

Blue Nature Alliance to expand and improve conservation of 1.25 billion hectares of ocean ecosystems

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10375

Countries

Global

Project Name

Blue Nature Alliance to expand and improve conservation of 1.25 billion hectares of ocean ecosystems

Agencies

CI

Date received by PM

2/24/2021

Review completed by PM

Program Manager

Christian Severin

Focal Area

International Waters

Project Type

FSP

PIF ☐ **CEO Endorsement ☐**

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, this investment is financed under 1.1. Please make sure all financing is sitting under that objective.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

All financing is now under 1.1.

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, please address following comments:

1) The results framework needs to include quantifiable indicators, most of what has been included are qualitative. It is impossible to understand the scale of this investment by reading the RF. Please work on revising, formulating and including quantifiable indicators. Eg how many baseline management effectiveness assessment will be undertaken?? (looking at the uploaded documents, it seems that the project proponents have this information, it has just been omitted in table B).

2) This investment had already at PIF stage developed and highlighted a remarkable quantifiable area output, but this is for some reason not part of the results framework presented in table 2. Please include that and any intermediate indicators towards reaching the area target.

3) the proposed 4 mio for research in component 4 is way to high. This investment is about implementation on the ground. Please direct a considerable amount of this financing to component 2. Further, on component 4) it is not enough to simply say that research will be undertaken. Please again make sure that the indicators are quantifiable. Moreover,

4) please make sure that ME component 5, is not solely financed by GEF. Further, please note that AUDIT can not be financed by the ME budget, but should be covered by the PMC.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly, please make following adjustments.

1 & 2) Please remove (although less is acceptable if the spatial targets 2.1 and 3.1 are on track) from target 3.1.1. Now that there is a specific target indicated for output 3.1.1 it makes no sense to lower the aspiration by including this text.

3) spending \$4mio on KM activities is simply too high, that is more than 18% of the GEF project budget. Please move a considerable part of the budget to component 2 and 3. This component (4) has a target of training 1000 people for cost of 4 mio usd, that is equivalent to \$40000 per person trained, which is immensely high. On the other hand we welcome and support that the project is to engage with and deliver towards the portfolio KM project IWLEARN.

4) the overall cofinancing for the project is roughly 1:5. Of course it is understood that components that will be directly supporting action on the ground attract higher cofinancing, but having a component like the ME to be cofinanced in a ratio of 1:0.5 is simply too low. In order to ensure that GEF is not carrying an unequal weight of the ME burden, please work towards identifying more cofinancing that can be directed to this component.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Partly addressed.

on point 3) The overall GEF contribution to this component still 14% of the of project budget, if it is such an important set of activities it should be matched with cofinancing. Please lower this to around \$2mio, and increase cofinancing to bring it closer to the other components has been able to attract.

On the project budget uploaded in the portal, it is not possible to read, please upload in a format that makes it readable.

25th of June 2021 (cseverin): Partly

Budget is now readable and in the uploaded budget the changes to component 4 can be seen. However, no changes has happened to table B (Results Framework). Please make sure Table B and all other relevant budget tables reflect upon this change.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/24/2021:

We have reduced the budget for component 4 on learning, capacity building, and knowledge management to ~\$2.1M as requested and will fund more of these activities via co-financing. The cost savings in the budget were shifted into site engagements under components 2 and 3. The work outlined in component 4 is a central aspect of the Blue Nature Alliance strategy as it will build the learning networks, tools, and training programs necessary to accelerate the replication of large-scale MPAs and to build the capacity of those individuals most directly responsible for the effective management of large scale ocean conservation areas, while making significant contributions to the IW-Learn program. The target of building the capacity of 1000 people is fairly conservative and we anticipate that we will likely exceed that target significantly.

Project budget image uploaded again in the portal. We have found that zooming in on the image helps with readability.

