

Engagement for RCISs

*Why it's important
Designing Engagement
Implementation*



A wide-angle photograph of a vast, open field filled with numerous purple flowers, likely Salvia, growing in green grass. The field stretches towards rolling hills in the distance. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, with some darker patches suggesting an overcast or stormy atmosphere. The overall scene is a natural, scenic landscape.

Why is engagement important?

Benefits of Engagement

- Overall: Make your RCIS better
- **Understand needs** of users/potential users
- Build **relationships** and partnerships
- **Increase relevance** and sensitivity; do not assume you know what's needed
- Incorporate the **best data and analytical approaches**
- Ensure that process and products address **equity and environmental justice**
- Reflect and respect **community voices**



RCIS Engagement Requirements and Recommendations (Per the RCIS Guidelines)

RCIS Consultation Requirements

- The guidelines identify *required* notifications and consultations before submitting the RCIS for approval. See RCIS Program Guidelines Section 4.5.1 for details.
- Examples: Must consult with all local public agencies that have land use authority, tribal entities, NCCPs and hold a public meeting.
- The guidelines also identify the process after submission to CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for review. See Guidelines Section 4.5.2 for details.

RCIS Consultation Recommendations, per CDFW

- Early and ongoing consultation with CDFW throughout the process.
- Collaboration with other public agencies and interested stakeholders.
- Include a public or stakeholder engagement process that could include technical and scientific experts, potential users of the RCIS, local governments, tribal entities, policy and strategic experts, community-based organizations, and conservation, infrastructure, development and mitigation organizations.

Issues that Benefit from Outreach

Motivation for the RCIS

- *Who would use the RCIS, for what purpose, and what information is important to include?*

Geographic Scope

- *Is the RCIS boundary aligned with the goals?*

Focal Species and Conservation Elements

- *Are there species or habitats that should be included?*

Conservation Priority Areas

- *Are regional and local conservation priority areas reflected?*

Development Plans

- *Are reasonably feasible development plans reflected?*

Partners and collaborators

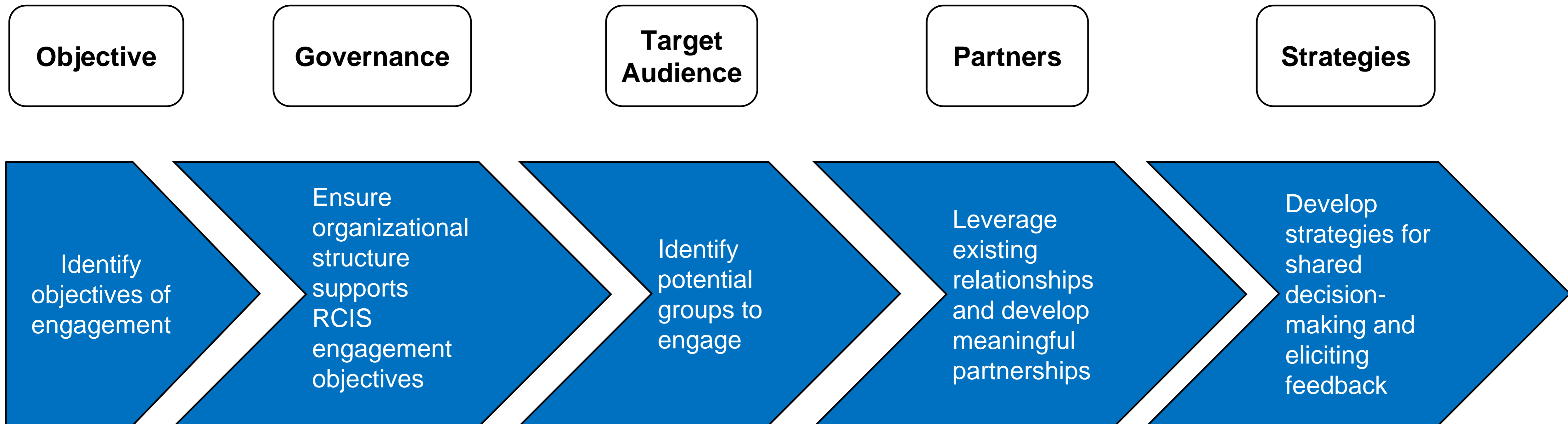
- *Who is involved in the process and who is missing?*

