

How to unlock greater investment in ocean science and infrastructure

“How to” workshop summary

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Summary

Ocean science remains largely unrecognised by the public, despite progress under the UN Ocean Decade. Blue finance addresses these gaps by linking startups to commercial value chains, bridging innovation with ecosystem restoration. It also expands blue infrastructure beyond physical assets to include data-driven solutions like digital twins and software-as-a-service, making blue-economy initiatives more efficient. Innovative financial instruments, such as blue bonds and loans, integrate markets, technology and policy, creating investable securities that drive sustainable ocean funding. Strengthening these financial mechanisms and demonstrating their long-term returns will be key to unlocking greater investment in ocean science. The session is the first step in an initiative led by the Ocean Decade that seeks to build a partner coalition to drive the development and implementation of new approaches to calculating return on investment in ocean science to guide decision-making.

Blue finance and innovation

Assessments, planning and private-sector engagement

- Strengthening environmental-impact assessments (EIAs) as a financial requirement increases investor confidence and ensures marine ecosystems are not harmed by development activities. Marine spatial planning optimises resource management, reduces costs and improves investment traceability, making blue finance more attractive.
- The shipping and bulk-cargo sectors must integrate ocean science into their models to attract sustainable finance. Investment in ocean-mapping technologies will improve risk assessments and reform unsustainable supply chains. Early-stage financing and structured mentorship can help scale blue startups, while blockchain tokenisation of marine assets requires better regulatory alignment

Innovative blue investments

- Financial models like blue bonds and investment pools for seagrass, fisheries and marine renewable energy can bridge sustainability and commercial viability, creating new investment opportunities.
- The “ridge to reef” approach ensures investments consider entire ecosystems, increasing long-term returns



and reducing financial risks. Identifying the right intervention point early is key to securing blue finance.

Science-society-policy interface

Ocean literacy and media engagement

- Expanding ocean literacy and awareness campaigns will drive investment by highlighting the link between ocean health and economic stability. Training journalists in marine-science reporting will improve public discourse and increase visibility for funding opportunities. Training scientists in the language used by investors will also help bridge the communication gap.
- The seabed-mapping community has been working on innovative ways to analyse and communicate the economic and societal benefits of data collection and sharing as a means of fostering additional resource mobilisation and partnerships.
- Media engagement should be followed by financial and policy mechanisms that turn awareness into sustainable investments.

Marine science and observations

- Demonstrating the cost-benefit of sustained ocean research can attract private investment. Advances in physical oceanography exist, but deeper investment in marine biology and biogeochemistry is needed to assess ecosystem health and financial risks.
- Offshore ecosystems are critical to climate regulation but receive less funding than coastal areas. Expanding offshore research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of ocean health and its financial implications.

Bridging science and policy through finance

- Translating scientific findings into economic terms will create viable investment opportunities. Financial incentives, such as tax benefits or blended-finance models, can accelerate adoption of ocean solutions.
- Private-sector engagement must increase through tailored financial instruments that make ocean science a compelling investment, reducing reliance on government funding.

Nonprofit contributions and financial resilience

Scaling nonprofit initiatives and bundling solutions

- Clustering multiple conservation initiatives creates larger, more attractive investment opportunities while increasing impact. Clear, standardised communication between scientists, investors and policymakers will improve trust and funding access.
- Bundling small-scale interventions—like seagrass restoration, marine-waste clean-ups and fisheries reform—can generate broader investment interest. The circular-plastics-economy model, where scientific data drives revenue-generating clean-ups, can be adapted to other areas of ocean science.
- Nonprofit initiatives play a critical role in ocean science. Diversification of investment sources is an important principle to reduce risk and volatility when mobilising and leveraging resources for smaller-scale organisations.



Leveraging resources for capacity-building

- Investing in capacity-building will equip marine-conservation organisations with the financial and technical expertise to attract capital. Learning from proven models in renewable energy, forestry and climate finance will accelerate progress in ocean-science funding.

Key takeaways

- Blue investments require robust data layers to deliver environmental and economic benefits. Financing instruments must allocate funds for scientific monitoring and impact verification.
- Small but well-designed capital investments can have outsized impacts if structured effectively.
- The maritime industry must adopt innovative financial mechanisms, learning from sovereign blue bonds and applying them at a corporate level.
- Blended-finance and patient-capital models will increase investor confidence and create a viable market for ocean-sustainability investments.

