



Discovery report

For the **Global Ocean Observing System**

V1.0 | March 2022



Introduction

In late 2021 Wolf&Player was charged with developing a Communications Plan for the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and implementing initial actions. The project involves three stages:

1. Discovery



A review of GOOS's current situation and a shared understanding of what we are trying to achieve. Activities included materials reviews and desk research, stakeholder interviews and a stakeholder survey.

2. Strategy



Our response to findings in the discovery phase, resulting in a series of strategic recommendations for GOOS Office HQ and GOOS co-chairs to feedback and review. Those chosen to be pursued will form the basis of the communications plan.

2. Plan

[To follow]

A final communications plan that will include a roadmap for delivery of the strategic recommendations. It will be circulated to GOOS SC for final sign off.

This document

This document reports on our findings from the discovery process. It represents our interpretation of everything we read and heard from the outreach that was conducted. While it draws some initial conclusions on the findings, it stops short of making actionable recommendations – these are contained within the separate strategy presentation.

This report covers the following areas:

- 1 — Process**
- 2 — About GOOS**
- 3 — Target audience and stakeholder mapping**
- 4 — Communications objectives**
- 5 — Mechanisms and channels**
- 6 — Current perception**

1 Process

To provide a solid foundation for our proposed communications strategy, we:

- Drew on the understanding of GOOS we have gained since we began working with you around the middle of 2020.
- Conducted a review of your website and published material, and what you provided us with prior to us becoming the authors of this communications strategy.
- Held a discovery workshop with internal stakeholders.
- Carried out an email stakeholder input survey.

The material that follows is gathered from all of these sources.

2 About GOOS

Vision

A truly global ocean observing system that delivers the essential ocean information needed for our sustainable development, safety, wellbeing, and prosperity.

GOOS's mission is to lead the ocean observing community and create the partnerships to grow an integrated, responsive and sustained observing system serving users as effectively as possible.

GOOS's principles are to:

- Implement through user-driven design
- Maintain sustained observations
- Ensure regular evaluation
- Set global standards and best practices

You state that:

'Looking forward to the next decade, we will achieve our mission by offering more inclusive governance and increased expertise, engagement, communication and capacity. We will also engage with existing and new partners and stakeholders to deliver our 2030 strategy while building advocacy and visibility with stakeholders.'

Albert: *'We're the infrastructure that allows a lot of exciting things to happen.'*

2030 Strategy

According to your 2030 strategy, GOOS has the following specific strategic objectives for the coming decade:

1. Strengthen partnerships to improve delivery of forecasts, services and scientific assessments.
2. Build advocacy and visibility with stakeholders through communicating with key users and national funders.
3. Regularly evaluate system impact to assess fitness for purpose.
4. Strengthen knowledge and exchange around services and products to boost local uptake.
5. Provide authoritative guidance on integrated observing system design, synthesising across evolving requirements and identifying gaps.
6. Sustain, strengthen and expand observations coordination through GOOS and partner communities, promoting standards and best practice, and developing metrics to measure success.
7. Ensure GOOS ocean observing data and information are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable with appropriate quality and latency.

8. Support innovation in observing technologies and networks.
9. Develop capacity to ensure a broader range of beneficial stakeholder participation.
10. Extend systematic observations to understand human impact on the ocean.
11. Play a leading role in establishing effective governance for global in situ and satellite observing, together with partners and stakeholders.

The 2030 Strategy and communications

In the RFQ to which we responded, you state:

It is critical that we support the GOOS 2030 vision with an appropriate communications strategy, which fosters:

- Inclusive governance
- Increased expertise
- Increased engagement, communication with stakeholders
- Increased capacity development
- Engagement with existing and new partners

GOOS has identified the following long-term outcomes from successful implementation of Strategic Objective 02 around communications and advocacy:

1. Significant step up in the recognition of the value of the global ocean observing system in climate, operational services and ocean health
2. Increased external recognition by investors of the value of GOOS and the ocean information flowing from a coordinated system
3. Increase in longer-term sustained funding for ocean observing and the development of external and vocal advocates for the GOOS
4. Increase in participation by nations
5. Observing system that meets national, regional, global needs
6. Recognition for the role of GOOS, WMO, IOC, and our partners play in the global development of an ocean observing system

Communications will play a role in a broad range of outcomes across the Strategy, as indicated above and in the challenges.

