



inspire a positive future  
by connecting people and  
nature today

UNESCO MAB Brand & Story Toolkit  
A guide to engaging people and telling our powerful story



# Thank you

This guide and toolkit was made possible by the support and help of several passionate people across the UNESCO MAB Council and EuroMAB network.

Special thanks to our pilot biosphere reserves:

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A photograph showing the silhouettes of several people standing on a bridge with an ornate metal railing. They are looking out over a body of water towards a sunset or sunrise, with the sky transitioning from blue to orange and red. The scene is peaceful and evokes a sense of connection and nature.

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## The opportunity

How can a common approach across the network help to engage people in biosphere reserves?



## The case for a common approach

The UNESCO MAB programme and network is a fantastic idea. We connect people and nature in hundreds of places around the world. Our cultures and languages are diverse and different - yet we share a common purpose and vision. And we have one story that we can all tell.

The MAB Council has identified communication as a key strategic opportunity. There are great examples of communication in the MAB, but we can be better at engaging everyone across and within our network on what a biosphere reserve is and why its important. We can use new techniques to bring people on the journey with us, and find more ways to inspire others to be involved.

Consumer brands are exceptional at building relationships. They are in our homes and in our lives. We not only understand clearly what they do for us, but why they fulfil a need.

Brands also have a consistency in how they tell their story. Their communications aim to create conversations, to bring people in and engage rather than simply broadcast their messages.

We can take inspiration from brands and the best environmental campaigns to help every biosphere tell a consistent, powerful story. This guide is one step to a common approach for the MAB.

## Objectives for this guide

This guide is for anyone who engages people in biosphere reserves across the MAB network.

Our aims for the guide are:

To inspire a new and consistent way of communication for UNESCO biosphere reserves

To build confidence across the network in connecting with audiences in a more strategic way by creating engagement plans

To encourage the network to share best practice and learning

## How we worked together

The biosphere reserve brand and story has been developed by the network, for the network. We used an advisory group and four pilot biosphere reserves to create the content and to test our approach. Each pilot has agreed to implement an engagement strategy from the toolkit.

As we learned along the journey, we adapted the content. We translated the story into French and Spanish to test how language might impact on meaning. And we made the tools easy by creating content that anyone in the network could download and use immediately.

The Brand & Story Advisory Group met in Paris to shape the foundations of the brand

Members of the MAB council were interviewed to get their insight to the brand story

Four pilot biosphere reserves stepped forward to support the toolkit and help to build the approach

The Brand & Story Advisory Group gave feedback to the pilot work

We launched the guide at the EuroMAB conference in Estonia

October 2014

November 2014

Nov 2014 to Feb 2015

March to April 2015

May 2015



A photograph showing a person in a river using a net, with another person in the foreground taking notes in a notebook. The text 'inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today' is overlaid in white.

# inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today

## Using this guide

How will you learn from the guide and what will you find inside?



## How to use this guide

This guide will help you to understand the MAB biosphere reserve brand and story, and to create your own engagement plan.

### Step 1:

Read through the entire guide to get a good understanding of the brand and story. Look for ways you might change the story you are telling now.

### Step 2:

Download the presentation deck and session worksheets - you'll find the link [here](#) and in the relevant section in the guide.

### Step 3:

Invite a group of stakeholders and host a session to build your engagement plan with your audiences. Or run a session with your team to come up with new ideas.

### Step 4:

Implement your engagement plan, and share the learning with the rest of the network on the communication platform <https://teams.unesco.org>



## What you'll find inside

We have designed this guide to be as easy to use as possible.