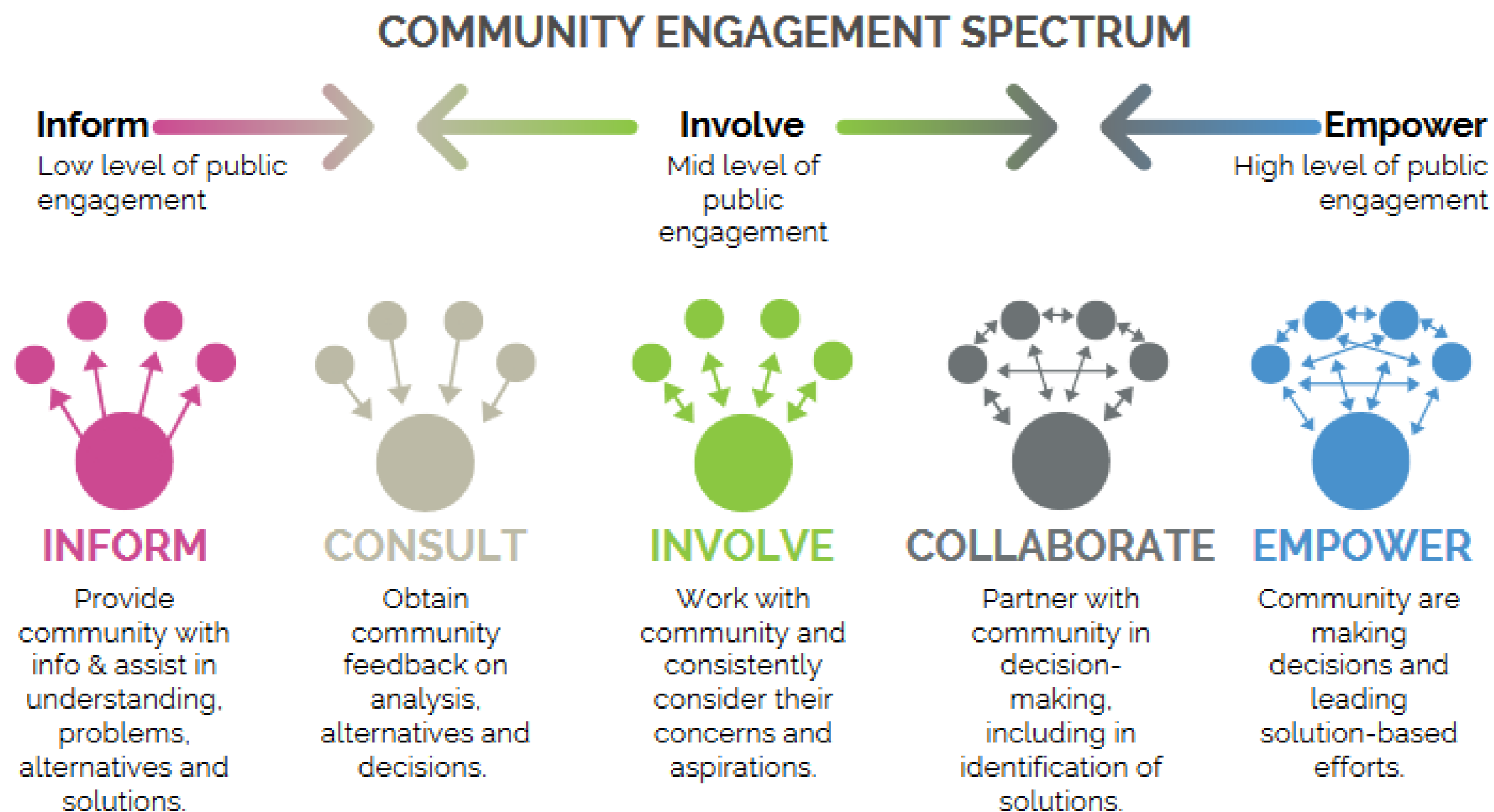


A wide-angle photograph of a vast, open field filled with numerous tall, purple, spiky flowers. The field stretches towards rolling green hills in the distance. The sky is a deep blue, filled with large, white, fluffy clouds that are illuminated from above, creating a dramatic lighting effect. The overall scene is serene and expansive.

