# **OCEAN Year 1 Annual Review (2023-24)**

|  |
| --- |
| **Title:** Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Competitive Grants Programme |
| **Programme Value £ (full life):** £60,000,000 | **Review date:** September 2024 |
| **Programme Code:** BPFOCEAN | **Start date:** August 2023  | **End date:** March 2030 |

## Summary of Programme Performance

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | **2024** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Overall Output Score | **A** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Risk Rating  | **High** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DevTracker Link to Business Case:  | [OCEAN-Full-Business-Case\_Final\_1-20240319030320.7\_Redacted-compressed.pdf (northeurope.cloudapp.azure.com)](https://devflow.northeurope.cloudapp.azure.com/files/documents/OCEAN-Full-Business-Case_Final_1-20240319030320.7_Redacted-compressed.pdf) |

## A: SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

### **A1. Description of programme**

The Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Grants Programme is a Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)-led competitive grants scheme to support projects that aim to deliver lasting change to the marine environment and coastal communities. The programme is funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA) as part of the Blue Planet Fund (BPF) – the UK’s £500 million marine ODA portfolio to support developing countries in protecting the ocean and reducing poverty. An investment of up to £60 million for OCEAN was announced in December 2023 at COP28 in Dubai.

In the last 10 years, less than 1% (around USD ~$13 billion) of the total value of the ocean has been invested in sustainable projects, even though the ocean supports the livelihoods of 1 in 10 people globally[[1]](#footnote-2). OCEAN seeks to redress this imbalance and support people and communities who have most acutely and disproportionately been impacted by climate change. By supporting both large and small organisations working towards ocean-based solutions to climate change and poverty reduction in coastal communities, OCEAN aims to build resilience for coastal people and communities most acutely affected by declining ocean health and climate change. The fund’s long-term objective is to place the ocean on a path to recovery, enabling local communities and nature to thrive side by side.

Organisations including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can submit applications for funding to deliver projects in ODA eligible countries. OCEAN will award grants to projects that aim to achieve improvements to the marine environment and its biodiversity and a reduction in multi-dimensional poverty through the following two distinct funding pathways:

* Community Grants of a maximum allocation of £250,000 are available for small-scale, local, in-country organisations. These grants must focus on increasing the capacity of local communities to tackle marine and poverty issues, by delivering local solutions to local problems.
* Partnership Grants of between £250,000 and £3 million are available for medium to large organisations with the capacity to deliver solutions at scale. These grants must focus on partnering with and working alongside the local communities, to deliver local solutions to local problems, while addressing the potential to scale.

OCEAN is entirely ODA funded, and therefore projects must be based in an ODA eligible country and promote the economic development and welfare of that country as a primary objective. Projects can be based in more than one country, but all countries must be ODA eligible. Projects must also contribute to poverty reduction and do so in a way that reduces gender inequality, as required by the UK International Development Act. OCEAN is expected to focus on Least Developed, Low Income and Lower Middle-Income countries, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) eligibility. Projects based in Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) are eligible, however they must demonstrate a stronger case for support.

The 12 months since OCEAN Business Case approval has focused on the mobilisation and implementation of OCEAN, including the onboarding of our Grant Administrator (GA) NIRAS. The first call for proposals launched in February 2024, and projects will be awarded in October 2024. A second call for proposals is scheduled to launch in January 2025.

### **A2. Summary supporting narrative for the overall score in this review**

### This OCEAN Annual Review covers the period from Business Case approval in August 2023 to 31st August 2024, referred to as OCEAN year 1. The programme score for year 1 is *A –* *met expectations*, and has been assessed through output scoring (please see sections B2, B3, and C for further detail). Key successes from year 1 include:

* Due to successful communication and engagement strategies the first call for proposals generated significant interest with 694 applications to implement projects in 107 countries.
* As part of this successful communication and engagement strategy the OCEAN branding, website, newsletter and social media channels were developed and launched ahead of the first call for proposals. The website has had over 33,000 users since launch and the OCEAN mailing list has 1200 subscribers.
* High-quality programme management ensured that OCEAN successfully met all public-facing deadlines/dates including application windows opening and closing on published dates, all webinars and workshops held on published dates, notification of application outcomes issued on time.
* OCEAN composed and delivered 694 tailored feedback letters to all Round 1 applicants, regardless of outcome, to provide high quality capability and capacity building to applications to support them to improve their future applications for funding. We received positive comments from applicants on the quality and usefulness of these letters.
* Due to a successful recruitment campaign a diverse 11-member Expert Committee whose role it is to assess applications was recruited and onboarded.
* OCEAN developed and published comprehensive application guidance in time for the first call for proposals to support applicants in producing high-quality and eligible applications. A total of 5 guidance documents were produced and shared on the OCEAN website and application portal and translated into the 5 OCEAN priority languages. These documents were downloaded 6863 times as of end-June 2024.
* The OCEAN Helpdesk was established to support applicants and grantees in their applications. From February to June 2024 the Helpdesk team resolved 1446 queries in multiple languages with an average response time of less than 1 working day.
* In order to further develop applicant capability and capacity OCEAN developed and delivered 22 webinars and workshops to support applicants. 1837 representatives from 1119 different organisations attended these events.
* To support grantee engagement and capability and capacity building OCEAN has established a networking platform called the OCEAN Grants Community for applicants and grantees on the UN Ocean Decade Network and OCEAN has been endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade.
* OCEAN has integrated a strong focus on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH). The programme has developed a GESI Action Plan, is embedding GESI into all key processes and stages in the OCEAN application and project cycle and has recruited a dedicated Safeguarding Manager to provide guidance to applicants and grantees.

### **A3. Major lessons and recommendations for the year ahead**

1. **Lesson:** Due to the competitive nature of OCEAN and the annual funding rounds there are key similarities with Defra’s Challenge Funds (Darwin, IWT Challenge Fund etc.) and other relevant programmes. As OCEAN moves to the implementation phase Defra programme teams must ensure that there are close strategic links and opportunities to share learning between the programmes to maximise programme impact, increase capability and capacity and support effective programme management, including risk management.

**Recommendation:** Implement additional meetings and focused workshops at key points in the annual fund cycle to sit alongside regular meetings to support sharing of lessons-learned and ensure a coherent strategy between Defra’s Challenge Funds. A representative from the Biodiversity Challenge Funds will also sit on the OCEAN Programme Board.

1. **Lesson:** The first year of OCEAN has been focused on the design and mobilisation of the programme. As the programme moves to implementation it is important to ensure that OCEAN enhances and complements the Blue Planet Fund portfolio and wider Defra ODA portfolio to maximise impact and reduce duplication. OCEAN must also achieve collective strategic impact beyond the small-scale impact of individual projects.

**Recommendation**: Defra to establish the OCEAN Programme Board that will consist of key HMG stakeholders who will convene bi-annually as a minimum. The board will discuss and agree how OCEAN will enhance and complement the existing BPF portfolio and wider Defra ODA portfolio and ensure strategic impact through considering evidence, scalability and the focus of funding windows.

1. **Lesson:** Within our guidance to applicants, we clearly state: “*projects based in Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) are eligible; however, projects applying to work in a UMIC should clearly demonstrate a stronger case for support and this will be assessed” with* detailed guidance around what this means. Following results of Stage 1 sifting of applications by the Expert Committee it was evident that we potentially hadn’t adequately weighted this clearly enough within our scoring criteria to allow for consistent scoring by all Expert Committee members leading to potential geographical biases and the requirement of additional review.

**Recommendation:** Defra and NIRAS to develop clearer guidance for the OCEAN Expert Committee on the scoring of UMIC applications ahead of the assessment stages for the second call for proposals which will launch in January 2025.

1. **Lesson:** Due to the success of the first funding round OCEAN received significant volumes of eligible applications in Year 1. To ensure a robust evaluation process, all eligible applications were reviewed separately by three of our Expert Committee members ahead of the sift meeting. With limited resource for the first funding round, this added strain to members and the programme team, particularly if external issues led to members being unable to complete all of their allocated assessments within tight time frames allocated.

**Recommendation:** Defra to increase the number of Expert Committee members, particularly those with international development expertise ahead of the launch of the second call for proposals in January 2025.

1. **Lesson:** Due to OCEAN being a new funding programme several detailed guidance documents for applicants were created and published online. However, due to the complexity of the guidance, applicants were found to often make common mistakes when it came to essential eligibility and application requirements which led to some applications being ineligible.

**Recommendation:** NIRAS and Defra to publish short-form guidance to make essential eligibility and application requirements more visible to applicants ahead of the launch of the second call for proposals.

1. **Lesson:** OCEAN programme team delivered a briefing open to all Climate and Environment Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) colleagues ahead of the first call for proposals in Year 1. However, due to the restrained timelines ahead of the launch date some key messaging around how FCDO colleagues could support and engage with applicants during the competitive process was not clearly identified or understood.

**Recommendation:** Defra programme team to further develop the strategy for engagement with FCDO colleagues regarding OCEAN applications during the application and selection stages ahead of the launch of the second call for proposals in January 2025.

1. **Lesson:** A significant component of Year 1 was taken up by ensuring the development and implementation of OCEAN as a programme, therefore only limited additional engagement activities were undertaken and development and growth of the Ocean Decade Network was put on hold due to changes in the platforms resourcing.

**Recommendation:** NIRAS to undertake further engagement activities and grow the membership and value of the OCEAN Grants Community as a key learning platform on the Ocean Decade Network focussing for year 1 grantees over the next 12 months.

1. **Lesson:** Due to constrained timelines ahead of call for proposals in Year 1, very limited in-country/regional engagement was undertaken. This resulted in a proportionately high number of applications from a small number of countries and some regions being underrepresented.

