

## **CRA Ocean 2 (2025)**

### **OCEAN 2: Towards the Ocean We Want : Biodiversity and Ecosystem Sustainability for Nature and Human Well-being**

#### **Call Theme:**

The CRA Ocean 2 recognizes the urgent challenges and opportunities in achieving the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, the Ocean Decade Challenges<sup>2</sup>, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets<sup>3</sup>, and their connections to other global environmental agreements that promote ocean sustainability, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services, sustainable blue economy and contributions to human well-being. This CRA aims at coordinating actions and projects through a transdisciplinary approach, fostering co-creation, co-design, and co-implementation of innovative solutions to address global environmental challenges related to the ocean, its biodiversity, from genes to ecosystems. It will prioritize three main thematic areas: (i) biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions, (ii) the ocean-biodiversity-climate interactions, and (iii) nature futures, ocean governance, and ethics for sustainability, as key areas to foster transformative change and promote integrated responses. Acknowledging differences among ocean basins, cultural diversity, regional and local specificities, and distinct financial models, this CRA seeks to integrate multilateral and collaborative approaches while strengthening the interlinkage between science, technology, and innovation with societal needs. By strengthening the science-policy-society interface, CRA Ocean 2 seeks to foster evidence-informed policymaking, enhance multi-level, cross-sectoral, and societal cooperation in ocean governance, and support the effective implementation of global agendas focused on ocean biodiversity and sustainability.

#### *Background and Rationale*

Covering over 70% of the planet's surface and more than 90% of its habitable volume, the global ocean supports complex biodiversity and marine ecosystems that provide essential services such as oxygen production, food, raw materials, climate regulation, and renewable energy. It also serves as a route for transportation, while also offering non-material benefits such as cultural identity, spiritual significance, and inspiration for art, traditions, and beliefs. A sustainable use of the global ocean is also key to safeguarding biodiversity.

Marine and coastal biodiversity play a fundamental role in sustaining ecological functions that directly influence critical global challenges, including climate and energy security, food systems, integrated health across human, animal, and environmental systems, pollution control, water availability, and sustainable resource management. As one of Earth's largest carbon stocks, the ocean is essential for climate regulation and supports livelihoods

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>2</sup> <https://oceandecade.org/challenges/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

worldwide. However, human activities have significantly altered marine biodiversity, negatively impacting their composition, structure, and function, ultimately compromising their ability to sustain both nature and human well-being.

Biodiversity loss in marine environments is primarily driven by five key threats: resource overexploitation, climate change, pollution, non-indigenous species, and changes in sea use, particularly through coastal habitat modification and artificialization. These pressures accelerate ocean degradation, pushing the ocean toward its carrying capacity and the planet closer to critical tipping points. Despite these challenges, restoring marine biodiversity presents a powerful pathway to resilience, particularly in polar regions, which play a crucial role in global climate resilience and ocean health.

Biodiversity conservation requires coordinated action across multiple global agreements, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC), and the High Seas Treaty (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction - BBNJ) Agreement). Strengthening synergies across agreements, policies, and frameworks enhances ocean governance, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience while enabling a more effective channeling of efforts, financial resources, and integrated solutions to address interconnected global challenges. By aligning policies, investments, and scientific advancements, these agreements can drive transformative action for a healthier and more sustainable ocean. This is particularly timely as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) calls for more science-based knowledge and solutions.

Ensuring the sustainability of marine biodiversity requires transdisciplinary collaboration, integrating natural and social sciences and non-academic partners. Co-designing and co-implementing research with decision-makers, Indigenous peoples and local communities, industries, and civil society ensures that research is scientifically robust and leads to socially relevant and equitable solutions. Scientific and technological advancements further strengthen ocean governance. Artificial intelligence (AI), remote sensing, digital sequence information (DSI), and open-access biodiversity databases provide critical insights into marine ecosystems, helping monitor biodiversity changes, support restoration and conservation efforts, and predict future trends. Expanding integrated digital tools and interoperable data platforms enhances evidence-based decision-making, improves conservation strategies, and informs marine spatial planning.

The ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus is fundamental to resilience, as rising temperatures, acidification, and extreme events threaten marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods, and can be further exacerbated by other environmental changes, such as pollution. Health and Food are intrinsically connected to this nexus. Nature-based solutions (NbS) can enhance biodiversity conservation, support the local economic value chains, and promote shared benefits while mitigating climate change impacts. These approaches, alongside adaptive ecosystem-based management strategies, strengthen the ability of ecosystems and societies to respond to environmental challenges. However, channeling efforts, funding, and integrated solutions is crucial, particularly in Developing Countries, Least Developed Countries, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where vulnerabilities, resources availability, technology access and capacities vary widely. Tailored approaches are needed to ensure equitable and effective resilience-building.

The sustainable management and conservation of marine biodiversity also requires global cooperation and science diplomacy. Strengthening governance mechanisms for shared coastal watersheds, territorial waters, and the High Seas. Many economic activities depend on the ocean, making it essential to align biodiversity conservation with a sustainable economy to ensure harmony with ecosystem processes and functions, environmental health and human well-being. Coastal communities, whose livelihoods rely on marine resources, are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of biodiversity changes and environmental degradation. At the same time, sectors such as fisheries, tourism, sport, and maritime industries depend on a well-functioning ocean and a stable climate. Developing governance frameworks that promote socioeconomic equity, responsible economies, and nature-positive business models ensures that conservation efforts drive economic resilience, creating lasting benefits for both people and the planet.

To ensure meeting these goals and alongside other theoretical and experimental methods, scenarios can be powerful tools for exploring plausible futures and assessing biodiversity changes and conservation alongside its implications for human well-being. By analyzing past trends and envisioning future possibilities, they provide valuable insights into nature's contributions to people, the quality of life, and pathways toward sustainability. They allow the study of cumulative and synergistic impacts of the ever-increasing use of oceanic resources and space on biodiversity. The diverse frameworks of scenario conceptualisation and construction (e.g. exploratory, target-seeking, policy screening, etc.), co-designed by scientists, stakeholders and decision makers (e.g. participatory scenarios), help anticipate and navigate the complex interactions between nature and society, fostering a deeper understanding of ecological and social transitions. Scenarios can incorporate mental maps, modeling and art to raise awareness and foster ocean literacy. Beyond generating knowledge, scenarios support evidence-based decision-making, guiding policy development, investment strategies, and capacity-building efforts. When anchored in marine-coastal areas, from coastal zones to the deep and high seas, scenarios become essential for integrating the complexity of biodiversity considerations across multiple scales, ensuring more resilient and adaptive governance frameworks.

### **Special Key Requirements of CRA OCEAN 2:**

Through this new Collaborative Research Action (CRA), the Belmont Forum seeks to advance transdisciplinary research that supports the sustainability of marine biodiversity, aligning with the 2050 vision of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). OCEAN 2 fosters collaboration between natural and social sciences and non-academic partners, integrating action-science-policy approaches with multilevel, cross-sectoral, and society-engaged scenario analyses. By evaluating potential marine biodiversity trajectories and responses both within and beyond national jurisdictions, OCEAN 2 will provide decision-makers with critical knowledge to inform policies that prevent biodiversity changes and promote ocean sustainability.

#### **1. Alignment with the Ocean Decade Challenges**

The Ocean Decade is a global action framework that convenes diverse societal actors to co-design and co-deliver transformative ocean science and knowledge to inform policy, innovation and decision making. Structured around ten Challenges, the Ocean Decade shares the Belmont Forum's focus on transdisciplinary science and collective action to drive social and

technological innovative solutions to underpin sustainable development. Challenge 2 of the Ocean Decade focuses on ecosystems and biodiversity, including aspects related to resilience and management of the impacts of multiple stressors.

