Five-Year Strategic Business Plan External Version for Distribution 2023-2027

PREPARED FOR THE WORLD SEABIRD UNION

Photo Credit

Red Footed Booby and the Kilauea Point lighthouse, Kauai

Photo Credit: Deb Nystrom

Disclaimer

ERG made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this report is accurate, complete, and obtained from reliable sources. However, much of the data and information in this report is drawn from perceptions gathered through interviews and discussions. ERG makes no guarantee of the completeness or accuracy of the information provided.

This strategic business plan was prepared by Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) in 2023.

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List of Abbreviations and Definitions

Abbreviations

DEIJ	Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
ECR	Early career researcher
ERG	Eastern Research Group, Inc.
USD	U.S. Dollars
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WSC	World Seabird Conference
WSC4	4th World Seabird Conference
WSU	World Seabird Union

Definitions

Activities	What the organization does in the short term to achieve outputs and outcomes (stable 0-5 years).
Goals	Clearly defined, specific, actionable, and measurable conditions achieved through meeting specified outputs and outcomes that are broad enough to capture long-term aspirations but tailored to be achievable with the organization's resources (stable 5 years).
Measures of Performance	Quantitative and qualitative metrics that assess to what extent outputs, outcomes, and goals are being achieved.
Mission	A succinct statement that articulates the purpose and primary goals of the organization (stable 15 years).
Outcomes	Achievements that can be measured in terms of improvements in knowledge, policy, and ecosystem health (stable 2-5 years).
Outputs	Achievements in the short term that contribute to achieving outcomes (stable 0-5 years).
Strategies	Methods or actions applied to achieve stated goals and outcomes (stable 3-5 years).
Theory of Change	A high-level description or visual model of the theory that underlies all or part of the organization's work, including goals, strategies, and outcomes.
Vision	A statement that communicates the optimal desired future state–the mental picture–of what the organization wants to achieve. Provides guidance and inspiration (stable 30 years).

Executive Summary

Forest Starr and Kim Starr

Background

World Seabird Union (WSU) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to fostering seabird conservation, management, and research through its global network of member organizations. Established following the first World Seabird Conference (WSC) in 2010, WSU serves as a convening body for seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers. WSU works to build connections among member organizations, promote the exchange of seabird information, and unify people working on seabird-related topics around the globe.

As WSU enters its 14th year, it is seeking to define a strategic direction for the organization. Therefore, WSU contracted Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) to assist in developing a five-year strategic business plan. ERG supported WSU by leading a process to identify the strategic direction of the organization, including updating WSU's vision and mission and developing goals, objectives, strategies, and measures of success. ERG worked closely with the WSU Steering Committee – comprised of Officers, Board Members, and member organization representatives **– to set project priorities and goals.**

Barriers, Needs, and Opportunities

Limited ongoing engagement within the seabird network and community and lack of sustained information sharing on a global level presents a barrier to the facilitation of partnerships and exchange of ideas. The seabird community stands to benefit from a global organization that can facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and exchange of information and knowledge among seabird researchers and scientists worldwide. WSU is well-poised to meet this need by promoting and utilizing the WSC, seabirds.net (WSU's website, which hosts the Seabird Information Network, the seabird life history database, and other resources), and other activities to bring seabird researchers together and promote seabird research. WSU has the opportunity to facilitate and enhance the level of global knowledge exchange and create connections among seabird researchers—and in doing so, build capacity for seabird science and conservation.

Vision and Mission

WSU will work to achieve the following 30-year vision:

> *Facilitate the efforts of our member organizations across the globe to promote seabird conservation, management, and research in a changing world.*

To support advancement toward its vision, WSU will carry out the following 15-year mission:

> *Create and enhance sustainable, diverse networks and partnerships for fostering and sharing seabird research, knowledge, and ideas on a global level.*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)

WSU's commitment to DEIJ enables it to better serve as an international organization focused on building capacity and personal relationships among seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers around the world. WSU celebrates and thrives on different perspectives and cultures and promotes equity in the work it does.

Goals, Strategies, and Theory of Change

WSU will work to achieve the following goals:

- *Goal 1* – Establish, develop, and continue to improve effective communications and cooperative conservation efforts among existing and emerging seabird organizations with the goal to advance seabird conservation, management, and research through regional and global scientific collaboration and information sharing.
- *Goal 2* – Prioritize increased representation of and training for member organizations from underrepresented[1] and under-resourced regions in seabird conservation, management, and research in order to build and share capacity (including access to data, information, funding).
- *Goal 3* – Secure long-term and sustainable financing to support WSU's functions and programs and fulfill its mission of supporting member organizations.

WSU will deploy four core strategies that will direct its activities and projects towards achieving its mission, goals, and outcomes. Strategies denoted with an asterisk (*) are ones that apply to more than one goal.

- **Promote information exchange** on issues related to seabird conservation, management, and research.*
- **Advance WSU Committees and projects** through clear leadership, goals, and milestones.
- **Promote and support professional development** for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and underrepresented groups.*
- **Form a DEIJ Committee and pursue DEIJ activities** to increase representation of and training opportunities for member organizations from underrepresented and under-resourced regions.*

WSU's Theory of Change describes, at a high level, the components that underlie work toward its goals. Globally, seabirds are under threat from multiple anthropogenic factors, such as climate change, fisheries interactions, habitat loss, ocean pollution, and disturbances. Given that seabirds are transboundary species, the coordination of seabird conservation, management, and research will also need to be on the regional and global scale. WSU recognizes the critical importance of bringing together knowledge and people from across the world to share capacity and facilitate scientific collaborations to further protect and conserve seabird species. To date, WSU's efforts have focused on planning the WSC every five years, promoting information sharing through online databases on the WSU website, planning the Twitter Conference, producing the "World of Seabirds" video series, hosting "Meet a Seabird Scientist" sessions, and supporting seabird conservation policies on an as-needed basis. Moving forward, there is a clear opportunity for WSU to expand efforts in enhancing the WSU network of seabird organizations it has engaged with since 2010. Specifically, its Theory of Change will center on effective communications and cooperation, building and sharing capacity, regional and global scientific collaboration and information

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[1] For the purposes of this plan, "underrepresented" is defined as geographically and racially underrepresented.

sharing, long-term and sustainable financing for WSU activities, and increased representation from underrepresented and under-resourced regions.