**Recommendation:** Defra and NIRAS to enhance level of in-country/regional engagement ahead of and during the second call for proposals to promote a diverse set of global applications, particularly from those who previously have not been able to access similar funds. This will included targeted outreach in Western Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

1. **Lesson:** Given the number and variety of grantees, there is a need to standardise some of the reporting requirements in order to achieve consistent and accurate aggregation of results.

**Recommendation:** Defra to develop and pilot OCEAN Standard Indicators with first cohort of grantees at onboarding stage (from November 2024) to support synthesis of results across the OCEAN portfolio.

1. **Lesson:** In-country engagement and feedback from HMG colleagues and applicants has demonstrated a need for continued guidance and support beyond the application stage for new grantees.

**Recommendation:** NIRAS to offer quarterly learning sessions on specific topics to support capacity development of grantees and facilitate networking and peer to peer learning.

1. **Lesson:** Based on feedback from the Expert Committee and ODA colleagues there is an opportunity to increase the ambition of the OCEAN GESI approach for Round 2 and beyond.

**Recommendation:** Undertake engagement with GESI experts in HMG and beyond to refine OCEAN GESI documents including Guidance Notes, Ambition Statement and the GESI Action Plan, explore opportunities for inclusion of disability in our GESI approach, and assess the feasibility of a GESI-focused funding window. Inclusion of a GESI output to the OCEAN logframe and addition of a GESI Expert to the GA team.

## B: THEORY OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

**B1. Summarise the programme’s** [**theory of change**](https://defra.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/t/Team569/EYKsnu69tPRGn-MDZaT7oTwBubyk9q4_JSeyjlktmKmhhg?e=qALZ5m)**, including any changes to outcome and impact indicators from the original business case.**

OCEAN will provide up to £60 million in funding to organisations delivering marine environment and development projects in ODA eligible countries. Defra and FCDO policy teams provide support and expertise to the programme, drawing on advice from regional FCDO posts. A dedicated Grant Administrator (GA) supports the design and implementation of the programme, and a dedicated OCEAN Expert Committee provides recommendations on what to fund, and feedback to applicants on their proposals. An Independent Evaluator supports the generation of evidence and consolidates emerging lessons and insights from the programme.

By administering Community Grants and Partnership Grants, OCEAN supports grassroots to larger-scale projects to deliver lasting benefits to the marine environment and coastal communities. Alongside these grant pathways, OCEAN provides networking support, training and guidance to grantees and applicants to help them apply for grants, deliver effective projects, and evidence their impact. The programme will consolidate evidence and disseminate lessons for the Blue Planet Fund, Defra, FCDO, and wider stakeholders on how to effectively support local capacity development, e.g. through identifying, promoting and co-generating local and indigenous knowledge that supports marine conservation, empowers women and other marginalised groups.

By developing the OCEAN learning and networking platform to connect grantees with each other and the expertise they need, OCEAN will result in a global network of organisations supporting and promoting local and regional empowerment in the marine environment space. Small, locally-based organisations will apply for Community Grants, and larger, more established organisations will apply for Partnership Grants. Through these pathways, organisations will gain access to funding to address, for example, the drivers of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, local sources of marine pollution, marine biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts. OCEAN will also generate and disseminate knowledge through products including guidance notes, webinars, annual reviews of projects, evaluation reports of the programme based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, and a range of webinars, workshops, case-studies and thematic deep dives based on needs identified by stakeholders. Sharing successes, challenges and best practices as they emerge will amplify the impact of the programme.

As a result of the programme, local organisations will be better supported to help communities manage marine resources sustainable and inclusively. As the programme matures, the organisations it supports will have an increased ability to influence policy at local, sub-national, and national levels. This will promote more inclusive decision and policy making, by bringing in more local knowledge and experiences.

Through projects, communities will have an increased awareness of, and share knowledge about the themes in the BPF outcomes. Through this awareness, and through supporting grantees to deliver successful projects, local organisations will be more willing and able to apply for and access ODA funding. As more organisations apply and engage with the programme, Defra will learn more and become more knowledgeable and effective supporters of in-country organisations. This will contribute to an increased capacity for local organisations and communities to tackle environmental challenges at different levels. The increased diversity of organisations that have access to funding will ensure that alternative approaches to tackling marine issues are fostered. Approaches will be more nuanced, context-specific, and more accurately reflect the complexity of human behaviour and perceptions in social and environmental change. OCEAN will share relevant learning within the BPF portfolio, across-HMG and beyond as relevant.

In the long term, the increased diversity and capacity of local actors addressing marine and development challenges will support the ultimate goal of placing the ocean on a path to recovery, enabling local communities and nature to thrive. Marine ecosystems will be better protected and more sustainably used and managed, as communities are more knowledgeable about them and empowered to influence decision-making. This will promote action in many areas, including, for example, improved waste management systems to manage marine pollution, and strengthened management of regional and national fisheries and aquaculture, more inclusive governance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), and reduction in Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing activities. These actions will address many of the dimensions of poverty e.g. through improved food security, sustainable livelihoods, and improved social outcomes for vulnerable groups. Through reducing the multiple dimensions of poverty there will be an increase in coastal communities’ resilience to the climate crisis, by increasing their ability to adapt to and overcome shocks.

The current OCEAN Theory of Change is presented in Annex A. This will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to embed lessons from OCEAN’s delivery, results achieved, and emerging evidence from within and beyond OCEAN.

**B2. Describe where the programme is on/off track to contribute to the expected outcomes and impact. What action is planned in the year ahead?**

An unforeseen delay in the approval of the OCEAN Business Case by Defra Ministers and HMT resulted in an eight-week delay to awarding the GA contract and the subsequent launch of the first call for proposals. This has in turn resulted in a delay to the award of successful projects and disbursement of funding to grantees. This delay in the disbursement of funding to grantees has resulted in OCEAN having not being scored on two out of three indicators of *Output 1 - Organisations in ODA eligible countries have access to funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at a local-level* and therefore not met expectations with a score of B. OCEAN has met or exceeded its expectations across indicators of the following two outputs.

* *Output 2 - Organisations and coastal communities in ODA eligible countries have access to guidance, training and support to build their capacity to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges – A+*
* *Output 3 - Networks, partnerships and learning processes are established, supporting knowledge and evidence exchange to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges - A*

Therefore OCEAN has met or exceeded expectations on 2 of the 3 outputs across their indicators and overall has scored *A – Outputs Met Expectation*. Further information is contained in the output assessment (section C), which provides quantitative scores to detail whether the programme is currently on track based on key outputs.

Despite the forementioned delays OCEAN remains on track to contribute to the expected outcomes and impact over the lifetime of the programme.

**B3. Justify whether the programme should continue, based on its own merits and in the context of the wider portfolio**

In its first year OCEAN has focused on mobilisation, procurement and the first call for proposals. Good progress has been made across these objectives in line with OCEAN’s overall strategy and Theory of Change (Annex A). Despite delays, the first call for proposals was a success with 694 applications to implement projects in 107 different countries and 96% of Community Grant and 100% of Partnership Grant applicants who were invited to Stage 2 completed this phase of the process. We are on track to award in the region of £2.7 million of funding in this financial year to successful projects from November 2024. Other successes are outlined in section A2.

OCEAN is therefore recommended to continue delivery as planned, ensuring that there is close monitoring of progress throughout year two to learn from and adapt to any changing circumstances. and to avoid any future delays.

## C. DETAILED OUTPUT SCORING

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Output Title**  | Organisations in ODA eligible countries have access to funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at a local-level |
| Output number:  | 1 | Output Score:  | **B** |
| Impact weighting (%):  | 20 | Weighting revised since last AR?  | N/A |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Achieved** | **Progress** |
| 1.1 | Volume of funding awarded: OCEAN commits £60m in grant funding to organisations working at local level | £0 | £4.5m | £0 | **Overall: B - Missed**Due to delays with approvals of the Business Case the launch of the first call for proposals was delayed by 8 weeks. Successful projects will be selected in October 2024 with funding disbursed to grantees from November 2024. |
| 1.2 | Volume of funding managed by local organisations: Local organisations receive OCEAN funds either by directly receiving a grant, or through managing a portion of the budget when partnering with a Lead organisation.1. Proportion of funds committed that are managed by small-medium organisations
 | - | Community Grants: 100%Partnership Grants: N/A for Round 1 | Community Grants: 100%Partnership Grants: N/A for Round 1 | **Overall: A – Met**For OCEAN Round 1 100% of successful funding through the Community Grants pathway will be managed by local small-medium sized organisations. A proportional approach for Partnership Grants will be implemented for Round 2. |
| 1. Proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries
 | - | 90% | 0% | **Overall: B - Missed**Due to the forementioned delays in launching the first call for proposals successful projects have not yet been selected. We therefore cannot confirm the proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries but are on track to meet our 90% target. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Output Title**  | Organisations and coastal communities in ODA eligible countries have access to guidance, training and support to build their capacity to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges |
| Output number:  | 2 | Output Score:  | **A+** |
| Impact weighting (%):  | 40 | Weighting revised since last AR?  | N/A |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Achieved** | **On track?** |
| 2.1 | Applicants and grantees use OCEAN training and guidance to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects1. Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training
 | 0 | 350 | 1837 | **Overall:A+ - Outputs moderately exceeded expectations.**22 training and information events were held in total with 1837 applicants from 1119 organisations covering 106 countries. |
| 1. Number of applicants and grantees using OCEAN guidance
 | 0 | 350 | 6863 individual downloads | **Overall: A – Met** |
| 2.2 | Applicants and Grantees report that OCEAN training and guidance was relevant and useful - proportion reporting that training and support is relevant and useful1. Proportion reporting that OCEAN training is relevant and useful
 | - | 75% | 94% | **Overall: A+ - Outputs moderately exceeded expectations.**Based on applicant feedback surveys 94% of respondents reported that the OCEAN training is relevant and useful. |
| 1. Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful
 | - | 75% | 98% | **Overall: A+** **- Outputs moderately exceeded expectations.**Based on applicant feedback surveys 98% of respondents reported that the OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful. |
| 2.3 | Proportion of OCEAN projects that provide guidance, training and/or support services to communities | - | N/A | N/A | No data until project commencement (November 2024 onwards). |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Output Title**  | Networks, partnerships and learning processes are established, supporting knowledge and evidence exchange to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges |
| Output number:  | 3 | Output Score:  | **A** |
| Impact weighting (%):  | 40 | Weighting revised since last AR?  | N/A |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Achieved** | **On track?** |
| 3.1 | Applicants and grantees use and engage on the OCEAN Learning and Networking Platform to get peer support, and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN | 0 | 55 | 55 | **Overall: A – Met**OCEAN has been endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade and the OCEAN Grants Community group has been established on the UN Ocean Decade Network with 55 members to date. This network will continue to be built with a focus on creating a community with dedicated learning sessions for OCEAN grantees. |
| 3.2 | Processes are established to share OCEAN evidence and learnings with other existing Challenge Funds and Blue Planet Fund programmes | 0 | Processes: 6Evidence Pieces: 1 | Processes: 6Evidence pieces: 3 | **Overall: A - Met**7 knowledge sharing processes have been established to date and 3 evidence pieces produced. |
| 3.3 | OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products related to marine environment and poverty reduction | - | N/A | N/A | No data until after project commencement (November 2024 onwards). |

