GEBCO STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

31st May 2025

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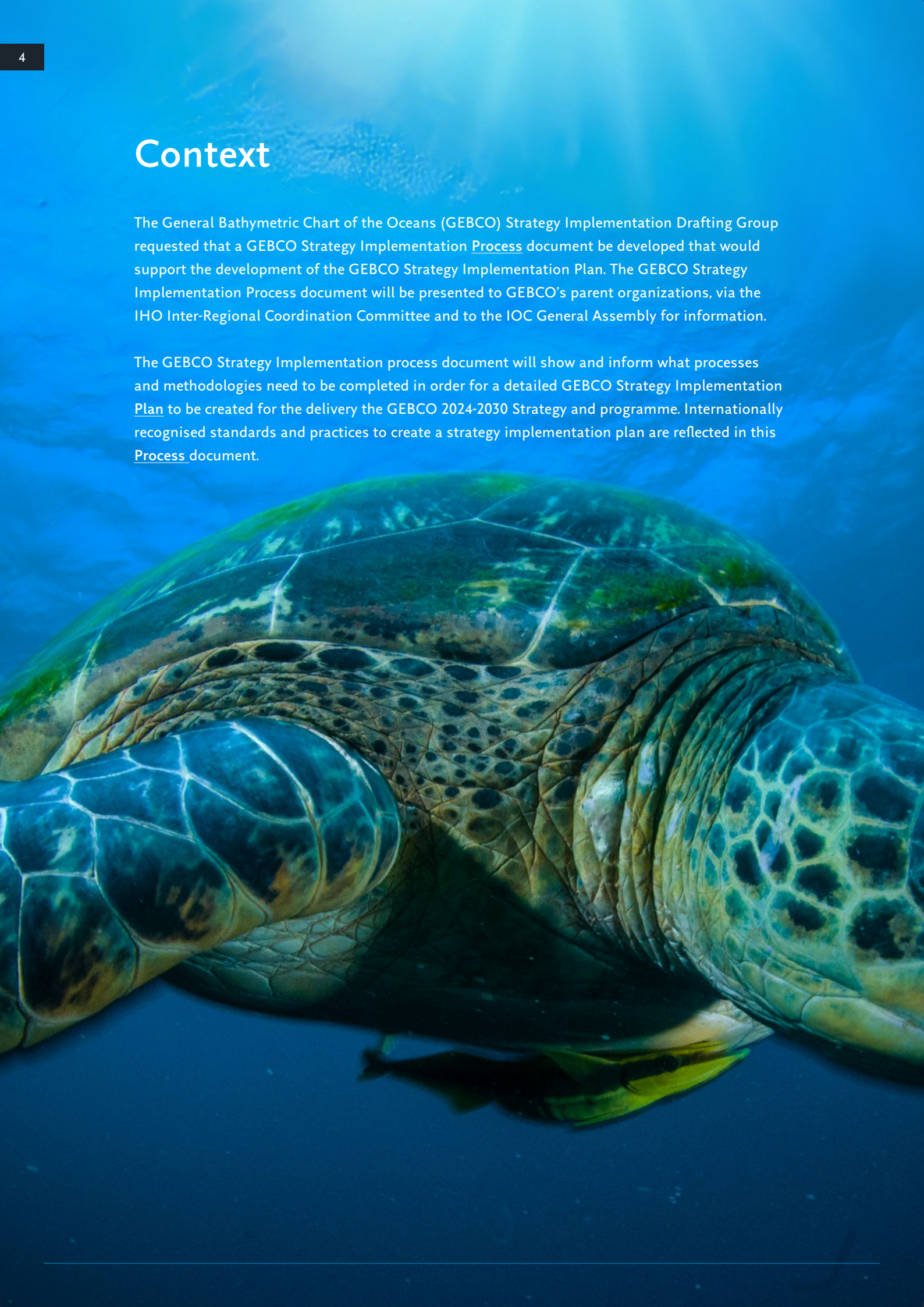
Context

