Access to Nature – Planning for Protected Areas

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OLTA Annual Gathering, Nov 2, 2023

The Myth of Pristine Wilderness

Planning

- Proactive instead of reactive
- Think things through
- Intentional choices

Land Trust Considerations

- Obligations as a Charitable Organization

- Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices STANDARD 12 Land Stewardship

B1. Develop a written land management plan for each property within 12 months to identify:

a) property's conservation values and threats to those features

b) overall management goals for the property

c) activities to reduce any risks or threats to the conservation values

d) Specify the uses that are appropriate for the property, in keeping with the property's conservation values, any restrictions and donor or funder requirements

B4. Maintain the property in a manner that retains the land trust's public credibility, manages community expectations and minimizes risk consistent with the land trust's mission

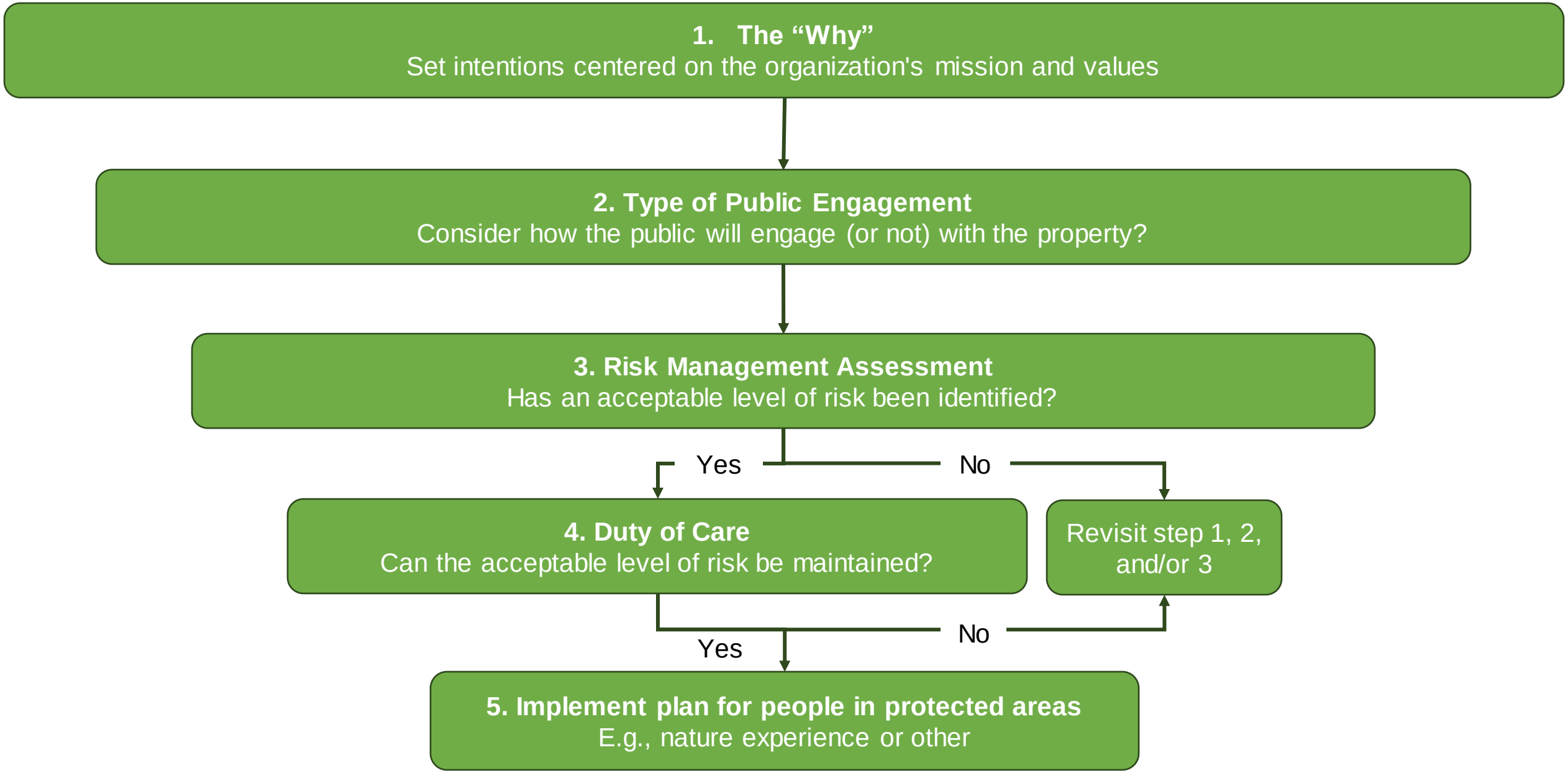
Framework: Planning for People in Protected Areas

Intentions:

