IPOS Service Request Submission Guide

August 2025

towards ipos

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 IPOS Objective

The International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) aims to foster an inclusive, collaborative, and informed global response to ocean sustainability challenges. IPOS will do so by bridging the gap between knowledge and action, delivering the best available evidence—quickly, clearly, and inclusively—through a practical human-centred interface which is anchored in local context and that integrates world-class science, local knowledge, and AI-powered synthesis.

1.2 IPOS Test Period

IPOS launched its inaugural Ramp-up phase at UNOC-3 (2025–2027) to pilot and evaluate two of its flagship services—**Action Requests and Rapid Responses**—which are designed to support UN Member States in accelerating implementation of international ocean commitments. These services aim to close critical knowledge-to-action gaps by co-developing timely, scientifically grounded, and policy-relevant outputs in partnership with requesting States, particularly with reference to multilateral frameworks, targets and objectives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement.

1.3 IPOS Services to be tested

During the Ramp-up Phase, IPOS will test two of its three proposed services:

Action Requests are comprehensive, 10-month co-designed processes to support long-term planning and ecosystem-based management strategies.

Rapid Responses deliver shorter, targeted assessments or guidance within weeks, aimed at supporting urgent or time-sensitive decisions.

Both formats are built upon structured peer review, expert engagement, and varying degrees of stakeholder consultation depending on the service.

1.4 How the Ramp-up Phase will work

During the Ramp-up phase, IPOS will deliver up to **two Action Requests** (one per year) and **eight Rapid Responses** (four per year), with potential for scale-up as additional resources become available. These services will be open to all UN Member States, either individually or in groups, and will emphasize actionable outcomes, transdisciplinary collaboration, and regional relevance.

IPOS services are designed to address **real-world challenges** such as transboundary marine pollution, cumulative impact assessment, marine spatial planning, and ecologically coherent MPA network design. Final deliverables will be made **publicly accessible**, contributing to a shared knowledge base and supporting peer learning across the global IPOS community.

2. Selection Process

2.1 Characteristics for successful selection

Across both Action Request and Rapid Response services, IPOS will **prioritize** requests that:

- Address critical and timely sustainability issues;
- Demonstrate alignment with IPOS's mission and global ocean targets;
- Show strong political will to use the outputs for planning or implementation;
- Involve active engagement from the requesting State/s; where multi-State proposals will be evaluated more favorably;
- Where possible, include in-kind support from relevant national institutions or other external supporting mechanisms. Proposals that do not provide support will not be scored unfavourably;
- Demonstrate coordination with the appropriate ministries or include a commitment to coordinate once the request is accepted; and
- Demonstrate a clear plan for how the outputs will inform national, regional, or international processes.

In addition to the characteristics outlined above, IPOS will ensure **diversity and strategic balance** in the selection of service requests across:

- Geographic regions (ocean basins, coastal and island States);
- Developmental levels (using UN Development Programme Human Development Index multipliers);
- Multilateral frameworks (e.g., Sustainable Development Goal 14, Global Biodiversity Framework Targets, Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement.
- Types of requesters (individual or joint State submissions).

All scoring will be conducted anonymously by members of the IPOS Knowledge Committee. Each proposal will receive a set of independent scores, which will be averaged into a final score per request. The final scores will be transmitted to the IPOS Steering Committee for final decision-making.

In order to provide support to States that face the most challenges in meeting their international Ocean sustainability commitments, the Steering Committee will apply a **development index multiplier** based on the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index (HDI) scoring for States:

- Very High/High HDI: x1

- Medium HDI: x1.25

- Low HDI: x1.5

Requests that are not selected will receive a follow-up message from the IPOS Secretariat explaining why they were not selected. Some otherwise strong proposals may be declined and redirected if the Steering Committee determines that another national, regional, or international body is better placed to address the request, in line with IPOS's commitment to avoid institutional redundancy, or if other services have already been approved for the same State during the two-year test phase.

2.2 Evaluation and Scoring Criteria

Following a pre-screening for alignment with IPOS mission and the application characteristics in 2.1 by the IPOS Secretariat, eligible proposals will be scored from 1 to 5 against the following criteria:

1	Environmental sustainability impact (how significantly the subject matter of the application benefits environmental health e.g. number and diversity of species, habitats and ecosystems)
2	Urgency (how quickly action is needed to prevent irreversible damage or harm)
3	Feasibility (within 10-month delivery for Action Requests or within weeks for Rapid Response)
4	State engagement (e.g., relevant ministries and departments have been appropriately engaged or consulted, or there is a commitment to engage after the request is accepted.)
5	Potential for co-benefits, including socioeconomic, capacity development or technological
6	Availability of support (e.g. a focal point within the government of the requesting State(s) to liaise with; a commitment to supporting engagement with relevant scientists or NGOs or private sector partners; or facilities for meetings).

