

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
(of UNESCO)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN DECADE OF OCEAN SCIENCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING PROGRESS AGAINST
THE MID-TERM EVALUATION ACTION PLAN**

Summary. This document summarizes progress of the implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, including reporting against the Action Plan resulting from the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Ocean Decade. The document contains the *Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility Strategic Plan (2026–2030)* in Annex 2.

Introduction

In December 2017, building on the efforts of IOC Member States and the IOC Secretariat, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (hereafter, the Ocean Decade). The Ocean Decade is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver a step-change in the generation and use of ocean science and knowledge. It will influence how countries invest in and participate in science and innovation to embrace societal goals and align research investment to contribute to common goals, including the 2030 Agenda.

In accordance with Resolution A/RES/72/73 of the UN General Assembly, and IOC Resolution EC-LI.1, after the preparatory phase of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) reported upon in documents [IOC-XXX/2 Annex 3](#) (2019), [IOC/EC-53/4.1.Doc\(1\)Rev.](#) (2020), [IOC/A-31/3.7.Doc\(2\)](#) (2021), and [IOC/EC-55/4.1.Doc\(1\)](#) (2022), the period from July 2025 to May 2026 saw continued intense activity related to the implementation of the Ocean Decade. Four additional Calls for Decade Actions were launched during this period. As of May 2026, the Calls for Decade Actions have resulted in the endorsement of 60 programmes, 517 active projects and 76 active contributions. During this period, two iterations of the Ocean Decade Monitoring and Evaluation Framework were launched. A total of 359 monitoring and evaluation responses were received from endorsed Ocean Decade Actions, representing an overall response rate of 54.9% across all active Actions. Programmes recorded the strongest engagement, with a response rate of 73.8%, compared with 56.6% for Contributions and 52.4% for Projects. The higher participation of Programmes reflects strong engagement by larger and more established initiatives, while the lower response rates among Projects indicate continued opportunities to strengthen reporting compliance and monitoring systems. The overall response rate provides a sufficiently robust evidence base for assessing implementation progress across the Decade. Continued efforts to improve reporting by Projects will further enhance the representativeness of future assessments and strengthen the ability to demonstrate collective impact.

Ocean Decade Challenges

The most frequently addressed Decade Challenge was Challenge 2, with 150 Actions identifying it as a priority area. This was followed by Challenge 9 (133 Actions) and Challenge 10 (115 Actions). Together, these three challenges account for a substantial proportion of reported implementation efforts.

The distribution demonstrates strong alignment of endorsed Actions with major Ocean Decade priorities. At the same time, lower levels of engagement were observed for Challenges 6 and 8, suggesting potential areas where future calls for Action or targeted mobilization efforts could help improve balance across the Decade portfolio.

Alignment with Priorities in The Barcelona Statement

The priority receiving the highest level of support was the enhancement and scaling up of marine and coastal ecosystem-based management approaches, identified by 149 Actions. Strong engagement was also reported for priorities relating to ocean literacy, human-ocean connections, and adaptive governance systems supporting coastal communities and marine industries.

Several priorities related to innovative ocean finance, ocean-health linkages, and climate mitigation through marine renewable energy received comparatively fewer responses. This indicates that while

implementation remains strongly focused on ecosystem management and governance, there may be opportunities to further stimulate action in emerging thematic areas.

Geographic Distribution of Lead Institutions

Lead institutions are distributed across a diverse range of countries, although participation remains concentrated in a number of established ocean science nations. The United States leads with 47 reporting institutions, followed by Norway (32), the United Kingdom (26), Germany (24) and Australia (23).

The distribution demonstrates strong international engagement while also highlighting the importance of continuing efforts to broaden geographic representation and strengthen participation from developing regions.

Lead Institution Types

Publicly funded research institutions remain the largest category of lead institutions, accounting for 95 Actions, followed by non-governmental organizations (84) and educational institutions (60). Governmental organizations also play a significant role, leading 44 Actions.

The diversity of institutional leadership demonstrates the multi-stakeholder nature of the Ocean Decade and confirms the importance of partnerships among research, government, education, civil society and private-sector actors.

Participation from Africa and Small Island Developing States

Responses from Actions led by institutions based in Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) remain limited relative to the overall portfolio. Of the responses received, 15 were submitted by Actions led by institutions from Africa and/or SIDS.

While endorsed Actions from these regions remain active and engaged, the results underline the need for continued efforts to strengthen participation, visibility, capacity development and reporting from Africa and SIDS in order to ensure equitable global implementation of the Ocean Decade.

Ocean Basin Coverage

Reported activities demonstrate broad geographic coverage across all major ocean basins. The North Atlantic Ocean accounted for the largest share of reported activity (17.9%), followed by the North Pacific (15.1%) and Indian Ocean (14.1%). Activity levels were also substantial in the South Atlantic (13.9%) and South Pacific (13.5%).

Coverage remains comparatively lower in the Arctic Ocean (10.1%), Mediterranean Sea (7.8%) and Southern Ocean (5.5%). Overall, the distribution confirms that Ocean Decade Actions are addressing priorities at a global scale, while also highlighting opportunities to further strengthen engagement in polar and other underrepresented regions.

Involvement of Indigenous and Local Knowledge Holders

More than half of reporting Actions (54.3%) indicated the involvement of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) holders. Participation was particularly strong among Programmes, where 62% reported engagement with ILK holders.

This level of participation demonstrates increasing recognition of the value of diverse knowledge systems in ocean science and management. Continued efforts to strengthen meaningful partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and local communities will be important for ensuring equitable and context-specific implementation outcomes.

Leadership by Early Career Ocean Professionals

A total of 97 Actions reported being led by Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), representing 27.0% of all responses received. Leadership by ECOPs was particularly evident within Projects, which accounted for more than 80% of ECOP-led initiatives.

These results demonstrate the growing contribution of the next generation of ocean leaders to Ocean Decade implementation. Continued investment in leadership opportunities, mentorship and visibility for ECOPs remains important for sustaining this momentum.

Production of Knowledge Products

Knowledge generation remains a major outcome of Ocean Decade implementation. Reporting Actions produced almost 24,850 knowledge products during the reporting period, including publications, reports, datasets, tools and other outputs. On average, each reporting Action generated approximately 83 knowledge products.

Nearly 84% of reporting Actions indicated that they had produced at least one knowledge product. This highlights the substantial contribution of the Decade portfolio to expanding the global ocean knowledge base and supporting evidence-informed decision-making.

Resource Needs Assessment

Reporting Decade Actions identified significant financial resource gaps. Available funding for action implementation amounted to approximately USD 43.6 million against identified needs of USD 95.1 million, leaving a financing gap of more than USD 51.5 million. Coordination activities also reported a funding shortfall of approximately USD 2.2 million.

In contrast, reported in-kind support was broadly sufficient to meet identified needs, with only marginal gaps reported for implementation and coordination activities. These findings suggest that while technical expertise, infrastructure and partner contributions remain strong, securing sustainable financial resources continues to be one of the principal constraints affecting the scale and long-term sustainability of Ocean Decade implementation.

Capacity Development

Capacity development remains one of the strongest areas of Ocean Decade implementation. More than 86% of reporting Actions indicated that they conducted capacity development activities during the reporting period.

Collectively, Actions reported almost 24,850 capacity development activities benefiting approximately 13,870 individuals. This demonstrates the significant contribution of the Decade to strengthening ocean science capacity, skills development and institutional capabilities across regions.

The Capacity Development Facility (CDF) is the Ocean Decade's strategic capacity development matchmaking mechanism, connecting institutions with capacity needs to partners offering expertise,

technology, training, and resources. CDF works toward three goals: advancing equitable access to the co-design of ocean science with priority for SIDS, LDCs, and under-represented groups including ECOPs; building technical and functional capacity to generate and contribute to ocean science; and building institutional capacity to apply scientific knowledge in policy and management.

Between May 2025 and July 2026, CDF delivered ten trainings/workshops through matches made by the Ocean Connector platform, the matchmaking digital infrastructure connecting under-resourced organisations to ocean science capacity development opportunities globally. Since its launch in November 2025, the platform has reached 2,326 users, 112 partners, and 122 published opportunities, with 17 successful matches recorded as of May 2026. The ten trainings reached 85 participants from 34 countries, with 94 percent from developing countries and 36 percent from 15 SIDS or LDC countries, and were delivered in partnership with 29 organisations across research institutions, regional networks, intergovernmental bodies, and universities. Topics spanned ocean biodiversity data, environmental DNA, ocean oxygen and acidification, alien invasive species, science communication, shipboard interdisciplinary training, co-design between science and policy, and BBNJ for practitioners and policymakers. The Project Steering Group provides strategic guidance and reviews shortlisted Ocean Connector requests, serving as the transparency and accountability mechanism in the approval process.

To guide CDF's work through and beyond 2030, the Strategic Plan 2026 to 2030 was co-designed with the Project Steering Group (refer Annex 2). The Plan organises CDF's work around four operational priorities: matchmaking programmes and partnerships that build human capital across stages of professional development, securing sustainable institutional and financial homes for piloted programmes, scaling proven programmes through replication and expanded partnerships, and monitoring outcomes and applying learning across the portfolio.

For the remainder of 2026, seven additional trainings are confirmed for delivery between end of July and end of November, with topics ranging from area-based management to calibration of sea level stations, responding to requests from partners on the ground and from IOC regional sub-commissions. CDF works closely with IOC partners to deliver these trainings, including IOC commissions and the Ocean Teacher Global Academy, ensuring quality assurance and alignment with bottom-up needs. The cumulative number of beneficiaries is anticipated to reach 200 by the end of the year.

Governance and Coordination Structures and Informal Working Groups

A new cohort of the Decade Advisory Board was nominated and started its work in January 2026 in line with a revised Terms of Reference that was endorsed by the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly. It held one in-person meeting in February and has made recommendations on Decade Programme endorsement via intersessional communication. It discussed a range of strategic issues related to measuring progress of the Decade, resource mobilisation, the role of indigenous and local knowledge in the Decade, and the means of increasing engagement of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

Forty-three (43) National Decade Committees have been established and are implementing diverse initiatives to catalyse national interest and resources for the Decade, as well as provide a platform for the discussion of national priorities aligned to the Decade. Notable gaps exist in the global coverage of NDCs, particularly in SIDS where Member States have reported that human resource constraints limit their ability to create National Decade Committees. A new model for Regional Decade Committees is being trialed in the Tropical Americas and Caribbean Region.

