



Global Ocean Observing System



Session 5: GOOS reform - Structure and governance

Session chairs: Matias Sifon and Suzan M. El-Gharabawy

15th GOOS Steering Committee meeting | 25-27 March 2026 | Hyderabad, India



Global Ocean Observing System



5.1

Introduction to Structural and Governance Changes

GOOS SC co-chairs

15th GOOS Steering Committee meeting | 25-27 March 2026 | Hyderabad, India

02

Proposed structure

02

Summary of overarching comments related to structure

1/2

- The reform feels very functional and focused on internal structural changes, but lacks ambition for increasing observing capacity, connecting the value chain, and linking to industry and technology
- Missing a statement of what must be globally standardized and what can remain distributed.
- Connection with IODE and ODIS is missing in proposal and needs to be clarified. IODE is working with the IOC data architecture
- the reform should explicitly articulate the ocean observing value chain, and how GOOS works towards delivery of ocean information and services to societal users. Without this clarity, structural reform risks focusing on coordination of observations without ensuring delivery of societal value.
- We need a clear onboarding pathway for major advancing initiatives like CoastPredict or TPOS. Co-design needs to be explicitly embedded in GOOS thinking right now.
- I have some concern about the isolation of GOOS components from the WMO ecosystem

Summary of overarching comments related to structure

2/2

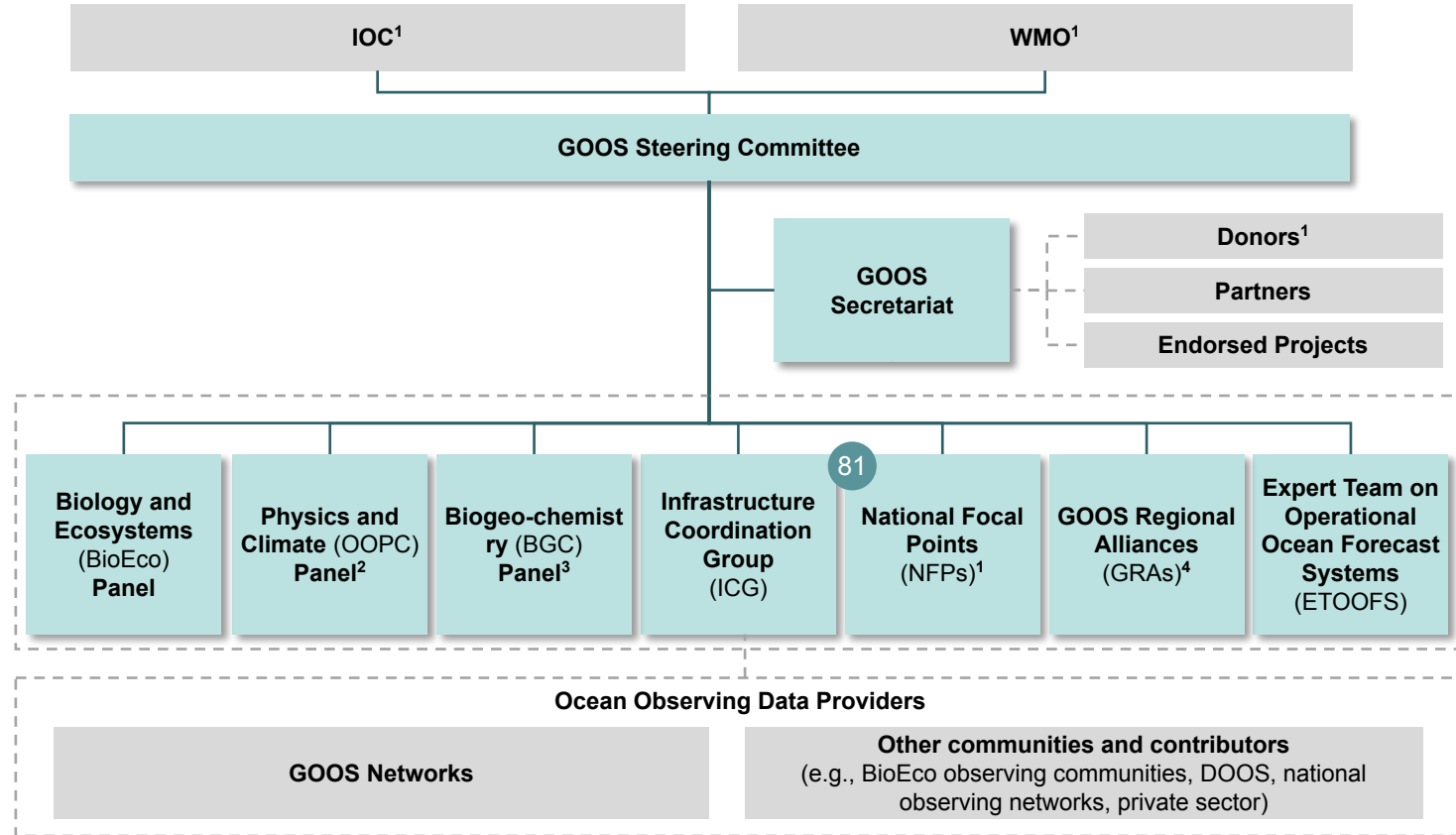
- This reform is a moment to question how this works beyond the now-successful but fragile secretariat brokering role, with a goal of simplifying, flattening, and concentrating the cross-WMO-IOC governance in a way that delivers simply for GOOS and for WMO as a user of GOOS data.
- The proposal also doesn't acknowledge that OOPC is co-sponsored by GOOS, GCOS, and WCRP – that GOOS operates in an ecosystem of coordination activities.
- A radical simplification might be great, but pulls the ocean away from the Earth system perspective where it is needed: for weather and early warning, and for climate.

Recommended structural changes will help GOOS to enhance its operations and better deliver against its mission

	Recommended changes	This will help achieve...
1	Streamline GOOS reporting structure and refresh component responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove overlapping reporting to improve delivery and efficiency and strengthen accountability Enable the GOOS Steering Committee to make informed decisions based on input from components Clarify responsibilities and reduce duplication between components
2	Consolidate sponsorship under the IOC and WMO based on existing contributions and distinguish sponsor, donor, and partner roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor GOOS under IOC and WMO to ensure unified leadership, stability, and shared responsibility Streamline sponsor coordination while recognizing UNEP and ISC's historic contributions
3	Enhance resource mobilization through the Donor Coordination Group to convene funders, foster alignment, and drive investment for GOOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance engagement and coordination across Member States and other donors Strengthen long-term sustainability by coordinating donor outreach and aligning investments with GOOS priorities for the system and its coordination
4	Elevate the GOOS Steering Committee's function through stronger strategic oversight, targeted skillsets, and longer terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance GOOS Steering Committee's capacity to provide oversight across components and advice to Member states Strengthen leadership continuity, institutional memory, expertise and recognition at the intergovernmental level
5	Empower the GOOS Secretariat to have clear identity to support the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive clarity of purpose and focus and enable tangible progress toward GOOS mission and objectives Enhance capacity to coordinate, communicate, and drive delivery across all components
6	Introduce the Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG) as an OCG with broadened mandate to centralize the coordination of networks and other observing networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand mandate to coordinate all ocean observing data providers Centralize efforts for data services and management, metadata harmonization, and performance monitoring to improve global interoperability
7	Strengthen NFP's role and interaction model to further Member States participation, national coordination, and integration with global standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build more consistent and accountable system for national reporting and engagement Enhance collaboration among NFPs and improve the information flow

Streamlining reporting lines will promote greater integration and accountability across GOOS components (1/3)

