



SDG 14 focuses on preserving the health of our oceans and marine ecosystems.



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

**The Learning
Institute**

Many community foundations are exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their planning, granting, convening, Vital Signs and more. This Fact Sheet is part of a series that focuses on specific SDGs to engage and inspire community foundations of all sizes to deepen their work around these goals.

What is this approach?

The [targets of SDG 14](#) bring a global focus to sustainable fishing, reducing marine pollution, protecting and restoring ecosystems, and reducing acidification. The sustainability of our oceans is under severe threat from pollution, ocean warming, algal blooms and fisheries collapse ([source](#)). These threaten more than a third of the world's population, who depend on the oceans for their livelihoods ([source](#)). At the same time, there has been significant progress on marine conservation, with the area of protected marine habitats increasing from 30.5% in 2000 to 46% in 2019 ([source](#)) along with improvements in fishing regulations and the sustainable management of fish stocks ([source](#)). Canada ranks 103 in the [Ocean Health Index](#) and, with almost 14% of Canada's marine and coastal areas under protection, has already surpassed this SDG target and is now committed to protecting 30% by 2030 ([source](#)). However, available data indicates that only 29% of Canada's major fish stocks are classified as healthy ([source](#)), while Canada faces significant threats from marine pollution and plastic waste.

Canada's national approach to SDG 14 is captured in the Ocean Protection Plan, with [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#) as the national lead on SDG 14. Canada is also showing global leadership in tackling plastics pollution through initiatives in the G7 ([source](#)), and the government has committed to zero plastic waste by 2030 ([source](#)). Canada's national approach to SDG 14 includes conserving marine species, investing in ocean science and innovation, and advancing reconciliation through collaborative governance.

The key elements of this approach are captured in the national Ocean Protection Plan:

- Supporting safe and clean marine shipping.
- Building partnerships with Indigenous and coastal communities.
- Increasing economic opportunities for Canadians.
- Improving marine safety.
- Protecting the marine environment.

Canada's approach to SDG 14 recognizes Indigenous rights to fisheries and coastal resources, and includes a strong focus on reconciliation. Indigenous fishing rights are recognized under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which was ratified by Canada following the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee ([Call to Action 43](#)). Efforts to meet these obligations include the [Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement](#), while several First Nations are working together to create a [Fisheries Reconciliation Table](#).



We need to maintain a healthy ocean for the health of all people, including Indigenous communities who rely on food from the sea. (...) If Canada and other governments recognize Indigenous authority, respect their rights and law-making processes, then we are on the right path. But there is more work to be done.

— [LINDA NOWLAN](#)

[VAST, DEEP AND TROUBLED: WHY THE TIME FOR INVESTMENT IN OCEANS IS NOW](#)

Local approaches to SDG 14 can be found in communities living along Canada's vast coastlines from the Atlantic to the Arctic to the Pacific. At the same time, all Canadians have a role to play in achieving SDG 14, as the health of our oceans is inextricably linked to inland communities and ecosystems, including our rivers and lakes, our waste disposal systems and the protection of habitats for key fisheries.

Local approaches to SDG 14 include:

- Indigenous management of fisheries for sustainable use.
- Local monitoring of protected marine areas and fishing stocks.
- Community campaigns to reduce plastic waste and prevent plastics from reaching the ocean.
- Community river and beach cleaning campaigns.
- Infrastructure to prevent untreated fertilizer and pesticide run-off from reaching rivers.
- Sustainable local fishing industries and consumers purchasing sustainable produce.

Why is it important for grantmakers?

Canada's fate is tied to its oceans. There are over 7 million Canadians living in coastal communities ([source](#)) and, with the world's longest coastline, Canada's "blue economy" accounts for approximately \$36 billion in GDP as well as 350,000 jobs ([source](#)). While Canada has made significant progress in expanding marine conservation areas, these do not protect against the impacts of pollution, which are second only to climate change in damaging the health of marine ecosystems ([source](#)). Around 80% of marine pollution comes from the land ([source](#)), and Canada produces the most waste per capita in the world (Statista 2019), while only 70% of Canada's wastewater is safely treated ([source](#)).

