GBIF | Global Biodiversity Information Facility

Draft Resource Mobilization Strategy

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Resource Mobilization Strategy

Foreword

This strategy supplements GBIF's next five-year strategic plan, with its mission "to mobilize the data, human capacity, and technologies required for information about the world's biodiversity to be freely accessible and used by researchers and decision makers in all nations to reverse biodiversity loss and address the multiple crises facing the natural world."

Significant increases in funding are required to achieve this ambitious agenda. The recent CODATA *Twenty-year Review of GBIF* highlighted that the combination of high expectations along with technical and scientific challenges could create a scenario where "business as usual" would fail to preserve GBIF's relevance.

The resource mobilization strategy establishes the framework for delivering increased and stabilised funding to fulfil GBIF's current remit, positioning it as a leader while securing its long-term mandate. By harnessing the convening power of the network to mobilize people, knowledge, and partnerships, the strategy outlines how to apply additional resources to increase GBIF's impact over the next five years.

A focus on long-term growth is central to fulfilling the strategy. Strengthened partnerships and networks are significant themes for building on the needs of our stakeholders and identifying opportunities to add value in the future. While financial security is critical to maintaining GBIF's position as a global leader, the strategy accommodates partnerships that deliver non-monetary value as well as those with funding potential, connecting and consolidating current contributions with a diversified funding base.

Prepared as both the public and private sectors take a deeper interest in biodiversity, this strategy represents a major shift in focus essential to the GBIF's capacity to fulfil its mission.

Summary

The Resource Mobilization Framework rests on following four priorities:

We will **sustain and strengthen existing partnerships**. Voting participants currently pay more than 80 per cent of GBIF's funding and will remain its core source. Economic constraints will place more emphasis on ensuring that current investments deliver value. In order to protect current resources, our first objective is to deepen existing partnerships. By working closely with national, regional and international authorities, we will coordinate strategic engagement in policy dialogues and provide strategic and technical support that both draws on and influences country-specific priorities.

We will **diversify funding sources** and add new supplementary sources of funding. Targeted engagement across thematic impact areas will cultivate a broader constituency of support from international financial institutions, foundations, private corporations and other donors. By developing programme areas for investment that apply funding to enhance core work, additional funding will be directed toward outcomes that extend the capabilities and enhance the relevance of GBIF participant nodes.

We will also pursue opportunities to create additional funding streams within other ministries, departments and agencies of current Voting Participants. Given that decentralized decision-making and budget models that prevail in a majority of these countries and the increasing emphasis on mainstreaming biodiversity across broader policy outcomes, there are rising opportunities for increasing funding by accelerating delivery of other scientific and technical priorities and objectives.

We will **deliver external value by strengthening GBIF's place in the landscape**. By continuing to represent the network in key partnerships and collaborations, the GBIF Secretariat will advance the shared objectives and capabilities of network members and ensure they are integrated in the delivery of wider policy- and decision-making agendas. We will extend our reach and ensure we deliver outcomes for a comprehensive set of stakeholders. Sustained involvement in framing and delivering relevant external outcomes will strengthen our collective impact while capturing emerging opportunities both to leverage and to develop the network's abilities.

Finally, we will **build organizational capacity**. In parallel with the first three priorities, GBIF will need to develop more fit-for-purpose mechanisms for converting leads and prospects into reliable partners and funders. We want funding to be channeled into cross-cutting priority areas, geared towards long-term outcomes. By targeting unrestricted funding, we will seek to invest it in strategically advantageous programmes that build up capabilities focused on long-term outcomes. Such flexibility will reduce centralized administrative burdens while allowing redistribution, as appropriate, in support of participant nodes. While earmarked funding has potential to make significant impacts, particularly in countries with limited capacity, we will focus where possible on consolidating smaller contributions into larger programme streams (as appropriate and agreed) to minimize bespoke proposal and reporting requirements.

Strategic framework

Priority 1: Sustain and strengthen existing partnerships

The following activities are intended to reinforce relationships with the current Voting Participants, but they are also applicable in Priority 2 efforts aim to add new Voting Participants.