The Barcelona Statement<sup>4</sup> and related Vision 2030 Outcomes Report<sup>5</sup> that emerged from the Conference identify these priorities, several of which align strongly with the themes identified in this CRA. The CRA is a formal contribution to the Ocean Decade. Funded projects of this CRA will be considered for formal endorsement as Decade Actions, thus facilitating the engagement of CRA research teams in the network of Ocean Decade partners and initiatives.

In this context, each proposal must clearly identify the Challenges they are addressing and demonstrate how they contribute to overcoming them. Additionally, the Challenge 10: Ensuring society has the capacity and conditions to achieve the Decade's objectives is a mandatory requirement for all projects, ensuring they strengthen the connection between society and the ocean. This challenge emphasizes expanding motivation, capacity, and opportunities for individuals across sectors to make informed decisions and adopt behaviors that support a healthy ocean.

Proponents are strongly encouraged to review the ten Challenges of the Ocean Decade and their associated White Papers before developing their proposals. These documents provide essential guidelines to ensure initiatives align with the Decade's scientific and strategic priorities, maximizing their global relevance and impact. A deep understanding of these Challenges enhances the effectiveness and legitimacy of projects while strengthening their connection to global frameworks, increasing recognition, and expanding resource mobilization within the scope of the Decade.

## **2. Theory of Change**

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a strategic framework used to plan, implement, and evaluate projects and initiatives, particularly in transdisciplinary research, where complex challenges require structured approaches to planning and evaluation. It provides a structured framework that maps out the logical sequence of actions and their expected effects, clarifying the causal pathways that drive change and linking inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts.

Both a visual and narrative tool, ToC illustrates the connection between actions and the ultimate goals of a project, making explicit the assumptions and pathways needed to achieve systemic change. In transdisciplinary research - where diverse sectors and knowledge systems (scientific, policy, and community) interact - ToC helps structure collaborative processes and align expectations across stakeholders. By fostering a shared understanding of the mechanisms that drive environmental and societal transformations, ToC enhances multi-level, cross-sectoral cooperation, supports evidence-informed policymaking, and strengthens the effective implementation of Collaborative Research Actions (CRAs), ensuring that interdisciplinary teams work towards common objectives.

Moreover, ToC enables adaptive management, helping identify key risks, assumptions, and external factors that may influence outcomes. This ensures that interventions remain dynamic

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<sup>4</sup> <https://oceanexpert.org/document/34098>

<sup>5</sup> <https://oceanexpert.org/document/33599>

and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. Given its role in strengthening strategic design and impact, integrating ToC into project development is strongly encouraged, as it enhances strategic clarity, strengthens collaboration among diverse actors, and ensures long-term effectiveness in addressing complex socio-environmental challenges.

It is important for participants to anticipate their roles in navigating power dynamics while co-constructing their projects. This can, for instance, be done by developing a ToC related to the multidimensional sustainability problem the applicants' project is designed to address. This entails having a well-considered and co-constructed multidimensional problem formulation at the start of the research. Researchers need to be reflexive and agile throughout the research process, for example on the difficulty of integrating different types of knowledge, how to link more localized change to structural change at different scales, or how to respond to different socio-environmental conditions that they encounter. Participants are encouraged to think about diverse knowledge production modes, including research for the intrinsic sake of knowledge, multidisciplinary and co-production of knowledge, as well as how knowledge is transferable and linked to action.

### **Call Areas:**

Based on the context outlined in the Background and rationale section, recognizing the urgent challenges and opportunities for ocean biodiversity and sustainability research-based solutions, as well as the specific requirements of CRA OCEAN 2 (listed above), proposals can address issues related to any ocean and seas around the globe including Arctic and Antarctic oceans and from coastal to deep-sea ecosystems. Proposals must incorporate elements from at least one of the three areas listed below, while adhering to Belmont Forum policies<sup>6</sup> and integrating transdisciplinary approaches:

- Biodiversity Conservation and Nature-Based Solutions.
- Ocean-Biodiversity-Climate Integration.
- Nature Futures, Ocean Governance, and Ethics for Sustainability.

