

# OCEAN Year 2 Annual Review (2024-25)

<b>Title:</b> Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Competitive Grants Programme		
<b>Programme Value £ (full life):</b> up to £60,000,000		<b>Review date:</b> September 2025
<b>Programme Code:</b> BPFOCEAN	<b>Start date:</b> August 2023	<b>End date:</b> March 2030

## Summary of Programme Performance

Year	2024	2025						
Overall Output Score	A	A+						
Risk Rating	High	High						

## 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), a 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.

Organisations including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can submit applications for funding to deliver projects in ODA-eligible coastal countries. OCEAN will award grants to projects that aim to improve the marine environment and its biodiversity and a reduction in multi-dimensional poverty through 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 £500,000 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.

This reporting year has focused on the mobilisation and implementation of OCEAN R1 projects, the launch of Round 2 (R2), and the onboarding of the OCEAN Independent Evaluator (IE). For R2, OCEAN has strengthened its approach to disability inclusive programming with the transition from Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). The programme particularly welcomed applications with a strong focus on GEDSI and strengthened our application guidance and eligibility criteria to reflect this. During this reporting period, the programme team conducted site visits to Indonesia and Madagascar to inform this report. Defra regional coordinators also supported this report through site visits and stakeholder meetings. The site visit findings are integrated throughout the report.

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

This OCEAN Annual Review covers the period from August 2024 to July 2025, referred to as OCEAN year 2. OCEAN has performed well in this monitoring year and has exceeded or substantially exceeded a number of milestones. The programme score for the year is A+ and has been assessed through output scoring (see sections B2, B3, and C for further detail). Key successes from year 2 include:

- **Successful completion of the R1 application cycle:**
  - ~£11M of funding was committed through the award of 3 Partnership Grants and 18 Community Grants in R1 (Annex A). Projects commenced from November 2024 with a number of successful onboarding sessions to introduce grantees to the OCEAN grant management process.

- **Completion of the first reporting cycle demonstrates the OCEAN real-world impact:**
  - OCEAN projects supported more than 4,100 people across 12 countries (including 1,775 women, 667 children, 679 youth, and 2,948 with IPLC status) between November 2024 and March 2025.
  - OCEAN projects provided capacity development training to people in 8 ODA-eligible countries this reporting year. Projects reported that over 1,100 people received training in marine environment conservation, restoration, monitoring, management or sustainable livelihoods practices between November 2024 and March 2025.
- **Two successful in-person visits took place to OCEAN projects in Madagascar and Indonesia.**
- **Grantee capability enhanced and knowledge shared through series of learning and networking events:**
  - The GA facilitated a series of online workshops to encourage networking and support grant management. These focused on onboarding of grantees, Project MEL, networking, mentoring, annual reports and preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). Grantees also contributed to a UN Ocean Conference 2025 event hosted by Women Ocean Guardians focused on locally-led, inclusive leadership in action.
- **R2 application window launched on time in February 2025 with an increased GEDSI ambition and added emphasis on disability:**
  - OCEAN saw a significant increase in interest with 902 applications received across both funding pathways in R2 compared to 694 for R1. This was mostly due to an increase in Partnership Grant applications (351 in R2 compared to 171 in R1).
  - The OCEAN GEDSI Action Plan and Ambition Statement were published on the OCEAN website in February 2025 alongside further GEDSI guidance.
- **Application of adaptive learning to strengthen overall effectiveness of OCEAN.**
  - Six additional Expert Committee (EC) members were added to increase the range of expertise in international development and poverty alleviation. This additional resource has also built resilience to manage the increase in applications received in R2. The OCEAN Selection and Assessment Criteria, Theory of Change and Logframe have also been strengthened to reflect the programme’s commitment to poverty reduction.

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

**Programme Management**

1. **Lesson:** Effective governance and strategic alignment for OCEAN funding rounds require adequate planning time, structured engagement, and resource optimisation. Insufficient lead time for analysis, limited strategic discussions, lack of early regional engagement, and high costs for multilingual accessibility have collectively delayed decision-making, reduced regional participation, and strained resources. These challenges highlight the need for a proactive, integrated approach to planning and coordination across programme boards and regional engagement.

**Recommendation:** Defra and the Grant Administrator to implement a forward-planning framework that ensures:

- a. **Early alignment and engagement:** Agree Programme Board strategy and analysis terms with senior stakeholders at least four weeks in advance of each meeting and initiate regional engagement strategies three months before each funding round.
- b. **Structured governance:** Introduce an annual mid-year Programme Board dedicated to strategic priorities and future direction, in addition to the project selection meeting.
- c. **Optimised applicant offering:** Review and adapt language support based on priority regions, simplify content for better translation, and explore cost-effective AI-based interpretation and translation solutions. This integrated approach will improve decision-making timelines, strengthen strategic alignment, enhance regional participation, and deliver better value for money. **Deadline:** June 2026

**Risk Management**

2. **Lesson:** Early identification of risks strengthens portfolio-level risk management and creates opportunities for learning and relationship building. At the pre-award stage the team identified the high inherent risk of project [redacted] working with vulnerable women and girls. An enhanced risk monitoring plan was set out consisting of monthly check-ins and an early in-person monitoring review to validate that appropriate safeguarding mechanisms were in place. Project Annual Reports are a key tool in risk identification and management at the delivery stage. A safeguarding concern was reported in the annual update of the risk register of

[redacted] and escalated via the Defra safeguarding channel. The issue was investigated through follow-up conversations with the grantee and colleagues at the British Embassy in Manila and mitigating actions put in place

**Recommendation:** GA to develop further due diligence measures to support early identification and categorisation of project risk ratings at the pre-award stage. Robust risk monitoring measures and opportunities for support to be further developed by the GA. Defra to identify cross-programme opportunities to share lessons-learned on identification of and working with high-risk projects. GA to develop additional training in risk management through a dedicated online event for existing and future grantees ahead of the start of the 25/26 Annual Report Process. **Deadline: April 2026.**

**Grantee Engagement**

3. **Lesson:** Effective grant management and community engagement require tailored, proactive support. Many OCEAN Community Grant recipients are new to ODA grant requirements and need clear, timely guidance, especially on financial processes. Online platforms like the [redacted] have proven ineffective for fostering networking and learning, highlighting the need for more dynamic and accessible engagement strategies.

**Recommendation:** The GA and Programme Team to implement a communication and engagement strategy that combines regular, strategically timed email reminders and strengthened messaging during webinars and learning events with a revised networking approach. This approach should prioritise online events, existing social media channels, and in-person opportunities where feasible. Ahead of R2 onboarding, the GA should develop enhanced guidance for grant management and produce a revised engagement strategy to ensure grantees receive the support and connections they need. **Deadline: December 2025.**

**SEAH**

4. **Lesson:** There are often systemic barriers in SEAH prevention and response in the operating context of OCEAN projects.

[redacted]. In project annual reports grantees highlighted that clear, confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms are needed to encourage reporting and ensure timely responses and that barriers such as fear, remoteness and unclear procedures hinder reporting and must be actively addressed.

**Recommendation:** Defra and GA to refine SEAH information available to grantees, ensuring that it is clear and accessible. GA to share additional safeguarding resources with grantees via the OCEAN website to help development of PSEAH Action Plans and robust safeguarding policies and provide training to support this work. **Deadline: March 2026.**

**Scalability and Sustainability**

5. **Lesson:** Many OCEAN projects demonstrate strong local impact but lack clear pathways for scale and long-term sustainability. Current designs often prioritise short-term delivery over embedding systemic change or leveraging national frameworks.

**Recommendation:** Defra and GA to revise applicant guidance and assessment criteria to enhance focus on sustainability and scalability. Strengthen existing requirements of applicant proposals across the following three areas:

- a. **Policy alignment:** Demonstration of explicit links to national marine strategies, climate adaptation plans, and poverty reduction frameworks to increase government buy-in.
- b. **Co-financing and partnerships:** Robust evidence of engagement with local authorities, private sector, and other donors to diversify funding streams.
- c. **Exit strategies:** Clear plans for institutionalisation of activities within local governance structures or community-led models. **Deadline: June 2026.**

**Geographic and Thematic Prioritisation**

6. **Lesson:** Previous funding rounds have been geographically and thematically broad, but a changing funding landscape with reduced ODA availability and evolving HMG priorities require a sharper strategic focus.

**Recommendation:** Defra and GA to work with EC and Programme Board to define priority geographies and themes for future rounds, considering:

- a. High-impact regions: LDCs and SIDS most vulnerable to climate change and biodiversity loss.
- b. Existing geographic and thematic clusters from previous funding rounds.

- c. ODA and HMG priorities: Ensure coherence with UK’s climate finance and biodiversity targets, priority countries and priority themes. **Deadline: March April.**

**Ratio of Community and Partnership Grants**

7. **Lesson:** Community Grants deliver strong local empowerment but require intensive administrative support, and may be less scalable. Partnership Grants offer greater potential for systemic change but it remains unclear how these larger, multi-actor grants complement smaller community projects or advance OCEAN’s broader objectives of increasing the capacity of local organisations and driving equitable and inclusive decision-making.

**Recommendation:** Defra and GA to work with Programme Board and Expert Committee to review the Round 1 and Round 2 portfolio of grants, determining a suitable balance of the two grant types and exploring whether the existing funding pathways should be revised. **Deadline: June 2026.**

## **B: THEORY OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES**

### **B1. Summarise the programme’s theory of change, including any changes to outcome and impact indicators from the original business case.**

As detailed in Section A1 OCEAN is a competitive grants programme focused on delivering lasting benefits to the marine environment and coastal communities. As a result of the programme, local organisations will be better supported to help communities manage marine resources sustainably 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, bringing in more local knowledge and experiences.

Through projects, communities will have an increased awareness of and share knowledge about the themes in the OCEAN 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 funding. As more organisations apply and engage with the programme, Defra will learn 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.

In the long term, the increased diversity and capacity of local actors addressing marine and development challenges through a GEDSI empowering portfolio 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 a range of areas, including waste management systems to manage marine pollution, 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 including women and girls. 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 OCEAN Theory of Change (ToC) (Annex B) was updated in June 2025 as part of the Independent Evaluator (IE) inception phase of work. The IE revised the OCEAN ToC through a collaborative effort with the GA and Defra. The ToC was revised as a simplified, more evaluable pathway, with more assumptions at each level of the results chain. The revised TOC focuses on how OCEAN investments, activities and outputs are expected to lead to three dimensions of impact – (i) marine conservation across BPF impact areas; (ii) coastal community resilience/poverty reduction; and (iii) wider transformational change of the political, economic, social, legal and environmental space in which the programme operates.

In line with OCEAN’s increased GEDSI ambition for R2, GEDSI has been incorporated at the Output, Outcomes and Impact stages of the revised ToC. To reflect OCEAN’s commitment to poverty alleviation the ToC has been strengthened to reflect the importance of equitable and inclusive activities that deliver improved poverty and socioeconomic outcomes for the most vulnerable coastal communities.

The OCEAN ToC will continue to be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to embed lessons from OCEAN’s delivery, results achieved, and emerging evidence. The next iteration will be revised to better reflect that both the Community Grant and Partnership Grant pathways contribute to enabling local organisations’ access to funding and engagement with local community stakeholders.

### **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?**

This reporting year has seen many successes, as detailed in Section A2. These include R1 grants being awarded and delivered, marine and poverty targets identified through the OCEAN Standard Indicators, and an increased GEDSI ambition with a GEDSI-focused R2. During this period OCEAN has had a real-world impact with over 4100 individuals being supported by the programme with 1,100 individuals receiving training in marine environment conservation, restoration, monitoring,

management or sustainable livelihoods practices between November 2024 and March 2025. OCEAN has met or exceeded expectations on all three outputs and overall has scored A+ (outputs exceed expectation) for this Annual Review. Detailed information is contained in the Output Assessment (section C), which provides quantitative scores to assess where the programme is on track against multiple Indicators per Output. We currently do not have outcome level results as projects have been delivering for less than a year and are in the early phases of implementation. Based on the current information available to us we believe that OCEAN is on track to contribute to the expected impact and outcomes detailed below.

**Impact:** 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.

**Outcome:** 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.

**Intermediate Outcome:** Increased capability and capacity in ODA eligible countries to design and deliver equitable and inclusive solutions aimed at marine protection and poverty reduction.

