



Concept Note

“Blue Glue”: Ports and Harbors Connecting to Coastal Resilience and Community Engagement

Background

Ports and harbors are more than just gateways for trade and transportation. They are hubs for innovation, education, recreation and collaboration, connecting people, ideas, and resources across the ocean and to the land. Ports and harbors have the potential to be the “blue glue” that brings the right people together to fill the gaps we see in ongoing efforts to protect our coastlines and prepare for growing climate shocks and stresses while building holistic, equitable resilience for the people and communities that surround and rely on them.

In Europe and across Africa, Asia and the Americas, new programs and funding mechanisms are being created to help the most vulnerable populations respond to the impacts of the climate crisis. As an example, Justice 40 is a US initiative that aims to deliver 40 percent of the benefits of federal investments in clean energy, climate, and infrastructure to disadvantaged communities. These communities are often located in coastal areas, where they face multiple challenges, such as sea level rise, flooding, erosion, pollution, and social inequity. Port and harbor functions can play a key role in addressing these challenges by providing opportunities for economic development, environmental protection, social inclusion, jobs and education. Similar efforts throughout the globe create an opportunity to align through the connection to coastal ocean, lacustrine and riverine communities.

“Blue glue” is a new term we, the Center for Sea Rise Solutions and World Ocean Council, are nurturing to describe how our ports and harbors can bring together surrounding communities, the maritime industry and coastline stakeholders to explore new opportunities to create jobs, tackle the climate crisis, and address equity and inclusion goals.

Objective

The objective of this proposal is to provide a new lens around ports and harbors, coastal resilience, and community, and to test the theory of whether ports and harbors can serve as a model for creating jobs, tackling the climate crisis, and addressing equity and inclusion goals (like those of Justice 40 and others) collectively. We will ask the questions:

- *Can ports and harbors be the “blue glue” that brings the right people together to fill the gaps to protect our coastlines, prepare for climate resilience, and support equity and inclusion goals?*
- *Can we identify specific programs to enhance and facilitate partnerships between Ports and their surrounding communities that provide apprenticeship and job opportunities, while fostering the development of skills to tackle the climate crisis?*
- *Why is it important to involve the port and city in discussions surrounding ocean and coastal governance/management discussions?*
- *How do we encourage the engagement of communities in the port-city topics, specifically in the fostering of skills and training?*
- *What are the enabling conditions for port-city collaboration?*
- *With respect to equity, how do we get a diverse set of stakeholders to sit around the table, especially in ports suffering from a legitimacy or a PR crisis?*
- *How do we address challenges in bringing “unheard voices” to the table and broader challenges like consultation capture and fatigue?*

Accordingly, this proposal will focus on 4 key themes:

1. Community and Governance
 2. Education
 3. Economy
 4. Infrastructure
1. **Community and Governance** (As cities and ports continue to grow, there will be more connections with the community so we must ask how to integrate with the community; this includes addressing how governance system of ports and cities can be reformed to include more sessions in which citizens can voice their opinions on projects, to make governance and decisions taken more transparent for the citizens, and to ensure that citizens' comments and feedback also reaches the person in charge)
 2. **Education** (with subcategories and stakeholder to include workforce develop, vocational rehab, primary schools, secondary schools, community colleges, HBCUs, tribal colleges, universities, training centers, tech institutes, etc, all with the goal of creating new pathways, new funding streams/tools, transition vulnerable industries and employees, providing more access, expanding connection and literacy for ocean facing activity, businesses and jobs, including more funding and program design for apprenticeship and vocational programs with direct linkages to port and harbor needs and roles and that of the surrounding communities and stakeholders),
 3. **Infrastructure** (with subcategories and stakeholders like energy transition, blue/green and nature based solutions, design and engineering, Waterfront Edge Design GuidelinesTM, city/town connectivity, materials use and circularity, holistic and equitable resilience finance mechanisms, etc, all with idea of reshaping waterfronts beginning with ports and harbors to build long term sustainability and resilience, economically, socially and environmentally - pushing for both mitigation and adaptation related projects),

4. **Economy** (with the subcategories and stakeholders like blue economy, innovation/startups, corporate, small business, insurance, banking, etc to imbed port and harbor connectivity to local economy, ocean GDP, local authority planning/policy, etc to build a foundation (back) to the ocean and make deeper connections to terrestrial activity and roles, while bringing new ideas and new funding streams),

Our primary objectives are to 1) align ports, harbors and communities in a way that addresses the urgency of ocean and planetary threats, 2) address the high cost of living by creating new job opportunities, and 3) break down silos along and between coastlines.

Success to Date

1. We hosted a working session event at the April 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona to engage and network with relevant stakeholders and potential partners.
2. We hosted a virtual follow up session on June 5 to identify future topics, key stakeholders and collaborative programs to date.
3. Our next session on July 31, 2024 will provide a format for a pitch session for NGOs, corporates and governments to present their ideas and initiatives that can be foundations for future projects.

Expected Outcomes

The proposal's success will be measured by the following outcomes in three to four years:

- Increased awareness and recognition of the importance and benefits of ports and harbors as the blue glue for coastal resilience and community, and of their linkages with the UN Ocean Decade objectives and actions.
- Development of innovative and inclusive solutions and strategies to address the gaps and challenges of ports, harbors, coastal resilience, and community, based on the best available scientific knowledge and data, and taking into account the local context and needs, while focusing on our five themes and their subcategories.
- Increased collaboration and partnerships among key stakeholders to implement these solutions and strategies within the themes, and to share the lessons learned and best practices across regions and sectors.
- Contribution to the achievement of the UN Ocean Decade outcomes and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to the ocean, climate, and infrastructure.