

42nd GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC42)
Map The Gaps Symposium
Victoria, Canada
27 – 31 October 2025

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025

Task 3.6.1

Organize, prepare and report annual meetings of the GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC) and associated bodies including TSCOM, SCRUM, GEBCO Science Day and SCUFN

High level summary

- Following the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference, seabed mapping has been widely recognised as vital for ocean science, policy, and sustainable development, reinforcing international cooperation and highlighting GEBCO's central role in making ocean floor data accessible.
- In tandem with GGC42, GEBCO members participated in the Ocean Floor Explore conference in Victoria, Canada, co-hosting a workshop that explored innovative funding models for ocean mapping. The event fostered collaboration and identified ways to secure sustainable support for global seabed mapping efforts.
- GGC42 focused on reviewing GEBCO's governance and strategic plan, prioritising actions from the five pillars to strengthen long-term objectives and operational effectiveness.
- Creating a GEBCO Secretariat, backed by its parent bodies, will improve governance, coordination, and support for global seabed mapping.
- Ahead of the 2nd Ocean Data Conference 2027 in Rio de Janeiro, GEBCO and its partners are preparing a unified strategy to highlight seabed mapping's significance, showcase achievements, and support global efforts for accessible and sustainable ocean data.

Details:

The Ocean Floor Explore Conference, held at the Victoria Conference Centre from 27 to 28 October, gathered representatives from across the global ocean mapping community to advance dialogue on seabed mapping. The IHO, represented by Director Luigi Sinapi, Assistant Director Samuel Harper and Project Officer Rosa Acosta, participated in a workshop on the second day focused on developing innovative funding models for seabed mapping activities within and beyond national jurisdictions. The event underscored the shared commitment to collaboration, resource sustainability, and the continued progress of the GEBCO and Seabed 2030 initiatives.

Participants at the Map the Gaps Symposium and GGC 42nd meeting, 27-31 October, Victoria, Canada

The event sought to empower communities engaged in ocean science and exploration by addressing the challenges, opportunities, and costs associated with achieving a comprehensive map of the seafloor. Central themes included the analysis of



current seabed mapping methodologies, the adoption of emerging technologies to reduce operational costs in line with GEBCO standards, and the critical role of strategic science communication in fostering broader awareness and support for ocean mapping.

Joined by Julian Barbier of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the IHO delegation updated the participants on various strategic initiatives and outlined pathways for future engagement. The workshop centred on identifying and evaluating sustainable funding mechanisms for seabed mapping activities conducted both within and beyond national jurisdictions.

Discussions explored the effectiveness of existing financing models, the potential for scaling successful mechanisms, and innovative approaches to mobilize new resources to support the sustained growth of global seabed mapping efforts. Through its participation, the IHO reinforced its commitment to collaboration, transparency, and the continued enhancement of GEBCO efforts to generate and share high-quality bathymetric data for the benefit of the international community.

The 42nd Meeting of the GEBCO Guiding Committee took place at Ocean Networks Canada, on the campus of Victoria University, Victoria, B.C, Canada, from 29 - 31 October. 40 attendees and representatives from the IHO, IOC-UNESCO and Industry participated in the meeting. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Luigi Sinapi, Assistant Director Samuel Harper and Project Officer Rosa Acosta.

Aside from the normal administrative tasks, GGC42 heard updates from IHO and IOC decision making bodies and a comprehensive update on the Nippon Foundation – GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project (SB2030) year 8 activity and Year 9 plans. The GEBCO Subcommittees presented their annual reports and submitted their work plans and budgets for 2026. GGC42 discussed the latest developments on 'depth as a GOOS Essential Ocean Variable (EOV), as well as initial work undertaken to establish a GEBCO Secretariat and to develop a new funding model for GEBCO.

The principle focus of the GGC42 was the implementation of the GEBCO Strategy and the associated Governance Review. The leaders of the five strategic pillars: Governance, Data, Technology, Capacity Development, and Community Engagement, presented detailed progress reports and proposed a series of targeted actions to strengthen GEBCO framework. Building on the outcomes of the SWOT analysis undertaken at GGC41, each pillar identified specific priorities designed to enhance operational

efficiency, accountability, and coordination across the GEBCO structure. The Committee endorsed actions aimed at refining governance mechanisms, improving transparency in decision-making, and aligning internal processes with the GEBCO Strategy Implementation Plan. Following deliberations, it was agreed that the strategy pillar leads will assimilate the feedback received and develop a final implementation plan to be presented at the 2026 GGC Intersession Meeting.

In order to progress on several focused areas of work, a series of Task Groups composed of GGC members were created. These small groups will tackle subjects such as:

- Liaison with the IOC Sustainable Ocean Planning and Management WG;
- Task team for preparing GEBCO symposium 2026;
- Task team to develop proposals for future approach to the GEBCO seminars 2027 and 2028;
- Task team to review and validate the Governance review Risk and mitigation management;
- Task team to develop a plan to revive SCOPE.

GGC42 agreed on several future actions to advance technical coordination and data accessibility. These included enhancing interoperability between the BODC, DCDB, and Seabed 2030 nodes, improving metadata services, and integrating risk assessment and quality control mechanisms across GEBCO products.

Finally, the Committee agreed to prepare three strategic documents to guide future operations: a GEBCO Partnership Framework, a Financial and Resource Management Plan, and a Continuous Improvement and Risk Mitigation Strategy. These will serve as reference tools to enhance accountability, transparency, and long-term sustainability within the GEBCO framework. Collectively, the actions adopted at GGC42 reaffirm the Committees strategic direction.

Photo



42nd GGC participants – Victoria, Canada

Upcoming meetings:

The 43rd GGC meeting is planned to be held in 2026 in Colombia (venue and dates TBC).