of the dunes while providing practical opportunities to contribute.

The important achievement was not simply that restoration and monitoring activities took place. Over time, community members became increasingly involved in protecting and monitoring the dunes themselves. Dune protection began to be seen as a shared responsibility, providing visible evidence that local participation could contribute to coastal resilience.

Lesson learned: Look beyond the completed activity. A short-term win becomes meaningful when people can see that their contribution has made a difference and are motivated to stay involved.

3.7 Step 7 – Sustain Momentum

PURPOSE

Successful activities need to become part of a continuing **learning and adaptation process**.

PRO-COAST emphasises that transformation rarely results from a single intervention. Partnerships need to be strengthened, activities adapted and lessons incorporated into subsequent action.

WHAT TO DO

- Regularly review what is working and what is not. Bring stakeholders back together. Compare experience with evidence. Adapt activities when circumstances change.
- Use setbacks as information rather than automatically interpreting them as failure.
- Peer learning can also help. The PRO-COAST workshop series created a community of practice in which Change Agents compared experiences and learned from approaches developed in other socio-ecological contexts.

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Learning Loop

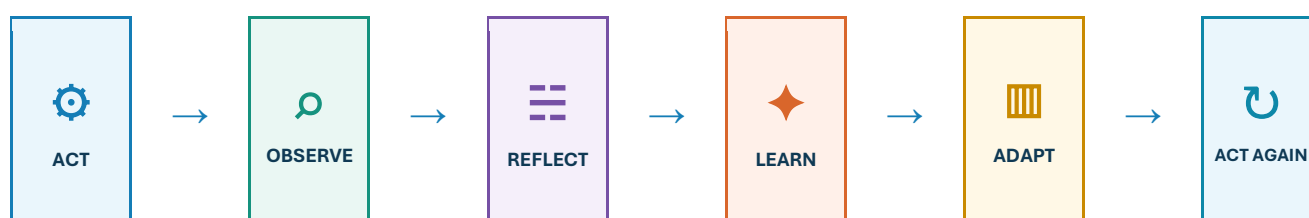


Figure 11. The Learning Loop

AT EACH CYCLE, ASK

- 01 What Happened?
- 02 What Changed?
- 03 What Surprised Us?
- 04 What Did Not Work?
- 05 What Should We Do Differently?

! WATCH OUT

Do not continue an activity simply because it was in the original plan. **Adaptation is part of transformation**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are stakeholders learning from experience and adapting while maintaining commitment to the wider vision?

PRO-COAST In Practice

Sustaining Momentum through Peer Learning and Adaptation

Across PRO-COAST, the workshop series developed into a community of practice in which Change Agents compared experiences, discussed challenges, exchanged tools and reflected on progress across the different case studies. Over time, discussions shifted from reporting what had been done towards examining why certain approaches worked, why others were less effective and what could be transferred to other contexts.

This repeated reflection helped Change Agents reconsider assumptions and adapt subsequent activities. Rather than following initial plans unchanged, they learned to respond to changing stakeholder priorities, implementation challenges and emerging opportunities. The workshops therefore became not only a place to report progress, but a continuing learning environment supporting adaptation and sustained action.

Lesson learned: Sustain momentum by creating regular opportunities to reflect, learn and adapt. Progress is more likely to continue when experience is used to improve the next round of action.

3.8 Step 8 – Make Change Stick

PURPOSE

The Final goal is not to keep every project activity running indefinitely but to ensure that **valuable behaviours, relationships, knowledge, and practices can persist beyond the initial intervention**. In PRO-COAST, possible pathways to achieve long-term sustainability included citizen-science networks, stakeholder partnerships, educational initiatives, governance collaborations, and monitoring systems.

WHAT TO DO

- Identify what is worth sustaining and who could take responsibility for it.
- Connect successful activities to existing organisations, community structures or governance processes. Consider how knowledge and data will remain accessible. Explore resources and responsibilities for continuation.
- Most importantly, strengthen local capacity so that progress does not remain dependent on one project or one Change Agent.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What should continue?
- ☐ Who will own it?
- ☐ Which relationships need to remain active?
- ☐ Can successful practices become part of existing routines or decisions?
- ☐ Who will maintain biodiversity monitoring or citizen-science activities?
- ☐ What will happen when project support ends?

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Legacy Test

For every important outcome, ask:

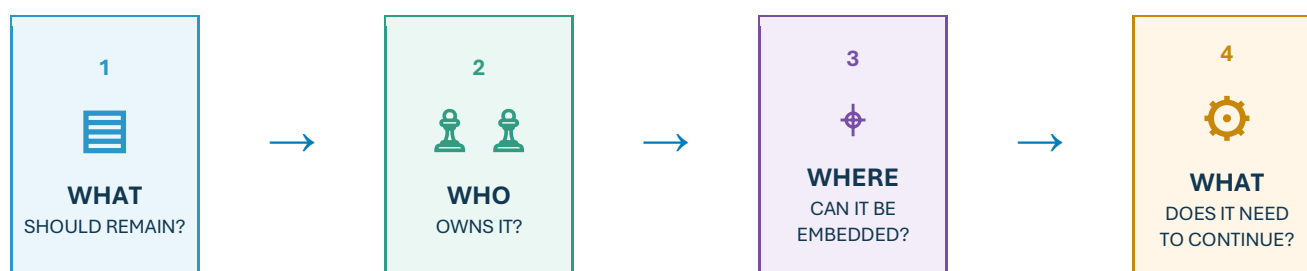


Figure 12. The Legacy Test

! WATCH OUT

Sustainability does not mean that every activity must continue unchanged. Sometimes the most valuable legacy is a **relationship, capability, monitoring practice or governance connection** that enables people to respond differently to future challenges.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Could meaningful parts of the change process continue without the original project or Change Agent driving every activity?

Planning for Continuity in Strunjan, Slovenia

In Strunjan, the SRNA citizen-science monitoring system emerged as a practice with value beyond the initial project activities. What began as a response to wildlife-related concerns developed into a monitoring network involving local residents, volunteers, conservation organisations and researchers.

Through the SRNA platform, camera trapping, wildlife monitoring and citizen-science training, ecological data collection became connected with continued community participation. Importantly, the case strengthened long-term collaboration between local communities and conservation organisations, creating a basis for monitoring and engagement that can extend beyond individual project events. The report also identifies the SRNA model as having potential for replication in other protected areas and biodiversity-monitoring programmes.

Lesson learned: Make change stick by embedding useful practices in relationships and capacities that can continue. Monitoring becomes a lasting legacy when local actors have the knowledge, connections and tools to remain involved.

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Change Agent Quick Check

At any point in the process, return to these eight questions as a quick pause-and-check throughout the change [process](#).

1

Awareness

Do we understand the biodiversity challenge together?

2

Team

Do we have the right people involved?

3

Vision

Do we know what future we are working towards?

4

Communication

Are we creating dialogue beyond the core team?

5

Action

Can stakeholders meaningfully contribute?

6

Wins

Can we demonstrate that something is changing?

7

Momentum

Are we learning and adapting?

8

Legacy

What will remain when our intervention ends?

Figure 13. The Change Agent Quick Check

→ TAKE-AWAY

The Change Agent's role is not to control the transformation journey. It is to help people navigate it.

THE CHANGE AGENT JOURNEY

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO LASTING CAPACITY

A practical pathway for supporting change that can continue beyond the intervention

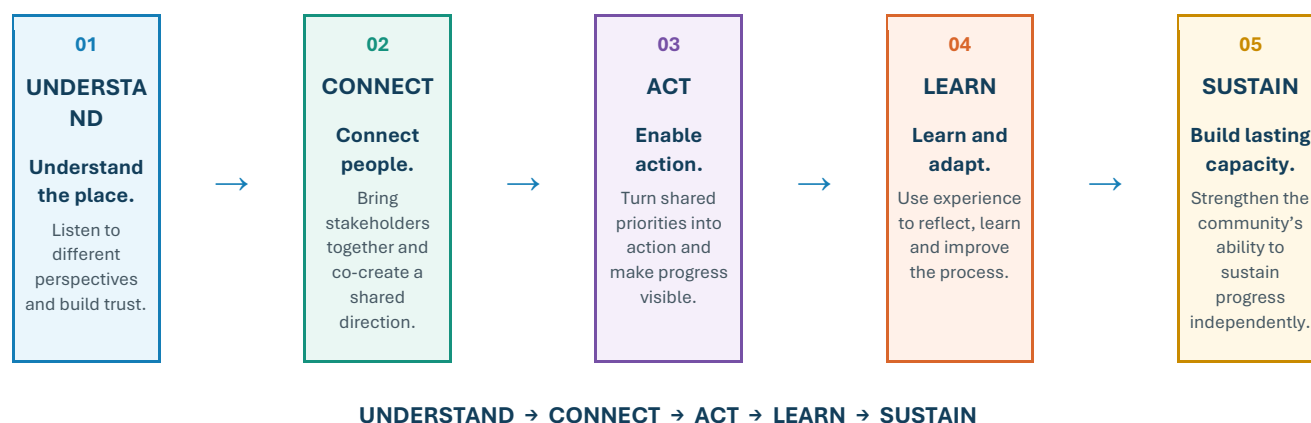


Figure 14. The Change Agent Journey

4 FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR MAKING CHANGE WORK IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES

The PRO-COAST case studies varied significantly in ecological challenges, stakeholder groups, and governance environments. However, they shared several key lessons from the Change Capacity process. Stakeholder ownership, ongoing communication, citizen science, sustained engagement, and adaptive governance consistently proved crucial.

The workshop series also showed the value of sharing insights across diverse social-ecological settings. These experiences translate into five practical principles for Change Agents.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Do not transfer solutions from one coast to another. Transfer principles, questions and learning – and adapt them to the local social-ecological context.

4.1 Step 1 – Start with The Local Social–Ecological Context

PURPOSE

Coastal biodiversity challenges are inseparable from the people, activities and institutions surrounding them. Tourism, fishing, agriculture, recreation, conservation, local livelihoods, regulation and land or sea use may interact with biodiversity in very different ways from one place to another. PRO-COAST therefore treats coastal areas as **social-ecological systems**. Environmental challenges cannot be understood independently from their social, economic and political context.

WHAT TO DO

- Before designing an intervention, understand both the **ecological and social systems**.
- Map existing biodiversity pressures and conservation activities, but also investigate who uses the area, who makes decisions, who has knowledge, where conflicts exist and which previous initiatives have succeeded or failed.
- Do not assume local stakeholders automatically share the scientific definition of the problem.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What is happening ecologically?
- ☐ How do people use and value this place?
- ☐ Who benefits from existing practices?
- ☐ Who experiences negative consequences?
- ☐ Which rules and institutions shape behaviour?
- ☐ What has already been tried?

! WATCH OUT

A technically appropriate biodiversity solution may fail if it does not fit local relationships, livelihoods, values or governance conditions.

✓ PRACTICE RULE

Understand The Place → Understand The People → Then Co-Design The Intervention

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we explain the biodiversity challenge from both an ecological and a stakeholder perspective?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Different Coastal Contexts Require Different Responses

The PRO-COAST case studies operated in different ecological, social and governance contexts. Across the cases, biodiversity challenges were linked to activities and pressures including tourism, fishing, agriculture, recreation, marine pollution, habitat degradation, and competing forms of land or sea use. The relevant stakeholder groups and institutional arrangements also differed between locations.

The Change Capacity process therefore encouraged Change Agents to examine not only ecological conditions, but also how people used and valued the area, where relevant knowledge was held, which actors influenced decisions, and what barriers or enabling conditions shaped possible action.

Lesson learned: Approaches should not be transferred unchanged between coastal areas. Change Agents need to understand how ecological pressures, livelihoods, stakeholder relationships and governance arrangements interact in each place.

4.2 Step 2 – Build Trust Before Expecting Collaboration

PURPOSE

Stakeholder engagement involves more than just convening people. Participants must have sufficient confidence in the process, the Change Agent, and each other to openly share information, address disagreements, and work together towards common goals.

In PRO-COAST, we identified trust as a fundamental condition for change at individual, organisational and broader governance levels. Trust supports open communication, collaboration and sustained stakeholder engagement, while also helping Change Agents and stakeholders navigate uncertainty, disagreement and resistance over time.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Participation brings stakeholders into the process. Trust helps them stay, contribute and act together.

