

URWAN



The URWAN Checklist

Final version

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Instructions

- To ensure your NbS intervention is credible, effective, and truly beneficial for both nature and people, **all elements** in the URWAN Checklist should be considered and completed.
- Aim to consider all elements, but don't worry if some are not applicable to your context. Treat the URWAN Checklist as **a practical support tool**—not a rigid or prescriptive standard.
- The URWAN checklist is **not intended to be followed in a strict chronological order**. You can start using it at any stage of an intervention, whether during planning, design, or implementation.
- Refer to the **brief explanations** to understand why the specific element and its steps matter and use the **recommendations for guidance**. If any terms are unclear, please, refer to the **Glossary**.
- Mark off each step as you complete it and **revisit the Checklist regularly throughout the intervention lifecycle**. This helps you track progress, spot gaps, refine your approach, and improve performance over time.
- The Checklist can also **support teamwork**. Project leads can use it to assign tasks, clarify roles, and monitor progress, while team members can update completed steps and flag issues early.





Elements of the checklist

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Planning Team and Action Plan

Stakeholder engagement

Site selection

Baseline assessment

Co-design

RISK MANAGEMENT

Feasibility Analysis

Risk Management Framework

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategic Alignment and Synergies

Governance

FINANCING AND MAINTENANCE

Economic Justification

Distributional Equity

Financial Feasibility and Sustainability

Integration NbS into Public Financial Planning

MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Adaptive Management

MAINSTREAMING AND SCALING

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE





The URWAN Checklist

PLANNING AND DESIGN		
Planning team and Actional Plan		
☐ Identify a planning leader and establish a planning team. ☐ Develop a planning action plan, including objective(s), activities, workplan, timeline and budget. ☐ Set up thematic and/or interdisciplinary working groups with clear roles and responsibilities. ☐ Ensure effective cost management during the planning phase.	Why Planning Team and Action Plan matter A dedicated team is needed to manage the complex and multi-dimensional process of planning and designing effective NbS. This team should have a clear leader, a well-defined action plan, and enough funding to do its work properly. In addition, thematic or interdisciplinary working groups should be established to support the main team. By bringing together people with different skills, experience, and knowledge, these groups strengthen the planning process. They help ensure real stakeholder involvement, support co-design activities, address legal and regulatory requirements, confirm technical feasibility, and help build a strong foundation for the long-term management, maintenance and governance of NbS.	Recommendations ▪ Promote the presence of professionals in more than one working group to encourage knowledge sharing. ▪ Ensure regular revision of roles and responsibilities of the working groups.
Stakeholder engagement		
☐ Map stakeholders at all levels (for example, within a Municipality identify key departments and offices). ☐ Develop a communication and engagement strategy with clear branding, tailored messages and tools (e.g. posters, web pages, etc.) for each stakeholder group, a workplan, timeline, and budget. ☐ Implement the communication strategy early on and sustain it throughout the planning, design and implementation phases.	Why Stakeholder Engagement matters Stakeholder involvement is essential for NbS. It ensures that solutions respond to local challenges, needs, and values, while also building public support for their long-term maintenance. When stakeholders are engaged as partners and co-creators, interventions are better adapted to the local context, more widely accepted, properly maintained, and more equitable. Because NbS are often seen as new and complex, their success depends even more on public understanding and acceptance than traditional grey infrastructure. A participatory approach benefits	Recommendations ▪ Develop a centralised, culturally responsive, and locally relevant communication strategy rather than relying on fragmented, project-based efforts to make NbS benefits visible and understandable to all stakeholders. ▪ Engage stakeholders early and continuously throughout planning, design, implementation and monitoring. ▪ Ensure clear communication about roles, expectations and limits of influence to





