



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Appointment of members to the Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature Expert Committee

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: 19 July 2024

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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The Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature grants programme

Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) is a new competitive grants programme funded through the [UK's Blue Planet Fund](#), by Defra's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget.

OCEAN launched with an initial call for proposals in February 2024 and aims to attract proposals from local organisations working closely with the communities most affected by declining ocean health across all [ODA eligible countries](#).

Evidence shows that there is insufficient competitive funding for programming that solely tackles marine issues and for organisations that specifically focus on reaching local communities and local organisations.

In the last 10 years, less than 1% (that's around only USD ~\$13 billion) of the total value of the ocean has been invested in sustainable projects, even though the ocean supports the livelihoods of one in ten people globally. OCEAN seeks to redress this imbalance and support people and communities who have most acutely and disproportionately been impacted by climate change.

OCEAN provides support for projects that aim to deliver lasting change to the marine environment and coastal communities. Organisations including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are able to submit applications for funding to deliver projects. As global development seeks to better reach those who are systematically left behind, discriminated against, and locked into poverty, working at the local level in coastal areas is an important approach.

OCEAN runs an annual call for proposals with two grant sizes available to bid for; community grants of up to £250 000, and partnership grants of up to £3 million. Community grants are targeted at smaller, in country organisations and local communities with a focus on capacity building, alongside delivering activities to support coastal communities or improve the marine environment. Partnership grants are aimed at established, high-capacity organisations that partner and collaborate with local organisations and are able to absorb increased funding to scale up existing in-country activities to reach higher numbers of people.

Funds are allocated through an open and transparent process against clear criteria, with applications scored and recommended for selection by the OCEAN expert committee.

More details about OCEAN can be found on the [OCEAN website](#).

What is the OCEAN Expert Committee?

Our aim is to establish an OCEAN Expert Committee (OEC or the “Committee”) that is inclusive, diverse, and global. Members could include experts from government, NGOs, academic research institutions, CSOs and coastal communities. Committee members will bring significant knowledge and experience of working in the marine environment, with coastal communities and on poverty reduction and ODA programming, particularly with regards to smaller organisations.

The primary role of the OEC is to provide high quality technical specialist advice to the OCEAN grants programme through reviewing and selecting projects from submitted applications. In addition, OEC members will be requested to support and review strategic elements of OCEAN and the Blue Planet Fund. Members may also be called upon to assist Defra in reviewing the BPF Theory of Change and Key Performance Indicators, for example, and/or providing advice to improve aspects of the broader portfolio.

The OEC members will be expected to champion the OCEAN grants programme where possible, with members supporting outreach and engagement activities to enhance stakeholder awareness and further the objectives of the programme, including attending and presenting at OCEAN events, workshops/webinars for potential applicants and projects.

The OEC will also aim to include up to a maximum of three ex-officio members to ensure consistency to the committee over the full life of the programme.

Description of role

We are looking for individuals who, as leaders in their field, can contribute at the highest levels and work effectively as part of the Committee.

Members are expected to:

- assess and score applications against the published criteria, to agreed timelines and standards, to enable Defra to award funding to high-quality projects
- provide strategic advice
- champion the OCEAN grants programme

We would like to encourage applications from a wide range of backgrounds and global contexts, including the private sector, academia and professional institutions, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders. Applicants can be based anywhere, but applications from those in low and middle-income ODA-eligible countries are particularly encouraged.

Time commitment

You should ensure you have sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role.

Members will be required to commit to:

- fourteen days per annum in total to assess applications (focused in blocks)
- two to three one-day sift meetings
- one to two strategy discussion days, where OEC members input on the long-term direction of the programme

Successful candidates will also be expected to attend an induction event in Q4 2024.

The next funding round assessments (c. ten days) are anticipated to be conducted in January to February 2025, and March to April 2025, with corresponding sift meetings (2 or 3 days) to take place at the end of each of those months (exact timings to be confirmed).

The appointments will commence in late 2024, with a two-year term, with annual review points.

Qualities and experience required

Defra are looking for up to ten people who must be able to demonstrate substantial specialist and/or generalist technical expertise, as well as experience related to the marine environment, conservation actions, poverty reduction approaches and threats to both environmental and human wellbeing.