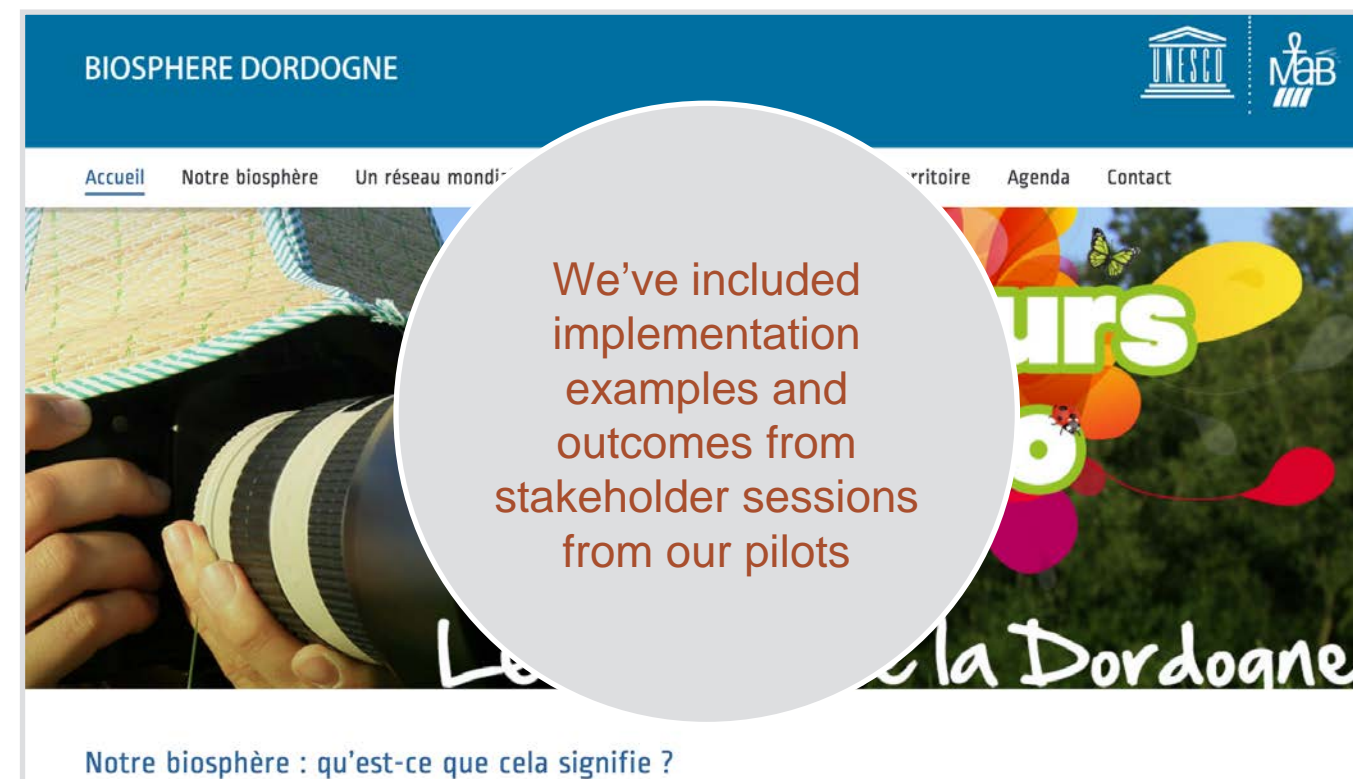
There is a navigation bar at the top to help you through the guide.

There are tips and tactics throughout the guide to help you learn quickly.

Use the links to download presentations and worksheets for the toolkit.

We have included case studies of our pilot biosphere reserves to help inspire you to create your own engagement plans.

Use the navigation bar to see where you are in the guide



### Tips

Look out for the tip arrow to give you ideas and point you to resources



## Telling your own story

Biosphere reserves across the network are already doing a great job at communicating. Each biosphere reserve is unique and has their own story - this guide is designed to give you a common framework and foundation to talk about the MAB network and biosphere reserves idea.

You are invited to review the story that you are telling about your biosphere reserve, and use the guidance to make your story even more powerful. Review the **Our story** section to find recommendations on common content that every biosphere reserve can include when explaining the network.

## Making an engagement plan with your stakeholders

The guide sets out a new approach to communication that encourages you to create engagement plans by asking your stakeholders to participate in the process.