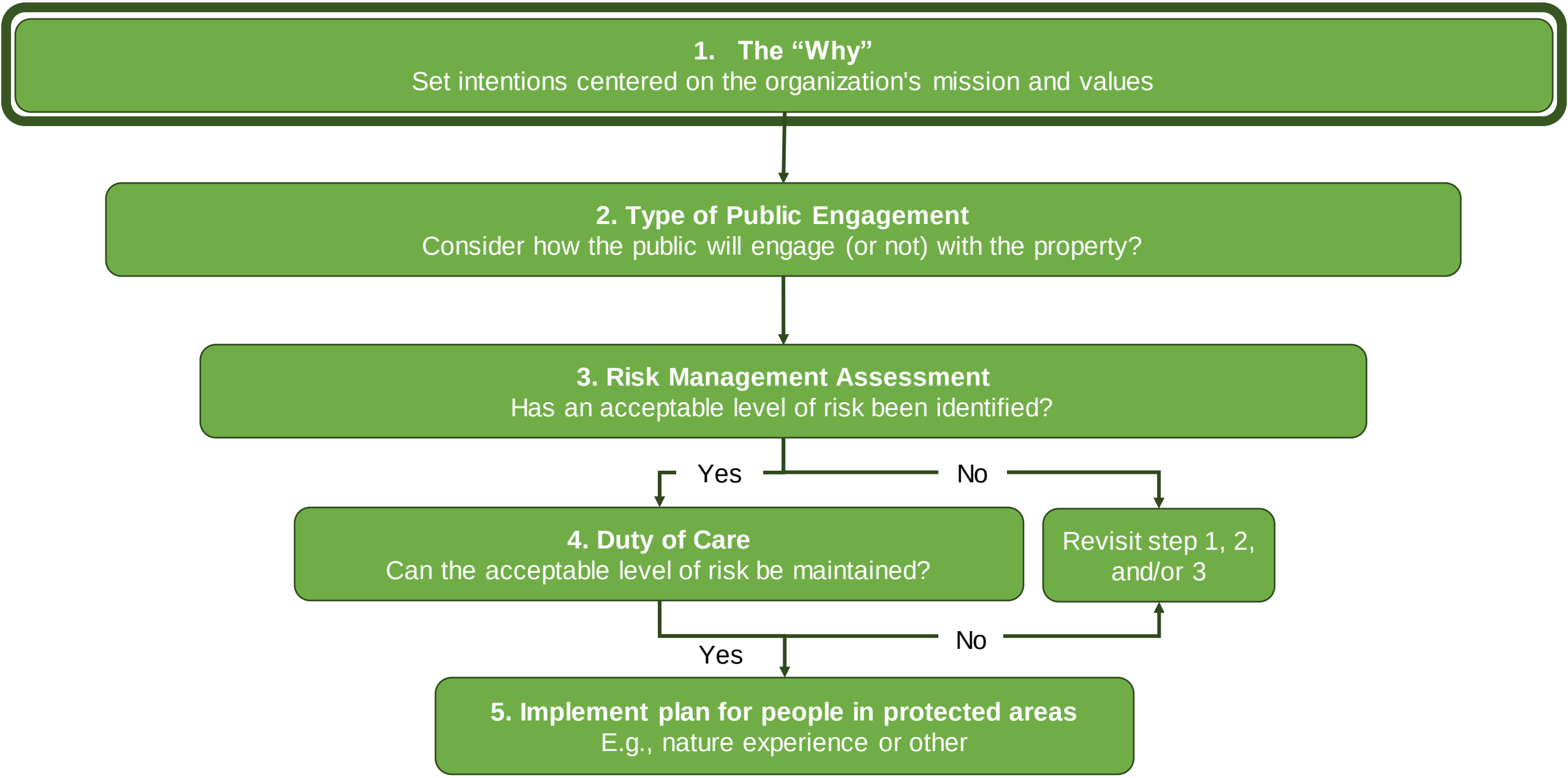
1. To ensure projects you take on align with your organization's mission and values

1. It ensures any considerations for reconciliation, equity, and accessibility are made from the start

1. To empower others to care and respect nature in a meaningful way


1. The "Why"
Set intentions centered on the organization's mission and values
2. Type of Public Engagement
Consider how the public will engage (or not) with the property?
3. Risk Management Assessment
Has an acceptable level of risk been identified?
Yes
No
4. Duty of Care
Can the acceptable level of risk be maintained?
Revisit step 1, 2, and/or 3
No
Yes
5. Implement plan for people in protected areas
E.g., nature experience or other

The Power of Influence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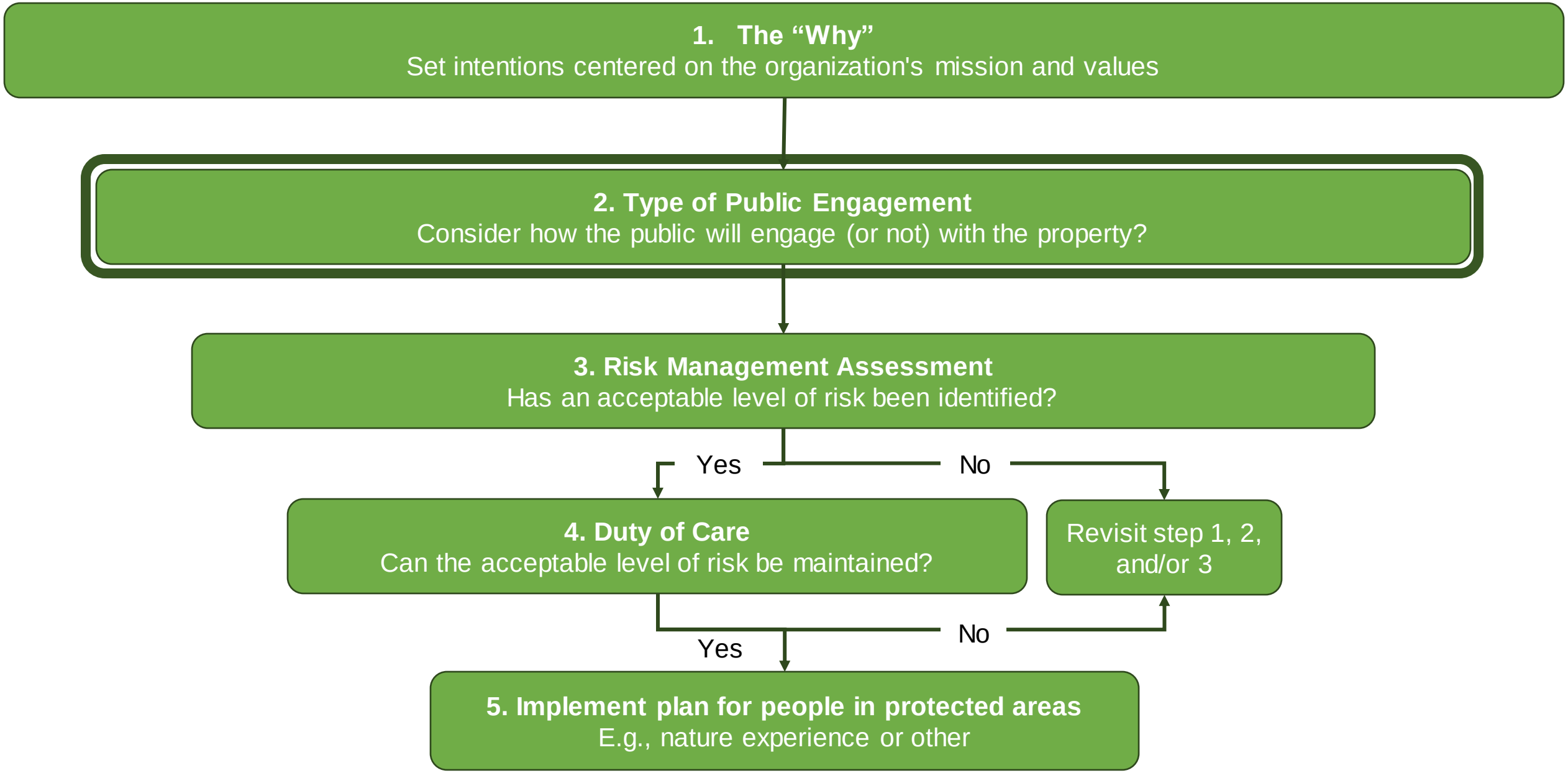
1. The “Why”: Organization Mission and Values