The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Strategy Implementation Drafting Group requested that a GEBCO Strategy Implementation Process document be developed that would support the development of the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan. The GEBCO Strategy Implementation Process document will be presented to GEBCO's parent organizations, via the IHO Inter-Regional Coordination Committee and to the IOC General Assembly for information.
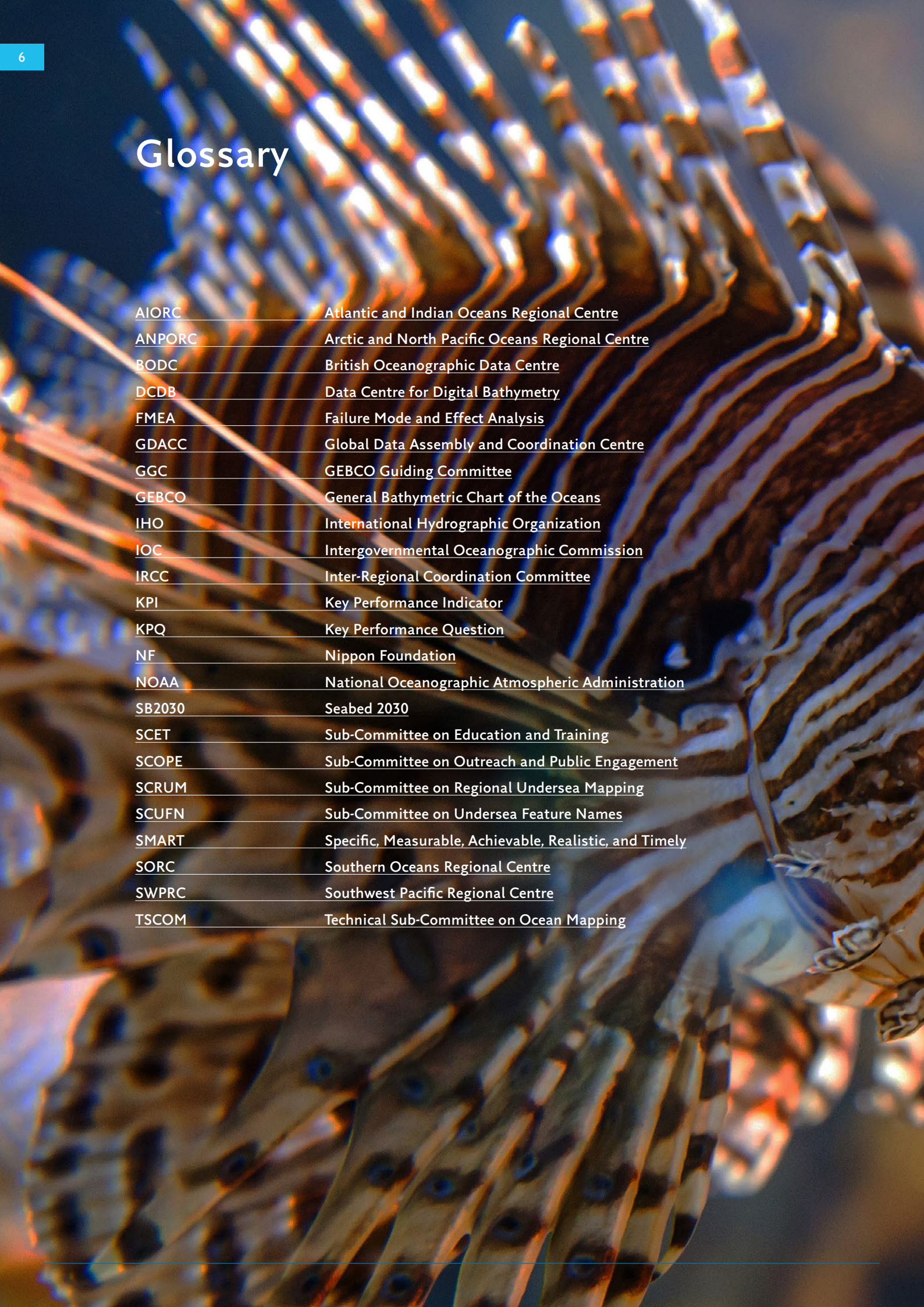
The GEBCO Strategy Implementation process document will show and inform what processes and methodologies need to be completed in order for a detailed GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan to be created for the delivery the GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy and programme. Internationally recognised standards and practices to create a strategy implementation plan are reflected in this Process document.

Contents

Glossary

AIORC	Atlantic and Indian Oceans Regional Centre
ANPORC	Arctic and North Pacific Oceans Regional Centre
BODC	British Oceanographic Data Centre
DCDB	Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry
FMEA	Failure Mode and Effect Analysis
GDACC	Global Data Assembly and Coordination Centre
GGC	GEBCO Guiding Committee
GEBCO	General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans
IHO	International Hydrographic Organization
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IRCC	Inter-Regional Coordination Committee
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KPQ	Key Performance Question
NF	Nippon Foundation
NOAA	National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration
SB2030	Seabed 2030
SCET	Sub-Committee on Education and Training
SCOPE	Sub-Committee on Outreach and Public Engagement
SCRUM	Sub-Committee on Regional Undersea Mapping
SCUFN	Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely
SORC	Southern Oceans Regional Centre
SWPRC	Southwest Pacific Regional Centre
TSCOM	Technical Sub-Committee on Ocean Mapping

Overview

The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) was established in 1903 by Prince Albert I of Monaco. The programme has successfully run over 122 years, with 26.1% of the world's oceans now having been directly measured and mapped to a recognised resolution (as of 2024).