WHAT TO DO

- Invest time in relationships before asking stakeholders for commitments.
- Listen to concerns. Be transparent about what the project can and cannot influence. Keep promises. Explain how stakeholder input will be used. Acknowledge disagreement rather than hiding it.
- Work with trusted local intermediaries where relationships are difficult to establish directly.

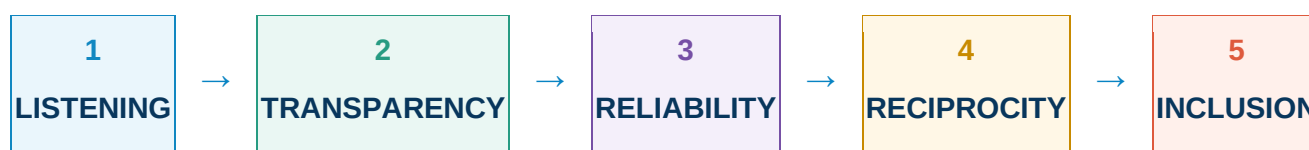
QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Who trusts whom?
- ☐ Where are relationships already strong?
- ☐ Where is there distrust or previous conflict?
- ☐ Are stakeholders confident that their contributions matter?
- ☐ Are we transparent about decisions and limitations?
- ☐ Have we done what we said we would do?

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Trust Check

For important stakeholder relationships, assess:



If one element is weak, ask what the Change Agent can realistically do to strengthen it.

Figure 15. The Trust Check

POWER AND CONFLICT CHECK

Trust and shared understanding matter, but they may not be enough for collaboration. Coastal governance processes can involve unequal influence, competing interests and disagreement about who should benefit, who should bear costs and whose knowledge should shape decisions. Change Agents should therefore address power and conflict explicitly rather than assuming that participation alone will resolve them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Who benefits from the current situation or proposed change?
- ☐ Who bears the financial, social or environmental costs?
- ☐ Who can influence the decision formally or informally?

- ☐ Whose knowledge and interests are recognised?
- ☐ Who may be excluded or unable to participate effectively?
- ☐ Are some stakeholders able to shape the process more strongly than others?
- ☐ Is there disagreement about the objective, the evidence, the process or the distribution of benefits and costs?

WHAT TO DO

- Map stakeholder interests alongside their formal and informal influence.
- Make decision-making procedures and limitations transparent.
- Agree clear rules for participation and decision-making.
- Use an impartial facilitator where relationships are particularly difficult or conflict is significant.
- Provide less powerful or underrepresented stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to contribute.
- Use accessible formats and provide additional time, information or support where participation barriers exist.
- Record areas of agreement and disagreement instead of presenting artificial consensus.
- Establish how you will document and address unresolved concerns.

Practice rule: Do not treat disagreement as evidence that engagement has failed. Managed constructively, disagreement can reveal competing interests, unequal influence and important information that would otherwise remain hidden.

! WATCH OUT

Trust cannot be demanded because a project has good intentions. It develops through repeated experience.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are stakeholders increasingly willing to share knowledge, discuss disagreement and collaborate?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Trust as a Condition for Continued Engagement

PRO-COAST identified trust as important at individual, organisational and wider governance levels. Across the Change Capacity process, Change Agents connected communities, public authorities, researchers, NGOs, businesses, and other actors. This role required attention to existing relationships, previous tensions, local credibility and whether stakeholders believed that their contributions would influence the process.

The project experience highlighted that formal authority does not automatically create community trust, while trusted local actors may not have access to formal decision-making. Change Agents therefore need to work across both community relationships and institutional structures.

Lesson learned: Trust develops through repeated experience of transparency, responsiveness and follow-through, not simply through inviting stakeholders to participate.

4.3 Step 3 – Listen, Reflect, and Co-Create

PURPOSE

Change Agents often possess significant scientific or technical expertise when initiating a process. However, expertise alone doesn't determine which solutions a community will comprehend, accept, support, or maintain. Theory U introduces a vital principle to the PRO-COAST approach: observe and listen before making decisions. Stakeholders are urged to consider various perspectives, reflect on their assumptions, and collaboratively explore new possibilities.

WHAT TO DO

- Create opportunities for stakeholders to define problems as well as solutions.
- Use open questions. Explore disagreement. Combine scientific evidence with local and experiential knowledge. Test emerging ideas before committing to large-scale interventions.
- After implementation, return to stakeholders and ask what should change

The process becomes:

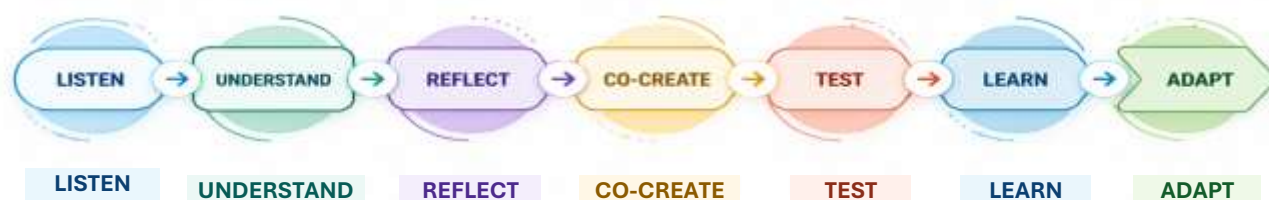


Figure 16. Process of Listen, Reflect, and Co-Creation

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Whose knowledge are we using?
- ☐ Whose knowledge are we missing?
- ☐ What assumptions are we making?
- ☐ What are stakeholders telling us that does not fit our original plan?
- ☐ What part of the intervention has actually been shaped by stakeholders?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Co-Creation Test

Ask one simple question:

?	What is different because stakeholders participated?
---	--

IF THE ANSWER IS “NOTHING”
the process was probably **consultation** rather than **co-creation**.

CONSULTATION

≠

CO-CREATION

! WATCH OUT

Asking stakeholders for feedback after all important decisions have already been made is not co-creation.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we identify a meaningful decision, activity or solution that changed because stakeholders contributed?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Connecting Implementation with Reflection

The PRO-COAST workshop process connected activities within the case studies with structured reflection, case-study presentations, practical exercises and peer exchange. Change Agents considered what had happened, what barriers or unexpected responses had emerged, and what might need to be adapted in subsequent activities.

Experiences from different social-ecological settings were brought into conversation without assuming that an approach used in one location could be copied directly in another. Change Agents were encouraged to identify transferable insights and then assess whether and how they were relevant to their own local context.

Lesson learned: Co-creation requires stakeholder contributions to influence what happens next. Listening and reflection become meaningful when they lead to an observable decision, adaptation or jointly developed response.

4.4 Step 4 – Turn Participation into Stewardship and Collective Action

PURPOSE

Participation is valuable, but PRO-COAST ultimately aims for more than workshop attendance or awareness events. Across the case studies, activities included citizen science, biodiversity monitoring, restoration, awareness campaigns, community monitoring systems and stakeholder platforms. Over time, many initiatives evolved into collaborative processes involving public authorities, civil society, researchers, businesses and communities.

The important transition is therefore:



Figure 17. From Participation to Stewardship

WHAT TO DO

- Give stakeholders meaningful opportunities to contribute to biodiversity action.
- This may mean collecting data, monitoring species or habitats, restoring ecosystems, developing local solutions, communicating with other community members, participating in planning or taking responsibility for continuing an initiative.
- Whenever possible, connect participation to something stakeholders can **see, influence or learn from**.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What can stakeholders actually do?
- ☐ What decisions can they influence?
- ☐ What knowledge or resources do they need?
- ☐ Can participation generate benefits for both biodiversity and the community?
- ☐ Could participants eventually take responsibility without the project organising everything?

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Ownership Ladder

Use the ladder to reflect on the quality of engagement.



The Objective is not always to move every stakeholder to the highest level.
Instead, ask whether the **level of engagement matches the role stakeholders need to play.**

Figure 18. The Ownership Ladder: From Information to Stewardship

! WATCH OUT

High participant numbers do not necessarily indicate strong ownership.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are some stakeholders beginning to take action because they see it as their responsibility rather than simply a project activity?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Moving from Participation towards Action

Across the PRO-COAST case studies, participatory activities included citizen science, biodiversity monitoring, restoration, awareness campaigns, community monitoring systems and stakeholder platforms. These activities created opportunities for public authorities, civil society organisations, researchers, businesses and communities to contribute different forms of knowledge and capacity.

In the PRO-COAST approach, participation was not treated as an end in itself. The intended progression was from receiving information and attending activities towards contributing knowledge, influencing action, collaborating with others and, where possible, assuming greater responsibility for biodiversity stewardship.

Lesson learned: Participation becomes stewardship when stakeholders have a meaningful role, can see the relevance of their contribution and develop the capacity to continue acting beyond an individual project activity.

4.5 Step 5 – Connect Biodiversity Action with Governance

PURPOSE

Local action gains longevity when it aligns with the institutions and decisions influencing the coastal system. Therefore, Change Agents must operate across different levels. D6.1 defines them as gatekeepers and mediators among residents, authorities, businesses, NGOs, and other stakeholders, emphasizing their importance in connecting local efforts with governance, policy, and funding channels.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

A successful local action becomes more powerful when the knowledge, relationships or practices it creates can influence how future decisions are made.

WHAT TO DO

- Identify who has formal and informal influence over the biodiversity challenge.
- Consider local authorities, protected-area managers, regulators, landowners, businesses, sector organisations, NGOs and community groups.
- Ask how knowledge generated through community activities or citizen science could reach decision-makers. Explore whether successful practices could be incorporated into management plans, monitoring systems, organisational routines or future policies.

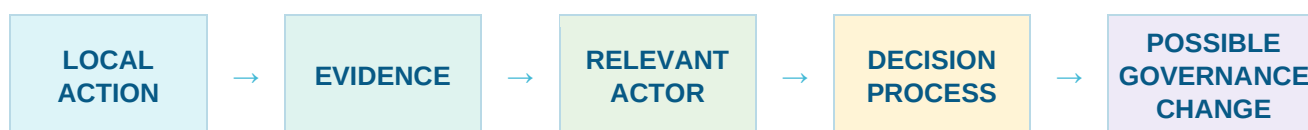


QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ Who makes the decisions that affect this biodiversity challenge?
- ☐ Who influences those decision-makers?
- ☐ Where does community knowledge currently enter decision-making?
- ☐ What evidence would decision-makers need?
- ☐ Could a successful local practice become part of an existing governance process?
- ☐ Which relationships need to continue for this to happen?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Governance Connection

For each promising local action, map:



For example:

Community biodiversity monitoring

- → Produces locally relevant evidence
- → Shared with conservation authority
- → Enters habitat-management discussion
- → Informs future monitoring or management.

This does not mean that one activity has transformed governance. It identifies a **possible pathway for local action to become institutionally relevant**.

! WATCH OUT

Do not wait until the end of an intervention to think about governance. If institutional embedding matters, relevant actors should be connected to the process early.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we identify at least one realistic pathway through which local biodiversity action, knowledge or relationships could influence future decisions or practices?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Connecting Local Knowledge, Relationships and Governance

PRO-COAST positioned Change Agents as gatekeepers and mediators between residents, public authorities, businesses, NGOs, researchers and other relevant actors. This connecting role was intended to help knowledge and experience generated through local biodiversity activities reach organisations and decision-makers able to influence management, monitoring, policy, funding or future practice.

Across the project, possible routes towards longer-term governance connection included stakeholder partnerships, citizen-science and monitoring systems, collaboration with public authorities, educational initiatives and links with existing organisations or governance processes.



Lesson learned: Local action has a greater chance of influencing longer-term practice when relevant governance actors are involved early and when evidence, responsibilities and relationships are connected to existing institutional processes.

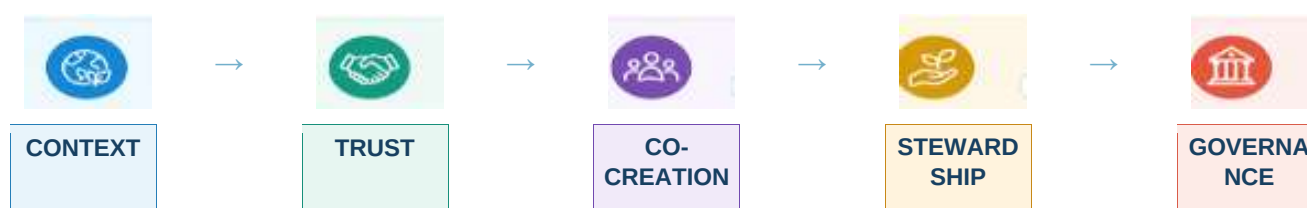
The Five Principles at a Glance

Use the five principles as a simple reference throughout the change process. Together, they highlight the key areas that Change Agents should keep in mind when working with stakeholders and communities. The practical questions below provide a quick way to reflect on how these principles are being applied in practice.