CI-GEF 06/23/2021:

1 & 2) Target 1.1 reads ?Target 1.1: 20 sites that meet Alliance criteria have developed engagement frameworks (although less is acceptable if spatial targets in Components 2 and 3 are on track).? The included note, ?although less is acceptable if the spatial targets in Components 2 and 3 are on track? is a critical note and cannot be removed. We are not reducing the spatial target, but rather acknowledging the fact that the number of engagement sites that we need to reach the spatial target may change based on the size of the selected sites. For example, if we find 18 sites that get us to the 1.25 billion hectare target, then there is no reason

to conduct more scoping for additional sites. If on the other hand, we meet the target of 20 engagement frameworks and they don't add up to 1.25 billion hectares, then we will need to continue scoping till we reach the spatial target.

3) The budget has been reduced under component 4 and added to components 2 and 3 per guidance. Please note that the activities are not only Knowledge Management, but also regional collaboration and coordination
4) Co-financing for M&E had been revised to account for work that will be done on the ground monitoring the project as well. Please note that each component has different co-financing needs, and while the overall co-financing is a 1:5, each component will be different.

4) Co-financing for M&E had been revised to account for work that will be done on the ground monitoring the project as well. Please note that each component has different co-financing needs, and while the overall co-financing is a 1:5, each component will be different.

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

1) and 2) Results Framework updated with quantifiable indicators.

3) No GEF funds will be spent on research. All research to be conducted by the Blue Nature Alliance is to be financed through co-financing and is captured in Outcome 4.1. The Component 4 budget of ~\$4.1 million is for Outcome 4.2 which covers knowledge management and learning for the fields of large-scale and transboundary ocean conservation. The work in outcome 4.2, as captured in the ProDoc in paragraphs 88-95 and paragraphs 156-172, is aligned with and will contribute significantly to the IW:Learn program. It has the target of reaching 1000 individuals with enhanced knowledge, capacity, and tools to implement ocean conservation at scale and/or transboundary ocean governance, of which at least 33% women.

4) M&E component 5 now includes co-financing. Confirm that the audit is not under M&E but under PMC costs. See M&E table in CEO endorsement.

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response
Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description

of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): yes

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Partly, please make sure that cofinancing sources are inserted in table C into categories that follow what is in the co-financing letters. As an example, the cofinancing letter from ASOC mentions \$482539 in cash/c-financing, but in Table C the cofinancing is listed as In-kind. The same goes for Int Eco Fund which lists \$3816400 as cash, but table C lists as in-kind.

25th of June 2021 (cseverin):

Please provide proof of the fact that ASOC financing indeed is all cash co-financing.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/24/2021:

Both categories of co-financing for the International Eco Fund and ASOC have been updated to "Grant." In both cases, these organizations have secured grants from other funders that serve as match to the Blue Nature Alliance grant that they received. We originally labelled this as "In-kind" since the money did not flow through the Blue Nature Alliance, but that was a misunderstanding and they should have been labelled as grant. In the case of ASOC, we acknowledge that the co-financing letter is a bit confusing and uses the language "cash and in-kind," however that was due to a miscommunication during drafting and we confirm that this should all be classified as grant funding.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly, please clarify following. IT is noted that the GEF is to finance positions in the range of \$238k - \$625K. In relation to that, a couple of questions arise, that need to be clarified. 1) are the BNA staff costs only covered by the GEF grant or will all financiers pay an equal amount? If the latter these salaries are very

high. Further, please recall that GEF financing CAN NOT finance IA staff, but only project staff.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly addressed.

It is mentioned below in the agency comment that "the budget only includes project staff that will work on the execution of the project" . It is not clear if these staff will be CI staff. This is important as GEF financing can not finance GEF Implementing agency staff. Please clarify

24th of June 2021(cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: The GEF funding for CI staff is only for work on the Blue Nature Alliance project. Staffing of the Blue Nature Alliance is co-financed by all other major donors. These are not CI-GEF agency staff. There is segregation of duties between CI-GEF and other divisions within CI. The governance structure of the Blue Nature Alliance ensures segregation between the Alliance and the rest of CI, including the CI-GEF Agency. See CEO Endorsement Section 6: Institutional Arrangement and Coordination

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

GEF funds will be used to cover two full time staff, Regional Program Officer and the Alliance Grants Manager. The GEF funding for these two positions is \$1.1 million which is spread over 5 years. The other positions are fully co-funded from co-financing.