	communities by empowering people, strengthening social connections, and fostering a shared sense of responsibility.	prevent disengagement and consultation fatigue. - Invest time, resources, and funds to ensure the participatory processes can become a permanent element of urban planning. - Empower vulnerable stakeholders through transparent two-way dialogue to build trust and mutual understanding. - Support long-term stewardship by fostering community ownership and integrating maintenance into city policies and cultural practices to prevent neglect or vandalism.
Site selection		
- Identify potential sites with relevant stakeholders and concerned public administrations. - Define and agree on a set of criteria for the selection of the intervention site with relevant stakeholders and concerned public administrations. - Screen potential sites through a suitability analysis based on the agreed criteria (such as ecological conditions, land availability, infrastructure constraints, connections to existing green and blue spaces, city priorities and implementation timeline). - Select the final site(s) in agreement with the relevant stakeholders and concerned public administrations.	Why Site Selection matter It is important to select the most suitable and practical location for the NbS as the site can affect the long-term success of the intervention and determine who and what benefits from it. Poor spatial planning or choosing the wrong site can undermine NbS effectiveness, waste resources, and lead to unintended problems, including environmental injustice (when people are disproportionately impacted by environmental factors because of discrimination).	Recommendations - Allow sufficient time for site selection, as it often requires coordination with public administration, evaluation of multiple options, and consideration of planning constraints and community involvement. - Consider the future investment plans in the area.
Baseline Assessment		
- Inspect the selected site(s) in detail using field visits, measurements, photos, and existing technical and cartographic data. - Conduct a Baseline Assessment to understand local environmental, social, economic, and regulatory	Why Baseline Assessment matters NbS are only effective, fair, and widely accepted when they are adapted to the specific social, environmental, legal, and institutional conditions of a place. A focused Baseline Assessment helps understand the challenges	Recommendations Plan the Baseline Assessment realistically, considering data gaps, uncertainties, and possible administrative delays.





conditions, identify key challenges and vulnerabilities, ensure alignment with city strategies, and guide the design of context-specific, evidence-based solutions.	to be addressed and the local context within which the intervention(s) will be implemented. It helps support informed decisions, align actions with local priorities and strategies, and design strong, evidence-based solutions that work well in that specific location.	- Combine desk research with on-site assessments. - Involve experts from different fields, seek external technical support when needed, and include local and citizen knowledge (e.g., citizen science). - Keep the baseline assessment focused on what is needed for decision-making, rather than trying to collect every possible piece of data.
Co-design		
- Organise a launch event to present the findings of the Baseline Assessment, introduce the co-design approach, gather participant feedback, and explore initial ideas through collective discussion and data collection. - Synthesize insights from the first event to see whether a co-design process can be pursued and guide the organisation of the following co-design workshops. - If possible, hold co-design workshops to develop and refine design proposals based on stakeholder input and site constraints. - Prototype solutions through physical, digital, and governance methods in a co-creation workshop. - Engage hard-to-reach groups to inform, brainstorm, vote on design options, and finalize key elements of the project. - Organise a final event to present the intervention(s) – either co-designed or not - to the local community. - Analyse and document the outcomes of the co-design process, including costs, feedback, and lessons learned.	Why Co-design matters Co-design supports the development of NbS that people understand, accept, and actively support. It helps identify priority challenges to be addressed and define clear, realistic outcomes from the outset, avoiding misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. It also ensures that solutions remain flexible and adaptable to evolving urban and climate conditions over time.	Recommendations - Use co-design approaches and tools that have been tested in practice, such as the URWAN Start Park guidelines. - Review and, where suitable, adapt or replicate solutions that have already proven successful, such as those in the URWAN NbS Catalogue. - Design multifunctional solutions that build on existing interventions (including grey infrastructure) and address the complexity of urban areas. - Promote innovation and co-creation by involving a wide range of stakeholders, allowing flexibility in the process, and using both local knowledge and technical expertise. - Use recognized frameworks and standards for NbS to ensure the co-designed intervention(s) meet established criteria. These frameworks also support future