Table 3. The Five Principles at a Glance

Principle	Practical question
1 Start with context	Do we understand both the ecological and social system?
2 Build trust	Are relationships strong enough for meaningful collaboration?
3 Listen and co-create	Have stakeholders genuinely influenced what we do?
4 Build stewardship	Are people moving from participation towards ownership and action?
5 Connect to governance	Can local action influence decisions, institutions or future practices?

Together, the principles create a practical progression:



→ TAKE-AWAY

Biodiversity conservation becomes a process of societal change when people move from being recipients of conservation measures to becoming participants, collaborators and stewards of their coastal environment.

A change agent's role is to facilitate that transition by linking community initiatives with broader relationships, institutions, and governance structures essential for lasting change.

5 CITIZEN SCIENCE AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE

Citizen science offers benefits beyond just collecting biodiversity data. As a participatory process, it helps people engage directly with their coastal environment, bridges scientific and local knowledge, promotes dialogue among stakeholders, and enhances their sense of responsibility for biodiversity.

This highlights the significance of citizen science in the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach. In the case studies, citizen science and biodiversity monitoring served as practical methods to transition from stakeholder engagement to actual implementation and locally rooted actions. The cross-case analysis further recognized citizen science as a vital means for fostering participation, increasing knowledge, and promoting sustained engagement.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Do not use citizen science only to collect data. Use it to connect people, knowledge and action.

A useful way to think about its potential is:



Not every citizen-science initiative will progress through all these stages. The pathway helps Change Agents ask what the activity could enable beyond data collection.

5.1 Step 1 – Design Citizen Science for Participation and Learning



The starting point should not be:

“What data do we need citizens to collect?”



Instead ask:

“What can people and biodiversity gain from participating?”



Well-designed citizen-science activity should create value for both the biodiversity objective and the participants.

WHAT TO DO

- Start with a clear biodiversity question. Decide what information is genuinely useful and what participants can realistically observe or collect.

- Keep the method understandable and feasible. Explain not only how data should be collected but why the information matters.
- Where possible, involve participants in more than data collection. They may help identify questions, select locations, interpret observations, discuss implications or communicate results.
- Finally, make sure participants hear what happened to the information they contributed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What biodiversity question are we trying to answer?
- ☐ Why do we need community participation?
- ☐ Who could contribute useful knowledge or observations?
- ☐ What do participants need to know or learn?
- ☐ How will the information be used?
- ☐ How will results be returned to participants?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Citizen Science Canvas

Before launching an activity, complete six fields:



Figure 19. The Citizen Science Canvas: Six Questions for Designing an Activity

! WATCH OUT

Do not treat community members simply as unpaid data collectors. Participation becomes more meaningful when people understand the purpose, can contribute their own knowledge and see how the evidence is used.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can participants explain why they are collecting the information and what could happen with it afterwards?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Using Citizen Science to Connect Participation and Learning

Across the PRO-COAST case studies, citizen science and biodiversity monitoring served as practical ways to move from stakeholder engagement to locally grounded action. Their role extended beyond collecting ecological data: they created opportunities for participants to engage directly with their coastal environment, contribute local observations and strengthen their understanding of biodiversity challenges.

The cross-case learning highlighted the importance of giving participants a clear purpose, an understandable method and information about how their contributions would be used. Citizen science was therefore approached not only as a research method, but also as a participatory and capacity-building process.

Lesson learned: Citizen science is more meaningful when participants understand why information is being collected, can contribute their own knowledge and receive feedback about how the evidence is used.

5.2 Step 2 – Turn Biodiversity Knowledge into Ownership and Action

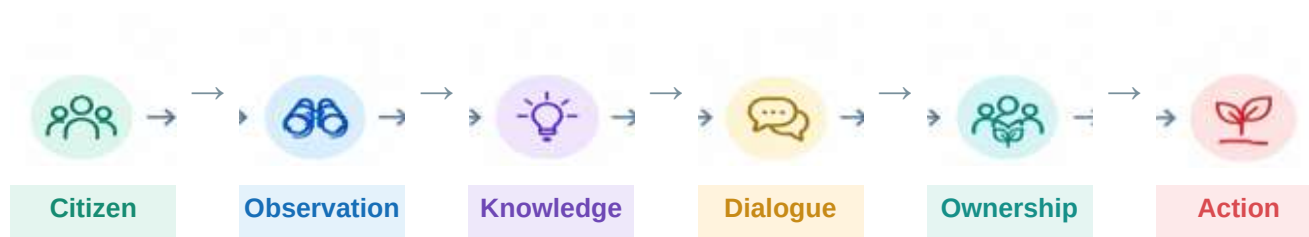
PURPOSE

Citizen science is especially valuable for behavioral and societal change when it transforms how people relate to their environment. Regular observation helps reveal ecological changes that might otherwise go unnoticed. Local experience enriches scientific knowledge, enabling participants to acquire new skills and insights. Over time, those monitoring habitats or species may become more open to discussing threats, sharing their findings, or engaging in conservation efforts.

The desired pathway is therefore not simply:



but potentially:



This pathway represents the social dimension of REDS, focusing on how citizen participation can develop from observation and knowledge into dialogue, ownership and action. The ecological dimension of REDS is addressed through the REDS software, which provides the corresponding ecological analysis and decision-support functions.

This reflects the wider role given to Change Agents in PRO-COAST: they connect knowledge, stakeholders, and action, and help communities experiment, learn, and gradually embed more sustainable practices.

WHAT TO DO

- Create opportunities to interpret results collectively rather than only sending data to researchers.
- Bring participants, scientists and relevant decision-makers together to discuss what observations mean.
- Ask whether the findings point towards practical actions. Where appropriate, connect monitoring with restoration, protection, awareness or stewardship activities.
- Recognise local knowledge as a contribution rather than treating scientific expertise as the only legitimate form of knowledge.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What are participants noticing?
- ☐ Has their understanding of the ecosystem changed?
- ☐ Are new conversations emerging?
- ☐ Are participants sharing knowledge with others?
- ☐ Does the evidence suggest an action?
- ☐ Are people becoming willing to take responsibility for continued monitoring or conservation?

PRACTICAL TOOL – From Data to Action

After a citizen-science activity, work through:



Figure 20. From Data to Action

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

The strongest citizen-science outcome may not be the dataset alone. It may be a community that understands its biodiversity better and has greater capacity to act for it.

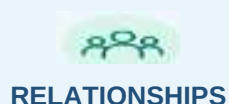
! WATCH OUT

Do not assume that increased knowledge automatically changes behaviour.

Understanding is not enough

Someone can understand biodiversity loss and still face practical, economic, institutional or social barriers to acting differently.

Citizen science therefore needs to connect with the wider Deep-Change process:



These wider conditions matter too.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Is citizen science generating something beyond data – such as learning, relationships, ownership or action?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Moving beyond Data Collection

The PRO-COAST cross-case analysis identified citizen science as a means of supporting participation, increasing biodiversity knowledge and encouraging sustained engagement. By observing habitats, species or environmental conditions, participants could combine local experience with scientific approaches and develop a stronger understanding of changes occurring in their coastal environment.

The PRO-COAST approach emphasised that the potential value of citizen science lies not only in the resulting dataset, but also in the conversations, relationships and practical responses that the monitoring process can stimulate. Change Agents were therefore encouraged to connect observation and evidence with collective interpretation, awareness, restoration, protection or stewardship where appropriate.

Lesson learned: Biodiversity knowledge is more likely to support ownership when participants can interpret what they observe, discuss its significance and identify possible responses together.

5.3 Step 3 – Connect Citizen Science to Governance and Long-Term Stewardship

PURPOSE

Citizen science is particularly valuable when locally generated knowledge reaches decision-makers who can influence management. The goal isn't to suggest that citizen-generated evidence automatically changes policy but to emphasize that Change Agents should consciously think about where the evidence needs to go.

WHAT TO DO

- Identify potential users of the evidence from the beginning.
- These may include local authorities, conservation organisations, protected-area managers, researchers, environmental agencies, landowners or other actors involved in coastal management.
- Discuss what evidence these actors can actually use, in what format and at what point in their decision processes.
- Where citizen-science activities prove useful, explore how monitoring can continue. Consider community groups, schools, NGOs, research institutions or existing monitoring programmes as possible long-term hosts.

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Evidence Pathway

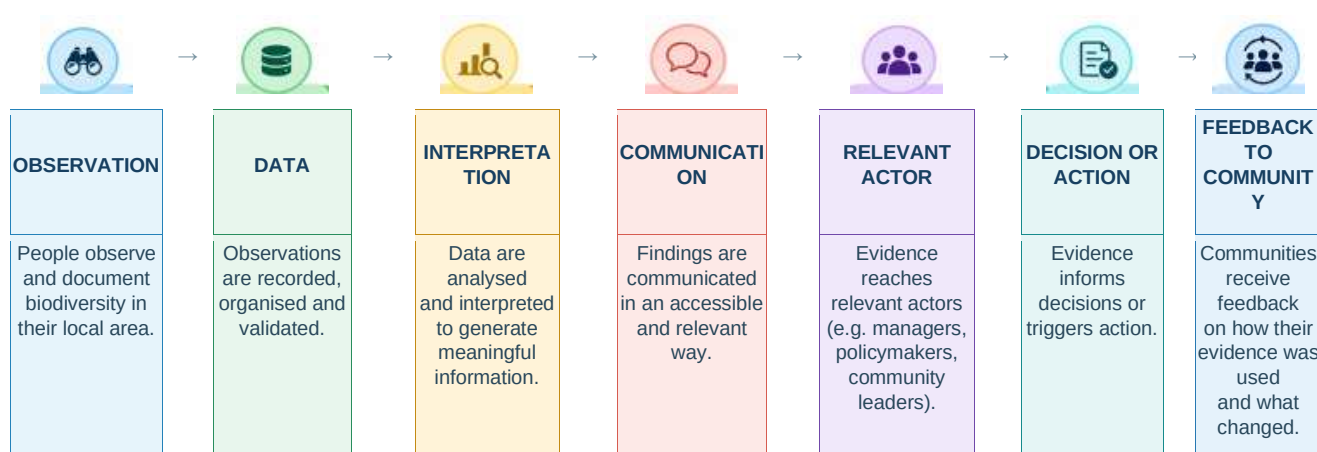


Figure 21. The Evidence Pathway: Connecting Citizen-Science Evidence to Decision-Making and Community Feedback

MAP THE COMPLETE ROUTE

OBSERVATION → DATA → INTERPRETATION → COMMUNICATION → RELEVANT ACTOR → DECISION OR ACTION → FEEDBACK TO COMMUNITY

For example:

Residents monitor a coastal habitat → Observations are validated and interpreted → Findings are discussed with conservation actors → Evidence enters a management discussion → A management response is considered → Participants learn how their evidence was used.

⚠ A break anywhere in this pathway can limit impact.

! WATCH OUT

Collecting more data is not always the answer. Before establishing long-term monitoring, ask **who needs the evidence, whether it will be used and whether the community has the capacity to continue collecting it.**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Is there a credible pathway connecting community-generated knowledge to conservation action, management or governance?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Creating Pathways from Community Knowledge to Decision-Making

PRO-COAST recognised that community-generated biodiversity evidence becomes more useful when it can reach actors involved in conservation and coastal management. Potential users identified in the Manual include local authorities, conservation organisations, protected-area managers, researchers, environmental agencies and landowners.

The Change Agent's connecting role is important in identifying what evidence these actors can use, how to communicate it, and when it needs to enter the decision-making process. Possible arrangements for longer-term monitoring include community groups, schools, NGOs, research institutions and existing monitoring programmes.

Lesson learned: Collecting evidence does not automatically influence governance. A credible pathway requires an identified user, an appropriate format, an opportunity for the evidence to inform decisions and sufficient capacity to continue monitoring where it remains valuable.

