

How to Get Involved in the UN Decade of Ocean Science?

Here are some frequently asked questions (FAQ) regarding the UN Ocean Decade and how to get involved through applying to Decade Actions. The information on this page has been compiled from the [OceanExpert](#) website to provide prospective Decade Action candidates with guidance on the endorsement criteria and process. If you have additional questions about participating in the UN Ocean Decade and applying for endorsement of your action, please reach out to us on [LinkedIn](#).

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Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQ)

I. List of acronyms

DCU - Decade Coordination Unit

EOIs - Expression of Interests

IOC - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

LDCs - Least Developed Countries

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS - Small Island Developing States

UN - United Nations

UNCLOS - United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Introduction to the Ocean Decade and Actions

1.1. What is the UN Decade of Ocean Science, “The Ocean Decade”?

The UN Decade of Ocean Science refers to the initiative launched by the United Nations in 2017, spanning from 2021 to 2030, aiming to revitalise ocean science to counteract the ocean's decline and promote sustainable development. With the vision of *'the science we need for the ocean we want'*, it serves as a platform for scientists and stakeholders across sectors to collaborate, generating knowledge and partnerships. The Ocean Decade, coordinated by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), accelerates progress in ocean science to provide science-based solutions aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

1.2. What is a Decade Action?

Decade Actions are tangible initiatives endorsed as part of the UN Ocean Decade to address its Challenges and contribute to science-based sustainable ocean solutions. There are four types of Decade Actions:

Programmes are large-scale, long-term (minimum four years), interdisciplinary initiatives implemented at global or regional scales. Programmes consist of component projects and are expected to grow over time, integrating new partners and geographies. Key criteria include scale, multidisciplinary design, funding (partially

secured or with clear sourcing strategy), capacity development, international leadership, and a transformative approach that goes beyond 'business as usual'.

Projects are focused initiatives that typically support the objectives of an endorsed Decade Programme. For [Call 09/2025](#), only projects aligned with one of the 29 eligible Programmes listed in Annex I are eligible. Projects may be national, regional, or subnational.

Activities are standalone events or products (e.g., workshops, summer schools, publications, webinars) **are not eligible as Programmes, Projects, or Contributions** under this Call. Such initiatives should instead be submitted as **Decade Activities** via a separate form, available [here](#).

Contributions are in-kind or financial resources provided to a Decade Action or to the coordination of the Decade itself. Contributions must be fully resourced and can support any Decade Challenge or endorsed Programme.

1.3. What is the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan and where can I find it?

The [Ocean Decade Implementation Plan](#) is the guiding document for the Ocean Decade. It is a non-prescriptive framework that identifies the priorities and guiding principles for the Decade, as well as the desired outcomes at the end of the Decade. It also provides information on how people can participate in Decade activities, how Decade activities will be financed, who will coordinate the Decade and how the impact of the Decade will be measured.

The Implementation Plan was presented to the United Nations at the 75th Session of the General Assembly in 2020 and can be found, together with a summary version in several language versions on the Ocean Decade website.

1.4. Why should I seek endorsement of my initiative as a Decade Action?

Endorsement of an initiative as a Decade Action provides official recognition that the initiative is part of a collective effort to meet the Ocean Decade vision. Proponents of endorsed Decade Actions will have the opportunity to join a highly visible, shared, global effort that builds on decades of achievement in ocean science. There will be opportunities to create new collaborations across disciplines, geographies and generations, as well as opportunities to access new sources of support.

1.5. Can my Action be moved from one category to another during the course of the Decade?

Yes. This is either through the evolution of the action by the proponent (i.e., a project expands partnerships and geographic scope to become a programme) OR through assessment by the DCU (i.e. a programme submission is reviewed and identified as more in line with project scope).

2. Eligibility

2.1. Who can carry out and seek endorsement for a Decade Action?

There are no restrictions on the type of institution or individual eligible to propose a Decade Action. Proponents may include research institutions, formal and informal scientific collaborations, universities, governments, UN bodies, NGOs, philanthropic and corporate foundations, Indigenous and local community groups, businesses and industry, educators, and individuals (e.g., via citizen science). All Actions must be co-designed and co-delivered with relevant stakeholders and reflect a commitment to inclusion, equity, and scientific impact.

2.2. Are ongoing or existing initiatives eligible for endorsement as Decade Actions?

Yes. However, proponents will need to clearly describe how their initiative meets the Decade endorsement criteria and how the proposed Decade Action represents transformative ocean science, including moving past 'business as usual'.

2.3. My proposal is a certification or awarding scheme. Am I eligible to submit as a Decade Action?

No. This limitation is because third parties do not have the authority to allow logo use beyond themselves, nor are they permitted to encourage other organisations to claim affiliation with the Decade. Certification and awarding schemes are too close to this scenario. If you conduct science-based project work around methodologies or best practices related to award schemes, these may be eligible to be submitted as Decade Actions.

3. Endorsement Process

New FAQ: 3.0. What is Call for Decade Actions No. 09/2025?

