

The transformative role of Foundations in the Ocean Decade



The United Nations
Decade of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development
2021-2030



2021
2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

The Ocean Decade

The vision of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development ('the Ocean Decade') is 'the science we need for the ocean we want'. The Ocean Decade envisages nothing less than a revolution in ocean science that will trigger a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean. The Ocean Decade provides a framework to convene stakeholders from diverse sectors to generate scientific knowledge and develop the partnerships needed to support a well-functioning, productive, resilient and sustainable ocean that underpins human health and well-being.¹

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO has been mandated to coordinate the preparatory phase of the Decade and is working to create a robust enabling environment at national, regional and global levels.²

“The Ocean Decade envisages nothing less than a revolution in ocean science that will trigger a step change in humanity's relationship with the ocean.

FIGURE 1. THE OCEAN DECADE ACTION FRAMEWORK



Source: IOC-UNESCO, 2020

1 See: <https://www.oceandecade.org>

2 See: <https://ioc.unesco.org>



BOX 1. OCEAN DECADE FOUNDATIONS DIALOGUES

In February 2020, the first Ocean Decade Foundations Dialogue was held in Copenhagen, in partnership with THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS, to explore how best to create the partnerships and funding models that will underpin the enabling environment for the Ocean Decade.

Twenty-one organizations participated in this unique international platform to

share their vision of how Foundations can help to empower communities and increase investment in priority areas.

Building on the success of this event, the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment will host a second Decade Foundations Dialogue in Morocco in 2021. In partnership with

IOC-UNESCO and other Foundations, this event will expand the dialogue among Foundations, explore innovative ways in which Foundations can support the Ocean Decade, and discuss a range of priority themes for the Ocean Decade where Foundations will play a leading role.





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Foundations – indispensable partners in the Ocean Decade

The role of Foundations in ocean science

Communities, governments and citizens around the world are faced with important challenges in the development of solutions to protect the ocean and optimize its contribution to human well-being and sustainable development. Foundations are an essential part of the ecosystem that will be required to address this seemingly insurmountable challenge. Foundations can catalyse collaborative efforts and initiatives with ocean researchers, civil society and government that bring about lasting change. Foundations work alongside governments and a wide range of partners, including

public sector institutions, private business actors, NGOs and civil society to generate innovative science or programmes.

A number of reports highlight the importance of joining efforts to address the multiple issues compromising ocean health and the resilience of marine ecosystems.³ The findings of recent analyses highlight the significance of Foundations as supporters of ocean science: since 2016, 25 Foundations provided 67% of all funding for SDG 14 and it is estimated that their contribution to marine conservation is roughly equal to that of official development assistance (ODA) from both bilateral and multilateral aid agencies.⁴

- 3 CEA Consulting. 2019. *Funding – Our Shared Seas: Global Ocean Data and Trends for Informed Action and Decision-Making*. <https://oursharedseas.com/2019-update/funding/>.
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- 4 <https://sdgfunders.org/sdgs/goal/life-below-water/lang/en/>



TESTIMONIALS FROM PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS OF THE OCEAN DECADE

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THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS are pleased to engage in partnership with IOC-UNESCO with the purpose of supporting its efforts towards a successful Ocean Decade. It aligns well with the foundations’ focus on the Danish marine environment. A clean ocean holds part of the solution to combating climate change, feeding the growing global population, and securing clean energy. The UN Ocean Decade is a unique opportunity to build global momentum, also among international foundations. With the conference in Copenhagen in February 2020, we sought to contribute to building an awareness and engagement among our peer foundations.

THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS
VILLUM FONDEN × VELUX FONDEN

Mikkel Klougart
Senior Adviser, Head of Programme, Environment, THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS

The actions we take in the next decade could decide the fate of the ocean for hundreds of years. The ocean faces unprecedented challenges from pollution such as plastic, the impact of climate change and overfishing.

No one person can solve these problems, so we all need to work together to find the solutions to these challenges. We strongly believe that by working through the Ocean Decade, Foundations can make a meaningful and positive impact for the ocean.

REV Ocean

Nina Jensen
CEO, REV Ocean

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Ocean exploration is about making discoveries that help us better understand the world we live in. The Schmidt Ocean Institute is proud to be an Ocean Decade Partner, working alongside the UN, the IOC and other partners to transform our knowledge of the ocean globally through robust research, innovative technology and public engagement that connects science and society. As a philanthropic Foundation, we have the ability to explore remote and frontier areas that others may not reach. Together, we all have a part to play in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and to improve our understanding of the ocean and ultimately protect our planet and our future.

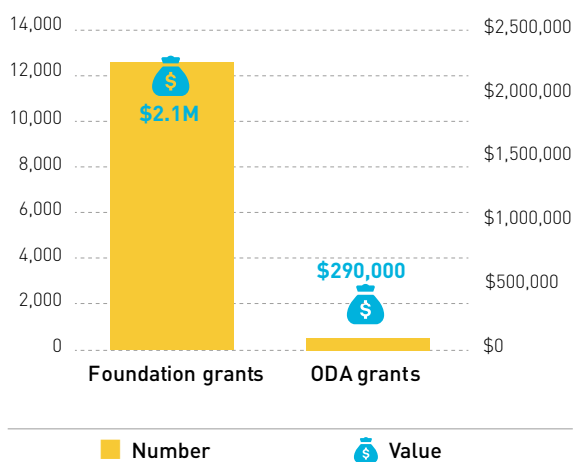
SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE

Jyotika I. Virmani, PhD
Executive Director, Schmidt Ocean Institute

How can Foundations accelerate transformative action as part of the Ocean Decade?