**C1. Briefly describe the output’s activities and provide supporting narrative for the score.**

**Output 1: Organisations in ODA eligible countries have access to funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at a local-level**

Due to unforeseen delays in the approval of the OCEAN Business Case by Defra Ministers and HMT there was an eight-week delay to awarding the GA contract. This resulted in a delay to launching the first call for proposals and subsequent award of projects, meaning that at the time of drafting this Annual Review, successful projects have not been awarded and no funding has been disbursed to grantees.

We received a high level of interest for our first call for proposals with 694 applications received for projects in over 100 countries. We are on track to award ~£2.7million for this Financial Year in November 2024.

Despite successful projects not yet being awarded we can confirm that for Round 1 100% of the OCEAN Community Grants funding will be managed by local small-medium sized organisations as all projects remaining in the assessment phase meet this requirement. A target for Partnership Grants was not included for Round 1. We are now reviewing our Round 2 guidance to ensure that we have a proportional approach for our Partnership Grants to ensure that there are suitable opportunities for local small-medium sized organisations to manage funding through both our Community and Partnership Grant pathways.

Due to the forementioned delays in launching the first call for proposals successful projects have not yet been selected. We therefore cannot currently confirm the proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries. Based on the data of applicants currently in the assessment phase we are on track for approximately 90% of awarded grants to be led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries. All Community Grants will be led by small-medium sized organisations based in ODA eligible countries. More than 50% of the Stage 2 Partnership Grant applications have their Lead Organisation headquartered in an ODA eligible country.

**Output 2: Organisations and coastal communities in ODA eligible countries have access to guidance, training and support to build their capacity to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges.**

OCEAN delivered 22 training and information sessions to more than 1800 attendees representing more than 1000 organisations across over 100 countries. Sessions included question and answer sessions to ensure that applicants had the support that they needed for their application. Based on applicant feedback surveys 94% of respondents reported that the OCEAN training that they attended was relevant and useful.

OCEAN developed and published five guidance documents to support applicants to develop strong proposals. These included a detailed Guidance Note for Applicants, Flexi-Grant Guidance, Finance Guidance, Partnership Grant Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Guidance and Community Grant MEL Guidance. Based on applicant feedback surveys 98% of respondents reported that they found the guidance relevant and useful to assist with completion of their application.

The online OCEAN helpdesk also provided further support providing fast responses to a variety of queries. Based on applicant feedback surveys 75% of applicants reported that they used the helpdesk, with 90% finding it useful or very useful. From February to June 2024 the Helpdesk team resolved 1446 unique queries.

Capability and capacity building is a selection and scoring criteria utilised by the OCEAN Expert Committee when assessing proposals. We therefore anticipate a high proportion of OCEAN projects will provide guidance, training and/or support to communities once Round 1 projects commence from November 2024.

**Output 3: Networks, partnerships and learning processes are established, supporting knowledge and evidence exchange to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges**

This first year has focused on establishing networks, partnerships and learning processes. In the past year OCEAN has been endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade, the OCEAN Grants Community group has been established on the UN Ocean Decade Network and 55 members have joined to date. There is further work to be done on continuing to build the OCEAN Grants Community Group with a focus on creating a community with dedicated learning sessions for OCEAN grantees and encouraging peer to peer networking.

A number of internal and external learning processes have been established over the past year, including the below in Table 1.

**Table 1: List of internal and external learning processes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Internal** | **External** |
| Communication & Engagement Framework developed that outlines strategy for evidence and learning sharing | Monthly meetings with Biodiversity Challenge Funds team established |
| MEL Framework that outlines strategy for generating evidence developed | Cross-programme learning established between Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) and OCEAN with OCEAN MEL Director & OCEAN Communications and Engagement Manager working across both programmes |
| Learning approach that outlines processes for learning at programme & portfolio level developed | OCEAN MEL team membership of the Blue Planet Fund MEL Steering Group. |
| Internal ‘Recommendations tracker’ created to continuously add feedback/suggestions from the team or from other stakeholders, which is reviewed monthly to decide on what to action or reject | OCEAN Expert Committee Strategy Day established to share evidence and learnings at the end of the application round |
| Monthly Information Management Meetings established to review monthly dashboard data on applications, communications and engagement. | Quarterly meetings with Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate (GCBC) team established |
| Learning and reflections sessions embedded into quarterly meetings and post-application rounds | OCEAN membership of the Conservation Leadership Community of Practice |

This year three evidence pieces have been produced that can be shared with other existing HMG Challenge Funds and Blue Planet Fund programmes. These are:

* Community and Grants Stakeholder Engagement: A review of the enablers and barriers to accessing funds
* Review of Eligibility Criteria at Round 1: Analysis of eligibility, compliance and recommendations
* OCEAN Round 1 Reflections

**C2. Describe any changes to this output during the past year, and any planned changes as a result of this review.**

An exercise was undertaken to update the OCEAN logframe, to bring the outcome and impact indicators in line with the Theory of Change, and with the outputs that were achievable in the first 12 months of the programme. Given the fact that OCEAN projects would not be up and running until after the first year (and the successful grantees would not be confirmed by this stage), a logframe with output indicators focused more on process rather than impact evaluation was more relevant for this Annual Review. The review was led by Defra’s BPF MEL team, and was supported by the OCEAN Policy team and the GA. Changes to the logframe were workshopped in person and online, and discussed with colleagues in Defra’s ODA Hub, before being signed off by the OCEAN SRO. The final version of the logframe was signed off in May 2024. For the next refresh of the logframe, we will ensure that this is signed off at least six months before the next Annual Review, as recommended. This refresh will be supported by the Independent Evaluator (IE), who will offer a new perspective to the suggested indicators for the second year of the programme.

The bullet points below summarise the changes to the outputs, considering these are most relevant for this Annual Review.

**Output 1:**

*Original indicators:*

* 1.1: Proportion of small grants going directly to recipient country-based organisations (%)
* 1.2: Proportion of large grants co-led/managed with country-based organisations (%)
* 1.3: Number of organisations supported by technical assistance
* 1.4: Number of high-quality applications received

*Updated indicators:*

* 1.1: Volume of funding awarded: OCEAN commits £60m in grant funding to organisations working at a local level
* 1.2: Volume of funding managed by local organisations: Local organisations receive OCEAN funds either by directly receiving a grant, or through managing a portion of the budget when partnering with a Lead organisation
	+ a: Proportion of funds committed that are managed by small-medium organisations
	+ b: Proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries

**Output 2:**

*Original indicators:*

* 2.1: Proportion of grants that focus on changing policies, strategies or regulations that impacts on marine issues (disaggregated by small and large grants) (%)
* 2.2: Proportion of grants that directly focus on marine issues that affect marginalised and vulnerable communities (disaggregated by small and large grants) (%)

*Updated indicators:*

* 2.1: Applicants and grantees use OCEAN training and guidance to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects
	+ a: Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training
	+ b: Number of applicants and grantees using OCEAN guidance
* 2.2: Applicants and Grantees report that OCEAN training and guidance was relevant and useful
	+ a: Proportion reporting that training and support is relevant and useful.
	+ b: Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful
* 2.3: Proportion of OCEAN projects that provide guidance, training and/or support services to communities

**Output 3:**

*Original indicators:*

* 3.1: Number of workshops on effective delivery in line with ODA objectives (forecasting and budgets; logframe development; fraud & risk monitoring and assessment)
* 3.2: Number of organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project (disaggregated by local and national) (#)

*Updated indicators:*

* 3.1: Applicants and grantees use and engage on the OCEAN Learning and Networking Platform to get peer support, and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN
* 3.2: Processes are established to share OCEAN evidence and learnings with other existing Challenge Funds and Blue Planet Fund programmes
* 3.3: OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products related to marine environment and poverty reduction

**C3. Progress on recommendations from the previous AR (if completed), lessons learned this year and recommendations for the year ahead**