☐ Keep participants involved through regular follow-ups (online or in person).		monitoring and evaluation, improving transparency and accountability.
RISK MANAGEMENT		
Feasibility Analysis		
☐ Conduct a Feasibility Analysis to determine whether the co-designed intervention(s) are viable to undertake.	Why Feasibility Analysis matters A Feasibility Analysis helps check whether an intervention fits the local regulatory, social and environmental conditions. It looks at whether it can be properly maintained over time (including water, staff, community support, and technical skills) and whether it follows existing standards, regulations, and safety rules. Doing a Feasibility Analysis early helps avoid moving forward with solutions where the risks of implementation are greater than the expected benefits.	Recommendations - Consider critical legal and regulatory aspects, such as land ownership and maintenance responsibilities, to ensure intervention(s) can be implemented in practice. - If the budget allows, conduct a feasibility analysis with enough technical and economic detail to allow the project to proceed directly to implementation. - Use feasibility results to build confidence in the co-designed intervention(s) among institutions and political stakeholders. - Consider the potential nuisances associated with construction in the area and identify appropriate mitigation measures, such as redesigning the emergency plan. - If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to assess the feasibility of the alternative solutions.
Risk Management Framework		
☐ Identify potential environmental and social risks and their impacts, such as gentrification, displacement, and unequal access to ecosystem services. ☐ Rank risks by severity and priority.	Why Risk Management matters As ecological, social, and cultural systems are dynamic, a Risk Management Framework offers a clear and structured way to identify,	Recommendations Establish feedback channels so communities can help identify and address risks.





☐ Develop corrective measures to address these risks with input from affected stakeholders. ☐ Establish a Risk Management Framework and ensure regular review to maintain its effectiveness.	assess, prioritize, monitor, and mitigate risks that could affect the successful implementation of the NbS. It also helps address any expected and unexpected impacts the intervention(s) may create. It looks at how these impacts are shared among different stakeholders and supports early action through corrective measures to reduce harm. Monitoring data also support adaptive management and ongoing improvement of performance over time.	▪ Co-develop safeguards and corrective measures with stakeholders early and review them regularly to protect community rights and interests. ▪ Ensure safeguards and corrective measures are aligned with regulatory and planning cycles by integrating NbS into urban climate/disaster risk management frameworks. ▪ Communicate risks and safeguards transparently to build trust, prevent conflicts, and support adaptive management. ▪ If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to evaluate risks, test scenarios and changes in a virtual environment without risking physical damage.
IMPLEMENTATION		
Strategic Alignment and Synergies		
☐ Map relevant sectors and complementary interventions. ☐ Leverage synergies and collaborations with identified sectors and initiatives. ☐ Link the intervention(s) to broader sustainability goals (e.g., the Global Sustainability Goals – SGDs) to strengthen institutional commitment and cross-sector coordination. ☐ Develop reporting mechanisms with local, national and regional partners to ensure coherence, transparency, and accountability.	Why Strategic Alignment and Synergies matter Aligning the NbS with wider policy goals, action plans, and strategies helps strengthen institutional support and improve coordination across different sectors. For effective NbS, it is also important that the intervention(s) build on past or ongoing initiatives and existing infrastructure and look for synergies across different policy and governance levels (local to global) and economic sectors (e.g., tourism, agriculture, etc.).	Recommendations ▪ Align the intervention(s) with national, regional and global frameworks to support future funding and scalability.