Call 09/2025 is the latest global opportunity for scientists, communities, governments, NGOs, and stakeholders to contribute to the Ocean Decade by proposing new **Programmes, Projects, or Contributions**. This Call responds directly to the [Barcelona Statement](#), focusing on critical gaps in scientific cooperation and delivery, including emphasis on the Southern Ocean and Antarctic, as well as links to the upcoming Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025–2034).

Key deadlines for this Call:

- **15 June 2025** – Submission of Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for Programmes
- **31 August 2025** – Submission of Project and Contribution applications

Full details and forms are available at: <https://oceandecade.org/call-for-decade-actions-09-2025>

3.1. How long will the endorsement process take?

For Call 09/2025, endorsement decisions will be communicated in the **first half of 2026**, depending on the volume of submissions. All proponents will receive notification via the contact details provided in their submission. Ensure your information is accurate to receive timely updates from the Decade Coordination Unit.

3.2. What are the endorsement criteria for Decade Actions?

When requesting endorsement, proponents of proposed Decade Actions need to demonstrate how they fulfil those criteria in the following list that are relevant to their proposed Decade Action:

- I. Contribute to fulfilling the Ocean Decade Challenges and to achieving the Decade objectives and the associated sub-objectives.
- II. Accelerate the generation or use of knowledge and understanding of the ocean, with a specific focus on knowledge that will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and complementary policy frameworks and initiatives.
- III. Are co-designed or co-delivered by knowledge generators and users, and thus facilitate the uptake of science and ocean knowledge for policy, decision making, management and/or innovation.
- IV. Ensure that all data and resulting knowledge are provided in an open access, shared, discoverable manner in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and are appropriately deposited in recognized data repositories consistent with the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy or the relevant UN subordinate body data policy.
- V. Strengthen existing or create new partnerships across nations and/or between diverse ocean actors, including users of ocean science.
- VI. Contribute toward capacity development, including, but not limited to, beneficiaries in SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs.
- VII. Overcome barriers to diversity and equity, including gender, generational, and geographic diversity.
- VIII. Collaborate with and engage local and indigenous knowledge holders.

3.3. If I am submitting a Programme for endorsement, do all the component projects need to be identified before submission?

No. However, you should be able to describe the types of projects that will form part of the Programme, the timing and process to identify projects, and the governance or coordination structure for the Programme and its future projects.

3.4. Can I still submit a request for endorsement even if I don't fulfil all the endorsement criteria?

Yes. Proponents will be asked to explain how their Decade Action supports all the endorsement criteria. However, detailing a justification of why one or more criteria is not applicable is acceptable.

3.5. Who will decide if I receive endorsement?

For requests for support for co-design of Decade Actions: The Decade Coordination Unit will complete a first technical review of the submissions and will seek the advice of any relevant decentralised coordination structures or regional task forces before making a recommendation to the Executive Secretary of IOC/UNESCO who will make a final decision.

For Expression of Interests for Decade Programmes: For the (Expression of Interests) EOIs, the Decade Coordination Unit will review the submissions for completeness and ask for recommendations of the [Decade Advisory Board](#) on which proponents should be invited to make full programme submissions. For full submissions that are accepted, the Decade Coordination Unit will work with individuals selected from the [Expert Roster](#) to complete a first technical review of the submissions that will be presented to the Decade Advisory Board. The Board will review and make recommendations on endorsement and this information will inform the Executive Secretary of the IOC/UNESCO who will take the decision on endorsement of the Programme.

For Decade Projects: For Projects that are being solicited by endorsed Decade Programmes, the Decade Coordination Unit will organise a first technical review of the submissions and will seek the advice of the relevant endorsed Programme on the submission. This information will inform the Executive Secretary of the IOC/UNESCO who will take the decision on endorsement of the Programme.

For Decade Contributions: The Decade Coordination Unit will carry out a technical review of the submissions and provide this information to the Executive Secretary of the IOC/UNESCO who makes a decision on endorsement.

3.6. Will I be notified if my request is refused?

Yes. All applicants who have submitted requests will be notified of the outcome. Where possible, we will aim to provide information on why the request was refused and recommendations to improve the alignment of the initiative with the Decade vision.

3.7. Can I resubmit my request if it is refused?

Yes. Where possible, when requests are refused, we will aim to provide information on why the request was refused and recommendations to improve the alignment of the initiative with the Decade vision.

3.8. If I am not ready for a specific Call for Decade Actions, will I have another chance to submit?

Yes. The Ocean Decade periodically launches Calls for Decade Actions, though their themes, criteria, and participating Programmes may vary. If you are not prepared for **Call 09/2025**, consider using this time to refine your initiative and explore participation in other endorsement categories, such as Decade Activities. Future opportunities will be announced on the Ocean Decade website and newsletter.

3.9. Do I need approval from the national Government (e.g., the IOC focal point) before submitting my request for endorsement?

No.

3.10. Do United Nations bodies need to get endorsement for their Decade Actions?

United Nations bodies do not need to apply for endorsement. UN agencies wishing to submit a Decade Action can register their Decade Actions via a separate process at any time. The registration form can be found by contacting oceandecade@unesco.org.