Ahead of the next Annual Review we will apply learnings from the previous two years to develop a set of ambitious Indicators. The IE will develop methodologies for measuring impact and outcome level results including transformational change and improved poverty and climate outcomes. This will include modelling to inform this target setting. The commitments made for the next Logframe refresh in early 2026 include:

1. Developing targets for intermediate outcome, outcome and impact level indicators, and targets for all future years for all indicators. Also make targets for existing indicators more ambitious.
2. Develop an indicator to evaluate the longer-term sustainability of funding that OCEAN has/has not enabled in its grantees.
3. Reflect the programme’s higher level of GEDSI ambition for intermediate outcome 3.

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

OCEAN has been effective this year in ensuring that R1 projects were awarded in FY24/25 and establishing the processes, tools and procedures for managing grants. R2 was launched on time and a growth in demand has been experienced, particularly for Partnership Grants where the number of applicants has doubled. OCEAN has demonstrated its ability to be flexible and strategic through the successful increased focus of GEDSI in R2. We are on track to award R2 grants to successful applicants in November 2025 in line with delivery milestones. OCEAN has made good progress across all outputs (see Section C), scoring A+ (outputs exceed expectation). The ratio of administrative costs against funding committed is higher in this period due to the cost of establishing the programme, but will improve as the programme matures. OCEAN is still the early stages of delivery, but initial indications, including from the output scores, are that the programme is on track to deliver its anticipated outcomes and impacts.

**Case study: Shining a light on GEDSI approaches from OCEAN Round 1 Grantees**

**Project title: Project of Resilience and Empowerment of Coastal Communities of Yenne (Rated: GEDSI Empowering)**

This project engages and mobilises community members across 9 villages (3,734 households) in a three-year programme that aims to deliver lasting change to the marine environment and support poverty reduction. A key component of this project is training a group of facilitators, to include women, youth, fishermen, people with albinism, and other persons with disabilities. People with albinism face discrimination within the project community, and this project aims to include them within the group of facilitators, with a focus on improved access to markets and financial resources. Grounded in community-based approaches, this project considers the diverse needs of community members, involving them in both awareness-raising and income-generating activities. Specific trainings include entrepreneurship and resource mobilization skills for young people, fisheries resource management skills for women, and GEDSI training for community leaders. Training young people in entrepreneurship and resource mobilization is essential for economic development and the empowerment of new generations. Training women in fisheries resource management, will facilitate the integration of women into local decision-making regarding fishing, contributing to the sustainability of marine resources and to the empowerment of women in coastal villages. A GEDSI training for community leaders will better equip them to integrate principles of equity and inclusion into their community activities.



### C. DETAILED OUTPUT SCORING

<b>Output Title</b>	Organisations in ODA eligible countries are better able to access and manage funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at local-level.		
Output number:	1	Output Score:	<b>A+</b>
Impact weighting (%):	20	Weighting revised since last AR?	N/A

Indicator(s)	Milestone(s) for this review	Progress
1.1 Volume of funding managed by local organisations, in their role as Lead Organisation or Partner Organisation in OCEAN grants. <b>Proportion of funds committed that are managed by organisations in ODA-eligible countries.</b>	N/A – No target set this year as a newly agreed indicator	<b>No milestone set</b> 82.7% of funds awarded (£9,225,922) is managed by Lead Organisations and in-country Partner Organisations that are registered in ODA-eligible countries.
1.2 Proportion of grantees demonstrating effective management of OCEAN funds. <b>Proportion of grantees meeting reporting requirements.</b>	Target:: 90%	<b>Overall: A+ Exceeded</b> 20 out of 21 projects (95%) demonstrating moderate to good progress in their first Annual Report (12 ‘good’, 8 ‘moderate’, 1 ‘very poor’). 19 out of 20 projects (95%) are meeting the requirement of GEDSI Responsive or higher (██████ not yet assessed due to reporting gaps) 18 out of 21 project (86%) Annual Reports provided an adequate quality of reporting and evidence (2 ‘excellent’, 6 ‘good’, 10 ‘moderate’, 3 ‘poor’).

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

OCEAN received a high level of interest for our first call for proposals with 694 applications received for projects in over 100 countries. In October 2024 we awarded funding to 21 projects in 13 ODA eligible countries with 82.7% (~£9.2m) of funds allocated to in-country organisations. This consisted of 19 Lead Organisations and 33 Partner Organisations.

While a target was not set this year for Indicator 1.1 ‘Volume of funding managed by local organisations, in their role as Lead Organisation or Partner Organisation in OCEAN grants, this proportion of funding to organisations in ODA eligible countries exceeds initial estimates of 65-70% based on the number of International NGOs applying through the Partnership Grants pathway. 44.9% of R1 funds are allocated to small sized organisations (annual income of <£1m) and 18.3% to medium sized organisations (annual income of £1-10m) in ODA eligible countries. This demonstrates that OCEAN is funding its target stakeholder group of locally led small-medium sized organisations that often face funding gaps.

Indicator 1.2, assessing grantee fund management, surpassed its 90% target with an overall performance of 92%. Most R1 projects showed good progress, met GEDSI standards, and provided adequate reporting, resulting in an A+ rating for the indicator.

The score for this Output is an **A+**.

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

Output one has not changed during the past year, however the two output indicators have been revised as detailed below.

Year 1 Wording	Year 2 Wording	Rationale for Change
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<p>1.1 Volume of funding awarded: OCEAN commits £60m in grant funding to organisations working at a local level</p>	<p>1.1 Proportion of funds committed that are managed by organisations in ODA-eligible countries in their role as Lead Organisation or Partner Organisation in OCEAN grants.</p>	<p>Feedback from the ISBF Analytical Assurer included that the original indicator is more of an input than an output. The rationale for this is because grantee funding allows for individual projects to produce their outputs, rather than the funding itself being an output of the OCEAN programme.</p> <p>In order to include a more effective finance indicator, we developed the revised wording in order to capture whether we are providing sufficient funds to community/local organisations.</p>
<p>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.  <b>a) Proportion of funds committed that are managed by small-medium organisations</b>  <b>b) Proportion of grants led by organisations registered in ODA eligible countries</b></p>	<p>1.1 Proportion of grantees demonstrating effective management of OCEAN funds through meeting reporting requirements.</p>	<p>This indicator has changed as part b) was adapted to be its own indicator for 1.1, and it was found that effectively defining and then setting a target for SMEs was too challenging, and not necessarily representative of “success” for OCEAN. This is why a new indicator focusing on grantee reporting requirements was developed, which also reflects the fact that in year 2 we now have grantees up and running, compared to year 1 when projects had not started.</p>

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

Lesson	Recommendation	Progress Update	Future Activities
<p>Inadequate weighting and clarity of Upper-Middle Income Country (UMIC) criteria leads to inconsistent scoring by EC.</p>	<p>Develop clearer UMIC guidance for EC ahead of R2.</p>	<p>Clearer UMIC guidance was developed and shared with the EC with an opportunity for feedback. This was published in the ‘Core Guidance for Applicants’ document published on the OCEAN website ahead of the Launch of R2 in February 2025.</p>	<p>A strategy meeting will be held with the EC in August 2025 where there is an opportunity to provide any feedback on the application process and reflect on previous recommendations. We will continue to make any amendments as required based on this feedback.</p>
<p>Insufficient EC resource due to large number of OCEAN applications.</p>	<p>Increase number of EC members particularly those with international development expertise ahead of second call for proposals.</p>	<p>Six new members were added to the EC via two recruitment rounds ahead of R2. These members not only bolstered the capacity of the EC to assess an increased number of applications but also new skills, including GEDSI and international development expertise.</p>	<p>The EC is currently at capacity and provides a broad thematic and geographic coverage. There are no plans for future recruitment currently but capability and capacity will continue to be monitored.</p>

Limited in-country/regional engagement undertaken due to constrained timelines.	Enhance level of in-country/regional engagement with targeted engagement in Western Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) ahead of and during R2.	A R2 engagement strategy was created which included regional workshops targeting Western Africa, Pacific SIDS and Caribbean SIDS. This led to an increase in applications from SIDS but no significant increase from countries in Western Africa. This suggests that there are likely wider factors causing this.	Further analysis will be undertaken following the EC Sift Meeting and Programme Board to compare R1 and R2 figures for these regions and see how impactful these workshops were in quality and quantity of applications. The OCEAN engagement strategy will be updated ahead of any future rounds.
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<b>Output Title</b>	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:	<b>A+</b>
Impact weighting (%):	40	Weighting revised since last AR?	N/A

Indicator(s)	Milestone(s) for this review	Progress
2.1 Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects.	Target: 1,119 organisations attend training	<b>Overall: A+ Exceeded</b> 1,271 organisations attended training Since August 2024 OCEAN delivered 20 events with 4,279 people registered and 2,245 live attendees from 1,271 organisations and 133 countries. Since August 2024 7 online events with attendance from all 21 Lead Organisations and 63 unique attendees.
2.2 Applicants and Grantees report that OCEAN training and guidance was relevant and useful. <b>a) Proportion reporting that OCEAN training and support is relevant and useful</b> <b>b) Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful</b>	Target: 75% report training and guidance is relevant and useful	<b>Overall: A++ Substantially Exceeded</b> Proportion reporting that OCEAN training is relevant and useful: Average of 91% across all applicant and grantee surveys (92% of CG Stage 1 applicants; 91% of CG Stage 2 applicants; 90% of PG Applicants; 90% of Grantees) Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful: Average of 96% across all applicant and grantee surveys (96% of CG Stage 1 applicants; 98% of CG Stage 2 applicants; 99% of PG applicants, 90% of Grantees)

<p>2.3 OCEAN provides guidance and training on GEDSI considerations to support projects and applicants.  <b>a) Number of GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised; Number of resources with GEDSI mainstreamed.</b>  <b>b) Number of GEDSI-focused trainings delivered; number of trainings with GEDSI mainstreamed</b></p>	<p>Target: 5 GEDSI focused resources developed or revised. 7 resources with GEDSI incorporated; 3 GEDSI focused trainings; 7 trainings incorporating GEDSI</p>	<p><b>Overall: A+ Exceeded:</b>  A total of 5 GEDSI-focused resources have been developed, showcasing OCEAN’s GEDSI ambition statement; 10 resources revised, strengthening guidance and templates for applicants, Expert Committee and ensuring GEDSI is appropriately embedded into risk register and programme management procedures; 3 GEDSI focused trainings delivered to applicants and grantees introducing GEDSI and how to mainstream into project design and implementation; 8 trainings delivered incorporating GEDSI to applicants, grantees and Expert Committee (see Annex C GEDSI focused resources)</p>
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**C1. Briefly describe the output’s activities, and provide supporting narrative for the score.**

Since August 2024, OCEAN has delivered 19 events for potential applicants. 4,279 people registered to these events, with 2,245 live attendees representing 1,271 organisations covering 133 countries. There have also been 7 online events this reporting year for R1 grantees. A target of 1119 organisations attending training was set for Indicator 2.1 based on year 1 figures, and this was exceeded for this reporting year. Representatives from all 21 R1 Lead Organisations have attended one or more of these sessions, with 63 unique attendees. All trainings are available in multiple languages, and available to view again on YouTube. Slide packs are sent to all registrants.

Potential applicants are sent feedback surveys following completion of each stage of the application process and grantees are sent feedback surveys after completion of key milestones. Based on these surveys an average of 91% of event attendees found OCEAN training relevant and useful, and an average of 96% of users found OCEAN guidance relevant and useful. This exceeds the target for this Indicator (2.2), which had been set at 75% report that OCEAN training and guidance is relevant and useful to meet OCEAN’s ambition to be at least GEDSI empowering programme.

This reporting year OCEAN has provided supportive resources for both applicants and grantees on the important of recognising the connections between GEDSI, multidimensional poverty reduction and marine conservation goals. Applicants and grantees have been provided with actionable ‘how to’ guidance, in both written and presented formats, on a variety of topics including developing a project with a strong GEDSI approach, how to write a successful proposal, and how to design and implement an equitable and empowering project. Indicator 2.3 had a target of 5 GEDSI focused resources developed or revised, 7 resources with GEDSI incorporated, 3 GEDSI focused trainings and 7 trainings incorporating GEDSI. High-quality support from the GA GEDSI Manager, ODA and BPF GEDSI Leads and FCDO Disability Inclusion Advisor has led to each of these targets being met or exceeded. The programme and its stakeholders are benefitting from the strengthened approach to GEDSI across all workstreams.

The score for this Output is an **A+** with scores of A+ or A++ across all indicators.