Proposed GOOS reporting structure



1) Member States are represented in the GOOS structure via IOC and WMO Governing Bodies, NFPs, and Donors
 2) Additionally reports to the GCOS Steering Committee
 3) Additionally reports to the ISC SCOR
 4) GRAs role and position is still under revision and therefore is not detailed out in this proposal, options are included in the appendix
 Note: GOOS components are organized in the diagram by following the value chain view

Recommended changes

- The GOOS Steering Committee will be reporting to the IOC Governing Bodies (Assembly, Executive Council) and WMO Governing Bodies (Congress, INFCOM)
- All other GOOS components will report to the GOOS Steering Committee, ensuring clarity, stronger oversight and alignment
 - The GOOS Secretariat (formally known as the GOOS Project Office and GOOS Office in Paris) will be formalized as a standalone component and coordinate with donors, partners and endorsed projects
 - Expert Panels will continue to have double reporting
 - Ocean observing data providers will be coordinated through a single integrated component, the Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG), that combines the coordination capabilities of OCG, OceanOPS, the BioEco Panel and IODE (see slide #20)
 - There will be a strengthened two-way interaction model with NFPs (see slide #21)
 - GRAs role and position is still under revision and therefore is not detailed out in this proposal
- The clarified structure will enable opportunities for the needed outsourcing/in-kind support by Member States for GOOS components
- Components will be assigned a defined set of targets to ensure system-wide accountability (see slide #26)
- The clarified reporting lines and accountability mechanism will require an increased governance role of the GOOS Steering Committee (see slide #18)

Refreshing and strengthening responsibilities across GOOS components will enhance efficiency across the ocean observing community (2/3)

Responsibilities of GOOS components

GOOS Steering Committee

- ✓ Develop and oversee **GOOS strategy** and **biennial workplans** for submission to IOC and WMO Governing Bodies and **respond to governing body requests**
- ✓ Oversee, monitor, guide, and evaluate **GOOS system performance** to ensure alignment with strategic objectives and workplans
- ✓ **Advise Member States** and other **donors** on the importance of and benefits from GOOS
- ✓ **Approve** updates to component **Terms of Reference** (excluding the GOOS Steering Committee's own TOR), Chair/Co-Chairs (per component TOR), workplan, and GOOS endorsed projects
- ✓ **Advocate** for ocean observing and provide **senior level representation** of GOOS and ocean observing in appropriate fora
- ✓ Support Secretariat with **resource mobilization** and **donor engagement**
- Drive tactical/day-to-day interaction between GOOS components (e.g., ex officio removed from the SC)



BGC Panel	OOPC Panel	BioEco Panel	Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG)	NFPs	GRAs	ETOOFS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify, set specifications, evaluate, and evolve Essential Ocean Variables (EOVs) ✓ Co-design and develop optimal system design requirements and implementation strategies for EOVs ✓ Collaborate across disciplines and GOOS components, including with other GOOS Expert Panels ✓ Support development of user-oriented data and information products ✓ Monitor observing system design □ Coordinate observing networks / communities, including management of the BioEco Portal (moved to ICG) □ Develop data-flow standards and data quality control protocols (moved to ICG) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinate, provide guidelines and specifications for ocean observing data providers ✓ Grow the network of ocean observing data providers (GOOS networks and other observing communities including private sector) ✓ Monitor performance and coordinate reporting of the operational system on behalf of ocean observing data providers ✓ Promote innovation in observing technologies and methodologies ✓ Set metadata standards for ocean data networks and communities and integrate with IOC and WMO systems ✓ Monitor performance and assets distribution (e.g., ensure data flow, data services, and management) □ Report directly to IOC and WMO (incl. communication, engagement, etc.) □ Promote the importance of ocean observation through capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinate national ocean observing activities and engage key stakeholders (e.g., via National Coordination Committees) ✓ Provide national inputs for GOOS reporting, EOV tracking, and system assessments ✓ Support and strengthen national participation in global and regional GOOS initiatives ✓ Promote adoption of GOOS best practices and open data-sharing standards at the national level ✓ Identify national needs for ocean observation ✓ Advocate for national investment in sustained ocean observing systems 	To be confirmed – under revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set global standards and guidance to ensure continuous improvement of operational ocean forecasting systems ✓ Improve integration of observations and models and coordinate forecasting efforts □ Assess forecasting system performance and strengthen capacity across Member States

✓ In-scope activity □ Out of scope activity





Summary comments

Streamline and refresh responsibilities (page 14)

- Expert panel responsibilities:
 - Careful thought is needed on how the three Panels will interact with the ICG once it is established. It is unclear in the proposal.
 - Why has “developing data-flow standards and data quality control protocols” been moved to ICG?
 - “*Monitoring observing system design*” is listed as a Panel responsibility. Fulfilling this role effectively will require close, sustained interaction and coordination with the new ICG.
- ETOOFS responsibilities: Why is “*Assess forecasting system performance*” out of scope for ETOOFS? It seems as one of the few quantitatively verifiable ways to assess GOOS performance.

Empowering and prioritizing GOOS Secretariat roles will help advance its mandate and better support the ocean observing community (3/3)

Responsibilities of GOOS Secretariat

	 Ocean observing system coordinator	 Strategic advisor and advocacy champion	 Standards steward	 Innovation catalyst
Current in-scope activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facilitate planning, coordination, and communication across GOOS components to ensure system-level integration and alignment with the 2030+ strategy ✓ Support the development of standards that enable worldwide engagement and data sharing for a unified, comprehensive ocean monitoring value chain ✓ Facilitate alignment with sponsors ✓ Support and monitor GOOS components as defined by TOR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop, formalize, and maintain strategic partnerships with policy makers, scientific community, ocean observing data providers, implementors, funders, and other relevant users ✓ Strengthen GOOS visibility through communication tools and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promote and maintain best practices and standards for ocean observing (setting EOVs, network, and metadata specifications) ✓ Coordinate activities across GOOS components to leading to new and better standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promote emerging technologies in ocean observing
New activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advise on ocean observing strategies and solutions in response to policy-based queries and respond to Member States requests ✓ Facilitate alignment with Member States and other donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lead engagement, provide insights and coordinate feedback mechanisms for donors and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promote GOOS endorsement, such as through new projects, to facilitate evolution of the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Activate government and private sector engagement for project design based on current and new technologies ✓ Catalyze pilots of technologies and tools ✓ Promote the use of ocean observing data for products and services for the ocean economy and disaster risk reduction
Out of scope activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Matchmaking between different entities or stakeholders □ Detailed project management activities for smaller research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Organize individual seminars or workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ N/A

Comments:

Streamline and refresh responsibilities (Slide 15)

GOOS secretariat roles


- Supporting the GOOS SC or the Donor Coordination Group is missing from the tasks of the Secretariat.
- The “*innovation catalyst*” part would require a different profile for the Secretariat and it does not seem as a core need.
- New activity under *innovation catalyst*: The “*Activate government and private sector engagement for project design*” seems not to fully cover the GOOS' role to improve pathways to private-sector funding of the GOOS system

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Consolidating sponsorship under IOC and WMO and defining roles of sponsors, donors, and partners will deliver a coordinated support system

Proposed definitions, roles, and governance for sponsors, donors, and partners

Type	Definition (and examples)	Primary roles	Governance
Sponsor 	UN entities with deep institutional alignment that provide long-term staffing and funding commitment, and play a strategic, directive, and enabling role to support GOOS and the ocean observing enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IOC - Lead sponsor WMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide formal governance, oversight, and legitimacy within the UN system Approve and endorse GOOS’s strategic direction, workplan, priorities (Lead sponsor only) Provide core and project-based funding to core support infrastructure, staff, capacity and participate in Donor Coordination Group Champion ocean observing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IOC and WMO Governing Bodies to serve as the oversight body for the GOOS Steering Committee
Donor	Nations and institutions that provide core funding and in-kind staffing to support GOOS and its coordination e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member States Intergovernmental organizations Philanthropies Corporations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide core and project-based funding to core support infrastructure, staff, and capacity Participate in Donor Coordination Group Champion and fund ocean observing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biennial Donor Coordination Group meeting to serve as a mechanism for resource mobilization and to engage current and potential donors
Partner	Organizations that provide supportive, complementary, collaborative, and advisory contributions with flexible and thematic engagement, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNEP & ISC International Maritime Organization International Hydrographic Organization Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean (POGO) Private sector (e.g, shipping industry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with GOOS on specific projects and programs Promote GOOS goals within their networks, communities, and regional forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and coordinate relationships through partnership MOUs Opportunity to serve on the GOOS Steering Committee as a non-Regional Expert Group member