Governance and Operational Structures

WSU is governed by an elected Board of Directors and Regional Representatives who represent six geographic regions: Africa/Indian Ocean, Asia, Australasia, Europe, North America, and South America. There is one principal Regional Representative and one alternate Representative per georaphic region on the Board. The alternate Regional Reprepresentative can act as a proxy in the event the principal Representative cannot attend a meeting. The Board of Directors is expected to participate in WSU meetings and provide guidance for WSC planning and other activities undertaken by WSU.

As a volunteer-run organization, WSU has a lean operating structure, with four Officer positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. To achieve the goals, outcomes, and desired growth outlined in this plan, WSU will need to hire two paid part-time staff and expand its skill base.

Member Organizations and External Partnership Structure and Operations

Member organizations and partners play an integral role in WSU's work, and WSU will seek to strengthen its member organization network. Given the scale and depth of work WSU aims to accomplish, it will be necessary to collaborate with member organizations to help WSU achieve its goals and mission. There are several strategies WSU could consider utilizing to build and strengthen the WSU member organization network including:

- Increase visibility;
- Create an easy and clear way to apply for WSU membership;
- Clarify and highlight member organizations' roles/responsibilities;
- Maintain ongoing and regular communications;
- Align with and leverage member organizations' missions and goals; and
- Expand membership to smaller organizations and those in underrepresented regions.

Communications, Branding, and Marketing

To ensure that the public, member organizations, partners, and prospective funders recognize and understand the value of WSU, the organization needs to formalize an approach to communications, branding, and marketing. The new communications approach will highlight the core role that WSU plays in promoting and advancing the conservation, management, and research of seabirds on the global scale. As part of its communications strategy, WSU could take several steps to enhance its communications, branding, and marketing across the next few years, such as bringing in communications expertise; developing a communications strategy; developing branding and increasing marketing; and participating in meetings and events hosted by member organizations.

Future Considerations

Overall, this Strategic Business Plan outlines a roadmap for WSU to expand its capabilities and have a greater impact, building on its strengths in connecting and sharing information among the global seabird community. Through implementation of this Strategic Business Plan, WSU has great potential to fulfill its mission and enhance the value that it provides to the seabird community, in addition to advancing seabird conservation, management, and research—particularly for underserved and underrepresented regions. Moving forward, WSU will look for opportunities to measure its impact, mitigate risks, leverage connections, form partnerships, and generate sustainable financing to support its vision of promoting seabird conservation, management, and research that builds resilient seabird populations.

Chapter 1.
Background

WSU is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to fostering seabird conservation, management, and research through its global network of member organizations. Established following the first World Seabird Conference (WSC) in 2010, WSU serves as a convening body for seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers.[2] WSU works to build connections among member organizations, promote exchange of seabird information, and unify people working on seabird related topics around the globe. To date, WSU has, along with host member organizations, convened three WSCs in an effort to bring together seabird scientists and professionals from around the world to facilitate knowledge exchange and network building.

As WSU enters its 14th year, it is seeking to define a strategic direction for the organization. Therefore, WSU contracted (ERG to assist in developing a five-year strategic business plan. ERG supported WSU by leading a process to identify the strategic direction of the organization, including reassessing and updating WSU's vision and mission and developing goals, objectives, strategies, and measures of success. ERG worked closely with the WSU Steering Committee – comprised of Officers, Board Members, and member organization representatives – to set project priorities and goals.

To support development of the strategic business plan, ERG reviewed documents relevant to WSU's programs, progress, strategy, and achievements and conducted 24 interviews with WSU Officers, Board Members, partners, representatives from WSU member organizations, and donors. The purpose of the interviews was to better understand WSU's role and niche, gaps to fill, priority issues, and operational aspects. The document review and interviews informed the development of a straw proposal for the draft strategic business plan, which ERG presented to the WSU Board and Steering Committee during a virtual meeting on January 5, 2023. The virtual meeting provided an opportunity for Board and Steering Committee members to provide detailed feedback and input on the proposed strategic business plan. Following the straw proposal meeting, ERG revised the plan based on feedback received to develop the strategic business plan outlined in the following sections.

Barriers, Needs, and Opportunities

Seabird conservation and research is a global field that attracts experts from across the world. Due to the nature of seabirds and the far-reaching areas they inhabit, there is a need for global cooperation

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[2] World Seabird Union Fact Sheet, 2019, http://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/seabirdsnet/documents/World_Seabird_Union_Fact_Sheet_2019_v1.pdf

surrounding their conservation and management. However, limited ongoing engagement within the seabird network and community and lack of sustained information sharing on a global level presents a barrier to the facilitation of partnerships and exchange of ideas. Geographic and organizational isolation of research organizations, language barriers among scientists and practitioners, lack of and competition for funding, the time and effort required to maintain partnerships in the seabird field (particularly if they are voluntary), and the reliance on volunteers to further this work are additional challenges to global collaboration on seabird conservation and research. Therefore, the seabird community stands to benefit from a global organization that can facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and exchange of information and knowledge among seabird researchers and scientists worldwide. WSU is well-poised to meet this need by promoting and utilizing the WSC, seabirds.net (WSU's website, which hosts the Seabird Information Network, the seabird life history database, and other resources), and other activities to bring seabird researchers together and promote seabird research.

WSU has the opportunity to facilitate and enhance the level of global knowledge exchange and create connections among seabird researchers—and in doing so, build capacity for seabird science and conservation. Building on its existing platforms such as seabirds.net and the WSC, WSU can further facilitate connections among seabird researchers and conservationists, ECRs, and smaller regional seabird groups. Strengthening these connections will increase the visibility of WSU as an organization while also raising awareness of issues that affect seabirds including habitat loss, pollution, fisheries (bycatch, competition, habitat degradation), invasive species, and climate change.