The \$625k that is referenced in the above comment is to fund a series of consultancies over the 5-year period for tool development, trainings and innovative approaches for large-scale ocean conservation.

We confirm that the CI-GEF IA staff are not included in the budget. The budget only includes project staff that will work on the execution of the project.

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly, the table is filled in, but without any details. the heading calls for "**Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status in the table below**". Please provide more details

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

The PPG table has been updated to reflect current spending through March 2021 and detailing the activities implemented during the PPG period.

Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request 29th of April 2021
(cseverin): yes

Agency Response

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the portal entry does not include any information on justification, only lists changes to the document compared to at PIF stage. Please include information on the project, responding to the headings through out the CEO Endorsement request.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the portal entry does not include any information on justification, only lists changes to the document compared to at PIF stage. Please include information on the project, responding to the headings through out the CEO Endorsement request.

27th of May (Cseverin): No, please address following comment:

Considering the global coverage of GEFs engagement in 24 large marine ecosystems in 99 GEF eligible countries, it is odd that this portfolio is not part of the identified baseline. Please include these investments as part of the baseline description.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF Response 06/23/2021: Paragraph 40 in Baseline Scenario section of the ProDoc included historical trends in MPAs within LMEs. This section has been expanded. The updated paragraph 41 of the ProDoc and CEO ER is included here.

GEF has been a significant driver of this increase with engagements in 24 of the 66 global LMEs, constituting a portfolio of work which spans 99 GEF eligible countries. As LMEs provide essential ecosystem services and cover some of the most highly productive and biodiverse ocean areas, existing MPAs and opportunities for MPA development in these areas will be essential to meeting the project's objectives. The GEF portfolio of work represents key baselines initiatives for which the Blue Nature Alliance will build its scope of work.

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the portal entry does not include any information. Please include information on the project, responding to the headings through out the CEO Endorsement request.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the portal entry does not include any information. Please include information on the project, responding to the headings through out the CEO Endorsement request.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the incremental reasoning section is not the same as co-financing. Please formulate and insert incremental reasoning, that allows the reader to understand what would be happening without the GEF investment and what increment the GEF financing is bringing to the investment.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the section only briefly touches on core indicator 11. The GEBs are broader than the Core indicators. Please provide a description on how the project delivers towards the IW GEBs.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, the section is not responding to the heading. please provide a response.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Section updated.

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly, a global map has been included. However, it would be good to also have the map uploaded that includes the already financed MPAs and then ones that is being considered.

27th of May (Cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: The global map of active engagement sites was included in the original ProDoc submission in February (Figure 1). Since then, the Alliance has initiated three additional site engagements in Palau, Niue, and Costa Rica. These three areas have been added to Figure 1 which has been updated in the ProDoc and CEO Endorsement/portal. In addition, a map with the locations of sites under active has been uploaded separately. This map is confidential and should not be made publicly available as part of the ProDoc.

Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

Stakeholders

**Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase?
Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, stakeholder engagement plan and description here of is simply missing crucial information. It is noted that the project is already implementing MPA investments in different part of the world, which makes it even harder to understand that there apparently have near to no engagement.

Moreover, the stakeholder engagement section is written as this is what will be happening in the future, when in reality the stakeholder engagement plan should have been finished and attached.

Further, it is troubling that the project has not been engaging with the **Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities** or private sector stakeholders as part of the stakeholder engagement plan formulation. Especially as these two diverse stakeholder groups as essential for ensuring sustainability of the investments on the ground.

The same goes for civil society. It is noted in the portal that civil society will only be consulted. Considering the role civil society can play in ensuring that these MPAs invested in will be functional and long term sustainable investments, again it is worrisome if the BNA plan to only consult them. At the same time this stand in contrast to what has been described in the inserted table.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly.