Thirteen (13) decentralised coordination structures are operational (Decade Collaborative Centres (DCC) and Decade Coordination Offices (DCO)) and 24 Decade Implementing Partners. The DCOs and DCCs are playing an essential role in supporting the Decade Coordination Unit to coordinate Decade Actions, catalyse new initiatives, build stakeholder engagement, mobilise resources and communicate on the Decade. Planning for a new Decade Collaborative Centre for Challenge 4 – Sustainable Ocean Economy to be hosted by Barcelona City Council is well advanced. Five of the DCOs are being hosted by IOC (Western Pacific Region—WESTPAC; Tropical Americas and Caribbean—IOCARIBE, Africa—IOCAFRICA; Data Sharing—IODE; and Ocean Observations—GOOS).

Additional resources are urgently required for the effective functioning of the IOC-led Tropical Americas and Caribbean, Africa, Ocean Observations DCOs. A lack of resources for these structures is creating substantial challenges for coordination within the Decade framework, and is also undermining the potential for IOC to leverage the Decade framework to strengthen and sustain its regional presence in Africa and the Tropical America and Caribbean region and its transformative work in ocean observations. The mandate of the IOC-led DCO focusing on ocean literacy and Challenge 10 of the Decade expired at the end of 2025, however the DCO is expected to be re-started later in 2026 following finalization of an agreement for new resources to support its operation.

Following in-person meetings in June 2025 at the United Nations Ocean Conference, NDCs and DCCs/DCOs have committed to collective progress in strengthening collaboration within their networks and with each other (DCC/DCO Statement of Collaboration, NDC Action Plan). Both NDCs and DCCs/DCOs formally committed to actively support the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference preparatory process by co-leading, contributing to, and participating in Ocean Decade Solution Workshops and Regional Dialogues. Structured dialogues with the Decade Advisory Board have also been initiated in line with the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation.

NDCs demonstrated leadership by jointly advancing conversation on ocean and human health, notably through the Conference on Ocean and Human Health organized by NDC Portugal in collaboration with 10 other NDCs (Belgium, Cabo Verde, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, UK, U.S.), which resulted in a unified statement stressing urgency and the increasing evidence, supporting long held indigenous knowledge, on how Ocean and Human Health are intrinsically linked. Additionally, NDCs jointly worked on the Guidance to implement the Ocean Decade Vision 2030 at national level – Ocean Decade.

Between July 2025 and May 2026, the Ocean Decade Corporate Data Group (CDG) strengthened its impact by combining policy delivery, practical guidance and executive-level alignment. A key milestone was the adoption of an IOC policy recommendation on data sharing in waters under national jurisdictions at the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly, followed by the establishment of an inter-sessional IODE Working Group with active CDG participation. During the period, the CDG advanced practical implementation through publication of the Marine Megafauna Data Sharing Guideline and updates to the Bathymetry Data Sharing Guideline, and reinforced its thought leadership and outreach through industry conference engagement and an article in the *Marine Technology Society Journal* (August 2025) highlighting the role of open, industry-held data in delivering Ocean Decade outcomes.

Strategic direction was discussed at the in-person CDG meeting at IOC headquarters in September 2025, where members agreed objectives leading to the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference in Rio de Janeiro, focusing on strengthening enabling frameworks, increasing the volume and visibility of shared data, and expanding engagement beyond CDG membership. In parallel, the CDG initiated targeted discussions with private-sector executives on removing contractual barriers to data sharing,

including proposals to embed data-sharing provisions in Joint Operating Agreements and Production Sharing Contracts. The CDG also intensified engagement with leading ESG rating agencies to promote the formal recognition of private-sector ocean data sharing as a measurable contribution to sustainability performance and alignment with global frameworks such as the SDGs, TNFD and CSRD. The overall CDG direction was reinforced in April 2026 through a meeting of CDG executive sponsors with co-chairs Vidar Helgesen (IOC) and Mark Heine (Fugro), underscoring the critical role of executive leadership in making non-commercial ocean data sharing standard practice and enabling a shift from advocacy to scalable, long-term implementation.

The Strategic Communications Group comprising 25 communications experts who provide advice to the Decade Coordination Unit and Decade Actions on communications tools and approaches has continued its work with a strong focus on mentoring of Decade Actions. The Ocean Decade Expert Roster which has over 740 members has been established to create a pool of experts to assist the IOC Secretariat with the identification of strategic targets for Ocean Decade Challenges, in the review of Decade programme submissions, and in regular review processes of the Decade.

Gender Equity

Gender considerations continue to be integrated across a growing proportion of Ocean Decade Actions. Approximately 39.6% of reporting Actions indicated that they included specific activities aimed at addressing gender equity.

The gender distribution of Action leaders also reflects relatively strong representation of women, who accounted for 54.1% of reported leaders compared with 44.3% male representation. These results demonstrate continued progress toward inclusivity while also highlighting opportunities to further mainstream gender-responsive approaches across the portfolio.

Communication Channels

The Ocean Decade website remains the most important communication channel for stakeholders, accounting for 29.8% of reported information access. LinkedIn (22.7%) and newsletters (21.9%) were also identified as major sources of information.

The results indicate that digital platforms continue to play a central role in stakeholder engagement. At the same time, the strong performance of newsletters highlights the ongoing importance of direct communications for maintaining an informed and connected community.

Social Media Reach

Reporting Actions collectively reached more than 21.5 million social media followers, demonstrating significant public visibility and outreach potential. Projects accounted for the largest share of this audience, reflecting the scale and diversity of engagement activities undertaken across the portfolio.

This extensive digital reach represents an important asset for raising awareness, promoting ocean literacy and communicating the achievements of the Ocean Decade to broader audiences.

Resource Mobilisation

The following Member States/organizations have made specific financial or in-kind contributions to support Decade coordination activities during this period: Belgium (Government of Flanders),

Canada, ENGIE, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, France, Fugro, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, and Sweden.

Mobilization of in-kind and financial resources remains a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade. Resources are urgently needed to support the Decade Coordination Unit and in IOC-led Decade Coordination Offices in IOCAFRICA, IOCARIBE and the Ocean Observations DCO.

Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

The Ocean Decade website received 2,921,436 users in 2025 and generated 3,353,504 page views over this period with most users from China, Singapore, the United States, France, Brazil. The GenOcean campaign has been redesigned and was relaunched in early 2025 to focus on youth engagement and citizen science initiatives, featuring over 25 Decade Actions and initiatives.

By 31 December 2025, the Ocean Decade newsletter had garnered 20,359 subscribers, and 143,000 people directly followed the Ocean Decade on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and X, which represents a significant increase since the last period. In total, since the launch of the Ocean Decade in 2021, 6 million people have come across the Ocean Decade official pages on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and X.

The Ocean Decade garnered significant visibility in the lead-up to, and during, the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC). The website's dedicated page listing Ocean Decade events at UNOC received 23,500 views from 16,700 users, mostly from France, the United States, Spain, Japan, and the United Kingdom. On social media, 7.7 million people came across the hashtag #OceanDecade during the UNOC period (8-15 June 2025).

The online campaign 'Ocean Science in Action' showcased the impact of Ocean Decade Actions at the half-way point of the Decade. Featuring 38 Actions across 13 web stories and videos on 13 different topics, this campaign, co-produced with Actions, reached over 323,000 people on social media.

2027 Ocean Decade Conference

The Conference, which is part of series of triennial international conferences planned throughout the duration of the Decade, will be a seminal moment in the implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Coming just three years before the end of the Decade, it will convene approximately 3,000 participants from across society to achieve the following:

1. Showcase and track achievements towards *The Barcelona Statement* priorities that emerged from the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference.
2. Define collective actions to fulfil remaining priority policy and decision-making needs to the end of the Decade.
3. Facilitate partnerships and discussions to shape the post-2030 legacy of the Decade.
4. Contribute to the post-Agenda 2030 dialogue in relation to ocean science and knowledge and generate inputs to the 2028 United Nations Ocean Conference (Busan, June 2028).

The Conference will be a crucial moment to consolidate the achievements of the first 6 years of implementation of the Decade and to accelerate collective action for the remainder of the Decade, with a focus on the uptake and application of science and knowledge for policy and societal decision making. The link between the Conference and the 2028 United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) is important to solidify given the focus of both events in contributing the fulfilment of SDG14. Discussions are underway with Korea and Chile as the co-hosts of 2028 UNOC to determine the ways in which the outcomes of the Conference can be recognized as formal science-policy inputs to the 2028 UNOC preparation process (including informing the political declaration negotiations) and the structure of UNOC.

Mid-Term Evaluation Action Plan

The Mid-Term Evaluation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development was requested by the IOC Executive Council at its 57th session in June 2024. Managed by UNESCO's Division for Internal Oversight Services (IOS), the evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and coherence of the Decade's implementation to date, and to inform strategic adjustments needed to achieve its intended outcomes over the remaining five years.

A summary of the evaluation and the management response from the IOC Executive Secretary were presented to the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly in June 2025. IOC Resolution A-33/2 requested the Secretariat to develop an action plan on the basis of the management response for presentation to the Decade Advisory Board before the end of 2025 and to report on progress against the action plan at the 59th Session of the IOC Executive Council. The following Action Plan was prepared by the Secretariat and discussed with the Decade Advisory Board during Meeting No. 03/2025 in September 2025 prior to its finalisation. Annex 1 contains an update on progress in achieving the actions identified in the Plan.