Recommended changes

- GOOS sponsorship will be consolidated under IOC and WMO based on the long-term institutional alignment, investment, involvement, and leadership of the two organizations
 - IOC and WMO Governing Bodies will continue to serve as the oversight and decision-making body for the GOOS Steering Committee, appoint Steering Committee members
 - IOC to continue to serve as the lead sponsor, host the GOOS Secretariat, service components, coordinate efforts of sponsors, and represent GOOS with external audiences
- The role of donors and partners will be distinguished from the role of sponsor to enable targeted strategies for communication, funding, and collaboration
 - UNEP and ISC will be recognized for their historic contribution and transition into serving as partners, with UNEP continuing to play a role in partnering with GOOS on biodiversity and ecosystem-focused work
 - The biennial Donor Coordination Group will serve as a mechanism for resource mobilization without spinning out a new component (see slide #17)
 - GOOS Secretariat will lead partnership engagement in consultation with the respective GOOS components

Comments: Consolidating sponsors (slide 16)

- The sponsorship consolidation should be accompanied by clear safeguards ensuring that IOC's own programmes (IODE and its programme components OBIS, ODIS) remain under IOC Assembly governance and cannot be drawn into joint IOC-WMO decision-making without Assembly authorisation




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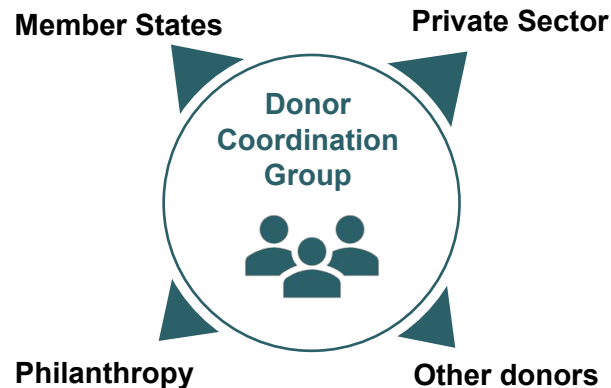
Enhancing resource mobilization through the Donor Coordination Group will unite funders, align goals, and encourage greater investment in GOOS

Overview of a proposed Donor Coordination Group

Coordinating members

- Convener**  IOC Executive Secretary & WMO Secretary General
- Co-Chairs**  1 Member State Donor Rep & 1 non-Member State Donor Rep (Elected, rotational)
- Facilitator**  Selected GOOS Steering Committee and GOOS Secretariat members

Donors



Goals

- Convening of sponsors and donors
- Platform to galvanize and sustain donor support for GOOS and its components
- Tool to engage prospective donors
- Opportunity for donor feedback

Recommended changes

- The Donor Coordination Group will be established to address overall funding gaps and ongoing financial and resource mobilization challenges for GOOS and its components and the ocean observing enterprise
 - Resources include but are not limited to core Programme and Budget, Regular Programme, extrabudgetary, external project funds, and well as other in-kind and staff secondment support
- This group will act as a consultative biennial meeting and not as a new GOOS component
- The group will serve as a platform to link donor and GOOS priorities
- The GOOS Steering Committee and GOOS Secretariat will provide an actionable, prioritized GOOS system-focused “investment menu” and guide donor engagement and investment decisions
- The GOOS Steering Committee, with support from the GOOS Secretariat, will share annual written updates with members on implementation progress and funding impact
- GOOS Secretariat and GOOS Steering Committee will consult with Member States to identify the relevant donor representatives

Note: Before formalizing the Donor Coordination Group it is recommended that GOOS explore the complementarity of the proposed GOOS Informal, Open-Ended Working Group on Ocean Observing Risks and other existing high-level forums for oceans (e.g., High Level Panel for Sustainable Ocean Economy, G7 FSOI, WMO Commons, etc.)

Comments: Donor Coordination Group (slide 17)

- A Donor Coordination Group would require specific Secretariat support. The experience from WMO and SOFF is that this can be extremely resource consuming to be successful.
- Donor coordination group should work hand in hand with a task group from GOOS teaming up with environmental economists to ensure a proper economic valuation of ocean observing networks.
- The proposed funding mechanisms are untested, will take years to create, and require heavy resources to support before we actually see any new funding.

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Elevating the GOOS SC by enhancing oversight, expert skills, and member terms will lead to better governance and more effective decision making

Proposed membership structure of the GOOS Steering Committee (SC)

	#	Role / representation	Rotation (illustrative)	Illustrative role description
Regional experts	1	Group I	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure regional priorities are reflected in GOOS decisions Provide input on capacity development needs and regional resource mobilization
	2	Group II	Year 1	
	3	Group III	Year 1	
	4	Group IV	Year 3	
	5	Group V	Year 3	
Scientific and technical experts	6	Private sector	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee operational coordination and system performance Drive adoption of emerging technologies and partnerships Strengthen private sector engagement and funding opportunities Align GOOS outputs with global policy frameworks Promote training and equitable participation globally
	7	Data management	Year 1	
	8	OceanOPS liaison	Year 1	
	9	Innovation	Year 1	
	10	Science policy advisor	Year 1	
	11	...	Year 3	
	12	...	Year 3	
	13	...	Year 3	
	14	...	Year 3	
	15	...	Year 3	
Ex-officio	16-25	Components reps.	NA	



Recommended changes

- Steering Committee (SC) will serve as a decision-making and governing body, overseeing GOOS components and responsible to IOC and WMO Governing Bodies
 - SC members will have ocean observation expertise, more targeted skillsets and corresponding roles aligned with 2030+ strategy
 - Ex-officio for GOOS components will no longer be considered as part of the SC, but will continue to collaborate via the GOOS Executive Committee and joint meetings
- Two Co-Chairs – one from regional expert groups (suggested rotation by region) and one from scientific and technical experts – will be elected by the SC every 2 years with opportunity to renew for 2 more years
- Term length for all SC members will be extended from 2 to 4 years including renewal opportunity to serve up to two consecutive terms (8 years total)
- A phased (staggered) transition will be implemented with 7 to 8 members renewed every 2 years
- Regional expert group members will be selected by IOC electoral groups and approved by the IOC Assembly
- Scientific and technical experts will be nominated by an open call to IOC and WMO Member States, selected by the IOC Executive Secretary with WMO approval, while considering representation across both skillsets and ocean basins
- Timebound SC task teams will address specific issues

Comments: GOOS SC (slide 18)

- Removing the representation of GOOS bodies in the Steering Committee separates the “decision making body”, from the body that is pushing forward the activities (voluntarily).
 - There is a risk that the decisions of the SC will not be sufficiently informed.
 - Make sure the GOOS SC has sufficient understanding of the work done by GOOS components, and that GOOS components can influence GOOS SC decisions.
 - At least one representative from ICG and another from the panels (it could be rotation) should be present
- Opening calls for SC members every two years would require a significant investment of time given how formal these processes are.
- IOC and WMO should include equal disciplinary representation as an explicit requirement in the selection criteria for SC scientific and technical experts, ensuring biological and ecosystem observing is consistently represented alongside physical and biogeochemical disciplines.
- The INFCOM Management Group has GOOS as an ex officio member, should the GOOS SC have an INFCOM ex officio member? The ICG, at least the part connected to global high-seas-spanning observing networks and OceanOPS sharing data in real time, should ideally maintain strong connections into various INFCOM bodies.