- Support improved linkages with stakeholders' agendas through wider national and regional engagement, recognizing that for many major donors changing the quality of funding is more feasible and has more impact than changing the quantity.
- Assess options for independent impact evaluation of the network, including
    1. Quantifying the value of current participants' investments
    2. Providing existing partners and potential investors with evidence on the impact of potential investment
    3. Establishing baseline performance indicators for tracking future performance
- Improve coordination among current Voting Participants by matching funding priorities and outreach efforts. In addition to solidifying GBIF's role in delivering key objectives to existing funders, this approach can surface additional funding

opportunities by highlighting programmatic connections to increase the capacity of national nodes to deliver value to their funders and stakeholders.

- Based on the current staffing, the key criteria for seeking to leverage national engagement will be (in order of importance):
    1. Connections to internationally agreed goals
    2. Network connections to regionally agreed goals
    3. Existing funding relationships (e.g. European Union support of the BID programme)
    4. National goals with broad support and clear strategic outcomes that are measurable
    5. Common transnational or thematic needs

Priority 2: Diversify funding sources

A diversified donor base will enable GBIF to enhance financial stability and long-term sustainability while making it possible to deliver on the high expectations described in the CODATA report. We will pursue funding that will deliver lasting collective outcomes across all GBIF partners and constituents.

Target organizations will meet the following criteria:

- Funding priorities that align with our vision and values
- Willingness to collaborate as a partner as well as a funder
- Authority to supply data (either directly or through decision-making influence) and/or to use of GBIF tools and services to fulfil their own objectives

Activities that support fund diversification include:

- Securing targeted country-specific funding through closer alignment between GBIF priorities and high-level national priorities, particularly within the framework of internationally agreed goals i.e. the CBD National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, along with other regional or national initiatives. Initial opportunities will target strong existing relationships within the network.
- Expanding funding opportunities in regional and multilateral fora where GBIF's value is already proven, such as the European Commission. Additional opportunities in other priority areas and jurisdictions may arise, for example, in partnership with consortia receiving funding for ESFRI and other initiatives under the upcoming seven-year budget framework (FP7). Similar prospects may exist through bilateral sources in other regions, such as the U.S. National Science Foundation.
- Focusing efforts on improving global- and regional-scale network connections in the global south. Policy and resource priorities have made these countries areas of high interest for investment in capacity. For GBIF, deepening connections in these regions represent opportunities for both directed and internal investment to level up global capabilities and deliver more comprehensive coverage, strengthening our unique position as a global network and data infrastructure.
- Expanding investment opportunities across the banking and business sectors. Building on recent interest and success in mobilizing data from the private sector, we will seek to develop targeted work plans across pre-identified groups of companies,

subsequently extended with an opportunistic list of prospects. Successful engagement of the first group will enable more rapid development of the second, which can then be developed and pursued more aggressively.

- Building support and capabilities across philanthropic foundations and other private funders and donors. Such engagements are comparatively slow to take shape and often show results only after iterative processes taking 12 to 24 months of cultivation and negotiation. We will identify key prospects and connections through the work of consolidating GBIF's place in the landscape (Priority 3). Work in this area will also draw upon a preliminary 2019 report on philanthropic opportunities commissioned by the Secretariat.

Priority 3: Focus on delivering external value and strengthening our place in the landscape

GBIF will continue to lead the network's engagement in numerous other partnerships and collaborations that advance common aims and objectives, and bring together a broader constituency of support. This will develop the profile of GBIF and help us understand the priorities of key decision-makers and enable us to capitalize quickly on new initiatives and shape emerging agendas.

In pursuit of this, GBIF will focus on the following areas:

- Leading coordination across relevant policy areas that impact our stakeholders such as the CBD and related specialist areas, including ongoing negotiations on digital sequence information (DSI), as well as affiliated global forums like the Global Taxonomy Initiative and World Science Forum.
- Increasing our participation in other decision-making bodies with an eye toward ensuring relevance, expanding resources and broadening stakeholders. Examples include the UNEP Finance Initiative and aligned commercial agenda-setting bodies like the Task Force on Nature Related Financial Disclosures, as well as other UN conventions (IPCC, Ramsar, CITES).
- Strengthening the strategic value of participant organizations and partners. Where possible, non-state participation in GBIF will revolve around cooperation agreements that outline joint objectives and active plans for collaboration. Current examples of this approach exist in the partnerships with IUCN and IPBES.
- Ensuring that formal commitment of GBIF involvement in other organizations rests on providing meaningful contributions of expertise and support that delivers material worth back into the network. Examples include the influencing of domestic planning to support our objectives or the delivery of visibility or a leadership mandate in targeted sectors to leverage funding justification or additional partnerships.