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION OF PROGRESS AGAINST MID-TERM EVALUATION ACTION PLAN

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
1. Streamline and strengthen the governance and coordination framework for the Ocean Decade to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation and support progress toward its intended outcomes in the second half.			
1.1 In consultation with the Decade Advisory Board, define and launch a set of flagship priorities that cut across multiple Ocean Decade Challenges and directly address the most urgent ocean science needs for global policy frameworks while leveraging opportunities to strengthen the IOC's post-2030 mandate (ref. Recommendation 8.1). Mobilize and coordinate clusters of partners from across the Ocean Decade to catalyze collective action delivering on these priorities in the lead-up to the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference and through to 2030.	Q1 2026	DCU / DAB	Completed. A set of eight 'Ocean Decade Solutions' were presented to and discussed with the Decade Advisory Board (DAB) during its in-person meeting in February 2026. These were subsequently refined and finalized in stakeholder consultations with a broad set of Decade partners.
1.2 Develop a resource mobilisation package for the operation of the Decade Coordination Unit including scenarios ranging from the minimum viable level to an ideal staffing structure and share with Member States as well as members of the Ocean Decade Alliance, Foundations Dialogue, UN-Oceans and other relevant groups and organisations.	Q4 2025	DCU	Completed. Circular Letter 3061 advised Member States of the budget needs for the Decade Coordination Unit and the information was shared with the Decade Advisory Board, Foundations Dialogue and Ocean Decade Alliance in relevant meetings.
1.3 Restructure the Decade Coordination Unit to a minimum viable level that can be supported with existing secured resources while covering essential functions and publish the organisational structure and roles on the Ocean Decade website.	Q3 2025	DCU	Completed.
1.4 Finalise recruitment of the Ocean Decade Coordinator and formalise other roles within the Decade Coordination Unit.	Q4 2025	IOC ES	Not completed due to restrictions on new recruitments imposed by UNESCO.
1.5 Develop and implement a comprehensive onboarding process for new expert members of the Decade Advisory Board that facilitates their strategic role in the Ocean Decade in line with the revised Terms of Reference adopted at the 33rd Session of the IOC Assembly.	Q1 2026	DCU	Completed. Onboarding was undertaken prior to and during the in-person meeting of the DAB in February 2026.

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
1.6 Develop a roster of expertise and availability of individual Board members to engage in priority elements of Decade implementation (e.g. engagement with decentralised coordination structures, National Decade Committees or informal working groups).	Q1 2026 and ongoing	DCU / DAB	Ongoing. Commenced at the in-person meeting of the DAB in February 2026.
2.Strengthen UN system-wide collaboration and alignment to support the achievement of the Decade's outcomes and reinforce its identity as a collective UN initiative, enhancing its global reach and impact.			
2.1 Invite heads of relevant UN agencies within UN-Oceans to actively engage in and support the Ocean Decade and use UN-Oceans as a mechanism to regularly update members on Ocean Decade progress and engagement opportunities.	Q4 2025	IOC ES / DCU	Completed.
2.2 Facilitate dialogue with UN agencies to discuss emerging policy priorities and the associated ocean science and knowledge needs.	Q2 2026 and annually	DCU	To be commenced in Q3 – Q4 2026 with a dedicated session of UN Oceans focusing on the Ocean Decade.
2.3 Revise the process for membership of UN agencies in the Decade Advisory Board in line with the new Terms of Reference for the Board and actively promote engagement of UN agencies in Board meetings.	Q4 2026	DCU	Completed.
2.4 Structure Decade Advisory Board meetings to create a dialogue between UN members and expert members on entry points and priorities for the Decade to contribute to global policy frameworks and processes.	Ongoing	DCU	Ongoing and commenced during the in-person meeting of the DAB in February 2026.
2.5 Develop communications materials to provide information to UN Oceans on how to engage in the Decade and resources to support targeted communications within UN agencies on the benefits of engagement.	Q2 2026	DCU	Not yet commenced. Human resource constraints in the communications team have delayed this work which is planned to be undertaken in late 2026 – early 2027 in advance of the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference.

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
3. Put in place a comprehensive resource mobilization framework to ensure sustainable funding for the coordination of the Decade and to strengthen the enabling environment for funding and supporting Decade Actions.			
3.1 Secure additional in-kind or financial resources to allow the development of targeted resource mobilisation packages for the Decade Coordination Unit and IOC-led Decade Coordination Offices to support activities around identified flagship priorities (ref. Recommendation 1.1).	Q2 2026	DCU	Partially completed. A new modest EXB project from a philanthropic partner is under discussion.
3.2 Expand efforts in the development of knowledge products to contribute to the global discussion on improved efficiency and effectiveness of investment in ocean observation, data and science and widely communicate on the role of the Ocean Decade in this area of work including organization of an international workshop on ocean science funding models as part of the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference process/proceeding.	Q4 2026	DCU	Not yet commenced.
3.3 Optimise the impact of the Foundations Dialogue through inviting foundations to support a dedicated secretariat for the group and establishing processes to formalise membership, roles and responsibilities.	Q2 2026	DCU / Foundations Dialogue	Partially completed. A new modest EXB project from a philanthropic partner is under discussion.
3.4 Review the membership of the Ocean Decade Alliance including securing renewed commitments from returning members and communicate widely on these commitments.	Q2 2026	DCU / Ocean Decade Alliance	Underway. Hampered by human resource constraints in the DCU, this process is expected to be completed in Q3 2026.
3.5 Target five new Alliance members to join the group before the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference with clearly identified contributions and with a focus on increasing geographic diversity.	Q2 2027	DCU / Ocean Decade Alliance	Discussions are ongoing with potential new partners.
4. Strengthen national and regional engagement, with a focus on LDCs, SIDS and other under-represented regions, to facilitate more equitable participation and alignment with local and regional priorities.			

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
4.1 Create links between the Decade Advisory Board and decentralised coordination structures and National Decade Committees through annual joint online meetings and individual support and advice from Board members to the operations of these structures.	Ongoing	DCU	Underway. This action was initiated at the in-person meeting of the DAB in February 2026.
4.2 Provide targeted support to all Decade Advisory Board and Ocean Decade Alliance members to create National Decade Committees in their home countries.	Ongoing	DCU / DAB / Ocean Decade Alliance	Ongoing.
4.3 Collaborate with National Decade Committees to translate the global priorities of the Decade, including the results of the Vision 2030 process and the Barcelona Statement, to the national level.	Q1 2026	DCU	Completed. A new guidance document was co-developed with and provided to all National Decade Committees who are being provided ongoing technical support on this issue.
4.4 Work with technical and financial partners to co-design a resource mobilisation and partnership package for Capacity Development Facility initiatives focusing on individuals and institutions in SIDS and LDCs, as well as Early Career Ocean Professionals as a means of ensuring the sustainability of the Facility.	Q3 2026	DCU	Not yet completed. A strategic plan has been developed for the Capacity Development Facility to underpin resource mobilisation efforts.
4.5 Undertake a rolling process of collaborative evaluations with DCCs, DCOs and National Decade Committees to analyse past impact and effectiveness and identify actions to improve engagement and impact individually and as groups of partners.	Q4 2026	DCU	Underway. This process will be completed in Q3 2026.
5.Enhance the mainstreaming of inclusivity, diversity, and equity to ensure that all voices, particularly those of marginalized and under-represented groups, are meaningfully included and benefit from the Decade.			
5.1 Complete and publish the Ocean Decade Gender Action Plan.	Q1 2026	DCU	Completed.
5.2 Complete and publish the Framework for Indigenous and Local Knowledge within the Ocean Decade.	Q4 2025	DCU	Completed.
5.3 Continue engagement with youth stakeholders to develop practical pathways for youth engagement in the Ocean Decade.	Q3 2026	DCU	Completed.

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
6.Strengthen the strategic focus and impact of the UN Ocean Decade Actions to enhance alignment with global and national priorities, promote innovation, support knowledge use and ensure practical application for tangible benefits to Member States and the ecosystem.			
6.1 Depending on availability of additional resources, develop and share an interactive database as a tool for Decade partners to access real-time information on Decade Actions.	Q1 2026	DCU	Not yet completed due to a lack of financial resources.
6.2 Work with existing Decade programmes to document their existing and planned impact for sustainable development outcomes and include requirements for self-reporting on this as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.	Q4 2026	DCU / Decade Actions	Not yet commenced.
6.3 Revise the Call for Decade Actions endorsement request process for Decade programmes to strengthen the identification by proponents of the knowledge, policy and innovation and technology gaps that they will fill and to clearly identify expected impact for sustainable development outcomes.	Q1 2026	DCU	Completed. This action was initiated as part of Call for Decade Actions No. 10/2025.
6.4 Define and implement preparation process for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference that is structured around the Ocean Decade flagship priorities (ref. Recommendation 1.1) and that convenes thematic and regional groups of Decade Actions, decentralised coordination structures and National Decade Committees to identify joint action plans, commitments and metrics of success for the remainder of the Decade.	Q2 2027	DCU	Completed. The process has been designed and roll-out started in May 2026 accompanied by a dedicated communications campaign.
6.5 Depending on availability of additional resources, develop and launch targeted and funded Calls for Decade Actions to support strategic communications activities of Decade Actions.	Ongoing	DCU / DCO Connecting People and our Ocean	Not yet commenced.
7.Enhance the existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to transform it into a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system.			

Recommendations / Actions	Timeline	Responsibility	Progress
7.1 Strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to require self-reporting from Decade programmes on the ways in which science and knowledge have informed policy and decision making.	Q3 2026	DCU	Not yet commenced.
7.2 Mobilise resources to allow tracking of the metrics of success defined and agreed to during the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference.	Q4 2027	DCU	Not yet commenced.
8. Systematically leverage the Decade to shape IOC's post-2030 agenda and amplify the impact of its programmes.			
8.1 Identify priority areas of work that IOC will lead as post-Decade legacy initiatives and develop work packages that include: (i) actions that leverage and strengthen IOC programmatic work, (ii) metrics of success, and (iii) resource mobilisation targets. These priority areas of work will align with key elements of the Ocean Decade flagship priorities (ref. Recommendation 1.1) and be informed by existing and planned IOC-led initiatives in the Decade as well as complementary processes including the 'IOC and Future of the Ocean' consultation process.	Q2 2026	IOC ES / Management Team / DCU	Commenced but not yet completed. This work is being undertaken in alignment with several parallel processes including the 'IOC and the Future of the Ocean' consultation process and development of an IOC-wide resource mobilisation plan.
8.2 As part of the IOC Communications Strategy, strengthen the visibility of the Decade as an IOC flagship initiative and amplify joint messaging and storytelling on milestones and post-Decade priorities.	Ongoing	DCU / IOC Communications	This work is ongoing as evidenced by joint collaboration on communications for the Island States Ocean Summit.

ANNEX 2: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FACILITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Capacity Development Facility (CDF) Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan (2026 to 2030) sets out the vision, objectives, and operational approach of the Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility (CDF). Established within the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021 to 2030), CDF acts as a strategic matchmaker, connecting institutions with capacity needs to partners offering expertise, technology, training, and resources, and translating the Decade's ambitions into practical action.