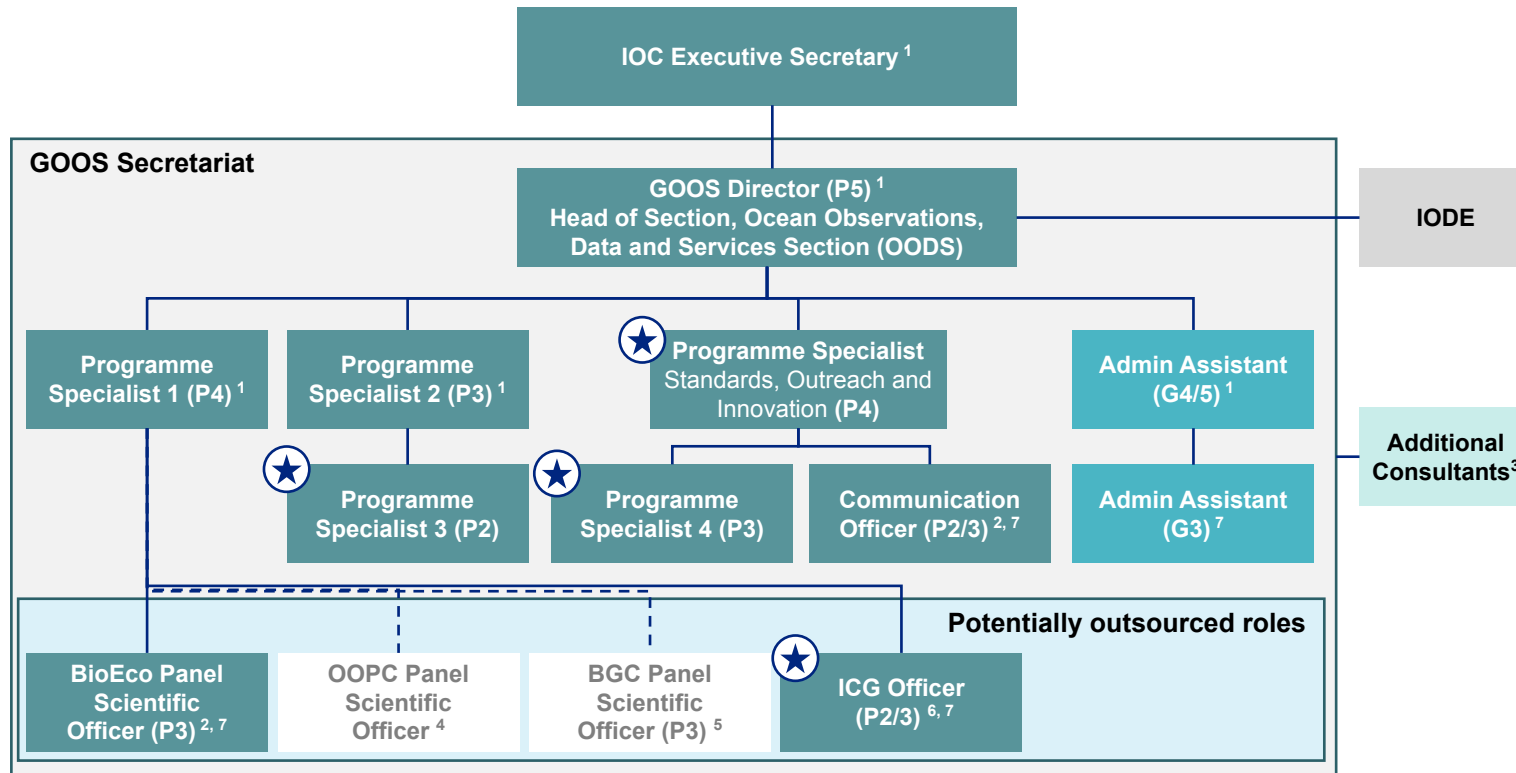


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Formalizing the identity of GOOS Secretariat with additional staff will boost coordination across GOOS and reinforce its operational capacity

Proposed organizational chart for the GOOS Secretariat



Recommended changes

- The GOOS Secretariat, including existing IOC and WMO staff and additional proposed resources, will be formalized as an official component of GOOS and will take on an expanded scope with four prioritized roles supported by existing and new key activities to advance its mission
- Updated team structure will align with the expanded responsibilities and improve operational efficiency
 - The OOPC Scientific Officer will continue to report to their respective WMO department
 - Staffing resources for Panel Scientific Officers, ICG Officers, and other technical roles can be adopted by other organizations (ex: National observing networks, etc.)
- Clear accountabilities will be established across GOOS Secretariat team members to ensure role clarity and balanced workload distribution (see slide #58)
- Contributions from other GOOS components will be formalized to provide complementary capabilities e.g., resource mobilization, strategic planning (see slide #59)
- GOOS Secretariat will create an onboarding document outlining its responsibilities, expectations, etc.

1) Currently an established post
 2) Currently an affiliate consultant post, proposed to be formalized as an established post
 3) Currently an affiliate post determined by the budget, not needs
 4) Continue to be funded and staffed under WMO
 5) Continue to be served by the IOCCP Director and Officer
 6) Previously filled through secondments until 2024
 7) New position identified as part of the GOOS SC Workplan (A-33/4.5.2.)

- IOC Professional
- IOC General Service
- IOC Consultant
- Other Professional
- Oversight
- Coordination
- ★ New position
- External

Comments: GOOS Secretariat (slide 19)

- Concerns about funding the proposed secretariat. The proposed Core Secretariat is not sufficient! Need 12 members.
- The GOOS Secretariat only identifies IOC staff with the exception of the OOPC officer, I think it appropriate to identify Champika, Mathieu and the OceanOPS team as part of GOOS, and should be visible next to the secretariat team strengthening the full GOOS internal human resources capacities.
- What are the priorities if partially funded?
- IODE needs to be connected to ICG in particular and not sit outside the organogram
- Concerns about the expert panels support and potentially being “outsourced”:
 - Core support positions for the Expert Panels should be part of the core Secretariat and must be secured through stable, sponsor-provided funding, not outsourced to external organisations.
 - Looks as if the funds from IOC will go to new functions, while the panels and ICG rely on external funds. This is the current situation, but this is the model we should present as ideal.
 - This approach undermines the retention of institutional knowledge and the ability to attract and keep capable staff over long term.