Foundations can play multiple roles in the Ocean Decade in accordance with their individual mandates and priorities. Flexible, responsive and able to work at the interface of academia, science and society, Foundations are ideally placed to convene diverse stakeholders, strengthen and empower networks, and generate influence nationally, regionally and at the global level. They are able to take risks and explore sensitive or emerging issues, thus catalysing knowledge and generating synergies for transformational science that can contribute to groundbreaking solutions to address the Ocean Decade Challenges.

FIGURE 2. FOUNDATION AND ODA GRANTS FOR OCEAN SCIENCE, 2009–2020



Source: IOC-UNSECO using data from SDGfunders.org

Mobilizing resources and funding: Foundations play a crucial role in global funding for marine science. From 2009–2020 there were 12,573 Foundation grants totalling around **US\$2.1 billion** for marine science. This compares to 476 multi- or bilateral ODA grants totalling around US\$290 million in the same period (see Figure 2). Foundations often contribute in ways that other resource

providers do not, for example by providing support for seed or incubator funding for piloting initiatives that can be replicated or scaled up with other types of funding. They can also invest in high-risk research, the development of innovative solutions at the interface of innovation and technology, or for synthesizing and disseminating bodies of existing knowledge. They can leverage funding from other philanthropic or corporate organizations – including those who do not typically focus on ocean science – by highlighting the societal impact of the Ocean Decade and the broad contribution of ocean science to numerous facets of sustainable development. Through peer-to-peer networking, they can encourage and create synergies between Foundations within and across national boundaries in key challenge areas to enhance the impact of funding, or develop alternative funding mechanisms.

Communications and outreach: The diverse physical and regional makeup of Foundations means that they are in a unique position to act as facilitators and ambassadors for the Ocean Decade. They can raise awareness of its importance and encourage diverse partners in their networks to engage in the Decade by highlighting priority themes, such as a focus on measurable results and the focus of the Decade on solutions and action for sustainable development. Foundations can also support and host stakeholder networking events, or work with regional or national Decade structures to focus on specific themes or regions.

Advocacy and networking: Foundations have a recognized role as effective and neutral brokers of knowledge and information with diverse stakeholder groups such as governments, civil society, industry and scientific institutions. The Ocean Decade will only be successful if these diverse stakeholders work together to achieve a collective impact. To this end, Foundations can foster dialogue and support advocacy efforts that unite diverse actors, and ultimately support the central role of ocean science in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

An aerial photograph of a beach at sunset or sunrise. The sand is a warm, golden-brown color, and the ocean is a deep, vibrant blue. White foam from breaking waves is visible along the shoreline. Three yellow kayakers are seen paddling in the water near the beach. The overall scene is serene and active.

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Benefits and opportunities for Foundations in the Ocean Decade



By engaging in this global and highly visible UN-led initiative, Foundations will be able to create a greater impact than by working alone – rather than being bystanders to the process, they will have the opportunity to shape the strategic implementation of the Ocean Decade. Foundations will have the opportunity to collaborate and establish new partnerships with fellow funders and resource providers through a range of mechanisms, including the Ocean Decade Alliance. The Ocean Decade will also connect Foundations with new recipients of funding and resources, thus allowing them to support some of the most innovative solution-oriented

science to be carried out over the next decade. The Ocean Decade will provide Foundations with new global and regional platforms to raise awareness of their work. It will also provide Foundations with a common set of priorities developed by a global community over a highly inclusive three-year process, which can contribute to their strategic planning and resource allocation decisions. The Ocean Decade allows Foundations to join this common effort while maintaining a focus on their own geographical or thematic priorities, and continuing to adopt their own processes and procedures for the identification and administration of their support.



BOX 2. PHILANTHROPIC OCEAN RESEARCH VESSEL OPERATORS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE OCEAN DECADE

The international Philanthropic Ocean Research Vessel Operators forum consists of more than a dozen private organizations who manage and operate many of the leading philanthropically supported scientific oceanographic research vessels.

Success in the Ocean Decade will only be achieved through collaboration. To this

end, this forum will be an excellent platform for philanthropic research vessels to engage in a collective way with the Decade, and complement the individual efforts of its members.

Its members meet on an annual basis to share information on safe, efficient and environmentally responsible operations,

explore possibilities for collaborating on projects, and solve problems of mutual interest to better support the global marine scientific community's research and outreach efforts at sea. It also acts as a voice to promote the philanthropic research vessel community's impact and provide expert advice to other bodies as required.



What are the mechanisms for Foundations to support the Ocean Decade?