Key considerations to have the intended impact:

1. Be intentional about the choices you make

1. Make considerations for reconciliation, equity, and accessibility

1. Avoid exclusionary gatekeeping behaviour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2. Type of Public Engagement

Passive / Unplanned

The public initiates engagement with the organization or the property

Examples: trespassing, unexpected increased use, seasonal uninvited use

Nature Experience

The organization actively engages with the public

Two types:

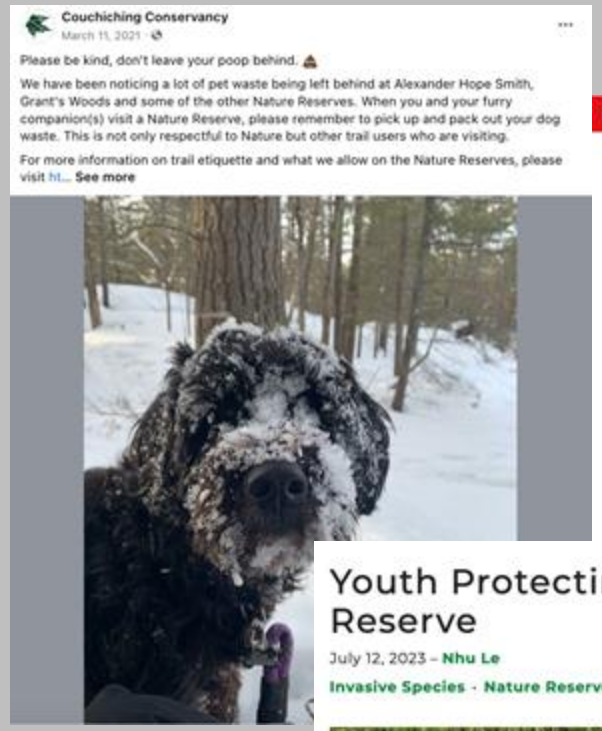
1. In person experiences
2. Non in person experiences

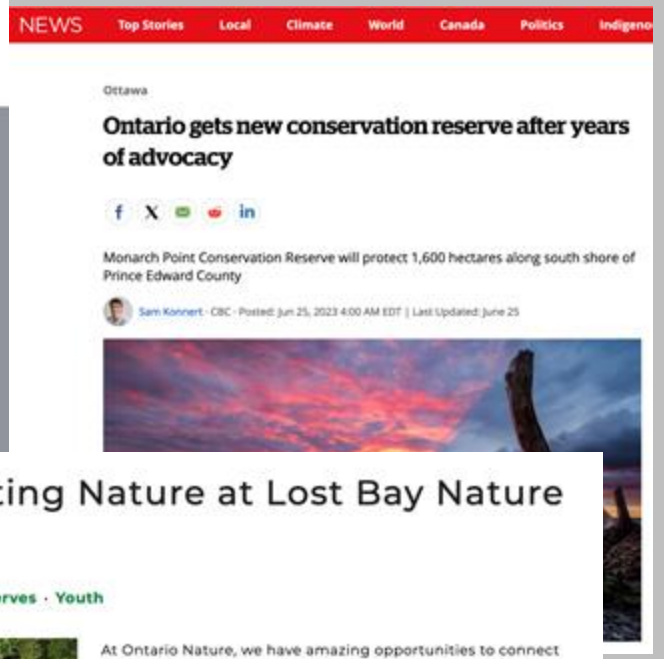
2. Type of Public Engagement: Nature Experience

Definition: An intentional and facilitated experience that connects people to nature, sets clear expectations, and is within the scope of the organization's mission

