

# An All-Island Ocean Literacy Network

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2030





## The Network

Since its establishment in 2016, the Irish Ocean Literacy Network (IOLN) has brought together like-minded individuals and organisations who passionately believe in the importance of the seas and oceans to the island of Ireland and its citizens. The aim of the network is to try to improve coordination, collaboration, and capacity building of the island's "Ocean Citizens" community to help achieve a common vision – an Ocean Literate Society across the Island of Ireland.

*“An ocean literate citizen understands the importance of the ocean to humankind; can communicate about the ocean in a meaningful way and is able to make informed and responsible decisions regarding the ocean and its resources.”*

The network consists of a broad and diverse range of members including NGOs, public bodies, research and academia, education, private enterprises, and individuals from the public residing throughout the island of Ireland. By working together, it is expected that collective action and coordination can help achieve tangible measurable impact on society.

Network members collaborate to advance ocean literacy across the island. They accomplish this mission through sharing knowledge, capacity building, public awareness campaigns, outreach, and advocacy.

## Our Vision

By 2030, the IOLN will have a thriving network of ocean champions and organisations deeply engaged with local communities across the island. These communities are "Ocean Literate" and as such actively participate in ocean conservation efforts and embrace sustainable practices, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the marine environment.

## Our Mission

The mission of the Network is to cultivate and nurture a sustainable community of ocean literate citizens, enabling seamless collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the effective coordination of marine outreach and ocean literacy endeavours throughout the island.

## The Evolution of Ocean Literacy

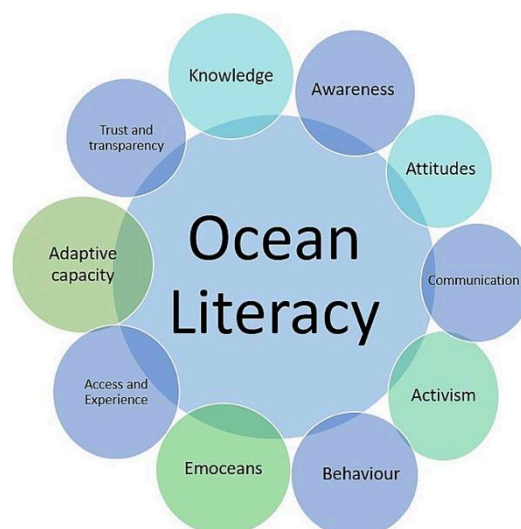
Ocean literacy was initially defined in 2004 by a group of U.S. scientists and educators to address the scarcity of ocean sciences in formal education. It has since significantly evolved from its original education-focused framework towards a global movement promoting sustainable interactions with the ocean.

This original concept was underpinned by seven principles aimed at fostering an understanding of the ocean's critical role in Earth's ecosystem:

1. The Earth has one big ocean with many features
2. The ocean and life in the ocean shape the features of Earth
3. The ocean is a major influence on weather and climate
4. The ocean made the Earth habitable
5. The ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems
6. The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected
7. The ocean is largely unexplored.

Building on early definitions of ocean literacy, an ocean-literate person was characterised as someone who understood the importance of the ocean to humankind, could communicate about the ocean in a meaningful way and was able to make informed and responsible decisions regarding the ocean and its resources.

Contemporary models of ocean literacy have introduced a more nuanced approach, incorporating awareness, knowledge, attitude, communication, behaviour, emotional connections, access and experience, adaptive capacity, trust and transparency, and activism as dimensions of ocean literacy, acknowledging the complexity of factors influencing pro-environmental behaviour and the necessity of transforming knowledge into meaningful action for ocean sustainability (McKinley et al., 2023). This evolution reflects a shift from a knowledge-deficit model to a more inclusive and action-oriented approach, highlighting the importance of connection to and engagement with the ocean across diverse societal segments.





## Strategic Objectives

### 1. Enhance Network Capacity

Build capacity and expertise within the IOLN network to support work with local communities through targeted training, skill development, and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

**Indicators of success:** *Number and quality of training programs; assessment of growth in specific skills or competencies among members through pre- and post-training evaluations; frequency and participation in knowledge-sharing activities.*

### 2. Promote Engagement and Collaboration within IOLN Membership

Cultivate a culture of active participation and collaboration among IOLN members, fostering a dynamic and supportive network that takes collective action.

**Indicators of success:** *Member participation in Network meetings, projects, campaigns, the number of collaborative projects initiated within the Network, and monitoring the generation of innovative ideas and initiatives resulting from collaborative efforts.*

### 3. Facilitate Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

Foster increased engagement and cooperation between IOLN members and coastal communities, identifying alignment and synergies that lead to collaborations and partnerships to help achieve the IOLN Vision.

**Indicators of success:** *Level of engagement with external stakeholders, number of partnerships or collaborations established, impact of partnership/campaign actions arising.*

### 4. Champion Best Practices in Ocean Literacy & Community Engagement

Act as a beacon for promoting and showcasing exemplary ocean literacy practices across the island, inspiring excellence in ocean education, outreach, and conservation.

**Indicators of success:** *Monitor impact of OL actions, Track awards, recognition or certifications received by Network members for their initiatives; assess the adoption and impact of best practices in improving ocean literacy among target audiences; measure changes in public awareness and engagement in initiatives.*

### 5. Establish a Sustainable Funding Model

Establish a resilient and diversified funding model to ensure the long-term sustainability of a Network secretariat and funding to support activities and initiatives by IOLN and its members.

**Indicators of success:** *Balance of funding income streams, success rate in securing grants; build cash reserves.*



## Internal Transformations

Transformations in four areas are needed within the organisation to achieve our strategic outcomes.

### 1. Governance and Leadership

- a. Develop a governance structure that supports the execution of strategic objectives, including clear roles and responsibilities.
- b. Foster a diverse and inclusive governance structure that represents different perspectives and expertise within the Network.

### 2. Capacity Building & Institutional Learning

- a. Invest in the professional development and capacity building of Network members to ensure they have the critical mass, skills, and knowledge necessary to achieve strategic goals.
- b. Allocate resources and time to build the capacity of the Network's leadership and general membership.
- c. Create a repository of best practices, lessons learned, and research findings that can be shared among Network members.
- d. Support academic research to generate tangible community benefits and achieve positive real-world impact.

### 3. Resource Mobilisation

- a. Seek and secure diverse funding sources to support Network activities and avoid dependency on a single funding stream.
- b. Establish effective grant management processes to ensure that funds are allocated efficiently and transparently.

### 4. Stakeholder Engagement

- a. Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy to facilitate partnerships and collaboration with external organisations and government agencies.
- b. Build advocacy capacity to effectively engage with policymakers and advocate for marine conservation.