Governance		
☐ Establish a governance mechanism tailored to the specific context of the intervention(s) (e.g., interdepartmental committees) that ensures coherence, avoids duplication, bottlenecks and conflicts, fosters participation and leverages synergies. ☐ Establish, when possible, dedicated bodies (e.g., technical working groups) to guide implementation, prioritize investments, and troubleshoot implementation challenges across departments. ☐ Establish (or use existing) accessible and well-publicised systems for raising concerns and resolving conflicts, supported by trained staff.	Why Governance matters Successful NbS need clear, open, and inclusive governance that involves different sectors and levels of decision-making, while connecting top-down priorities with bottom-up needs. A participatory governance builds trust and legitimacy, values local knowledge, promotes fair distribution of benefits, and supports long-term success.	▪ Actively facilitate collaborative and participatory governance to bring together interdisciplinary actors and break institutional silos. ▪ Use existing participation channels and trusted intermediaries to engage diverse stakeholders in ongoing activities (e.g., monitoring, maintenance and communication) and build shared ownership of the intervention(s). ▪ Ensure the meaningful inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups to promote equity and prevent green gentrification.
FINANCING AND MAINTENANCE		
Economic Justification		
☐ Build a strong case for adopting NbS instead of conventional solutions by using multi-criteria impact assessments that go beyond traditional financial measures (such as Cost–Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA)). (SEE RISK MANAGEMENT)	Why Economic Justification matters NbS are designed to provide wide-ranging social, environmental, and economic benefits. They are expected to provide greater overall value than traditional grey infrastructure. However, municipal finance systems often underestimate their worth because decisions are made in silos and focus mainly on engineered interventions. Accounting for the wide range of NbS co-benefits and avoided harms—such as better public health, flood protection, recreational spaces, and biodiversity—makes a stronger case for including them in urban policies, planning, and investment decisions. Two approaches are usually used: ▪ Cost–benefit analysis (CBA) measures the tangible costs, benefits, avoided damages, and wider co-benefits of NbS. It helps build strong investment cases and calculate cost-benefit ratios.	Recommendations ▪ Move beyond short-term, sector-based assessments and adopt longer-term, cross-sector perspectives when evaluating NbS. ▪ Use simplified valuation methods early in planning to build political and institutional support for NbS. ▪ Explicitly identify and communicate NbS co-benefits and avoided costs, even without full economic valuation. ▪ Frame NbS benefits in ways that are relevant to multiple municipal departments to reduce siloed decision-making.





	▪ Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) compares the costs of alternative solutions that achieve the same outcome and usually takes long-term performance into account, not just short-term financial returns.	▪ If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to assess the cost effectiveness of alternative solutions.
Distributional Equity		
☐ Evaluate the potential impacts of the intervention(s) on the community. (SEE RISK MANAGEMENT) ☐ Develop and implement mitigation measures where unequal impacts are expected or observed. (SEE RISK MANAGEMENT)	Why Distributional Equity matters The transparent and participatory assessment of how the benefits and costs of the NbS affect different stakeholders ensures that benefits and costs are fairly shared across stakeholder groups (<i>distributional equity</i>) and that the interventions are equitably placed across neighbourhoods (<i>spatial justice</i>). It prevents reinforcing social inequality or causing green gentrification, while building social trust and acceptance and long-term care of the NbS.	Recommendations ▪ Evaluate the potential impacts of the intervention(s) on the community early to avoid risks of displacement, green gentrification, resistance, social tension, while ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness for all user groups. ▪ Communicate transparently with affected communities to build trust and adapt mitigation measures. ▪ Align financing, planning, and implementation decisions to prioritise fair and accessible outcomes. ▪ If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to evaluate the distribution of potential impacts of the intervention(s).
Financial Feasibility and Sustainability		
☐ Develop a multi-year financial plan covering the intervention(s) construction, maintenance, monitoring, participatory and knowledge creation processes. Plan for both the initial costs and the recurrent expenses. ☐ Evaluate long-term risks (e.g., climate, maintenance failure, vandalism, financing instability) and integrate	Why Financial Feasibility and Sustainability matters Financial feasibility and long-term sustainability are crucial because NbS take time to deliver real benefits and only provide lasting value if they are properly maintained throughout their life. Focusing only on initial investments, without planning for ongoing costs, maintenance, and eventual handover, can reduce effectiveness, shorten their lifespan, and weaken public trust—especially when benefits take time to appear.	Recommendations ▪ Engage private actors early by aligning the intervention(s) with business opportunities, regulatory requirements, and visibility incentives, while leveraging their technical expertise.