1)Please address comment provided in last review:

"It is noted in the portal that civil society will only be consulted. Considering the role civil society can play in ensuring that these MPAs invested in will be functional and long term sustainable investments, again it is worrisome if the BNA plan to only consult

them. At the same time this stand in contrast to what has been described in the inserted table."

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: Civil society role updated in the portal.

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: A complete Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been uploaded to the portal and added as an Appendix in the ProDoc (VI-g).

A full description of stakeholder engagement completed during the PPG Phase has been added within the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. In total, over 75 organizations and at least 150 people were engaged during the PPG.

The regions and sites for investment are to be identified during the Implementation Phase and as such, the exact stakeholders and the presence of IPs could not be determined during the PPG Phase for every site. The project therefore outlined how stakeholder engagement plans will be developed for each site and embeds stakeholder engagement in the Engagement Framework Template (Appendix VI-a) which will be completed, along with other social and biological assessments, during the Desktop Analysis and Advanced Scoping Phases for each sit

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, please attached the completed gender analysis to the portal submission

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed.

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: A gender mainstreaming plan has been uploaded to the portal and added as an Appendix in the ProDoc (VI-h).

The regions and sites for investment are to be identified during the Implementation Phase and as such, a detailed gender analysis could not be undertaken during the PPG Phase. The project therefore outlined how gender mainstreaming plans will be developed for each site and embeds gender mainstreaming in the Engagement Framework Template (Appendix VI-a) which will be completed, along with other social and biological assessments, during the Desktop Analysis and Advanced Scoping Phases for each site (Paragraph 194).

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly, the section included is focusing on the partnership with VULCAN, but only includes a few lines on the important partnership with local resource users, that are an essential of the private sector. Further, partnerships with large global enterprises such as hotel chains and others that surely will benefit from the establishment of MPAs in the coastal zones can and should also be elaborated upon.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): addressed, but to the bare minimum. Successful implementation will surely need to ensure much more detailed elaboration of private sector engagement in each site investment. Simply referencing a McKinsey report is not detailed enough to get private sector engagement insured in each site investment. Hence, we expect to see clearly identified entry points, in each site investment for the private sector, with roles clearly identified for ensuring continuous engagement of private sector throughout the implementation and beyond.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Noted

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: We confirm that each engagement site will have its own private sector engagement strategy as appropriate for the site. Given that most sites are not yet selected, the ProDoc focused on engagement with the private sector at the global level that occurred during the PPG. Significant private sector engagement will take place at both the global and at the individual site level during implementation.

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Private sector engagement section updated.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly. Please address following:

- 1) the risk table includes wording that alludes to additional info on covid impacts have been included below table, but no information is inserted. Please explain. and preferably insert information referenced.
- 2) Please provide a separate document, that describes the long, medium and short term risks that COVID presents to the project, and associated mitigation responses. Further, this document, should also allude to any opportunities that COVID may be providing to the successful implementation of the investment.
- 3) One of the most important catalysts for successful, long-term, sustainable MPA investments is the alignment with local policies. Therefore, lack of willingness to support political reforms and formulation of (or amendments to) policies this is also one of the greatest risks. If the investments are not supported by local policy frameworks, and their implementation, this will impact enforcement, local livelihoods, economic opportunities, financial and in-kind support from local, regional and national government structures to support the running costs of MPAs. Please include and elaborate on this further in the risk matrix.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

- 1) The risks table and additional information on COVID risks from the ProDoc (paragraphs 119-124) has been expanded and included in the CEO endorsement/portal.
- 2) COVID analysis uploaded separately and included in CEO endorsement
- 3) An additional risk ?A lack of alignment with local policy frameworks or in-kind support from local, regional, and national support may hinder the success of long-term sustainable MPA investment? has been added to the risk table (Table 4: Risk Assessment and Mitigation Planning). The following Risk Mitigation Measure was included in the risk table.

?A lack of alignment with local policy frameworks or in-kind support from local, regional, and national support may hinder the success of long-term sustainable MPA investment.

