

Tool 3: Suggested Coproduction Steps and Practices

An informational tool provided as part of a toolkit for researchers and resource managers with an interest in coproducing actionable science to support public land management.

While there is no single approach to coproduction, there are steps you can take and practices you can follow for successful coproduction throughout a project. The following steps and practices represent ideas and actions that were beneficial in our projects, based on our collective experience.

Success in coproduction must be grounded in a commitment to building strong working relationships and good basic project management. The suggested actions complement and build on standard project management processes and steps. Although project leads for the resource management agency and science provider will often work together to initiate these steps and practices, all members of the project team work together to support and implement the coproduction effort. Early and sustained communication among all project team members is critical for successful coproduction.

Initiating coproduction

1. Consider what [level of coproduction](#) is most appropriate for your project based on the nature of the project, its intended end products and users, available time and resources, and any other pertinent factors (see "[Tool 2: What Level of Coproduction Makes Sense for My Project?](#)").
2. Build a project team that includes the expertise and experience needed to complete the project. Start by drawing on your existing networks and those of colleagues and funding partners. For complex projects, consider identifying core project team members versus auxiliary members, or breaking the team into smaller working groups while also ensuring that there are mechanisms for cohesive communication.
3. Plan a kickoff meeting(s) that includes a conversation about [what coproduction means](#) and typical challenges encountered in coproduced projects (see "[Tool 1: Coproduction in the Public Lands Context](#)").
4. Collectively clarify the agency management need addressed by the project, who will use the resulting science product(s), and specifically how and in what processes and decisions the products will be used. Revisit this conversation as needed throughout the project, particularly if there are changes in agency policies or decision processes that may affect product use.
5. Decide on and record roles, responsibilities, and other project details using the [Project Logistics Tracker Template](#) (see "[Tool 4: Suggested Communication Deliverables for Coproduced Projects](#)"). Consider timelines for delivering products and account for input from the management agency, peer review and approval processes, and expected publication timeframes.
6. Revisit the project statement of work and planned deliverables with the project team; discuss and document any changes resulting from these initial conversations.
7. Discuss details about data ownership and data sharing. Plan for long-term data storage and access.

Communicating within the project team (including running project meetings):

8. Commit to a recurring day and time for project team meetings. Put meetings on everyone's calendars for the year (or length of the project), with the flexibility to cancel if a meeting is not needed.
9. Consider rotating responsibility for leading and facilitating meetings to support participatory decision making. Determine whether it might be beneficial to bring in an outside facilitator.
10. At an early meeting or in a follow-up to it, ask each team member how much time they plan to devote to the project, what project phases and decisions they would like to be involved in, and how they would like to be looped into project communication (e.g., via emails, project meetings, shared meeting notes).
11. Develop and share an agenda before each meeting. Start each meeting with a reminder of the project scope/objectives, a recap of key decisions from the last meeting(s), the current meeting plan, and an opportunity for every member to share relevant project updates (e.g., progress on related initiatives, agency staffing or policy changes). Give equal space to management and research perspectives.
12. Take meeting notes and share them in an agreed-upon format and location, with action items and responsible parties highlighted. Consider emailing progress updates between meetings if meetings are infrequent.
13. Clarify points of contact for concerns, detailed questions, and updates about project progress/work.

14. As the project progresses, the project leads should periodically check in with project team members about how they feel about the project and their involvement in it. This could occur at a project team meeting but may be better in one-on-one conversations. Possible questions to ask:
 - How do you feel about the direction the project is headed and the work we are doing?
 - Are you satisfied with your involvement, and that of the project team, in the project?
 - Do you feel you are being listened to and have the say you want to have in project decision making?
 - What is working well? What could be improved? What are we not doing that we should be doing?
15. Once the project is underway, have an open and realistic conversation about who would like to be involved in, and an author on, project products. Make sure the whole team is comfortable with the author group making decisions about project publications, and that authors have adequate time to contribute to the effort. Revisit these conversations and decisions as needed.
 - Consider consulting existing resources on the roles of authors and contributors (e.g., "[Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#)").

Sharing project progress and products with others outside of the team

16. Create a [Project Briefing Sheet](#) and project webpage to facilitate communication with others outside of the project team (see "[Tool 4: Suggested Communication Deliverables for Coproduced Projects](#)"). Encourage project team members to share these with others who may have an interest in the project.
17. Periodically ask the project team if there are other agency programs or people with whom the project leads or project team members should be coordinating or sharing information and products.
18. Decide when and how often to brief leaders in the resource management agency (often leads of individual programs, offices, or branches) about the project. Make every effort to have both the research lead and the resource management lead for the project attend briefings. Share the project briefing sheet and link to the project website with the audience before meetings.
19. Think about who is the best messenger to take project updates and results to different audiences. A goal of coproduction is that everyone on the project team will be fully capable of, and comfortable with, sharing project results and products with the audiences they know best.

Evaluating success

20. At the outset of the project, consider if you will evaluate the coproduction aspect of the project when the project is completed, in addition to requesting feedback on coproduction as the project progresses (see step #14). Consider who conducts the evaluation, whether it is restricted to project team members or extends beyond them, and what approach you will take. You might conduct the evaluation formally (e.g., working with social scientists to develop a survey or interviews) or informally (a conversation), with questions such as:
 - During the project, did you feel like your ideas and contributions were valued?
 - What were some strengths and weaknesses of the coproduction process used for this project?
 - From a coproduction perspective, what would you like to see done differently in a future effort?
21. At the outset of the project, consider if you will evaluate the extent to which the products were actionable and acted upon. Develop a list of potential end users and questions to ask them. The team will likely need to plan for this evaluation to occur in the future, since the timeline for product use may be months or years. You might conduct the evaluation formally (e.g., working with social scientists to develop a survey) or informally (a conversation), with questions such as:
 - Did this product provide useful information for you?
 - Did the product address your original management need? Did the spatial and temporal scale of the product fit your needs?
 - Did you use the product to inform a management action or decision? If so, how?
 - What, if anything, could make this product more useful for you?

Suggested Citation

Selby, L.B., Carter, S.K., Haby, T.S., Wood, D.J.A., Bamzai-Dodson, A., Anderson, P.J., Herrick, J.E., Samuel, E.M., and Tull, J.C. Suggested Coproduction Steps and Practices: An informational tool provided as part of a toolkit for researchers and resource managers with an interest in coproducing actionable science to support public land management. Denver (CO): U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; 2024. <https://www.blm.gov/noc/report/toolkit-coproducing-actionable-science-support-public-land-management>.