This method is highly effective as it ensures that you are acting strategically and have taken stakeholder voices under consideration before you communicate.

We use the word “engagement” because it better reflects our values of involving and connecting people to the biosphere, rather than simply telling them about it. Visit the **Tools to engage** section to find out more.





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## Our story framework

What is the purpose, values and story of the biosphere reserve and the MAB network?



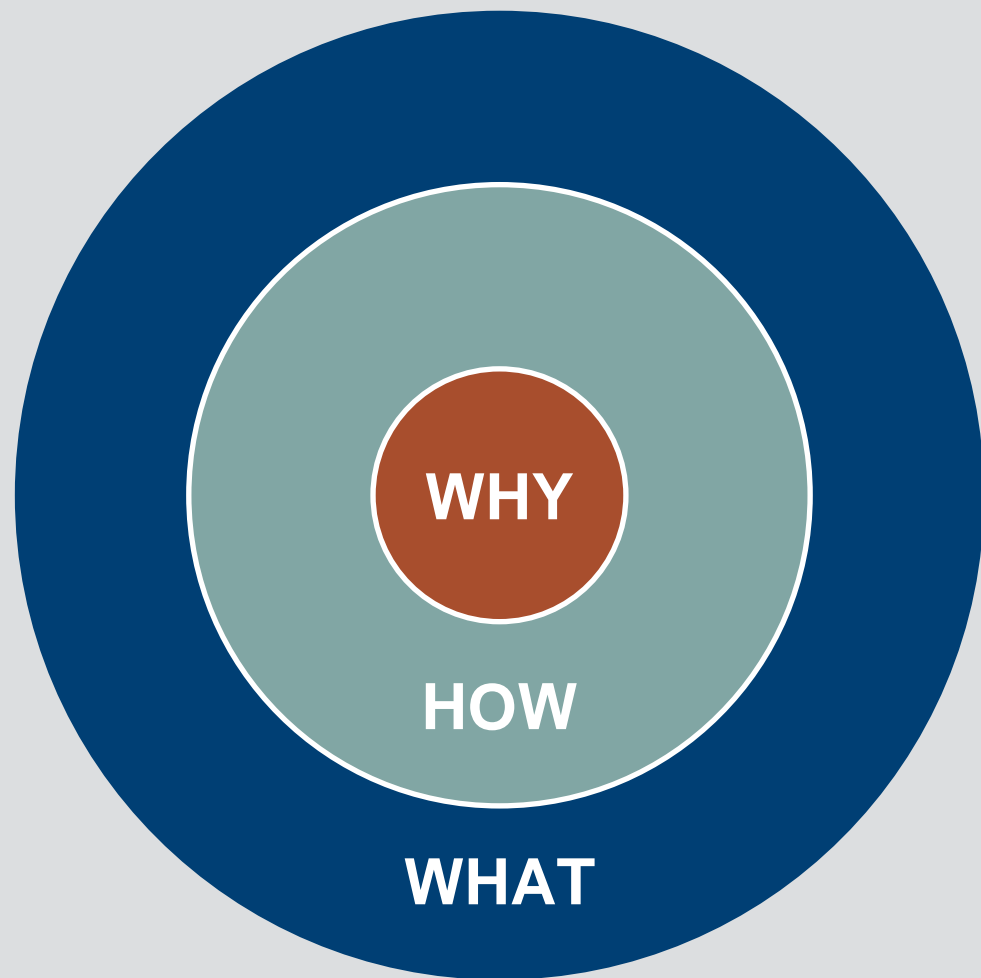
## A brand for the biosphere reserve

The UNESCO biosphere reserve brand has been created based on a very simple concept. Designed by Simon Sinek, the WHY-HOW-WHAT framework helps to structure the way we communicate about biosphere reserves.

This section explains the brand framework, and gives you some guidance on how the pieces fit together to tell a more powerful story about the biosphere reserve and the network.

At the end of the section are some things to remember when telling your own story.