2.3 Submission support

To help States prepare strong and aligned submissions:

- The IPOS Secretariat is available for **one-on-one consultations** and encourages early engagement to clarify expectations and ensure proposals are well-informed;

- A**n application form** will be provided for completion by the State/s;

- **Fictional examples** are attached in the **Appendix** to assist States in articulating and framing requests.

3. Guidance for Action Requests

3.1 Overview

Action Requests are IPOS's most comprehensive knowledge service (see Strategic Overview). They are 10-month, science-policy processes aimed at producing in-depth, co-designed knowledge syntheses and solution options to inform policy decisions. Each year of the Ramp-up Phase (2025 and 2026) will test one Action Request. During the Ramp-up Phase, Action Requests will be completed in a shorter cycle of 10 months in order to complete two full Action Requests within the period.

3.2 Timeline

- Application window:

Year 1	June 9 - October 1, 2025
Year 2	June 9 - October 1, 2026

- Review and Selection window:

October 1 - November 1 each year

- Implementation window:

10 months following selection, including the development of inter- and trans-disciplinary hybrid working groups to work in close collaboration with the State(s).

3.3 Application Requirements

The application should align with the characteristics listed in above in 2.1.

3.4 Service delivery process

Month 1	Scoping and expert selection; Kick-off online meeting, scope and refine the question, establish a work plan
Months 2 - 8	Collaborative research, writing, stakeholder consultation, in-person workshop(s)
Month 9	Peer review and revisions
Month 10	Final approval by Knowledge Committee and publication
Post service	Impact assessment

4. Guidance for Rapid Response Requests

4.1 Overview

Rapid Responses are designed to deliver quick-turnaround knowledge products that support urgent or time-sensitive decisions related to marine sustainability (see Strategic Overview). Unlike Action Requests, Rapid Responses are delivered in a matter of weeks. IPOS will offer four Rapid Responses per year during the Ramp-up Phase.

4.2 Timeline and Application Process

Calls for Rapid Response proposals will be opened each quarter, with applications accepted throughout the year on a rolling basis. States must indicate the quarter in which they wish to be considered:

Quarter	Decision Window
1	Oct 1 – Nov 1
2	Jan 1 - Feb 1
3	April 1 - May 1
4	July 1 - Aug 1

4.3 Application Requirements

The application should align with the characteristics listed in above in 2.1, and should:

- Identify a specific and time-bound policy, legal, or programmatic process related to the request;
- Explain the type of synthesis or analysis or framework needed, and include how the State intends to use the output; and
- Demonstrate the potential for near-term application of the output.

4.4 Service delivery process

Months 0 - 1 (max)	Scoping and expert selection; kick-off online meeting to discuss the scope and refine the question in close collaboration with the requesting State/s, establish a framework for the response
Months 1 - 2 (max)	Develop a response applying IPOSGPT to the framework, consultation with the State and identified stakeholders to verify the development direction of the response, revision and internal review
Months 2 - 3 (max)	External expert peer review, revisions, consultation with State on final version, verification by Knowledge Committee, communicate and publish

5. Conclusion

The 2025–2027 IPOS Ramp-up Phase provides an important opportunity to refine service delivery models, build trust with States, and generate early examples of knowledge-to-action impact. Whether submitting a comprehensive Action Request or a time-sensitive Rapid Response, States are encouraged to bring forward focused, feasible, and action-oriented proposals that demonstrate commitment to using scientific knowledge to accelerate progress toward sustainable ocean governance.

For more details or to submit a request, please contact the IPOS Secretariat (info@ipos.earth or projects@ipos.earth)

Appendix

1. Action Request: A fictional example of an application

1. Identify the State leading the service request
Country X (Ministry of Blue Economy)

2. Are other States supporting the service request? Please list accordingly
Country Y and Country Z (as part of the shared Coral Archipelago Initiative)

3. Identify the focal points/Ministries/departments responsible for submitting the service request.
Ministry of Blue Economy and Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Marine Spatial Planning (contact information).

4. Specify the marine region(s) or jurisdictions relevant to the request (e.g., Exclusive Economic Zones, Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, Large Marine Ecosystems, Regional Seas, Ecoregion, specific basin).
Eastern Coral Archipelago LME, portions of Country X's EEZ, and adjacent Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction corridor.