The Citizen Science Quick Check

Before, during and after an activity, ask:

Table 4. The Citizen Science Quick Check

Question	Why it matters
1 Why are we collecting this information?	Creates purpose
2 Who should participate?	Broadens relevant knowledge and inclusion
3 What will participants learn?	Strengthens capacity
4 What local knowledge can they contribute?	Enables two-way learning
5 What happens to the evidence?	Connects participation with use
6 Who could act on the findings?	Creates a route towards impact
7 Will participants receive feedback?	Builds trust and continued engagement

8 Could monitoring or stewardship continue?

Supports legacy

Citizen science can therefore operate at several levels simultaneously:

- **BIODIVERSITY** — generating observations and ecological knowledge
- **PEOPLE** — increasing awareness, skills and engagement
- **RELATIONSHIPS** — connecting communities, researchers and institutions
- **ACTION** — creating opportunities for conservation and stewardship
- **GOVERNANCE** — providing locally grounded evidence that may inform management and decision-making

Responsible Citizen Science Checklist

Citizen science should be designed not only to generate useful evidence, but also to protect participants, respect community knowledge and ensure that data are collected, managed and used responsibly. Before beginning an activity, the Change Agent and relevant partners should agree how participation, knowledge and data will be governed.

Table 5. Responsible Citizen Science Checklist

Question	What to check
1. Is participation informed and voluntary?	Participants understand the purpose of the activity, what participation involves, how their contributions will be used and that they may decline or withdraw where applicable.
2. Who owns and controls the data?	Data ownership, stewardship, storage, access and permitted uses are agreed and explained before collection begins.
3. Who will have access to the findings?	Participants know whether information will be shared publicly, with researchers, authorities, organisations or other users.
4. Is personal information protected?	Only necessary personal information is collected, with appropriate arrangements for confidentiality, secure storage, anonymisation and data protection.
5. Is community knowledge treated ethically?	Local, traditional and experiential knowledge is acknowledged appropriately and is not shared, published or reused beyond the agreed purpose without suitable permission.
6. Are participants adequately safeguarded?	Physical, psychological, social and reputational risks have been considered, particularly for children, vulnerable participants and activities conducted in hazardous coastal environments.
7. Is participation inclusive and fair?	The activity does not exclude people unnecessarily because of language, disability, digital access, time, travel costs, equipment needs or unequal confidence and influence.

8. Are expectations and limitations clear?	Participants understand what the activity can and cannot achieve, including whether the evidence is likely to influence management or policy.
9. Will participants receive feedback and recognition?	Findings are returned in an accessible form, contributions are acknowledged appropriately and participants are informed about decisions or actions arising from the evidence.
10. Is there a process for concerns or complaints?	Participants know whom to contact if they have questions, wish to correct or withdraw information, or have concerns about the activity or use of the data.

RESPONSIBLE PRACTICE RULE

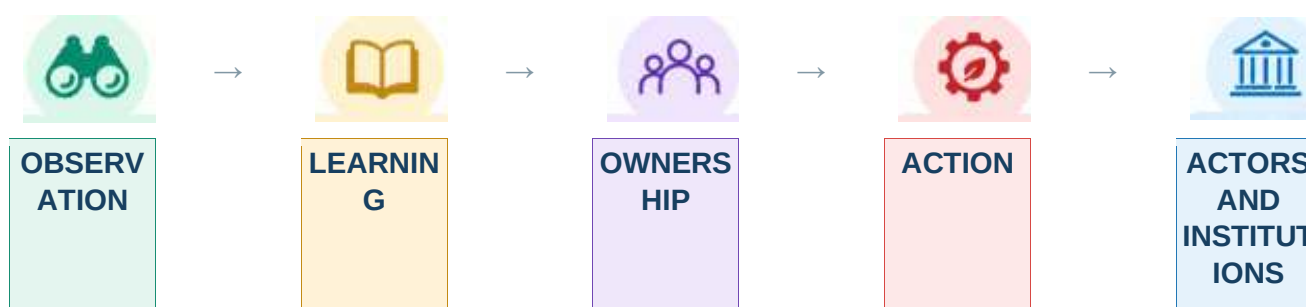
Agree how participation, community knowledge and data will be protected and used before collection begins—not after the evidence has already been gathered.

→ TAKE-AWAY

Citizen science is most powerful when people do not simply contribute data, but become part of the process of understanding, discussing and responding to biodiversity change.



For the Change Agent, the practical task is therefore to **connect observation with learning, learning with ownership, ownership with action, and action with the actors and institutions that can help sustain biodiversity stewardship over time.**



↪ Sustaining biodiversity stewardship over time ↪

6 MONITOR, LEARN AND ADAPT

Monitoring in PRO-COAST should go beyond merely recording the number of workshops held, participant counts, or biodiversity data collected. Its main goal is to help Change Agents understand **whether changes are occurring, why they are happening, and what to do next**.

This is especially crucial because the PRO-COAST case studies take place in diverse social-ecological settings. Consequently, the workshop approach integrated implementation with monitoring, reflection, peer learning, and adaptation, rather than viewing evaluation as a final, standalone task.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Monitor to learn – not only to report. Evidence is useful when it helps you decide what to do next.

6.1 Step 1 – Monitor What Changes – Not Only What Happens

The first distinction is simple but important:

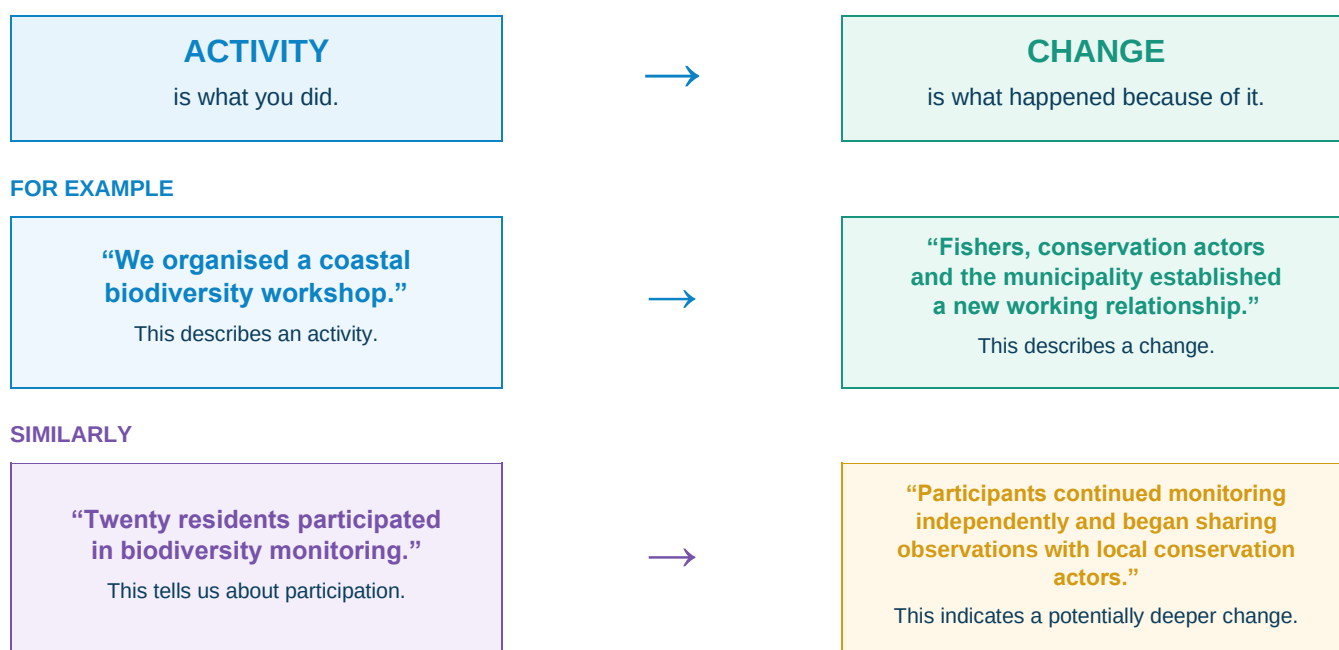


Figure 22. From Activity to Change: Distinguishing What Was Done from What Changed

WHAT TO MONITOR

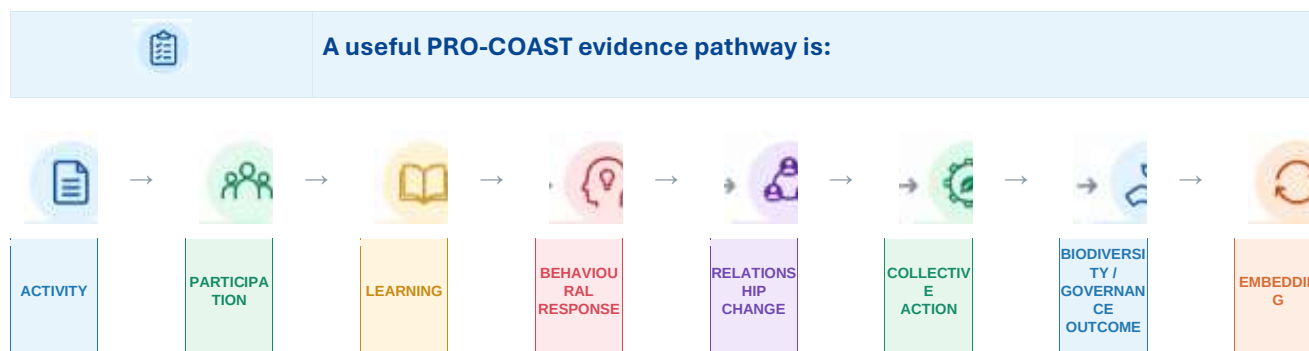


Figure 23. The PRO-COAST Evidence Pathway: From Activity to Longer-Term Change

Not every intervention will progress through the complete pathway. It helps Change Agents look beyond immediate outputs.

Look at...	Ask...
Activity	What did we do?
Participation	Who engaged – and who did not?
Learning	What did participants understand differently?
Behaviour	Did people begin doing something differently?
Relationships	Did new connections, trust or collaboration develop?
Collective action	Are stakeholders beginning to act together?
Biodiversity	Is there evidence relevant to ecological condition or management?
Governance	Is knowledge or action influencing decisions or practices?
Embedding	Is anything continuing beyond the original intervention?

✓ PRACTICE RULE

Count activities – but investigate change.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ☐ What happened because of the activity?
- ☐ Who changed their behaviour, knowledge or involvement?
- ☐ Did relationships between stakeholders change?
- ☐ Did collective action emerge?

- ☐ Is there evidence of biodiversity-related change?
- ☐ Did locally generated knowledge reach decision-makers?
- ☐ What can we actually demonstrate – and what are we only assuming?

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we identify at least one meaningful change beyond the delivery of the activity itself?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Looking beyond Activities and Participation Numbers

Across the PRO-COAST Change Capacity process, monitoring was designed to go beyond recording activities, participant numbers or biodiversity data. Change Agents were encouraged to examine whether activities contributed to changes in stakeholder knowledge, behaviour, relationships, collective action, biodiversity practice or governance connections.

This distinction mattered because the case studies operated in different social-ecological contexts and did not follow identical pathways. A completed workshop, monitoring event, or awareness activity showed that something had been delivered, but evidence of change required considering what happened afterwards—for example, whether new actors collaborated, stakeholders continued monitoring, or locally generated knowledge entered a decision-making process.

Lesson learned: Activities and participation numbers show what was delivered. Evidence of change shows what happened as a result.

6.2 Step 2 – Use Evidence as Part of a Learning Cycle

PURPOSE

PRO-COASTs workshop method was deliberately designed to be reflective and iterative. Change Agents engaged in activities, shared experiences, collected feedback, and continuously refined their techniques. The workshops combined expert insights, practical exercises, peer learning, case-study presentations, and group reflection. Monitoring should adopt a similar approach.

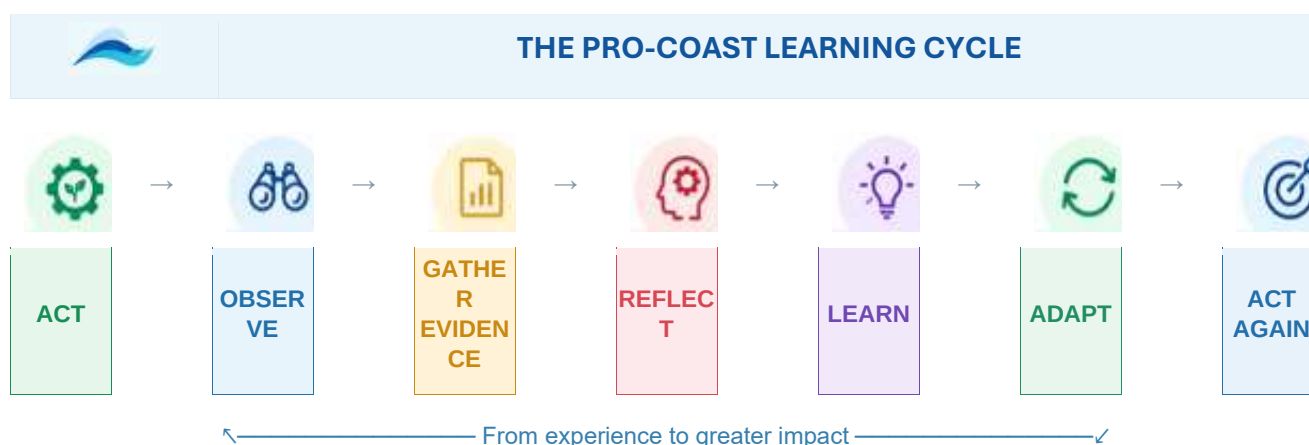


Figure 24. The Pro-Coast Learning Cycle

EVIDENCE can come from many resources.