### **Area 1**

#### ***Biodiversity Conservation and Nature-Based Solutions***

Biodiversity changes, ongoing degradation of marine ecosystems, and increasing anthropogenic pressures demand innovative and integrated approaches for biodiversity conservation, the restoration of ecosystems and the delivery of services. Nature-Based Solutions are fundamental strategies to ensure ocean sustainability and enhance resilience, and their effectiveness can be assessed through the use of tools including modelling and scenarios<sup>7</sup>. Under this theme, project development within the following priorities could be considered:

*Identification and Protection of Priority Areas for Marine Biodiversity:* The designation of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) is crucial for guiding marine biodiversity conservation and spatial planning. The establishment and effective management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) contribute to ecosystem preservation while balancing

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<sup>6</sup>For more information see evaluation criteria

<sup>7</sup>For an example, see <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.148515>

conservation with sustainable development. Evaluating the effectiveness of MPAs according to their location, size and/or management is key to ensuring their long-term protective role.

*Recovery and Sustainable Management of Overexploited Marine Resources:* Overfishing threatens ecosystem integrity and the food security of millions. Strategies for stock recovery and habitat restoration should prioritize sustainable fisheries, critical ecosystem restoration, and community engagement. The ecosystem-based management approach is essential to mitigate the impacts of overexploitation, considering ecological, social, and economic factors.

*Prevention and Control of Non-Indigenous Species:* The introduction of alien species (IAS), including disease vectors, can disrupt marine ecosystems, affecting biodiversity and economic activities. Strengthening monitoring, prevention, and eradication efforts, along with multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation, is essential to reducing their impact and protecting marine environments.

*Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on Marine Genetic Resources:* Advances in Digital Sequence Information (DSI) create new opportunities for marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Genetic data utilization enhances genetic diversity monitoring, biotechnological innovation, and the development of conservation strategies.

*Pollution Prevention, Mitigation, and Restoration:* Marine pollution endangers biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human well-being. Prevention, mitigation, and pollution recovery/restoration strategies are crucial to minimizing its impacts. Addressing this challenge requires robust policies, multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation, as well as continuous monitoring of emerging pollutants.

*Building Sustainable Blue Economy and Production Chains:* The transition to a sustainable economy necessitates the promotion of environmentally responsible practices and policies, as well as economic incentives for sustainable production chains. Strengthening the sociobioeconomy through multi-level, cross-sector, and societal engagement is essential to ensure equity, shared benefits, and economic viability in the use of marine resources, coastal-seascapes and touristic/cultural heritage initiatives.

*'One Health':* Ocean degradation directly impacts human, ecosystems, plants and animal health. The One Health approach highlights the interconnection between biodiversity, food security, and quality of life, emphasizing the need for integrated policies to promote a healthy and sustainable ocean.

*Restoration of Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:* The restoration of essential marine ecosystems strengthens biodiversity and ecosystem services. Incorporating these benefits into environmental policies and socio-economic development enhances conservation actions towards healthy and a resilient ocean for the future.

*Blue Carbon and Ocean Acidification:* Blue carbon areas and ecosystems play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. Their degradation weakens carbon sequestration and storage, while rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels drive ocean acidification, altering seawater chemistry and threatening marine life. Protecting and restoring these areas and ecosystems through transdisciplinary strategies that integrate biogeochemistry,

socio-economic impacts, shared benefits models, and policy frameworks is essential to sustaining biodiversity and enhancing climate resilience.