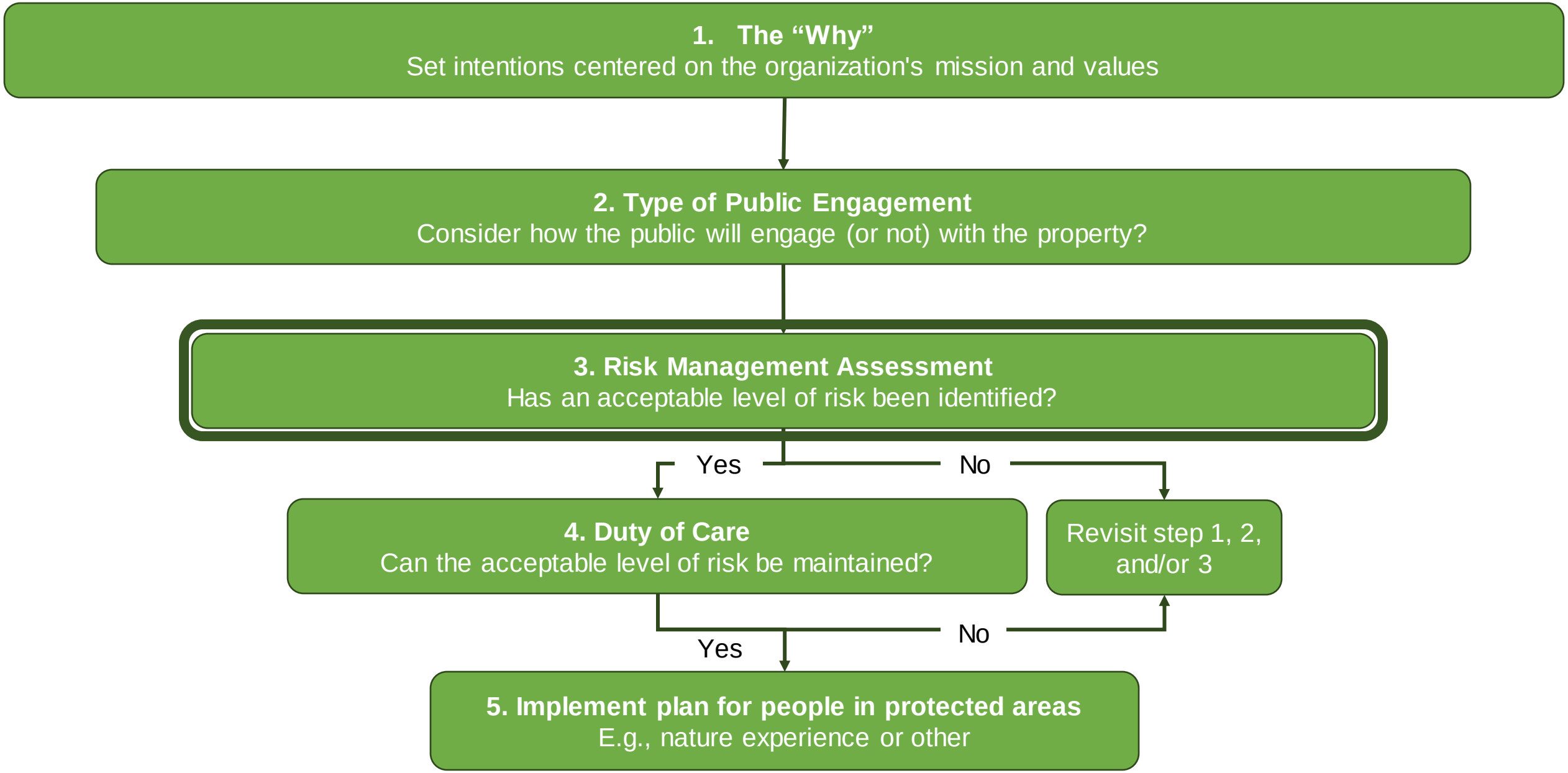
2. Type of Public Engagement: Nature Experiences

Non In-person Experiences





In-person Experiences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3. Risk Management Assessment

Purpose of step 3:

1. Identify all possible real and perceived risks for your organization regarding passive and active use of the property

1. Identify an acceptable level of risk that your organization is willing to take on

1. Identify any mitigation measures that would help maintain the acceptable level of risk

3. Risk Management Assessment

Examples of types of risk to consider:

- Reputational Risk (organization's mission and values)
  - Maintaining ecological integrity
  - Equity, diversity, and inclusion

- Health and safety risk (public, staff and volunteers)
  - Physical, psychological, capacity

- Financial risk
  - Financial capacity to maintain and monitor the property with increased use
  - Insurance, liability coverage

3. Risk Management Assessment: Reputational Risk

Ecological Integrity

Example: planning for a trail through a wetland

Risks to Consider:

- Damaging the ecosystem
- Impacting SAR and SAR habitat,
- Impacting the wetland hydrology
- Trampling and soil compaction

3. Risk Management Assessment: Reputational Risk

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Example: turning a laneway into an accessible trail because it's "easy"

Risks to Consider:

- Not serving the intended community in a meaningful way
- Not having the intended impact of nature experience

3. Risk Management Assessment: Health and Safety Risk

Physical Health and Safety

<u>Example:</u> Maintaining trails according to trail classification standards

<u>Risks to Consider:</u>

- Personal injury

3. Risk Management Assessment: Health and Safety Risk

Psychological Health and Safety

Example: Staff encountering trespassing activities

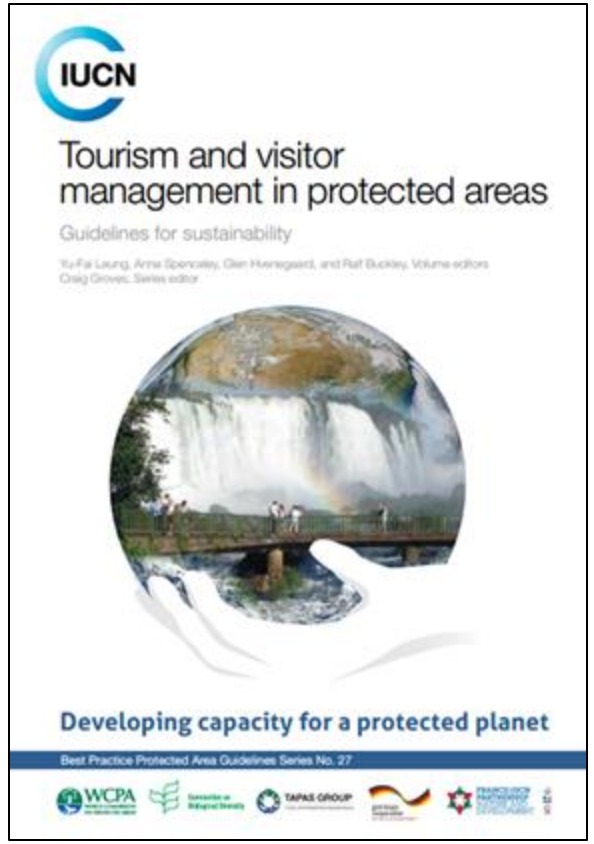
Risks to Consider:

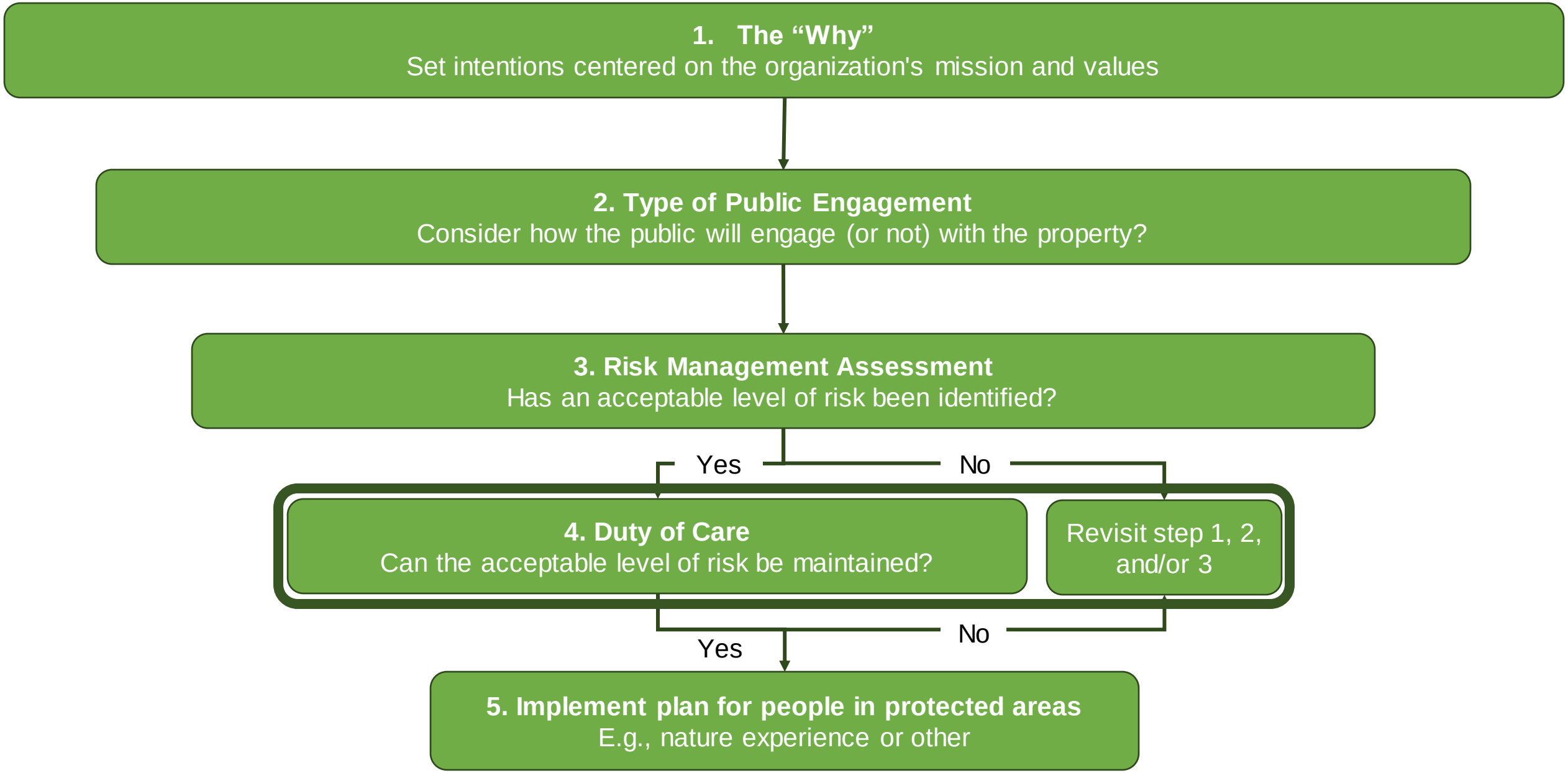
- Staff burnout
- Staff don't feel safe to come forward with visitor conflict
- Staff don't feel like they will be heard when they have ideas or concerns

IUCN publications: excellent resources

IUCN Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas guidelines

- Visitation in protected areas: the sustainability challenge
- Impacts of protected area visitor use and access
- Aligning management objectives with visitor use impacts
- Adaptive management for sustainable use and access
- Capacity building for sustainable use
- Costs and benefits of visitor use

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4. Duty of Care: Project

Funding to implement **and** maintain

- Is there appropriate and effective communications and infrastructure in place?
- Can it be maintained?