Depending on the intervention, Change Agents may use participation records, stakeholder feedback, interviews, observations, biodiversity monitoring, citizen-science data, meeting documentation, co-created outputs, changes in stakeholder networks or evidence of governance engagement.

The aim is not to collect everything.

Collect evidence that helps answer a **change question**.

Instead of asking:

?	INSTEAD OF ASKING “What can we measure?”
---	--

start with:

◆	START WITH “What do we need to know in order to understand whether this is working?”
---	--

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Five Learning Questions

After an important activity, ask the team and, where possible, participating stakeholders:

	Reflection question	What to consider
1	What happened?	Describe what you observed without immediately interpreting it.
2	What changed?	Look at knowledge, behaviour, relationships, action, biodiversity or governance.
3	What did not change?	Identify expectations that were not realised.
4	Why?	Consider context, barriers, stakeholder perspectives and unintended effects.
5	What should we do differently next?	Translate learning into a decision.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Evidence becomes valuable when it changes what you do next.

Combine Different Forms of Knowledge

PRO-COASTs social-ecological perspective indicates that relying on a single type of evidence is insufficient to tell the full story.

- **Scientific evidence** can help understand biodiversity conditions.
- **Citizen-science evidence** can expand observations and participation.
- **Local knowledge** can reveal patterns, histories and practices that formal datasets may not capture.
- **Stakeholder feedback** can help explain why people participate, resist or change.
- **Governance evidence** can show whether new knowledge and relationships are entering decision-making.

The Change Agent's task is to **bring these forms of knowledge into conversation**, rather than assuming one automatically overrides the others.

! WATCH OUT

More data does not necessarily mean better learning. Collect only information that has a clear purpose and can realistically be interpreted and used.

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Using Reflection and Peer Exchange as Part of Monitoring

The PRO-COAST workshop process combined implementation with monitoring, feedback, case-study presentations, practical exercises, peer learning and group reflection. Change Agents shared experiences from their case studies and considered what had happened, what had changed, what had not changed and what factors could explain the results.

This process brought together different forms of evidence. Scientific and citizen-science information helped describe biodiversity conditions and observations; local knowledge provided insight into histories and practices; stakeholder feedback helped explain participation, resistance or changing relationships; and governance evidence indicated whether knowledge or collaboration was reaching decision-making processes.

The purpose was not to identify one form of evidence as automatically superior, but to use the different forms of knowledge together to inform subsequent action.

Lesson learned: Evidence becomes part of a learning cycle when it is interpreted collectively and used to reconsider assumptions, explain outcomes and decide what should happen next

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we identify at least one meaningful change beyond the delivery of the activity itself?

6.3 Step 3 – Decide: Continue, Adapt, Consolidate or Stop

PURPOSE

Monitoring becomes useful when it supports decisions. Not every successful pilot should automatically be expanded, just as not every struggling activity should be abandoned immediately. Some interventions may need adaptation, while others may require more time for relationships to develop.

In some cases, the most appropriate decision may be to consolidate and strengthen what is already working rather than launch something new.

Use evidence to make one of five decisions:

What are we seeing?	Possible response
Meaningful change and continued engagement	CONTINUE
Promising results, but barriers remain	ADAPT
Valuable results, but they are fragile	CONSOLIDATE
Little value or poor contextual fit	STOP OR REDESIGN
Unexpected connections to wider actors or decisions	EXPLORE FURTHER

! WATCH OUT

Do not mistake more activity for more impact.

Adding another workshop, campaign or monitoring activity is not necessarily progress. Sometimes the most important next action is to strengthen an existing relationship, improve an intervention or create time for reflection.

PRACTICAL TOOL

The 10-Minute Change Review

After an activity, complete:

01

WHAT DID WE DO?



02

WHO DID WE REACH?



03

WHAT CHANGED?



04

WHAT EVIDENCE DO WE HAVE?



05

WHAT SURPRISED US?



06

WHAT DID WE LEARN?



07

CONTINUE, ADAPT, CONSOLIDATE OR STOP?



08

WHAT IS OUR NEXT ACTION?

This short exercise can be completed by the Change Agent team immediately after an activity and revisited later with stakeholders.

Learn Across Context – But Do Not Copy

One strength of the PRO-COAST workshop series was the opportunity for Change Agents working in very different coastal settings to compare experiences and identify transferable approaches.

Peer learning does not mean copying an intervention from another case study.

Instead ask:

- ☐ What principle made this work there?
- ☐ Would that principle matter here?
- ☐ What would need to change for our context?

This creates a simple transfer rule:



Figure 25. Learn Across Context

✓ PRACTICE RULE

Transfer the learning, not necessarily the solution.

The PRO-COAST quick monitoring check

At regular intervals, Change Agents should be able to answer:

- ☐ What did we do?
- ☐ Who engaged?
- ☐ What changed?
- ☐ What evidence do we have?
- ☐ What did we learn?
- ☐ What needs to change?
- ☐ What should we strengthen?
- ☐ What should we stop?
- ☐ **Is anything beginning to continue without us?**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we explain, using the available evidence, why an activity should continue, be adapted, be consolidated, be redesigned or stop?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Learning across Case Studies without Copying Solutions

The PRO-COAST workshop series gave Change Agents working in different coastal settings opportunities to compare case-study experiences and identify potentially transferable approaches. Because the case studies differed in their ecological challenges, stakeholder relationships and governance environments, an intervention that appeared promising in one location could not automatically be transferred unchanged to another.

Change Agents were therefore encouraged to examine the principle underlying an approach, assess whether it was relevant to their own context and consider what would need to be adapted. Monitoring and peer learning were used to support decisions about whether activities should continue, be adapted, be consolidated, be redesigned or be explored further.

Lesson learned: Cross-case learning is most useful when Change Agents transfer underlying principles and insights—not when they copy an intervention without considering local conditions.

→ TAKE-AWAY

Monitoring is part of the change process, not an administrative task added to it.

For PRO-COAST, the purpose is to help communities and Change Agents understand the relationship between **biodiversity action, stakeholder participation, learning, behavioural change, collaboration and governance**. The strongest monitoring system is therefore not necessarily the one that collects the most data. It is the one that helps people **see change, learn from it and make better decisions about what to do next**.



7 FROM LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION TO SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

PRO-COAST begins by addressing specific biodiversity challenges in particular coastal areas. However, its broader goal extends beyond isolated conservation efforts. Long-term success depends on local initiatives that **transform people's relationships with biodiversity, improve collaboration among stakeholders, promote the effective use of knowledge, and influence decision-making processes related to coastal ecosystems.**

The PRO-COAST case studies demonstrate this development. Activities like citizen science, biodiversity monitoring, nature-based solutions, awareness campaigns, and stakeholder platforms have progressively become collaborative efforts involving communities, researchers, civil society, businesses, and public authorities. Additionally, several case studies highlighted opportunities for ongoing efforts and replication beyond the project's scope.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Do not ask only whether a local biodiversity intervention worked. Ask what it changed – and what that change could influence next.

7.1 Step 1 – Identify Where Local Action Can Create Wider Change

PURPOSE

Not every successful local intervention leads to societal transformation. A restored habitat, a citizen-science activity or a stakeholder workshop may produce valuable outcomes without necessarily changing the wider system.

The important question for a Change Agent is therefore:



Where could this local change have an effect beyond the immediate activity?

PRO-COASTs social-ecological perspective recognises that biodiversity is shaped by interconnected ecological, social, economic and political factors. As illustrated in Figure 21, local biodiversity action can become more systemically relevant when the knowledge, relationships and practices it generates connect with wider decision-making and governance processes. This need to connect local evidence and action with wider governance also helps explain the rationale for developing REDS. From this perspective, the aim is to identify opportunities for locally embedded interventions to extend beyond their immediate context and contribute to wider transformative change.



WHAT TO DO

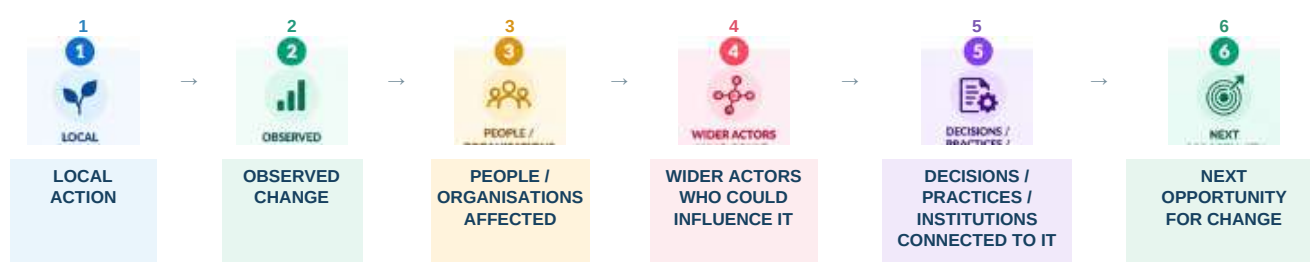
- Start with a change that you can actually observe.
- Then trace its possible connections:



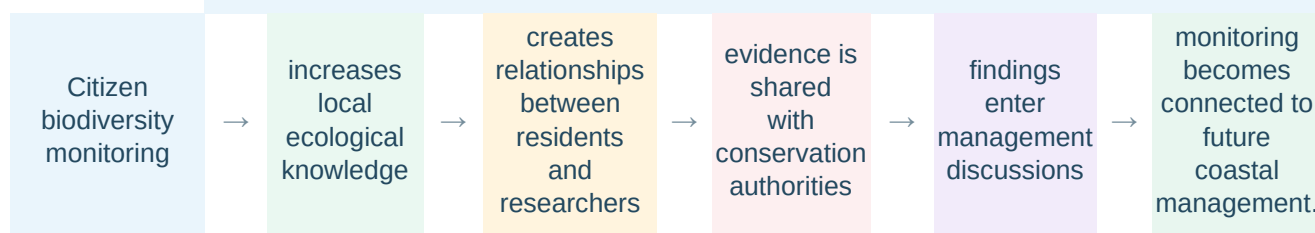
- Look particularly at connections involving:
 - **Relationships** — Are actors collaborating who previously worked separately?
 - **Knowledge** — Is new biodiversity knowledge reaching different stakeholders?
 - **Practices** — Are people or organisations beginning to work differently?
 - **Resources** — Are time, funding or capacities being redirected?
 - **Decision-making** — Is local knowledge entering planning or management?
 - **Rules and institutions** — Could successful practices become embedded?

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Wider Change Map

Take one successful local activity and complete:



For example:



The original activity has not “transformed the system”.

But it has created a credible pathway through which local action could become systemically relevant.

Figure 26. The Wider Change Map

! WATCH OUT

Do not describe every positive outcome as transformation. First demonstrate what has changed, then investigate what that change could influence.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we identify a realistic connection between our local biodiversity action and a wider relationship, practice, decision or institution?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

In one PRO-COAST case, a local biodiversity activity brought together community members, researchers and local authorities who had previously worked largely separately. What started as a local activity created new relationships and brought local biodiversity knowledge into discussions about future management practices.

Using the Wider Change Map helped the Change Agents recognise that the wider potential did not lie in the activity alone, but in the new connections it created between knowledge, actors and decision-making.

Lesson learned: Look beyond the immediate outcome. A small local action can become transformative when it changes who works together, how knowledge is used, or how decisions are made.

7.2 Step 2 – Recognise Emerging Transformation Pathways

PURPOSE

Across contexts, transformation rarely follow some predictable sequence. Nevertheless, the PRO-COAST experience suggests that locally embedded biodiversity action can become increasingly significant as it moves through different levels of change.