As a result, achieving SDG 14 requires action across many goals, including sustainable agriculture that reduces pesticide and fertilizer run-off (SDG 2), effective wastewater treatment (SDG 6), reduction in the environmental impact of cities and towns (SDG 11), reduction of plastic waste (SDG 12) and action on climate change to protect arctic ecosystems and reduce acidification (SDG 13). Grantmakers everywhere have a role to play in protecting Canada's oceans and improving the livelihoods of coastal communities. Despite the importance of our marine environment only "a small fraction of Canadian environmental grantmaking is directed at oceans" ([source](#)).



Many grantmakers don't think of themselves as ocean funders, even when their priority programs — climate, food security, biodiversity, reconciliation, community development — absolutely depend on healthy oceans. We have created an artificial divide between land and sea, and this limits our thinking at a time when we need to go all in to rebuild the abundance of natural systems.

— [DARCY DOBELL](#),

[VAST, DEEP AND TROUBLED: WHY THE TIME FOR INVESTMENT IN OCEANS IS NOW](#)

Action on SDG 14 is also an opportunity for reconciliation and working with Indigenous communities to support their traditional management of marine ecosystems and their rights to self-determination. Indigenous peoples' fishing rights and their control over their fishing grounds were stripped during colonization, and unsustainable practices have since led to the decimation of fishing stocks. Indigenous communities are now establishing Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) to sustainably manage marine ecosystems, often drawing on traditional ecological knowledge and proven management practices. Grantmakers can ensure that their action on SDG 14 also supports Indigenous leadership and Indigenous rights, and values Indigenous knowledge and conservation approaches.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Indigenous Protected Areas

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) may well be one of the most promising avenues to meet ambitious conservation goals. IPA models will vary depending on the visions of the First Nations leading their creation, but they generally include ecological principles that value ocean health, community wellness, employment and prosperity.

— THE TIDE NEEDS TURNING

SDG 14 also intersects with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Research from the United States indicates that low-income and BIPOC communities are more likely to be relegated to unsafe or polluted beaches, including those affected by untreated wastewater. Fisher folk in low-income communities are also more likely to be exposed to contaminated fish and suffer illnesses from seafood consumption ([source](#)). Action on SDG 14 can be an opportunity to address these challenges by ensuring funding is reaching those most affected by marine pollution.

At the national scale, grantmakers are responding to the important challenges and opportunities that SDG 14 presents and are coming together in a range of coalitions and networks. The Oceans Collaborative was formed by grantmakers

focused on ocean conservation and stewardship, and includes a pooled fund for marine grantmaking. SeaBlue Canada brings together six of the leading environmental grantmakers to focus on advocacy and the policy changes needed to support marine conservation in Canada. The Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition connects grantmakers, businesses and government agencies to raise awareness of the relationship between Canadians and their oceans.

Community foundations have also been part of the movement for action on SDG 14. Examples include:

- The West Vancouver Foundation has facilitated donations to the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative, which supports a marine action network in BC's Howe Sound.
- The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust is developing a local Biosphere Centre to support research, learning and sharing about Clayoquot Sound and its land and marine environments as well as the community's cultural connection to the bioregion.
- Vancouver Foundation supported the convening of the Thriving Coastal Communities action research project, which brought together members of BC's coastal communities to explore common challenges and opportunities.
- Nanaimo Foundation has partnered with Vancouver Island University in the Building Resilience in Coastal Communities research project.
- The granting work of Many community foundations supports wild salmon fisheries and habitats, including the Terrace Community Foundation's support for the Skeena Salmon Arts Festival and K-12 education programs.
- London Community Foundation has aligned its Vital Signs reporting with the SDGs, which revealed a common need to ban single use plastics and reduce plastic waste.
- The Fredericton Community Foundation's support for the Earth Rangers program encourages kids to get involved with environmental activities, including plastic waste prevention, and recycling and conservation efforts to protect seals and salmon.