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin):Partly, with reference to the criteria inserted at PIF approval (inserted below for easy access) the section needs to better explain how the IA will ensure to secure minimum fiduciary standards and "fire-walling" between the IA and EA functions, especially in the sub investments that will be self-excuted. Further, the explanation on the dual role of being an IA and then also being heavily involved in the execution in general, does not include any description of the control functions in place to ensure compliance with GEF policies.

4th of November 2019 (cseverin): Please note that by time of CEO Endorsement it is expected that, the GEF Implementing Agency (CI) will present (i) a detailed explanation of the mechanism through which the Executing Entities will select the grant proposals and disburse the funds; and (ii) how GEF Implementing Agency (CI) will ensure that the Minimum Fiduciary Standards Requirements (to be approved in December 2019 by Council) are met by each one of the Executing Entities at all levels of the project implementation.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly, the comment inserted from the PIF review and the above comment from April 2021 is not focusing on the selection of EA being vetted by the steering board or that it is a fair and open process how the execution partner is selected, but merely on the need for having a fire wall between implementation and execution. With that in mind, the most straight forward and cleanest approach would be to NOT have CI execute any sub investments. This is still the recommendation, please confirm this is the case.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Addressed, through providing strong clear arguments

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: We confirm that no sub awards will be issued to CI using any of the GEF project funds. Any awards to CI programs, approved based on the process outlined in the ProDoc and included in the previous response, will be funded with co-financing.

The following sentence has been added to the ProDoc in paragraph 211: ?No GEF project funds will be used for sub awards to CI programs.?

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

Segregation of Duties between IA (CI-GEF) and EA (Blue Nature Alliance):

The CI-GEF Agency solely retains the responsibilities related to the GEF Corporate Activities, including fiduciary and safeguards oversight, portfolio management, reporting to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Trustee, engagement with the GEF Secretariat and GEF Council and support to the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEFIEO). The CI-GEF Agency oversees external and internal Executing Entities which receive GEF Funds through a subsidiary agreement with the CI-GEF Agency on an individual project basis.

The Blue Nature Alliance, the Executing Agency is a partnership between Pew and CI, specifically the Center for Oceans, which is a separate Division from the CI-GEF Agency. The Alliance is responsible for project execution, which includes overall responsibility for managing and reporting on the technical and financial aspects of a GEF project in order to meet the project's outcomes.

The CI-GEF Agency reports to the EVP of Conservation Partnerships while the Center for Oceans reports to the EVP of Field Programs.

Sub-investments: In the case of the sub-investments that may be self-executed, note that any execution by the Core Partners (CI or Pew) will need Steering Council Approval (see portal, description of Output 1.1.4)

Semi-annually, the Blue Nature Alliance will prepare site selection recommendations for the Steering Council's approval; if new site investment opportunities emerge in between the semi-annual meetings and need rapid action, the Alliance Leadership and Management will have authority to make site investment decisions up to \$500,000 (excluding grants to Executive Core Partners (CI and Pew), which require Steering Council approval), but cumulatively not more than \$2.5M, over the course of a year. For site investments greater than \$500,000 or in excess of \$2.5M over the course of a year, the Steering Council will be notified by email and will have two weeks to object to the

investment; in the event any member objects, the site investment will be brought to the next Steering Council meeting for consideration (See portal Section 6: institutional Arrangement and Coordination, Responsibilities of the Alliance Management Team)

3) In relation to the comment on November 4th, 2019, the selection process is as follows:

Implementing partners are those best positioned to efficiently and effectively achieve outcomes, including local and international NGOs, private sector operators, the science and research community, and government institutions. Executing Core Partners (CI and Pew) carrying out project specific work may also serve as Implementing Partners; however, they will be subject to same selection criteria as other grantees, must disclose any potential, real and/or perceived conflicts of interest and be approved by the steering council regardless of the grant amount. The Blue Nature Alliance will establish an open mechanism to receive expressions of interest from potential implementing partners. Proposals will be invited and evaluated through a fair and transparent process (See portal Section 6: institutional Arrangement and Coordination, Implementing Partners).