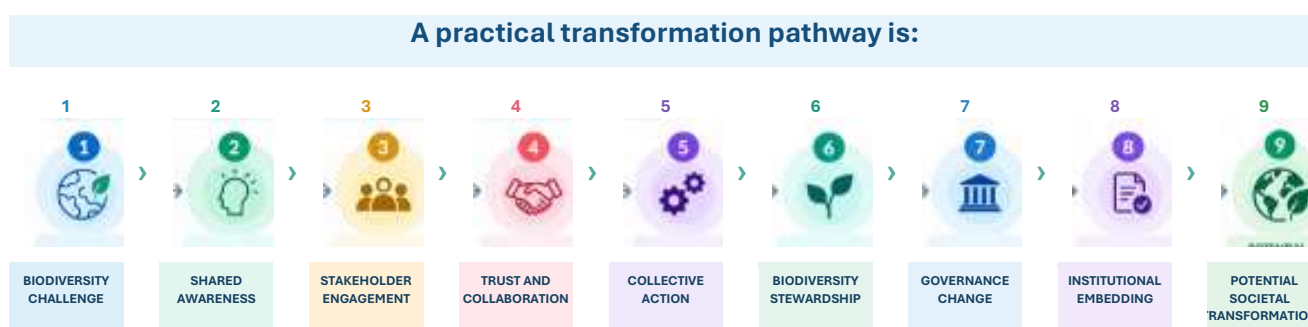


Figure 27. Recognise Emerging Transformation Pathways

This pathway should **not** be interpreted as linear or deterministic. Communities may move backwards and forwards, work at several levels simultaneously or consolidate one form of change before another becomes possible.

Look for reinforcing change



Possible signs include:

- stakeholders initiating activities without direct project prompting;
- new actors joining existing collaborations;
- citizen-science participants continuing to monitor biodiversity;
- organisations adopting practices developed through the intervention;
- community knowledge increasingly informing formal discussions;
- public authorities becoming more engaged;
- new resources or commitments being mobilised;
- relationships continuing beyond individual project activities.

No single indicator demonstrates societal transformation. But several developments occurring together may indicate that change is beginning to **spread, deepen or become embedded**.

★ PRO-COAST KEY MESSAGE

Look for patterns of reinforcing change rather than searching for one dramatic moment of transformation.

PRACTICAL TOOL

The Transformation Test

For an important outcome, ask four questions:

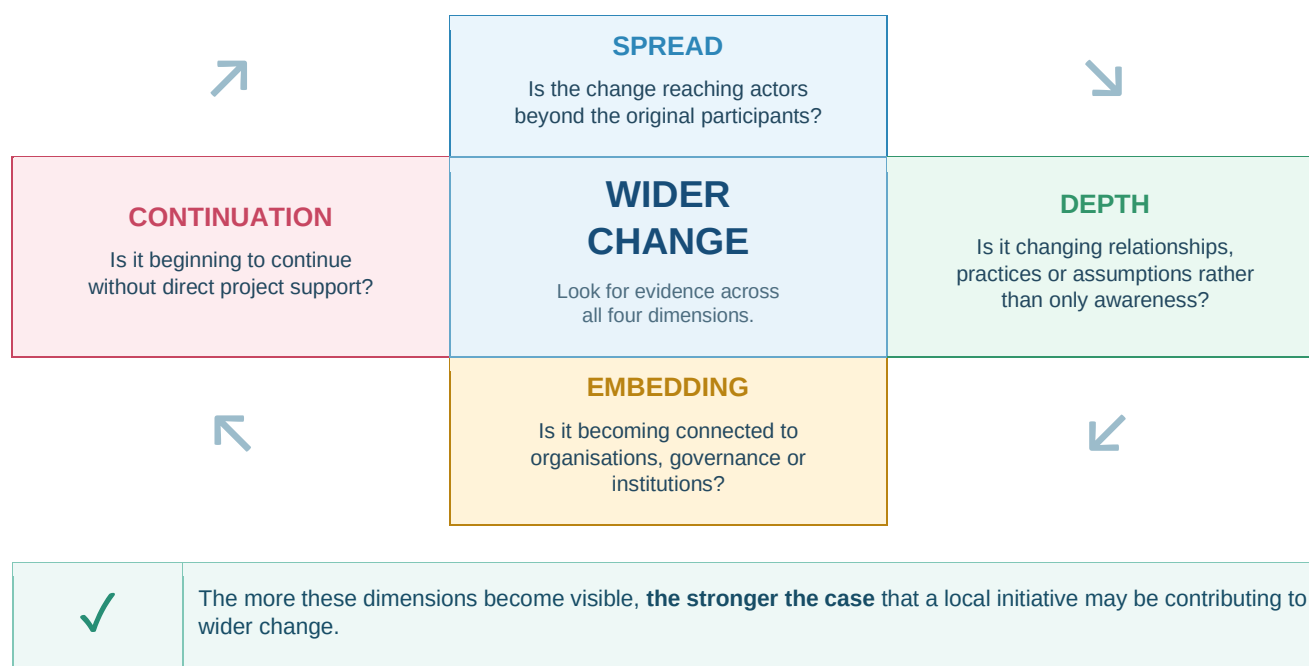


Figure 28. The Transformation Test

! WATCH OUT

Potential is not evidence. Distinguish carefully between **what has happened**, **what is emerging** and **what may become possible in the future**.

✓ CHECKPOINT

Can we describe the transformation pathway without claiming more than our evidence supports?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Looking for Emerging Patterns without Overclaiming

The PRO-COAST cross-case process considered how local biodiversity activities could become more significant when changes in knowledge, participation, relationships, practices and governance began to reinforce one another. The workshop series enabled Change Agents to compare developments in different case studies and reflect on signs such as continued participation, new collaborations, stronger links with public authorities and possible continuation beyond individual project activities.

These signs should not be treated as proof that societal transformation has occurred. Instead, they provide a basis for examining whether change may be spreading, deepening or becoming more embedded. The PRO-COAST approach therefore distinguishes between observed outcomes, emerging developments and future possibilities.

Lesson learned: Societal transformation should not be inferred from one successful activity. More credible indications emerge when several related changes begin to reinforce one another over time.

When describing transformation pathways, distinguish carefully between documented change, emerging indications, future possibilities and outcomes for which evidence is not yet available.

Table 6. Evidence Language for Describing Transformation

Evidence status	Meaning	Appropriate wording
Observed	A change has been documented	“The activity resulted in...”
Emerging	Early or incomplete evidence indicates that change may be developing	“There are emerging indications that...”
Possible	A plausible future pathway has been identified but not yet demonstrated	“This could create an opportunity for...”
Not yet evidenced	The expected change has not been demonstrated	“No conclusion can yet be drawn about...”

7.3 Step 3 – Plan for Legacy and Long-Term Stewardship

PURPOSE

The final question for a Change Agent is not:

“How do we keep the project going?”

It is:

“What should remain when the project is no longer here?”

PRO-COAST emphasises long-term behavioural change, stakeholder ownership, and collaborative governance, and its workshop process moved from problem identification and stakeholder mapping to implementation, monitoring, and sustainability planning.

Legacy can therefore take many forms.

What should remain?	Possible PRO-COAST legacy
Knowledge	Better understanding of local biodiversity
Skills	Capacity to monitor, communicate or organise action
Relationships	Continued collaboration between key stakeholders
Citizen science	Community capacity to observe and monitor biodiversity
Stewardship	People taking responsibility for local ecosystems



Practices	Conservation approaches continuing within organisations or communities
Governance connections	Stronger links between communities and decision-makers
Institutional embedding	Activities or knowledge incorporated into established structures

WHAT TO DO

- Discuss legacy before the project ends.
- Identify which outcomes are genuinely valuable and worth sustaining. Decide who could take ownership. Connect activities to existing organisations and governance structures rather than creating unnecessary parallel structures.
- Consider what knowledge, data, tools and relationships need to be transferred. Ask which activities require continued resources and which can continue through existing capacities.
- Most importantly, gradually reduce dependence on the Change Agent.

PRACTICAL TOOL – The Legacy Canvas

For each important Outcome, complete:

 WHAT SHOULD REMAIN?	 WHY DOES IT MATTER?
 WHO COULD OWN IT?	 WHERE COULD IT BE EMBEDDED?
 WHAT RESOURCES DOES IT NEED?	 WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP BEFORE THE PROJECT ENDS?

Figure 29. PRACTICAL TOOL – The Legacy Canvas

THE EXIT TEST

Before concluding an intervention, ask:

- **Who will convene stakeholders?**
- **Who will maintain important relationships?**
- **Who owns the knowledge and data?**
- **Who can continue biodiversity monitoring?**
- **Who can connect community evidence to decision-making?**
- **Which activities can continue?**
- **Which practices have become embedded?**
- **What still depends entirely on the project?**
- **Has responsibility been formally agreed or only proposed?**
- **Are the resources and institutional support needed for continuation actually available?**

! WATCH OUT

Sustainability does not mean preserving every project activity. Some activities should end. The important question is whether they leave behind **knowledge, relationships, practices or capacities that enable continued biodiversity stewardship.**

✓ CHECKPOINT

Does the community have greater capacity to understand, organise and respond to biodiversity challenges than it had before the intervention?

EVIDENCE FROM PRO-COAST

Moving from Project Activities towards Sustainability Planning

The PRO-COAST workshop process moved from problem identification and stakeholder mapping towards implementation, monitoring and sustainability planning.

Change Agents were encouraged to consider which knowledge, skills, relationships, citizen-science activities, monitoring practices and governance connections could remain valuable beyond individual project interventions.

Possible legacy pathways identified across the Manual include citizen-science networks, stakeholder partnerships, educational initiatives, governance collaborations and monitoring systems. The approach also emphasised linking valuable activities to existing community organisations, research institutions, and governance structures rather than assuming project-led arrangements could continue indefinitely.

At this stage, present these as legacy pathways and opportunities for continuation unless responsibility, resources, and institutional arrangements have already been confirmed.

Lesson learned: Legacy planning is stronger when it identifies what should remain, who could take responsibility, what support is required and which existing structure could sustain it.

THE PRO-COAST CHANGE JOURNEY

The complete Manual can now be condensed into one practical pathway:

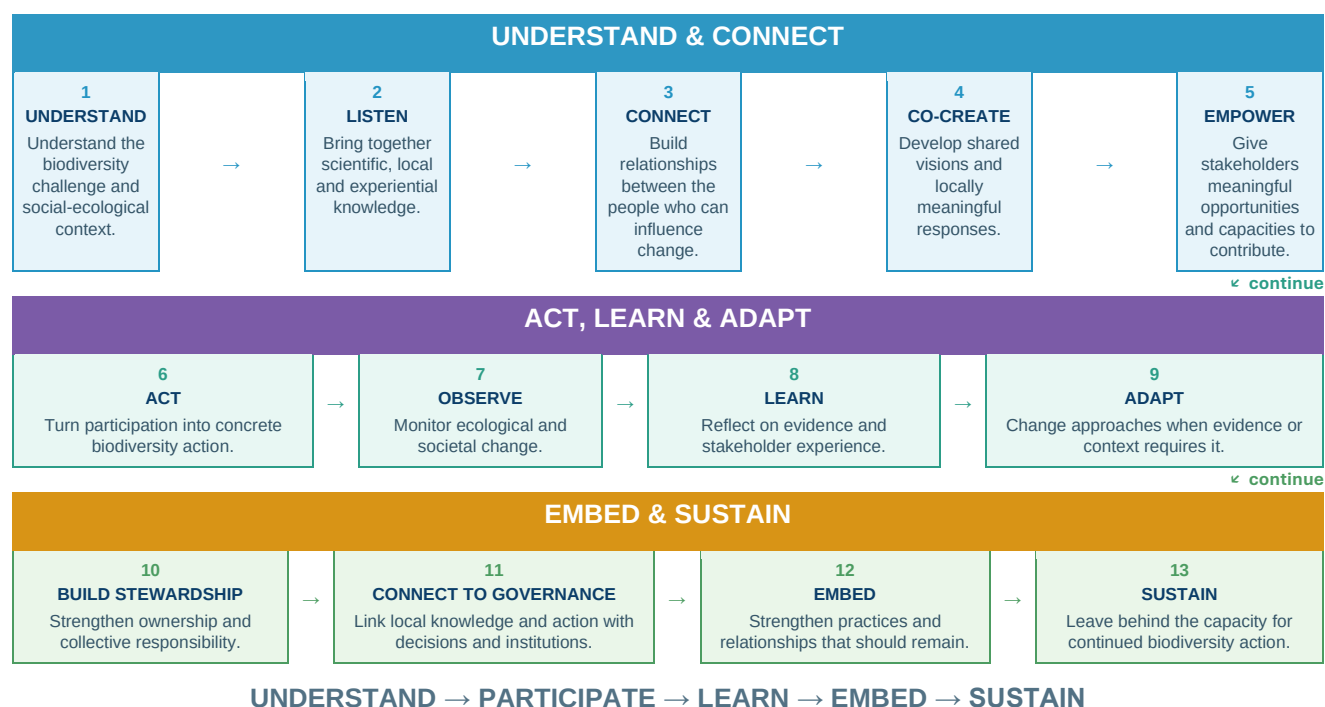


Figure 30. The PRO-COAST Change Journey

8 FINAL TAKEAWAY

The purpose of the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach is not just to follow eight steps or implement conservation actions. Instead, it aims to strengthen coastal communities and their partners' ability to understand biodiversity issues, collaborate across diverse viewpoints, act together, learn from experience, and maintain stewardship over the long term.