Capacity development is a central enabler of the delivery of ocean science services and management, and a direct requirement under SDG 14.a, which calls for increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacity, and transferring marine technology to developing countries, in particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

CDF does not duplicate what organisations already do on the ground. Instead, as a UN-wide initiative under the Ocean Decade, it coordinates across institutions, regions, and types of capacity development needs to reach those that would otherwise fall through the gaps. It aims to close those gaps by equipping individuals, organisations, and regions to participate as active co-designers and users of ocean science, not only as beneficiaries of it.

CDF brings institutional legitimacy, compliance infrastructure, and networks of the Decade to this role. This reduces transaction costs, enables access to co-financing, and allows CDF to apply consistent standards, whether by working with partners who already bring technical rigour and planned sustainability, or by coupling institutions that need support with partners who provide that rigour and a clear focus on sustainability and learning outcomes. As a coordination mechanism and a deployer of catalytic funds, CDF offers funders and partners reach, accountability, and assured quality within a single partnership.

The Strategic Plan is structured around three goals: advancing equitable access to the co-design of ocean science; strengthening functional and technical capacity to contribute to and influence the design and generation of ocean science; and strengthening institutional capacity to apply that knowledge in policy and management. Four strategic priorities translate these goals into operational focus areas through 2030, guided by a governance structure that assesses and prioritises the partnerships and programmes CDF supports. By 2030, CDF aims to have built a portfolio of replicable programmes delivered through multi-year partnerships. As the Decade concludes, CDF's coordination functions are designed to be sustained within appropriate institutional structures.

Background

Across the ocean agenda, capacity development is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and a direct requirement under SDG 14.a, which calls for increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacity, and transferring marine technology to developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs. It enables organizations to translate

commitments into outcomes by strengthening people, institutions, and the systems that support action. Without an explicit equity lens that addresses gaps in capacity and access to technology, progress toward a sustainable ocean economy and ocean management can remain out of reach for many developing countries.

A comprehensive review of global and regional strategic frameworks, together with relevant academic literature, reinforces this: closing these gaps requires deliberate, targeted effort. The bibliography is provided in

Annex A. The capacity development strategies and plans of the organizations listed below were reviewed in the process of developing the Facility's Strategic Plan:

- United Nations Agencies and Regional Commissions: including the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), United Nations (UN DESA / DOALOS), World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
- International and Intergovernmental Organizations: such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), the International Seabed Authority (ISA), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Global Frameworks and Scientific Networks: including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).
- Regional Organizations and Initiatives: such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and The Pacific Community (SPC).
- Academic Literature and Research: A broad body of peer-reviewed research examines how capacity development works in practice, where it falls short, and how it can be made more equitable.

The sections below draw on findings from more than 30 frameworks and literature sources. They reflect the overall landscape rather than any single organisation's approach, and for that reason do not cite specific institutions.

Synthesis of Capacity Development Approaches in Ocean Services and Management

Collaborative Partnerships and Inclusive Equity

Closing gaps in skills, knowledge, access to technology, and the capacity to produce and use science requires a commitment to leaving no one behind.

Key identified priorities and approaches include:

- Targeted Priorities: An explicit focus on Global Priority, ie., Africa, SIDS, LDCs, and Gender Equality to ensure equitable participation in the ocean economy.

- **Intergenerational Inclusion:** The structural integration of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) to ensure the long-term sustainability of scientific leadership.
- **Co-Design and Accountability:** A shift toward joint research agendas and programmes developed with local partners through partnerships grounded in trust and mutual accountability. This also includes co-design not only at the research level, but also with public administration and the private sector, where resources are channeled and mobilized.
- **Cooperation Models:** Actively promoting South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and the exchange of expertise.

The literature also cautions, however, that these approaches can be undermined when not implemented carefully. While global frameworks provide necessary standards and guidance, applying them without tailoring to local realities can sideline local innovation and reinforce inequitable power dynamics. Similarly, top-down implementation that does not incorporate bottom-up knowledge can overlook local expertise and the practical realities of delivery. To be effective, initiatives need to reflect local contexts and prioritise local leadership, so that communities define the problems and shape the solutions.

Reports also highlight the risk of fragmented capacity development delivered through episodic, short-term initiatives that are disconnected from national priorities and broader planning and programming. While one-off initiatives may provide immediate benefits in specific contexts, they are more effective when designed as part of a broader capacity-building process. To avoid fragmentation, these initiatives require coordination and clear planning for how they align with national programming and longer-term institutional frameworks.

The publications also address the challenge of retaining trained professionals — within their institutions, within the ocean science field, and within their home countries. Rather than restricting mobility, which evidence suggests can be counterproductive, the emphasis is on strengthening institutions so that staying becomes an attractive option. This includes developing clear career progression, fair incentives, supportive leadership, and adequate resourcing. Programme design also matters: retention of women and mid-career professionals improves when work environments offer practical accommodations for those with family responsibilities.

A System-Wide, Multi-Layered Approach

Capacity development needs to be addressed across three mutually reinforcing and interdependent levels:

- Individual Level: Focuses on practical, competency-based learning and continuous professional development to ensure technical/scientific know-how is grounded in practical application.
- Organizational Level: Addresses "institutional health" by improving working conditions, providing data/ tools, and establishing management systems to retain and use skilled staff.
- Enabling Environment Level: Focuses on mainstreaming ocean science into national regulations, policies, and budgets so it is viewed as an essential tool for social and economic development, recognizing that the ocean sector cannot reach its full potential without the meaningful integration of developing countries.

Effective action across these levels also requires institutional coordination and alignment, reducing fragmentation and addressing overlapping or unclear responsibilities among nations, international agencies, and cross-sector programmes.

An Integrated Approach to Capacity Development

These three levels are most effective when addressed together. Technical training without supportive institutions, or technology transfer without the governance conditions to sustain it, tends to generate lasting change.

Within the above levels, enabling capacities have historically been underprioritised. These are the institutional, governance, and functional conditions that allow skills and technologies to be applied and sustained in practice, and they shape whether individual learning translates into organisational change and whether transferred technologies are used and maintained over time.

At the same time, technical capacity remains essential as the prerequisite to enable co-designing of science, with persistent gaps in advancing technologies and digitalisation. Closing these gaps requires attention not only to skills training but to how technologies are selected, adopted, used, and maintained, and to ensuring that the people and institutions involved are positioned to shape the science from the start.

Central to technical capacity is the transfer of marine technology. This document uses the terms "technical expertise transfer" and "marine technology transfer" interchangeably. Consistent with the IOC-UNESCO Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, these refer to an integrated whole encompassing marine data and information, documentation and standards, scientific equipment, observation facilities, digital infrastructure, and expertise and know-how.

Across all three levels, there is a growing call to view capacity development through the lens of performance: to measure it by whether it improves how institutions and individuals actually function in practice, rather than by participant counts or activities delivered.

Ocean Decade

The proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2017 of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030 (hereafter, the Ocean Decade) reflects the conviction of UN Member States that ocean science must play a central role in reversing the decline in ocean health, while supporting societies that increasingly depend on ocean resources and services. UNGA resolution A/RES/72/73 (paras. 292–295) proclaimed the Ocean Decade, called upon IOC-UNESCO to prepare its Implementation Plan, and invited UN-Oceans and its participants to collaborate with the IOC on the Decade. The Implementation Plan was adopted in 2021 and the Decade is now five years into operations.

As the [Implementation Plan](#) sets out, the Ocean Decade serves as a transformative framework for global ocean science. It aims to strengthen ocean science, data, knowledge, and capacity in support of major global frameworks and agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the SAMOA Pathway, the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and emerging agreements such as the instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). It also aligns with parallel UN decades and initiatives.

The Ocean Decade Implementation Plan describes the Decade as “everyone’s Decade,” including scientists, research institutions, and universities; local and Indigenous knowledge holders; early career ocean professionals (ECOPs); UN entities and intergovernmental organizations; regional organizations (including regional seas conventions); national and sub-national governments; local coastal communities; business and private sector stakeholders (including emerging maritime industries and ocean information service providers); technology and innovation hubs and professional societies; philanthropic foundations and science funding agencies; NGOs and civil society (including aquarium, zoo, and museum operators); children, youth, school students, and educators; and the general public, including poor and marginalized communities.

Capacity development is a central tenet of the Ocean Decade. Its objective is to achieve more evenly distributed capacity across regions, generations, and genders, reversing asymmetries in ocean knowledge, skills, and access to technology. Per the Implementation Plan, capacity development must strengthen the capacity to do the science, the capacity to influence the

design of science, and the ability to participate in co-design efforts¹. It must also strengthen the ability to understand and use science to develop sustainable development solutions, including evidence-based policymaking, management, innovation, and technology uptake.

The Ocean Decade capacity development framework² spans natural and social sciences, emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches, the infrastructure that supports ocean science, and stronger linkages across science, policy, and practice, including scientific innovation. The Implementation Plan also emphasizes the need for long-term partnerships that build existing networks and resources, explicitly seeking to avoid siloed efforts that have historically fragmented progress, and to strengthen national and regional capacity development networks.

Complementing the Implementation Plan, Vision 2030 White Papers were developed for each Ocean Decade Challenge. Challenge 9 is directly linked to CDF's mandate and operations. The Challenge 9 White Paper states that by 2030, success will be achieved when skills, knowledge, technology, and participatory decision-making are strengthened and equitably distributed, with particular emphasis on LDCs, SIDS, and other under-represented groups, enabling their meaningful participation across all Ocean Decade Challenges.

Five years into implementation, the 2025 Ocean Decade Mid-term Evaluation identified the need for a more robust way to translate Decade ambitions into action. Among other recommendations, it notes that delivery now depends on a dedicated technical assistance function, including targeted support for LDCs and SIDS and more systematic inclusion of Indigenous knowledge holders and ECOPs. In this context, CDF can serve as a mechanism that helps apply scientific outputs to ocean management and supports the scaling of successful approaches across different contexts.

To operationalize these objectives, CDF serves as a strategic matchmaking, coordination, and enabling mechanism, translating high-level Ocean Decade capacity development goals into tangible and equitable outcomes.