There is a long-term aim of having ocean observing viewed as part of an essential national infrastructure for sustainable development and to underpin vital services.

Ocean Decade

In relation to the Ocean Decade, you claim that:

‘Our observations and predictions are the foundation of much of the exciting, transformative work the Ocean Decade will carry out to give us the ocean we need for the future we want. Launching the Ocean Decade has made GOOS’s work more important than it has ever been. We will be fundamental to its success.’

GOOS, then, sees itself as occupying a central place in ocean observing and is ambitious for the future. This is not stated explicitly enough in GOOS communications at present and should be.

3 Target audience and stakeholder mapping

GOOS has generally identified three target audience areas with an additional fourth that includes the interested public.

1. Investors / potential investors

- UN or national agencies (UNESCO)
- Government science / Ocean research
- Philanthropy / Other supporters
- Government departments
 - Environment (increasingly Climate)
 - Hydrology and meteorology
 - Fisheries
 - Business sectors (construction etc.)

2. Ocean observing community

- Ocean observing community of 'do'ers'
- Core Team / Internal
- GOOS National Focal Points
- Sponsors
- Influencers / allies / partners
- Value chain partners

3. Users of ocean data

- Direct users
 - WMO Community
 - Industry
 - Modelling community
 - Policy science / government
- End users
 - Science
 - Industry - Blue economy
 - Government
 - NGOs
 - 'Unknowing' general public

4. Other: business and the interested public

- Equipment / technology suppliers
- Commercial networks
- 'Interested' public

The current focus is on communicating with investors/potential investors and the ocean observing community. Investment mostly goes into the technical coordination structure. There are very few investors in the core central system.

GOOS cannot be seen to be competing with its community audience for investment. Rather it needs to be viewed as serving them. GOOS believes it should represent the implementers and communicate upwards alongside them.

The 'Other' audience has not traditionally been a target for communications. GOOS believes it may be best to use its UN parent organisations for this.

Philanthropists and the 'Other' audience are new additions to the GOOS target audience. Grenzebach, Glier and Associates is developing a strategy to connect with philanthropists.

Wolf&Player suggests that, of the 'Other' audience, there should be more focus on promoting awareness in the general public.

4 Communications objectives

GOOS wants to reach different sectors of its audience for different reasons.

For **investors and potential investors**, often governments, GOOS wants to emphasise the value of the system and encourage investment in ocean observing implementers such as AniBOS.

GOOS also wants to highlight the value of coordination through investment in the Core Team and coordination of the system to what are typically UN-level investors.

Investment in the operational aspect of GOOS is also important.

Anya: *'The global need is to show clearly that ocean observing is an absolutely central part of a sustainable economy and sustainable environment going forward. I see that messaging as key to our role.'*

With the **GOOS community**, the aim is to raise awareness of what the organisation is doing, build the community itself and remind it that the organisation is its 'voice on the inside.'

Emma: *'Our communication package plan needs to include comms with community, maybe around how they can reach out and get special investment but also about what GOOS is doing for them.'*

For **users**, GOOS's objectives include reminding them of what they are getting for free, enabling them to appreciate what would happen if GOOS did not exist and encouraging them to imagine the possibilities if they were to work with the organisation.

Anya: *'You've got a group benefiting from using the data systems and the construct but who aren't really clear what GOOS means to them. They need to be told GOOS is doing this for you.'*

What does GOOS want to say to the different audience segments?

For investors and potential investors in GOOS, the overall message is that ocean observing is critical to understanding global climate change and that the organisation is the infrastructure for sustained observing.

Torste: *'If you invest in international coordination of ocean observing your investment is going to give you more knowledge.'*

With the GOOS community, the fundamental message is that GOOS supports them in what they are attempting to achieve and exists to empower them, while also communicating to them the benefit of being part of the global conversation.

Anya: *'One of the issues is I don't know that there is a clear message about the benefit of a joined-up international conversation.'*

5 Mechanisms and channels

Currently, GOOS communicates with **investors** via:

- Personal communications (emails etc.)
- Policy briefs
- Other UN organisations
- WMO
- Media coverage
- Published reports with recorded webinars

With **government bodies**, GOOS communicates via nations or UN structures / international groupings. When contact is made with government, it is often through departments. Decisions, however, are made at the level above, within central government.