Designing Engagement

Potential Steps for Designing Engagement Process:





*Based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, developed by the International Association for Public Participation, 2014
http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/foundations_course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.pdf

Scales and Structures of Engagement

- RCIS Proponent and consultants
- Core team
- Steering/advisory team
- Technical/data team
- Natural resources and infrastructure agencies
- Elected officials/agency decision-makers
- Interest groups/additional partners
- Community/general public



Example of management and engagement structure

Key questions to ask yourself

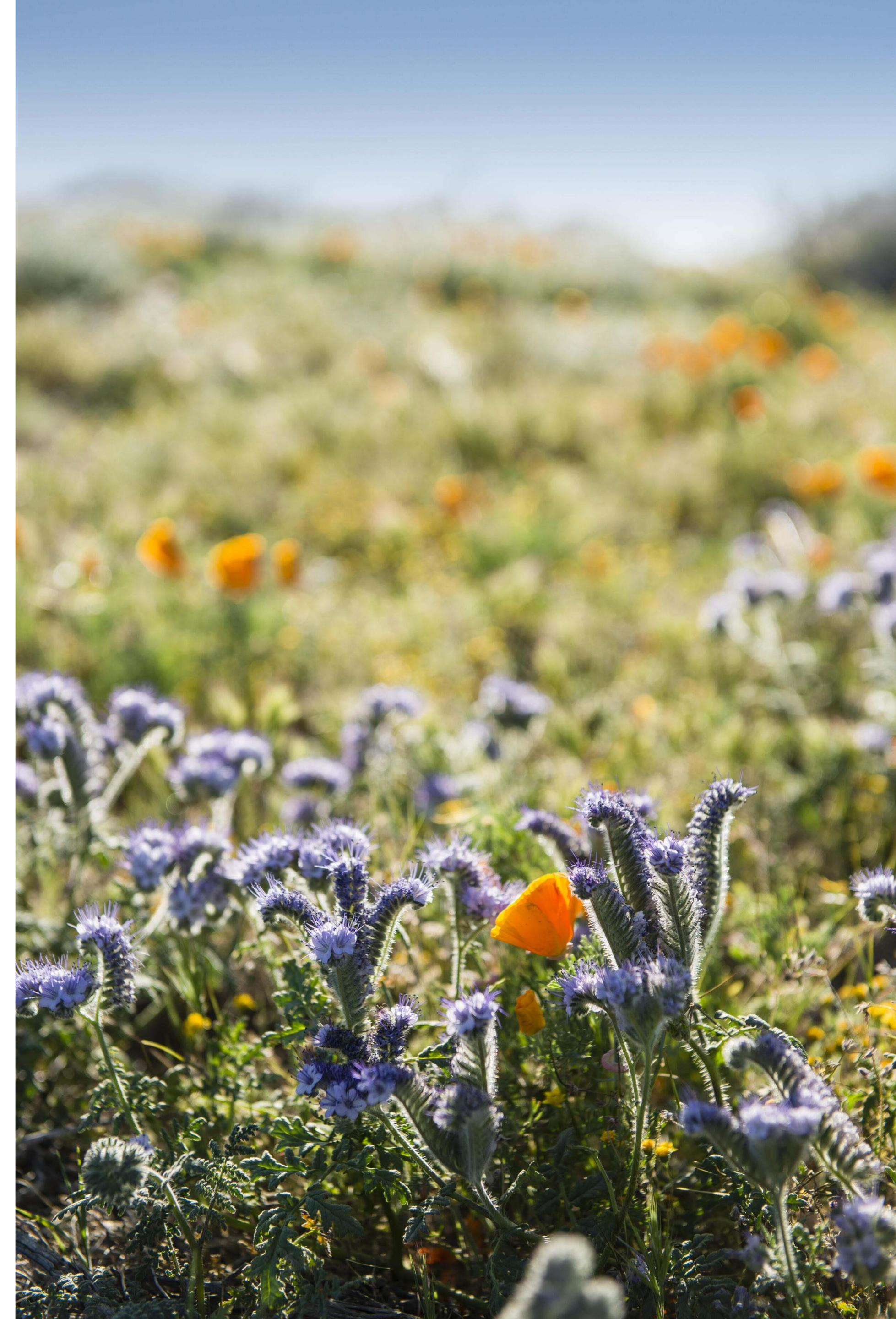
- What are the goals of engagement?
- Who should be engaged? And why?
- What is the optimal RCIS development management structure?
- What questions will engagement answer?
- What decisions will be made or informed?
- When will engagement take place?
- What approaches will be used?
- What is the engagement context/history?
- What are the biggest challenges anticipated?

What other key questions are there?