About the Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility (CDF)

CDF's Objective and Scope

Informed by the Synthesis of Capacity Development Approaches in Ocean Services and Management and the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan, the primary objective of CDF is to matchmake and enable equitable access to capacity development across the ocean science

¹ IOC-UNESCO (2021), UN Decade Implementation Plan, p. 30

² IOC-UNESCO (2021), UN Decade Implementation Plan, p. 31

landscape. With a particular focus on SIDS, LDCs, and ECOPs, CDF works to ensure that individuals, organisations, and regions are equipped to co-design and implement ocean science, apply technical knowledge, and act on scientific evidence across governance, policy, and management processes. Through partnership-based delivery and strategic resource mobilization, CDF works to close persistent gaps in skills, technical capacity, and institutional capacity that limit active participation in ocean science, particularly among underrepresented groups. These three dimensions — equitable co-design, functional and technical capacity, and institutional capacity — underpin CDF's three goals set out in this plan.

In line with the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan, the thematic scope of CDF remains flexible to support cross-sectoral innovation, while remaining grounded in the outcomes of the ten Ocean Decade Challenges. Outputs and activities delivered through the Facility are needs-driven, shaped by priorities identified through upstream and downstream sources, and co-designed with partners in direct response to what individuals, organisations, and regions identify as their most pressing capacity development priorities.

To deliver on these objectives, CDF combines a coordination and matchmaking function with technical support for the design and quality of partner-delivered programmes, deploying catalytic funds where needed to complement partner contributions and reduce barriers to co-financing.

CDF's Institutional Positioning

To achieve the goals set out in the Ocean Decade capacity development framework, for the duration of the Ocean Decade, CDF leverages IOC's technical expertise, institutional structures, and operational arrangements as the specialized UN agency for Ocean Science and Services. Through this institutional positioning, CDF's work serves both the Ocean Decade's global objectives and IOC's mandate to its 153 Member States.

Alignment with IOC Capacity Development Strategy 2023–2030

The Facility's core activities directly deliver on the following outputs of the [IOC Capacity Development Strategy](#):

- Output 1 (Continuous Professional Development): Supporting knowledge sharing at individual and institutional levels through trainings, workshops, and professional networks
- Output 2 (Access to Technology and Expertise): Facilitating access to technology, infrastructure, and expertise through partnerships that promote technical cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange

- Output 3 (Strengthen Regional Mechanisms): Conducting needs assessments, supporting IOC's regional sub-commissions, and positioning regional organizations as capacity development leaders
- Output 4 (Resource Mobilization): Reinforcing sustained resource mobilization via diverse partnerships and funding sources

Contribution to IOC Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2029

Capacity development functions as a cross-cutting enabler for all IOC functions. CDF's activities advance the following [IOC Medium-Term Strategy](#) objectives:

<i>IOC Objective</i>	<i>CDF Contribution</i>
Objective 1: Healthy Ocean Ecosystems	• Supports research networks on ocean acidification and de-oxygenation through South-South and South-North knowledge exchange • Strengthens IODE data and information centres (including OBIS) by promoting platform utilization and building data mobilization skills • Builds Member State capacity in maritime spatial planning, coastal area management, and marine protected areas through programmes such as MSPglobal
Objective 2: Early Warning Systems	• Supports training on multi-hazard early warning systems for ocean-related risks • Builds technical capacity for early detection of marine invasive species through observing technologies (e.g., DNA metabarcoding) • Provides targeted technical assistance to enhance Member States' preparedness, mitigation, and awareness capabilities via existing IOC programmes
Objective 3: Climate Resilience	• Facilitates and scales training, demonstration projects, and shared tools enabling Member States to respond to climate change and variability • Supports policy and planning capacities for sustainable ocean management, including coastal zone management and marine spatial planning • Strengthens open access to ocean information and knowledge
Objective 5: Foresight on Emerging Issues	• Facilitates knowledge exchange and networking among researchers and practitioners on emerging challenges and opportunities in ocean science, particularly in developing countries

CDF reinforces IOC best practices and expands their reach through partnerships, including by engaging Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA) to sustain and standardize learning and development. By connecting Ocean Decade partners and structures with existing IOC mechanisms, CDF serves as a strategic broker that expands IOC's partnership reach and ensures

capacity development investments are aligned with and build upon IOC's technical infrastructure.

How CDF Identifies Capacity Development Needs

CDF gathers input on needs through both top-down and bottom-up pathways to remain holistic in its approach and to stay informed. Figure 1 demonstrates the multiple sources and pathways used to conduct organic needs synthesis and alignment checks.

Avenues through which CDF identifies needs include:

- UN and intergovernmental publications and peer-reviewed literature: CDF draws on a structured review of capacity development strategies, plans, and related publications from UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, global frameworks and scientific networks, and regional bodies, complemented by peer-reviewed academic literature. This review is used to map the current capacity development landscape, identify common priority areas and gaps, and inform CDF positioning and future priorities.

- UN Capacity Development sharing mechanism: Information gathered formally and informally from UN agencies on their capacity development activities, including planned and completed initiatives and priority areas, is shared, consolidated, and catalogued. This information can help identify opportunities and gaps, including at the regional level.
- Consultations with the Project Steering Group (PSG): CDF consults the PSG for strategic guidance that shapes the Facility's overall direction, including its role within the Ocean Decade ecosystem, its services, and how it adapts to emerging needs and gaps across ocean science services, and management.

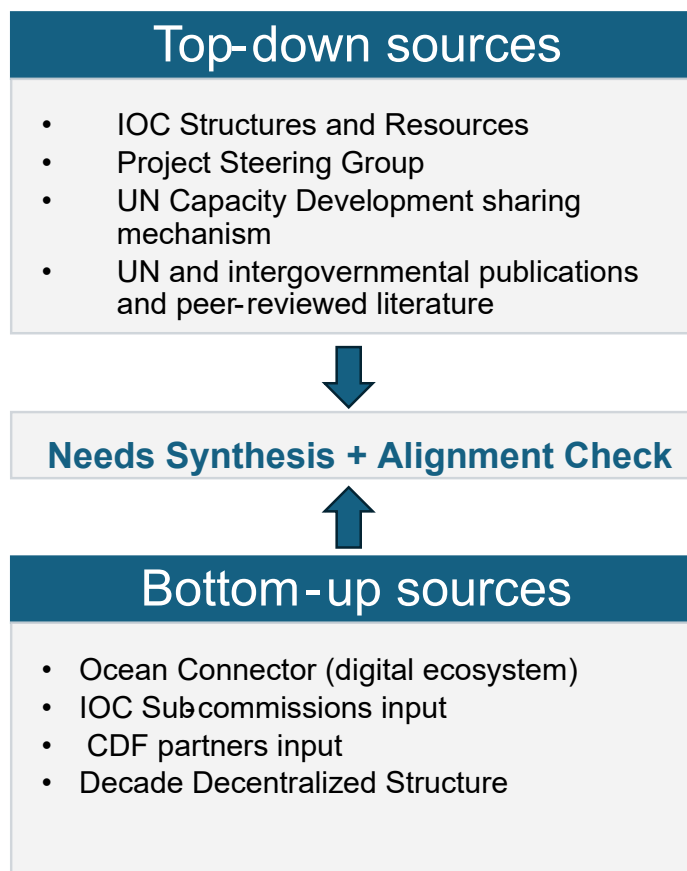


Figure 1: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Input Sources for CDF Needs Assessment

- **IOC structures and resources:** CDF draws on IOC coordination mechanisms and knowledge products to identify needs, including strategic reporting and inputs from IOC Sub-Commissions based on their engagement with Member States. It also uses IOC strategy documents (including the IOC Capacity Development Strategy and IOC Medium-Term Strategy), findings from the annual capacity development survey conducted through the IOC Capacity Development Programme, and relevant global assessments such as the 2020 Global Ocean Science Report.
- **Digital ecosystem:** Ocean Connector, a digital platform matches needs with existing resources and opportunities. It provides a space where stakeholders can engage in different ways, whether as ECOPs seeking opportunities or as organizations offering resources and support, and to enable matchmaking across these groups.
- **Ocean Decade Decentralized Structures:** The Decade Decentralized Structure includes National Decade Committees (NDCs), and Decade Collaborative Centres (DCCs) and Offices (DCOs) established at thematic, regional, and national levels. Engagement with these structures enables CDF to capture thematic, national, and regional perspectives. Coordination is maintained through surveys and participation in recurring meetings, supported by regular coordination with the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU).
- **Partners of the Capacity Development Facility:** CDF engages a growing number of partners through two main modalities: organizations that request support through the Facility, and organizations that work with CDF to offer financial resources, expertise, or delivery capacity. These roles are not fixed; institutions may shift between them or hold both roles depending on the activity. Through ongoing engagement across the delivery cycle (preparation, implementation, and post-delivery reporting), partners provide practical feedback and consultations that help CDF identify gaps, refine its service offer, and strengthen future delivery.

CDF's Partner Institutions

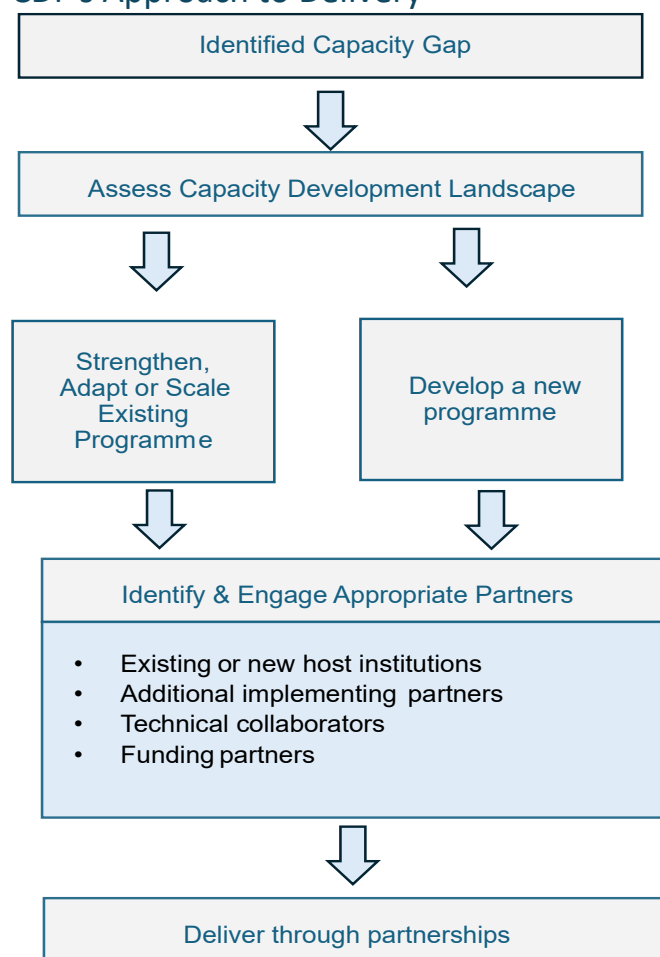
As CDF is nested within the Ocean Decade and operates under the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan, the stakeholders that the Ocean Decade engages can potentially become partners of CDF. In this section, “stakeholders” refers to the Ocean Decade stakeholder groups, including those identified in the Implementation Plan³. Those stakeholders become partners when they actively engage with the Facility, either by requesting support or by contributing resources, expertise, or delivery capacity. Partner institutions therefore include, but are not

³ IOC-UNESCO (2021), UN Decade Implementation Plan, p. 33

limited to, lead institutions of the Ocean Decade and other organisations spanning those stakeholder groups.