**“People don’t buy what you do  
- they buy why you do it”  
- Simon Sinek**



Biosphere reserve brand:

What it gives us:

**WHY**  
**Our Purpose**  
 The "North Star" of the biosphere reserve

The core of communication - the consistent understanding of why biosphere reserves exist and are important to people

**HOW**  
**Our Values**  
 Describes our unique way of doing things

The behaviours common to every biosphere reserve

**WHAT**  
**Our Proposition**  
 Describes the biosphere reserve and the network

The easy to remember, relevant and engaging way to describe what a biosphere reserve is and what the network does



## Our purpose

The purpose statement sets out why a biosphere reserve and the network exists. It is core to our story and to inspiring all audiences about UNESCO's programme and your biosphere reserve

Inspire a positive  
future by  
connecting people  
and nature today

Our role is to use the power of science and the wonder of nature to inspire change

The impact we have is to create a secure future that we can look forward to

## Our purpose

There is meaning behind the words in our purpose statement. The words have been carefully chosen to reflect what we want our story to convey.

Inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today

From our network to our sites, our role is to reconnect people and the economy with their environment

We're making this future real now and everyday



## Biosphere reserves are about connection

### Our purpose

Our purpose outlines the role that we play in solving one of sustainable development's biggest issues - disconnection between people and nature.

Life is an amazing series of connections.

Between people, between people and nature, between knowledge and action, across time and place.

If these connections break, we put our collective quality of life at risk. If we keep them strong, we build a future that inspires us.

**UNESCO biosphere reserves connect people and nature to inspire a positive future today.**

### Tip

You can use this text as a simple way to help people understand our purpose.

## Our values

We have four core values that describe the behaviours of the network and how a biosphere reserve works.

### Celebrate life

The “positivity” value

**We celebrate people and nature**

### Empower people

The “participation” value

**We enable participation**

### Model solutions

The “innovation” value

**We explore new ways everyday**

### Belong together

The “collective” value

**We are part of something bigger**



## Celebrate life

We shine a light on positive examples of people and nature to thriving together.

We believe that people's quality of life and the health and diversity of nature are inextricably linked.

People are a part of their environments which have in turn been shaped by local cultures.

So we find ways to celebrate and advance culture, nature and economy together.

This is the “positivity” value. It reminds us that biosphere reserves are about the diversity of life and to find ways to celebrate people, environments and economic development together.

## Empower people

We are a movement of people building a future that we can trust.

We know that people are most powerful when they are informed, inspired, and have the tools to make change happen.

The only way to build a future that is self-sufficient, secure and happy is to help people believe it is possible, and help them to make it happen.

This is the “participation” value. As a network we need to inspire action in others. This value reminds us to get people involved.

## Model solutions

We explore new ways of living everyday that solve global challenges.

Our solutions are built on a strong scientific foundation and understanding of local cultures, traditions and ecology, which we translate it into actions everyday.

This allows us to make the most of local expertise, and live in a way that tackles global challenges. By doing this, we model the future we want to see.

This is the “innovation” value. Biosphere reserves are places where sustainable development is happening now in our way of living. We are an example.

## Belong together

Our success depends on the strength of the relationships we create.

It's these powerful connections that mean we can achieve outcomes together that we could not achieve alone and be part of something bigger.

Connecting people across disciplines, cultures and borders. Reconnecting people to each other, and to nature. Connecting the values and heritage from our past with hopes we have for our future.

This is the “collective” value. It is a reminder that we are about connections and that we cannot be successful without great relationships inside and outside of our network.



## Biosphere reserves are:

About people, by people, for people

A vehicle for people to organise around

Connect people across the world

Connecting culture, nature and economy

Understand heritage, create future

Explore better solutions in practice

Ways of living, not only ways of conserving

Shared values and language

Fuelled by passion

## Features

In listening to people across the network, we outlined the common features of biosphere reserves:

## Place and network

Because we are a place with a way of living, and a network around the world, we need to be clear about how we describe ourselves

### Tip

You can use this text when you need to differentiate between the biosphere reserve and the network

A UNESCO biosphere reserve is a place where people share a way of living with nature that builds a future we're proud of.