Recommendations

- Design engagement process carefully
- Be clear about decision-making process and realistic about areas for reaching consensus
- Use participants' time efficiently and help everyone make positive contributions
- Ensure that engagement is centered on answering actionable questions
- Listen and be transparent
- Understand equity-related barriers to participation and use alternative outreach strategies



Engagement Resources

Process

- [Stakeholder engagement--best practice guide](#), Simply Stakeholders
- [Facilitating Local Stakeholder Participation in Collaborative Landscape Conservation Planning](#), Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University
- [Best Practices for Stakeholder Engagement in Biodiversity Programming](#), USAID
- [Community Engagement Resource Guide](#), National Recreation and Park Association
- [The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities](#), PolicyLink
- [Conservation by Design - Spectrum of Engagement](#), The Nature Conservancy
- [Community Meetings for Busy People](#), Groundwork USA

Equity and Inclusion

- [Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit 2020-2023](#), Boston Public Health Commission
- [Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement](#), Groundwork USA
- [Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement, A Guide for Practitioners](#), Simon Fraser University's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

Language and Terms

- [Equity Language Guide](#), National Recreation and Park Association
- [Glossary of Racial Equity and Community Engagement Terms](#), Advancing Pretrial Policy and Research
- [Preferred Terms for Select Population Groups and Communities](#), CDC



Kaweah RCIS site tour. Photo Credit: Kristen Boysen

Implementation

A wide-angle photograph of a vast, open field filled with numerous small, purple, spiky flowers. The field stretches towards rolling green hills in the distance. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, with some darker patches suggesting shadows or distant storms. The overall scene is bright and expansive.

Assembling Your Network

Decide:

- The Proponent, Sponsor and Primary Users
- Those who need to make the decisions and lead the process

Engage:

- Partners, agencies, science experts, potential users and stakeholders
- Those who may be engaged in RCIS development – giving advice, reading documents, providing feedback

Inform:

- Organizations in the RCIS project area who may have limited interest
- Those who should be informed and invited into the process

Key questions for different groups

Decision-Makers	Users	Other Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will RCIS project leadership and partner groups be organized? • Who will have the power to make decisions about which aspects of the RCIS development? • What will the process be for reaching consensus, if consensus is necessary? • What will represent an adequate level of agreement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the target users of the RCIS? • What decisions do users need to make and how will the RCIS support them in making those decisions? • Who should be involved in the design and data decisions? • How will users be engaged in different aspects of the process and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose perspectives should inform the RCIS? • Who needs to understand and be supportive of the RCIS? • Who may be concerned about the RCIS? • What are barriers to participation? • What is the role of equity? • What engagement approaches will be used?

Potential groups to engage

- Conservation organizations/practitioners
- Local governments and planners
- Natural resource agencies
- Public infrastructure agencies (transportation, water, flood control)
- Tribal groups and Indigenous communities
- Environmental justice groups and NGOs
- Local or regional habitat agencies (e.g., NCCP/HCPs)
- Infrastructure and environmental consultants
- Developers (renewable energy, housing)
- Funders
- Elected officials



Engagement tactics

- Steering and Advisory group meetings
- One-on-one meetings
- Meetings with technical/scientific experts
- Open community/public meetings
- Interviews and focus groups
- Online surveys
- Webinars
- Community science/data gathering



Kaweah RCIS; Credit: Kristen Boysen

Communications Examples

Websites

- [Kaweah Subbasin RCIS](#)
- [Monterey County RCIS](#)
- [San Joaquin Valley RCIS](#)
- [Santa Cruz RCIS](#)
- [Santa Clara Valley RCIS](#)

Handouts

- [Santa Cruz RCIS](#)



RCIS Highlights



Monetary RCIS Overview

Introduction outlining how conservation actions were developed, including data sources, such as recovery plans, and outreach.



User Guide

List of chapters or sections, divided by potential users of the Monterey RCIS, to help you understand what may be useful to achieve the proposed objectives.



Regional Setting

Description of the natural resources and land use in the Monterey RCIS area.



Selection Methodology

Process and key considerations for the selection of focal species and focal conservation elements, and non-focal species and non-focal conservation elements for the Monterey RCIS.



Focal Species

The 28 plant and wildlife species that are identified as having high priority for conservation, based on a necessity for habitat enhancement opportunities in the RCIS area.



San Joaquin Valley Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

An Innovative Approach to Protecting Water, Agriculture, and Habitat in the San Joaquin Valley