## **Area 2**

### **Ocean-Biodiversity-Climate Integration**

The ocean regulates the planetary climate. However, climate change is affecting biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services, and threatening the security of coastal populations. The interconnections among climate, ocean basins, and biodiversity demands integrated approaches to mitigate impacts and enhance socio-environmental resilience. In addition to these impacts of climate on biodiversity, there are feedback impacts of biodiversity changes on climate, especially on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Addressing those research challenges will be key to informing both biodiversity and climate policies. Under this theme, project development within the following priorities could be addressed:

*Impacts of Climate Change on Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Human-well being:* Rising ocean temperatures, extreme weather events, and changes in ocean currents and circulation are threatening biodiversity, disrupting marine habitats, weakening ecological connectivity, and intensifying coastal erosion and sea level rise, ultimately putting economic activities and human well-being at risk. Strengthening biodiversity conservation and ecosystems' ability to regulate climate, protect against natural disasters, sustain marine food chains, and promote human well-being requires policies and practices driven by multi-level, cross-sector, and societal engagement.

*Food Security and Environmental Changes:* Warming ocean basins, seawater acidification and pollution, fish and seafood stock depletion, and species distribution shifts threaten global food security and the livelihoods of coastal fishing communities. Multi-level, cross-sector, and societal engagement strategies that integrate climate management, marine conservation, and sustainable blue economy and fisheries are crucial to ensuring resource availability and minimizing disruptions to food chains.

*Coastal Cities' Vulnerability and Adaptation Strategies:* With a significant portion of the world's population and economic activities concentrated in coastal areas, rising sea levels, storm surges, and erosion threaten marine biodiversity, infrastructure, economies, and livelihoods. To address these challenges, nature-based solutions, alongside robust policies and multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation, are essential for reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing urban coastal resilience.

*Scenario Development, Modeling, FAIR data, and Synthesis for Decision-Making:* Ocean system modeling, combined with FAIR data analysis, strengthens biodiversity conservation and supports evidence-based policies. Integrating ecological and socio-economic data helps predict biodiversity changes, climate impacts, detect extreme events, and guide biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Evaluating the potential effects of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies on biodiversity is essential to avoid unintended ecological consequences. Scenario modeling and integrated assessments should explicitly consider biodiversity outcomes to inform adaptive management, optimize co-benefits, and minimize trade-offs between climate action and conservation goals.

*Ocean-Climate-Biodiversity Data Management:* Effective ocean governance relies on integrated monitoring systems and data-sharing frameworks. Inclusive and interoperable digital platforms

enhance environmental analyses, connect research networks, and improve evidence-based decision-making, as defined in Belmont Forum Data policies (evaluation criterion n. 6) and supported by the Decade of the Ocean (through, for example, the Global Ocean Observing System).

*Uses, Changes, and Suppression of Marine-Coastal Seascapes:* Interventions from deep-sea to coastal habitats, both within and beyond national jurisdictions, compromise biodiversity, ecosystem services, and natural defenses against environmental changes. Integrated planning and actions that balances conservation and sustainable development, combined with robust policies and multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation, is essential for reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing socio-environmental resilience.

*Prevention and Adaptation to Emerging Environmental Changes:* The intensification of extreme events and emerging threats requires innovation, effective governance, and nature-based solutions. Integrating scientific evidence into public policy through multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation is essential for ensuring ocean health and the resilience of biodiversity, ecosystems, and societies.

### **Area 3**

#### **Nature Futures, Ocean Governance and Ethics for Sustainability**

Effective ocean governance is crucial for advancing marine conservation policies and ensuring the sustainable management of ocean resources. As marine ecosystems face increasing pressures, integrating science, policy, private sector, and social participation strengthens ocean resilience and enhances evidence-based decision-making. International and regional cooperation, multi-sectoral governance, and forward-looking approaches including scenario development are key to addressing emerging challenges and securing a sustainable ocean future. Under this theme, project development within the following priorities could be considered:

*Research and development towards the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and its Integration with International Conventions:* The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) establishes 23 ambitious targets for biodiversity conservation, which can be strengthened through integration and alignment with international environmental agreements and treaties. Fostering synergies, allocating resources, and strengthening multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation mechanisms are essential for ensuring effective ocean governance and sustainability.