Value Proposition and Core Competencies

WSU's **value proposition** demonstrates how it fills a key niche in the landscape of seabird research and conservation:

- WSU is a **global organization** with the **unique ability to unify** scientists from around the world who are working on seabirds and seabird-related issues.

- WSU **facilitates communication and coordination** of activities and interests between a number of regional seabird groups to provide a tangible way for seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers to build capacity for seabird research.

WSU's core competencies define its capabilities; WSU's core competencies include the following:

- **A leader in unifying seabird researchers and scientists from around the world:** Due to the broad geographic areas that seabirds cover, global partnerships are necessary for advancing seabird conservation and research. WSU is unique in its global scope and specific focus on seabirds, compared to other bird organizations with narrower geographic scopes or with broader geographic scopes but wider taxonomic focuses.

- **A respected global hub for seabird-specific information:** Seabirds.net provides data and resources and disseminates information to seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers around the world. The seabirds.net platform and WSU as an organization facilitate connections between researchers to promote exchanges of ideas and knowledge.

- **A network for emerging and ECR seabird scientists**: WSU provides pathways and opportunities for ECR seabird scientists to connect with and learn from researchers who are veterans on a variety of seabird-related topics. The WSC, the World Seabird Twitter Conference, and the researcher profiles on seabirds.net are resources for ECRs to learn more about the field and those who are

engaging in it. Through these opportunities, ECRs can broaden their understanding of the topic, connect with potential mentors, and build their expertise.

Core Values

Core values describe inherent characteristics of an organization that outline its character and the principles it will endeavor to uphold while working to achieve its vision and mission. Throughout its efforts, WSU will abide by the following core values:

- **Transparency:** WSU is committed to openness, transparency, and integrity.
- **Impact-Oriented and Outcome-Driven**: WSU will achieve success in facilitating advances in the conservation, management, and research of seabirds through meaningful, results-focused processes and open collaboration.
- **Accountability**: WSU is accountable for all its actions internally and to its member organizations and partners.
- **Collaboration**: WSU will develop relationships nationally, regionally, and internationally to leverage collective resources, address problems together, and promote fair and honest collaboration.
- **Adaptive Management**: WSU is dedicated to learning from its successes and failures and adapting to reflect lessons learned.
- **DEIJ**: WSU is committed to encouraging diverse perspectives, embedding equity in its practices and systems, and promoting inclusivity in its work.

Chapter 2.
Strategic Direction

Ryan Mandelbaum

Vision and Mission

The sections below outline WSU's strategic direction for the coming five years. See *List of Abbreviations and Definitions* for definitions of strategic business planning terms used throughout the document.

Vision

WSU will work to achieve the following 30-year vision:

Facilitate the efforts of our member organizations across the globe to promote seabird conservation, management, and research in a changing world.

Mission

To support advancement toward its vision, WSU will carry out the following 15-year mission:

Create and enhance sustainable, diverse networks and partnerships for fostering and sharing seabird research, knowledge, and ideas on a global level.

Goals and Strategies

Building on WSU's vision and mission, the organization will work to achieve several goals in the coming five years. This section outlines the details of each goal and core strategies that WSU will deploy to achieve its goals.

Goals

WSU will work to achieve the following goals[3]:

- *Goal 1* – Establish, develop, and continue to improve effective communications and cooperative conservation efforts among existing and emerging seabird organizations with the goal to advance seabird conservation, management, and research through regional and global scientific collaboration and information sharing.

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[3] Note that the ordering of goals is arbitrary. WSU will need to work towards all goals in order to achieve its mission and vision.

- *Goal 2* – Prioritize increased representation of and training for member organizations from underrepresented[4]and under-resourced regions in seabird conservation, management, and research in order to build and share capacity (including access to data, information, funding).
- *Goal 3* – Secure long-term and sustainable financing to support WSU's functions and programs and fulfill its mission of supporting member organizations.

Strategies

WSU will deploy four core strategies that will direct its activities and projects towards achieving its mission, goals, and outcomes. Strategies denoted with an asterisk (*) are ones that apply to more than one goal. See the *Theory of Change and Logic Model* section for more details.

- **Promote information exchange** on issues related to seabird conservation, management, and research.*
- **Advance WSU Committees and projects** through clear leadership, goals, and milestones.
- **Promote and support professional development** for ECRs and underrepresented groups.*
- **Form a DEIJ Committee and pursue DEIJ activities** to increase representation of and training opportunities for member organizations from underrepresented and under-resourced regions.*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

WSU DEIJ Statement

Our commitment to DEIJ enables us to better serve as an international organization focused on building capacity and personal relationships among seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers around the world. WSU celebrates and thrives on different perspectives and cultures, and we promote equity in the work we do.

WSU is committed to taking action to strengthen DEIJ within WSU by implementing the following DEIJ - specific strategies across all of WSU's work:

- **Improving accessibility to WSU, WSC, and existing WSU communication platforms** (including through translations) to support and amplify the science, experiences, and voices of its underrepresented colleagues.
- **Promoting diversification of and increasing opportunities** for member organizations to understand, share, and lead DEIJ efforts, including training, education materials, and a discussion board (e.g., through the WSU's Global Web Forum).
- **Fostering and strengthening guidance of and leadership opportunities for local researchers** to support seabird monitoring, scientific studies or conservation efforts.
- **Hosting seabird events and panels** that incorporate showcasing underrepresented perspectives and research.

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[4] For the purposes of this plan, "underrepresented" is defined as geographically and racially underrepresented.

- **Highlighting diverse work** in newsletters and posts (e.g., WSU Spotlight on Diversity – a regular newsletter with a spotlight on work from underrepresented regions or highlights on WSU's DEIJ efforts).
- **Strengthening WSU's governance structure**, including refining board length and duties, bylaws, representation, and operational guidance to ensure diverse representation (e.g., consider incentives such as free/reduced conference registration and supporting publication fees).