CDF services also extend to organisations not yet engaged in the Ocean Decade. By building their capacity and readiness, the Facility helps them develop Ocean Decade Action applications and engage more formally over time.

CDF's Approach to Delivery



CDF strengthens capacity by working through partner institutions and programmes hosted within legally registered organizations of any size. Through these partners, support reaches individuals through institutional channels, reinforcing ownership, co-design, and accountability, while enabling outputs and activities to be tracked at the organizational level.

As a result, expressed needs may reflect local, national, subregional, regional, global, sector-specific, or cross-sector priorities, depending on each institution's mandate, purpose, and vision.

Where global frameworks and UN-wide strategies identify gaps in specific competencies, CDF works with existing UN systems, including OTGA, and partners to develop or adapt training modules that

address these gaps. CDF's role in delivery varies depending on who leads the programme.

Figure 2 CDF Delivery Model

Where programmes are co-developed and co-delivered with IOC, CDF plays an active role in co-designing content, structuring the programme, and quality assuring materials to ensure they meet the standards required for replication and sustained use. Where programmes are partner-led, CDF's role is more targeted: identifying and filling specific gaps that would otherwise prevent delivery or limit participation, whether related to travel, resources, or access to expertise. In these cases, quality is assured through rigorous partner selection, as CDF deploys catalytic funds only to partners whose institutional capacity and programme design

have been assessed as fit for purpose. In both cases, CDF works to ensure that what is delivered is aligned with the goals and operational priorities of the Facility.

CDF Sustainability and Resource Mobilization.

CDF deploys catalytic funds in two ways: as a targeted enabler that removes specific barriers to participation in partner-led programmes, and as co-designer and quality assurer in programmes developed and delivered with IOC. Across both, CDF functions simultaneously as a coordination mechanism and a deployer of catalytic funds.

As a coordination mechanism, CDF connects capacity needs with appropriate financial resources and expertise. CDF facilitates matchmaking between organisations seeking support and partners able to provide financial or technical contributions, and identifies opportunities for co-financing to enable larger-scale or sustained initiatives. Once a programme has been assessed as appropriate through the tiered framework, decisions are made on how it will be resourced — whether through co-financing arrangements, host institution contributions, or the deployment of CDF catalytic funds.

As a deployer of catalytic funds, CDF holds and manages its own operational budget and deploys funds directly to support programmes, providing complementary financing alongside partner contributions. This function operates within IOC financial rules and oversight, ensuring accountability and compliance. Funders can channel financial resources directly to implementing partners or work through IOC as intermediary, depending on their own requirements and preferences.

Sustaining both capacities requires two distinct and equally important streams of resource mobilization. The first is operational: securing the human capacity and running costs that allow CDF to function effectively as a broker, including staff to manage the request pipeline, coordinate partnerships, provide technical support, quality assure materials (particularly those co-designed from the ground up), and oversee monitoring and learning. The second is programmatic: mobilizing the catalytic funds CDF deploys to support programmes directly, reducing partner risk and increasing co-financing attractiveness.

Development of CDF Strategic Plan

Rationale and Purpose

Given CDF's bottom-up approach — focused on working with local partners and responding to expressed needs — an overarching Strategic Plan was recommended to ensure alignment with the global framework, the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan, effective resource mobilization, and coordination.

The Strategic Plan is also informed by iterative consultations with the project steering group and by lessons learned from 2025, summarised below. Together with the Synthesis of

Capacity Development Approaches in Ocean Services and Management, these sources shaped its direction.

In 2025, CDF ran pilot operations to test how the matchmaking mechanism works in practice. Six pilot activities were selected in partnership with delivery organizations; CDF complemented these with additional technical and financial resources, leveraging existing capacity to reach ECOPs from SIDS and LDCs. The pilots span key capacity areas: co-design of science-policy solutions, oceanographic observation techniques, environmental DNA methods for biodiversity monitoring, the BBNJ Agreement, marine data mobilization to OBIS, and early detection of invasive species. Full details are available on the [CDF webpage of the Ocean Decade website](#).

Evidence from the 2025 pilot phase

In 2025, CDF completed six collaborative initiatives with partner organisations. These pilot activities showed that matchmaking between institutions can catalyse progress on the recommendations set out in the Implementation Plan. They also clarified the scope of activities CDF can feasibly pursue in the next cycle.

In one type of arrangement, CDF fills targeted gaps that would otherwise prevent participation, often within larger multi-year programmes where coordination, follow-up, and programmatic staff are already in place and the only missing piece is funding to bring participants from under-resourced countries. In a programme delivered through WIOMSA and Nelson Mandela University, Indigenous and Local Knowledge holders had been selected to contribute to co-design alongside technical experts but lacked funding to attend. CDF covered their participation, so ILK was present where it is central. In a similar case, for a training on ecological sampling techniques delivered as part of a Summer School in Kenya, early career ocean professionals from Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries had been selected but could not cover travel. CDF covered those costs at the organisers' request, turning a selection into a real opportunity.

In another type of arrangement, CDF is more deeply engaged throughout. In a training on area-based management with more than six partners, part of a larger programme, CDF pooled financial resources with co-organisers, helped identify instructors, supported programme development and content design to reach the right audience, disseminated the call, and supported quality assurance through IOC officers. How hands-on CDF becomes depends on where support is needed.

None of these are large-scale interventions. Their value lies in what they unlock: a well-placed contribution that allows larger programmes to deliver their intended reach, or a targeted input that seeds a replicable programme others can build on.

Some lessons learned gained include:

- Working through regional organizations when relevant: Pilot initiatives confirmed that regional organizations are effective partners in achieving sustained, systemic change. By

acting as a bridge between international partnerships and local implementation, these organizations help ensure that capacity development is not a one-off event but is integrated into existing regional governance and scientific networks.

- Setting up systems as an enabler for local leadership: The 2025 initiative demonstrated that local partners possess high technical capacity but are often hindered by a lack of standardized processes. By providing templates, planning tools, and administrative support, CDF enabled local partners to deliver initiatives more independently. This shows that with the right coordination systems in place, local leadership is an effective way to deliver technical results.
- Unlocking the potential of ECOPs: Experience from the 2025 initiatives revealed high levels of engagement from ECOPs in developing countries. There is significant untapped energy and drive among young professionals eager to be part of innovation. Ensuring ECOPs are meaningfully included is critical to the long-term sustainability of ocean science.

Building lessons from the 2025 pilots, the Strategic Plan will define priorities and scope for the next cycle — past the pilot phase and into 2030 — and provide a consistent basis for partnership engagement, programme co-design, and delivery.

Goals of CDF

While CDF cannot address every vision or recommendation in the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan⁴, the Plan's goals serve as guiding principles and an entry point for CDF's operations and future expansion. CDF works toward three core goals through partnership-based delivery and process-oriented efforts. Under each goal, the approaches are outlined as a mutually reinforcing set.

Goal 1: Advance Equitable Access to Co-design of Ocean Science

- Individuals and institutions from SIDS, LDCs, and underrepresented groups are involved in the co-design of ocean science, not only as beneficiaries of capacity development but as active shapers of scientific agendas and priorities.
- ECOPs are recognised and engaged as contributors to the co-design and delivery of ocean science, not only as recipients of training and support.
- Equitable access to ocean science extends beyond formal training to include professional networks, scientific communities, and spaces where ocean science is discussed, shaped, and influenced.

⁴ IOC-UNESCO (2021), UN Decade Implementation Plan, p. 23

- Capacity development is designed for sustainability and replication from the outset, ensuring that equitable access becomes embedded in the institutions and programmes delivering the initiative.
- Local leadership and ownership of technical expertise are central to sustainable capacity development.
- Partnerships are grounded in trust, mutual accountability, and shared ownership, reducing fragmentation and ensuring that supported activities align with the priorities of the communities and institutions they serve.
- Progress toward this goal will be tracked through disaggregated participation data, diversity indicators, and qualitative evidence of co-design, with detailed indicators captured in the Operational Workplan.

Goal 2: Build technical and functional capacity to do the science and influence the design of the science

- Professionals and institutions from SIDS and LDCs have the technical capacity not only to acquire new skills but to maintain, sustain, and build on existing expertise, equipment, and infrastructure over time.
- Professionals from SIDS and LDCs build and retain the technical and functional competencies required to contribute to ocean science
- Technical knowledge and skills are built in ways that are applicable within the local context and connected to the broader scientific communities, data systems, and standards through which ocean science operates globally.
- Professionals develop the capacity to interpret scientific evidence and communicate it effectively, building the individual foundation that enables science to inform decisions and influence the design of ocean science policy.
- Progress toward this goal will be tracked through evidence of skills retention and application, individual uptake of transferred technologies, and the degree to which local expertise is leading and Training of Trainers models are being adopted and sustaining technical capacity development, with detailed indicators captured in the Operational Workplan.

Goal 3: Build institutional capacity to generate, interpret, and apply scientific knowledge in policy and management

- Executing institutions are strengthened through CDF partnership process to deliver and sustain capacity development programmes independently, with shared ownership and organisational capacity built over time.
- Capacity development is designed so that skills and knowledge gained by individuals have an increased chance of translating into institutional capacity when they return to their organisations. While CDF cannot directly influence the institutional conditions that determine whether individual learning becomes organisational change, it can design programmes that empower individuals to drive that change from within.
- Decision makers, managers, and policymakers are better equipped to draw on and interpret scientific evidence in governance and management processes, strengthening both the link between what science produces and what institutions decide and act upon.
- Progress toward this goal will be tracked through qualitative assessments of functional capacity strengthening within partner institutions and evidence gathered through the annual survey, of whether individuals supported by CDF programmes are applying their skills within their organisations, with detailed indicators captured in the Operational Workplan.