This is the first Annual Review for OCEAN and no previous recommendations have been made for the programme’s delivery. Key lessons learned and recommendations from year 1 are detailed in section A3. These lessons are summarised by the output which they relate to below alongside a progress update below in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of lessons learned and recommendations by output**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson** | **Recommendation** | **Progress Update** |
| **Output 1** |
| Inadequate weighting and clarity of UMIC criteria leads to inconsistent scoring by Expert Committee. | Develop clearer UMIC guidance for Expert Committee ahead of Round 2.  | Revised guidance is currently being drafted ahead of the launch of the second calls for proposals. |
| Insufficient Expert Committee resource due to large number of OCEAN applications. | Increase number of Expert Committee members particularly those with international development expertise ahead of second call for proposals.  | The recruitment process is currently underway for the addition of at least five new Expert Committee members. |
| Limited in-country/regional engagement undertaken due to constrained timelines. | Enhance level of in-country/regional engagement with targeted engagement in Western Africa and SIDS ahead of and during Round 2. | A Round 2 engagement plan is currently being created including a number of in-country/regional targeted workshops.  |
| **Output 2** |
| Common mistakes made by applicants due to complexity of OCEAN guidance. | Publish short-form guidance to make clear essential eligibility and application requirements ahead of Round 2. | Short-form guidance has been drafted and is currently being cleared by key stakeholders. |
| Lack of clear messaging to FCDO colleagues regarding their role and desired involvement in OCEAN. | Further development of OCEAN-FCDO engagement strategy ahead of Round 2. | The OCEAN-FCDO engagement strategy has been revised and shared with FCDO colleagues. An OCEAN engagement webinar was held with FCDO colleagues in August 2024 to provide further clarity. |
| Need for continued guidance and support to applicants beyond the application stage. | Offer quarterly learning sessions to support grantee capacity development and facilitate networking and peer to peer learning. | Plan for quarterly learning sessions is currently in development. Plan established to further develop the OCEAN Community on the UN Ocean Decade Network to facilitate networking and peer to peer learning. |
| **Output 3** |
| Limited additional engagement activities undertaken with growth of the UN Ocean Decade Network put on hold. | Undertake further engagement activities and grow membership and value of OCEAN Community on UN Ocean Decade Network. | Plan established to further develop the OCEAN Community on the UN Ocean Decade Network to facilitate networking and peer to peer learning. |
| Need to standardise reporting requirements to achieve consistent and accurate aggregation of results. | Develop and pilot OCEAN Standard Indicators with first cohort of grantees. | Standard Indicators are currently being finalised and will be piloted from November 2024. |
| **Crosscutting** |
| Need to ensure close strategic links and sharing of lessons learned with Defra’s Challenge Funds and other relevant programmes. | Implement additional meetings and focused workshops to support sharing of lessons-learned and ensure a coherent strategy. Representative from the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to sit on OCEAN Programme Board. | Plans for a focused workshop are currently in development with the Biodiversity Challenge Funds team. Additional regular meetings with key programmes have been established. Biodiversity Challenge Funds representative has agreed to sit on OCEAN Programme Board. |
| OCEAN must ensure that the programme enhances and complements the Blue Planet Fund portfolio and wider Defra ODA portfolio and has wider strategic impact than each of it’s individual projects. | Establish the OCEAN Programme Board who will agree how OCEAN will enhance and complement existing portfolios and ensure strategic impact. | OCEAN Programme Board membership and Terms of Reference agreed and first meeting scheduled for October 2024. |
| Increase ambition of the OCEAN GESI approach for Round 2 and beyond.  | Undertake engagement with experts to refine key documents, explore inclusion of disability and assess feasibility of GESI-focused funding window. Addition of GESI Expert to the GA team. | Engagement with experts is underway with documents and approach scheduled to be finalised by December 2024. GA GESI Expert to be onboarded from November 2024.  |

These lessons and recommendations were identified during brainstorming sessions with key stakeholders and since embedded into the OCEAN delivery plan, MEL strategy, Comms strategy and other key documents. Defra will continue to take action to strengthen OCEAN’s delivery based on key learnings generated through OCEAN’s continued delivery as well other feedback mechanisms such as ICAI findings.

**D: RISK**

**Overview of risk management**

Due to the delays in grant spend and other factors such as the likelihood of managing many small grants across multiple geographical areas the overall risk rating of OCEAN is **high**. However the programme has satisfactorily operated within risk appetite for each category throughout year 1.

Defra and the OCEAN GA NIRAS held monthly risk register and fraud assessment review meetings and identified and raised new risks and issues through an action log in weekly, fortnightly and monthly operational programme meetings. Any key risks and issues were immediately escalated to the OCEAN SRO and documented through monthly Programme Management Meetings throughout year 1. Defra also ensured OCEAN proactively engaged with FCDO Posts throughout delivery. All identified risks (including fraud) have mitigation measures in place and a named risk owner in the risk register which is reviewed and updated during the monthly risk register and fraud assessment review meeting.

Key risks that were monitored and mitigated by Defra during year 1 are presented in Table 3. Additionally, Defra hold quarterly risk deep dives with FCDO to review the cross-HMG BPF Risk Register ahead of each cross-HMG BPF senior strategic board meeting.

**Table 3: Year 1 Key OCEAN Risks**

| Risk Type | Risk Description | Impact | Probability[[2]](#footnote-3) | Gross Risk | Mitigations | Residual Risk |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Financial | OCEAN might under or overspend in a given financial year due to difficultly in accurately forecasting when projects will need to receive funding. Could result in unexpected under/overspend in Defra’s ODA budget for a given financial year. | Medium | High | High | Defra will oversee and manage NIRAS to ensure they continually monitor, and track programme administration & project spend, providing updates monthly. Defra to ensure NIRAS provide expertise to prospective projects during the application stage, and to successful projects once they are in place, to assist them in completing and updating accurate spending forecasts.Defra will manage the programme through its diverse portfolio, balancing any underspend by increasing spend in other programmes that can absorb more funding to undertake additional activities for greater impact, as well as using adaptive programming to identify activities that are working particularly well/poorly and adjust programming accordingly to make sure funding going to the right places, and opportunities for scale up are identified. | Medium |
| Operations | OCEAN does not receive sufficient number of high-quality applications. Due to insufficient promotion of the fund, or factors that make applying to it less appealing, such as an overly complex application process, . This would result in the fund being unable to deliver to the required standards and level of ambition.  | Medium | Medium | Medium | Defra will ensure NIRAS will promote the fund, have knowledge and contacts in the ODA field and will be able to effectively promote the fund to high quality potential applicants. Members of the expert committee and HMG Posts will also be supported and encouraged to promote the fund to organisations that they are aware of and that would align with the BPF’s outcomes.The application process, including the forms and amount of information required, will draw on learning from existing funds, such as the Darwin Initiative, to ensure the process is less time consuming and as streamlined as possible. Defra will establish a process of continual learning, amending aspects of the scheme to encourage more applications and/or higher quality applications in future years.Defra will work closely with BPF regional advisors and HMG Posts to promote programme and explain process to ensure as few barriers to entry as possible. | Low |
| OCEAN Expert Committee does not successfully meet deadlines. Due to a high number of applications significantly increasing the workload for the committee (this has cascading impacts on the Annual Application Round timetable and implementing the process on time). | High | Medium | High | Defra will ensure NIRAS support management of high application number via eligibility and compliance checks process.Defra will ensure NIRAS clearly communicate anticipated workload to the Expert Committee during induction webinars.Defra will ensure NIRAS will maintain frequent communication with the Expert Committee during assessment period to understand progress and highlight any potential issues as early as possible to Defra.Defra will work with NIRAS to reflect on output and performance of the Expert Committee and identify whether further recruitment is required to manage workload at future Rounds.Defra to identify reserve / back-up members to offer surge support where needed from Biodiversity Challenge Funds Expert Committee.Defra to instruct NIRAS to discuss with other committee members to take on additional applications to support other members and review time period for evaluation and determine if it should be extended. | Low |
| The structure of the Community Grants Window results in disproportionate requirements and processes. Due to the level of support required for applications at either end of the window's budget limits (e.g., £10k vs £250k). | high | Medium | High | Defra will ensure application, compliance and reporting processes are streamlined and appropriate for the size of the organisation / project being funded. Defra to ensure NIRAS provide different processes for above and below £100k threshold. Defra to review outcome of Round 1 and instruct NIRAS to further develop application processes and fund design ahead of Round 2. | Low |
| OCEAN encounters delays or programme failure due to Defra recruitment freeze; key staff departures and potential impacts of wider team pressures across BPF fund. | Medium | High | High | Defra to ensure that any departing staff prepare relevant handover documents to remaining staff to cover duties. Defra to schedule meetings with departing staff to explain the finer details of any duties being handed over. Organise regular weekly catch up sessions so team can inform and give greater detail of their wider duties, sharing knowledge. Where possible, have multiple team colleagues assist on workstreams in order to build working knowledge of different aspects of the programme. | Low |
| Strategic | The delivery model will be challenging to deliver. Due to lack of staff overseas which might result in a lack of capacity for engaging with every eligible country with projects;  | High | Medium | High | Four regional advisors are recruited in-country by the BPF to provide a critical role in galvanising delivery, establishing and utilising their regional networks to coordinate programming and push for BPF objectives.Defra to ensure NIRAS have a strategic engagement framework in place to detail approach to ensuring global engagement with the programme. In country coverage to be supported through NIRAS Global offices and other connected networks. There is a challenge to have this in every country, but NRIAS and Defra to develop a streamlined process for implementing in-country activities through working with FCDO Post and national Governments.System will be established to monitor 5-10% of projects each year via an in-country visit, rather than a requirement to visit all projects. NIRAS to communicate upfront to projects that they will be potentially subject to localised monitoring from Defra, NIRAS and external Independent Evaluator. | Medium |
| Safeguarding | Safeguarding issues arise that necessitate a pause, delay or cancellation of the programme. Due to programme/partner staff doing harm or not reporting incidences of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment or bullying may occur, causing irreparable harm and misalignment with the principles that underpin the programme. This may also result in damage to the UK’s reputation. | High | Medium | High | Defra will instruct NIRAS to ensure close oversight and due diligence of activities across portfolio will be undertaken. Delivery partners must have a robust safeguarding policy in place or be willing to develop one as part of project award agreement including systems to enable reporting and support whistle-blowers. Defra, will instruct NIRAS to ensure safeguarding workshops, training, support and advice are provided to applicants and delivery partners.  | Medium |
| Reputational | The reputation of Defra/HMG is brought into disrepute and the programme causes harm. Due to Insufficient due diligence checks, monitoring and reporting, resulting in interventions of local delivery partners going wrong and remaining undetected, causing harm, or delivery partners act in a way which might result in reputational harm to HMG.  | High | Medium | High | Defra will ensure all delivery partners are competitively selected against rigorous due diligence technical and financial criteria. Expert Committee will undertake independent assessments to ensure projects meet delivery, quality and strategic objectives. Defra will seek input from HMG Posts to review project applications in their host country that have been shortlisted and recommended for funding by Expert Committee. Defra's OCEAN Programme Board will review and make final decision for funding approvals based on evidence provided by expert committee and HMG Post. 4)NIRAS will conduct reporting frameworks, due diligence and spot checks. | Low |
| Project’s funds become misappropriated and used in other ways. Due to insufficient due diligence checks allowing a higher possibility of fraudulent applications which might result in reputation damage to HMG/Defra and less funding available for genuine projects. | Medium | Medium | Medium | Defra will manage and mitigate financial risk associated with the delivery partners, through enhanced due diligence, spot checks, reporting frameworks, audits and checks conducted prior to grant instalments being transferred.A full fraud risk assessment has been completed, with input from the Defra Counter Fraud Team, to put in place a number of specific actions and processes to reduce the chance of fraud taking place, and the funds being misappropriated.Funding will be disbursed in stages via NIRAS, which will allow monitoring and the ability to halt expenditure if necessary, reducing the potential for funds to be misused. | Medium |