"GEBCO is an internationally recognised and well-respected programme that operates under the joint auspices of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)."[1]

In June 2024, the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC) and the IOC Executive Council 57 endorsed the GEBCO Strategy 2024-2030:

The GEBCO Vision and Mission were reviewed and updated as part of this process to ensure they reflected the 2024-2030 strategy.

Vision
To bring knowledge about our planet's seabed to everyone.

Mission
To produce free, open and complete seabed data and information for the world's oceans. This is achieved by enabling and inspiring seabed mapping efforts through international collaboration, technological innovation, capacity development and education.

[1]The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans Strategy 2024-2030.

Executive Summary

Creating and successfully delivering a strategy implementation plan for the globally important GEBCO programme requires strong leadership, thorough and meticulous management and oversight to ensure delivery of strategic goals and objectives. The GEBCO published Strategy 2024-2030 and a separate, but related detailed GEBCO Governance Review were both endorsed by IRCC and IOC Executive Council in June 2024. A key recommendation was that a GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan be produced and implemented.

This document sets out the internationally recognised processes and practices to follow when developing the Strategy Implementation Plan. The recommended model comprises of eleven essential steps that guide us through strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The successful achievement of the GEBCO Mission and its programme depends heavily on a detailed and rigorous Strategy Implementation Plan. Developing a plan with the right strategic objectives, goals, and milestones requires thorough risk management, measurement and analysis through KPIs, as well as continuous monitoring, evaluation of programme delivery, and reporting of programme status and achievements. These practices and principles are critical to a successful implementation, and sufficient time must be allocated to ensure these critical factors are comprehensive and fit for purpose for GEBCO.

Annex C of this document presents a proposed timeline to complete the necessary processes (Steps 6-11) to generate the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan, which will be presented to the GEBCO Guiding Committee for approval at GGC 43 2026.

WHY GEBCO IS DEVELOPING A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In parallel to the GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy, a detailed GEBCO Governance Review of the current GEBCO organizational and administrative ecosystem was conducted. The report, findings and recommendations from the Governance Review were presented and endorsed by IRCC 16 and IOC Executive Council 57 in June 2024. The abstract shows the importance of aligning GEBCO's work in the new strategy with the findings of Governance Review and to develop a GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan:

GEBCO Governance Review Executive Summary

The GEBCO (General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans) Governance Review Report provides an in-depth analysis of the entity's governance structures and practices, aimed at enhancing its operational efficiency and alignment with the strategic objectives of its parent organizations, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.....

Key components of the review include an examination of the organisational and governance arrangements within GEBCO, its committees, and its interactions with external bodies....

The review emphasises the importance of aligning GEBCO's work with the newly commissioned GEBCO Strategy, which was developed in parallel to this governance review.

The report suggests several next steps.........the development of an implementation plan,[2]

To aid understanding, the GEBCO Organization Structure can be found at Annex A, this current structure has evolved under 122 years of the GEBCO programme, and the Governance Review recommended that the structure be reviewed.

[2]GEBCO Governance Review Report endorsed by IRCC 16 June 2024.

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO CREATE A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

There are many approaches to implement a strategy, however the underlying key principles are by and large the same, in that strategy implementation is the process of turning a strategic plan into action.

Creating a strategy for an organization can be complex, time consuming and demanding. A strategy is ineffective and will not be realised unless a detailed plan is created, managed and delivered. Failure to achieve a strategy is often a result of not delivering a strategy implementation plan effectively, deliverables, activities and milestones need to be achievable and realisable. Successful delivery of a strategy requires strong and effective leadership, providing guidance and direction to persons empowered in the delivery of specific aspects of a plan, and holding those persons to account for delivery of work and activities delegated to them.

"Strategy implementation is the process by which an organisation translates its chosen strategy into action plans and activities, which will steer the organisation in the direction set out in the strategy and enable the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives." [3]

To deliver this strategic plan, specific organisational requirements must be allocated

and established. These include providing the necessary resources, ensuring appropriate support, and dedicating sufficient time to deliver the work required for successful implementation.

Once developed, the Strategy Implementation Plan will outline the steps needed to achieve GEBCO's mission. This plan will serve as a roadmap for the successful delivery of the strategy, and it must reflect the following criteria for developing the strategic plan (Step 5 of delivering a Strategy Implementation Plan):

- Define your goals / Identify objectives
- Establish a team with the skillsets needed
- Map out any risks
- Schedule all milestones – Create a timeline of activities
- Assign tasks / Track progress
- Allocate resources

In Step 5 the GEBCO Strategy 2024-2030 and GEBCO Governance Review and SWOT analysis previously conducted should ALL be reviewed and validated to identify if anything has changed BEFORE commencing Steps 6-11. Conducting this process will ensure that an accurate and current foundation is available to develop the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan.

With the GEBCO strategic plan now developed, certain steps need to be followed to achieve successful delivery., These include and are not limited to: communication, engagement with the team, executing the plan, being agile, ensuring work and activities and delivered in full and once the strategy has been implemented identifying lessons learnt.