On this occasion we are especially keen to hear from candidates with expertise working West Africa, Caribbean small island developing states (SIDS) and Pacific SIDS. We are also interested in expanding our expertise around Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU), International and Large-Scale Fisheries, Plastic Pollution, Mangrove Restoration and Sustainable Aquaculture. However, these are not limitations, and we still strongly welcome applications from candidates with experience in other regions or thematic areas.

Ideally candidates will also demonstrate senior leadership expertise in designing, delivering, or evaluating programmes in low and middle-income countries, for example through concept, design, implementation, closure of projects, supported by core capabilities in areas such as finance, safeguarding, poverty reduction, gender equality, monitoring, evaluation, risk and training.

OCEAN is a new grants programme and Defra are looking to recruit members from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences to establish a truly inclusive, diverse, and global committee, with a wide range of expertise.

Members may have an academic background in marine protection, bring experience and local knowledge from operating directly in a local context, or have similar knowledge and experience that they are able to bring to the Committee.

To support OEC's capability and capacity to recommend strong projects, we would like to strongly encourage candidates from low and middle-income countries to apply, to strengthen the geographic diversity and improve the representation of these countries and their stakeholders in our decision making.

Successful candidates will offer sound judgment, excellent interpersonal and collaborative skills, discretion, and the ability to assimilate and analyse complex information. Candidates will preferably be able to demonstrate previous experience of impartially and robustly reviewing project applications and justifying their assessments in a committee-type forum with peers.

Candidates should also demonstrate sound knowledge and expertise from one or more of the following desirable criteria:

1. Senior professional experience of successfully delivering outcomes in multiple low and middle-income countries from concept to closure, supported by core capabilities around finance, safeguarding, gender, conflict prevention, monitoring & evaluation (incl. logical frameworks), communications, risk management and capability building. A practical understanding of working in challenging environments and building strong and equitable partnerships is also desirable.
2. Strong track record of working with, applying, and reporting to competitive grant funding schemes, ideally including impartially reviewing project applications to such schemes. This should include the ability to articulate or identify technically robust projects that provide strong value for money, can deliver ambitious outcomes in line with respective guidance, and provide positive and constructive feedback where required.

Terms and conditions of appointment

Period of appointment

The initial appointment will be for a two-year term (with annual review points), with the possibility of reappointment for a further term, subject to approval.

Appointments are anticipated to start in late 2024 with the first application assessments in January to February and March to April 2025.

OCEAN is subject to future spending reviews and in the event the programme does not receive funding in a future spending review, all members' terms will be terminated early.

Individuals who are currently or have previously been members of another Defra advisory committee are eligible to apply, subject to open competition.

Remuneration and expenses

Committee members will not be paid a salary, however we will be offering recruited members a stipend of £350 per day plus reimbursement of reasonable (only standard class) travel and subsistence costs for attending Committee meetings, if required.

The Department has due regard to diversity. Expenses may include reimbursement of reasonable additional childcare or other carer costs that are occurred due to OEC commitments, and the reimbursement of reasonable additional expenses of disabled people.

Location of offices and meetings

Meetings are typically held two to three times a year, broken up into two to three sift meetings plus one to two strategy meetings, depending upon the work programme. Where possible, Sift and Strategy meetings will be held on consecutive days to make in-person attendance easier. Members are expected to be available for and participate in all Sift and Strategy Meetings.

For convenience and efficiency, the default meeting method is currently virtual, but meetings are expected to be periodically held in person with the option to join remotely. For our annual strategy discussion meetings, members will be greatly encouraged to attend in person, however we will always accommodate remote attendance where necessary.

Typical meeting commitments will be considered to run across a full working day (09:00 to 17:00, UK time zone), however we will endeavour to consider different time zones wherever possible through, for example, splitting meetings across two days (to be actioned and agreed by Committee chair).

Complete OEC members Terms and Conditions and Terms of Reference documents are provided separately to this briefing pack. Successful applicants will be expected to formally agree to abide by both these documents before commencing a role as an OEC member.

How to apply

Appointments to Defra's Expert Committees and Advisory Groups are not ministerial appointments regulated by Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments (OCPA). The post will, however, be filled through open competition, in line with government guidelines on best practice for making public appointments.