*Nature Futures and Sustainable Scenarios for Marine Biodiversity and Climate:* The Nature Futures framework, developed by IPBES, explores alternative pathways for biodiversity conservation while considering climate change, economic pressures, environmental degradation, and societal needs and well-being. Development of scenario and modeling, co-designed and co-constructed by scientists, decision-makers, and local communities, will support proactive conservation strategies by anticipating challenges, adapting policies to local contexts, and fostering inclusive and effective solutions for marine biodiversity and climate resilience.

*Evidence-informed Policies for Sustainable Ocean Management:* The development of sustainable ocean policies relies on robust data to inform regulatory decisions and



conservation strategies. Strengthening research networks and fostering multi-level, cross-sector, and societal cooperation, alongside ensuring transparency in decision-making, enhances the effectiveness of ocean governance while reducing uncertainties.

*Regional Cooperation and Multi-Sectoral Governance for Marine Conservation:* Effective transboundary ocean governance requires transnational cooperation and integrated management to balance conservation and economic development. Key economic sectors must be incorporated into sustainable management strategies, regional agreements, marine spatial planning, and data-sharing mechanisms to reinforce biodiversity conservation policies, promote equitable access to marine resources, and strengthen ocean governance.

*Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge along with scientific knowledge in Ocean Governance:* Indigenous peoples and traditional communities hold valuable ecological knowledge about marine ecosystems. Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into decision-making processes enhances marine conservation efforts, fosters socially just policies, and requires the development of institutional mechanisms to integrate diverse knowledge systems into ocean governance.

*Capacity Building for Innovation and Ocean Policies:* Training and capacity building for policymakers, decision-makers, scientists, and local communities accelerate policy implementation. Strengthening embedded science, citizen-science, interdisciplinary networks, fostering knowledge exchange programs, and leveraging big data and artificial intelligence enhance ocean governance, making it more resilient, adaptable, and inclusive.

*Evidence-Informed Decision-Making:* Effective ocean governance relies on evidence-based policies to reduce uncertainties and drive positive conservation outcomes. Strengthening monitoring systems, environmental policy evaluation, and multi-level, cross-sector, and societal engagement enhances transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in decision-making, fostering more resilient and adaptive marine management while ensuring a healthy and sustainable ocean for all.

### **Project requirements:**

Proposals should include a strong and deliberate linkage between the societal and environmental aspects within global environmental challenges to ensure that they meet the Belmont Challenge for international transdisciplinary research: to provide knowledge for understanding, mitigating, and/or adapting to global environmental change.

Given the complexity and scope of these challenges, research consortia must be truly transdisciplinary, including a minimum of 3 consortium partners one from each (a+b+c): a) social sciences/humanities/economics and b) natural sciences/physical sciences/engineering/technology, as well as c) societal partners (i.e. citizens, industry, civil society organizations, conservation organisations), using a participatory, co-designed and co-implementation approach. The project consortium must also be requesting funding from (at least) 3 different funders participating in the call, and be multilateral - from (at least) 3 different countries. Additional knowledge holders are welcome to be part of the proposing consortium once these minimum criteria are met.

Successful proposals **must address at least one of the Call Areas**. Submissions should clearly describe how the proposed project will address the Call Theme and accomplish the activities. Successful proposals will include well-justified budgets, partitioning of funds, and clear allocation of roles, responsibilities, and time.

**Proposals are required to include:**

1. **Data management Plan** including public accessibility of data, digital objects, results, and findings;
2. **Project Description** including background, research plan, and consortium composition with detailed discussion of stakeholder engagement and co-production process;
3. **Management Plan** to describe the implementation of the how the overall coordination, monitoring, oversight, and evaluation of the project;
4. **Impact, Engagement and Dissemination Plan**, including the development of introductory and valorization videos for the kick-off and end-term meetings, planned social media activities as well as any other externally facing communication activities foreseen as a result of this work, capacity building activities foreseen as part of the co-development of the research;
5. **Funding Plan**, including funding to participate in coordinated activities throughout the project's lifespan such as attending the CRA Kick-Off, Mid-Term, and End-Term meetings to be held at the [Sustainability Research and Innovation Congress](#). The expenses for these activities should be accounted for in the Funding Plan to allow participation from *at least* three Consortium members.