[3]Chartered Management Institute 30th March 2020.

HOW TO DELIVER A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GEBCO has recently developed its Strategy 2024-2030 as well as conducted a detailed Governance Review. A GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan needs to be created that reflects both its strategy document and the recommendations to be implemented from the Governance Review. This document outlines the processes to be followed to develop a strategy implementation plan that is aligned with the new strategic goals and objectives and will serve as a roadmap for achieving success.

As previously stated, there are numerous models and approaches to creating a strategy implementation plan, many have very similar facets and criteria. The intention is to adopt the eleven-step model to create a strategy Implementation plan as listed below.

It is assessed that Steps 1-4 (in blue) have been previously completed as these aspects were considered when the GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy was developed. The constituent aspects of Step 5 have already been listed and the remainder of this document focuses on Steps 6-11 (in green), which outlines the processes that need to be considered when developing a strategy implementation plan. A proposed outline timeline to complete Steps 6-11 can be found at Annex C, should the work be conducted as listed then the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan work could be completed and presented to the GEBCO Guiding Committee for endorsement in October 2026.

Eleven steps to strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

STEP 1: Choosing the right time
STEP 2: Building the team
STEP 3: Reviewing the existing vision and mission
STEP 4: Analysing the current situation

GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy

STEP 5: Developing your strategic plan (criteria is summarised in the previous section)

STEP 6: Aligning with the new strategy
STEP 7: Creating an operational plan
STEP 8: Risk management assessment
STEP 9: Collecting the right information for effective monitoring (KPIs)
STEP 10: Monitoring and Evaluation
STEP 11: Reporting on performance

GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan

STEP 6:
ALIGNING WITH THE NEW STRATEGY

STEP 7:
CREATING AN OPERATIONAL PLAN

The GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy was adopted at the 16th meeting of the IRCC and the 57th meeting of the IOC Executive Council in 2024. In conjunction, a thorough GEBCO Governance Review was conducted, which evidenced a number of recommendations to be actioned and implemented. To ensure that there is coherency, an alignment process needs to be conducted to ensure GEBCO has the appropriate committees/working groups and personnel that are constructed in a way which can deliver the goals and objectives GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy. This alignment process will identify if the right balance of human resources and fiscal budget are available to successfully implement your strategy.

Step 6 is arguably the most critical phase in the implementation of the new strategy. In this step, insights from the recent governance review, the outcomes of the SWOT analysis, and the key issues and risks we have identified will be integrated. This comprehensive analysis will enable alignment of the current structure and operations with the new strategy. It may reveal that it is not currently fit for purpose, and that significant changes, including potential restructuring and evaluating funding needs, are necessary. The success of this step hinges on the active participation and input of all members of the

Guiding Committee, as their collective expertise and commitment will be vital to ensuring all are fully prepared to deliver the strategic objectives.

The alignment process should take the form of an exercise that maps all pre-existing work and activities as defined in sub-committee's and Seabed 2030 workplans and identifies if it contributes to the new strategy. In addition, the GEBCO Governance Review and SWOT analysis will identify any additional requirements not previously determined. This process will determine if pre-existing work and activities should continue/stop and or be adjusted to ensure that ongoing work/activities best delivers work effectively/efficiently. Mapping out the activities to deliver the strategic plan will/may identify work that is not currently being conducted (gaps). The impact of any gaps can be evaluated and determine, if resourced, whether they would contribute to the goals and objectives of the GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy. Conducting an alignment exercise will ensure that the work/activities delivered will be aligned to the strategic priorities/goals and objectives and implemented efficiently within the resources (people & budget) available. It is recommended that once complete an alignment exercise be conducted periodically.

GEBCO's strategic priorities are key and will inform the development of the strategic plan, underpinning work/goals and deliverables to achieve objectives and realise our strategic priorities can be mapped, and highlighting milestones to be delivered/achieved across a timeline. The overarching strategic plan can be refined into operational delivery plans which will reflect specific tasks, responsibilities and resource allocation.

An example of a five-year strategy (delivery) plan can be found at Annex B. It shows the five pillars of the GEBCO 2024-2030 Strategy, and it incorporates the outputs of the Governance Review. Other factors and activities may be identified when the strategy implementation plan development work has been conducted. Once complete, ALL facets can be combined into a single implementation plan schedule. This will enable the immediate identification of work/activities/deliverables etc that will be conducted over the short-term (Years 1-2), medium-term (Years 3-4) and long-term (Years 5+). Creating a schematic of the operational plan makes it easy to identify what work and activities are currently being delivered, track progress and hold those persons responsible for delivery to account.

The operational plan outlines:

1. The activities GEBCO intends to conduct to deliver its programme and achieve its mission.
2. The timing when activities will be conducted.
3. The person (sub-committee) responsible for the completion of each activity.
4. The Key Performance Indicators for tracking GEBCO's performance in delivering its strategy and strategic plan.