The challenge is to communicate to department decision-makers what investment can do for their career and how it aligns with their existing priorities.

Emma: *'We don't have the people to maintain the relationships with all of these influential people.'*

GOOS communicates with the **ocean observing community** via:

- Meetings
- Its mailing list
- The website
- Social media: Twitter / YouTube
- A presence in IOC, Unesco and WMO communications
- Media coverage

With regard to these last two content items, GOOS tends to be more reactive and opportunistic than strategic.

A channel that has not yet been explored is **product development**, whether this is to create a new annual product along the lines of the IOC's Annual Global Ocean Science Report or the WMO's Annual State of the Global Climate Report, or to use an existing product such as the Annual OceanOPS Report Card.

GOOS could also encourage OceanOPS to expand the database of information it keeps on the organisation.

National focal points offer another untapped way to reach sponsors, influencers/allies and value chain partners.

6 Current perception

As part of our research, we carried out a GOOS Communication Survey mailed out to 89 stakeholders – four emails bounced back and 30 people responded. The survey covered public sector organisations, universities, foundations/associations, businesses/private companies and other stakeholders.

Responder profile

The bulk of respondents (53%) were members of the GOOS core team. 46.7% were ocean observing system implementers. 33.3% were data users. 13.3% were official focal points. 6.7% were partners. 6.7% were sponsors. 3.3% were funders. 3.3% had no relationship with GOOS. No potential funders replied.

Of these, 46.7% had been working with GOOS for more than 10 years. 83.3% stated that GOOS's relationship with its sponsors, IOC, UNESCO and the UN was important to them.

The overwhelming majority (90%) are interested in communications from GOOS because they want to keep up with developments in and relevant to ocean observing, followed by 83.3% who want to keep up with developments at GOOS itself.

Survey analysis – high level takeaways

The survey is available to read in its entirety [here](#). For the purposes of this report, we have extracted these high level takeaways:

- 50% of respondents felt GOOS describes its key roles clearly through its communications (50% did not)
- The key roles of GOOS are seen as positioning the global ocean observing system as a needed global infrastructure (scoring #2.23 average) and advocating and championing ocean observing (both at national level and within the UN system) (scoring #3.13 average)
- 83.3% stated that GOOS's relationship with its sponsors, IOC, UNESCO and the UN was important to them and that while the brand is strong within marine and climate circles, it is not so well known outside of that community
- Roughly 40% of respondents felt GOOS was weakest in terms of visibility, usability and accessibility and use of media (Only 10% of respondents feel that GOOS is strongest in its use of media)

Just half of respondents feel GOOS describes its key roles clearly through its communications.

Specific criticisms of current communications activity touch on the need to consider all audiences, raise GOOS's profile, be clearer in

defining its core objective and more assertive in advocating for the community while not overstepping the realm of its mandate.

Anya: *'We don't always communicate very well what we do for the different bits and pieces of the GOOS community. We've recognised that getting that communication right, making sure we offer added value to the community is important.'*

When it comes to the channels respondents use, most engage with organisations by visiting their website (70%) and a more comprehensive website was called for.

Other answers covered the need for more, regular newsletters and for GOOS to consider developing 'strategic partnerships with individual journalists and media, and subscribe to global groups that provide article-ready copy to interested media'.

Social media was also seen as important, with respondents most active on LinkedIn (56.7%). The fact that several respondents from a survey where 50% of respondents were members of the GOOS Core Team who answered specific questions felt that GOOS should have more of a presence on social media was significant.

In conclusion, and bearing in mind that the survey was sent out to respondents with whom GOOS has a good, strong relationship, the findings were not especially encouraging.

Next steps

1. Strategic agreement

14th - 25th March

- ▶ Review and feedback round with GOOS HQ project team
- ▶ Circulate report to wider stakeholders within GOOS HQ and GOOS co-chairs
- ▶ Agree on the strategic recommendations

2. Communications Plan

First draft

April

- ▶ Development of strategic plan with:
 - 3-5 year objectives
 - Review horizon and performance metrics and KPIs
- ▶ Circulation to GOOS HQ and GOOS co-chairs for review and feedback

3. Communications Plan

Final draft

May

- ▶ Development of final plan with:
 - Resource appropriate implementation guidance
 - Branding and template usage guidance
- ▶ Circulation to GOOS SC for review and feedback
- ▶ Publication of plan

Thank you

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