The UNESCO biosphere reserve network connects communities around the world who are pioneering a positive future for people and nature.



## The biosphere brand

### WHY

#### Our Purpose

The "North Star" of the biosphere reserve

Inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today

### HOW

#### Our Values

Describes our unique way of doing things

Celebrate life

Empower people

Model solutions

Belong together

### WHAT

#### Our Proposition

Describes the biosphere reserve and the network

A UNESCO biosphere reserve is a place where people share a way of living with nature that builds a future we're proud of

## Example: A biosphere reserve story

This story to explain the bassin de la Dordogne biosphere reserve does a great job of integrating the purpose of the biosphere reserve, our values and our proposition.

Nous pensons que la Dordogne et l'ensemble des cours d'eau qui l'alimente représentent un élément fondamental de la vie des populations du bassin. Quoi de mieux qu'un fleuve pour comprendre la solidarité nécessaire entre l'amont et l'aval ? Entre son propre petit ruisseau et l'ensemble du bassin hydrographique ? Entre la nature et les hommes ? Entre le passé, le présent et l'avenir ?

We believe that the Dordogne and all of its connections represent the fundamentals of life for everyone in the river basin.

What better metaphor than a river to make clear links between life upstream and downstream? Between a river's own small creek and the watershed that surrounds it? Between nature and people? Between the past, the present and the future?



## Example: Introducing the biosphere reserve

Niagara Escarpment biosphere reserve used the key messaging from the biosphere brand on a display stand created for a conference on biodiversity.





## Remember:

### Start with WHY

Our purpose is important to inspire people on the story of UNESCO MAB and the network.

### We have one purpose

The purpose of the biosphere reserve and the network are the same - we are the biosphere!

### Our values make us special

The behaviours common to every biosphere reserve make us special and will help people understand what to expect from the network.

### Biosphere reserves are about people

Telling personal stories helps people to connect. Always put people in the picture when talking about the biosphere reserve.







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## Tools to engage

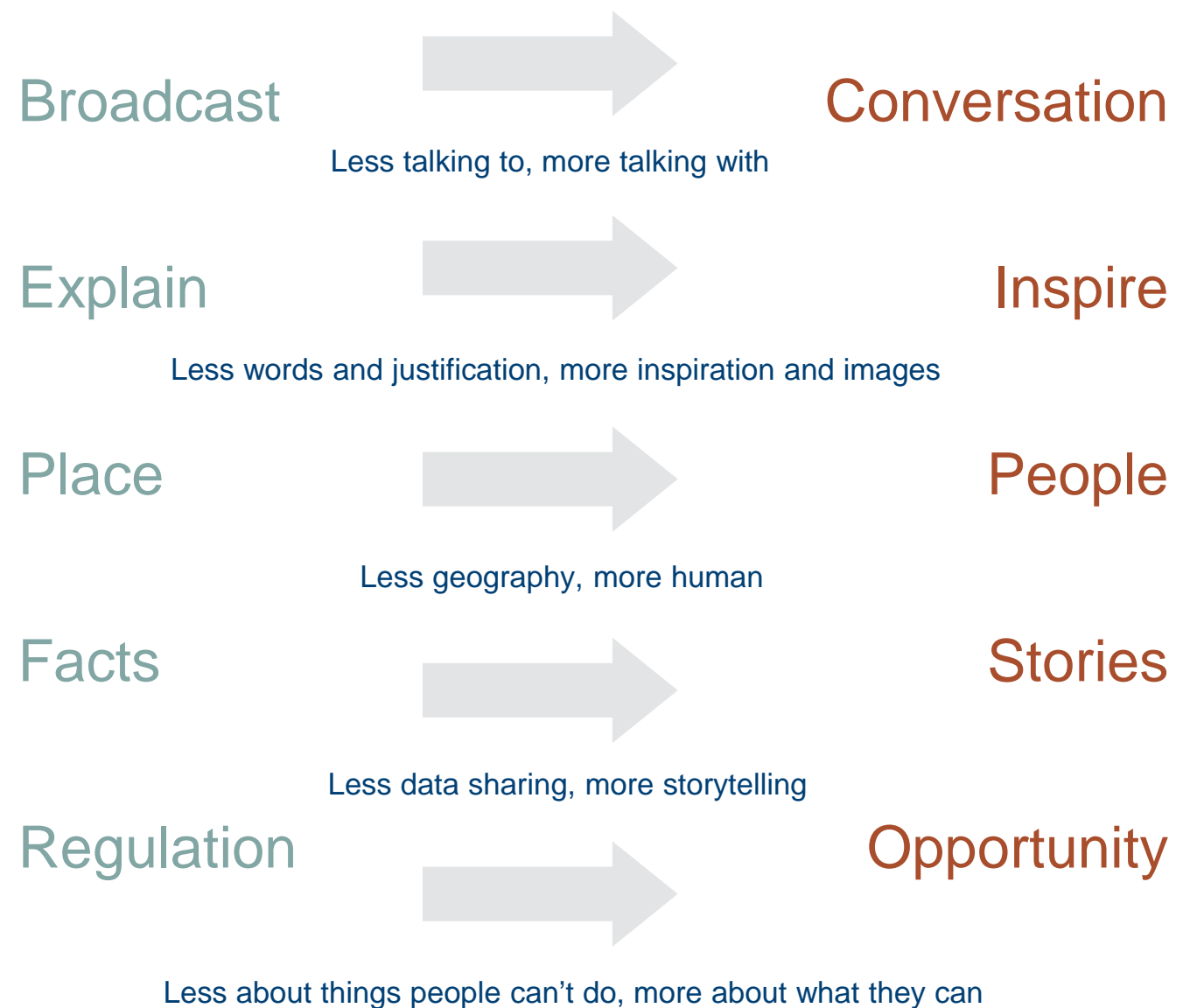
How can you create your own engagement plan?