them into the financial planning process. (SEE RISK MANAGEMENT) ☐ Identify viable mechanisms to finance the intervention(s) that reflect the multiple benefits of NbS (e.g. health, flood mitigation, recreation, property values) and cover the entire lifecycle, from construction to monitoring and maintenance. ☐ Engage a broad range of stakeholders (public, private, community) and promote collaboration to share costs, risks, and benefits equitably.	Including long-term financial planning from the start builds credibility and public support, even if implementation happens in phases or is delayed. Ensuring durability requires low-maintenance design, clearly defined roles and responsibilities (effective governance), secured multi-year funding, and sustained participatory and community stewardship processes that support NbS as enduring public assets.	▪ Public administrations can help reduce risks for private investment through supportive policies, co-investment, transparent market mechanisms, and well-documented demonstration projects. ▪ Build cross-sector partnerships to diversify funding and increase long-term sustainability. ▪ Use continuous monitoring and clear communication of the intervention's outcomes to demonstrate environmental, social, and economic value for communities and investors.
Integration into Financial Planning		
☐ Ensure investment plans integrate NbS as solutions to effectively address climate change and water management in cities. This can be achieved through dedicated budget allocations, performance-based incentives, strategic plan alignment, etc. ☐ Ensure procurement procedures integrate NbS as solutions to effectively address climate change and water management in cities. ☐ Ensure the NbS intervention(s) are aligned with existing policies and can benefit from related funding.	Why Integrating NbS into Public Financial Planning matters Integrating NbS in public budgeting and planning helps ensure they continue beyond individual project cycles. This often means presenting NbS as supporting multiple policy goals, rather than just as separate environmental expenses. Even partial or gradual budget integration can increase institutional ownership and improve chances for long-term maintenance. Tools like fiscal incentives, subsidies, and supportive regulations can help turn pilot NbS projects into permanent budget commitments.	Recommendations ▪ Introduce NbS considerations early in city budgeting and project planning cycles, before funds are fully allocated. ▪ Train municipalities, NGOs, associations who design the interventions and prepare tenders, as well as the contractors who must understand and implement NbS requirements. ▪ Acknowledge current limitations in contractor capacity and adapt procurement requirements accordingly. ▪ Consider tailored approaches for small municipalities facing limited access to specialised contractors. ▪ Promote learning and knowledge exchange—locally and globally—to address



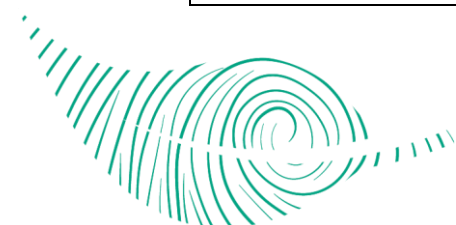


		gaps, strengthen implementation, and develop the NbS market.
MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT		
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)		
☐ Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan to keep track of ecological, social, and economic indicators and assess the interventions' effectiveness. ☐ Establish regular review cycles (quarterly, annual, or biennial) based on risk levels (e.g., more frequent reviews for flood-prone areas). (SEE RISK MANAGEMENT) ☐ Conduct periodic assessments to measure performance (ecosystem, social and economic outcomes), detect failures, inform improvements and guide future decisions.	Why Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) matters Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) helps check if NbS are working as planned. It allows to track progress, measure results, and make sure the interventions remain useful, inclusive, resilient, and effective over time. By measuring environmental, social, and economic results—and understanding maintenance needs—interventions can be better managed, and decisions be taken on evidence, not guesswork. Showing clear results, such as better climate resilience or improved water management in cities, also builds trust and encourages more cities to adopt NbS.	Recommendations ▪ Design simple, realistic, and sustainable M&E frameworks aligned with existing data systems, with clearly assigned responsibilities and long-term funding to ensure continuity beyond initial project phases. ▪ Integrate diverse knowledge sources—scientific, local, and traditional—while explicitly stating assumptions and using phased or partial monitoring to support learning and adaptation. ▪ Engage communities and stakeholders by co-designing protocols, involving citizen science, providing training, and fostering stewardship to ensure inclusive and equitable monitoring. ▪ Collect and analyse disaggregated data on social, economic, environmental, and well-being outcomes to fill knowledge gaps on NbS value and inform decision-making. ▪ Share performance data publicly and connect M&E efforts to international frameworks to support accountability, mainstreaming, and cross-sector learning. ▪ If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to develop the monitoring and evaluation framework.