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

Year 1 Wording	Year 2 Wording	Rationale for Change
<p>2.1 Applicants and grantees use OCEAN training and guidance to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects  <b>a) Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training</b>  <b>b) Number of applicants and grantees using OCEAN guidance</b></p>	<p>2.1 Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects.</p>	<p>Part b) of this indicator was removed as, on revision, we do not believe this is an effective measure of engagement. The method previously used was also not effective, as the number of downloads of OCEAN guidance does not tell us who is downloading, whether they are downloading multiple times, or anything</p>

		about the quality of the guidance
2.3 Proportion of OCEAN projects that provide guidance, training and/or support services to communities	2.3 OCEAN provides guidance and training on GEDSI considerations to support projects and applicants. <b>a) Number of GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised; Number of resources with GEDSI mainstreamed.</b> <b>b) Number of GEDSI-focused trainings delivered; number of trainings with GEDSI mainstreamed</b>	On revision, we decided that this indicator does not tell us meaningful information, as the expectation is that every project will provide some sort of guidance, training or support to communities. We also felt that the OCEAN Logframe required a new GEDSI indicator, to reflect the increased focus on GEDSI for Round 2. This led us to replace the previous indicator 2.3 with the new version on GEDSI-focused resources and trainings developed and delivered

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

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Future Activities</b>
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 R2.	Short-form guidance has been published on the OCEAN website for Community and Partnership Grants ahead of the launch of R2 in February 2025.	Defra and the GA will continue to seek feedback from applicants and grantees to ensure that guidance is relevant and useful.
Lack of clear messaging to FCDO colleagues regarding their role and desired involvement in OCEAN.	Further development of OCEAN-FCDO engagement strategy ahead of R2.	The OCEAN FCDO Engagement Strategy was finalised ahead of R2 and shared with FCDO colleagues for their feedback. An engagement webinar was held with FCDO colleagues in August 2024 to provide further clarity.	OCEAN to engage with FCDO colleagues in December 2025 to seek feedback on their R2 experience with a particular focus on the success of amendments from R1 to R2.
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.	7 Grantee sessions were hosted this reporting year to support capacity development and facilitate learning as detailed in Output 2. Unfortunately, the ODN, our planned platform to facilitate networking and peer to peer learning was closed in July 2025 and we are currently seeking an alternative to support this.	Based on feedback from grantee and applicant surveys GA to consider opportunities for further support that can be delivered in written or presented forms. Further time to be allocated to Grantee sessions to allow time for peer-to-peer networking.
Increase ambition of the OCEAN GESI approach for R2 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	OCEAN has moved from GESI to GEDSI with the inclusion of disability. OCEAN has strengthened its GEDSI ambition and now aims to be at least a GEDSI Empowering Programme. GEDSI focused team resource has been bolstered with GA	There are no current plans to increase ambition of GEDSI approach as we must ensure that we balance ambition with the capacity and capability of the community-level organisations that we strive to reach. We will

	Expert to the GA team.	GEDSI Manager and ongoing support from an FCDO Disability Inclusion Adviser. GEDSI expertise has also been added to the EC. In February 2025, R2 launched particularly welcoming applications with a strong GEDSI focus.	continue to provide support to applicants and grantees to further their skills in this important area.
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<b>Output Title</b>	Knowledge is produced and shared to address marine environmental and poverty reduction challenges and is effectively facilitated by OCEAN and its projects through networks, partnerships and learning processes.		
Output number:	3	Output Score:	<b>A</b>
Impact weighting (%):	40	Weighting revised since last AR?	N/A

Indicator(s)	Milestone(s) for this review	Progress
3.1 Applicants and grantees engage in learning events to learn from the OCEAN programme and other grantees (including Partnership Grant to Community Grant knowledge transfer), and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN. <b>Proportion of OCEAN grantees attending learning events.</b>	Target: 80% of grantees to attend events on average.	<b>Overall: B Missed</b> An average of 67% of grantees attended grantee events.
3.2 OCEAN shares evidence and learnings with other existing programmes and stakeholders external to Defra.	Target: 10 instances of OCEAN sharing evidence and learnings.	<b>Overall: A+ Exceeded</b> Achieved 14.  A total of 14 instances of evidence and learnings from the OCEAN programme have been actively shared with external stakeholders and existing initiatives beyond Defra. This includes contributions to strategic working groups such as the BPF MEL poverty sprint, regular engagement with the Biodiversity Challenge Fund, and participation in global forums like the UN Ocean Conference and the International Marine Conservation Congress. Insights from field visits and monitoring reviews, including those in Madagascar and Berikanpreneur, have been disseminated through presentations, blogs, and social media. Key updates and reflections have also been shared via the Annual Review on Devtracker, GESI Champions Community of Practice, and internal strategy sessions, ensuring transparency and collaboration across the marine conservation and development community.
3.3 OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products (both written and unwritten) related to marine environment and poverty reduction.	Target: 0 due to early stage of R1 projects.	<b>Overall: A++ Substantially Exceeded</b> 80% of projects reported production of knowledge products in their first annual reports.

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

This year has focused on establishing partnerships with our R1 grantees and developing and sharing evidence and learning with other programmes and key stakeholders. As detailed in Output 2 there have been 7 online events for grantees. Unfortunately, the Indicator 3.1 target of 80% of grantees on average attending events has been missed with only 67% attendance on average. Grantee feedback surveys suggest that this target was not met as monthly events were too frequent, with some respondents confirming that they would prefer information in writing with optional online events. It has been decided to reduce the frequency of events, but to make them longer in duration to support further networking amongst grantees. This approach will be reviewed throughout the next year.

A target of 10 instances of OCEAN sharing evidence and learnings was set under Indicator 3.2. This target was exceeded with 14 learning/knowledge products shared with key stakeholders internal and external to Defra including multi-thematic blogs, read-outs of site visits and grantee participation in an event at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice.

Grantees have also been producing and sharing accessible knowledge products this reporting year. Due to the early stage of R1 project delivery a target of 0 was set for Indicator 3.3. This has been substantially exceeded with 80% of projects confirmed during their first Annual Report that they have produced and distributed knowledge products related to the marine environment and poverty reduction. Examples of knowledge products have included newsletters, webinars, training materials, press releases and social media posts.

In the last reporting year we were endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade and had established the OCEAN Grants Community Group on the ODN to use as a knowledge sharing platform and peer to peer networking tool. Unfortunately the ODN will be closing as of July 2025 [REDACTED]. OCEAN promoting it through multiple channels, and OCEAN will seek alternative methods to deliver these objectives.

The score for this Output is an **A**, met expectations, with Indicator scores ranging from B to A++.

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

<b>Year 1 Wording</b>	<b>Year 2 Wording</b>	<b>Rationale for Change</b>
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	3.1 Applicants and grantees engage in learning events to learn from the OCEAN programme and other grantees (including Partnership Grant to Community Grant knowledge transfer), and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN. <b>Proportion of OCEAN grantees attending learning events.</b>	Focusing on the Learning and Networking Platform as a measure of grantee knowledge exchange missed out on other opportunities for learning engagement that were taking place. The role of the L&N Platform has also changed since the indicator was originally developed, meaning that it is now no longer the central platform for facilitating knowledge sharing between grantees
3.2 Processes are established to share OCEAN evidence and learnings with other existing Challenge Funds and Blue Planet Fund programmes	3.2 OCEAN shares evidence and learnings with other existing programmes and stakeholders external to Defra. <b>Number of evidence pieces developed and shared by the OCEAN programme.</b>	It was decided to move away from separating out process and evidence pieces in the measurement, instead focusing on all pieces of evidence developed by the programme as a whole. The measurement is also clarified in the indicator with the new text in bold.
3.3 OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products related to marine environment and poverty reduction	3.3 OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products (both written and unwritten) related	The new wording of the indicator clarifies the measurement and disaggregation taking place

	to marine environment and poverty reduction. <b>Proportion of OCEAN grantees producing and sharing accessible knowledge products.</b>	
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**C3. Progress on recommendations from the previous AR (if completed), lessons learned this year and recommendations for the year ahead**

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Future Activities</b>
Limited additional engagement activities undertaken with growth of the UN ODN put on hold.	Undertake further engagement activities and grow membership and value of OCEAN Community on UN ODN.	Despite OCEAN publicising the ODN across multiple channels there has been limited engagement on the platform. This is not limited to OCEAN and the ODN has closed as of July 2025.	Programme Team and GA to deliver the future OCEAN networking strategy through online events, existing social media channels and in-person events where possible. GA to produce a revised engagement strategy reflecting this
Need to standardise reporting requirements to achieve consistent and accurate aggregation of results.	Develop and pilot OCEAN Standard Indicators with first cohort of grantees.	OCEAN Standard Indicators have now been designed and piloted with R1 grantees. Standard Indicator Guidance has been produced. OCEAN Standard Indicators have been introduced to R2 applicants.	Standard Indicators will continue to be monitored by the GA and IE and can be revised as necessary.
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.	Regular meetings with the Biodiversity Challenge Funds team and other relevant programmes have been established. These have provided a forum to share lessons learned and understand key risks and opportunities. It is hoped that a workshop can be delivered this reporting year but has not occurred yet due to resourcing constraints. The SRO of the Biodiversity Challenge Funds is now a member of the OCEAN Programme Board.	OCEAN team to continue to engage closely with stakeholders of relevant programmes. Defra and GA to look to schedule a one-day workshop with the Biodiversity Challenge Funds within the next six months.

# D: RISK

## D1. 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** – this is within risk appetite. Risk has increased this year as we have moved from the delivery of a funding round to now incorporating the monitoring of Grantee Projects, this means we are exposed to a greater range of risks such as Safeguarding and greater scope for risks involving fraud, programme delivery and the threat of political and climactic events and the risk of these causing delays or cancellation to projects. This is the first year for the programme in monitoring active projects, so risk may decrease as mitigations are tested and adjusted. OCEAN has satisfactorily operated within risk appetite for each category throughout year 2.

This year Defra and the GA held monthly risk register and fraud assessment review segments of weekly/fortnightly programme meetings to raise emergent issues, these were then reviewed in monthly RAID/FRA meetings to identify new risks and refine approaches, escalate or remove present risks through an action log. Specialists have been brought in for each category (SEAH, GEDSI, Finance) to develop/improve risk management and mitigation. Any key risks and issues were immediately escalated to the OCEAN SRO and documented through monthly Programme Management Meetings. All identified risks (including fraud) have mitigation measures in place and a named risk owner in the risk register which is reviewed and updated monthly.

A cross section of Risks and explanations of Residual Risk from each category has been collected for review under Annex F in this document.

### Risk Management by Category:

**Strategy and Context (Cautious – Medium Residual Risk in Appetite):** This year OCEAN transitioned from GESI to GEDSI with R2 a GEDSI focused Round. This represented a new risk for the OCEAN programme with the potential for Grantees to submit proposals that did not properly address the new GEDSI standards, for the Expert Committee, if not properly informed, to ineffectively grade project proposals in line with new criteria and for projects, once selected, not giving enough time to GEDSI related learning, to mitigate these, the following steps were taken.

A high-level GEDSI Analysis of OCEAN was conducted at the end of R1 in October 2024 by a newly appointed GEDSI Manager to act as a benchmark for the development of the GEDSI Criteria in Round 2. This included strengthening GEDSI guidance and resources, mitigating the risk of applications not effectively adhering to the new criteria. The GEDSI scoring criteria was redeveloped with enhanced minimum standards and strengthening GEDSI mainstreaming across all OCEAN components, a training session was held with Expert Committee to ensure they effectively graded the proposals, with any outliers flagged for further briefing during the review process, thereby reducing the risk. The GEDSI Lead and IE ensure GEDSI indicators are included in any case studies and analysis the IE engages in. An in-depth analysis will take place at the end of R2, involving examinations between the grantees of R2 with the first Annual Reports of R1 Projects. Ongoing monitoring involves providing analysis from our GA Mel Lead, on how projects can reach higher GEDSI standards, those failing to meet expectations are provided with extra support in developing their approaches.

**Project and Programme Risks (Cautious – Medium Residual Risk in Appetite):** Project monitoring and support has presented new challenges as we move into the delivery phase, including political instabilities and changes of government. Some projects have demonstrated less experience with MEL and GEDSI commitments, preferring to focus on core aspects of project delivery. This has been actively mitigated through funding contingent on related key metrics.

