The General Bathymetry Chart of the Ocean   
OUR STRATEGY 2022-2027

Draft version 1

**Our vision is the public availability of the most authoritative and up to date general bathymetric chart of the world oceans and seas.**

**Our mission is to compile open and available data from an authoritative public record of all bathymetric survey data of the world’s oceans and seas into the general bathymetric chart of the ocean by investing in, and building capacity for the active maintenance and update of these record.**

# Introduction

The present structure of General Bathymetric Chart of the Ocean (GEBCO) is a reflection of its long evolution since its creation in 1903 by Prince Albert I of Monaco, including its successes and the opportunities created through many transitions over the years.

Our original mission was to provide “the most authoritative, publicly available bathymetry of the world’s oceans” and it has remained so until today.

GEBCO has a rich history; its successes are numerous and global.[[1]](#footnote-1) Today, GEBCO is an internationally recognised and well-respected program that operates under the auspices of the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While both parent organisations have their own respective strategies, GEBCO had yet an officially communicated strategy. This strategy thus aims to:

* support a strong GEBCO governance that can utilise to increase its visibility and relevance amongst a world more aware of the importance of the ocean.
* provide direction for GEBCO that will see outcomes last for generations.
* provide clarity of GEBCO direction within the complex structure and relationships between parent’s organisations, our subcommittees and subordinate projects.
* ensure GEBCO complements and support parent’s organisations objectives.
* ensure that our sub-committees and subordinate projects have the support they require to optimize their work and outcomes.

## Our parent organisations

GEBCO operates under the auspices of the IHO and the IOC of UNESCO. The present strategy therefore, supports the missions and objectives of our parent organisations, and recognises their leading role in our organisation.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The vision of the IHO is to be the authoritative worldwide hydrographic body, actively engaging all coastal and interested States to advance maritime safety and efficiency [[3]](#footnote-3), while supporting the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment. Its mission is to create a global environment in which States provide adequate, standardized and timely hydrographic data, products and services, and ensure their widest possible use.

The vision of IOC is to bring together governments and science community to achieve the ‘Ocean We Need for the Future We Want’. Its mission is to promote international cooperation and coordinate programmes in research, services and capacity-building to increase knowledge about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas. The IOC then sees that knowledge is applied for the improvement of management, sustainable development, the protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its Member States

# GEBCO’s vision and mission

Bathymetry is foundational to most ocean sciences, from hydrography, oceanography to marine geology and ecology. In turn, the derived scientific knowledge is critical to achieving all six outcomes of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade), which our parent organizations’ strongly support.

GEBCO therefore takes bathymetry at the heart of its pursuit with:

* a **Vision** to see a healthy and sustainable ocean informed by a comprehensive ocean map, and

a **Mission** to provide the most comprehensive and authoritative, publicly available bathymetric dataset for the world’s oceans.

# Outcomes

By achieving its mission, GEBCO seeks the following outcomes aligned to the Ocean Decade:

* Open and equitable access to bathymetric data, information, technology and innovation contributing to an Accessible Ocean.
* Improved bathymetric data and information supporting better derived scientific knowledge and contributing to a Predicted, Safe, Healthy and Resilient Ocean.
* A well-understood seabed contributing to an Inspiring and Engaging Ocean.

To deliver on these outcomes, GEBCO’s core activities include the **compilation, curation, distribution, promotion and scientific use** of bathymetry data [[4]](#footnote-4) acquired during hydrographic survey and ocean mapping.

And through its endorsement of the pledges made by both the IOC and IHO, GEBCO supports and further develops within its core activities: **science, technology and innovation**, as well as **capability and capability building**.

# Objectives

To achieve these outcomes, we set a number of objectives that respect and build on the original vision of GEBCO, while supporting our parent organisations’ goals. We stress that bathymetric data and its development are based on scientific-evidence, engineering and innovation.

GEBCO’s core activities contribute to delivering these five objectives:

1. Support the continuous improvement (both qualitative and quantitative) of bathymetric data acquisition and sharing, in support of global ocean seafloor mapping and a global ocean bathymetry map.
2. Maintain and make available the IHO-IOC GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names.
3. Encourage and promote technological innovation to improve and accelerate the data acquisition and development of our core activities.
4. Create a community that will assist in building science capacity, mobilise scientists, and facilitate an enabling environment for engagement of practitioners, decision makers and the private sector in the development and use of science-based solutions.
5. Raise awareness amongst academic institutions of gaps in education and training that may impact on the progress and development our objectives.

# Principles and strategies to deliver our objectives

To deliver its strategy in the most effective way, GEBCO endorses the following principles:

* Support IOC and IHO in their national government engagement and coordination
* Leveraging our parent organisations, subcommittees, subordinate projects and other relevant initiatives.
* Focus strongly in the areas beyond national jurisdictions (ABNJ)
* Support IHO hydrographic mandate for waters under national sovereignty from a member state and national government perspective.
* Ensure open, diverse, equitable and inclusive cultures striving for outcomes that are overarching, ambitious, and span generations, gender, cultures, nations, and sectors.

# A better future

GEBCO remains open to welcome initiatives in the form of new partners, Technical Sub-Committees or projects, as long as those initiatives

* follow the principles of GEBCO
* have clear purpose and structure defined in TOR and SOP,
* are agreed by the GGC at its annual meeting
* …

1. See 100 year of GEBCO [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. IHO Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 and Draft IOC medium-term strategy for 2022–2029 (41 c/4) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. IHO Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 p.3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bathymetry as a subset of hydrography “measures the physical features of a water body. Hydrography includes not only bathymetry, but also the shape and features of the shoreline; the characteristics of tides, currents, and waves; and the physical and chemical properties of the water itself.” NOAA web site [check reference] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)