Strategic Priorities 2026 to 2030

The three goals set out above describe what CDF is working toward through 2030: equitable access to the co-design of ocean science, stronger technical and functional capacity to generate and contribute to that science, and stronger institutional capacity to apply scientific knowledge in policy and management. They are not sector-specific or thematic — they cut across all of CDF's work and provide the frame against which progress is assessed.

The four strategic priorities that follow translate these goals into operational focus. They describe where CDF will concentrate its effort and resources through 2030: the types of programmes and partnerships it will match, how it will work to secure sustainable homes for those programmes, how it will scale what works, and how it will monitor and learn across the portfolio. Each priority advances one or more of the three goals, as indicated in the section headings below.

Priority 1: Matchmake Programmes and Partnerships That Build Human Capital Across the Professional Development Continuum

Advances Goals 1 and 2 — translates the equitable access and technical capacity principles into operational programme types and brokering focus

CDF will direct its matchmaking efforts toward identifying existing programmes and co-designing new ones across the professional development, from minimum competencies through technical specialisation to scientific and policy influence. Working with implementing partners on the ground and technical specialists, and connecting programmes with funding partners, CDF will focus on four distinct programme types:

- Programmes that build the practical, on-the-job competencies required across ocean science services and management, equipping professionals from SIDS and LDCs to enter the field and strengthen their applied practice.
- Programmes that build existing expertise through technical specialisation or the functional skills required to translate science into policy and management decisions.
- Programmes that combine refresher training and updated technical knowledge with hands-on practice, ensuring that skills, equipment, and infrastructure remain operational over time.
- Programmes that build network access and professional community connecting professionals from SIDS and LDCs to the spaces where ocean science is discussed, shaped, and co-designed, with clear outputs such as contributions to working group papers, technical frameworks, or governance processes.

Across all four programme types, the goal is not skills transfer alone but building the readiness of professionals from SIDS and LDCs to participate as contributors to and co-designers of ocean science.

Priority 2: Secure Sustainable Institutional and Financial Homes for Programmes Piloted Through CDF

Advances Goal 3 — operationalises the institutional strengthening and sustainability principles through securing host institutions and multi-year funding

CDF will direct matchmaking effort toward securing both the institutional homes and the funding arrangements that allow successful programmes to be sustained, scaled, and replicated across regional and national contexts.

- CDF will actively identify and engage national, sub-regional, and regional institutions or offices that have the mandate, networks, and operational capacity to host and run programmes over the long term. These institutions will serve as institutional homes for the programme, taking ownership and responsibility for sustaining it beyond CDF involvement, with the programme ultimately fully embedded within the host institution.
- Sustainable financing is central to this priority. CDF will both proactively identify and approach funding partners and respond to funders seeking to support ocean science capacity development, across bilateral donors and development finance institutions, philanthropic foundations, and UN agencies and intergovernmental bodies. CDF

facilitates the pilot process, with the explicit strategic goal of moving toward multi-year programmatic funding arrangements that provide the sustained financing programmes need to deliver lasting impact.

Priority 3: Scale Proven Programmes Across Regions Through Replication and Expanded Partnerships

Advances Goals 1 and 3 — extends equitable access geographically and strengthens implementing institutions through the replication process

Replication is not a transfer of a fixed model. Each adaptation is co-designed with local and regional partners, so replication itself becomes an exercise in co-design.

- For newly co-designed programmes, replication is built in from the outset. Content, delivery modality, and partnership structures are developed with portability across contexts in mind. For existing programmes identified and strengthened through CDF engagement, replication potential is assessed after piloting and built in where appropriate.
- Replication works through a stable core of standardised, accessible materials adapted to each new context by local partners. CDF will work with partners to ensure that learning materials developed through supported programmes are version-controlled and maintained through accredited platforms such as the Ocean Teacher Global Academy, so knowledge generated in one context is available as a resource that each new replication can draw on and shape.
- CDF will proactively identify and engage partners in target regions, building the relationships necessary to support sustained delivery. These partnerships are the mechanism through which replication takes hold as a co-designed process in each new setting.

Priority 4: Monitor Outcomes and Apply Learning Across the Portfolio

Advances Goals 1, 2, and 3 — provides the evidence base through which progress toward all three goals is tracked and programme design is continuously refined

CDF monitors its portfolio against the Ocean Decade's strategic framework for capacity development⁵, tracking progress across six desired results: the development of human resources at individual and institutional levels; improved access to technology and physical infrastructure; the strengthening of global, regional, and subregional mechanisms; the promotion of ocean research policies in support of sustainable development; increased

⁵IOC-UNESCO (2021), UN Decade Implementation Plan, p. 31

awareness and understanding of the role and value of the ocean; and sustained long term resource mobilization. CDF uses the following monitoring mechanisms to assess whether its work is contributing to the priority activities identified under each of these desired results.

CDF monitors at two levels.

- Programme level: Lessons learned reports, prepared by implementing partners at the close of each programme, capture what worked, what did not, and what should be adapted — offering the instructor's perspective on how the programme contributed to the Decade's desired results and priority activities. Alongside these, CDF records its own observations on programme quality across relevance, content, and logistics, drawing on its direct involvement in design and delivery.
- Individual and institutional level: An annual survey tracks whether skills gained through CDF-supported programmes are retained and applied over time. The survey does not replace direct skills assessment, but it provides a ground-level view of emerging gaps, whether existing gaps are narrowing, and how beneficiaries and institutions experience the impact of the work. It also captures evidence of co-design participation, including contributions to the design of programmes, standards, or technical frameworks, and engagement in working groups or governance processes where ocean science priorities are shaped.

Lessons learned and CDF observations from one context shape how a programme is adapted before replication in another. Annual survey findings inform decisions about what to carry forward and what to change across content, logistics, and delivery, shaping both the refinement of existing programmes and the design of new ones. When CDF can demonstrate, through the annual survey, lessons learned reports, and feedback from implementing agencies, that its supported programmes translate into sustained and applied capacity on the ground, the case for continued and expanded investment is strengthened. CDF therefore treats monitoring as the foundation on which trust with funding partners and host institutions is built over time.

CDF Implementation Process

Rather than pre-identifying themes or sectors to select organizations to work with, CDF prioritizes partnering with organizations that have the mandate and either the operational capacity to implement capacity development initiatives or a well-defined plan to strengthen institutional systems and resources to absorb, apply, and sustain new capacity beyond CDF intervention. It then matches organizations that can offer resources, expertise, or delivery capacity with organizations that have clearly articulated capacity development needs. By creating a space for organizations to submit requests through the Ocean Connector, CDF makes demand visible, supports coordination, and increases the likelihood that capacity will be

integrated into ongoing programmes, connected to complementary initiatives and partners, and sustained beyond the initial intervention.

For initiatives where CDF deploys catalytic funding, alignment is assessed through a structured 28-question questionnaire submitted via the Ocean Connector by institutions requesting support. The questionnaire, available on the [Ocean Connector page](#), covers the activity's details, intended audience, thematic focus, partnership arrangements, financial requirements, and risk management. The responses provide the evidence base for a four-tier prioritization assessment (Annex B), through which CDF checks alignment of requests and operationalizes its three goals. The tiers are structured as follows:

Table 1. Advancement of Goals Through Supported Activities and Operations

Tier	Sub-category	Criterion / Indicator	Mapping to Ocean Connector Questionnaire	Goal Advanced
Tier 0 Mandatory	—	Activity fits within one or more of the 10 UN Ocean Decade Challenges.	Thematic focus field; capacity gap description	<i>Prerequisite to Goals 1, 2 & 3</i>
Tier 1 Primary Priorities Min. 1 of 2	Equity & inclusion	Primarily benefits Small Island Developing States or Least Developed Countries, or is delivered by partners based in these countries.	Target audience and beneficiary fields; question on geographic and gender gaps	Goal 1
		Targets Early Career Ocean Professionals.	Target audience field; question on generational gaps	Goal 1
Tier 2 Strategic Value Min. 8 of 13 overall	Core partnership model <i>Min. 2 of 4</i>	Partners with a regional organisation, regional sub-commission, or global network for long-term programming.	Partner identification fields; stated goals	Goal 3
		Addresses a documented gap from UN capacity development networks, global frameworks, or regional consultations.	Capacity gap narrative; stated goals	Goal 3
		Uses training-of-trainers or another replication model for sustained impact.	Support type requested; programme design fields	Goals 2 & 3
		Delivered through OTGA or another accredited platform that preserves learning.	Support type requested; delivery platform	Goal 3
	Multi-level capacity <i>Min. 4 of 6</i>	Identifies, uses, and maintains locally adaptable technologies and tools for doing or co-designing science.	Sub-theme selection; capacity gap narrative	Goals 1 & 2
		Promotes widely adopted data systems, standards, and processes for supporting ocean services and management.	Sub-theme selection; capacity gap narrative	Goals 2 & 3
		Strengthens capacity for science-informed policy or management.	Stated goals; capacity gap narrative	Goal 3

		Builds functional skills for stakeholder engagement or co-design.	Stated goals; programme design fields	Goals 1 & 2
		Involves local instructors.	Partner identification fields; personnel	Goals 1 & 2
		Connects participants to established or emerging professional networks or communities of practice in ocean science.	Programme design fields; stated goals	Goals 2 & 3
	Sustainability and follow-up <i>Min. 2 of 3</i>	Extends beyond a one-off event through mentorship, networks, or sustained engagement.	Proposed success measures; programme design	Goals 2 & 3
		Links clearly to the requesting organisation's long-term capacity development plan.	Organisation background; stated goals	Goal 3
		Has dedicated staff to support participants post-training.	Risk and personnel fields	Goal 3
Tier 3 Portfolio Fit Min. 2 of 3	Portfolio fit	Resources are available, including confirmed co-financers where required.	Resource and co-financing availability	<i>Enables Goals 1, 2 & 3</i>
		Does not create geographic or thematic imbalance in the portfolio.	Geographic and thematic distribution	Goal 1
		Timing allows for adequate co-design and delivery.	Co-design timeline	Goal 1

Requests must meet minimum thresholds across all three tiers to be considered. The full criteria against which each request is assessed can be found in Annex B. Once the proposed activity has gone through the established governance process (see Executing institutions are strengthened through CDF partnership process to deliver and sustain capacity development programmes independently, with shared ownership and organisational capacity built over time.

