

Greenprint Best Practices

Several elements contribute to the success of a greenprint. The following are best practices to consider when embarking on the development of a greenprint informed by on-the-ground experience from practitioners at The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, and The Trust for Public Land.

Process

Engage diverse stakeholders or advisors

Buy-in and engagement from stakeholders or advisors is critical for successful development and implementation of a greenprint. Engaging stakeholders or advisors who represent different sectors and interests results in a greenprint that more readily meets the needs of and secures buy-in from a broad and diverse base. Participation from potential users should be a high priority to ensure that a greenprint's framework, goals, and tools are advanced through implementation. It is important that the planning process maintains flexibility to account for diverse perspectives with varying expertise and background knowledge. Equally important is for the input from stakeholders and advisors to be considered and incorporated in a transparent and inclusive way. This will build trust in both the process and the products and will increase the likelihood of success, acceptance, and implementation of a greenprint.

Use accessible language in presentations and materials

Given that greenprints should incorporate multiple values in a landscape as well as diverse perspectives, stakeholders will likely have different sensitivities. Using shared, objective, and accessible language allows room for more perspectives that comprise the multiple values represented in a greenprint. Avoiding value-laden language will increase access and partnerships, and avoid alienation of organizations and individuals with varied interests.

Define the leadership roles and decision-making process early

Defining the roles and decision-making process early in greenprint development allows for a more streamlined process with fewer conflicts. Roles to determine include greenprint ownership, maintenance and data management, and implementation. The recommended leadership is usually a steering committee comprised of representatives from a greenprint's target audience. The committee's role is to provide leadership in science, methods, and outreach, and to put in place an inclusive decision-making process that addresses input from all stakeholders.

Be transparent

Trust in the greenprint process and products is key for support, uptake, and implementation. Transparency in the entire process is critical for building trust. The goals and intentions of the process, and ultimately the plan, should be stated clearly and early in the process. The decision-making and stakeholder involvement process should be transparent, with clearly established ground-rules for shaping and making decisions. The data and methods for the spatial analysis should be made available for review, whenever possible taking data sensitivities into account. Stakeholder meetings should be open to anyone who is interested.

Articulate the adaptability of greenprints

Stakeholders can contribute to a public and open greenprint process and maintain the flexibility to advance complementary goals through their own organizations or other partnerships. A greenprint process should respect the right and need of stakeholders and their respective organizations to advance their own interest and mission in ways that are related to, and ideally complementary to, a greenprint.

Pay attention to details

Given the place-based nature of a greenprint, paying attention to small details like meeting location or facilitator selection can make a big difference. These nuances help draw out important information in the greenprint development process and encourage buy-in from important and diverse stakeholders. If an end user doesn't see themselves reflected in the greenprint process and materials—from the photos featured in the document to the icebreaker used at the stakeholder meetings—it is less likely to be accepted and utilized.

Spatial analysis

Consider relevant conservation values

Considering conservation values determined by local stakeholders or advisors ensures that a greenprint accounts for both the many ecosystem benefits in a region (e.g. carbon storage or habitat connectivity) and additional values that are important to a community (e.g. flood protection or recreation).

Incorporating relevant conservation values ensures that the greenprint will be broadly applicable to resource conservation issues in a region, and reveal synergies that could be gained through new partnerships and trade-offs that may exist between values. This comprehensive approach will lead to a more diverse set of advocates for natural resources and working lands conservation. Other information may provide relevant information and context for assessing conservation investment, such as information related to health indices and disadvantaged communities.

Include a spatial representation of the conservation values using publicly available datasets, when possible

Spatially representing the conservation values of a landscape quickly highlights areas where multiple benefits from ecosystems overlap. These are areas where protection could benefit multiple resources and achieve the goals of multiple partners or where potential development could impact multiple resources. Spatial representation can take the form of maps, or preferably, an interactive map tool. Publicly available data should be used whenever possible. Including vetted, accessible data adds credibility to a greenprint by leveraging the buy-in inherent in established datasets.

Complement existing conservation plans and efforts

Existing conservation plans and efforts can provide a natural starting point for a greenprint. These could range from priority resource protection areas identified in a county's General Plan or by a coalition working to protect a watershed. Building on the momentum of other efforts and incorporating existing plans, data from these planning efforts, or goals can help a greenprint gain traction and credibility in a community and leverage existing relationships, data, and analysis.

Provide regional context

Relevance is important when determining the boundaries of a greenprint. The extent of the planning area must be appropriate for the culture, economy, society, and institutions of the potential greenprint users, and can be defined by political, ecological, or administrative boundaries. Whether it is at a

neighborhood scale or multiple counties, grounding a greenprint within a regional context helps to inform the location and type of conservation investments and ensure they contribute to larger goals.

Implementation and action

Create opportunities for ongoing collaboration among stakeholders

Beyond the greenprint development, it is important to create opportunities for stakeholders who were or would like to be involved to have the forum to collaborate and advance implementation ideas and actions. Holding periodic meetings and gatherings for stakeholders to provide updates on projects and funding, adjust greenprint content as needed, and identify opportunities to align on shared goals and projects helps to advance implementation.

Develop an implementable plan that provides sufficient information and detail to support decisions at the scales of implementation

The best conservation plans can fail to be implemented if they do not include guidance and examples for how to use the plan in different circumstances to support different decisions. Detailing discrete activities and implementation needs that contribute to the conservation goals of the greenprint will provide end users with opportunities to advance projects.