**Detection of fraudulent applications: *Medium.*** During due diligence checks carried out by the GA for sifted Round 1 applications, two were found to be fraudulent. A number of concerns were identified regarding project application details and legitimacy of the lead organisation. These projects were rejected.

**GESI*: Medium/Low*.** OCEAN’s ambition and commitment is to embed GESI across all elements of the programme. OCEAN has committed to being at minimum GESI sensitive with ambition to be GESI transformative. OCEAN has included GESI in its theory of change and logframe to ensure accountability and applicants are required to consider GESI in their applications with support available through webinars, workshops and the Helpdesk. GESI Guidance is also included in the Guidance Note to Applicants and MEL Guidance. Applicants are strongly encouraged to add GESI indicators in their logframes and if successful are required to create GESI Action Plans.

A deep dive into GESI within Defra’s Biodiversity Challenge Funds was recently conducted to collect and synthesise evidence and lessons of incorporating GESI. Given the similarities in programmes and shared challenges that OCEAN is anticipated to encounter, this Deep Dive has been used to inform the further development of the OCEAN GESI Action Plan. A detailed GESI Analysis of OCEAN will be conducted after the first Annual Application Round in October 2024 to further inform this approach, understand the different types of organisations applying, the context of the different applications received, baseline understanding of GESI amongst applicants, and any key areas of capacity development. This will support our upcoming work on increasing OCEAN GESI ambition and assessing the feasibility of a GESI-focused funding round.

**Safeguarding: *Medium***. Defra and NIRAS have a clear commitment to preventing SEAH and other safeguarding risks and in June 2024 completed a self-assessment on SEAH safeguarding risk. NIRAS is committed to improving safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) within all projects and will be undergoing organisational improvements based on the CAPSEAH Minimum Actions and practical guidance within [the Common Approach to PSEAH (CAPSEAH).](https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/webinars/capseah-common-approach-protection-sexual-exploitation-sexual-abuse-and-sexual-harassment) OCEAN has embedded a dedicated Safeguarding Manager in the team to provide guidance and support to applicants and grantees when required. To embed safeguarding in OCEAN projects all lead applicants are required to submit their organisation’s Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies which will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Manager. Workshops, training and support will be provided to Lead Organisations as part of the due diligence process to ensure that Lead Organisations can proactively monitor safeguarding processes and procedures in downstream partner organisations. All successful projects will be required to provide a risk self-assessment of SEAH which will be reviewed by the NIRAS Safeguarding Manager. Any SEAH risk self-assessments that score low will be immediately flagged and escalated to Defra and raised directly with lead applicants, with all project delivery paused until an action plan is established with necessary improvements in place.

**E: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:** **DELIVERY, COMMERCIAL & FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

**Delivery:**

General programme management is led by Defra’s designated OCEAN team, with the majority of operational tasks contracted to an external GA. The OCEAN team oversee procurement exercises, manage the contracts with the GA and independent evaluator, deliver oversight of the programme, and oversee programme-level financial and risk management, including safeguarding. The Defra team have weekly, fortnightly and monthly check-ins and operational delivery management meetings with the GA. These meetings are to provide regular programme updates, discuss any developments, and to quickly identify and escalate risks and issues where needed. In addition to these, weekly meetings are held for external communications and stakeholder engagement, together with separate monthly meetings on GESI, safeguarding, risk and fraud respectively. A monthly meeting is also held between the OCEAN and Biodiversity Challenge Funds teams to ensure shared learnings.

**Paris Agreement:**

The programme has an explicit focus on environmental protection that aligns with the Paris Agreement. The programme does not go against the fossil fuel policy, nor does it go against partner countries own climate plans, indeed there are opportunities to support these. A rapid climate and environmental risk screening assessment was completed and identified that the risk to this programme and its objectives is currently moderate for climate factors and low for environmental factors. This moderate climate score is due to the current uncertainty around which projects will be successful and their geographic and thematic focuses. An updated assessment will be completed within 6 months following the completion of the first competition round.

**Commercial:**

Ahead of year 1 Defra undertook a competitive tender procurement process to secure an external GA. Following all commercial governance procedures and Defra investment committee approvals, a multiyear contract (based on standard Defra Terms and Conditions) was awarded on the 4th of September 2023 to NIRAS and is available at [ODA BPF OCEAN Grants Programme (Grant Administrator) - Find a Tender (find-tender.service.gov.uk)](https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/029020-2023).

Defra are also currently carrying out a new commercial tender process to secure an Independent Evaluator (IE) for OCEAN through a multiyear contract with the aim to have in place before end of September 2024. The IE will work closely with NIRAS through development of an agreed MOU and will build upon current Defra and NIRAS programme monitoring and learning cycles.

A Performance Management Framework (PMF), is used to monitor, measure, and control the GA’s performance of contract responsibilities. Current PMF Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) monitor the GA’s service levels for eight weighted contracted workstreams as outlined below with a narrative of their status:

**Workstream 1 Core Design & Development of the Fund (20% weighting).** KPI 1: Fund processes and tools are delivered in full and on time, enabling the successful launch of OCEAN funding rounds and continued development and improvement of the Fund. *(Meeting expectations)*

* Website, guidance, application forms and online portal and Help Desk support delivered in full to agreed timelines affording successful launch of round 1.
* Recommendations Tracker set up, managed, monitored and reviewed on monthly basis, with recommendations prioritised by Defra and NIRAS team and actioned by NIRAS.

**Workstream 2: Supporting Projects and Applications (15% weighting).** KPI 2: High Delivery Partner performance and strong applications are enabled by adaptive and tailored support provided by the GA. *(Meeting expectations)*

* Help Desk established to support applicants throughout the fund cycle with an average response time of less than 1 working day and scoring 90% applicant feedback satisfaction.
* A total of 22 webinars and workshops were delivered, to share information on OCEAN, how to apply, provide training on project design and proposal development, and provided targeted support to solve problems during the application process.
* Detailed feedback and recommendations letters provided to all 694 applicants, regardless of outcome, to support and improve current and future applications for funding.

**Workstream 3: Annual Applicant Rounds: The Fund Cycle (15% weighting).** KPI 3:GAs implement effective administration and management of the annual application round to support target applicants to submit applications. *(Meeting expectations)*

* Effectively completed to time for Round 1 with Round 2 launch on track for January 2025.

**Workstream 4: The Expert Committee (10% weighting).** KPI 4: The Expert Committee is efficiently supported to ensure high quality application evaluation and approvals. *(Meeting expectations)*

* The Expert Committee have been provided with clear sift & evaluation documents, guidance, and instruction on time to key delivery dates, requiring no substantive support to access, evaluate and return scored applications on time.

**Workstream 5: Day to Day Project Management (10% weighting).** KPI 5:Management of projects, and their finances, are delivered to a high standard. *(Due to start in October 2024)*

**Workstream 6: New and Live Projects (10% weighting).** KPI 6: The Fund is managed in an agile and adaptive way, responding to risks and opportunities to strengthen performance. *(Due to start in October 2024)*

**Workstream 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) (10% weighting).** KPI 7:The performance of projects and the Fund is strengthened by adapting and responding to recommendations arising from feedback, projects and annual reviews. *(Meeting expectations)*

* Integrated learning and reflection sessions into regular meetings (monthly information meetings, quarterly meetings), and additional key points in the Fund cycle.
* Feedback and reflections recorded in Recommendations Tracker, which is reviewed in a monthly basis to agree upon what adjustments to action based on what we have learned.
* Development and implementation of PowerBI data platform to strengthen fund performance & MEL.