WSU will launch a DEIJ Committee (see the *Operational Structure* section) to help refine and implement these strategies. These DEIJ strategies are meant to complement the other organizational strategies (outlined above) and are not mutually inclusive. As an evolving organization, WSU will continue to reflect, learn, and grow from developing and implementing these and other DEIJ strategies.
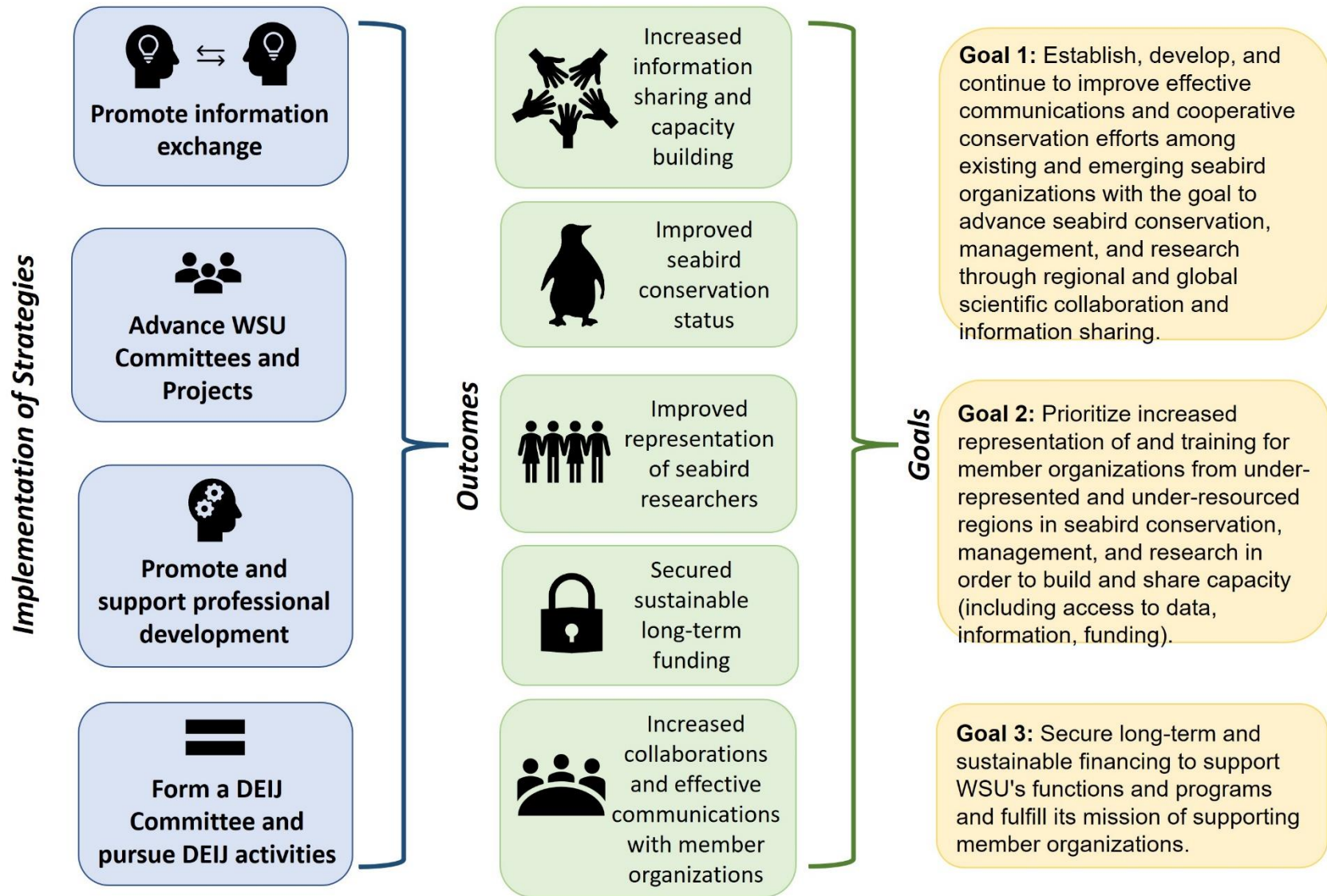
Theory of Change and Logic Model

WSU's Theory of Change Model describes, at a high level, the components that underlie work toward its goals. In contrast, the Logic Models serves as companion to the Theory of Change by providing greater detail about how WSU will move toward each of its goals, including the outcomes associated with each goal, the strategies and activities needed to achieve the outcomes, interim outputs and their timing, and measures of success.

Theory of Change

Globally, seabirds are under threat from multiple anthropogenic factors, such as climate change, fisheries interactions, habitat loss, ocean pollution, and disturbances. Given that seabirds are transboundary species, the coordination of seabird conservation, management, and research will also need to be on the regional and global scale. WSU recognizes the critical importance of bringing together knowledge and people from across the world to share capacity and facilitate scientific collaborations to further protect and conserve seabird species. To date, WSU's efforts have focused on planning the WSC every five years, promoting information sharing through online databases on the WSU website, planning the Twitter Conference, producing the "World of Seabirds" video series, hosting "Meet a Seabird Scientist" sessions, and supporting seabird conservation policies on an as-needed basis. Moving forward, there is a clear opportunity for WSU to expand efforts in enhancing the WSU network of seabird organizations it has engaged in since 2010. Specifically, its Theory of Change will center on effective communications and cooperation, building and sharing capacity, regional and global scientific collaboration and information sharing, long-term and sustainable financing for WSU activities, and increased representation from underrepresented and under-resourced regions (See **Error! Reference source not found.** below).

Figure **1.** Theory of Change.

Implementation of Strategies

- Promote information exchange
- Advance WSU Committees and Projects
- Promote and support professional development
- Form a DEIJ Committee and pursue DEIJ activities

Outcomes

- Increased information sharing and capacity building
- Improved seabird conservation status
- Improved representation of seabird researchers
- Secured sustainable long-term funding
- Increased collaborations and effective communications with member organizations

Goals

Goal 1: Establish, develop, and continue to improve effective communications and cooperative conservation efforts among existing and emerging seabird organizations with the goal to advance seabird conservation, management, and research through regional and global scientific collaboration and information sharing.