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, this is a global investment, hence this section also needs to allude to how this investment supports the global targets and promotes a discourse that includes MPAs and the multitude of services that they provide. Further, it was requested at the time of PIF, that "no objection" letters from the GEF OFPs would be provided, prior to engagement in countries and their approval by the BNA. This primarily is to ensure that the countries are aware of the investments taking place and to ensure that the GEF Focal points are aware too. Please include wording to this effect under this section.

Further, this section should also include description on how the BNA investments will assist countries in delivering towards their Strategic Action Plan Implementation in LMEs, as well as be reflected upon in the table inserted. The LME portfolio is covering more than ~100 GEF eligible coastal nations, and therefore there is a VERY high likelihood that BNA investments will directly be assisting countries in delivering on the ministerially endorsed SAPs. The connection with the LME portfolio is not clear in the portal submission and needs to be MUCH more present, as agreed upon during PIF formulation.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021:

(Section 6: Institutional Arrangements and Section 7: Consistency with National Priorities of the portal) The GEF will have a seat on the Steering Council and the ability to prioritize investments using GEF project funds to be consistent with the GEF's IW Focal Area Strategy and prioritize Key Biodiversity Areas. GEF project funds will be managed in a segregated account and will be exclusively used to invest in sites that meet one of the following criteria:

National or sub-national sites within a GEF eligible country that meets one or more of the following criteria¹¹:

- 1) Located within a multi-country Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) that has a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) that includes goals for marine protection.
- 2) Located in one of the 14 Pacific Island countries that have adopted the Pacific Islands SIDS SAP.

Transboundary Sites

Sites in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, commonly known as the high seas.

To date, the Alliance has initiated nine site engagements with approval from the Alliance Steering Council. Of these sites, seven are directly aligned with the International Waters Focal Area Strategy. To date, all initiate projects are being funded by co-financing since the GEF project is not yet in implementation phase.

It was agreed upon in a discussion with the GEF-SEC in August 2020 that the Blue Nature Alliance would seek no objection letters from GEF OPS for only those engagement sites that GEF funding was to be expended. Since all engagement sites initiated thus far have been financed by co-financing (given this GEF project is not yet in implementation phase), no sites have yet triggered this requirement. The Blue Nature Alliance still intends to obtain no objection letters from GEF OPS for GEF-funded sites and will share these with the GEF-SEC on a rolling-basis as sites are scoped, approved, and initiated.

As the project pipeline is developed, sites which overlap with GEF supported LMEs are identified. The LMEs with alignment to the Alliance project pipeline thus far include: Small Islands States LME, Agulhas Current LME, Somali Coastal Current LME, Guinea Current LME, Antarctica LME, Pacific Central-American LME, Humboldt Current LME, Canadian Eastern Arctic LME, Hudson Bay Complex, and Bay of Bengal LME. The Alliance will review and incorporate any relevant TDAs/SAPs into its site-based engagement strategies and conduct consultations with GEF project leads (included in the portal, Section 4: Alignment with GEF Focal Area and/or Impact Program Strategies).

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, this section needs to provide more detail on how it intends to build a KM system (after all this is the single largest IW investment in GEF 7), and unless the BNA is able to gather and share experiences on process and delivery it is highly unlikely that it will have any lasting impacts. Moreover, it is probable that the BNA partners can only use the BNA experiences if there is proper KM system.

Further, it is not clear that the project will be allocating at least 1% of the GEF financing to support IWLEARN activities (that were described in detail in the PIF submission). Please include this reference, here and ALSO included under the component description in Table 2 of the portal submission, as well as in the prodoc.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly addressed, please address below comments:

1) Please insert reference into component 4 description in results framework in portal, that "the project will at least be allocating 1% of the GEF grant to support the BNAs participation in and contribution to IWLEARN"

2) IWLEARN is NOT part of the ME of the project and hence should therefore NOT be included in that table.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: The budget for IW:LEARN was removed from Table 10 (M&E) and added to paragraph 95 in the ProDoc and in description of Output 4.2.4 in the CEO Endorsement/portal

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: KM section revised. Outcome 4.2 has indicators and targets related to knowledge management and dissemination (see outcome and outputs in RF).