**Workstream 8: Communications and Promotion of the Fund (10% weighting).** KPI 8**:** International awareness and understanding of the fund is strengthened, and the opportunity to apply reaches new prospective Applicants. *(Meeting expectations)*

* Strong upward trend in website statistics and engagement with the fund on social media platforms (unique and returning visitors, time spent, downloads, country of origin, subscriptions), representing broad readership (geographic and sectoral). With >80% upward trend in engagement during funding rounds.
* At least 70% growth in the engagement and number of high-quality fund applications being submitted because of dedicated engagement / promotion activities (e.g., Indonesia Workshop).

The PMF is now being reviewed by Defra and NIRAS to ensure KPIs are streamlined to align with new commercial monitoring processes and GA capabilities through a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) service level rating assessment. Progress will be reported by NIRAS and monitored by Defra monthly.

**Financial performance:** Defra and NIRAS worked closely during year 1 to monitor programme spend and align with original forecasted budgets. Fixed costs for grant administration have progressed as planned with exception of a Contract Change Note (CCN) put in place to secure additional resourcing of £48,626 for a new Fund Engagement Manager to lead on engagement activities associated, with the application and grant cycles, raise awareness of the fund through direct engagement with different stakeholder groups including applicants, networks and FCDO Posts and via other networks and processes. Variable costs have been closely managed and streamlined particularly around assessment of applications due to the volume of applications received.

**E2. Value for Money (VfM) assessment**

***E.2.1 Overview of Cost-Effectiveness***

OCEAN has made significant efforts to ensure VfM is embedded into its strategy and delivery. The programme’s design itself is based on a competitive funding model which should lead to the best and most relevant projects being awarded funds. The GA has developed a VfM strategy to ensure appropriate measures are in place throughout the lifetime of the programme. The OCEAN risk register also includes VfM related risks (such as exchange rate risks, inflation and transaction costs), which makes sure that mitigations can be put in place to avoid risks to VfM. The GA will perform VfM assessments of grant applications through a VfM scorecard, and due diligence checks. Grantees are then held accountable for the finances they receive through Annual Reports and spot audits, and payments to grantees are linked to progress. These steps are positive at this early stage, and the activities and mitigations discussed should be continued into future years to ensure VfM across the life of the programme.

OCEAN is bringing on board an IE through the Lot 6 MEL Call-off contract. The IE will greatly improve the programme’s ability to test and understand VfM, through dedicated VfM assessments in Mid-Term and Final Evaluations. Other IE outputs will also help improve the VfM achieved across the programme, as learnings drive improvements in delivery from the Authority and GA, and also help to make projects more effective. Learning outputs will include evidence reviews, deep dives, case studies and six-monthly/annual learning events where the programme brings grantees and partners together. Learning outputs and evaluations will include recommendations, which can be implemented across the programme to deliver improvements, helping to strengthen the VfM achieved.

Given that this Annual Review concerns the first 12 months of the OCEAN programme and grantee projects are not up and running, we are unable to test the VfM delivered through programme outcomes and impacts, and therefore the monetary benefits achieved. The VfM assessment below will focus on the progress made towards the other 4 Es (Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity), and the plans that are in place to ensure and monitor VfM in future years. The assessment concludes with key recommendations for the next 12 months, to continue to ensure OCEAN delivers strong VfM. As seen above, given the performance against target indicators in the first year, we can be confident that OCEAN is on track to achieve the expected VfM, if the programme builds on the strong foundations established to date.

***E.2.2 Business Case VfM***

A Value for Money assessment was undertaken for the OCEAN Full Business Case in 2023. A range of Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) was developed, with a central estimate of 2.0. This means that we expect to see monetary benefits of £119m, with a partial Net Present Value (NPV) of £59m when accounting for the £60m programme cost. The figures were derived by mapping BCRs from a selection of sample projects across four key themes coinciding with the four Defra-led BPF priority outcomes – marine pollution, MPAs, IUU fishing, and large-scale sustainable fisheries. The methodology also included a split of investment between Community and Partnership Grants, to more accurately reflect the scalability of results for these two different sizes of project.

Monetised benefits included:

* **Marine environmental benefits**, ranging from the damage avoided from preventing a tonne of plastic waste entering the ocean (Marine Pollution outcome) to the ecosystem service benefits of protecting mangroves and seagrasses (MPA outcome)
* **CO2e emissions savings benefits**, largely from the emissions avoided from changing waste disposal methods (Marine Pollution outcome) and emissions avoided and sequestered from protecting and restoring blue carbon ecosystems (MPA outcome)
* **Economic benefits** **(partial)**, including partial revenue, tax and income benefits associated with interventions, and multiplier effects

Unmonetised benefits included:

* Wider environmental benefits
* Social and wellbeing benefits
* Human health impacts
* Capacity building benefits

At this early stage of the programme, we are unable to test these modelling assumptions and estimate the actual monetary benefits achieved. However, several elements of the MEL strategy will allow us to do this in future years, when outcome and impact data at programme-level is available. We estimate that this will take up to two further years to bring in enough high-quality data to undertake a full VfM assessment using this modelling approach. Section E.2.4 “Recommendations” contains reference to the plans that will be actioned to ensure OCEAN can bring in the necessary data in future years.

***E.2.3 Assessment of the 5 Es***

The assessment of the 5Es below goes into narrative detail around each key aspect of VfM. Progress towards delivering against the 5 Es at this early stage of the programme is summarised under each section. Cost-effectiveness was covered at the start of this VfM section, so the narrative below focuses on the remaining 4 Es – Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity.

**Economy**

Economy considers whether the inputs required for a project are being procured at the best price. The key cost drivers in the first 12 months of the programme include the cost of Grant Administration, and the funding given to successful Community and Partnership applicants. The global nature of the fund coupled with a commitment to reach stakeholders who have not typically applied for this kind of funding requires extensive outreach & engagement, and the cost increases with the number of applications received, particularly when assessment in different languages is required.

* Defra were able to procure the GA economically, due to the competitive nature of the procurement process, and the selection of an experienced GA that can create cost efficiencies from its experience managing other funds including Defra’s Biodiversity Challenge Funds.
* The GA were able to keep costs low through a number of mechanisms at different stages of the programme inception:
	+ **Development and design phase:** The OCEAN GA continues to consult with the GA of Biodiversity Challenge Funds to adopt cost-saving measures that have worked in their programme; the GA researched and selected tools and platforms with value for money as a criteria, using tools that met requirements that had lower pricing than competitors; the GA leveraged global NIRAS offices, and global networks to promote and raise awareness of OCEAN
	+ **Application phase:** Developed a two-stage process to reduce time and cost of administration for high volumes of applications; an Eligibility & Compliance process was implemented to reduce the cost of OCEAN Expert Committee who are compensated per application assessed; To reduce cost of compiling feedback letters, technical feedback letters were provided only to those that pass checks
	+ **Ongoing measures:** use of AI translation tools (which are quality assured); Use of social media publishing platform to more efficiently manage social outreach channels
* Several processes were in place to ensure grant funding reaches the most reliable and impactful projects including webinars and guidance notes for applicants. These processes encourage applicants to consider co-financing, demonstrate how their project will deliver VfM, and provide evidence that their approach is viable and best practice
* The GA also put in place transparent eligibility and selection criteria which are available on the OCEAN website
* For Round 2, the Expert Committee will integrate VfM scoring in their selection process to further strengthen the consideration for project VfM at the application stage
* There are also mechanisms in place to ensure grantees are held accountable for VfM once up and running, including a Quarterly Claims process where grantees must provide actuals and forecasts for each quarter, change request processes where budget amendments must be pre-approved, spot audits of grantees and monitoring visits, and VfM reporting in the Annual Report
* However, while a two-stage process reduces the costs associated with the initial assessment stage, it does add additional costing to the process as applications are reviewed twice by the Expert Committee. With the high number of applications received for Community Grants, this is seen as a vital step, but forecasted costings justifies that a one stage process is likely the most cost-effective approach for Partnership Grants

**Efficiency**

Efficiency relates to how inputs can be turned into desired outputs. Given the early stage of the programme, this section focuses on the outputs produced by the GA during the pre-application and application stages, including guidance, webinars and feedback, and the costs involved in doing so.

* Due to the experience of the GA and the ways of working established with Defra, OCEAN was able to rapidly mobilise its teams and set up all systems, processes, guidance and outreach to launch its first application round as early as possible, so that funds will be disbursed early in year 2 (with projects starting in Oct 2024). For example:
	+ OCEAN developed and published its Guidance Note for Applicants, Finance Guidance and Flexi-Grant Guidance in February 2024, in time for the Fund Launch
	+ Partnership MEL Guidance was developed and published in time for first call for proposals, Community Grants MEL overview was published for Stage 1 applicants, and the Community Grants MEL Guidance and templates were updated in time for the opening of Stage 2 applications which have more emphasis on MEL
	+ In the first four months OCEAN drafted its first MEL Framework and Communications and Engagement Framework which outlined its key principles and strategies for networking, learning and knowledge exchange
	+ Between February and July 2024, OCEAN delivered 22 training and information sessions to more than 1,800 attendees representing more than 1,000 organisations across over 100 countries
* The GA has produced a table showing the estimated cost per applicant. Costs increase as applications moved through the process as a result of the additional assessment processes required. Conducting eligibility checks on applications ensures that non-compliant or ineligible applications are removed from the process before entailing the further costs associated with the Stage 1 assessments. For future Annual Reviews, we will seek to compare the costs per applicant with other grant programmes, such as Darwin.