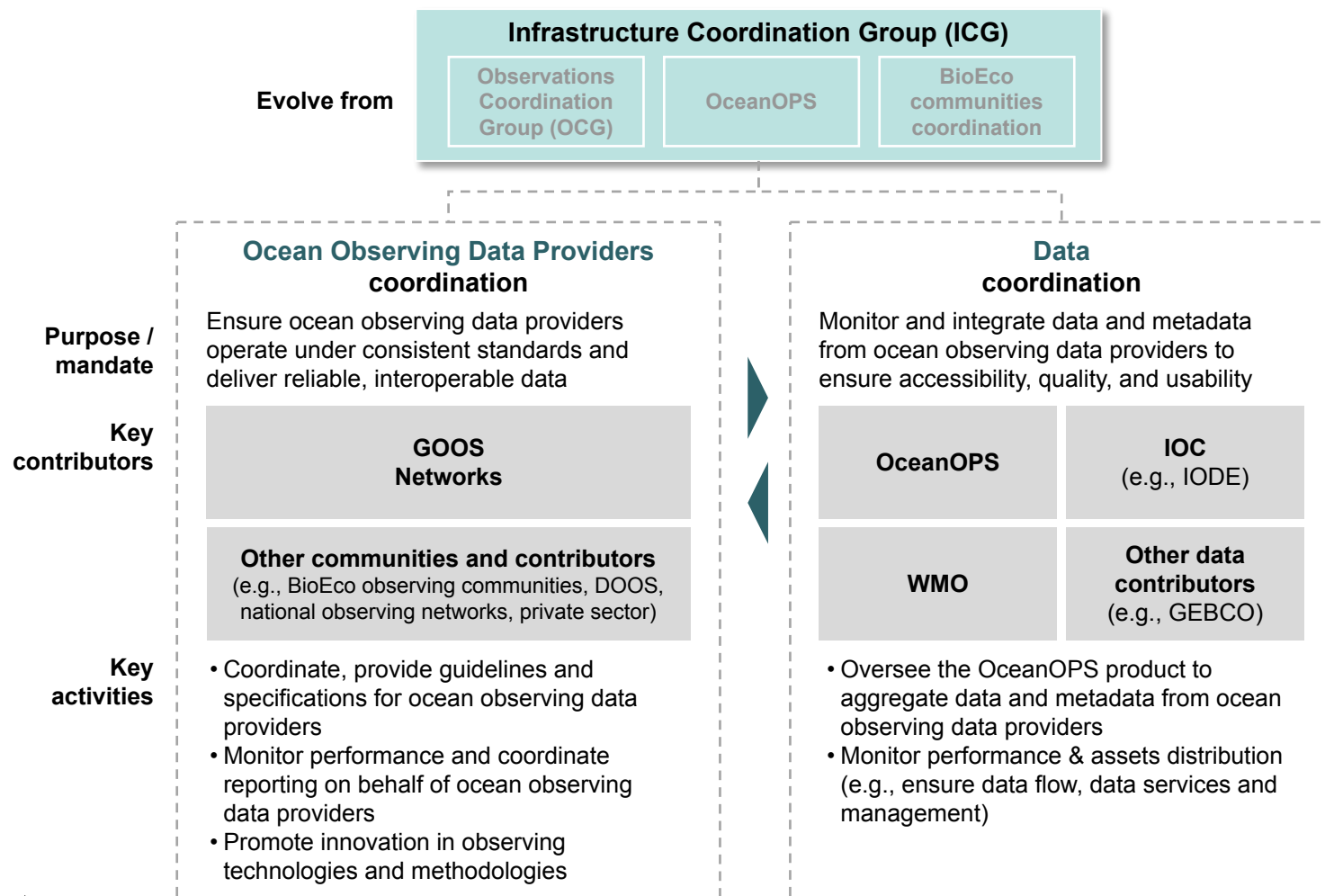
Establishing a connection somewhere here to the GCOP would seem important_____

Recommended structural changes will help GOOS to enhance its operations and better deliver against its mission

	Recommended changes	This will help achieve...
1	Streamline GOOS reporting structure and refresh component responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove overlapping reporting to improve delivery and efficiency and strengthen accountability Enable the GOOS Steering Committee to make informed decisions based on input from components Clarify responsibilities and reduce duplication between components
2	Consolidate sponsorship under the IOC and WMO based on existing contributions and distinguish sponsor, donor, and partner roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor GOOS under IOC and WMO to ensure unified leadership, stability, and shared responsibility Streamline sponsor coordination while recognizing UNEP and ISC's historic contributions
3	Enhance resource mobilization through the Donor Coordination Group to convene funders, foster alignment, and drive investment for GOOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance engagement and coordination across Member States and other donors Strengthen long-term sustainability by coordinating donor outreach and aligning investments with GOOS priorities for the system and its coordination
4	Elevate the GOOS Steering Committee's function through stronger strategic oversight, targeted skillsets, and longer terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance GOOS Steering Committee's capacity to provide oversight across components and advice to Member states Strengthen leadership continuity, institutional memory, expertise and recognition at the intergovernmental level
5	Empower the GOOS Secretariat to have clear identity to support the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive clarity of purpose and focus and enable tangible progress toward GOOS mission and objectives Enhance capacity to coordinate, communicate, and drive delivery across all components
6	Introduce the Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG) as an OCG with broadened mandate to centralize the coordination of networks and other observing networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand mandate to coordinate all ocean observing data providers Centralize efforts for data services and management, metadata harmonization, and performance monitoring to improve global interoperability
7	Strengthen NFP's role and interaction model to further Member States participation, national coordination, and integration with global standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build more consistent and accountable system for national reporting and engagement Enhance collaboration among NFPs and improve the information flow

Introducing the Infrastructure Coordination Group will centralize ocean data provider coordination, data management, and strengthen integration

Proposal for Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG)



Recommended changes

- Network and data coordination provided currently by OCG, OceanOPS, BioEco Panel and IODE will be merged into a single component – Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG)
 - ICG will have an expanded mandate to coordinate all ocean observing data providers (e.g., GOOS Networks, biology community, regional and coastal observations)
 - OceanOPS will facilitate implementation of ICG workplan
- A Co-Chair system will be established with one focused on network and one on data, while also introducing Vice Chairs to represent external contributors, ensure biological expertise, and the user community
- ICG will report to GOOS Steering Committee on behalf of all ocean observing data providers contributing to ocean observation and system wide data coordination efforts
 - NFPs will continue to communicate and collaborate with their respective national observing networks and communities to develop and sustain its national ocean observing coordination
- Ocean observing data providers will follow data management standards and protocols set forth by IOC and WMO
- Ocean observing data providers will be encouraged to integrate their own data platforms (e.g., BioEco Portal) with the OceanOPS product



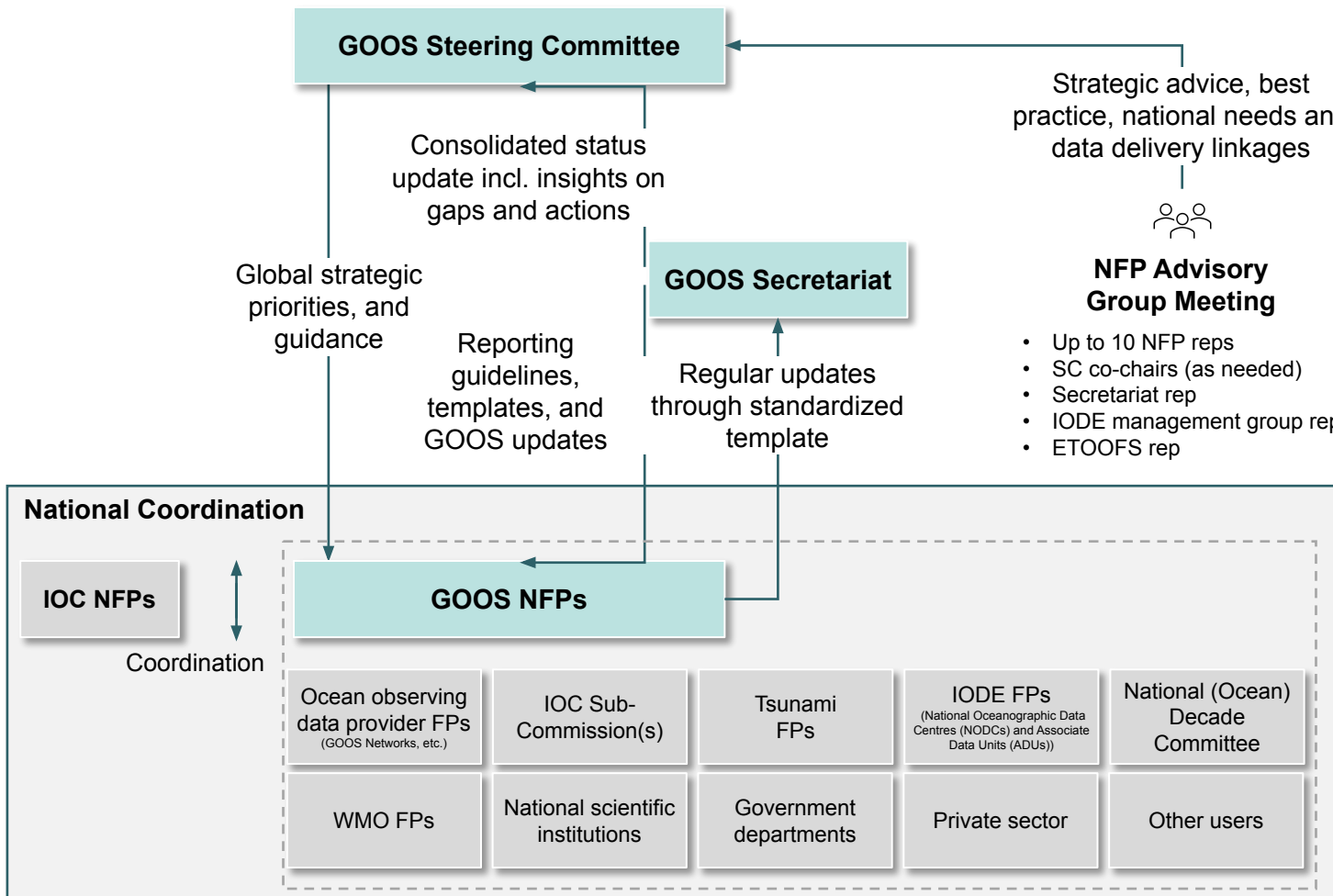
Summary of responses: ICG Presentation under 5.3