NB: The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates and monitors ministerial appointments to public bodies to ensure that they are made on merit after fair and open competition. More information about the role of the Commissioner and the Code of Practice is available from the [Civil Service Commission](#).

To apply candidates must submit the following documents:

1. **Statement of suitability:** It is essential that your statement of suitability gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet one or more of the essential criteria. Please provide specific examples to establish how you meet the criteria. The statement of suitability should not exceed 1,000 words.
2. **CV:** should include education, professional qualifications and employment history, and the names and contact details for two referees. CVs should not exceed two sides of A4 pages (size 12 Arial font).

After you submit your application, we will then send you the following questionnaire that must be completed.

3. Completed **Conflicts of interest and political activity** questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the appointments process, require additional assistance to support you in your application or for an informal discussion about the role please contact the OCEAN team at Defra ocean@defra.gov.uk

Completed documents should be returned by email to ocean@defra.gov.uk please quote "OCEAN Expert Committee Recruitment" in the subject line.

The deadline for receipt of application is **12:00 noon (UK time) on Friday 19 July 2024.**

Selection process

Selection panel

The panel will be selected from Defra officials (Panel Chair), members of existing Defra advisory panels and the OCEAN grant administrator.

Shortlisting

The selection panel will assess candidates based on written application against the essential criteria, as well as consideration of experience and expertise to ensure the committee's capability and capacity to assess and advise on the breadth of areas covered by the programme.

Candidates may be potentially invited for interview or appointed based on the evidence supplied in the application.

It is therefore essential for your application form to give full but concise information/evidence/examples relevant to the appointment.

Disability

We guarantee to consider anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. By 'minimum criteria' we mean that you must provide us with evidence in your application which demonstrates that you generally meet the level of competence required for each criterion, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience defined as essential.

The Cabinet Office and Defra are committed to the employment and career development of disabled people.

More information about Disability Confident Leaders is available by clicking the logo above. We have a duty to make reasonable changes to processes where possible to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged.

If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, please refer to the 'How to apply and submit your application' section below.

Interviews (optional)

Interviews, if required, are likely to take place week commencing 2 or 9 September 2024 and will take place via MS Teams. Further details will be provided nearer the time.

Reserve list

A reserve list may be held for 12 months from which further appointments can be made.

Ineligibility criteria

You cannot be considered for a public appointment if:

- you occupy a paid party-political post or hold a particularly sensitive or high role in a political party
- you become bankrupt or make an arrangement with creditors
- your estate has been sequestrated in Scotland or you enter into a debt arrangement programme under Part 1 of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Act 2002 (asp 17) as the debtor or have, under Scots law, granted a trust deed for creditors
- you are disqualified from acting as a company director under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, or equivalent
- you have been convicted of a criminal offence, the conviction not being spent for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (c. 53), or equivalent
- you become subject to a debt relief order or a bankruptcy restrictions order
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest

How we will handle your application

We will acknowledge receipt of your application form, via email, within 5 working days of the closing date.

The proposed shortlisting will take place in late July / early August 2024.

Candidates will then be notified by email whether or not they have been shortlisted.

References will be taken up if candidates are shortlisted.

The interviews, if required, will take place week commencing 2 or 9 September 2024.

Shortlisted applicants will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible following references and / or interviews.

The successful candidates will be expected to attend an induction event and OEC meetings in late September / early October 2024.

Equal opportunities

We recognise the challenges that people with (multiple) protected characteristics may experience in their career progression. We want an OEC that celebrates and embraces diversity of thought and experience. We are fully committed to being inclusive and ensuring equal opportunities. We hope to attract a range of diverse applicants – particularly from people from ethnic minority backgrounds, people with a disability and people with gender diverse identities.

Dealing with your concerns

For queries about the application process please email ocean@defra.gov.uk.

Privacy policy

We will keep the data of successful candidates for the duration of their contract with the department and according to our retention policy at the end of that contract.

We will keep the data of reserve candidates for one year.

Where candidates are unsuccessful their data will be destroyed within 30 days following the announcement of the results.

The material you submit will be reviewed by Defra, the grant administrator and other panel members.

The equality, diversity and inclusion questionnaire will be treated in confidence.