On completion of the Climate and Environmental Risk template, the OCEAN programmes risk rating has been increased to major due to the broad geographic spread of projects. Projects are evaluated based on their mitigation measures for such risks with support provided by the GA. Should a project

be deemed particularly high risk then a more tailored monitoring approach may be considered. Regular bi-weekly meetings with in-country Regional Coordinators provide key local knowledge to assist this process.

**Safeguarding (Cautious – Medium Residual Risk in Appetite):** Safeguarding has been a category of particular interest as OCEAN begins monitoring active projects. Residual impacts remain high as even with procedures in place, instances of abuse are still highly likely to occur with the potential to be of a severe nature. OCEAN operates with the expectation that such events will occur and ensure that the processes laid out are followed. This way we can prevent repeated patterns of abuse, mitigating the worst outcomes. This is in line with [the Common Approach to PSEAH \(CAPSEAH\)](#) standards.

The GA is committed to improving safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH), supporting grantees to undertake organisational improvements based on the CAPSEAH Minimum Actions and practical guidance within the CAPSEAH.

To embed safeguarding in OCEAN projects, all Lead Organisations are required to submit their organisation’s safeguarding, whistleblowing and code of conduct policies which are 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 they can proactively monitor safeguarding processes and procedures in downstream partner organisations.

The Safeguarding Manager will undertake a SEAH assessment on all successful projects. Projects of concern will be escalated to Defra and raised directly with Lead Organisations. Project delivery is paused until an action plan is established with necessary improvements in place.

**Delivery and Operational (Cautious – Low Residual Risk in Appetite):** Risks relate primarily to delivery of funding rounds and at present mitigations are implemented ensuring that risk is low with a minimalist appetite. Due Diligence of OCEAN projects is rigorous but the geographical distance from projects leaves us reliant on the assumption project reports are accurate. Site visits are in place but only for 10% of projects and therefore enforcement effectiveness relies on the threat of spot checks.

Due to the early stage of OCEAN’s lifecycle, there is limited impact data, insights are dependent on evaluation which will be carried out by the IE with support from MEL teams in Defra and the GA. Programmes of this nature are difficult to assess for poverty until several years of project activity.

A key emergent issue for OCEAN has been changes to the expected budget. Decreased budgets will lead to a reduction in the number of projects available to fund, consequently weakening the vfm for OCEAN. Mitigating Actions are presently focused on limiting unnecessary expenses and reducing the number of funding rounds, to reduce administrative costs involved in this process.

**Reputation (Cautious – low residual risk in appetite):** Reputational damage mitigation is undertaken through the mitigation of other risk categories, principally effective programme delivery. Specific issues can be addressed through the complaint’s procedure, as was resolved in February, when a potential applicant raised concerns with our process of requiring GEDSI and SEAH documentation. Responses were carried out in line with complaints procedure, ensuring wider criticism was averted.

Queries or issues with OCEAN can be addressed through the OCEAN Helpdesk, with steps for resolving issues comprising a key part of the OCEAN Logframe (Annex G). Strong performance against KPI benchmark for engagement with helpdesk attribute lack of negative response across social media as responses mitigate most issues navigating application process.

Negative comments made via social media are monitored and raised in monthly comms meetings during which responses are discussed and agreed upon. Low funding rate for projects (3% for 1<sup>st</sup> Round 2024) represent a risk for dissatisfaction and potential negative comments, highlighting the importance of support to reduce time commitments for submission of application (a negative issues

raised by participants) and other forms of support such as our feedback, which can help participants with other funding pursuits, giving more added value for them, reducing dissatisfaction.

**Financial and Fiduciary (Cautious – Medium Residual Risk in Appetite):** Financial and Fiduciary risks are Medium as instances of fraud have been detected at numerous instances from grantees. However, these instances have been relatively small transactions.

Due Diligence checks are conducted at the beginning of the application process where GA conducts due diligence on all potential delivery partners and their applications. Checks require all lead applicants to provide evidence of legal status of lead applicant organisation, a minimum of at least 2 years of financial reports and accounts (with requirement to provide independently audited accounts for fund applications >£100k), and specific checks with FCDO to corroborate organisations existence and capacity to carry out work outlined. The Expert Committee undertake further assessment of applications to identify evidence of fraud and following Programme Board review. Spotlight checks for all successful shortlisted applicants are included before any payment is made

Mitigations are also conducted during the lifecycle of all projects In line with Cabinet Office guidance, bi-annual reporting of projects with quarterly financial statements, supplemented with spot checks of 10% of all projects and site visits to ensure the appropriate use of finances. Such mitigating actions will reduce the chance of large-scale fraud but there is a reasonably high chance that persistent misreporting/low level fraud due to poor quality financial administration (rounding errors etc.) is difficult to counter given the geographical distance of projects and reliance on project partners reporting figures. Spot checks, site visits and regular reporting will mitigate this, but the potential for low level abuse remains. As such Residual risk remains medium, with a low impact score and medium likelihood.

During this reporting year evidence of potential fraud was detected in a total of three shortlisted applications due to concerns relating to supporting financial and eligibility documents, the Lead Organisation's eligibility or separate concerns raised via the FCDO or Expert Committee upon assessment. Applicants in each case were rejected due to a review and assessment of concerns raised with Defra and their applications were not progressed further. For active projects, OPG\174 experience an instance of solicitation of bribes by a member of project staff, this was resolved by the Project Team themselves upon discovery, returning all relevant funds to the victims by time of reporting to OCEAN.

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

**Summarise the performance of partners and Defra, notably on commercial and financial issues.**

### **E.1.1. Delivery**

General programme management is led by Defra's designated OCEAN team, with the majority of operational tasks remaining contracted to the external GA. The OCEAN team oversee procurement exercises, manage the contracts with the GA and IE, 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, separate monthly meetings are held on GEDSI, safeguarding, risk and fraud respectively. A monthly meeting is also held between the OCEAN and Biodiversity Challenge Fund teams to ensure shared learnings.

### **E.1.2. 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. Following the award of R1 grants, the original rapid climate and environmental risk screening assessment was undertaken. The review identified that the risk to this programme and its objectives has increased to major risk for climate factors and low risk for environmental factors. This increased climate score is due to the global reach of R1 projects across 13 countries and the overall objective of the programme to target funding at coastal communities most acutely impacted by climate change. Climate risk reduction measures have therefore been incorporated where appropriate into the overall programme design and across all project activities to help mitigate any climate risk impact on the programme's success.

### **E.1.3. Commercial Procurement**

#### **E.1.3.1. Grant Administrator (GA)**

The GA exceeded performance against measured targets throughout their first multi-year contract agreement. Following successful completion of the R1 funding cycle, Defra secured a multiyear contract extension for the external GA to run from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027 (based on standard Defra Terms and Conditions). This was awarded to NIRAS on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025 under PCR2015 legislation regulation 72(1)(a) (available at [ODA BPF OCEAN Grants Programme \(Grant Administrator\) - Find a Tender \(find-tender.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/oda-bpf-ocean-grants-programme-grant-administrator)).

A Performance Management Framework (PMF), is used to monitor, measure, and control the GA's performance against contracted responsibilities. The PMF Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are streamlined to align with commercial monitoring processes and GA capabilities against eight weighted contracted workstreams (listed below) through a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) service level rating assessment. Progress is reported monthly by the GA and reviewed quarterly against these workstreams by Defra. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, the KPI's were amended through a Contract Change Note (CCN) due to the evolving complexity of the OCEAN GA contract and lessons learnt from R1.

At time of writing this report the GA is on track to fully meet six of the eight contracted workstreams (RAG status green); with workstream 2 (supporting projects and applications) and workstream 8 (Communications and Promotion of the Fund) partially met see outline below (RAG status amber). A detailed assessment can be found at Annex D.

#### **E.1.3.2. Independent Evaluator (IE)**

Defra has secured a multi-year Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Service contract for an Independent Evaluator (IE) to run from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2030. The commissioning of this service contract did not require a tendering process allowing for direct award to a Defra approved Delivery Partner and a reduction in time required to commission onboarding of Itad as the approved IE. The IE working closely with Defra and the GA, developed and agreed a finalised MOU approach on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024.

The key objective of the IE is to understand the success of the OCEAN Grant Programme's approach, and to share learnings about this with other relevant ODA programmes. OCEAN targets for relevant environmental and people-focused outcomes have been set against BPF Key KPIs, as well as Defra's International Climate Finance (ICF) KPIs. These indicators are captured in the programme logframe and will be developed further with the programme standard indicators framework. The IE aims to test the success of OCEAN against these key target outcomes, including how successful the innovative grant funding approach was in delivering positive impacts.

At the time of writing this report the IE have delivered a number of key milestones including the Inception Report, Theory of Change Refresh, Initial Learning Workshops, Draft OCEAN Learning Plan and three Evidence Review Concept Notes. All of these milestones were delivered on time, details are provided in Annex E.

#### **E.1.4. Financial performance**

Defra have worked closely with the GA and IE to monitor programme spend and align with original forecasted budgets and amend through CCNs where required. To more closely align with newly revised ODA terms and strengthen the programmes on GEDSI ahead of R2, on 30th October 2024, a CCN was approved to update ODA terms and conditions in OCEAN's grant agreements to meet new required Defra standards and HMG commitments and allow the GA an additional £25,525.50 per annum to recruit a GEDSI Manager to lead development of OCEAN's public GEDSI increased ambition statement for R2 and ownership of the GEDSI Action Plan.

Following this change, grant administration progressed as planned and on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025 terms and conditions for a multi-year contract extension valued at £1,642,111 was agreed through CCN. Fixed costs were revised through one further CCN on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025, to allow additional grant administrative support requirements for Indian NGOs. Defra and GA agreed this a necessary additional step to facilitate increased workload for GA relating to applications and awards for Indian NGOs with a break point for additional GA resource payment of £487.50 per application partner above a volume of 10.

Variable costs for GA and EC assessments have been closely managed and streamlined where possible particularly around assessment of applications in R1 and 2 due to the high volume of applications received. Fixed costs for IE have progressed as planned, with the exception of their expense claims that have failed to align with forecasted budgets. A CCN is currently being drafted to split out costs into three separate budgets, fixed, variable and additional to help improve financial forecasting and management of IE budgets.

## **E2. Assess the VfM of this output compared to the proposition in the Business Case, based on performance over the past year**

### ***E.2.1 Business Case VfM Assessment***

The OCEAN Full Business Case in 2023 included an assessment of the expected monetary benefits delivered by the programme. The methodology included mapping Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) from a selection of sample projects corresponding to BPF priorities. The analysis produced a range of possible BCRs for the programme, 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 that was originally assumed during Business Case planning.

The monetised benefits that were included in the analysis were marine environmental benefits, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saving benefits and economic benefits (partial). The methodology is available in the published OCEAN Business Case.

As with the 2024 Annual Review, the programme is in too early a stage to re-assess the monetary benefits and compare what has been achieved with the forecast in the OCEAN Business Case. We may be able to undertake a partial assessment of monetary benefits for the next Annual Review in August 2026.

### ***E.2 VfM Overview and Programme Cost-Effectiveness***

As seen above, there is not yet enough project-level evidence for a full quantitative assessment of cost-effectiveness. We can assess the steps that the programme has taken to embed VfM and strengthen the likelihood of cost-effectiveness in future years. OCEAN has taken several steps to

embed VfM throughout the programme. Progress has been made particularly at two levels – the IE (programme evaluation), and the GA and Defra (programme delivery).

An overarching VfM strategy and framework including indicators has been developed by the independent evaluator and the evaluation will provide learning to improve VfM and programme delivery. Outputs of the evaluation that will support our understanding of the programme’s VfM include: the Interim Evaluation (February 2026) including a full VfM strategy, case studies, evidence reviews, deep dives and the final evaluation in 2030.

**Grant Administrator and Defra (programme delivery)**

The GA and the Defra team have also led on several steps to ensure VfM and cost-effectiveness is maximised at programme-level:

- **Logframe refresh:** the GA and Defra co-led on a refresh of the programme logframe, based initially on feedback from the IE in the Inception Report. This included developing standard indicators for integration into grantee reporting. This holds the programme accountable to its performance, through regular reporting.
- **VfM integration into EC scoring:** VfM criteria was integrated into EC scoring of project applications to ensure VfM is considered properly from the beginning when assessing each prospective grantee.

**E.3 Assessment of the 4 Es**

The remaining assessment below will focus on qualitative evidence for Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity.

