

The Ocean Health Index Inform Phase

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1 Outreach and Communications Strategy

It is important to have a clear strategy for how to communicate the results of your assessment to your various audiences. You will want to have a clear message and way to reach to your various audiences, choosing the tools that will best suit your objective or call to action for each audience. To do this, it is helpful to revisit your initial assessment plan and stakeholder analysis and identify key messages and recommendations that are relevant to each group.

Your strategy will consist of both communication materials and a strategic outreach plan that details how you will distribute findings and materials.

In addition to highlighting key findings of specific geographies and goals, it can be important to provide interpretation of results and recommendations to decision-makers and managers so they can create policies to increase goal scores and ultimately ocean health.

1.1 Communications Strategy

The following materials may be useful to you:

- Summary of findings: findings to general audience, press, managers, and various decision-makers (via email or printed materials)
- Policy paper/report/memos: interpretation and recommendations to key decision-makers, including information and knowledge gaps, priority geographies and themes, and management interventions
- Website: broader distribution of findings and materials. Contact programs at oceanhealthindex.org to discuss options for using an OHI template
- Peer-reviewed academic manuscripts

1.2 Outreach Strategy

Examples of how to increase your presence include:

- Stakeholder workshops and/or town hall meetings: present findings, develop a strategic plan of next steps, evaluate different management scenarios.
- Work with network of decision-makers who were part of the planning team to organize public meetings, hearing, inter-agency meetings
- Consider perspective of the decision-maker: clarify issue and why of interest, highlight action to take and the relevant science to support the action
- Maintain engagement in the decision-making process: councils, partnerships with stakeholders, periodic meetings with technical working groups and government agencies
- Provide clear recommendations and courses of actions that create the conditions to sustainably maximize ocean productivity
- Clearly articulate geographic priorities and sectorial problems affecting local oceans
- Be available to support ocean and coastal resource management planning and/or policy development processes

2 Disseminate Findings

Even before your assessment has been completed it is critical to plan how you will communicate the findings of your assessment to your multiple audiences.

The ultimate purpose of conducting an assessment is ultimately to improve ocean health, with intermediate steps of inform decision-making and tracking changes through time. To do this, it is imperative that the results be properly communicated.

An ecosystem-based management approach outlines a series of principles to guide management towards long-term sustainability of, in this case, marine and coastal ecosystems. This information seeks to assist decision makers in taking steps toward sustainably managing their coastal resources. For more information on how to set up and implement an ecosystem-based management approach, consult the United Nations Environment Program's guide at www.unep.org/pdf/GPA/Ecosystem_based_Management_Markers_for_Assessing_Progress.pdf.

When disseminating the results of your assessment to policy makers, it is important to interpret what goal scores mean (what they represent, what information is included, how reference points were set) as well as possibilities for improving how well these goals are met (reducing pressures, increasing resilience).

It is crucial to the success of these assessments to consistently re-assess your study region through time to see how it is responding to management decisions. It is only through continued monitoring of these resources that you will better understand how effective your management strategy and policies are and it is only through effective communication that informed decisions can be made.

3 Communicate Results with Partners and Others

Once you have identified your different groups and clarified the objectives for each, brainstorm different channels you can use for your communications and sort them by which would be most appropriate for each group. Think about the different needs of each group of your stakeholders. What information does each group need from you to meet their objectives or to perform your desired action/outcome? For example, stakeholders

involved in decision making and planning that you would like to help engage in informed management actions would be more receptive to a well-laid out report rather than a newsletter, article or social media post.

After selecting the proper communication tool for each group, begin planning the messages for each group. Here it might be helpful to start with the broadest group and end with the most specific. For each group, aim to answer questions such as: What are the main facts that the audience needs to know? How much background does your audience already have on this topic? When will these facts need to be communicated? What is the best channel to reach the audience?

Make sure that each message is clear to each audience. For example, what are the absolutely necessary facts that a policy maker will need to know from your assessment to help them better manage your marine resources? How can you convey this information in the most direct, easily accessible way? This message will vastly differ from the one sent to the general public, whose main aim will be to increase awareness of ocean health and resource management. For examples, a past Ocean Health Index Global Assessment press release can be found at www.pacificlife.com/content/dam/pacificlife_corp/crp/public/about_pacific_life/foundation_community/strategic_focus/health and the report for policy makers from our West coast case study can be found at www.oceanhealthindex.org/Apps/OHI/Vault/O

It is important to remember that you may also want to include some of your stakeholders in this process. Partnering with some of your stakeholders might give you access to a broader demographic to help you amplify your message, and the OHI team can help too.

For more information on how to identify and communicate with various stakeholders, use planning and strategy tools such as the ones listed under “Communications Skills” at www.mindtools.com.

4 Implement Policies and Management Interventions that Respond to the Priorities

A well-designed and communicated Ocean Health Index assessment should provide important information to stakeholders and decision-makers. Assessment findings can be used to identify geographic and sectorial priorities among the regions assessed and for the entire study area.

You should consider involving stakeholders to develop and implement an **action plan**. Much like you planned for your assessment, you must now plan for the actions and policies you will enact to reduce pressures and increase resilience, the two possible pathways to improving ocean health and thus moving closer towards your targets.

4.1 Resources

- Conservation Gateway: Conservation Action Planning: www.conservationgateway.org/Documents/CAP_2pg_Description
- Conservation Action Planning Handbook: www.conservationgateway.org/Documents/Cap%20Handbook_June2007.pdf

5 Monitor and Re-evaluate to Determine Policy Effectiveness and Set New Priorities

If the OHI framework was adopted as a management tool, recalculating scores regularly could reveal whether management actions had the intended effect on both overall ocean health and particular goals. This objective demonstrates the power (and necessity) of having a quantitative, repeatable, transparent and comprehensive method for the assessment.

Other more complex, emergent tradeoffs become visible only when OHI assessments are done over time to track how goal scores change. Because of the complexity of ecosystem responses, full attribution of a change in one goal causing a change in another goal is difficult, but such patterns can provide insight on where to

direct further exploration of such possible tradeoffs. The ability to calculate past status scores, and then correlate changes with past management actions, illustrates one way it can be used to assess management effectiveness.