3.11. What happens once my Decade Action is endorsed?

Once a Decade Action is endorsed it will be part of a collective, global effort to fulfil the vision of the Decade. Once it is endorsed, the proponent can use the logo of the Decade when communicating about their initiative in accordance with the [Ocean Decade Brand Guidelines](#). Each Action is responsible for its own coordination which includes liaising with Decade structures. Proponents will be asked to sign a charter upon endorsement outlining expectations and provide simple annual reporting on the progress of their Action via an online template. Examples of the Charters for Endorsed Projects and Programmes which provide more information on the roles and responsibilities of Decade Actions are provided via the link in the “Guidance Note for Applicants”.

3.12. Do projects need to be associated with programmes?

Typically, projects will be hosted under currently endorsed programmes.

4. Funding

4.1. How can I get funding for my Decade Action?

The Ocean Decade is not a financing mechanism, but it can help proponents of Decade Actions that do not already have financing for their work to make connections to potential funders via the Ocean Decade Alliance, the Foundations Dialogue, or the

Ocean Decade Network. Further information on these structures is provided in the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan. When a request for endorsement is submitted, proponents will be asked to indicate if they have secured all the necessary funding for implementing the Action and endorsed Decade Actions will provide regular updates of funding needs.

4.2. Do I need to have secured funding before I submit my request for endorsement?

No. However, your submission should demonstrate that **some funding is already secured**, or that there is a clear plan in place to obtain funding. The Decade endorsement is not a funding mechanism but may increase the visibility and attractiveness of your Action to potential donors, funders, and partners.

5. Coordination Structures

5.1. What is the Decade Advisory Board and who is on it?

The Decade Advisory Board is an advisory body to the IOC Executive Secretary and the IOC Governing Bodies and will provide strategic advice and recommendations for the implementation of the Ocean Decade including advice on the endorsement of Decade Programmes. The Board is composed of 15 members and representatives of UN entities and experts from relevant scientific disciplines, as well as from stakeholder groups. You can find more information [here](#).

5.2. What is the Decade Coordination Unit and where is it based?

The Decade Coordination Unit is the central coordination structure of the Decade. It is based within the IOC-UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Its three main functions are to act as the: (i) primary coordination office for the implementation of Decade Actions; (ii) Secretariat for the Decade Advisory Board; and (iii) Secretariat for the Ocean Decade Alliance.

6. Communities of Practice and the Ocean Decade Network

6.1. What are Communities of Practice and how are they organised?

[Communities of Practice](#) allow Decade Actions working on similar themes or in similar geographies to coordinate and optimise their collective impact throughout the Decade. Communities of Practice are a way of loosely organising and making legible a very complex landscape throughout the Decade. There are both thematic (i.e. based around the Ocean Decade Challenges) and geographic (i.e. based around major ocean basins). They allow partners to work together - when it is advantageous - to carry out a range of essential functions including:

- Identification of thematic or geographic gaps and priority needs, leading to input to the design of future Call for Decade Actions.

- Monitoring and reporting the impact of Decade Actions.
- Communications and outreach.
- Resource mobilisation.
- Information exchange.
- Development of joint initiatives and partnerships.
- Joint work planning to avoid duplication and optimise use of resources.

Communities of Practice also allow a simpler entry point for the Decade coordination structures and other stakeholders wishing to engage with a group of partners working on similar issues. Rather than being viewed as strict and solid boundaries between different silos of work, they can be thought of as dotted, fluid lines around a group of related Decade Actions. This group of Actions can interact and overlap with other related Communities of Practice. They will not dilute the individual identity of Decade Actions, nor change the internal operation of Decade Actions. Partners can choose to be part of more than one Community of Practice. Exchanges across Communities of Practice will be encouraged and facilitated through Decade mechanisms.

6.2. Can I sign up for more than one Community of Practice?

Yes, once endorsed, applicants are welcome to sign up for more than one Community of Practice.

6.3. What is the Ocean Decade Network?

The Ocean Decade Network is a free, inclusive online platform that allows individuals and institutions to collaborate, share information, and stay updated on Decade activities. **Registration on the Network is required to access all documents related to Call 09/2025 and to submit your Decade Action.**

You can register here: <https://forum.oceandecade.org/signup>

7. Communications and Branding

7.1. Once my initiative is endorsed can I use the Ocean Decade logo in my communications?

Yes, but only in accordance with the **Ocean Decade Brand Guidelines** which will be provided, along with the logo files, following endorsement. Decade Actions are only allowed to use the logo for their activities. They may not grant the use of the logo to projects sitting under their Programme or to any other third party. Further information will be provided on endorsement of your Decade Actions.

7.2. How can I get regular updates on what is happening during the Ocean Decade?

The latest news from the Decade Coordination Unit and endorsed Decade Actions are showcased on the Ocean Decade website at www.oceandecade.org. You can also subscribe to our newsletter to receive updates straight to your inbox.

You are warmly invited to follow the social media accounts of the Decade and IOC/UNESCO:

Twitter: @UNOceanDecade

Instagram: @UNOceanDecade

Facebook: @oceandecade

Twitter: @locUnesco

Instagram: @ioc_unesco

Facebook: @locUnesco

And remember to join the Ocean Decade Network at forum.oceandecade.org!