**Table 4: OCEAN application costs for Stage 1 and Stage 2.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PG Cost per App** | **No. Apps** | **PG Total Cost** | **CG Cost per App** | **No. Apps** | **CG Total Cost** |
|  Stage 1. Ineligible  | £112.98 | 69 | £7,795.60 | £93.23 | 222 | £20,696.66 |
|  Stage 1  | £500.72 | 93 | £46,567.41 | £211.02 | 206 | £43,469.89 |
|  Stage 2. Ineligible  |  |  |  | £354.55 | 23 | £8,154.54 |
|  Stage 2  | £1,070.28 | 6 | £6,421.68 | £762.88 | 37 | £28,226.51 |
|  Awarded  | £1,296.27 | 3 | £3,888.81 | £1,318.87 | 35 | £46,160.40 |
|  **Total**  | **£378.21** | **171** | **£64,673.50** | **£280.51** | **523** | **£146,707.99** |

* The GA helped ensure efficiency of spend in their activities through:
	+ Prioritising early outreach and communications to solicit enough applications received in first round, ensuring administrative resources would be fully utilised in the first year
	+ Mobilising the team early, ensuring the team structure has a good balance of required skills by assigning roles and responsibilities to avoid duplication of effort, with team members specialising in areas where they have most experience
	+ Consulting Defra Policy team on draft deliverables to ensure a good understanding of requirements before submission to avoid multiple revisions and any associated delays
* Key dates such as Fund Launch Date, assessment periods and notification of outcomes to applicants have all been met. The GA was able to adhere to planned budgets and timelines, including meeting target milestones, thanks to regular reviews of the Workplan with the Policy Team during the initial development and design stage, and regular communication to adapt and update schedules and timelines as needed. Key deliverables completed include:
	+ Set up of key processes (Grant Management Manual, Fund Cycle Templates, Risk Register), tools & systems (Website, Social Media, Flexi-grant, Helpdesk, PowerBI), and strategies (Engagement Framework, MEL Framework, Learning approach, OCEAN Grants Community strategy, OCEAN GESI Action Plan)
	+ Soft launch of website for December 2024 announcement at COP28
	+ Onboarding & management of OCEAN Expert Committee
	+ OCEAN Launch and opening of Stage 1 and Stage 2 application windows
	+ Compiling and delivering Feedback letters to applicants

**Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to the ability of funding to deliver the selection of outputs most likely to result in the desired outcomes (and impacts). The focus of this section is on how effectively OCEAN delivered on its target outputs in the first year, and how the programme has put in place mechanisms to ensure effective delivery against targeted outcomes and impacts from the Theory of Change once projects are up and running.

* OCEAN has ensured that grant funding should go to the most relevant and appropriate applicants, by:
	+ Tailoring Eligibility & Selection criteria to the two different grant pathways, with different annual income requirements
	+ Independent OCEAN Expert committee established to assess the suitability of organisations to lead projects
	+ The importance of focusing on the marine environment and poverty reduction, and the BPF outcomes underpinning these areas were communicated to applicants in webinars. Applicants were then asked to select which BPF outcomes are relevant to their project
	+ Questions are asked of applicants about expected outcomes and impact, and ToCs and logframes provided at application stage to ensure expected contribution to strategic outcomes can be assessed
* OCEAN will then continue to ensure that projects remain focused on delivering their intended outcomes, and will hold those projects accountable to this, through:
	+ A detailed MEL strategy including mandatory MEL requirements for projects, such as the Half-Year and Annual Reports, logframe reporting, and assessment against the Pathways to Change/ToCs. This will be aligned with further guidance and webinars for grantees to help them deliver effectively against the MEL strategy – most notably through quarterly learning sessions for grantees
	+ In-country monitoring visits to assess project performance and also share learnings and advice for making improvements
	+ A set of Standard Indicators are being developed, with projects expected to report on at least one indicator for Poverty, Environment, and GESI
* An IE is being onboarded to provide further insight into the OCEAN programme as a whole, and for individual projects where possible. The IE was procured through the Lot 6 MEL contract process and has significant experience in this field. The main objectives of the independent evaluation are to understand the success of the OCEAN Grant Programme’s approach, and to share learnings about this across OCEAN and with other relevant ODA programmes. The IE will do this through evidence reviews, deep dives, case studies and field visits, which will all feed into several formal reports including an Inception Report, a Mid-Term Evaluation and a Final Evaluation. The IE will also help to address a number of key questions to assess the VfM of OCEAN.
* Learning is a key aspect of OCEAN, as this will help grantees, the GA, the Authority, and other ODA programmes learn from programme experience and implement recommendations. This is therefore essential for ensuring the effectiveness of OCEAN delivery against targets. Learning processes that have been developed include:
	+ A Learning Strategy is being formalised, based on eight key aspects of OCEAN learning.
	+ The Learning and Networking Platform for grantees has been established. This is a space for grantees to ask for advice from their peers, and to discuss emerging issues. The GA will then be able to respond to these issues as part of the adaptive learning strategy
	+ Meetings with other Defra Challenge Funds including the Biodiversity Challenge Fund and the Biodiverse Landscapes Fund have been established to share learnings across programmes and improve Defra ODA performance as a whole. Representatives from the GA also attend the BPF MEL Steering Group meetings, and have held discussions with the MEL team from the Global Fund for Coral Reefs to learn more about their MEL strategy including standard indicators

**Equity**

Equity assesses the degree to which the results of the intervention – both positive and negative – are equitably distributed, with consideration of different vulnerable groups in the population such as women and girls, those whose livelihoods are most at risk, and the young and elderly. Achieving fair and equitable results is a key goal for OCEAN, particularly considering the fact that the programme is trying to reach smaller community-level organisations who may not have had access to project funding in the past. OCEAN has a strong focus on GESI which has been embedded across the programme as far as possible.

* OCEAN has embedded GESI throughout its project design in a number of ways. At programme and application-levels, these include:
	+ **Programme-level**: OCEAN has developed a GESI Action Plan, and has committed to being at minimum GESI sensitive, but has an ambition to be GESI transformative. OCEAN has included GESI in its theory of change, and logframe to ensure further accountability. GA is embedding GESI into all key processes and stages in the OCEAN application and project cycle. The core OCEAN team attended a learning session on GESI by Defra’s Lead Social Development Advisor for ODA.
	+ **Applications**: All application webinars & workshops have provided information on the importance of promoting GESI, and applicants are required to consider GESI in their applications (a GESI question to promote applicants to analyse GESI context) and logframes (GESI disaggregated indicators). The OCEAN Expert Committee assess and score applications on their level of GESI awareness. GA has responded to applicants on GESI in webinars & Helpdesk. GESI guidance is included in our Guidance Note to Applicants and MEL Guidance. Applicants are strongly encouraged to add GESI indicators in their logframes and plan to collect GESI disaggregated data in their logframes. Grantees will also be required to create GESI action plans in first months of the project, and will be given training on best practices for this.
* To help ensure equitable outcomes, OCEAN actively encourages applicants and grantees to design and deliver projects in consultation and collaboration with target communities, and to analyse and monitor the needs of different groups via their GESI Action Plans.
* In order to maximise OCEAN’s poverty reduction impact the OCEAN criteria will be updated ahead of Round 2 to enhance the robustness of assessment for projects based in UMICs. Poverty assessment criteria will also be enhanced with additional guidance for applicants produced.

***E.2.4 Recommendations***

Considering the early stage of the programme, the picture for VfM is not complete. We will need to ensure processes are in place to continue to monitor VfM effectively in the next 12 months, particularly as grantees are brought on board and projects start. Key recommendations for these next 12 months include:

* **Finalise and integrate the OCEAN VfM Strategy**. The OCEAN VfM Strategy should be completed in the coming weeks, and tested with the Independent Evaluator before integrating into grantee delivery. This includes the plan to integrate VfM scoring into the Expert Committee’s process, which will be important for ensuring selected projects are a reliable use of OCEAN funding.
* **Finalise and integrate the OCEAN Standard Indicators Framework**. Similarly, the Standard Indicators Framework should be finalised and tested, before sharing our expectations for reporting with grantees. This will help us stay on top of questions concerning effectiveness and will provide a more complete picture of the monetary benefits being achieved.
* **Finalise and integrate the OCEAN Learning Strategy**. This will help formalise the key learning processes, making sure that all OCEAN outputs are effectively used to deliver improvements across the programme and more widely. It will also help grantees learn about effective methods and approaches, improving performance in future periods and making the achievement of target outcomes and impacts more likely. As with the VfM Strategy and Standard Indicators, this will need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant and useful.
* **Ensure new grantees meet MEL requirements**. As the first projects commence, it is essential that OCEAN reiterates the expectations around MEL (including the logframe reporting, Half-Year and Annual Reports), to ensure projects are able to collect and report strong and reliable data. This will allow us to test for Value for Money in future periods, as we assess how grantees have performed against logframe targets, including monetisable outcomes and impacts.