## Changing how we engage:

### The big shift

The way we tell our story can change to more effectively engage people on what a biosphere reserve is, why it is important to them and how they can get involved.

Consider each of these shifts when you are creating your engagement plans.





## Creating a plan with your stakeholders

An important step forward for communication of the UNESCO MAB and biosphere reserves is our shift from talking to stakeholders to engaging them in conversation.

This ethos is in our values and our approach to creating engagement plans. Building strategies with your stakeholders is the most effective way of considering their needs and getting them on-board with your objectives.

This section sets out an approach and a set of tools to help you create an engagement plan by bringing stakeholders together in one session.



# Agenda for a stakeholder session

Follow this agenda for arranging and running your stakeholder or team planning session.

You will need a facilitator to hold the agenda and keep participants energised and to time.

See the FAQ section for some tips on who to invite to your sessions.

## Set expectations

Explain why the participants have been invited and how their help will support better engagement in the biosphere reserve

## Share the brand story

Tell participants about the biosphere reserve brand purpose and values, and give them time to ask questions

## Agree objectives

Use the Objective worksheets and ask the group to agree on engagement objectives for your biosphere reserve

## Make a plan

Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to use the worksheets. Have them share what they have made at the end of the session

## Session part 1: Setting expectations

The opening of your session should be about setting the context and the desired outcomes for the day. Thank participants for coming to the session, and let them know what you want success to look like.

Asking them what they want to get out of the session is a great way to involve them right away and have the group align on expectations.

### Tip

Use a flip chart and write down the expectations that your participants have. It shows you are listening!

**In this part of the session,  
ask participants:**

**“What is the one thing you  
would like to make sure we  
achieve by the end of the  
session today?”**



## Session part 2: Share the brand story

We have a great story to tell, but it might be one that your stakeholders have not heard before.

Use the [Brand & Story presentation deck](#) to share the new story with participants - including our purpose, values and proposition.

Allow plenty of time for this section to give participants time to ask questions.

### Tip

Give space to listen and allow questions without being defensive. Our approach to storytelling might be new to stakeholders.