Goal 2: Prioritize increased representation of and training for member organizations from under-represented and under-resourced regions in seabird conservation, management, and research in order to build and share capacity (including access to data, information, funding).

Goal 3: Secure long-term and sustainable financing to support WSU's functions and programs and fulfill its mission of supporting member organizations.

Theory of Change by Goal

To complement the overall Theory of Change, this section provides greater detail on how WSU will advance its programmatic activities, as well as how these goals and associated outcomes link to performance measures that WSU can use to evaluate its impact. See *Error! Reference source not found.* and *Implementation Work Plan* for how WSU can implement the Strategic Business Plan and then monitor, assess, learn, and adapt based on WSU's experiences.

Goal 1: Establish, develop, and continue to improve effective communications and cooperative conservation efforts among existing and emerging seabird organizations with the goal to advance seabird conservation, management, and research through regional and global scientific collaboration and information sharing.

WSU's founders envisioned it as an organization connecting all seabird organizations around the world. As WSU expands beyond the planning and implementation of WSCs, it has a unique opportunity to continuously maintain and improve the network of seabird organizations. In doing so, WSU will be able to fulfill its mission to have a sustainable and diverse network focused on advancing seabird conservation and sharing seabird research, knowledge, and ideas globally.

WSU will strive to maintain ongoing and regular communications (i.e., quarterly) with member organizations. Communications can be in the form of informal check-ins with or emails to the member organization representatives, participation at member organizations' events, and WSU's newsletters and social media posts produced by the Communications Committee or by the Communications Officer (once the position is filled).

Through its committees and projects, WSU can increase participation of member organizations and promote cooperative seabird conservation efforts. It is imperative that WSU Committees are set up with clear leadership, goals, and milestones to ensure their success and effectiveness. WSU will update its Handbook, an existing document that outlines the operational and governance structures, to align with the Strategic Business Plan while also including additional details on roles and responsibilities.

To improve WSU's relationship with its member organizations, WSU can gain a better understanding of its existing member organizations and their mission, goals, and geographic reach. This can be accomplished through an online survey for member organizations to complete, in which WSU can also explore if there is any interest for potential partnerships on future WSU activities (e.g., providing assistance in future WSCs, hosting technical training or knowledge sharing webinars, educational social media campaigns on seabirds). WSU can use the survey findings to identify any gaps in the WSU network in terms of the seabird species and geographies in which existing member organizations. WSU can identify emerging seabird organizations to engage with through its vast network and communications, branding, and marketing efforts. This goal is also aligned with strategies related to improving the member organization network (see for more information).

Building off the goal of capacity building and sharing for seabird organizations, WSU will contribute to changes in the state of seabird conservation, management, and research. By strengthening the WSU member organization network, WSU will have an opportunity to facilitate scientific and professional collaboration between member organizations and support conservation activities through advocacy. Cooperative efforts can be initiated through existing or new WSU Committees and projects, as well as through networking at WSCs or other WSU events. The WSU website is central to bridging member organizations and information sharing; therefore, WSU will continue to maintain and enhance its website and databases to ensure information is up to date. To increase accessibility of WSU's communication platforms, WSU can consider including translations to key webpages and documents for member

organizations. In pursuit of this goal, WSU will support bringing member organizations together to achieve seabird conservation, management, and research outcomes.

Goal 2: Prioritize increased representation of and training for member organizations from under-represented and under-resourced regions in seabird conservation, management, and research in order to build and share capacity (including access to data, information, funding).

WSU can use its position as a global convener of seabird organizations to address this goal. WSU will design and coordinate efforts that will generate increased capacity and knowledge of member organizations to conserve and study seabird species and manage their habitats. WSU will organize panels at the WSCs focused on opportunities and lessons learned in conducting seabird research, particularly in underrepresented and under-resourced regions, which could also highlight approaches to access to data and funding.

As a conduit of seabird information, WSU will share seabird news, funding opportunities, and more with member organizations through a quarterly or semi-annual newsletter. When WSU has filled the Communications Officer position (see *Chapter 3. Governance and Operational Structures* for more detail), WSU can determine the frequency of newsletter production. WSU will also continue to maintain its website content and online databases, including the directory of member organizations to enable networking and information sharing. WSU will support transfer of technical skills through webinars, training, and educational materials that can strengthen capacities for seabird conservation, management, and research. To achieve this goal and its associated outcomes, WSU will draw on its strategies surrounding the facilitation of information exchange and professional development.

WSU's commitment to DEIJ will be integrated across the organization's programmatic planning and activities. Under this goal, WSU will promote opportunities for existing and potential new member organizations from underrepresented and under-resourced regions to take on leadership roles and participate in WSU events. If there is interest and an identified gap, WSU could consider supporting the creation of seabird organizations in underrepresented and under-resourced areas. WSU will also support professional development activities that will result in increased technical capacity to advance seabird conservation, management, and/or research in underrepresented and under-resourced regions. To achieve this goal, WSU will support technical skills training, development of educational materials, and information sharing through WSU's Global Web Forum. WSU will continue to offer WSC travel awards and reduced costs to ECRs and seabird conservationists, managers, and researchers from underrepresented and under-resourced regions.

Goal 3: Secure long-term and sustainable financing to support WSU's functions and programs and fulfill its mission of supporting member organizations

Without long-term and sustainable financing, it will be difficult for WSU to implement the Strategic Business Plan in its entirety. Thus, WSU will acquire necessary funds to hire a part-time Project Coordinator, who will be core to implementing the Strategic Business Plan and monitoring progress or consider focusing on specific goals that are implementable with an all-volunteer organization. The Project Coordinator will help with fundraising needed for scaling the organization's growth. WSU will concentrate on implementing strategies related to fundraising, communications, branding, and marketing to build WSU's brand and attract new funders.