Priority 4: Build organizational capacity

Ensuring greater flexibility and with limited earmarking of specific funds is a cross-cutting objective of the global resource mobilization strategy. We will establish pooled funding for cross-sectoral activities, ensuring a coherent and integrated approach to directing resources to grow and scale up capacity across all parts of the organization.

The following activities address this challenge:

- Reframing the supplementary budget to programmes centered on impact focus areas closely connected to the progress priorities in the [draft] strategic plan. The aim is to develop long-term programmes to attract and leverage funding pooled from multiple donors. Contributions will therefore not be tied to a specific time-limited project or pre-planned activities but will instead support a results framework that complements other planned outputs and funds a variety of activities.

- Examining options for innovative financing for the network's services. Examples like private-sector help desks could highlight effective mechanisms for replication and explore potential revenue-producing activities.

- Improving internal communication and alignment on priorities. Recent investments in a grant management and customer relationship management systems have enabled the Secretariat to improve end-to-end management for distributing and reallocating funds, which will in turn allow transparent oversight of new leads, subsequent engagement and programme monitoring. These improvements will require an ongoing investment of time and may involve additional financial resources to build the teams or add capabilities, particularly in communications.

- Strengthening communications to sustain global attention, support to the biodiversity agenda and ensure the visibility of the network to public- and private-sector donors. Work in this area is already underway, with the current planned delivery of a series of specifically tailored communications outputs on individual strategic areas.

- Leveraging technical cooperation throughout the network to develop further capabilities that do not rely on ongoing operational expenditure from the Secretariat's core budget. This work will require increased capacity within the nodes to decentralize costly activities such as digitizing and cleaning data, developing software and providing publishing support. Leveraging existing mechanisms such as the mentorship and training programmes can support delivery of these objectives and support the network's growth and expansion.

Implementing the resource mobilization strategy

Progress and implementation of the resource mobilization strategy will involve regular coordination across GBIF. For example, programme officers have often had close relationships with partners and funders and should be encouraged to take a greater role in resource mobilization by contributing to development and implementation of funding programmes.

The strength of this organization is its proximity to partners and flexibility in responding to their needs. By simultaneously decentralizing resource mobilization close to the host countries and programme officers operations and investing in central resources through the Secretariat and functional teams, GBIF can develop detailed project proposals to partners where needed while engaging in high-level advocacy in other cases. The potential weakness of such a structure is the lack of transparency about ownership of relationships. The consequent risk is that donors may be approached by several members of the organization at the same time or not at all.

The Strategic Partnership Officer has overall responsibility for all donors but will work closely with Secretariat staff and other partners to coordinate efforts. Nodes and node managers, for example, have a distinct liaison role within their national governments and host institutions.

They advocate for GBIF activities in these communities and support national-scale resource mobilization. The Strategic Partnership Officer will be responsible for ensuring appropriate communication and collaboration during all stages of the funding cycle.

The Secretariat will engage nodes when preparing potential funding proposals and partnerships. Member delegations will remain indispensable to the success of this resource mobilization strategy, acting as core partners in delivering outcomes from it.

To improve the effectiveness of cross-organizational cooperation on resource mobilization, two initial ongoing initiatives are planned:

- Closer communications with the nodes, both through community webinars and standing items on the agenda of the nodes steering group
- Regular updates to the EC to ensure a steady flow of information and, as needed, decision-making with potential funders, programmes and requirements

High-level work requirements

Annual work plans will include targets as well as specific roles and responsibilities across the various functional groups to chart and reflect milestones in delivering results under the overall strategy. Annual objectives will break down each strand of activity into more specific actions to be carried out depending on the donors and targets.

The effective implementation of this plan will require the attention of groups across the secretariat, and in particular:

- The ECs support: support of the RM strategy including use of their own networks for advocacy and outreach to donors.
- Participant representatives: support in building a broader constituency in GBIF's donor network and joint exploration of new donor relationships.
- Programme officers, data products, communications, and informatics: collaboration to develop appropriate "investment products" illustrating social and financial returns.
- Secretariat: commitment to implementing and adequately supporting project management and control processes.
- Finance and administration: clarity of actual and expected cost changes and project expenditure, and the use of reporting mechanisms for funders.