Reconciliation, equity, accessibility

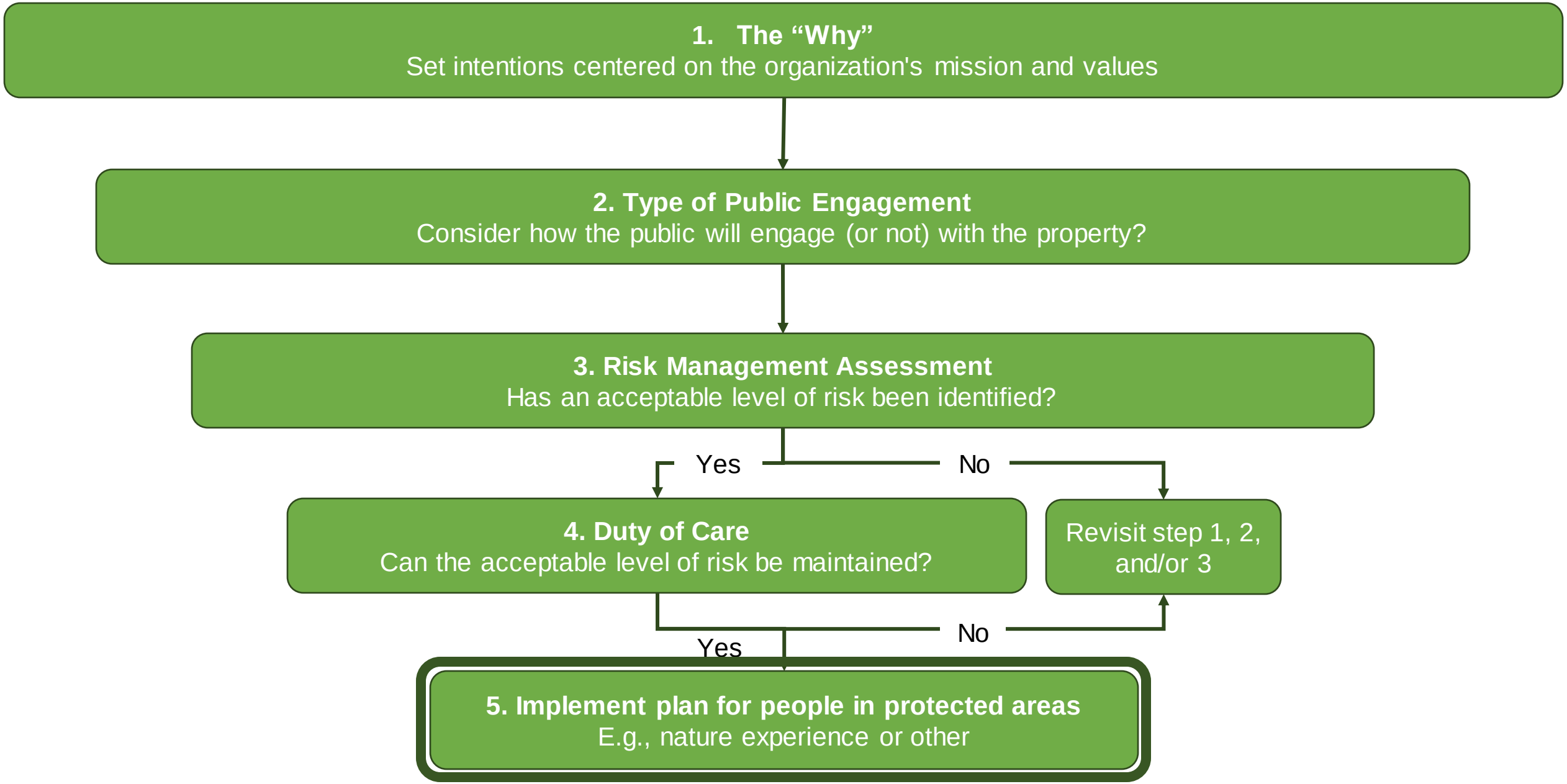
- Are we engaging in exclusionary gatekeeping behaviour?
- Can we maintain the nature experience to be accessible to the widest range of people?

Monitoring effectiveness

- Can you monitor the effectiveness of the type of public engagement to ensure it is having the intended impact?

4. Duty of Care: People Behind the Project

- How is the organization supporting staff who deliver on these projects?
- Does the organization help shoulder the responsibility of this work? Or does it fall on one or few people, which could lead to burnout?
- Are staff given the necessary resources and training to manage challenging situations?
- When an incident occurs, how will you and the organization respond?
- Does the organization support staff the way staff need to be supported?
- Do staff feel respected and valued?
- Do managers provide effective guidance to staff?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5. Implement Plan for People in Protected Areas

Passive / Unplanned

- Consider regular monitoring for activity
- Use trail cameras

In-Person Nature Experience

- Retain a trail expert/provide training to staff
- The more “accessible” a trail is, the higher the duty of care is
- Incorporate perspectives of people with lived experiences early on
- Consider getting ahead of unsolicited advertisement (e.g., trail apps)

Non In-Person Nature Experience

- Clear consistent messaging
- Consult and listen to staff who steward the properties on appropriate messaging

The Power of Influence

Appendix 1 Additional Resources

- ICUN: Ten principles of visitor management in Protected Areas (slide 29)

Ten principles of visitor management in protected areas: IUCN

1. Appropriate management depends on **objectives** and **protected area values**
2. **Proactive planning** for tourism and visitor management enhances effectiveness
3. **Changing visitor use conditions** are inevitable and may be desirable
4. Impacts on resource and social conditions are **inevitable consequences** of human use
5. Management is directed at **influencing human behaviour** and minimising tourism-induced change
6. Impacts can be influenced by many factors, limiting amount of use is one of many management options
7. **Monitoring** is essential to professional management
8. The decision-making process should **separate technical description from value judgements**
9. **Affected groups should be engaged** since consensus and partnership is needed for implementation
10. **Communication** is key to increased knowledge of and support for sustainability

IUCN Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas guidelines

Appendix 2 Risk Management Assessment Resources – Ecological Integrity

- Field of Recreational Ecology (slide 31)