Chapter 3.
Governance and Operational Structures

Ursula Ellenberg

Governance Structure

WSU is governed by an elected Board of Directors, which is organized by six geographic regions: Africa/Indian Ocean, Asia, Australasia[5], Europe, North America, and South America. There is one principal Regional Representative and one alternate Representative per geographic region on the Board. The Alternate Regional Rep can act as proxy in the event the principal Representative cannot attend a meeting (Figure 1). The Board is expected to participate in WSU meetings and provide guidance for WSC planning and other activities undertaken by WSU. To ensure that the governing body continues to serve WSU's shifting needs, WSU will retain its existing governance structure and focus on the coming actions in the next five years:

Board of Directors
6 Region Representatives and Alternates

Figure 1. WSU Governance Structure

- **Investigate and refine the term length for members of the Board** potentially from five years to two or three years with an option to renew to ensure a staggered process for transition of members (either by timing to ensure overlap and/or implementing Board-elect positions for a year).
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities** for incoming members of the Board.
- **Improve diversity and geographic representation** of the Board membership through better promotion of roles available within WSU and incentives for participation on the Board (e.g., journal publication support, conference registration fee waived/reduced).
- **Encourage ECRs** to take on leadership roles, such as alternative representative and Board-elect positions.
- **Develop and distribute regular communications** to keep the Board engaged, including updates on other WSU efforts and how Board members can provide guidance and advice.
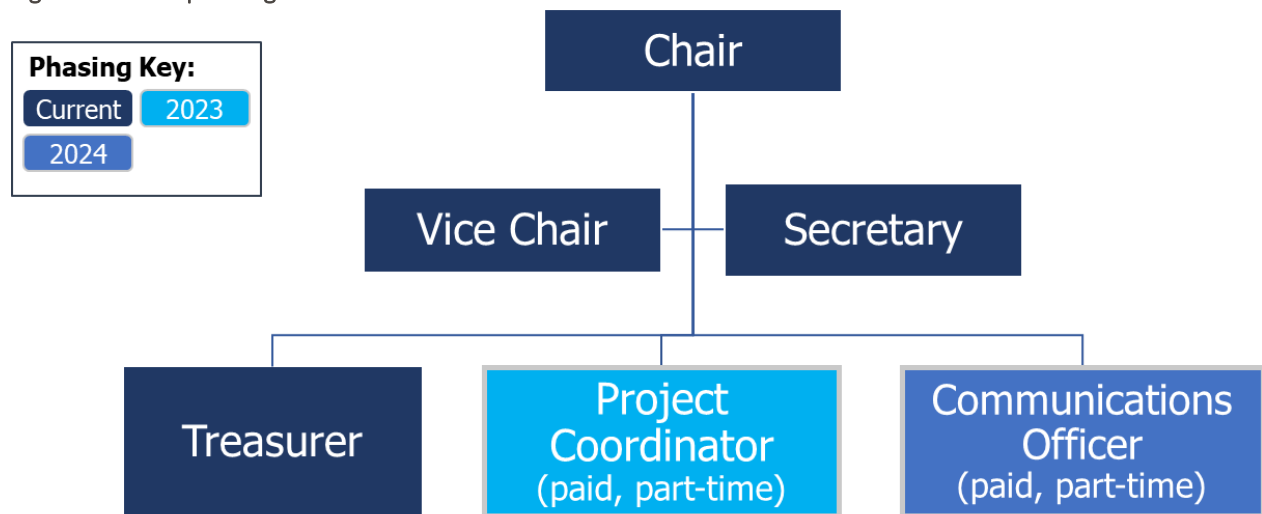
Operational Structure

As a volunteer-run organization, WSU has a lean operating structure, with four Officer positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. To achieve the goals, outcomes, and desired growth over the next five years outlined throughout this plan, WSU will need to hire two paid part-time staff and expand its

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[5] WSU will consider updating the bylaws to update "Australasia" to "Oceania" to be inclusive of Pacific Island nations.

skill base (Figure 2). Specifically, WSU will plan to hire the following types of staff within the next two years:

- **Project Coordinator**: In Year 1 (2023), pending funding, WSU will seek to hire a part-time Project Coordinator, who will help support the Chair and WSU in implementing the Strategic Business Plan and monitoring the progress of plan implementation. The Project Coordinator will also help ensure that WSU efforts and projects across the organization align with the Strategic Business Plan goals and help coordinate overarching strategies across the different committees. *This position could transition to a full-time position later if funds allow.*
- **Communications Officer**: In Year 2 (2024), pending funding, WSU will plan to hire a part-time Communications Officer to help WSU with internal and external communications, marketing, and social media. The Communications Officer will highlight WSU successes and lessons learned, and also help with conference outreach and marketing. *This position could transition to a full-time position later on if funds allow.*

Figure 2. WSU Operating Structure

Beyond the additional staff outlined above, key considerations will inform WSU as it works to grow its operating structure:

- **Scaling growth:** It will be necessary for WSU to scale and phase in its staffing in a manner that is sustainable and feasible to implement given WSU's existing resources. It will be necessary for WSU to monitor the structure to ensure its successful implementation and adapt as needed.
- **Obtaining needed revenue:** WSU's operating structure will be dependent on obtaining targeted funds from the various revenue streams it will pursue, outlined below. WSU will thus work to obtain sufficient revenue to support its structural and operational growth.

Committees

WSU maintains committees to help support general activities of the organization. Many of these committees need to collaborate and coordinate together to ensure committee goals are met. The committees were previously structured by WSU-focused committees and WSC-focused committees. Moving forward, WSU will restructure the committees to maintain continuity of operations and communications. Committees will be restructured as the following:

- **Communications:** Responsible for any communications (including but not limited to e-mail and social media campaigns) advertising the WSC, as well as maintaining and managing any web

pages, media/social media, and other events for WSU. Makes regular updates to the directory of seabird groups and experts on the WSU website. *Works with the Conference Committee for conference communications.*

- **Conference**: Helps plan the WSC, World Seabird Twitter Conference, and any other relevant conferences and events. *Works with the Communications Committee for conference communications, DEIJ Committee to align on DEIJ efforts, ECR Committee to design and implement activities focused on ECRs at the conference, and the Fundraising Committee for conference financing. (This committee would combine the former Twitter Conference Committee and Conference Planning Committee).*