**Economy**

Economy considers whether the inputs required for a project are being procured at the best price. The key costs drivers for the programme in the last 12 months were the cost of the GA, funding for Community and Partnership Grantees, and the IE costs. These are all central to the delivery and success of OCEAN as a whole.

- OCEAN follows a robust project selection process, ensuring that grant funding reaches the most suitable and financially reliable organisations. The application and selection process is transparently explained through published guidance and GA-led webinars. The process includes eligibility and due diligence checks by the GA, and scoring of application quality by an independent EC. The shortlist of potential projects is presented and discussed at the Programme Board, for senior leaders to feed in with recommendations.
- Grantees are required to submit two progress reports per year – a Half-Year Report in October, and an Annual Report in April. Grantees must report progress against KPIs and their finances, ensuring they are held accountable. The GA also holds grantees to account for their spending through spot audits, requiring Change Requests if changing spend across budget lines or Financial Years, and Quarterly Claims reports based on actual spend.
- The focus on small community-level organisations and the global nature of the fund means that the spend and administration cost per grantee may be higher by nature.
- Cost also increases with the number of applications received. However, this is not necessarily negative, as reaching these smaller organisations in vulnerable communities is a key objective of OCEAN, and has a positive impact in terms of Equity.
- The GA has pursued different cost saving methods for translation services including AI translation of documents, and hiring local interpreters for webinar interpretation (representing a cost saving of 52%). However, changing requirements from R1 to R2 meant additional translation costs were incurred from translating new material.

**Efficiency**

Efficiency relates to how inputs can be turned into desired outputs. We can assess programme Efficiency through OCEAN’s time and cost-saving measures, and the spend per application.

- The Annual Review in 2024 included an analysis of the delivery cost per applicant. This has been repeated for this Annual Review, to understand whether this has increased or decreased for R2 applications.
  - In R1 there was an average cost of £573.65 per Partnership Grant application, and a £458.51 average cost per Community Grant application.
  - For R2, the administrative cost per application has decreased due to efficiencies of scale with the fixed price model of WS3. The average cost per PG application fell to £495.78, and the cost per CG application reduced to £358.19.
- The GA and IE met all of the milestones for their key deliverables on time and within budget.
- The allocation of funding to successful R1 grantees was delayed, meaning that project start dates slipped by one month.
  - In R1 fewer projects than expected were selected by the programme board. Funding fewer projects may have implications for Value for Money, as fewer projects could lead to lower net present monetary benefits (unless the projects that were discounted would have ended up producing negative net present benefits).
  - The programme board grappled with balancing the risk appetite of the programme with the assurance needed to ensure projects that are likely to be successful are selected. Lessons have also been learned from this experience which have been applied ahead of R2, with more time built in for discussions with the Programme Board, and improvements to the eligibility and selection criteria.

**Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to the ability of funding to deliver the selection of outputs most likely to result in the desired outcomes (and impacts). There is limited evidence of project-level effectiveness as projects have been running for less than a year, but OCEAN have strengthened several processes to select the most effective grantees, and to hold these to account for results once projects are operational.

- OCEAN will ensure that projects are held accountable for their results with the two reports in October and April, including reporting on the Standard Indicators which the GA have developed.
- The output data presented above show early signs of progress in the grants particularly promising is the 4,100 people in 12 countries being supported and 11,000 people receiving training in marine environment conservation, restoration, monitoring, management or sustainable livelihoods practices between November 2024 and March 2025.
- OCEAN has applied several examples of adaptive learning, to strengthen the overall effectiveness of the programme. This includes:
  - Staggering CG and PG start dates to limit overlap in admin and assessment tasks
  - Recruitment of additional EC members to add more expertise in required areas, including GEDSI and poverty reduction and to bolster resource to better manage workloads.
  - Additional time reserved for feedback letter writing and approval.

**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. OCEAN ensures that all projects have a focus on reducing poverty. This helps ensure that benefits are felt by those communities who are most in need.

- OCEAN has taken a number of steps to strengthen equity across the programme, particularly with the integration of GEDSI.
  - OCEAN has committed to move towards GEDSI, going above and beyond GESI with the explicit inclusion of disability in its strategy. Expanding the definition in this way ensures that positive outcomes for disabled people are brought to the forefront.

- A GEDSI expert has been onboarded to the GA team, who has led on strengthening GEDSI guidance and strategy across the programme. Resources that have been developed or revised include an OCEAN GEDSI Ambition Statement.
- A Review of Round 1 grantee's annual reports shows that 11 out of 20 reports reviewed (55%) mention inclusion of persons with disabilities. Of those 11, 7 (34% of total) discuss strategies for inclusion or inclusion of specific participants/beneficiaries with disabilities, and 4 (20% of total) note that disability inclusion and accessibility is a challenge or gap that they are seeking strategies to strengthen. Webinar sessions for R1 grantees have included discussions on the switch from GESI to GEDSI, emphasising that disability inclusion has always been part of social inclusion. With the timing of this stronger emphasis on disability inclusion, it is a strong start that over half of R1 grantees have discussed this in their first annual reports.
- One notable change to OCEAN ahead of R2 was to take as stronger and more explicit focus on GEDSI.
  - PGs must take a GEDSI Empowering Approach, and CGs must take a GEDSI Responsive approach at a minimum
  - This resulted in a strong level of GEDSI Ambition among R2 applications. 95% of Stage 1 applications were GEDSI Responsive or Higher, and 65% of successful Stage 1 applications were GEDSI Empowering or higher, compared to only 24% of unsuccessful applications. This indicates a strong link between higher GEDSI scores and Stage 1 success
- The GA has undertaken an analysis of grantee Annual Reports, including GEDSI scores. 1 Report was not assessed, but of the remaining 20, 11 were empowering, 8 were responsive, and only 1 was unaware.
  - Beneficiaries targeted include women and girls (1775), children (667), youth (607), people from IPLCs (2888). Projects report that data on people with disabilities is scarce, and most have not been able to disaggregate by this category
- The Logframe refresh and the Standard Indicator development involved further strengthening of GEDSI, with new GEDSI-focused indicators and requirements to disaggregate by GEDSI characteristics when reporting.
- Another important aspect of equity to consider is the make-up of the R1 grantees, and whether this reflects a diverse portfolio of projects from different geographies.
  - An analysis of R1 grantees shows that 8 (38%) grantees are from Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), 7 (33%) are from Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), and 6 (29%) are from Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs).
  - 10 (48%) are based in Asia – with 5 alone based in Indonesia, 7 (33%) in East Africa, 2 (10%) in Central and South America, 1 (5%) in Oceania and 1 (5%) in West Africa
  - Most CGs cluster around the maximum CG grant amount (£250,000) – 12 out of 18 are £240,000 or higher, with only 4 below £100,000
  - Further analysis also found that beneficiaries are located in mostly coastal and rural populations.
- For R2, a Stage 2 survey found that 69% of applicants had never applied for ODA funding before – demonstrating that OCEAN has been able to reach the sort of low-capacity organisation it is seeking to.

**E.4 VfM Conclusion and Recommendations**

OCEAN has a strong potential to deliver good VfM, as forecasted in the Business Case. There is limited information available on programme results given the early stage of projects. The processes in place to understand VfM through the GA and IE should be an enabler of high cost-effectiveness in future years.

Recommendations for further strengthening the likelihood of VfM in future years include:

1. **Apply adaptive learning from IE outputs:** the IE team has already produced several key outputs which can lead to improved programme monitoring. To ensure the programme is delivers VfM, learnings and recommendations from the IE need to be actionable and implemented.

- 2. **Align with the BPF Portfolio Evaluation:** Itad are delivering an Independent Evaluation of the entire BPF Portfolio. There is a significant opportunity for synergies between the two evaluations.
- 3. **Assess grantee ability to report on Standard Indicators:** the GA and IE should assess the ability of grantees to adequately report on the new Standard Indicators, and whether they require additional support to be able to provide the necessary information.
- 4. **Undertake monetary benefits assessment when sufficient data is available:** partial analysis may be possible for the next Annual Review in 2026 dependent on data availability, with more complete information ready by 2027.

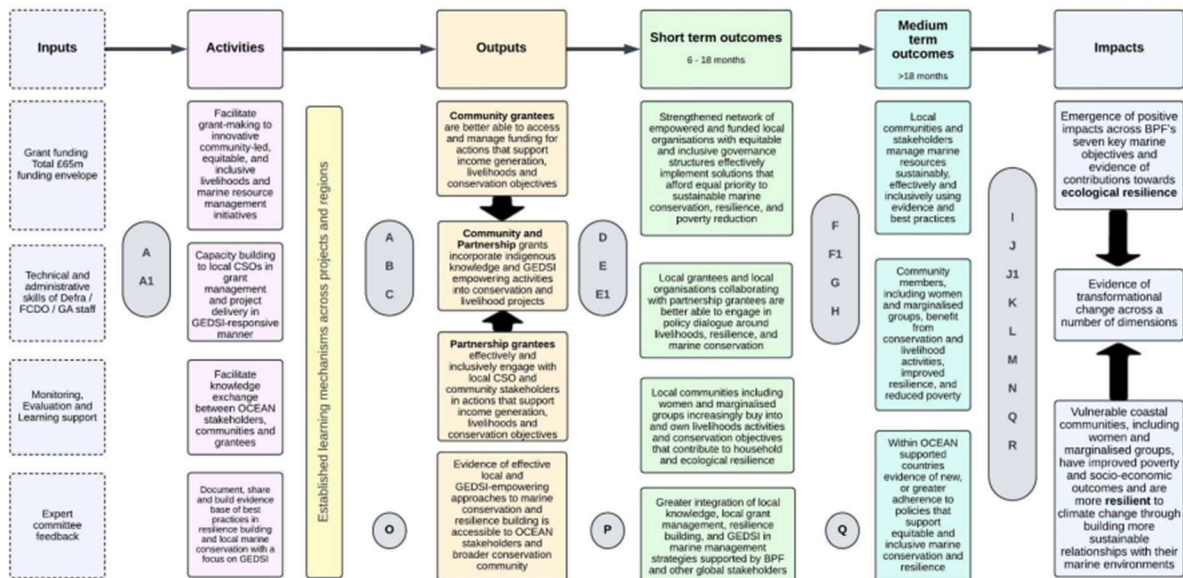
Date of last narrative financial report		Date of last audited annual statement	
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### Annex A: Round 1 OCEAN Projects

Project Reference	Grant Type	Country	Lead Organisation	Title of Project	Project Value	Project Dates
OPG1\209	Partnership	Mozambique	Zoological Society of London	Climate-resilient Coastal Communities and Marine Biodiversity in Northern Mozambique	£1,744,043	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2027
OPG1\132	Partnership	Honduras	Fauna & Flora International	Scaling Responsible Fisheries for Ecosystem Recovery alongside Honduran Coastal Communities	£2,999,378	01/11/2024 - 31/03/2029
OPG1\174	Partnership	Bangladesh	Uttaran	FISHNET: Fisherfolk Integration for Sustainable Habitat and Natural Ecosystem Transformation	£2,999,247	01/11/2024 - 31/03/2028
OCG1S2G B\1063	Community	Bangladesh	Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS)	Community-based Mangrove Restoration and Livelihoods in Sundarbans region of Bangladesh	£249,549.00	01/01/2025 - 31/12/2027
OCG1S2G B\1004	Community	Senegal	The Hunger Project Senegal	Project of Resilience and Empowerment of Coastal Communities of Yenne, Senegal	£249,819	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2027
OCG1S2G B\1083	Community	Tanzania	Aqua-Farms Organization	Matumbawe-Hai: Revitalizing Livelihoods in SOMAKI-CFMA, Co-management, Habitat-Restoration and Eco-Tourism	£247,279	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2026
OCG1S2G B\1054	Community	Malaysia	Reef Check Malaysia	Community-based Management of Marine Resources for Larapan Island, Sabah	£129,825	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2027
OCG1S2G B\1130	Community	Kenya	The Flipflopi Project Foundation	Incorporating Lamu East fisheries into a circular waste management model	£242,382	06/01/2025 - 30/03/2027
OCG1S2ID\1031	Community	Indonesia	BINTARI	Protecting Central Maluku Region's Biodiversity with Plastic Waste Management	£249,775	31/03/2025 - 31/03/2027
OCG1S2G B\1037	Community	Indonesia	Perkumpulan Rincong	Sustainable community management of customary marine areas in Aceh	£36,993.00	01/12/2024 - 30/11/2026
OCG1S2G B\1127	Community	Indonesia	Yayasan Mitra Insani	Protecting Mangroves for The Safety of Indragiri Hilir's livelihood	£243,216.00	01/11/2024 - 30/07/2027
OCG1S2G B\1148	Community	Indonesia	Yayasan Kopernik	Building Blue Economy to Empower Osi Island Seaweed Farmers	£99,863	01/11/2024 - 15.10/2025
OCG1S2ES\1004	Community	Madagascar	ONG Bel Avenir	Education, Marine Conservation and Employment Promotion vs Child Exploitation	£246,250	01/11/2024 - 31/03/2029
OCG1S2G B\1119	Community	Indonesia	Berikan Protein Initiative	Berikanpreneur	£24,353.00	11/11/2024 - 09/11/2025
OCG1S2G B\1093	Community	Peru	Planeta Oceano	Conservation of Giant Manta Rays in Northern Peru	£23,560.00	08/11/2024 - 08/11/2025