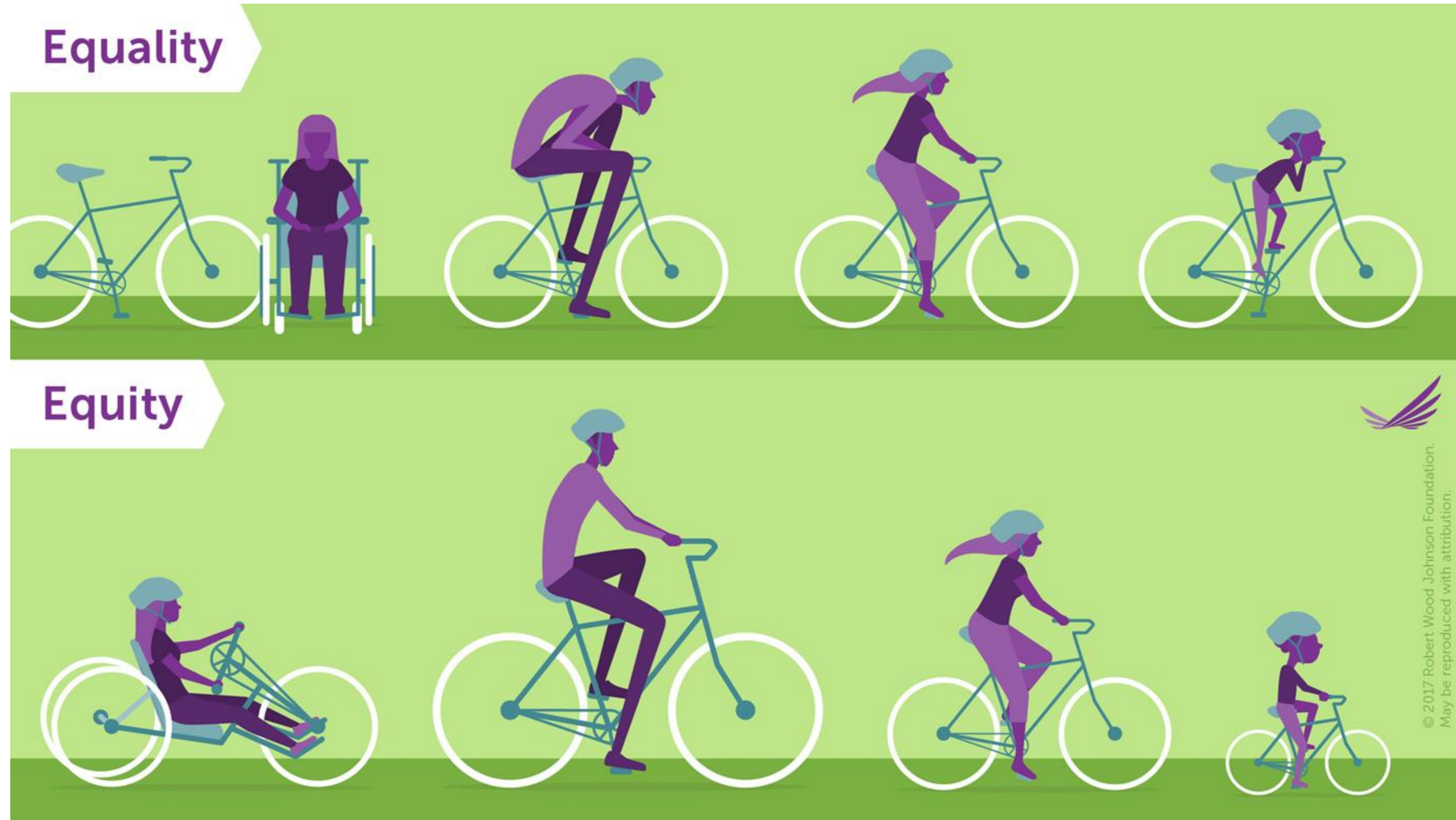
A wide-angle photograph of a vast, open field filled with numerous small, purple, spiky flowers. The field stretches towards rolling green hills in the distance. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, with some darker, greyish clouds on the right side, suggesting an overcast or stormy atmosphere. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor landscape.

Centering Equity

Equity definition

- **Equity means everyone has access to resources needed to thrive**
- Addressing discrimination and disinvestment that are the root causes of disparities
- Working to eliminate barriers and provide increased support to those who have been most disadvantaged





Principles of equity-driven engagement

- **Transparency and accountability** are critical
- Approach engagement with **empathy and humility**
- Identify and **reduce barriers to participation**
- Acknowledge our own **implicit biases**
- **Share decision-making and leadership**
- **Coalition-building**, collaboration, and partnerships are key
- Acknowledge the **inequities that conservation has and can create**
- Evaluate and be **willing to change course**



Before you begin equity-driven engagement

- Look inside your own organization for issues with equity, inclusion, and bias
- Understand local demographics and focus on specific types of inequity and diversity
 - Who has been most excluded in the past?
 - Who is facing the biggest socioeconomic or health inequities?
- Identify partners with strong community ties
- Don't underestimate time and cost required

Start with relationships. Remember that trust is difficult to build and easy to lose.



Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Program

Regional planning for species and habitat conservation, climate resilience and advance mitigation.

[PROGRAM OVERVIEW](#)