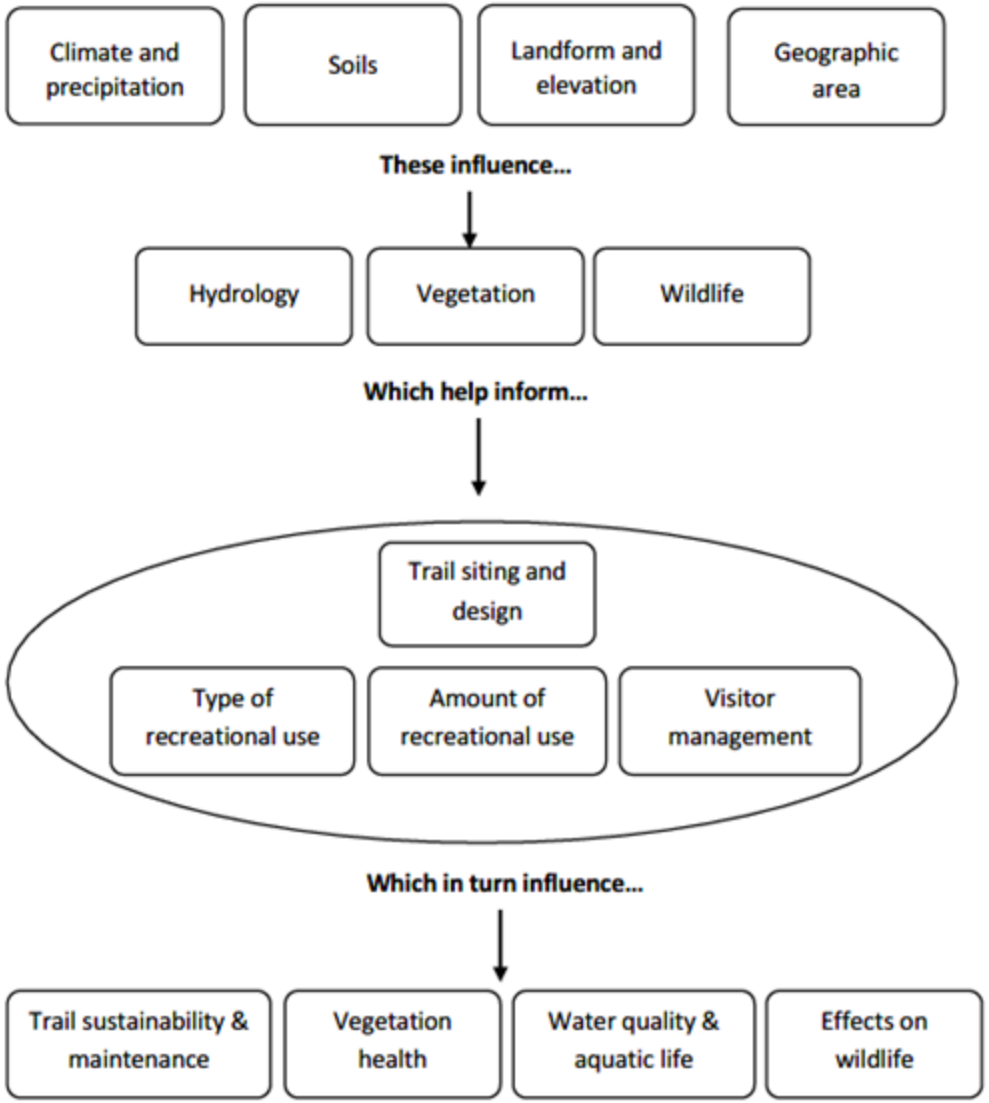
- Additional resources about maintaining ecological integrity (slide 32)

Recreational Ecology

...the scientific study of environmental impacts resulting from recreational activity in protected natural areas

Visitor access, ecological and management goals differ depending on site characteristics, proximity to urban or suburban areas, interest groups, etc

Hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use in natural areas:
A recreation ecology literature review
September 2017



Some key factors influencing environmental outcomes when recreational access is introduced to a natural area.

Additional Resources

- Hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use in natural areas: A recreation ecology literature review, September 2017 https://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/2017/09/28/Metro-Recreation-Ecology-Literature-Review.pdf ***577 references within this document
- Park, L.O., et al., Managing visitor impacts in parks: A multi-method study of the effectiveness of alternative management practices. Journal of Park and Recreation Administration. 2008. 26(1): p. 97-121.
- Monz, C.A., et al., Sustaining visitor use in protected areas: Future opportunities in recreation ecology research based on the USA experience. Environmental Management. 2009. Published online 17 December 2009.
- Manning, R., Visitor Experience and Resource Protection: A framework for managing the carrying capacity of national parks. Journal of Park and Recreation Administration. 2001. 19(1): p. 93-108.
- Marion, J.D. and S.E. Reid, Minimising visitor impacts to protected areas: The efficacy of low impact education programmes. Journal of Sustainable Tourism. 2007. 15(1): p. 5-27.
- Muhar, Andreas & Arnberger, Arne & Brandenburg, Christiane. Methods for visitor monitoring in recreational and protected areas: An overview. 2002: p. 1-6.
- Marion, J.L. A Review and Synthesis of Recreation Ecology Research Supporting Carrying Capacity and Visitor Use Management Decisionmaking, Journal of Forestry, 2016: 114 (3) : p. 339–351.