Adaptive Management		
☐ Review and refine the intervention(s) to ensure their long-term resilience and sustainability using data from monitoring.	Why Adaptive Management matters Adaptive management means learning by doing. It uses monitoring results to guide decisions and improve the interventions over time. As cities and conditions change, solutions can be adjusted when needed. This helps make sure NbS continue to work well and remain relevant throughout their lifetime.	Recommendations ▪ Keep plans flexible so the intervention(s) can be adjusted as conditions evolve. ▪ Integrate monitoring results into decision-making through clear institutional ownership and regular review processes. ▪ Treat uncertainty as a normal part of urban planning rather than a design failure. ▪ Document lessons learned early to enable timely adjustments and improve future interventions. ▪ Keep learning and improving the project over time to make sure it stays effective throughout its life. ▪ If possible, use decision-making tools such as digital twins to support adaptive management.
MAINSTREAMING AND SCALING		
☐ Systematically document and share lessons learned and success factors across city departments, national networks, and international platforms to demonstrate cost-effectiveness and social benefits of NbS compared to conventional infrastructure. ☐ Translate evidence and lessons learned into policy recommendations to help mainstream NbS into urban planning and governance (strategic level). ☐ Translate evidence and lessons learned into practical tools, such as guidelines and templates, to support	Why NbS Mainstreaming and Scaling matters Scaling NbS is only possible when key conditions are in place, such as secure land ownership, supportive land-use planning, inclusive governance, financial incentives, risk-sharing mechanisms, social equity, stakeholder participation, and other system-wide supports. Integrating NbS into everyday city planning and management ensures they are not treated as isolated, short-term projects but as long-term solutions that strengthen urban resilience and sustainability. Mainstreaming also encourages lasting commitment, better coordination between departments, and alignment with broader development goals. Achieving	Recommendations ▪ Use simple, easy-to-maintain systems for managing and sharing knowledge. ▪ Create open-access data platforms so policymakers, researchers, and the public can easily access performance results. ▪ Link NbS evaluation results to urban policy frameworks so performance data can guide citywide decisions, investment priorities, and institutional ownership.





cross-sector collaboration and everyday implementation (operational level). ☐ Establish strong cross-departmental and cross-sector coordination (e.g. taskforces or inter-departmental units) with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to reduce fragmentation and speed up NbS uptake. ☐ Ensure enabling policies are in place to support implementation.	this requires clear evidence that NbS are cost-effective and provide social benefits compared to traditional grey infrastructure.	▪ Use pilot projects and flexible regulations (regulatory sandbox) to test new approaches and inform future planning and policy updates. ▪ Strengthen collaboration with peer cities, international networks, and research institutions to continuously improve evaluation methods.
TECHNICAL EXPERTISE		
☐ Ensure access or organise training on NbS for representatives of the public and private sector (municipality staff, construction companies, public procurement departments, etc.) to ensure effective planning, design, implementation, funding, monitoring, evaluation and scaling of the NbS.	Why Technical Expertise matters Capacity gaps are often a major barrier to NbS adoption, particularly across technical, procurement and governance functions within Municipalities. Building skills and knowledge across departments reduces implementation risks and ensures NbS are not treated as just a niche environmental issue. Cities benefit most when capacity-building combines formal training with hands-on learning through projects and peer exchange. Tools such as training programs, toolkits, case studies, and shared standards and metrics help speed up NbS adoption while ensuring quality.	Recommendations ▪ Draw on expertise from other departments and/or external partners (NGOs, academia, local communities, private sector) to fill knowledge gaps. ▪ Use residents' knowledge, fostering bi-directional learning to and from citizens. ▪ Help stakeholders understand and capture the multiple co-benefits of NbS, including social and economic opportunities such as nature-based tourism. ▪ Adapt if necessary and use the three training kits produced by the URWAN project.