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Strengthening NFP’s role and interaction model will increase Member State involvement, enhance coordination, and align with global standards

Key NFP interactions in the future model



Recommended changes

- NFPs will have a strengthened role to link national observing efforts with broader GOOS and advocate GOOS at the national level
- GOOS Steering Committee (SC) will provide strategic direction and oversight to NFPs
 - NFP Advisory Group (comprising representatives from IOC Electoral Groups) will be established to ensure Member States perspectives are effectively communicated to the GOOS SC (see slide #32)
 - GOOS Secretariat will coordinate activities among NFPs, serving as the primary point of contact, sharing updates, templates, best practices, consolidating reports and actively supporting engagement between GOOS NFP and IODE focal points (NODCs and ADUs)
- NFPs will be encouraged to coordinate with IOC NFP and other relevant focal points and representatives (e.g., GOOS Network, WMO, IODE) through:
 - Existing national coordination mechanism (national observing networks) or
 - Establish national ocean observing committee/hub that bring together key representatives as per existing TOR and Implementation Guidelines
- NFPs will communicate and collaborate with national ocean observing data providers but the ICG will be reporting on their behalf (e.g., on % observing systems with interoperable EOVS dataflows)

Summary of comments: NFP role

1/2

Concerns:

- Care is needed not to overemphasize NFPs in this section. The significant responsibilities placed on NFPs under this proposal are unlikely to be fulfilled without strong, committed backing from their respective Member States.
- There appears to be significant variation in how different countries handle this issue, and consideration should be given to how these differences should be addressed. In addition, it seems necessary to thoroughly discuss approaches to strengthen the activities of NFPs.
- If Member State support cannot be secured, the NFP role should be recalibrated to reflect what is genuinely feasible, rather than setting expectations that will go unmet and undermine confidence in the reform overall.
- Missing link/interaction between NFPs and GRAs; why NFPs in a given region not interact with the corresponding GRA?

Summary of comments: NFP role

2/2

Suggestions for implementation:

- Before trying to make NFPs work, it would be advisable to explore how the connection GOOS-GRAs can be improved → Facilitate dialogue between GRAs and NFPs.
- Conduct a structured survey or dedicated consultation with Member States to review the proposed NFP Terms of Reference, gather feedback, and establish realistic expectations before the reform is adopted.
- Where Member States confirm their support, ensure this includes concrete provision, whether funding, institutional backing, or both, for NFP activities such as attending national committees and engaging with GOOS components.
- Design a streamlined, low-burden reporting system that works for both NFPs and the Secretariat. (Coordinating reports from 81 NFPs simultaneously represents a significant administrative challenge; a staggered or tiered approach to reporting cycles should be considered from the outset.)

04

Governance

04

Proposed governance structure will deliver accountability and transparent decision-making to support Member States in achieving its commitments to multilateral agreements

Key governance principles

- 1 Governance meetings will **reflect the global nature of ocean observation** (including global representation)
- 2 Governance meetings will specify **accountability reporting mechanisms** and **expectations for all parties to contribute** (including two-way interaction model between GOOS Steering Committee and Member States)
- 3 The governance model will establish a **clear and faster decision-making hierarchy to drive ownership**
- 4 Governance meetings will **break silos between different components** through **enhanced collaboration** to ensure coordinated ocean observing efforts
- 5 Key decisions and progress made will be **communicated in a timely manner** to build trust and enable informed participation
- 6 Meetings, and their composition will be **governed by their respective component TORs**

GOOS meetings will address strategic, operational, and external goals to ensure agile, inclusive governance and focused decision-making

Type	Steering	Cross-component	Component-led	External
Focus	Shape the direction of GOOS and guide the evolution of its mission and structure	Foster collaboration among GOOS components and enable shared planning, and innovation	Support operational execution and ensure components remains responsive and accountable	Connect GOOS with broader ecosystem and support alignment with global needs
Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ GOOS Steering Committee Meeting ★ Donor Coordination Group Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ GOOS Conference¹ GOOS Executive Committee Meeting ⊕ GOOS Secretariat Meeting² ⊕ Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG) Meeting³ ⊗ OCG Executive Committee Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Panel Meetings (x3) Expert Panel Exec Meetings (x3) ★ Joint Expert Panel Meeting ⊕ ICG Network Coordination Meeting⁴ ⊕ ICG Data Coordination Meeting⁵ NFP Forum ★ NFP Advisory Group Meeting ETOOFS Meeting GRA Forum⁶ GRA Council Meeting⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IOC Assembly Meeting IOC Executive Council Meeting WMO Governing Body Meetings Joint WMO-IOC Collaborative Board Meeting (JCB) Ocean Observing Data Providers Meetings e.g., GOOS Networks (x Multiple) NFP National Coordination Committee Meeting⁷ (x Multiple)


- What is new?**
- Strengthen GOOS **Steering Committee** oversight role and **limit members** to 5 Regional Experts and 10 scientific and technical experts
 - Donor Coordination Group** introduced to strengthen resource mobilization

- GOOS Conference** introduced to strengthen connection between components
- Strengthened Executive Committee to **explore innovation**
- Transition GOOS Management Team meeting into GOOS **Secretariat Meeting**
- Removed** OCG Executive Committee

- Introduced a **joint Panel Meeting, NFP Advisory Group**
- IODE and ETOOFS** to participate in the NFP Advisory Group for better linkage for data exchange
- Proposed **standardized governance** across Expert Panels




1) To be coordinated with Ocean Obs '29 and beyond, 2) Transitioned from GMT meeting, 3) Transitioned from annual OCG meeting, 4) Transitioned from joint OCG / OceanOPS meeting, 5) Transitioned from OceanOps meeting, 6) GRA Forum and GRA Council Meetings are to be confirmed given that GRAs are still under revision, thus, not included in the deep dive, 7) Applicable only in countries where it exists.