Appendix 3 Risk Management Assessment Resources –

- Physical Health and Safety
  - Trail type classification (slide 34)
    - Appropriately classifying a trail type is linked to monitoring and maintenance and liability risks if not maintained
  - Trail infrastructure designs (slide 35 & 36)
    - Sustainable design considerations

GOOD TRAIL DESIGN: POSITIVE, SAFE, SUSTAINABLE

Focus on a TRAIL TYPE, Identify Managed Uses, Designate a Designed Use

Trail Type Classification *(for Asset, Resource Conservation, and Visitor Experience Management)*

General Description and Technical Details

	Element / Trail Type	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3	TYPE 4
Trail Type Definition	Definition	• Paved or hard packed surfaced double track trail, all weather use, with no obstacles in surface. • Use compacted crushed rock, mineral soil, asphalt or chip-seal coat surface. • Minimum trail width of 1.5 metre. • Provide interpretive and directional signs, benches, and viewing areas where appropriate. • Machine- or hand-built and maintained.	• Natural surfaced packed single track trail or double track trail. • Use natural mineral soils or rock for surfacing, or native material from site. May be a paved surface • Minimum trail width of one metre. • Provide interpretive and directional signs, benches, viewing areas where appropriate. • Machine- or hand-built and maintained.	• Natural surface single track trail. • Trail tread may be constructed or established by clearing a corridor and marking the route. • Whenever possible use natural native material from site. • Minimum trail width of 0.25 metre. • Provide minimal signage. • Hand-built and maintained.	• No construction. • Suggested trail route. • Trail tread may consist of wildlife paths or may not exist. • Provide minimal or no signage or facilities. • Not maintained.
	Park Zone *(applies to National Parks only)*	Zone III, IV, and V (Natural Environment, Outdoor Recreation, and Park Service). *May be found in Zone II (Wilderness) under special circumstances.*	Zone II, III, IV, V (Wilderness, Natural Environment, Outdoor Recreation and Park Service)	Zone II, III, IV, V (Wilderness, Natural Environment, Outdoor Recreation and Park Service). *May be found in Zone I (Special Preservation) under exceptional circumstances.*	Zone I, II, III, and IV (Special Preservation, Wilderness, Natural Environment, and Outdoor Recreation).
	Typical Visitor Type	Suitable for all visitors including those with no trail experience. Visitor may be prepared for trail or may not be prepared *(proper equipment and water).*	Suitable for most visitors with some basic trail experience who are generally prepared *(proper equipment and water).*	Suitable for visitors who have trail experience and are prepared *(proper equipment and water).*	Suitable for visitors who have exceptional trail and navigation experience and are well prepared *(proper equipment and water).*
	Trail Rating	Easy or Moderate	Easy, Moderate, or Difficult	Moderate, Difficult or Unrated	Difficultor Unrated
	Image	 *Crushed rock or natural mineral soil surface*	 *Crushed rock or natural mineral soil surface*	 *Natural mineral soil surface*	 *Suggested trail route*
Technical Details	Distance (km / m)	Typical distance of trail does not exceed 10 km. *In certain cases a Type 1 trail may exceed 10 km.*	Typical distance of trail does not exceed 20 km. *In certain cases a Type 1 trail may exceed 20 km.*	May exceed 20 km.	N/A
	Trail Profile *(general description and typical elevation gain)*	Flat to gently rolling	Gently rolling with short steep sections	Rolling with steep sections that may continue for long periods	N/A
		Typical Elevation Gain	Typical Elevation Gain	Typical Elevation Gain	Elevation Gain
		0 – 100 metres *May be greater in certain situations.*	0 – 1,000 metres	0 - 1,000+ metres	N/A
	Trail Surface *(Material Type and Typical Average Width)*	Paved or surfaced •Hard packed and stable	Surfaced or natural •Firm and stable	Natural •May be loose in areas	N/A
		Typical Average Width	Typical Average Width	Typical Average Width	Average Width
		1.5 – 3.0 metres	1.0 – 1.5 metre	0.25 – 1.0 metre	N/A
	Quality of Marking *(General Signage and Information Provided)*	Trailhead information, interpretive panels, route markers, trail orientation maps • *Maximum information provided*	Basic trailhead information, route markers, and trail orientation maps • *Moderate information provided*	Basic trail head information and minimal route markers, or no signage provided • *Minimal or no information provided*	N/A
	Obstacles or Stairs	Few or no obstacles, no stairs or minimal use of stairs	Infrequent obstacles, stairs may be present	Obstacles common, stairs may be present	N/A
	Visitor Facilities	Parking lot, washroom, bridges, benches • *Maximum visitor facilities*	Parking lot, outhouse/pit toilet, bridges • Moderate visitor facilities	Bridges or other water crossing including fording • *Minimal visitor facilities*	N/A • *No visitor facilities*
	Level of Use	High to Very High	Moderate to High	Low to Moderate	Low

Parks Canada trail Type Classification

Design Considerations

Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design

1. Avoid/ Minimize Impact at Sensitive Ecological Areas
2. Develop Trails in Areas Already Influenced by Human Activity
3. Provide Buffers to Protect Sensitive Ecological and Hydrologic Systems
4. Develop Appropriately when Trails Do Intersect with Sensitive Areas
5. Use Natural Infiltration and Best Practices for Storm water Management
6. Limit tread erosion through design and construction
7. Provide Ongoing Stewardship of the Trails
8. Ensure Trails Remain Sustainable
9. Formally Decommission and Restore Unsustainable Trail Corridors

(http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/greenway/docs/dcrguidelines.pdf)

Seven Principles of Universal Design

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive in Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

(refer to handouts)

Note: Universal Design should always be considered but are especially important for Accessible Trails

Note: **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (**AODA) Standards require that organizations consult with people with disabilities when planning Recreational Trails

Slide taken from Treadscape: https://www.treadscape.ca/

Design Considerations

Sustainable Design

- **Physical**: Designing trails to retain their structure and form over years of use and under forces of humans and nature is key.
- **Ecological:** Minimizing the ecological impacts of trails, and protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources is fundamental
- **Economical:** For any trail, the implementing agency or advocacy group must have the capacity to economically support it over its life cycle.
- **Social:** Trails that meet the needs of its intended users encourage acceptance of and foster stewardship for the trail.

Universal Design and the AODA

Under this legislation, by 2025, an accessible Ontario is to be achieved through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in five key areas:

1. Customer Service
2. **Information and Communications (ie trailheads, signage and kiosks)**
3. Transportation
4. Employment
5. **Design of Public Spaces (Trails and their associated features)**

Slide taken from Treadscape: https://www.treadscape.ca/