- **Conservation Support:** Supports member organizations in their efforts to protect seabirds and their habitat and garners support for conservation actions via advocacy, advising, and consultation. This committee can convene on rotating topics/issues such as plastics, fisheries and bycatch, and other issues that are brought to the attention of WSU. *Works with the Communications Committee to highlight communications on research and support efforts. (This committee would incorporate the former Plastics Working Group).*

- **DEIJ**: Helps design, implement, and monitor progress on DEIJ strategies for WSU. Emphasizes the importance of DEIJ as an organizational priority and aligns the efforts of the committee with other strategic efforts. *Works with the Communications Committee to highlight DEIJ efforts.*

- **ECRs**: Responsible for hosting non-conference events (e.g., Meet the Masters online) and smaller conference events (e.g., Engaging ECRs and mentoring workshops) to enhance the careers of ECRs. *Works with Communications Committee and Conference Committee for support and communications and Fundraising Committee to implement the conference travel fund.*

- **Fundraising**: Helps raise funds through sponsorships, grants, partner agreements, and other revenue options to meet WSU goals. Explores ways to raise money focused on seabirds, as well as broader ocean and conservation funding opportunities. *Works with the Conference Committee for conference fundraising. (This committee would incorporate the former Financial Committee).*

New committees may arise depending on the needs and goals of WSU. Existing committees may refine their purpose and goals as efforts are underway.

Projects

WSU will continue implementing its existing projects over the next five years, including:

- **Global Web Forum**: WSU provides a free, global forum (discussion board) for seabird conservationists, managers, and scientists to interact through the web page at www.seabirds.net. Research blogs and discussion forums provide opportunities for scientists from across the globe to network and share ideas. Job postings and lists of member organizations keep WSU constituents engaged.

- **Seabird Information Network**: WSU coordinates several databases of global significance as part of the Seabird Information Network. One database supported directly by WSU is the Global Seabird Colony Register, an interactive map that provides data storage, data sharing, and visualization of colony data. Using open-source database management to collate and serve seabird data, this is a valuable resource for seabird conservation initiatives aimed at assessing vulnerabilities of breeding sites to threats such as coastal development, energy generation, mineral extraction, oil

pollution, invasive species, and climate change. This register provides a valuable resource for developing and transitional countries with limited resources for marine conservation.

- **World Seabird Video Project**: The WSU ECR Committee produced the "World of Seabirds" video series on YouTube, in which seabird researchers around the world are highlighted via interviews with researchers and presentations for the 3rd WSC. The series consisted of 13 videos that spanned across multiple geographies and seabird species, such as storm-petrels of Praia Islet (Portugal), kittiwakes of Middleton Island (Alaska, U.S.), seabird colonies at Punta San Juan (Peru), and common murre/guillemot in the Baltic Sea. Several videos also conducted live Questions & Answers sessions with researchers that the general public was welcome to participate in. In addition, WSU provided English subtitles for an interview conducted in Spanish and also Spanish and French subtitles for selected videos. WSU could consider creating a similar video project for future WSCs.

- **Directory of seabird groups and experts**: The WSU website has a directory of seabird groups and experts that is accessible only by member organizations.

New projects may arise depending on the needs and goals of WSU.

Chapter 4.
Member Organizations and Communications

Geoff McKay

Member Organizations and External Partnership Structure and Operations

The current bylaws state that membership is open to any organization interested in seabird research and conservation and must be approved by a majority of existing member organizations. Member organizations and partners play an integral role in WSU's work, and thus WSU will seek to strengthen WSU's member organization network. Given the scale and depth of work that the WSU aims to accomplish, it will be necessary to work in collaboration with member organizations to help WSU achieve its goals and mission. There are several strategies that WSU could consider utilizing to build and strengthen the WSU member organization network, including:

- **Increase visibility** of WSU network, activities, and resources. WSU will continuously maintain the WSU website to ensure that the most up-to-date information is available for its member organizations.
- **Create an easy and clear way to apply for WSU membership**. WSU can use Google Forms to create an application form for prospective member organizations. This form can also include information on the roles and responsibilities for member organizations and their representatives, as described in the following bullet. To streamline the membership application process, WSU can also amend the bylaws so that membership can be approved by a majority of the Board.
- **Clarify and highlight member organizations' roles/responsibilities** and opportunities. To ensure alignment on expectations and increase effectiveness of the WSU member organization network, WSU can develop clear descriptions of the roles and responsibilities for member organizations, particularly for the representatives who will serve as the Member Society Representative. WSU can encourage member organizations to appoint their volunteer Member Society Representative.

- **Maintain ongoing and regular communications** with member organizations. Quarterly/semi-annual communications can be a newsletter in which WSU can highlight progress, successes, and lessons learned as WSU and/or in the seabird community and can provide spotlights on member organizations or individuals. WSU can also ensure that its website has the most up-to-date information on WSU, member organizations, and events.
- **Align with and leverage member organizations' missions and goals.** To identify where WSU can leverage the WSU network to advance its work, WSU needs to first understand its member organizations' missions and goals.
- **Expand membership to smaller organizations and those in underrepresented regions.** WSU can map out its existing membership by geographic focus areas and seabird species to identify any gaps and opportunities. As a future consideration, WSU could potentially explore seeking donations from member organizations and classifying member organizations (e.g., scientific societies, national/international organizations, etc.) with various levels of support.

WSU has over 25 existing member organizations and in the coming years will continue to seek additional member organizations and strategic partners that will increase its geographic reach, diversity, and effectiveness.

Communications, Branding, and Marketing

To ensure that the public, member organizations, partners, and prospective funders recognize and understand the value of WSU, the organization needs to formalize an approach to communications, branding, and marketing. The new communications approach will highlight the core role that WSU plays to promote and advance the conservation, management, and research of seabirds on the global scale. As part of its communications strategy, WSU could take several steps to enhance its communications, branding, and marketing across the next few years:

- **Bring in communications expertise** by creating a part-time Communications Officer position, who would be responsible for building a communications strategy, producing communications materials, and supporting outreach to potential funders.
- **Develop a communications strategy** to identify key audiences and messages for communicating with them. WSU can expand its communication and outreach beyond its network to increase general awareness and education on seabird conservation issues to the general public. The communications strategy would provide a foundation to guide WSU's communications approach and priorities over the coming years.
- **Develop branding and increase marketing** to grow WSU's recognition by using social media (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), maintaining updated information on WSU's website, and developing quarterly/semi-annual newsletters to market WSU's achievements and upcoming events, but also to share relevant seabird information to the general public and to increase WSU's social media footprint.
- **Participate in meetings and events** hosted by member organizations for communicating with key players in the seabird community and strengthening WSU's relationship with the network.