**Project Duration:**

Projects are intended to be *three* years in length, however, individual annexes may provide support for varying lengths of time up to *four* years.

**Eligibility criteria:**

To be deemed eligible for this call, a Research Consortium should have **three or more participants**, representing **at least three different countries**, requesting support from **at least three participating funding organizations**. Each funding organization's eligibility requirements can be found in their annex for this call on the [Belmont Forum Website](#).

Consortium members can **request funding** or **in-kind support** as outlined in each Annex. Additional members may participate in a self-financed capacity *if* the minimum participants from three countries, requesting from three funding organizations, is met.

Each Research Consortium **must have a Consortium Lead**, who acts to facilitate collaboration and communication across the team, submits the research proposal, and annual reports, which are due each June 15<sup>th</sup> for the lifetime of the project. **Consortium Leads must request funding** from a participating funding agency and cannot participate in a self-financed or in-kind capacity. It is critical that each Consortium Member and Consortium Lead review the applicable funding agency annexes for this Call to determine whether their funding requests in the Funding Plan align with available support. Specific questions about eligibility should be directed to the relevant point of contact listed at the bottom of each organizational Annex. We

encourage the creation of a gender and geographically-balanced Research Consortium that provides opportunities for early career researchers to participate.

*Please be aware that certain funding agencies participating in this Research Call have adopted policies that may not allow funding for individuals if there is a person, public or private institution, company, or association from Russia or Belarus in the respective consortium. Consortia may be deemed ineligible for this reason.*

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

The proposals will be reviewed under the following selection criteria:

#### **1. Quality/Intellectual Merit**

- What is the quality of the science proposed? How innovative are the team's project goals and objectives?
  - How well does the activity advance knowledge and understanding within its own field and across different fields?
  - To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, and innovative concepts?

#### **2. Fit to call objectives (including user engagement & societal or broader impacts)**

- Addressing at least one of the call areas.
- Engagement of research users/societal actors (relevant policy makers, regulators, NGOs, communities, local and Indigenous people organizations, or industry) and effectiveness of proposed knowledge exchange activities
- Expected impacts: e.g. societal, policy related, economical.
  - What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society (e.g. policy development, economies)?
  - How have users/societal actors been engaged and how effective are the proposed mechanisms for knowledge transfer to decision makers?
  - Does the research collaboration focus on global challenges for which solutions can only be achieved by global scientific approaches?

#### **3. Personnel/Quality of the Consortium**

- Competence and expertise of teams and complementarities of consortium members?
  - How well qualified are the proposers (Consortium Lead and team) in terms of science knowledge, expertise and experience to conduct the project?
  - What is the quality of previous work in terms of past or potential contributions to, and impact on the proposed and other areas of research?
  - Is the Consortium Lead team (including any identified Co-Principal Investigators) able to lead the project, e.g. having strong management and leadership skills, or having complementarity of expertise and synergy of the members of the team?
- The Belmont Forum aims to increase the accessibility of research opportunities, especially to marginalized communities. In this spirit, please assess the diversity

of the Consortium team considering the multiple factors including: geography, training or background as well as the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and local knowledge holders.

- What is the added value of international cooperation? When appropriate please discuss the extent to which Partner Organizations' existing investments are leveraged in the proposed project
  - If these partnerships currently exist what does this new funding allow them to do that they could not do otherwise?

#### **4. Co-Production and Societal Relevance**

- Are there transdisciplinary approaches embedded and throughout the planned project lifecycle? (co-construction, co-identify, co-develop)
- Were societal parties/stakeholders involved in the initial framing and development of the proposal?
- Do the proposed project outcomes exhibit genuine (on-the-ground) societal relevance/impact?
- Are provisions made so that all partners (including stakeholders/society) will share equitably in on-the-ground impacts/benefits as a result of this project?
- Are [Ocean Decade Challenges](#) explicitly addressed? Inclusion of Challenge 10 is mandatory.