STEP 8:
RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

There are many definitions of risk and its impacts across differing situations and operations. The following definition of risk relates to programme risk and is well aligned to the GEBCO programme:

"An uncertain event or set of events which, should it occur, will have an effect on the achievement of objectives; a risk is measured by a combination of the probability of a perceived threat or opportunity occurring and the magnitude of its impact on objectives[4]."

Risks can have both positive and negative impacts on the deviation of expected norms. To be prepared for the impacts and effects of risks, detailed and thorough risk assessments/management of realising

risks needs to be conducted. All risks/potential risks to a programme need to be identified/analysed and mitigation measures determined to minimise any potential impacts. Ideally risks should be identified at the outset of a programme, or when conducting the alignment process to a strategy/strategic plan. Once risks have been identified they should be scored/ranked from those having the highest impact to the lowest and the normal process for this is the likelihood of the risk and the impact it would have on a project/programme. Once all risks have been identified, they should be put in the Risk Register and each risk should be reviewed periodically (quarterly) throughout the delivery of a programme. A Risk Register already exists, and it should be updated as needed once this process has been completed.

There are differing approaches to identifying and analysing risks and their impacts (these would include (not limited to) using the findings of refreshed SWOT reviews and those risks previously identified in the GEBCO Governance Review), one such method of assessment is the "Failure Mode and Effect Analysis" (FMEA). The FMEA analysis asks a set of questions, which help you analyse better the risks that may impact your programme[5]:

- Identify the steps/places in the process where things might go wrong,
- Describe some of the potential "failures",
- Describe the impact of those "failures" on your organisation's work and achieving your strategic plan,
- What caused these "failures"?
- How much warning time do you have before these "failures" potentially occur (i.e. how much in advance is it possible to predict these "failures" happening)?
- What solutions can you come up with to mitigate or fix these "failures"?

Should a risk have already been realised then it becomes an "Issue," the programme Risk Register should reflect both Risks and Issues.

[4]Source: What is a Risk? 10 definitions from different industries and standards
https://www.stakeholdermap.com/risk/risk-definition.html

[5]SCOUTS Planning for 2023 and Beyond. A strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation toolkit for NSOs.

STEP 9:
COLLECTING THE RIGHT INFORMATION FOR EFFECTIVE MONITORING (KPIs)
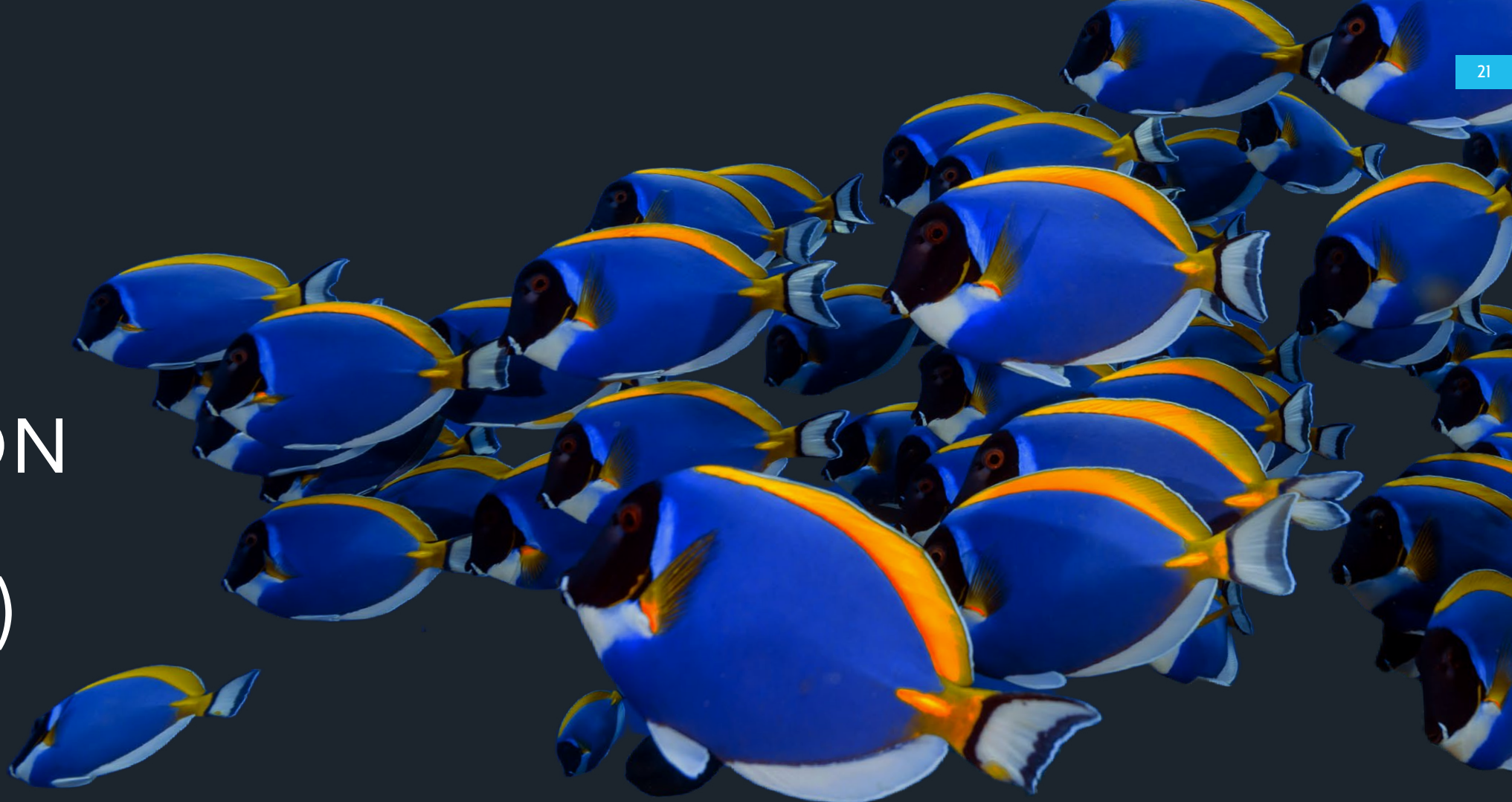
To assess and monitor progress made in the delivery of the strategic plan, using measurements or indicators on performance in relation to goals and objectives are important, and these enable strategic decisions on the current and future delivery of our strategic plan to be made. Measuring progress will identify the achievements made, as well as determining areas where there has been a lack of progress, which will enable improvements going forward.