**ANNEXES**

**Annex A: OCEAN Theory of Change**



**Annex B: OCEAN Logframe**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PROJECT TITLE** | **Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature fund** |
| **IMPACT** | **Impact Indicator 1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| OCEAN supports vulnerable coastal communities, including marginalised groups, to have improved poverty and socio-economic outcomes and to be more resilient to climate change through building more sustainable relationships with their marine environments | **BPF KPI 6:** Area of marine ecosystems protected, enhanced or under sustainable management practices due to OCEAN finance (ha) | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Hectares of marine ecosystem under sustainable management. **Method:** BPF KPI 6 - Area of marine ecosystems protected, enhanced or under sustainable management practices (disaggregated between MPAs and area under sustainable management; sustainable management theme - management, restoration or protection; ecosystem type; country/region). Method based on **ICF KPI 17**. **Data and source**: This will be collated from end of project reports from a standard indicator that projects will be required to collect if suitable for their intervention. |
| **Impact Indicator 2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Equitable and inclusive improved climate outcomes as a result of OCEAN projects[**BPF KPI 2.1:** Number of people with improved climate outcomes due to BPF finance (#)] | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Number of people with improved climate adaptation/resilience outcomes. **Method:** BPF KPI 2.1 - Number of people with improved outcomes - climate adaptation and climate resilience (ICF KPIs 1 and 4 - caution on double counting). **Disaggregation:** Sector; Gender and geography and if able disability; age; indigenous groups. **Data and source:** This will be collated from end of project reports from a standard indicator that projects will be required to collect if suitable for their intervention. |
| **Impact Indicator 3** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Equitable and inclusive improvements in multidimensional poverty outcomes. [**BPF KPI 2.2:** Number of people with improved poverty and socio-economic outcomes due to BPF finance (#)] | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Number of people with improved poverty/socio-economic outcomes. **Method:** BPF KPI 2.2 - Number of people with improved outcomes - poverty reduction. **Disaggregation:** Income (DI KPI); Food security (DI KPI); Health and wellbeing; Sector; Gender and geography and if able disability; age; indigenous groups. **Data and source:** This will be collated from end of project reports from a standard indicator that projects will be required to collect if suitable for their intervention. |
| **Impact Indicator 4** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| **ICF KPI 15:** Extent to which OCEAN is likely to have a transformational impact (score) | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Score 1-5 based on ICF KPI 15 criteria. **ICF KPI 15.** Extent to which ICF intervention is likely to lead to Transformational Change. Can develop alongside Darwin impact indicator**. Highlight GESI element** |
|  |
| **OUTCOME** | **Outcome Indicator 1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Local communities and stakeholders manage marine resources sustainably, effectively, and inclusively, and using evidence and best practices to reduce multi-dimensional poverty, and improve marine environment and climate outcomes | Number of poverty and/or marine environment policies and strategies implemented by OCEAN projects | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Number of policies and strategies implemented by OCEAN projects. **Disaggregation:** Unit (# Policies/strategies implemented by OCEAN projects); Type of policy or strategy; Level of policy or strategy (Local / regional / national / international); Organisation type and size |
| **Outcome Indicator 2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Number of local stakeholders trained / supported in marine environmental protection or poverty reduction | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Number of local stakeholders trained / supported. **Method:** From GFCR 5.4: "Number of local practitioners trained / supported in habitat conservation, monitoring, management or restoration (e.g. community rangers)". **Disaggregation:** OCEAN impact (directly vs indirectly impacted by OCEAN); Sector or theme of training/support; Type of training/support; GESI (Gender/age/location/disability status) |
| **Outcome Indicator 3** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| **BPF KPI 3:** Increased effective, equitable and sustainable representation and participation of coastal resources stakeholders in management (score 1-5) | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** Score 1-5 showing how well OCEAN is performing against BPF KPI 3 GESI criteria. **Method:** BPF KPI 3 - Increased effective and equitable representation and participation of coastal resources stakeholders in management (disaggregated between increased representative and effective systems of co-management; increased capacity of all resource users to participate in co-management; increased and/ or improved community organising). **Data and source**: Collated from end of project reports from GESI based measures across other indicators. **Targets and milestones** will be established once the method has been developed. Evaluated alongside GESI frameworks |
|  |
| **INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME** | **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Increased capability and capacity in ODA eligible countries to design and deliver equitable and inclusive solutions aimed at marine protection and poverty reduction | Applicants & Grantees report they have an improved ability to access funding since engaging with OCEAN. | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** % applicants and grantees reporting an improved ability to access funding. **Disaggregation:** Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Successful/Unsuccessful applicants; Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA); GESI (gender balance of organisation management); Age |
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Proportion of OCEAN projects that provide evidence of policy frameworks adopted and /or uptake of sustainable practices  | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 50% |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** % of OCEAN projects that provide evidence of policy frameworks adopted/take up sustainable practices. **Disaggregation:** Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA); GESI (gender balance of organisation management); Framework theme (climate/environment/people) |
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 3** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| OCEAN projects are GESI sensitive, empowering and transformative**a) Proportion of Community grants that are at least GESI sensitive** | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 100% |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **b) Proportion of Partnership grants that are at least GESI empowering** | **Planned** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 100% |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** a) % of Community grants that are atleast GESI sensitive. b) % of Partnership grants that are at least GESI empowering. **Disaggregation:** Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA); GESI scoring |
|  |
| **OUTPUT 1** | **Output Indicator 1.1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Organisations in ODA eligible countries have access to funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at a local-level | Volume of funding awarded: OCEAN commits £60m in grant funding to organisations working at a local level | **Planned** | £0 |  |  |  |  |  | £60,000,000 |
| **Achieved** | £0 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** £ (or proportion of total) committed in each year. **Disaggregation:** Funding pathway (Community/Partnership); Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA; single-country/multi-country); GESI (gender balance of organisation management); Age |
| **Output Indicator 1.2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Volume of funding managed by local organisations: Local organisations receive OCEAN funds either by directly receiving a grant, or through managing a portion of the budget when partnering with a Lead organisation. **a) Proportion of funds committed that are managed by small-medium organisations** | **Community: Planned** |  | Direct: 100%Indirect: N/A Yr1 |  |  |  |  | 100% |
| **Community: Achieved** |  | Direct: 100%Indirect: N/A Yr1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Partnership: Planned** |  | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Partnership: Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **b) Proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries** | **Planned** |  | 90% |  |  |  |  | 100% |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 50% |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** a) % of funds committed that are managed by small-medium organisations - using lead organisation in Yr1; b) Proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries - forecast in Yr1. **Disaggregation:** Funding pathway (Community/Partnership); Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA); GESI (gender balance of organisation management); Age |
|  | **IMPACT WEIGHTING (%): 20** |
|  |  |
| **OUTPUT 2** | **Output Indicator 2.1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Organisations and coastal communities in ODA eligible countries have access to guidance, training and support to build their capacity to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges.  | Applicants and grantees use OCEAN training and guidance to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects**a) Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training** | **Planned** |  | 350 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  | **#Organisations attending application webinars/workshops:#Attendee Countries:** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **b) Number of applicants and grantees using OCEAN guidance** | **Planned** |  | 350 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  | **#Downloads:** 6863 (Feb-Jun 2024) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** a) Number of unique **organisations** attending OCEAN training; b) number of downloads of guidance from OCEAN website. **Disaggregation:** Delivery type (**webinar**/in-person/written guidance); Training type (application/project delivery); Location (country of attendee); Language (En/Fr/Id/Pt/Es) |
| **Output Indicator 2.2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Applicants and Grantees report that OCEAN training and guidance was relevant and useful - proportion reporting that training and support is relevant and useful**a) Proportion reporting that OCEAN training is relevant and useful** | **Planned** |  | 75% |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  | 94% (source:Round 1 Stage 1 Post-Application Survey 2024, 392 respondents) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **b) Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful** | **Planned** |  | 75% |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  | 98% (source:Round 1 Stage 1 Post-Application Survey 2024, 392 respondents) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Measure:** a) % applicants from R1S1 reporting that training and support is relevant and useful. b) % applicants from R1S1 reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful. **Disaggregation:** Unit (% reporting training and support/guidance was relevant and useful); Type (webinar/helpdesk/community/expert committee feedback on applications/feedback on reports/written guidance); GESI: gender, age, education? **Method:** survey  |
| **Output Indicator 2.3** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Proportion of OCEAN projects that provide guidance, training and/or support services to communities | **Planned** |  | N/A |  |  |  |  | 100% |
| **Achieved** |  | N/A |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
|  | **Measure:** % of OCEAN projects providing knowledge, training and support services. **Disaggregation:** Location; Type (training/service); GESI (gender/age/education level) |
|  | **IMPACT WEIGHTING (%): 40** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **OUTPUT 3** | **Output Indicator 3.1** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Networks, partnerships and learning processes are established, supporting knowledge and evidence exchange to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges | Applicants and grantees use and engage on the OCEAN Learning and Networking Platform to get peer support, and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN | **Planned** | 0 | 55 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  | #OCEAN Grant Community members: 55Engagement: N/A year 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Disaggregation:** Unit (% increase in active users); Pathway (Community/Partnership); Language (En/Fr/Id/Pt/Es); Location of community member; Engagement/reach metrics |
| **Output Indicator 3.2** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| Processes are established to share OCEAN evidence and learnings with other existing Challenge Funds and Blue Planet Fund programmes | **Planned** | 0 | Processes: 6Evidence Pieces: 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achieved** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Disaggregation:** Unit (number of knowledge products / evidence pieces produced by OCEAN that are shared with other challenge funds / BPF programmes); Delivery type (written reports/workshops/webinars/presentations); Subject area (BPF outcomes/poverty/GESI) |
| **Output Indicator 3.3** |  | **Baseline** | **Aug-24** | **Aug-25** | **Aug-26** | **Aug-27** | **Aug-28** | **Aug-29** |
| OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products related to marine environment and poverty reduction | **Planned** |  | N/A |  |  |  |  | 50% |
| **Achieved** |  | N/A |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Data, sources and methods** |
| **Disaggregation:** Unit (% projects that produce knowledge products); Pathway (Community/Partnership); Type (newsletter, blog posts, case studies, peer-review publications); Language (En/Fr/Id/Pt/Es); Number of products (1-3, 4-5); Subject area (BPF outcomes/poverty/GESI) |

1. Sumaila, U.R., M. Walsh, K. Hoareau, A. Cox, et al. (2020), *Ocean Finance: Financing the Transition to a Sustainable Ocean Economy*, Washington, DC: World Resources Institute [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Likelihood: Very High (>80%), High (>50%<80%), Medium (>20%<50%), Low (>5%<20%), Very Low (<5%) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)