OCG1S2G B\1128	Community	Tanzania	Sea Sense	Strengthening Community-led Marine Managed Areas in Coastal Tanzania	£245,000	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2027
OCG1S2G B\1027	Community	PNG	Sea Women of Melanesia	Coral Triangle Marine Reserve Development in Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea	£111,100.00	01/01/2025 - 31/03/2029
OCG1S2G B\1034	Community	Philippines	NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR)	Combatting IUUF in Visayan Sea, Philippines through Empowered Fisher Alliances	£247,972	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2026
OCG1S2G B\1164	Community	Viet Nam	People and Nature Reconciliation	Transitioning SCA's to Marine OECM's in the North of Vietnam	£249,549	01/01/2025 - 31/12/2028
OCG1S2G B\1129	Community	Kenya	Coastal and Marine Resource Development (COMRED)	Secure coastal communities and seascapes through collaborative stewardship	£249,956	01/11/20224 - 30/09/2027
OCG1S2G B\1124	Community	Mozambique	Ocean Revolution Mocambique	Zero to Hero: Marine Conservation Capacity Building	£249,512	01/11/2024 - 30/09/2028

# Annex B: OCEAN Theory of Change



**Assumptions**

**A:** OCEAN is relevant and accessible to target CSOs, and there is availability of skilled personnel able to provide inputs; **A1:** OCEAN is funding the right organisations; **B:** CSOs have the capacity to meet/demonstrate minimum requirements and are able and willing to apply skills; **C:** A focus on working with Indigenous peoples and local communities enables the development of context-specific / locally grounded projects; **D:** Funding is available; **E:** CSOs have transparent and effective governance structures; **E1:** Inclusive governance structures are complemented by other critical enabling factors; **F:** Existence of the 'policy space' and resourcing to enable community access to benefits from ecosystem services and other funding streams; **F1:** Mechanisms for implementing the inclusive governance structures are fully resourced and supported; **G:** Funded actions provide opportunities for increased income / resilience for all community members including women; **H:** Existence of other BPF actions in the area; **I:** Local / national level policy framework is functional and political support is forthcoming; **J:** Pursuing inclusive approaches that are driven from the bottom-up and adequately resourced will contribute to poverty alleviation; **J1:** Benefits from conservation and livelihood activities are accessible to all - including women and marginalised groups - and of sufficient size to result in improvement in well-being outcomes; **K:** Conservation actions are of sufficient scale to improve household / community / regional resilience to climate change; **L:** Actions complement existing BPF programming; **M:** Households use increased incomes for productive purposes; **N:** Individuals and community members make resilience-enhancing behavioral changes; **O:** CSOs have the capacity and interest to access evidence, and evidence is presented in a way that is accessible to them; **P:** CSOs and other stakeholders apply lessons in programming; **Q:** Lessons are scaled to wider management approaches; **R:** Local and national-level decision makers use evidence in decision making and are not influenced by external elites who may challenge conservation efforts to protect economic interests

## **Annex C: GEDSI Focused Resources**

Under OCEAN Indicator 2.3 the following GEDSI-focused resources have been developed, revised or mainstreamed:

**Five GEDSI-focused resources developed:**

- [OCEAN GEDSI Ambition Statement](#) and [Applicant Guidance](#)
- [Ambition Statement 2-pager](#)
- [Blog: How can gender equality, disability and social inclusion strengthen OCEAN's efforts?](#)
- Gender Action Plan Template for Grantees
- Supplemental GEDSI resource for EC

**10 resources revised to incorporate GEDSI:**

- [Complete Guidance for Applicants](#)
- [MEL Guidance](#)
- Communications Guidance
- [Standard Indicators Guidance](#)
- [Partnership Grants: Essential Information](#)
- [Community Grants: Essential Information](#)
- [Logframe template](#)
- EC Handbook
- [Grantee Annual Report Templates](#)
- Risk Register

**3 GEDSI focused trainings delivered:**

- Introducing gender equality, disability and social inclusion for OCEAN
- Mainstreaming GEDSI in OCEAN projects
- Introducing GEDSI in an OCEAN application

**8 trainings delivered that incorporated GEDSI:**

- R1 Onboarding Webinar
- [R2 Launch Webinar](#)
- [R2 Community Grants: Stage 1 introduction webinar](#)
- [R2 Partnership Grants: How to apply and develop your webinar](#)
- [R2 Community Grants: How to develop your concept note webinar](#)
- EC onboarding session
- GEDSI Section for MEL webinar for stage 2 applicants.
- Presentation at December 2024 Defra GESI Community of Practice

## Annex D: Grant Administrator Key Performance Indicators

### Workstream 1: Core Design & Development of the Fund

**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. (RAG Status Green).**

- Status measured through delivery of high-quality and accessible application forms, guidance, feedback and application formats produced by the GA, and available for applicants on time for R1 and 2.
- The facilitation of lesson learning and ongoing development and improvement of the programme through feedback from applicants, grantees and internal teams compiled via surveys and monthly meetings with learnings recorded from discussions.
- Initiation of a recommendations tracker regularly updated by the GA and reviewed monthly.

### Workstream 2: Supporting Projects and Applications

**KPI 2: High Delivery Partner performance and strong applications are enabled by adaptive and tailored support provided by the GA (RAG Status Amber – partially met).**

- Status measured through data compiled and monitored through OCEAN Helpdesk function and applicant and delivery partner surveys with set % success targets. In each target set the GA exceeded requirements demonstrating:
  - o 98% GA response rate to applicant queries within 5 working days.
  - o 89% Customer Satisfaction on quality of responses received from GA.
  - o 98% Customer satisfaction on quality of guidance documents.
  - o 87% of applicants accessed webinars hosted by GA.
  - o 92% Customer satisfaction on relevance and useful support provided through webinars hosted by GA.
  - o >95% Customer satisfaction for detailed feedback provided for successful and unsuccessful Stage 1 applicants.
- Did not however fully meet success % target set of >75% of R1 resubmitted applications scoring higher in R2, with 55% of community grants and 69% of Partnership grants stage 1 resubmissions demonstrating improved scores at R2.
- Action agreed: Consider how to best structure this indicator to remove factors out of GA's control.

### Workstream 3: Annual Applicant Rounds: The Fund Cycle

**KPI 3: Grant Administrators implement effective administration and management of the Annual Application Round to support target applicants to submit applications (RAG Status Green)**

- Status measured through effective planning of timelines and administration of fund cycle, with all key dates and delivery deadlines met.

### Workstream 4: The EC

**KPI 4: The EC is efficiently supported to ensure high quality application evaluation and approvals (RAG Status Green).**

- Status measured by timely provision of documents, sift meetings and EC satisfaction feedback survey. Strengthening of assessment criteria at each stage based on feedback from EC, OCEAN Programme Board and lessons learned from Annual Fund Cycles.
- Effective and timely management on the recruitment and onboarding of 4 new Expert Committee members and assessment payment claims for all EC members, ensuring costs are streamlined across the application sift and review processes for R1 and 2.

### Workstream 5: Day to Day Project Management

**KPI 5: The Fund is managed in an agile, appropriate and adaptive way, responding to risks and opportunities to strengthen performance (RAG Status Green).**

- Status measured through requests from Defra being acknowledged and actioned within agreed contractual timeframes and to an acceptable quality.
- Major risks, fraud, SEAH, safeguarding and reputational issues/incidents are identified, documented and reported to Defra within 1 working day.
- Meetings, planned, managed and reported on to an acceptable standard with actions and learnings supporting adaptive management of the programme.
- Recommendations reviewed monthly and appropriate actions tracked and agreed with Defra to support the continued development and refinement of fund processes.

### Workstream 6: New and Live Projects

**KPI 6: Management of projects, and their finances, are delivered to a high standard, with fund-level monitoring and reporting of Grantees via Management Information identifying risks and opportunities to strengthen fund performance (RAG Status Green).**

- Status measured based on 100% of grants being disbursed to Delivery Partners within the agreed timeframe and financial forecasts accurately matching monthly expenditure needs.
- Management Information (MI) tools are reviewed and updated monthly and adapted as required in response to risks and opportunities raised via regular meetings.

**Workstream 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

**KPI 7: The performance of projects and the Fund is strengthened by adapting and responding to recommendations arising from feedback, projects and annual reviews (RAG Status Green).**

- Status measured through the GA effectively supporting programme level MEL through collecting feedback, facilitating lesson learning, liaising with IE and compiling recommendations and actions for adaptive management of the Fund.
- All survey results presented at MI meetings immediately after results received.
- Lessons and recommendations from R1 collated into report, GA provided feedback for both Annual Reviews, and collated recommendations for R2.
- R1 and R2 applicant surveys produced and results compiled.
- Successful in-person monitoring review conducted by GA on Community Grant project in ██████████ to validate and strengthen the project’s approach to safeguarding and risk management. The outcome of this visit afforded the development of a case study presentation by the delivery partner to other grantees on how they approached strengthening their safeguarding policy, which provided exposure and awareness of safeguarding to OCEAN grantees helping them to identify areas where they could improve their own safeguarding approaches.

**Workstream 8: Communications and Promotion of the Fund**

**KPI 8: International awareness and understanding of the fund is strengthened, and the opportunity to apply reaches new prospective Applicants, with communication strategies being agile and adaptive to support strategic priorities. (RAG Status Amber – partially met).**

- Status measured leverages of external events (e.g. webinars, workshops in-country visits) and other opportunities to increase engagement/promotion of the fund and increase applications from agreed strategic priorities and target audiences (e.g., ODA requirements for poverty alleviation and inclusion of GEDSI; Government thematic and geographic priorities for Least Developed Countries (LDC), Lower-Middle Income Countries (LMIC) and UMIC countries).
- Overall website performance, communications through social media and website statistical trends are all on track (RAG Green)
- OCEAN Grantee Engagement were partially met for FY24/25 with <75% attendance at events, however are on track for FY25/26 Q1 (RAG Green)
- GA Exceeded >70% targets set on applications received from eligible countries for R2: Community Grants made up of 75% LDC and LMIC countries; Partnership Grants made up of 71% of LDC and LMIC countries
- GA did not meet strategic priorities target set for West Africa and LDCs of >70% growth of applications being submitted from fund strategic priorities compared to R1: West Africa showed only 14% increase and LDCs 24% increase at R2. This was predominantly down to delays in Programme Board decision making, which impacted outreach and engagement processes due to Defra delays in approval of R2 launch.
- Action agreed: Engagement targets for each Annual Application Round are agreed with Defra at least three months before launch through the Annual Application Round Engagement Strategy, and all agreed targets are fully met.