"You need to consider the audience you are reporting to whether it be internal or external and what you are to measure. The challenges of measuring progress are two-fold:

1. *You first need to identify what it is that you NEED to measure, and then*
2. *HOW you are going to measure it."*[6]

To ensure development of the most appropriate KPIs to measure the success of the delivery of the strategic plan, it is necessary to determine the specific Key Performance Questions (KPQs) that support and underpin the KPIs. KPQs should be:

- Performance related – How well we are doing
- Short and clear questions
- They should be open-ended (not yes/no questions)
- Focus on the present and the future
- They should be refined and adjusted through delivery of the programme
- They should form the basis of developing our KPIs
- Use KPQs to report and communicate progress (internally and externally)

The KPI should collect information that will identify what progress is being made and inform decisions that will lead to improvement and better performance. It is recognised that KPIs should be developed using the SMART principles:

Setting goals provides a target to aim for. A SMART goal is used to help guide goal setting. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Therefore, a SMART goal incorporates all these criteria to help focus efforts and increase the chances of achieving goals.

Figure 2. Corporate Finance Institute -CFI

SMART goals are:

- *Specific: Well defined, clear, and unambiguous*
- *Measurable: With specific criteria that measure progress toward the accomplishment of the goal*
- *Achievable: Attainable and not impossible to achieve*
- *Realistic: Within reach, realistic, and relevant to your purpose*
- *Timely: With a clearly defined timeline, including a starting date and a target date. The purpose is to create urgency.* [7]

Once established, KPIs are critical to the successful delivery of the strategy, they should be reviewed, adjusted and updated annually.

[6]SCOUTS Planning for 2023 and Beyond. A strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation toolkit for NSOs.

[7]Corporate Finance Institute - CFI

STEP 10:
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A key aspect when implementing a strategy is that of monitoring and evaluation. "Monitoring" measures progress and achievements, or lack thereof in activities/ goals and identifies challenges so that decisions can be made early and if required corrections made for implementation of the strategy. Whereas "Evaluation" focusses on the reasons behind the occurrence of those challenges, how and why things were done and whether improvements could be made in the future.

The table and descriptors below provide context:

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Timeline	Continual collection of information, throughout programme/project	Periodic review at a significant point in the project. End of project, Mid-term and Change of Phase
Focus	Measures activity (Outputs)	Evaluates success, (Outcomes)
Purpose	Progress tracker Asks whether the project is being implemented as planned - are we on the right track	Reflection and correction - Asks whether the activities (outputs) have resulted in achieving the objectives (outcomes) and contributed to the goal Whether the project is successful
Stakeholders	Often uses people inside the project	Uses a mix of people from inside and outside the project
Results	May result in minor action to correct the situation	May result in major strategy change

Figure 3. Example of a strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation toolkit

An overview of what will be achieved when using monitoring and evaluation tools for timeline, focus and purpose is as follows:

Timeline
Monitoring. Happens throughout the implementation of the strategy and delivery of the plan. The periodicity for reviewing your performance should be profiled to align with goals within the strategic plan and timings for KPIs.