Societal transformation cannot be accomplished solely through a Change Agent or a singular project. Instead, Change Agents strengthen relationships, knowledge, ownership, collective efforts, and governance frameworks. These components aid in ensuring that locally driven biodiversity initiatives are more sustainable and have the potential to catalyze broader transformation.

PRO-COAST CHANGE MANUAL AT A GLANCE

The Core Principle

Coastal biodiversity change is not created through conservation measures alone. It becomes more durable when people:

- Understand the challenge
- Build trusted relationships
- Develop shared ownership
- Act together
- Learn from experience
- Connect local action with the institutions and governance processes that shape their coastal environment

The PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach therefore combines:

- Structured change
- Deep listening
- Co-creation
- Practical action
- Continuous learning



Figure 31. The PRO-COAST Rule of Thumb

Eight Questions for Every Change Agent

Ask yourself	Why it matters
1. Do we understand the biodiversity challenge together?	Shared awareness
2. Do we have the right people involved?	Core team and stakeholder network
3. Do we share a meaningful vision?	Direction
4. Are we creating dialogue and trust?	Relationships
5. Can stakeholders genuinely act?	Empowerment
6. Can people see meaningful progress?	Short-term wins
7. Are we learning and adapting?	Momentum
8. What will remain when we leave?	Legacy

These questions reflect the eight-stage Deep-Change process used in PRO-COAST while keeping the framework practical and adaptable to different coastal contexts.



FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR LASTING CHANGE

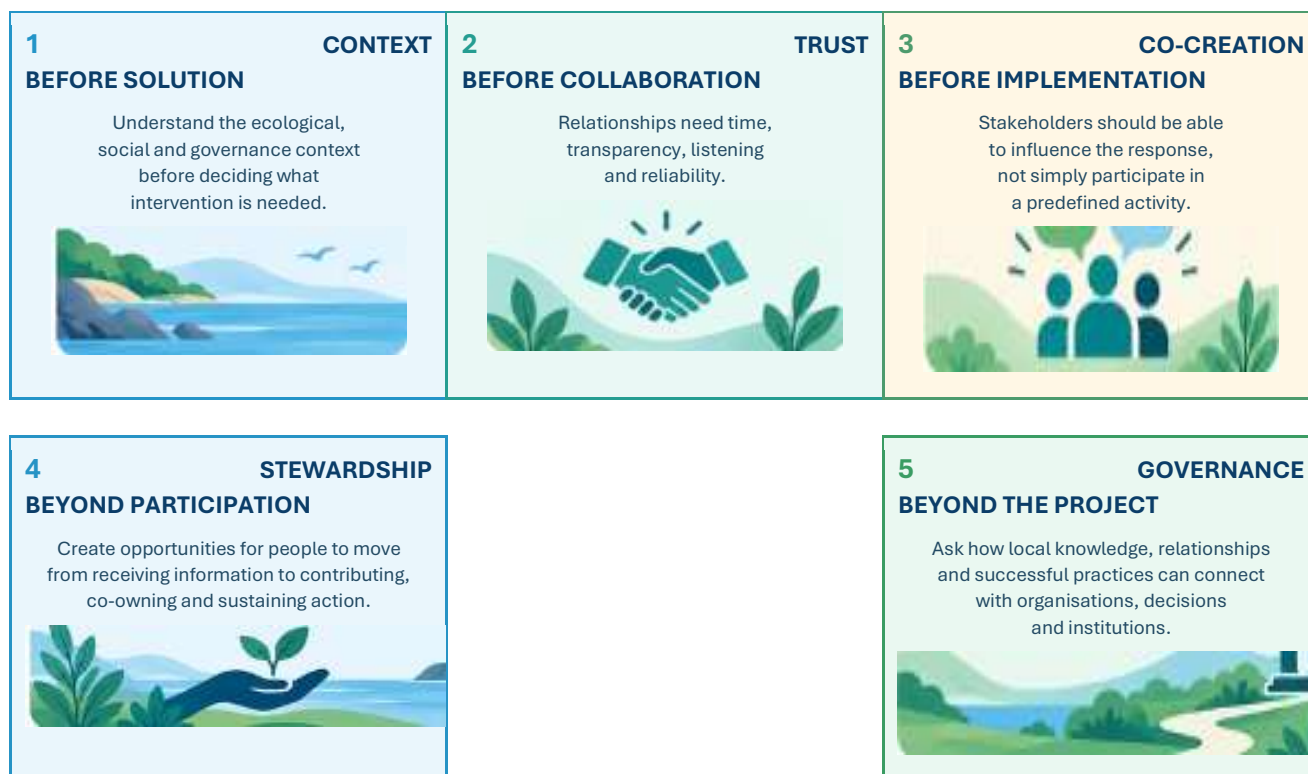


Figure 32. Five Principles to Remember

Use Citizen Science to Connect Knowledge and Action

Citizen science can contribute to much more than biodiversity monitoring.



Figure 33. Citizen Science to Connect Knowledge and Action

Ask:

- What are we learning?
- Who is learning with us?
- Who needs this evidence?
- What action could follow?
- Could participation continue without the project?

Remember: The value of citizen science lies not only in the data generated, but also in its potential to strengthen **knowledge, participation, relationships and stewardship**.

Monitor to Learn

Do not ask only:

“What did we do?”

Ask:

- What did we do?
- Who engaged?
- What changed?
- What evidence do we have?
- What did we learn?
- What should we do next?

Use monitoring to decide whether to:



The PRO-COAST workshop process itself followed this iterative logic, combining practical experience, reflection, peer learning and adaptation rather than treating capacity building as one-way knowledge transfer.



Look Beyond the Immediate Intervention

A local biodiversity activity can become more significant when its effects begin to influence relationships, practices, collective action or decision-making.

Use this pathway as a **reflection tool**, not as a **prediction**:

FROM BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE TO LASTING CHANGE

A PRO-COAST pathway through people, partnerships and action

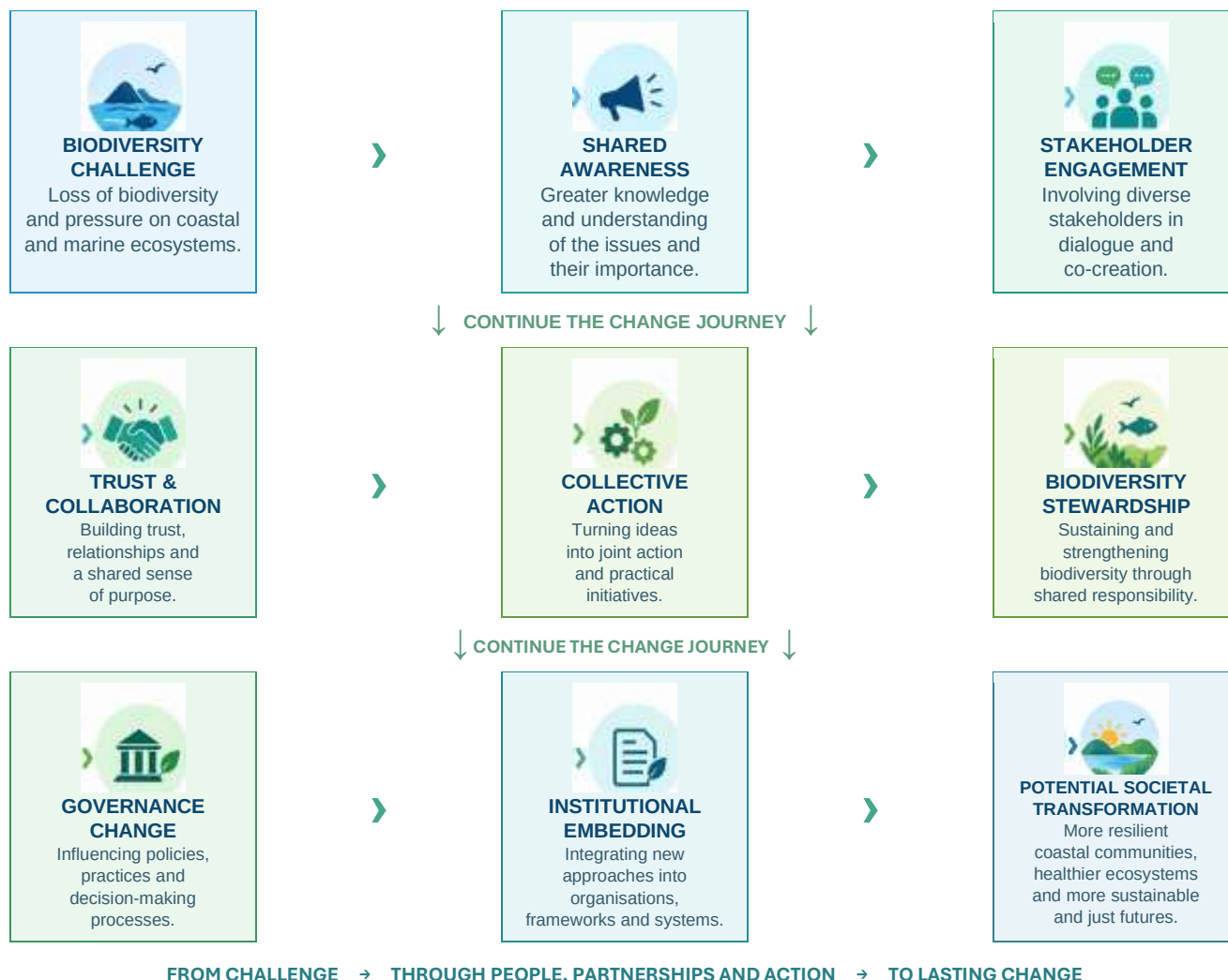


Figure 34. Biodiversity Transformation Roadmap

Do not claim transformation too early.

Instead look for:

- **SPREAD** — Is change reaching new actors?
- **DEPTH** — Are relationships, behaviours or practices changing?
- **EMBEDDING** — Is change entering organisations or governance?
- **CONTINUATION** — Is it becoming less dependent on the project?

THE FINAL CHANGE AGENT CHECK

Before completing an intervention, ask yourself:

UNDERSTANDING & KNOWLEDGE ✓ Do people understand the biodiversity challenge better? ✓ Has local knowledge been connected with scientific knowledge?	RELATIONSHIPS & COLLECTIVE CAPACITY ✓ Have new or stronger relationships been created? ✓ Can stakeholders act more effectively together?
OWNERSHIP & CONTINUITY ✓ Has participation created meaningful ownership? ✓ Are there practices or activities that could continue?	GOVERNANCE & FUTURE CAPACITY ✓ Can locally generated knowledge reach relevant decision-makers? ✓ Is there greater capacity to respond to future biodiversity challenges?

FINAL REFLECTION

What still depends on me – and what no longer does?