In this part of the session,  
ask participants:

“What is different about our brand story to what you have heard before about biosphere reserves?”

## Session part 3: Agree objectives

It is crucial to be very clear about what you want to achieve by engaging people on your biosphere reserve. This helps you target your engagement efforts more effectively - resulting in greater impact and less wasted resources.

Getting participants aligned on a set of objectives helps them to work towards a common goal during your session.

### Tip

You may want to help participants to give you ideas by sharing some goals that you have for engagement.

**In this part of the session,  
ask participants:**

**“What are we trying to  
achieve by engaging people  
on the biosphere reserve?”**

## Example: Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve

### 1. See the opportunity

Create a positive picture of the opportunity that being a biosphere creates, to overcome the feeling of restrictions.

The Urdaibai pilot recognised the challenge that residents in the region had a poor understanding of the benefits of the biosphere reserve. Their solution was to create a sense of identity through three tactical steps.

**Engagement Goal:  
Show people that  
Urdaibai biosphere  
reserve is a better  
way of life**

### 2. Celebrate local

Celebrate local people, places and products to increase pride in Urdaibai and to develop a sense of identity that connects people in the region.

### 3. Share the story

Encourage others to share and celebrate their positive experiences of the biosphere reserve.



## Session part 4: Make a plan

Ask participants to split into smaller groups to do an exercise that helps them step by step to build an engagement plan.

[Download the worksheets](#), and print off enough copies for each group. The instructions are on the worksheets but will find it beneficial to explain how to fill in the worksheet to each group.

### Tip

You may want to circulate around the groups and answer any questions they have as they complete the worksheets.

You might find it useful to review the sample worksheets in the Tips & FAQ section of the guide so you can familiarise yourself with the kinds of outcomes you can expect from participants.

Once the worksheets have been completed, bring the participants back together.

Ask each group to present their completed engagement plan.

The result will be several engagement plans that target different audiences - all under your engagement objective - allowing you the opportunity to choose which one to implement.

# Engagement plans

Engagement consists of four key areas.

The worksheets ask participants to consider each of the areas and build one plan

## Set objectives

Aligning all engagement activity to engagement outcomes

## Target audiences

Getting specific on who you are engaging and what they care most about in order to connect with them

## Create messaging

Considering inspirational key messages, and who your target audience will listen to

## Choose activities

Selecting the best method to deliver your message to the target audience to have the greatest measurable impact

## Example: Messaging & activities

Bassin de la Dordogne biosphere reserve in France created a new online story and social media activity to meet the challenge of communicating to residents across their large region.

Our new site has been built to the new brand story . The headings and menus are intended as a practical application of the recommendations of the toolkit. They include references to participation, celebration, discovery and the notion of progression.

Visit the site:

<http://biosphere-bassin-dordogne.fr/>

**Concours Photo**

Ouvert à tous!

Le bassin de la Dordogne  
Source d'inspiration

**1er lot :**  
CANON EOS 700D  
+ 18-55MM IS STM

**2ème lot :**  
PNJ DRONE  
DR-100

et bien + encore !!

RÉSERVE DE BIOSPHERE  
UNESCO  
APPROUVÉE  
le 11 juillet 2012  
BASSIN DE LA DORDOGNE

Hommes, biodiversité et paysages  
du bassin de la Dordogne.  
Vos plus belles photos et les plus insolites.

du 10 avril au 10 mai

f Informations et règlement du concours sur <http://www.biosphere-bassin-dordogne.fr>



# Example plan: Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve

To achieve our engagement goal of:	Showing people that Urdaibai biosphere reserve is a better way of life
We'll engage: (Target audience)	Residents of Guernika and Bermeo
By saying: (Core messaging)	I am Urdaibai • I am an important part, I have my role, I am a stakeholder We are Urdaibai • Our wellbeing is linked to the biosphere reserve Urdaibai is ours • Our heritage and future are connected
Through these activities: (Choose activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The focus of this pilot is Urdaibai Day - a fair celebrating local culinary heritage, crafts, music, leisure, nature, exhibitions, etc</li><li>• The build up to the day will target children in all Urdaibai schools, with a challenge that will be presented on the day</li><li>• We will use social media to run a contest on ideas of how to make our biosphere reserve better, and share the results on the day</li><li>• We'll engage with local sport entities and celebrities to attend the Day and to act as role models for the biosphere reserve</li></ul>

## Thanking participants

Make sure you thank participants for their time and insight. We have found that stakeholders enjoy the opportunity to be involved in the creative process, and often want to run similar exercises with their own teams after!