Steering governance meetings

Meeting	Mandate (non-exhaustive)	Suggested participants	Suggested frequency
<p>GOOS Steering Committee Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and oversee GOOS strategy and biennial workplans for submission to IOC and WMO Governing Bodies • Monitor, guide, and evaluate GOOS system performance to ensure alignment with strategic objectives • Advise Member States and sponsors on participation in and benefits from GOOS activities • Establish short-term task teams to address emerging or time-bound priorities • Approve updates to component Terms of Reference (excluding the GOOS Steering Committee’s own TOR), Chair/Co-Chairs (per component TOR), workplan, and GOOS endorsed projects • Select and appoint GOOS Steering Committee Co-Chairs in accordance with established procedures 	<p>Co-Chairs: Regional Experts rep x1 and scientific / technical expert rep x1 Participants: 5 Regional Experts, 10 scientific / technical experts</p>	<p>Quarterly (Q1 in person)</p>
<p> Donor Coordination Group Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene sponsors and donors to ensure high-level alignment and strategic engagement • Mobilize and sustain donor support to advance GOOS priorities and initiatives • Engage prospective donors and capture feedback to strengthen partnership and investment opportunities • Review biannual written updates prepared by the GOOS Secretariat and shared by the SC to maintain oversight and continuity between meetings 	<p>Co-Chairs: IOC Executive Secretary, WMO Secretary-General Participants: GOOS SC Co-Chairs, Member State donor rep, non-Member State donor rep, GOOS Secretariat rep, selected GOOS SC rep</p>	<p>Biennial (+ annual written update)</p>





Cross-component governance meetings

Meeting	Mandate (non-exhaustive)	Suggested participants	Suggested frequency
 GOOS Conference¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen collective alignment to purpose, strategy, and mission by bringing together Sponsors, Chairs, members of all components, and key collaborators (partners, etc.) via a GOOS-wide forum Foster connections and collaboration between GOOS components and other IOC entities (e.g., IODE and related programs) to enhance system integration and coherence 	<p>Chair: SC Co-Chairs Participants: Sponsor rep, SC, panel, NFPs members, other IOC focal points (IODE committee), relevant ocean observing stakeholders (civil society, etc.)</p>	Every five years
GOOS Executive Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review progress across components and align quarterly priorities with global ocean observing goals Identify and explore emerging technologies, methodologies, and co-designed solutions Share updates, coordinate joint initiatives and align stakeholders on key decisions and messaging before the formal SC 	<p>Chair: SC Co-Chairs Participants: Co-Chairs/leadership of all GOOS components</p>	Quarterly
GOOS Secretariat Meeting²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track implementation of the GOOS Strategy, biannual workplan, and related initiatives Address bottlenecks and enable timely delivery of GOOS Secretariat priorities, effective coordination among all GOOS components, resource optimization, and joint solutions to common challenges Monitor timelines and outputs in preparation for upcoming review and reporting cycles Prepare and consolidate materials to support other components and governance meetings 	<p>Chair: GOOS Director Participants: GOOS Secretariat (including WMO staff)</p>	Fortnight (Every two weeks)
 Infrastructure Coordination Group (ICG) Meeting³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure ocean observing data providers operate under consistent standards and deliver reliable, interoperable data Monitor and integrate data and metadata from ocean observing data providers to ensure accessibility, quality, and usability Identify synergies across ocean observing data providers, gaps in coverage, data interoperability, and lead network integration and stakeholder engagement Approve the annual report for the SC and select ICG Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs 	<p>Chair: ICG Co-Chairs Participants: ICG Vice-Chairs, Ocean observing data provider rep (GOOS Networks, etc.), OceanOPS Manager, GOOS Secretariat rep, IOC rep (IODE, OBIS, etc.), WMO rep</p>	Annual
 OCG Executive Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees the development and implementation of the OCG Work Plan, managing resources, inter-sessional activities, communication with the OCG, and relationship with other bodies 	<p>Chair: OCG Chair Participants: OCG Vice-Chairs, OceanOPS Manager, GOOS Secretariat and WMO rep</p>	Quarterly



Component-led governance meetings

Component	Meeting	Mandate (non-exhaustive)	Suggested participants	Suggested frequency
Expert Panels	Expert Panel Meeting (x3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align on scientific priorities and review progress on EOVS development and implementation Develop and update workplans, deliverables, and recommendations for the SC 	Co-Chairs: Panel Co-Chairs Participants: All Panel members, Panel project/scientific officer(s)	Quarterly (Three times per year)
	Expert Panel Exec Meeting (x3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track progress on specific EOVS tasks and panel operations, address technical or logistical challenges, and coordinate day-to-day actions Prepare for Expert Panel Meeting, draft technical documents, and synthesize updates for reporting 	Co-Chairs: Panel Co-Chairs Participants: Panel project/scientific officer(s), other Panel reps (if needed)	Quarterly
	 Joint Expert Panel Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate across Panels to align on scientific priorities, EOVS and implementation strategies Exchange methodologies, evaluation frameworks, and best practices 	Chair: One of the Panel Co-Chairs Participants: Panel Co-Chairs, Panel project/scientific officer(s); GOOS Secretariat rep	Annual
ICG	ICG Network Coordination Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure ocean observing data providers operate under consistent standards and deliver reliable, interoperable data Review status, coverage, and data delivery of ocean observing data providers, respond to queries and escalations Discuss requirements, observing advances, environmental stewardship, metrics, standards and best practices, and capacity development for ocean observing data providers 	Co-Chairs: ICG Co-Chairs Participants: Ocean observing data provider rep; Secretariat rep	Quarterly / Monthly
	ICG Data Coordination Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the OceanOPS product to aggregate data and metadata from ocean observing data providers Monitor performance & assets distribution (e.g., ensure data flow, data management) Advance metadata standardization and integration and enable new data streams across ocean observing data providers 	Chair: ICG Co-Chairs Participants: OceanOPS manager and staff; Secretariat rep	Weekly
NFPs	NFP Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate national needs and gaps Strengthen collaboration, peer learning and share best practices, guidance, templates Select NFP Advisory Group members by electoral groups 	Chair: NFP Advisory Group Chair Participants: All NFPs, GOOS Secretariat rep	Annual
	 NFP Advisory Group Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide strategic advice on Member States related matters to the SC and Secretariat Serve as a sounding board for new initiatives, policies, engagement models, and capacity development Support generating best practices for national system development and coordination, alignment with global frameworks, and ocean observing applications Discuss the linkage between national needs and data delivery Work with Secretariat on NFP reporting and accountability 	Chair: One of the members Participants: 1-2 representatives from each IOC electoral groups, SC Co-chairs (as needed), Secretariat rep, IODE management group rep, ETOOFS rep	Biannual
ETOOFS	ETOOFS Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify gaps, successes, and technical priorities across observing, data management, and forecasting systems and review progress and performance 	Chair: ETOOFS Co-Chairs Participants: ETOOFS members, Secretariat rep	Annual