## Annex E: Independent Evaluator Key Activities/Achievements

- **Signed MoU between Defra, GA and IE (complete):**
  - The MoU was signed approximately 1 month late due to an extended timeframe being required to draft and agree terms between parties.
- **Inception Report (complete):** Due to delays in signing the MoU the deadline for the Inception Report was pushed back from December 6<sup>th</sup> 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. The Inception Report was submitted on time by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 and reviewed the programme ToC and logframe, MEL framework, refined a list of evaluation questions, provided detailed sampling strategy, outlined the approach to learning from unsuccessful applicants and provided a list of evaluation activities and outputs.
- **Interim Evaluation (currently underway – on target):**
  - Process evaluation of the various stages and elements of the programme
  - Quality-assurance of programme monitoring
  - Quality assurance of process and effectiveness of embedding data into decisions
  - Review and update of the programme ToC
  - Progress towards programme objectives
  - Early findings from a first set of case studies
  - Review of GA learning processes and systems
  - Changes to programme design and/or delivery from programme learning
  - Recommendations for what should be included in the final evaluation
  - Interim Value for Money evaluation
- **Learning Workshops (complete):** The first set of learning workshops have been completed with three sessions with Defra and GA stakeholders:
  - Workshop 1: Stakeholder Mapping and Needs Assessment (11<sup>th</sup> March 2025)
  - Workshop 2: Learning Priorities and Questions (March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025)
  - Workshop 3: Learning Plan Development (24<sup>th</sup> April 2025)
- **Draft OCEAN Learning Plan (complete):** The draft OCEAN Learning Plan was submitted on time on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025. The next iteration will be submitted in August 2025.
- **Draft Value for Money Framework (underway):** The draft framework was submitted early on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at the request of Defra. This is currently being reviewed by Defra.
- **Evidence Review Concept Notes (complete):** Concept Notes have been developed for three evidence reviews:
  - Measurement of ICF indicator 4 on climate change resilience and its applicability to marine conservation projects.
  - How to answer OCEAN learning question 5: How might OCEAN drawn insights from current geopolitical and other contextual factors affecting ODA to guide future programming? How might OCEAN adapt or reshape its programming and refine its value proposition within the evolving global context.
  - Deep-dive to explore how OCEAN might leverage in-country synergies between grants across the BPF portfolio. How can we target future funding rounds to maximise the potential for transformative change.
- **Final Evaluation (not yet started – as planned)**
  - Assessment of whether OCEAN has achieved its outcome and impacts
  - Assessment of OCEAN's application of adaptive management
  - Recommended approach to assess Value for Money
  - Case study findings
  - Assessment of the long-term sustainability of the projects
  - Synthesis of findings from the Deep Dives
  - potential for transformative change.
- **The IE has also participated in the below activities:**
  - Participated in the OCEAN Round 1 Programme Board meeting in October 2025.
  - Participated in the OCEAN Programme Board Strategy meeting in July 2025 as an observer.
  - Reviewed and provided feedback for the OCEAN Grantee Feedback Survey.
  - Participated in the BPF Evaluation Workshop.
  - Participated in the BPF Poverty Sprint.
  - Attended OCEAN Operations Meetings.
  - Attended OCEAN Quarterly Meetings.

## Annex F: Summary of Key OCEAN Risks

<p>Safeguarding - SEAH within funded project</p>	<p><b>Cause:</b> A failure to properly administer monitoring protocols for SEAH within projects</p> <p><b>Event:</b> Programme/partner staff doing harm or not reporting incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment or bullying</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> A pause, delay or cancellation of the individual project, along with reputational damage for Defra and government</p>	<p><b>Very High</b></p>	<p><b>High</b></p>	<p><b>Very High</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Defra will ensure Grant Administrator has a specialist in place to ensure close oversight and due diligence of activities across portfolio.</li> <li>2) 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. Delivery partners will have minimum safeguarding and PSEAH standards in place. These standards will be assessed against the CAPSEAH Minimum Actions by the Grant Administrator Safeguarding Manager, with feedback provided to ensure an appropriate minimum level of policy and procedures are in place across all grantees (at time of award)</li> <li>3) Grant Administrators to review updates on SEAH from grantees as part of the annual reporting process, with additional feedback provided where necessary by the Safeguarding Manager to grantees to continue to strengthen their approach (Annually in April / May.)</li> <li>4) Defra will ensure our Grant Administrator will be able to provide adequate training and advice to applicants and delivery partners. Training to be provided during Application webinars and to grantees during onboarding and annually in Annual Report workshops. To include how to report incidents of SEAH to Defra.</li> <li>5) Enhanced monitoring for projects that are deemed to be high risk either because of vulnerability of project participants or other factors.</li> </ol>	<p><b>High – Safeguarding will represent a permanent risk for all programming given the sensitive nature of the risks, the power dynamics of all projects and the necessity of CAPSEAH approaches to assume that if there is nothing being reported, the monitoring system is not working as intended. However, impact will be reduced as an effect of our Mitigation Approach</b></p>
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Project and Programme	<p><b>Cause:</b> Grantees allocate insufficient time and resources to GEDSI.</p> <p><b>Event:</b> Smaller organisations not having the experience and expertise to develop and fully implement strong GEDSI approaches throughout the project.</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> Poor implementation of equality and inclusion project components, missed opportunities to include and empower marginalised community members, perhaps perpetuating or exacerbating existing inequalities. This can reduce the impact of the programme and open OCEAN to reputational harm.</p>	Medium	High	High	<p>1) Materials (application forms, presentation PowerPoints, webinars, etc.) are developed with accessibility in mind (screen readers, translators, presentations that describe relevant slide visuals, etc).</p> <p>2) OCEAN staff responsible for webinars and trainings learn the tenents of Universal Learning Design to meet the needs of a diverse range of grantees.</p> <p>3) Option for applicants/grantees to share their needs for resonable accommodations.</p>	<p><b>Low – The work done by our GEDSI lead in developing a GEDSI framework that is clearly marked for project proposals and training for Expert Committee Members ensure that all projects that do not meet GEDSI requirements are weeded out in the selection process, further support for active projects from GA MEL lead should help to ensure project ambitions stay on track to the best of our ability</b></p>
Delivery and Operational	<p><b>Cause:</b> Severe disruptions that Jeopardise the effectiveness or ability to implement projects</p>	Medium	Medium	Medium	<p>1)Environmental risks are factored into project programming and will be monitored by Defra through their grant administrator throughout the lifetime of the programme.</p> <p>2)Grantees to maintain and update a risk register - projects that operate in challenging areas / of heightened risk, should be able to</p>	<p><b>Low – All projects need to demonstrate an awareness of climate risks and have mitigation</b></p>

	<p><b>Event:</b> Natural disasters, extreme climatic events and hazards</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> Delays and or the cancelling of implementation of initiatives, that would likely lead to performing under budget, using up time and effecting the overall performance of OCEAN</p>				<p>demonstrate a clear understanding of how to manage this risk in their application. Enhanced risks registers should carefully consider differentiated risks for marginalised or vulnerable community members and project staff.</p> <p>3) Major events will be logged in the 'issues log' to flag any specific issues for projects within region effected and provide ability to track and monitor at project level through issues log.</p> <p>4) Grant Administrators ensure clear understanding of Change Request process to allow projects to adapt to issues/events that occur.</p>	<p><b>plans in space to ensure such events have a minimal impact, while we assume that such events will happen, there are no projects selected that cannot demonstrate a reasonable understanding and planned response to such issues</b></p>
Strategy and Context	<p><b>Cause:</b> Defra not understanding the programmes worth in the overall portfolio, underestimating or misunderstanding the value .</p> <p><b>Event:</b> A diverse portfolio of projects that might not immediately have much connection to one another or complimentary to other projects in the BPF fund.</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> Problems could be open ended and range from restructuring</p>	Medium	High	High	<p>1). Projects will be required to address either the four Defra led, three FCDO led outcomes, or broader marine environment impacts in some way, and this will allow an aggregation and focus around these. In later years, the focus can be further narrowed based on the projects OCEAN will have already funded.</p> <p>2). Indicators that OCEAN programme and its projects will be required to report on, will also allow Grant administrator &amp; indepent evlautor to aggregate their impact.</p> <p>3) MEL framework - will help ensure continued monitoring, evaluation and learning of projects and overalol programme success throughout.</p> <p>4) OCEAN grants team to ensure we have all points relating to the projects value and importance readily to hand in a core brief and other documents that can clearly outline the theory of change and strategic value of this programme.</p> <p>5) Highlight effectiveness of similar projects (e.g Darwin) and how they help bolster HMG's position in environmental matters due to</p>	<p><b>Medium – Narrative and Strategic clarity have always been an issue for OCEAN, the intent of OCEAN has been to cast a wide selection parameter, with all BPF objectives and all ODA Eligible Countries involved, the hope has been to use a comprehensive independent evaluation to find strong models for replication in the future while focusing throughout</b></p>

of programme to outright cancellation.

the respect they have developed

6) Utilise focused funding rounds to target immediate government priorities and increase alignment with OCEAN outcomes

rounds based on what is seen to be the greatest priority, however this will mean that it is hard to join up these projects and present a clear narrative during the immediate lifecycle.

<p>Financial and Fiduciary</p>	<p><b>Cause:</b> Insufficient due diligence checks regarding finances at the selection and project monitoring stage</p> <p><b>Event:</b> Fraudulent applicants being accepted, or projects misusing allocated funds for non-project purposes</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> Projects funds become misappropriated and used in others ways, leading to reputational damage and a reduction in the number of projects delivered and the programmes overall value for money</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Very High</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>1). Defra will ensure our Grant administrator manages and mitigates financial risk associated with the potential delivery partners, through enhanced due diligence checks conducted prior to grant award paperwork being signed and instalments being transferred. This will be done by reviewing all documentation relevant to these processes, with a due diligence report provided and reviewed by Defra before awards are put in place or amended.</p> <p>2) The Grant Administrators will implement a robust reporting framework, to ensure grantees provide regular updates on progress and supporting evidence that their projects are being delivered in line with the agreed application and workplan. Annual reports to include a financial reporting section, and grantees will be required to provide a quarterly financial report on actuals and upcoming forecasted estimates. In addition, the Grant Administrators will conduct annual spot audits and project monitoring visits on a sample of projects each year. To be agreed with Defra the sampling process and candidates ahead of conducting the process each year. This will commence in June/July annually.</p> <p>3). 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. Any incidents of Fraud will be logged and reported to the Defra Fraud Team.</p>	<p><b>Medium – Due to the distance of projects, there is a reliance on what we are sent by the organisations being true, site visits and other spot checks do provide a means of mitigating the risk of large scale fraud, but persistent, smaller scale fraud may be difficult to track.</b></p>
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					4). Funding will be disbursed in stages via Grant administrator, which will allow monitoring and the ability to halt expenditure if necessary, reducing the potential for funds to be misused. An escalation policy is in place and managed by the Grant Administrators to allow Defra to pause funding should there be concerns or poor performance (e.g a lack of reporting)	
Reputational	<p><b>Cause:</b> There are negative comments on social media about the application process</p> <p><b>Event:</b> Finding the application process challenging, the competitive elements of the programme, or as a result of disagreement with feedback/results</p> <p><b>Consequence:</b> Reputational damage and corresponding drop in applications</p>	High	Low	Medium	<p>1) Defra to ensure that Grant Administrator will review all comments and where necessary receive a reply.</p> <p>2) Defra will ensure that all relevant channels can clearly signpost people to the Helpdesk and formal help services available where requests for support are uploaded on social media.</p> <p>3) Contact details for the helpdesk will be clearly displayed on all social media profiles.</p> <p>4) Defra to be extra vigilant and provide extra oversight with Grant Administrator in the weeks around feedback letters / award notifications.</p>	<p><b>Low – Feedback from Grantees is overwhelmingly positive with GA able to meet all correspondence KPI’s for Helpdesk Queries, there is at times dissatisfaction with responses, however active engagement with Feedback Letters tends to lead to more positive responses as there is that responsive engagement lacking in most other grant funds</b></p>

## Annex G: OCEAN Logframe

PROJECT TITLE	Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature Grants Programme										
IMPACT	Impact Indicator 1		Baseline	Aug-24	Aug-25	Aug-26	Aug-27	Aug-28	Aug-29	Total	
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	Area of marine ecosystems protected, restored or sustainably managed due to OCEAN finance (ha) [BPF KPI 6; DII KPI 1; ICF KPI 17]	Planned		0	0						
		Achieved		0	93,290 ha						
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>									
		<p><b>Measure:</b> Hectares (ha) of marine and coastal ecosystem protected, restored or under sustainable management. <b>Method:</b> Area of marine ecosystems protected, enhanced or under sustainable management practices as a result of OCEAN finance. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Country; Ecosystem; Sustainable Management Practice (protected, restored, sustainably managed). Note that Ecosystem typology is priority marine/coastal ecosystems identified in OCEAN Standard Indicator 1a-c, but still aligned with ICF 'biome' disaggregation. <b>Data and source:</b> Project Annual Reports, Project Final Reports, Standard Indicators 1a-c, IE case studies &amp; deep dives.</p>									
	Impact Indicator 2		Baseline	Aug-24	Aug-25	Aug-26	Aug-27	Aug-28	Aug-29	Total	
	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		0	0						
		Achieved		0	410						
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>									