CI has highlighted the financing dedicated to support staff time and travel to participate in IW:Learn events in the budget tables in the CEO Endorsement/portal (section 9). Additionally, the entire Component 4.2 (\$4,130,468) will advance the objectives of IW:Learn and all tools and knowledge management products will be shared.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Yes

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Yes

Agency Response

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Partly, there is no reference to the IW GEBs here and how the investment will be assisting in delivering to these GEBs.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Partly, It is still not possible to understand from the portal entry how the investment will support GEF IW GEBs. Please insert description that alludes to how this investment will further transboundary cooperation and implementation of transboundary Strategic Action Programs and their priorities.

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): Addressed, however please note that West Greenland LME is NOT eligible for GEF IW funding.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 06/24/2021: We confirm that West Greenland LME will not receive GEF funding.

CI-GEF 06/23/2021: Added to ProDoc (par. 113)and CEO ER: The project will, further, support a scope of work relevant to GEF's International Waters Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) through its prioritization and exploration of transboundary opportunities. Opportunities identified thus far include transboundary cooperation in the Southern Cone of Argentina and Chile, the Pacific Central-American Coastal LME, Canadian Eastern Arctic ? West Greenland LME, and Antarctica. All interventions in these regions will be aligned with priorities identified in the relevant Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs) and lessons learned will be captured and shared through IW:LEARN.

CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Benefits section updated to include IW GEBs.

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, it is hard to get a good overview of what has been uploaded, when the file that contains most information is not searchable. Please upload a searchable WORD document and consider to upload separately (on top of including them in the PRODOC) following documents, stakeholder engagement plan, Gender action Plan, Cofinancing letters and detailed budget.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response

CI-GEF 05/24/2021

ProDoc has been uploaded as a word document (yellow highlights show revisions). SEP, GMP, budget and co-financing letters are uploaded as separate attachments.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): Uploaded and contains quantifiable indicators, therefore it is also anticipated that table b will include these too.

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): Addressed

Agency Response CI-GEF 05/24/2021: Table B updated.

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request 29th of April 2021

(cseverin): addressed

Agency Response

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

29th of April 2021 (cseverin): No, please address comments in the reviewsheet

27th of May 2021 (cseverin): No, please address remaining comments

24th of June 2021 (cseverin): No, please address remaining comments

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

Well-managed ocean conservation areas reduce key threats to the ocean and increase ocean resilience. Healthy oceans are better able to provide critical ecosystems services for people now and in the future. This project will address key barriers to ocean conservation through site-based and global investments in order to generate 1.25 billion hectares of new and improved ocean conservation areas and increased enabling conditions globally for large scale ocean conservation. The project will directly support ocean conservation areas covering 3.5% of the ocean, representing 35% of the global Aichi Target and SDG14 Target 5 of protecting 10% of the ocean. This significant contribution will build additional momentum towards the emerging global goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030.

The Alliance will deploy the vast majority of project capital directly into the creation, expansion or improved management of ocean conservation areas, inclusive of key biodiversity hotspots, coastal habitats, such as coral reefs, mangroves, and kelp forests and open ocean ecosystems, including highly productive seamounts and essential fish habitat for ocean health and food security.

The project will establish 750 million hectares of new ocean conservation areas and support 500 million hectares of existing ocean conservation areas in key biodiversity hotspots and coastal habitats. To complement existing GEF interventions within the International Waters Focal Area Strategy, the Alliance will give special consideration to investing within multi-country Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as well as opportunities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The project will work to innovate and mainstream marine area-based management and spatial tools, such as LSMPAs, into LMEs, regional entities and other communities of practice. It will support analysis of which policy and management instruments are most useful in reaching the Aichi target and the more ambitious call to protect 30% of the ocean. The Alliance will work at the site and regional level to stimulate private sector engagement in sustainable marine resources management.