MORE DEPENDENCE

Change Agent leads

LESS DEPENDENCE

Others continue

➤	THE GOAL IS NOT TO REMAIN ESSENTIAL. If the final question increasingly becomes “less”, the Change Agent may have achieved one of the most important outcomes of the process: strengthening the capacity of others to continue change.
---	--

The relationship described above, where the Change Agent gradually steps back as stakeholders build the capacity to continue independently is illustrated in the figure below



Figure 35. The Final Change Agent Check

FINAL MESSAGE

1. **Societal transformation cannot be prescribed through a manual or delivered by a Change Agent alone.**
2. What a Change Agent can do is create the conditions in which people can **understand biodiversity challenges, build trust, combine knowledge, act collectively, learn from experience and develop lasting stewardship of their coastal environment.**
3. The ultimate success of the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach is therefore not that a community has completed eight steps. It is that the community and its partners have **greater capacity to continue creating, adapting and sustaining biodiversity action after the formal intervention has ended.**



9 ANNEX – PRO-COAST CHANGE AGENT TOOLKIT

This Toolkit translates the PRO-COAST Deep-Change Approach into a concise set of practical working tools. The templates may be utilized individually or collectively throughout the change process. They support planning, stakeholder engagement, reflection, monitoring, and legacy planning, rather than introducing additional reporting requirements. Tailor these tools to the local social-ecological context. The Change Agent team can complete them, use them collaboratively with stakeholders, or revisit them at various stages to monitor the change process.

Tool 1 – Understand the Local Change Context

PURPOSE

Use this tool before designing or substantially adapting an intervention. It helps connect the **biodiversity challenge with the people, practices and governance conditions surrounding it.**

THE CONTEXT CANVAS

Table 7. The Context Canvas

Question	Your Notes
What biodiversity challenge are we addressing?	
What ecological changes or pressures can we observe?	
Why does this matter locally?	
Who is affected by the challenge?	
Who contributes to or influences the challenge?	
How do different stakeholders understand the issue?	
What local knowledge already exists?	
What scientific evidence is available?	
Which behaviours or practices may need to change?	
Which organisations, rules or decisions influence the issue?	
What has already been tried?	
What do we still need to understand?	

QUICK REFLECTION

The most important thing we currently understand is: 	The most important thing we still need to understand is:
---	---

✓ CHECKPOINT

Do we understand both the ecological challenge and the social context sufficiently to decide what to do next?

Tool 2 – Map Stakeholders, Relationship, and Trust

PURPOSE

Use this tool to identify who needs to be involved and to look beyond formal stakeholder lists towards **relationships, trust and influence**.

Step 1 – Identify the Actors

Table 8. Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder	Why do they matter?	Interest	Influence	Trust / Relationship	Role in Change
		Low / Med / High	Low / Med / High	Weak / Developing / Strong	
		Low / Med / High	Low / Med / High	Weak / Developing / Strong	
		Low / Med / High	Low / Med / High	Weak / Developing / Strong	
		Low / Med / High	Low / Med / High	Weak / Developing / Strong	
		Low / Med / High	Low / Med / High	Weak / Developing / Strong	



Step 2 – Look at The Relationships

Ask:

☐ Who already works together?
☐ Where are trusted relationships already present?
☐ Where is there conflict, distrust or weak communication?
☐ Who could act as a trusted connector or gatekeeper?

Which important stakeholder is currently missing?
--

Step 3 – Decide What to Do

Stakeholder we need to engage next:	Why:
Best person to make the connection:	Best way to engage them:

✓ PRACTICE RULE Do not map stakeholders only by power and interest. Map relationships too. Change happens through connections between actors.
--

This reflects the PRO-COAST emphasis on Change Agents as connectors between communities, authorities, NGOs, experts and other stakeholders, with trust playing an important role in sustaining engagement and collaboration.



Tool 3 – Position Your Change Journey

PURPOSE

Use this tool regularly to reflect on where the initiative currently stands within the PRO-COAST Deep-Change process and to identify the **next meaningful action**.

Where are we now?

Deep-Change Step	What evidence do we have?	What is missing?	Next Action
1. Shared Awareness			
2. Build the Team			
3. Shared Vision			
4. Communicate the Vision			
5. Empower Action			
6. Short-Term Wins			
7. Sustain Momentum			
8. Make Change Stick			

The eight stages provide structure, while the reflective dimension of the PRO-COAST approach encourages Change Agents to listen, reconsider assumptions and adapt the process to emerging conditions.

DEEP – CHANGE REFLECTION

Before deciding what happens next, **Ask:**

What are we hearing from stakeholders?
What has changed since our last reflection?
What assumption might we need to reconsider?



What barrier is currently preventing progress?

.....

Do we need to move forward – or revisit something earlier?

.....

NEXT MEANINGFUL ACTION

The most important next action is:

.....
.....

Because:

.....
.....

Who needs to be involved:

.....
.....

Evidence that would show progress:

.....
.....

✓ CHECKPOINT

Are we choosing the next action because the local situation requires it – or simply because it appears next in the framework?

Tool 4 – Monitor, Learn, and Adapt

PURPOSE

Use this short review after important activities or at regular intervals. The aim is to distinguish **what you did** from **what actually changed**.

The Change Review

1. WHAT DID WE DO?

Activity or intervention:

.....

2. WHO ENGAGED?

Who participated? Who did not?

.....



3. WHAT CHANGED?

Area	What changed?	What evidence do we have?
Knowledge / Awareness		
Behaviour / Practice		
Relationships / Trust		
Participation / Ownership		
Collective Action		
Biodiversity		
Governance / Decision-making		

4. WHAT SURPRISED US?

.....

5. WHAT DID NOT WORK AS EXPECTED?

.....

6. WHAT DID WE LEARN?

.....

7. WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?

- ☐ CONTINUE – the approach is working
- ☐ ADAPT – promising, but changes are needed
- ☐ CONSOLIDATE – strengthen what has already been achieved
- ☐ STOP / REDESIGN – insufficient value or poor contextual fit
- ☐ EXPLORE FURTHER – an unexpected opportunity has emerged



Next action:

✓ PRACTICE RULE

ACT → OBSERVE → EVIDENCE → REFLECT → LEARN → ADAPT

This iterative logic is consistent with the PRO-COAST workshop process, in which implementation, critical reflection, peer exchange, and adaptation were treated as interconnected elements of capacity building.

Tool 5 – From Local Action to Legacy

PURPOSE

Use this tool during the later stages of an intervention – **not only immediately before the project ends**. It helps identify what should remain, who could take ownership, and whether local change connects to wider governance or institutional processes.

Step 1 – Identify What Is Worth Sustaining

The most important change we have created or supported is: 	Evidence that this change exists:
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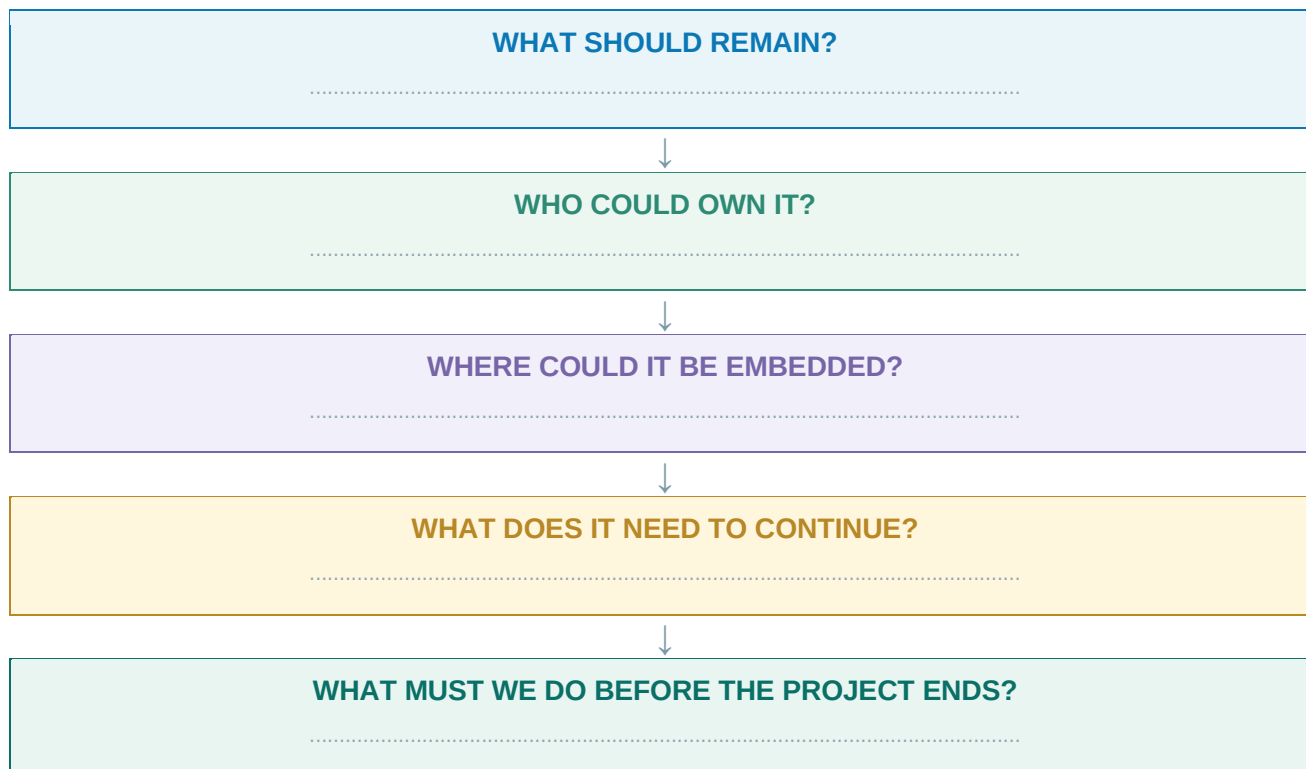
Step 2 – Look for Wider Change

Dimension	Question	Evidence / Opportunity
SPREAD	Is the change reaching actors beyond the original participants?	
DEPTH	Are relationships, behaviours or practices changing?	
STEWARDSHIP	Are stakeholders taking greater responsibility?	
GOVERNANCE	Is local knowledge or action reaching decision-makers?	
EMBEDDING	Is the change becoming connected to organisations or institutions?	



CONTINUATION	Could it continue without direct project support?	
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Step 3 – Build the Legacy Pathway



Step 4 – The Change Agent Exit Test

Before concluding your involvement, ask:

- Can stakeholders continue important activities without us?
- Is relevant knowledge accessible to those who need it?
- Can biodiversity monitoring or citizen-science activities continue where valuable?
- Are important stakeholder relationships likely to remain?
- Is someone responsible for the next step?
- Are community perspectives connected to relevant decision-making processes?
- Have useful practices been connected to existing organisations or structures?
- Does the community have greater capacity to respond to future biodiversity challenges?

FINAL QUESTION

What still depends on the Change Agent – and what no longer does?

.....

.....

.....



PRO-COAST LEGACY PRINCIPLE

The strongest legacy is not necessarily an activity that continues unchanged. It is increased capacity within the community and its stakeholder network to continue understanding, organising, learning and acting for coastal biodiversity.

ONE – PAGE CHANGE AGENT DASHBOARD

At the end, we would incorporate this page. It may be completed multiple times during the project and serves to link all five tools.

Table 9. Pro-Coast Change Agent Dashboard

Our biodiversity challenge	Our current Deep-Change Step	The most important stakeholders now
Relationship / trust issue requiring attention	Our current action	What we expect to change
Evidence we will look for	What we have learned	What we need to adapt
Our next action	Potential wider governance connection	What could become sustainable
Who could take ownership		

Three questions before you move on

1 What changed?	2 What did we learn?	3 What should we do next?
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PRO-COAST CHANGE JOURNEY

From understanding to sustainable change for people, nature and stronger coastal governance

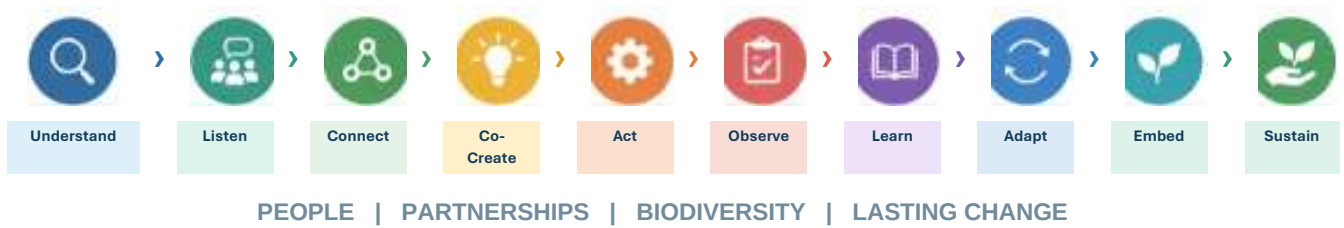


Figure 36. The Pro-Coast Change Agent Rule