WSU could work towards the following milestones over the next three years to assess progress towards establishing effective communications and to building a strong brand (Table 55).

Table 5. Communications, Branding, and Marketing Milestones.

	Year 1 2023	Year 2 2024	Year 3 2025	Year 4 2026	Year 5 2027
Year 1: Building the WSU Brand					
Logo Update: Modernize logo aesthetics.					
Website Revamp: Update website format and existing content; include resources and information in multiple languages; ensure content is current; prioritize updating WSU Board member and Officer biographies.					
Year 2: Developing the Communications Strategy					
Communications Leader: Identify a designated communications lead.					
Communications Plan: Develop a communications plan to ensure that member organizations and interested parties are aware of WSU activities.					
Social Media Outreach: Maintain a more active presence on social media; use Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms to share information and updates, including WSCs.					
Years 3-5: Implementing the Communications Strategy					
Continuation of website updates, social media outreach, and communication plan implementation (all of which would be initiated in Year 2).					

Chapter 5.
Future Considerations

This section discusses future considerations for WSU as the organization implements this five-year Strategic Business Plan, including potential risks and their mitigation strategies and an implementation plan with milestones.

Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Several risk factors may affect WSU's efforts as it works to achieve its goals during the coming five years. Table 6 outlines these potential risks as identified by the WSU Board, member organizations, and key stakeholders, as well as possible strategies to mitigate these risks.

Table 6. Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies.

Risk	Mitigation Strategies
Lack of sustainable and diverse funding	• **Explore sponsorships**, crowdfunding, foundation support. • **Leverage other sources of funding** by building connections to conservation **fields** (e.g., ocean conservation, climate change).
Lack of interest/capacity in furthering WSU efforts	• **Be visionary, nimble**, and facilitate forward progress. • **Be cognizant** of and leverage the work of other organizations. • **Build and maintain communications** with member organizations and the broader seabird community.
Limited early/mid-career scientists, particularly those from areas who may not have regional seabird organizations	• **Identify champions** to coordinate member organizations' efforts and actions. • **Increase engagement** with individuals from member organizations in underserved/underrepresented regions. • **Institute a DEIJ committee**, which could particularly focus on strategies for engaging individuals or organizations from regions without regional seabird organizations.
Limited capacity to perform activities described in this plan	• **Hire full or part-time staff** to assist with implementation of this plan and consider hiring more employees if needed if the organization begins to expand.

Overall, this Strategic Business Plan outlines a roadmap for WSU to expand its capabilities and create greater impact, building on its strengths in connecting and sharing information among the global seabird

community. Through implementation of this Strategic Business Plan, WSU has great potential to fulfill its mission and enhance the value that it provides to the seabird community, in addition to helping advance seabird conservation, management, and research—particularly for underserved and underrepresented regions. Moving forward, WSU will look for opportunities to measure its impact, mitigate risks, leverage connections, form partnerships, and generate sustainable financing to support its vision of promoting seabird conservation, management, and research that builds resilient seabird populations.

Implementation Work Plan

WSU has set an ambitious path forward in this Strategic Business Plan and will implement the plan in a stepwise fashion over the coming five years. 7 below provides an overview of the milestones that WSU aims to meet related to each of the main components of this strategy.

Table 7. Implementation Timeline.

	Year 1 2023	Year 2 2024	Year 3 2025	Year 4 2026	Year 5 2027
Governance and Operations					
Determine agreed upon new staffing needs and create position descriptions					
Determine agreed upon Board term lengths and strategies for communications and increased diversity					
Hire part-time Project Coordinator					
Hire part-time Communications Officer					
Hire part-time intern and subcontractor to support conference planning					
Revisit governance and committee structure and adapt as needed					
Fundraising					
Develop a clear mission and vision					
Highlight linkages between seabird conservation and other areas					
Identify specific funding opportunities that allow for engaging and collaborating with Indigenous people and local communities					
Highlight successful projects and conferences to build credibility and buy-in					
Submit at least three proposals a year to new funders (see potentials funders in the *Fundraising Strategies* section)					

	Year 1 2023	Year 2 2024	Year 3 2025	Year 4 2026	Year 5 2027
Member Organizations and Communications					
Modernize logo aesthetics					

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Update website format and existing content; include resources and information in multiple languages; ensure content is current; prioritize updating WSU Board Member and Officer biographies	X				
Maintain ongoing and regular quarterly/semi-annual communications with member organizations	X	X	X	X	X
Expand membership to smaller organizations and those in underrepresented regions		X	X	X	X
Create an easy and clear way to apply for WSU membership and clarify and highlight member organizations' roles, responsibilities and opportunities		X			
Identify a designated communications lead		X			
Develop a communications plan to ensure that member organizations and interested parties are aware of WSU activities		X			
Maintain a more active presence on social media; use Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms to share information and updates, including WSC		X	X	X	X
Continuation of website updates, social media outreach, and communication plan implementation (all of which would be initiated in Year 2)			X	X	X
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management					
Conduct a baseline assessment to identify the status on each of the performance measures	X				
Document assessment methods to be used in later assessments	X				
Perform rapid analysis to measure the status of each performance measure		X	X	X	X
Adapt strategies based on challenges and successes identified during annual status checks		X	X	X	X
Conduct an informal, internal evaluation to assess progress on performance measures			X		
Adapt strategies and priorities based on challenges and successes identified during mid-term evaluation			X		
Conduct an informal, internal full evaluation to evaluate progress on performance measures				X	X
Integrate lessons learned into an updated Strategic Business Plan					X