Evaluation. This usually takes place at set periods of the strategic plan, i.e. mid-term, if there is a significant change to the plan and at the end of the programme. However, evaluation can take place at any periodicity that suits, and evaluations on an annual basis for the first few years after delivery of the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan should be considered.

Focus
Monitoring. Focuses on current/in-year delivery of activities/goals and objectives.
Evaluation. Focuses on the outcomes of what activities/goals and objectives have been delivered, what has been achieved and what has been the impact etc.

Purpose
Monitoring. Tracks the progress made on a regular basis, highlighting any concerns and for updating programme risks.
Evaluation. Reviews "how" and "why" things were done and whether any changes or improvements can be made going forward.

Monitoring and evaluation are critical tools/measurements to the successful delivery of the strategy implementation plan, and they should be used in close conjunction with the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan and the short, medium and long-term priorities. By following this process we will be able to "strategically monitor" delivery of its strategy and implementation plan, it will identify if strategic goals are on-track for delivery and be in "strategic control" to make informed decisions on any potential changes to the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan.

STEP 11: REPORTING ON YOUR PERFORMANCE

reports could be issued every six months. External reports review the complete programme of work and activities, report on KPIs, risks and programme achievements and an assessment of performance in the delivery of the strategic plan. An external report is issued to stakeholders outside of GEBCO, they are detailed and provide a comprehensive evaluation on the progress made on achieving the objectives in the strategic plan.

Compilation of strategy reports can be time consuming and complex an example of some of the factors to be considered are as follows:

Challenges in Strategy Reporting
Compiling strategy reports can be challenging and complex, teams providing inputs must be coordinated and managed carefully to ensure that the overall report is comprehensive and cohesive. Some of the challenges that may be faced include:

Challenges in Strategy Reporting

Compiling strategy reports can be challenging and complex, teams providing inputs must be coordinated and managed carefully to ensure that the overall report is comprehensive and cohesive. Some of the challenges that may be faced include:

- Collecting and analysing data needed to be able to identify progress made on objectives and KPIs.
- Ensuring the data collected is accurate.
- Ensuring the results and analysis are clear and understandable.
- It is essential that the language and flow of the report is consistent throughout.

The reporting framework should be carefully constructed, it should provide clarity on what the required inputs are, what details/evidence needs to be provided and more importantly when (time/periodicity) draft reports are to be submitted for review and incorporation to the overarching strategy implementation report.

Reporting on the delivery and implementation of the strategy and schedule of delivery is critically important, as it provides transparency and accountability on how well the strategy is progressing. Strategy reports analyse performance, progress with strategic goals, objectives and whether they are attainable. These reports will help inform and mitigate known/new risks and provide corroborated evidence to enable informed decisions to be made on the strategic delivery of the strategy implementation plan. There are differing types of performance reporting when delivering a strategy, predominantly reports could be internal or external. Internal reports are kept within the delivery teams, and they would focus on in-year delivery (may focus on a number of specific activities being delivered), provide direction and guidance to the GEBCO team., These