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to how a philanthropic Foundation can support the Ocean Decade. The following suggestions can guide Foundations in developing a tailored mix of ways in which to engage. This list is non-exhaustive and Foundations are warmly invited to contact the IOC Secretariat to discuss these mechanisms, as well as other ideas for engagement and support.

1. Co-branding and sponsoring Calls for Decade

Actions: The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) within the IOC at UNESCO works with Foundations to co-design and co-brand requests for proposals focused on one or more of the Ocean Decade Challenges. The DCU would provide input during the evaluation and selection process to ensure alignment with the Decade criteria and facilitate endorsement of selected initiatives as Decade Actions. The Foundation would follow its own procedures to receive, award and fund grants.

2. Developing Decade Actions through co-design:

Foundations can initiate or participate in discussions with diverse actors to co-design and co-deliver Decade Actions, for example at programme or project level. The level and type of engagement can vary but may include:

- providing expert advice to groups of stakeholders who are working on Decade programme or project design
- provision of financial or in-kind resources for project 'incubation', for example in the form of support to working groups or travel grants to bring actors together for co-design processes
- funding or resources for full programme or project implementation.

3. Resourcing Decade Actions: Foundations can support Decade Actions by committing resources to a 'virtual resource pool' and subsequently working with the DCU to match these resources to high-priority endorsed Decade Actions seeking funding. Such resources could be financial or in-kind, for example provision of experts for capacity development programmes or space on research vessels. Alternatively, Foundations can prioritize support to endorsed Decade Actions through their existing grant selection and grant-making processes.

4. Supporting coordination costs: Foundations can provide financial or in-kind support and resources to the DCU, or to programmatic or regional

decentralized coordination structures. Examples could include seconding staff to a central or decentralized coordination structure or hosting a programmatic or regional Decade Collaborative Centre. More information about these structures can be found in the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan.

5. Supporting communications and outreach activities:

Foundations can produce and share communications in line with the Decade branding guidelines (e.g. videos related to specific Ocean Decade Challenges), host events or conferences, or contribute resources to support the rollout of the Decade communications work, including the global 'Generation Ocean' communications campaign. Foundations can also promote the Ocean Decade at different events to motivate stakeholders and garner support for Decade activities.

6. Encouraging grantee participation in the Ocean Decade:

Foundations can share information through their grantee networks to encourage broader engagement in the Ocean Decade. This could include:

- encouraging grantees to seek endorsement of their initiatives as Decade Actions
- participation of grantees in Decade initiatives such as those related to data and knowledge management
- engagement of grantees with stakeholder groups at the regional or national level, or with Decade-affiliated groups such as Early Career Ocean Professionals.

7. Leading or participating in national and regional committees and taskforces or expert groups:

Foundations will be important members in various regional and national stakeholder structures that will emerge throughout the Decade, including regional stakeholder platforms and National Decade Committees. Foundations will also provide essential expertise and experience in different working groups and expert discussions, including groups working on

monitoring and evaluation, communications, data and knowledge management or technology and innovation.

8. Engaging new philanthropic partners in the Ocean

Decade: Foundations can act as ambassadors for the Ocean Decade and work to engage new philanthropic partners. The number of Foundations currently focusing investments in ocean science remains relatively small, yet the ambition of the Decade will require the mobilization of significant new resources and the development of new and

innovative partnerships. Peer-to-peer networking can help to convince Foundations outside the traditional 'ocean science' space of the need to support ocean science as a means of achieving related priorities and mandates, for example biodiversity conservation, food security or climate action.

Foundations wishing to make a significant investment in the Ocean Decade via one or more of these suggested pathways can also express their interest in becoming a member of the **Ocean Decade Alliance** (Box 3).



BOX 3. THE OCEAN DECADE ALLIANCE

The Ocean Decade Alliance is a network of eminent partners of the Ocean Decade from the philanthropic and private sectors, governments and UN agencies who will lead by example to catalyse support for the Decade through targeted resource mobilization, networking and influence. Alliance members are part of a collective, global, UN-led effort to resolve some of the world's most pressing challenges. Membership of the Alliance is by invitation, based on a demonstrated and sustained commitment to the vision of the Ocean Decade, including alignment of resource provision strategies with the priorities of the

Decade, and commitment of significant in-kind or financial support to Decade Actions or coordination costs. Although relatively small, membership of the Alliance is diverse. Membership is primarily at the institutional level; however, high-profile individuals within member organizations can choose to become Ocean Decade Patrons and thus have their individual commitments to the Ocean Decade recognized. Importantly, the Alliance creates space for the emergence of new leaders within the ocean community from a diversity of profiles. Alliance members have the opportunity to shape the strategic implementation of the Ocean Decade and

are recognized as global leaders supporting ocean science. Alliance members will have new opportunities for formal and informal networking – both among other members of the Alliance and with stakeholders seeking resources. This will potentially lead to new collaborations for joint funding or initiatives, as well as opportunities to optimize synergies in activities supported by Alliance members. The Alliance provides members with access to leaders in ocean science, thus creating opportunities to fund or support the most innovative ocean science initiatives under the Ocean Decade.

For further information

on IOC-UNESCO's Ocean Decade or to sign up as an Ocean Decade Partner, visit our website : oceansdecade.org

Or follow us on social media:



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