#### **5. Resources and Management**

- Appropriateness of resources and funding requested
- Balanced cooperation
- How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?
- Is there an operational plan with well-defined milestones in place?
- Is the coordination plan adequate?
- Is there sufficient access to resources?
- Are the requested investments well justified and relevant?
- Are the scientific and financial contributions requested of the Partner Organizations from each country well balanced?

#### **6. Data and Digital Outputs Management Plan (DDOMP) and other required documents**

- Does the DDOMP conform to the [Belmont Forum Open Data Policy](#) and [FAIR principles](#)?
- Does the DDOMP consider [CARE](#) principles?
- Is the DDOMP appropriately detailed and resourced to be able to be taken forward effectively?

#### **How to apply:**

All call documents, including guidelines for applicants and national/regional requirements, and the submission portal can be found at the Belmont Forum Grant Operations website: <http://bfgo.org>.

Details of the call and the application process are presented on the Belmont Forum web site: <https://belmontforum.org/cras#open>, where you can also find links to training modules for proposers on the Belmont Forum YouTube channel.

Before starting to prepare proposals, applicants are advised to contact their National Contact Points as listed in the annex documents for the call.

### **Capacity building and networking activities**

Building strong and appropriate consortia will be key for the development of proposals meeting the challenges highlighted in the call text and producing the expected outcomes.

The capacity building and networking phase consists in a period of several months to be used to support activities of networking especially with various societal actors and disciplines, capacity building, transdisciplinary training or series of workshops. These activities will help applicants to 1) address the challenge of this CRA focused on transformation of management practices (transdisciplinary) using a holistic system approach (interdisciplinary) and 2) submit the proposals on the BFGo platform.

Potential supporting activities during the phase of proposal development:

- Workshops and other supporting activities could be organised regionally with the objective to build community gathering Natural Scientists, Humanities and Social Scientists, and Societal actors from different countries. Participation in these workshops should not be mandatory for proposal submission but should be considered as great opportunities for applicants to develop the transdisciplinary community and their networks. A key aspect for the success of these activities will be working with good knowledge brokers. These activities could have a regional focus.
- Webinars could be organised by each Partner Organisation with the support of the TPO and Belmont Forum secretariat. Webinars will help spread information through research communities about themes, good practices in transdisciplinarity or Belmont Forum specificities (i.e. Exchanges with previous Belmont Forum awardees).

If you would like to stay updated, please feel free to express your interest and sign up for our [mailing list](#), and follow us on our social media channels. If you need precisions or more information, please contact [info@belmontforum.org](mailto:info@belmontforum.org).

### **Call Submission Process:**

- This CRA has a two-stage submission process: Registration (mandatory for full proposal submission) and Full Proposals.
- All submissions must be made online through the [BFGo portal](#).
- Proposals must be written entirely in one of the following languages: English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish, without mixing languages, and submitted at the [BFGo portal](#).
- Capacity-building activities and Collaborative Networking activities will begin from the call launch to the call closure. These activities and projects are voluntary and are designed to enhance each consortia's proposal.

Submissions should clearly describe how the proposed project will address the Call Areas and accomplish the chosen Topics. Successful proposals will include well justified budgets, partitioning of funds, and allocation of responsibilities and time. Projects should have well-thought-out and detailed data management, project stakeholder engagement, and communication management plans. Plans for providing broad public accessibility of data, results, and findings should be described.

Successful projects are expected to participate in coordinated activities throughout the lifespan of the project including Kick-Off, Mid-Term, and End-Term activities.

**Disclaimer:** In the event of any discrepancies between the translated version and the original English version of this document, the English version shall prevail. The original English text serves as the official reference for interpretation and legal purposes.