Key external governance meetings

Meeting	Mandate (non-exhaustive)	Suggested participants	Suggested frequency
IOC Assembly Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the overall implementation and progress of GOOS within the IOC framework Approve and adopt the GOOS Strategy, biennial workplan and budget, and major reforms (e.g., creation or removal of components) Approve the five GOOS SC “Electoral Group” members, amendments to SC TOR Encourage Member State contributions of observations, data, and resources towards GOOS Determine IOC’s contributions to GOOS, including financial, human, and technical resources 	<p>Chair: IOC Chair Participants: All 152 Member States</p>	Biennial
IOC Executive Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review GOOS-wide annual report submitted by the GOOS SC Ensure GOOS alignment with IOC strategy, objectives, and related programs (e.g., IODE, Ocean Decade) Provide strategic guidance to the SC and serve as its escalation and advisory body 	<p>Chair: IOC Chair Participants: 40 IOC Executive Council Member States</p>	Annual
WMO Governing Body Meetings (INFCOM, Executive Council, Congress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review GOOS-wide annual report submitted by the GOOS SC Ensure GOOS alignment with WMO strategy, objectives, and related programs Provide strategic guidance to the SC and serve as its escalation and advisory body Determine WMO’s contributions to GOOS, including financial, human, and technical resources 	<p>Chair: As per WMO TORs Participants: GOOS SC co-chair or co-chair nominated representative</p>	-
Joint WMO-IOC Collaborative Board Meeting (JCB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the primary forum for sponsor coordination and collaboration, in line with the JCB TOR Engage in accordance with the JCB TOR, the WMO–IOC Collaborative Strategy, and relevant topics as identified by the JCB, including joint work between WMO and IOC, such as GOOS, GCOS, and WCRP Promote integrated ocean observation 	<p>Co-Chairs: WMO and IOC nominated representatives Participants: As per JCB TOR</p>	Annual
Ocean Observing Data Providers Meetings e.g., GOOS Networks (x Multiple)	<p>Exemplary for GOOS Networks (e.g., ARGO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and approve network specification sheets Update, approve, and implement network strategies to meet evolving activities and user needs Select GOOS Network Meeting Chair WHEN APPLICABLE: Onboard, coordinate, oversee, and manage network NFPs WHEN APPLICABLE: Oversee network task teams, and working groups, and communications (website, map products, etc.) 	<p>Exemplary for GOOS Networks (e.g., ARGO) Chair: GOOS Network Exec Board Chair Participants: All NFPs, GOOS Secretariat rep</p>	Annual
NFP National Coordination Committee Meeting¹ (x Multiple)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate national implementation of GOOS activities across NFPs Promote dialogue between scientific institutions, government agencies, and private sector Track and report national contributions to global ocean observing efforts Leverage existing national ocean observing coordination structures, when exists 	<p>Chair: GOOS NFP Participants: See stakeholders in the “National Coordination” box on the NFP recommendations (slide 21)</p>	Annual/ Biannual



Summary of comments: Governance - GOOS meetings

- One Joint Panel meeting every 3-4 years would suffice. Joint Panel Meetings cannot replace the individual Panel Meetings. There is also the question of budget.
- A fully funded annual face-to-face meeting between the Panels and the ICG should be provided to facilitate meaningful exchange.
- The preparation of OceanObs Conferences typically consume several months of staff time. Adding a GOOS Conference does not seem worth it, unless it would coincide with a Joint Panel Meeting and/or and ICG, for instance.
- Opposite opinion: it would make sense for a periodic - eg annual - joint GOOS meeting to enable more in-depth information exchange & discussion
- Notes that the WMO and INFCOM should somehow be engaged in the cross-component level, and not only the Steering Committee level.

GRAs

Additionally, two outstanding decisions that will shape the future structure of GOOS are yet to be addressed



GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs)

Key challenge

GRAs are intended to bridge regional coordination and implementation, but their current structure lacks clarity and coherence

- There is significant variation in the structure and function of GRAs, leading to uneven levels of effectiveness
- Interviews revealed confusion and uncertainty about their role and value, including language barriers that hinders collaboration

Options to investigate

- Consider the role and level of integration of GRAs with GOOS (see next slide)
- Consider how to sharpen the unique contributions and role vis a vis GOOS in contrast to national system
- Consider identifying potential maturity levels for GRAs



User engagement mechanism

Currently, there is insufficient engagement with end-users of ocean observation, resulting in their needs not being adequately addressed

- GOOS lacks a common, actionable view of end-users, resulting in fragmented engagement, limited co-design, inconsistent priorities, and weak justification for long-term funding
- Whilst not in scope of the GOOS reform review, the process has confirmed the need for a user analysis and development of user uptake engagement strategy

- Develop a user uptake strategy
- Widen the Expert Panel's mandate beyond EOVs with additional roles on user engagement and co-design
- Create a wider "User Engagement Group" to include a broader range of ocean observation end users
- Formalize a process of engagement with user communities in collaboration with IOC and WMO
- Coordinate and leverage partnerships to further engage with end users

GRA role will be further investigated and discussed during the GRA Forum XII and GOOS SC-15 in March 2026 (agenda item 5.2)



Differentiate GRAs in GOOS structure

GRAs as self-governed, independent entities

Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed mandate and responsibilities to strengthen regional coordination of ocean observation New and clearer process of engagement Formalized accountability and reporting (e.g., OKRs) Continued support from GOOS Secretariat GRAs encouraged to be basin-aligned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRAs no longer a separate component of GOOS with no formalized mandate; with flexibility to set their own priorities Regional autonomy in self-governance and decision-making Voluntary alignment with GOOS principles rather than formal obligations No direct support received from GOOS Secretariat
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRA Council and GOOS Regional Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint meeting between GRAs and NFPs for regional coordination
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Avoids disruption as builds on existing regional infrastructure and relationships ✓ Possibility to enhance regional coordination if mandates are clearly set and implemented ✓ Greater clarity and structure could improve performance and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides full autonomy and flexibility for GRAs to set regional priorities ✓ Encourages open dialogue and idea-sharing without formal obligations ✓ Streamlines GOOS structure ✓ Reduces dependency on GOOS Secretariat resources
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Demands change management to implement cohesively across GRAs ❑ Limits GRA flexibility and autonomy ❑ Requires ongoing GOOS Secretariat resources and capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Weaker alignment with global GOOS objectives, with a risk of inconsistent standards and practices across GRAs ❑ GRAs may feel demotivated due to reduced formal authority, potentially limiting regional impact

Note: Other options considered included reconfiguring GRAs to basin-aligned, repositioning them under IOC sub-commissions with a stronger role for regional experts in the GOOS Steering Committee, or removing GRAs entirely (more details in Appendix slide 54,55)




Summary of comments: GRA proposal - reflections

- Ocean processes are inherently transboundary. Regional approaches are often better suited, and better funded, for coordinating observing networks than national ones.
- There is probably not a single solution but a different solution for each of the GRAs
- GRAs are often effective and GOOS should take advantage of this and establish a formal process for engagement (eg similar to GOOS Networks).
- The reform should empower GRAs to fulfil a genuinely regional coordination role, working closely with NFPs at the national level and with the Panels at the scientific and technical level. This would strengthen the coherence of the overall system and make better use of what GRAs already do well.
- Allowing GRAs greater autonomy to operate independently would risk fragmenting global ocean observing coordination and undermining data interoperability and exchange. There are existing examples of regional bodies operating at arm's length from GOOS. For example, the SOOS has developed its own set of EOVs, many of which diverge from those of GOOS, reflecting a pattern of limited communication and weak integration with the global framework.
- There appears to be potential for overlap and/or gaps between global and regional coordination, which warrants consideration.

Summary of comments: GRA proposal - implementation

Suggested improved coordination/implementation through:

- GRAs should play the role of coordination of NFPs within their region with an harmonization of their missions (since now GRAs structure and function vary quite significantly). Link between NFPs and GOOS secretariat and Steering Committee.
- The Report Card and OceanOPS metadata system could be used to show the relative contribution of the countries to the system. This could serve as an incentive for greater participation
- Develop mechanisms for working with the Panels at the scientific and technical level
- Some GRAs are effectively communicating with some of the IOC sub commissions, which could help raise GOOS profile in IOC
- Joint meeting between GRAs and NFPs for regional coordination should be put upfront.
- GOOS should mandate GRAs to produce a regional design (coastal and open ocean) for their region every two years. They must support an integrated operational oceanography approach (observing and modelling) and actively engage in the co-design of regional priorities. We must insist on evidence of stakeholder engagement and integration with global networks in these regional designs.
-  Develop optimal design for coastal networks co-designed with stakeholders and end users to bridge the gap between open ocean and the coast, where GOOS wants to have more impact.



Global Ocean Observing System



5.2 Report back from GRA Forum

GRA Co-Chairs

15th GOOS Steering Committee meeting | 25-27 March 2026 | Hyderabad, India