- Capacity development is designed so that skills and knowledge gained by individuals have an increased chance of translating into institutional capacity when they return to their organisations. While CDF cannot directly influence the institutional conditions that determine whether individual learning becomes organisational change, it can design programmes that empower individuals to drive that change from within.
- Decision makers, managers, and policymakers are better equipped to draw on and interpret scientific evidence in governance and management processes, strengthening both the link between what science produces and what institutions decide and act upon.
- Progress toward this goal will be tracked through qualitative assessments of functional capacity strengthening within partner institutions and evidence gathered through the annual survey, of whether individuals supported by CDF programmes are applying their

skills within their organisations, with detailed indicators captured in the Operational Workplan.

Strategic Priorities 2026 to 2030

The three goals set out above describe what CDF is working toward through 2030: equitable access to the co-design of ocean science, stronger technical and functional capacity to generate and contribute to that science, and stronger institutional capacity to apply scientific knowledge in policy and management. They are not sector-specific or thematic — they cut across all of CDF's work and provide the frame against which progress is assessed.

The four strategic priorities that follow translate these goals into operational focus. They describe where CDF will concentrate its effort and resources through 2030: the types of programmes and partnerships it will match, how it will work to secure sustainable homes for those programmes, how it will scale what works, and how it will monitor and learn across the portfolio. Each priority advances one or more of the three goals, as indicated in the section headings below.

Priority 1: Matchmake Programmes and Partnerships That Build Human Capital Across the Professional Development Continuum

Advances Goals 1 and 2 — translates the equitable access and technical capacity principles into operational programme types and brokering focus

CDF will direct its matchmaking efforts toward identifying existing programmes and co-designing new ones across the professional development, from minimum competencies through technical specialisation to scientific and policy influence. Working with implementing partners on the ground and technical specialists, and connecting programmes with funding partners, CDF will focus on four distinct programme types:

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engagement in working groups or governance processes where ocean science priorities are shaped.

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section) and CDF engagement is confirmed, CDF will identify partners for co-implementation and mobilize resources as needed. The activity is then co-designed as a collaborative effort between the partner organization, the requesting institution, and CDF. It is through both the process of delivery and its outcomes that CDF advances its three goals.

Monitoring and knowledge management mechanisms applied across the portfolio are described under Strategic Priorities 2026 to 2030: Priority 4.

Governance

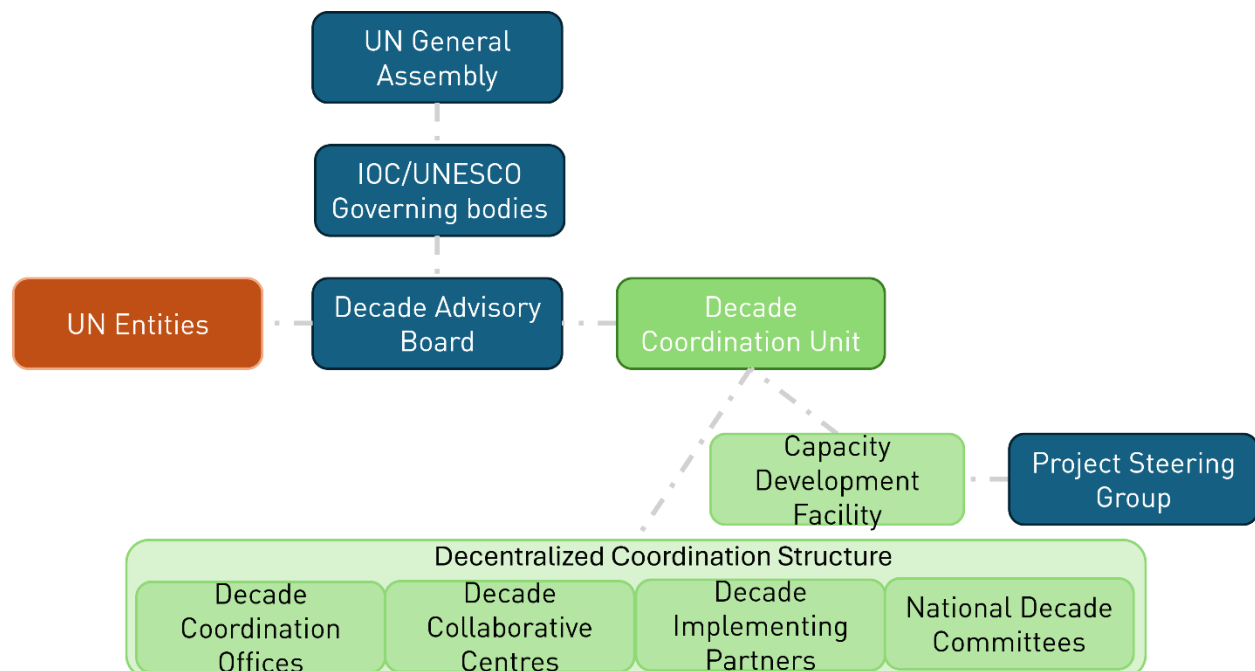


Figure 3 Governance and coordination framework for the Decade.

CDF is managed through day-to-day operations by the Secretariat within the DCU. The Secretariat manages the overall request pipeline through the Ocean Connector, including intake of requests, screening and initial assessments, liaison with requesting organizations and partners, identifying potential matches and solutions to address ocean science and capacity development gaps, and monitoring activities in the pipeline and under implementation.

For initiatives where, following tiered assessment, CDF deploys catalytic funds, the Secretariat's assessment and funding decision are shared with the PSG to ensure transparency and accountability. The PSG has a defined review period to raise concerns, request modifications, or recommend rejections before a decision is confirmed. Where concerns are raised, the Secretariat works with the applicant and partners to revise the proposed approach, strengthen delivery arrangements, or clarify roles, timelines, and expected results. Decisions and their rationale are documented to support consistency across the portfolio and to provide feedback to applicants.

Implementation and monitoring are overseen by the Secretariat. Through Lessons Learned Reports, financial reporting (depending on the contractual arrangement), co-developed communication materials, and an annual survey, trainings and workshops delivered with CDF support are reported to PSG throughout the year. For quality assurance, the Ocean Connector is used as a documentation and tracking tool, ensuring that submitted materials are reviewed, quality-assured, and recorded.

Vision Beyond 2030

The CDF occupies a distinct and strategic niche within the broader capacity development landscape of partners and initiatives focused on ocean science and knowledge. Through its human-centred approach, it connects under-represented groups to global capacity development opportunities, enabling both persistent and emerging gaps in ocean science skills to be systematically identified and addressed.

Sustainability is embedded at the core of the CDF model. All programmes supported by the Facility are designed to progressively achieve full independence. Institutional partnerships are structured to build self-sustaining capacity, while funding relationships are oriented toward predictable, multi-year commitments.

By 2030, success will be measured not by the continued presence of the CDF, but by what it has catalysed: programmes led and sustained by implementing partners, professionals across SIDS and LDCs actively applying and advancing their expertise, and a mature network of partnerships capable of mobilising and financing capacity development autonomously.

Recognised as a potential legacy initiative of the Ocean Decade, the CDF is intended to extend its impact beyond 2030. Its core coordination and technical functions, currently implemented as part of the Ocean Decade hosted by IOC, will be integrated into a sustainable institutional host to enable continued delivery of its mandate. The governance and institutional arrangements will continue to be discussed with the Project Steering and other relevant partners and as part of ongoing discussions on legacy initiatives of the Ocean Decade, including

those that will be supported by IOC. To this end, the CDF will proactively engage with prospective institutional and funding partners in the lead-up to 2030, ensuring that the necessary conditions for continuity are firmly in place well before the Decade concludes.

Annex A

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Annex B

CDF Tiered Prioritization Criteria

TIER 0: Mandatory

- ☐ Fits within Ocean Decade Challenges (1-10)

TIER 1: Primary Priorities *(Must meet at least 1 of 2)*

- ☐ Primarily benefits SIDS/LDCs or is delivered by SIDS/LDC-based partners
- ☐ Targets ECOPs

TIER 2: Strategic Value *(Must meet minimum 8 of 13 indicators)*

Core partnership model: (at least 2 of 4):

- ☐ Partners with regional organization, regional sub-commission, or global network for long-term programming
- ☐ Addresses documented gap from UN CD network, global frameworks, or regional consultations
- ☐ Uses training-of-trainers or other replication model for sustained impact
- ☐ Goes through OTGA or accredited platform that preserves learning

Multi-level capacity (at least 4 of 6):

- ☐ Identifies, uses and/or maintains locally adaptable technologies/tools for doing/co-designing science
- ☐ Promotes widely adopted data systems, standards, processes for supporting ocean services/management
- ☐ Strengthens capacity for science-informed policy or management
- ☐ Builds functional skills for stakeholder engagement or co-design
- ☐ Involves local instructors
- ☐ Connects participants to established or emerging professional networks or communities of practice relevant to ocean science

Sustainability and follow-up (at least 2 of 3):

- ☐ Goes beyond one-off event through mentorship, networks, or sustained engagement
- ☐ Has clear documentation linking the initiative to the requesting organization's long-term capacity development plan
- ☐ Has dedicated staff to support participants post-training

TIER 3: Portfolio Fit *(Must meet minimum 2 out of 3 indicators)*

- ☐ Resources available (including confirmed co-financers if required)
- ☐ Doesn't create geographic/thematic imbalance
- ☐ Timing allows for adequate co-design and delivery

Annex C

Acronym	Full term
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBSC	Capacity Building Sub-Committee (International Hydrographic Organization)
CCCCC	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
CD	Capacity Development
CDF	Capacity Development Facility
CGTMT	Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
ECOPs	Early Career Ocean Professionals
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
eDNA	Environmental DNA
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility
IHO	International Hydrographic Organization
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IOC-UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
IOCARIBE	IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions
ISA	International Seabed Authority
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MISC	Not spelled out in document (appears in a URL path)
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OBIS	Ocean Biodiversity Information System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTGA	OceanTeacher Global Academy
PEMSEA	Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia

POGO	Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean
PSG	Project Steering Group
RES	Resolution (used in a UNGA resolution reference)
SAMOA	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway)
SCOR	Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SDS-SEA	Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UN	United Nations
UN-Oceans	UN-Oceans (United Nations inter-agency mechanism on ocean matters)
UN-wide	United Nations system-wide
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WIOMSA	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association
WMO	World Meteorological Organization