Feel free to share the guide and toolkit materials with your stakeholders - they may want to run similar exercises with their own teams.

Send a follow up email to your stakeholders letting them know you have valued their input!

## Implementing your plan

The toolkit exercise will give you options of ways to engage stakeholders. You can choose which one is most appropriate to implement.

Consider:

### What resources are needed?

Include funds required, people and expertise, and the time required to get your plan going

### Which plan will give you the best impact?

Go back to your engagement objectives and review each plan against your goals

### Where are there quick wins?

Look for established channels or opportunities in your local area to partner with

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## Tips & Frequently Asked Questions

What common questions does the network have about our approach?



## Frequently asked questions: Brand & story

**Why doesn't the story talk more about sustainable development?**

Our brand and story are about the purpose and benefits of the network and the biosphere reserve. We have a contribution to make towards sustainable development; to make our story resonate with all stakeholders we need to be able to inspire people with our purpose and not attempt to explain everything about sustainability.

**Why don't we talk more about the value of the biosphere reserve in tangible facts and figures?**

The impact of biosphere reserves should be shared with key audiences. Consider which content is appropriate for which audience and that stories are more memorable than numbers!

**Some audiences do not respond well to the "biosphere reserve" term. Can we change this?**  
We have found a varied opinion on this issue across the network. It is something that the ICC council is addressing as part of the wider MAB strategy. For now for consistency we use the term "biosphere reserve" in this guide.

**How do we live the values in our team?**

The values are the behaviours that we see across the entire network of biosphere reserves. We use our values to guide how we do everything we do - from how we work with our partners, to how we behave on a daily basis. Our values give us a framework to help make sure our culture and way of doing things stays consistent and strong.

## Frequently asked questions: Stakeholder sessions

### Who should we invite to our stakeholder session?

Consider a range of participants who you believe to be engaged or willing to get involved. They will be most helpful to get quality outcomes - the sessions are not designed to convince stakeholders about the MAB, but to co-create solutions. 10-15 participants is a good size for the session.

### Who should run the stakeholder session?

We have made the process as simple as possible to allow you to run the session without external support - however you might find it helpful to have an external facilitator run the session for you.

### What happens if we run out of time in the session?

Try to keep to the time set out in the agenda, and give the working groups warning of when their time is up. If groups do not complete their worksheets in time you should still have initial ideas to build on.

### How do we measure the impact of our engagement?

The toolkit exercise asks participants to consider how to measure impact. Try to choose qualitative and quantitative measurements where you can demonstrate a shift over time.

## Frequently asked questions: Using the UNESCO logo

### Can partners use the UNESCO name and/or the MAB logo on their products?

There are strict rules to using the UNESCO name and logo. Under no circumstances can the UNESCO-MAB logo be used for commercial purposes. The sale of goods or services bearing the name, acronym, logo or internet domain names of UNESCO for profit is regarded as commercial use.

Commercial use of the name, acronym, logo or internet domain names of UNESCO, in whatever form, is subject to a special and specific contractual arrangement expressly authorised by the Director-General of UNESCO.

### How do we get our own UNESCO-MAB logo?

Biosphere Reserves and National Committees are invited to contact the UNESCO Secretariat in order to obtain the appropriate logo.

### Can we create our own identities?

There are great examples of biosphere reserves who have used creative approaches to the identity of their region.

Check out the communication platform to find inspiration - and consider the UNESCO name/logo use guidance before you commission any new identity for your biosphere reserve.



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