ANNEX A: GEBCO ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The current GEBCO Organizational structure shown below has been taken from the GEBCO Governance Review report.
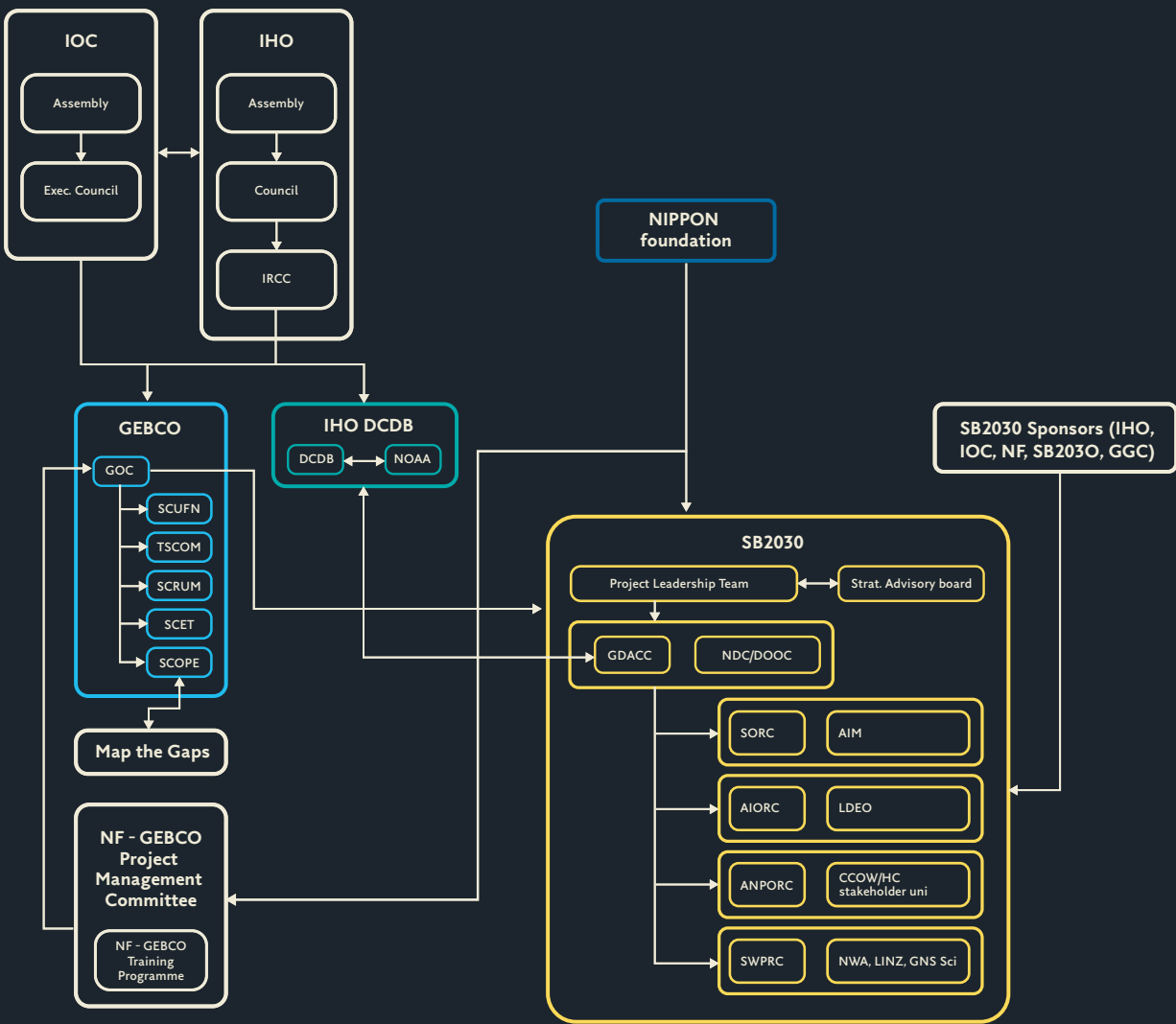

Figure 1 GEBCO Organizational structure

ANNEX B: EXAMPLE OF A STRATEGY PLAN FIVE-YEAR DELIVERY SCHEDULE

The programme delivery schedule shown below provides an example (A tailored delivery schedule appropriate to our strategy plan will be created) of how profiled work and activities identified from the GEBCO Strategy and the GEBCO Governance Review can be tracked and managed across the short-term (Years 1-2), Medium-Term (Years 3-4) and Longer-term (Years 5+). A programme delivery schedule provides an overview of the GEBCO programme and enables work/deliverables and KPIs to be tracked and can be used to hold those persons/agencies responsible for particular activities to account for individual delivery.

GEBCO Strategy 2024 - 2030	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Pillar 1 - Data		Programme delivery			
	Activity				
			Milestone implementation		
Pillar 2 - Technology/Standards		***		***	
	***				
			***	***	
Pillar 3 - Capacity	***			***	
		***	***		
			***		
Pillar 4 - Community	***				
		***		***	
			***	***	
Pillar 5 - Governance	***		***		***
			***		
	***	***		***	

GEBCO Governance Review	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
GGC		***	***		
	***		***		***
			***		
SCUFN		***			***
		***			
			***	***	
TSCOM	***				
		***	***		
			***		
SCRUM	***	***			
					***
	***		***		***
SCET		***		***	
	***				***
	***		***		
SCOPE		***			***
	***				
			***		
SB2030				***	
			***		
		***			

*****: Denotes work/activities/deliverables/KPIs etc identified and endorsed from the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan.*

Once the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan has been populated, the particular aspects that will be delivered in each individual year can be extracted across all strands.

xxxx: Denotes individual work/activity/deliverable

YEAR 1	Year 2	Years 3, 4 and 5
During the first year we will:	Building on the results of year 1 we will:	Building further on the achievements of the first two years we will:
• xxxx • xxxx	• xxxxx • xxxxx	• xxxxx • xxxxx

ANNEX C: GEBCO STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

To help plan and conduct the work needed to complete Steps 6-11 and conduct the work required to develop the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan the following outline schedule is proposed:

STEP 6: **Aligning with the new strategy (Complete by GGC42 October 2025)**

STEP 7: **Creating an operational plan (Complete by GGC intersessional meeting April 2026 (review & update once Steps 8-11 have been completed))**

STEP 8: **Risk management assessment (Complete by 30 June 2026)**

STEP 9: **Collecting the right information for effective monitoring (KPIs) (Complete by 30 June 2026)**

STEP 10: **Monitoring and Evaluation (Complete by 30 September 2026)**

STEP 11: **Reporting on your performance (Complete by 30 September 2026)**

The GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan is presented to the GEBCO Guiding Committee meeting (GGC43) for approval in October 2026.