		<p><b>Measure:</b> Number of people with improved climate adaptation/resilience outcomes. <b>Method:</b> BPF KPI 2.1 - Number of people with improved outcomes - climate adaptation and climate resilience (ICF KPIs 1 and 4 - caution on double counting). <b>Disaggregation:</b> country; sex (female, male); age (child, adult, youth, elder); <b>IPLC status; Disability status. Data and source:</b> Data reported by projects in their Annual Report under OCEAN Standard Indicator 4 "Number of people supported to better adapt to the effects of climate change" . IE Case studies and deep dives in later years.</p>								
	<b>Impact Indicator 3</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Equitable and inclusive improvements in multidimensional poverty outcomes. <b>[BPF KPI 2.2:</b> Number of people with improved poverty and socio-economic outcomes due to BPF finance (#)]	<b>Planned</b>		0	0					
		<b>Achieved</b>		0	171					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<p><b>Measure:</b> Number of people with improved poverty/socio-economic outcomes. <b>Method:</b> BPF KPI 2.2 - Number of people with improved outcomes - poverty reduction. Number of people with improved outcomes in food security, health, sustainable livelihoods, income, tenure/access rights, or benefitting from sustainable waste management (OCEAN Standard Indicator 3a-f). <b>Disaggregation:</b> Income (DI KPI); Food security (DI KPI); Health and wellbeing; Sector; country; sex (female, male); age (child, adult, youth, elder); IPLC status; Disability status. <b>Data and source:</b> Data reported by projects in their Annual Report under OCEAN Standard Indicator 3a-f, IE case studies and deep dives.</p>								
	<b>Impact Indicator 4</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>ICF KPI 15:</b> Extent to which OCEAN is likely to have a transformational impact (score) <b>[ICF KPI 15]</b>	<b>Planned</b>		-	-					
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	-					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								

		<b>Measure:</b> Score 1-5 based on ICF KPI 15 criteria. ICF KPI 15. Extent to which ICF intervention is likely to lead to Transformational Change. <b>Method:</b> To be developed with IE. <b>Data and Source:</b> OCEAN Standard Indicators, Project Final Reports, IE Case Studies and Deep Dives.								
		<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>				
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>Outcome Indicator 1</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
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 new and improved policies and frameworks developed, adopted and implemented as a result of OCEAN projects <b>[DII KPI TA3/TA4]</b>	<b>Planned</b>		0	0					
		<b>Achieved</b>		0	0					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										
		<b>Measure:</b> Number of policies and strategies developed, adopted and/or implemented by OCEAN projects. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Country; Policy stage (developed, adopted, implemented); New or improved (new, improved); Level of policy or strategy (Local / regional / national / international); Implementing organisation (Government; Non-government) <b>Data Source:</b> OCEAN Standard Indicator 9, IE Case Studies and deep dives.								
	<b>Outcome Indicator 2</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Number of local people benefiting from improved marine environmental protection and/or poverty reduction outcomes as a result of OCEAN projects	<b>Planned</b>		0	0					
		<b>Achieved</b>		0	4123					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										

		<b>Measure:</b> Number of local people benefitting from improved marine environmental protection and/or poverty reduction. <b>Method:</b> Number of beneficiaries reported in Project Annual reports. <b>Disaggregation:</b> country; sex (female, male); age (child, adult, youth, elder); IPLC status; Disability status.								
	<b>Outcome Indicator 3</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Increased effective, equitable and sustainable representation and participation of coastal resources stakeholders in management (score 1-5) <b>[BPF KPI 3]</b>	<b>Planned</b>		-	-					
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	-					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										
		<b>Measure:</b> Score 1-5 (ineffective - fully effective) for i) establishment of systems of co-management, ii) improved access and capacity to participate in co-management, and iii) strengthened systems of community organising and collaboration. <b>Method:</b> See BPF KPI 3 - OCEAN specific method to be developed with IE. <b>Data and source:</b> Project Annual Reports, Project Final Reports, OCEAN Standard Indicator 6, IE case studies & deep dives.								
		<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>				
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME</b>	<b>Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
OCEAN increases capability and capacity of locally-based organisations in ODA-eligible countries to leverage funding to	Applicants & Grantees report they have an improved ability to	<b>Planned</b>		-	-					
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	-					

design and deliver sustainable, equitable and inclusive solutions to reduce poverty and protect the marine environment	access funding since engaging with OCEAN. <b>Proportion of applicants and grantees reporting an improved ability to access funding.</b>									
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<b>Measure:</b> % applicants and grantees reporting an improved ability to access funding. <b>Method: Assessed by Independent Evaluator Disaggregation:</b> Funding pathway (Community/Partnership); Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Successful/Unsuccessful applicants; Lead/Partner; First time funded (yes/no); Location (ODA/non-ODA); GEDSI (gender balance of organisation management); Age								
	<b>Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Proportion of OCEAN projects contributing to the development of policy frameworks or sustainable practices	<b>Planned</b>		-	-					50%
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	14%					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<b>Measure:</b> % of OCEAN projects contributing to the development of policy frameworks or sustainable practices as reported in Annual Reports (OCEAN Standard Indicator 9). <b>Disaggregation:</b> Funding pathway (Community/Partnership); (climate/environment/people). Data source: <b>OCEAN Standard Indicator 9 in Annual Reports, IE case studies/deep dives</b>								
	<b>Intermediate Outcome Indicator 3</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>Planned</b>			-					100%

	OCEAN projects are GEDSI responsive, empowering and transformative <b>a) Proportion of Community grants that are at least GEDSI responsive</b>	<b>Achieved</b>				94%					
	<b>b) Proportion of Partnership grants that are at least GEDSI empowering</b>	<b>Planned</b>				-					100%
		<b>Achieved</b>				100%					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>											
<b>Measure:</b> a) % of Community grants that are at least GEDSI responsive. b) % of Partnership grants that are at least GEDSI empowering. <b>Disaggregation: Funding pathway (Community, Partnership).</b>											
		<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>					
<b>OUTPUT 1</b>	<b>Output Indicator 1.1</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Organisations in ODA eligible countries are better able to access and manage funding to address marine environment and poverty reduction challenges at a local-level	Proportion of funds committed that are managed by organisations in ODA-eligible countries in their role as Lead Organisation or Partner Organisation in OCEAN grants.	<b>Planned</b>				65%					
		<b>Achieved</b>				82.7%					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>											

		<b>Measure:</b> Proportion of funds allocated to organisations registered in ODA eligible countries in OCEAN project budgets. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Funding pathway (Community/Partnership); Organisation size (small/medium/large - defined by average annual income); Lead/Partner.								
	<b>Output Indicator 1.2</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Proportion of grantees demonstrating effective management of OCEAN funds through meeting reporting requirements.	<b>Planned</b>		-	90%					
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	95%					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<b>Measure:</b> Proportion of OCEAN grantees scoring 'moderate' to 'excellent' on their Annual Report Progress & Results and Reporting and Evidence Quality, and meeting the GEDSI score minimum standard (average across all categories).								
	<b>IMPACT WEIGHTING (%): 20</b>	<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>				
<b>OUTPUT 2</b>	<b>Output Indicator 2.1</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
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.	<b>Number of applicants and grantees attending OCEAN training to build their capacity to apply, design projects and effectively manage projects</b>	<b>Planned</b>		350	1,119					
		<b>Achieved</b>		1119	1271					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								

		<b>Measure:</b> Number of unique organisations attending OCEAN training. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Audience (Applicant/Grantee), Mode (Registered/Attended live); Location (number of countries in attendance).								
	<b>Output Indicator 2.2</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Applicants and Grantees report that OCEAN training and guidance was relevant and useful.	<b>Planned</b>		75%	75%					
	<b>a) Proportion reporting that OCEAN training is relevant and useful</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		<b>94%</b> (source: Round 1 Stage 1 Post-Application Survey 2024, 392 respondents)	<b>91%</b> Average across all 2025 applicant and grantee surveys (92% of CG Stage 1 applicants; 91% of CG Stage 2 applicants; 90% of PG Applicants; 91% of Grantees)					
	<b>b) Proportion reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful</b>	<b>Planned</b>		75%	75%					
		<b>Achieved</b>		<b>98%</b> (source: Round 1 Stage 1 Post-Application Survey 2024, 392 respondents)	<b>96%</b> Average across all applicant and grantee surveys (96% of CG Stage 1 applicants; 98% of CG Stage 2 applicants; 99% of PG applicants, 91% of Grantees)					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										

		<p><b>Measure:</b> a) % of OCEAN applicants reporting that training and support is relevant and useful. b) % applicants reporting that OCEAN guidance is relevant and useful. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Unit (% reporting training and support/guidance was relevant and useful); Type (webinars/helpdesk/expert committee feedback/written guidance); applicants vs grantees. <b>Method: Likert scale (5pt) questions in Applicant Surveys (Stage 1 &amp; Stage 2); Annual Grantee Survey.</b></p>								
	<b>Output Indicator 2.3</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	OCEAN provides guidance and training on GEDSI considerations to support projects and applicants. <b>a) Number of GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised; Number of resources with GEDSI mainstreamed.</b>	<b>Planned</b>			-GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised: <b>5</b> Resources with GEDSI mainstreamed: <b>7</b>					
		<b>Achieved</b>		GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised: <b>5</b> Resources with GEDSI mainstreamed: <b>7</b>	GEDSI focused: <b>5</b> GEDSI mainstreamed: <b>10</b>					
	<b>b) Number of GEDSI-focused trainings delivered; number of trainings with</b>	<b>Planned</b>			-GEDSI-focused trainings: <b>3</b> Trainings with GEDSI mainstreamed: <b>7</b>					

	<b>GEDSI mainstreamed</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		GEDSI-focused trainings: 3 Trainings incorporating GEDSI: 7	GEDSI focused: 3 GEDSI mainstreamed: 8					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<b>Measure:</b> a) Number of GEDSI-focused resources developed or revised; resources developed or revised to incorporate GEDSI, b) Number of GEDSI-focused trainings delivered; number of trainings delivered that incorporate GEDSI.								
	<b>IMPACT WEIGHTING (%): 40</b>	<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>				
<b>OUTPUT 3</b>	<b>Output Indicator 3.1</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
Knowledge is produced and shared to address marine environmental and poverty reduction challenges is effectively facilitated by OCEAN and its projects through networks, partnerships and learning processes	Applicants and grantees engage in learning events to learn from the OCEAN programme and other grantees (including Partnership Grant to Community Grant knowledge transfer), and to find and share opportunities for support and training external to OCEAN	<b>Planned</b>		0-	80%					
		<b>Achieved</b>		-	67%					
		<b>Data, sources and methods</b>								
		<b>Measure:</b> Proportion of OCEAN grantees attending learning events. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Pathway (Community/Partnership).								
	<b>Output Indicator 3.2</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>

	OCEAN shares evidence and learnings with other existing programmes and stakeholders external to Defra.	<b>Planned</b>	0	Processes: 6 Evidence Pieces: 1	10					
		<b>Achieved</b>		Processes: 6 Evidence Pieces: 4	14					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										
		<b>Measure:</b> Number of instances of OCEAN actively sharing evidence and learning. <b>Method:</b> OCEAN leverages new and existing processes (such as regular meetings, presentations, teach-ins) to share evidence and learning. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Examples will be listed including delivery type (written reports/workshops/webinars/presentations) Subject area (e.g. BPF outcomes/poverty/GEDSI)								
	<b>Output Indicator 3.3</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Aug-25</b>	<b>Aug-26</b>	<b>Aug-27</b>	<b>Aug-28</b>	<b>Aug-29</b>	<b>Total</b>
	OCEAN projects produce and share accessible knowledge products (both written and non-written) related to marine environment and poverty reduction.	<b>Planned</b>		N/A	0	80%				
	<b>Proportion of OCEAN grantees producing and sharing accessible knowledge products.</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		N/A	80%					
<b>Data, sources and methods</b>										

		<b>Measure:</b> Proportion of OCEAN grantees producing and sharing accessible knowledge products as reported in their Annual Reports. These products may include documents, spoken presentations, visual media, and other formats. <b>Disaggregation:</b> Unit (% projects that produce knowledge products); Pathway (Community/Partnership); Type (newsletter, blog posts, case studies, peer-review publications); Language (En/Other); Number of products (1-5, 6-10, 11+);					
	<b>IMPACT WEIGHTING (%):</b> <b>40</b>	<b>Defra (£)</b>	<b>Govt (£)</b>	<b>Other (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>Defra SHARE (%)</b>	