Common principles to get started

Getting started with SDG 14 begins with exploring your community's connection to the ocean and thinking about how your work can contribute to the health of our marine ecosystems.

01 Learn and understand

- Develop your organization's ocean literacy by exploring how your community influences and is influenced by Canada's oceans. Visit the [Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition](#) to get started.
- Use Vital Signs to help track the health of your community's coastlines or its contribution to healthy marine ecosystems elsewhere. See the [Vital Signs reporting](#) of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.
- Build relationships with Indigenous communities to learn about their approaches to marine ecosystems and support their conservation efforts.
- Gather data that allows you to understand which community members have been most affected by marine pollution and how to best support the different issues they are facing.

02 Strategic grantmaking

- Address the integrated nature of land and sea by supporting waste prevention, healthy freshwater ecosystems and bioregion initiatives such as the [Clayoquot Biosphere Trust](#) and the [Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative](#).
- Use impact investing to support marine conservation and sustainable fisheries. See this guide on [Food, Farms, Fish and Finance](#) as well as the work of the [Sitka Foundation](#).
- Support [ocean literacy](#) so that community members better understand their connections to the sea and fund research projects that strengthen understanding and action for conserving local marine ecosystems and livelihoods. See the work of the [Vancouver](#) and [Nanaimo](#) foundations.
- Provide funding to reduce marine pollution, including sustainable farming projects, [green infrastructure](#) to prevent harmful run-off, [zero waste](#) initiatives, and river and beach cleanups. See the Fredericton Community Foundation's support for the [Earth Rangers](#) program.

03 Lead and collaborate

- Lead by example by reducing your organization's impact on the marine environment through a [zero waste](#) program or a procurement policy that is committed to [sustainably sourced seafood](#).
- Work with Indigenous communities to support marine IPAs and advocate for recognizing Indigenous rights and marine conservation approaches.
- Partner to support community monitoring of our coastal ecosystems. See the work of [Ocean Networks Canada](#) and their support for community monitoring and citizen science for marine conservation.
- Connect with other SDG 14 grantmakers such as the [Oceans Collaborative](#) and consider pooling your funds to support larger and more integrated projects.

Resource list

Sea Beyond the Blue: A Guide on the Oceans for Philanthropists and Changemakers

- A 64-page guide that focuses on ocean philanthropy.
- Pages 6-15 provide an overview of key ocean challenges.
- Pages 22-51 present seven ways for grantmakers to take action on ocean issues, with tips and case studies.
- Pages 52-55 explore how funders can collaborate to influence systems change for marine conservation and sustainable management.

FundingtheOcean.org

- An online knowledge hub designed to track, inform and inspire ocean conservation philanthropy.
- Includes an online funding map that shows where and how organizations are protecting our marine ecosystems.
- The Resource Center tab provides a searchable database of reports and case studies as well peer learning groups and events.

Our Shared Seas

- A website that provides timely data, research and insights to support ocean conservation policy, practice and philanthropy.
- The Threats tab provides an overview of key ocean threats and more detailed pages on specific ocean challenges.
- The Solutions tab has a clickable table of ocean solutions and a link to a Primer for Philanthropy on Ocean-Climate Interventions.
- The Funding Report tab covers trends in philanthropic funding for oceans and includes an overview of funding landscape trends from 2010 to 2020.

UBS Philanthropy: Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

- An online article by UBS that provides a brief introduction to impact investing in coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Highlights wetland restoration, sustainable fisheries and ocean pollution as priority areas for investment and action.

Funder Collaboratives in Marine Conservation: Philanthropic Collaboration for Scoping, Projects and Assessments

- A 4-page overview of key considerations when forming and operating funder collaboratives to support marine conservation.
- Pages 1-2 look at three key situations where funding collaborations work best.
- Pages 2-4 present short case studies of marine funder collaborations.

Water Quality and Ocean Conservation: How Funders Can Engage

- An online article that explores the ways that freshwater and marine ecosystems intersect and the role that philanthropy can play in supporting both.
- Identifies five key areas of intervention and provides guidance on what grantmakers can do to take action.