5. Which of the following ocean sustainability targets or objectives is the request associated with? Select up to four.

- SDG 14.5 (marine protected areas)
- GBF Target 3 (30x30)
- BBNJ Agreement – Area-Based Management Tools
- CBD Target 11 (connectivity and ecological representativity)

6. Choose relevant topics addressed in the request.

- Cumulative impact assessments
- Marine spatial planning
- Marine ecosystem connectivity
- Capacity building and training

7. Select the main implementation or knowledge barriers the request aims to overcome.

- Limited or fragmented knowledge
- Capacity limitations
- Stakeholder conflict

8. Please provide a title for the proposal
From EEZ to ABNJ: Co-Designing Marine Protected Areas Across the Coral Archipelago

9. Provide a descriptive paragraph outlining the specifics of the challenge that needs addressing (approximately 250 words). Additional supporting documents can be uploaded through Question 15.
Country X faces growing pressures on marine ecosystems within the Eastern Coral

Archipelago LME due to overfishing, climate impacts, and unmanaged development. While Country X has committed to protecting 30% of its waters by 2030, progress is hindered by limited data on critical habitats, migratory species pathways, and connectivity between EEZ and adjacent ABNJ areas. Regional migratory species such as reef sharks, sea turtles, and tuna are poorly monitored, and existing protected areas lack ecological coherence. There is also a strong need to align with the BBNJ Agreement's Area-Based Management Tools, especially in offshore areas beyond national jurisdiction. Country X seeks support from IPOS to co-develop a spatial and ecological assessment that can inform the design and implementation of ecologically representative marine protected areas, both nationally and through transboundary cooperation. This would also include a participatory process that brings together fishers, Indigenous groups, and scientific experts.

10. Provide a detailed explanation of how you expect the service deliverables to be used.

The outputs will directly feed into Country X's revised National Ocean Strategy and Marine Spatial Plan (2026–2036). Regionally, results will inform joint EEZ-ABNJ conservation zones being explored under the Coral Archipelago Initiative. Country X also intends to table the findings during the upcoming BBNJ implementation dialogues and CBD reporting cycles.

11. Since IPOS Action Requests take 10 months for their completion, do you agree that this timeline is aligned with the intended use of the deliverables?

Yes

12. What practical deliverables should the IPOS Action Request support or co-develop?

- Scientific baseline assessment
- Spatial planning tools / scenarios
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement strategy
- Technical training for spatial planning software

13. Which key stakeholder groups should be included or consulted during the process as part of the hybrid working group (max. 6)?

- Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)
- Artisanal / small-scale fisheries
- National scientists / universities
- International scientific community
- Local NGOs
- National NGOs

14. Can the lead State provide some form of in-kind support or other support for the development of the request? (e.g., accommodation, meeting venue, meal support, financial support).

Yes, Country X can provide meeting space, interpretation services, and meals during co-design workshops and field visits.

15. Please upload any relevant files that can help the IPOS team better understand the context and challenges of the Action Request (max. 5 files).

- Country X Marine Spatial Plan 2020 (PDF)
- Coral Archipelago Biodiversity Atlas (shapefiles)
- National Ocean Strategy draft 2025 (Word)
- Migratory species telemetry data summary (Excel)
- Letter of support from Country Y and Z (PDF)

2. Rapid Response: A fictional example of an application

1. Identify the State leading the service request
Country X

2. Are other States supporting the service request? Please list accordingly
Country Y and Country Z (as part of a regional ocean pollution mitigation compact)

3. Identify the focal points/Ministries/departments responsible for submitting the service request.
Ministry of Environment and Coastal Affairs (contact information)
National Marine Pollution Control Agency(contact information)

4. Specify the marine region(s) relevant to the request (e.g., EEZ, ABNJ, LME, RS, Ecoregion, specific basin).
Western Gulf EEZ and the Coastal Urban-Deltaic Ecoregion (shared among Country X, Y, and Z)

5. Which of the following ocean sustainability targets or objectives is the request associated with? (select up to four)
- SDG 14.1: Reduce marine pollution from land-based and other sources by 2025
- GBF Target 6: Reduce pollution risks from nutrients, pesticides, plastics, and other waste
- GBF Target 14: Mainstream biodiversity across all sectors, including agriculture and infrastructure
- BBNJ – Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)

6. Choose relevant topics addressed in the request
- Marine pollution (plastics, nutrients, noise)
- Coastal development
- Ecosystem restoration
- Cumulative impact assessments
- Stakeholder conflict

7. Please provide a title for the proposal
Strengthening EIA for Coastal Resilience: A Rapid Response for Pollution Mitigation in Country X and its Deltaic Ecoregion

8. Provide a descriptive paragraph outlining the specifics of the challenge that needs addressing (approx. 250 words). Additional supporting documents can be uploaded through Question 14.

Country X is experiencing a sharp increase in marine pollution from both urban and agricultural runoff, concentrated in a highly populated coastal delta. Despite strong national ambitions under SDG 14.1 and GBF Target 6, efforts to regulate land-based sources remain fragmented, with weak enforcement and overlapping mandates between local and national institutions. The pollution load has resulted in extensive seagrass die-off, harmful algal blooms, and increased eutrophication events, affecting fisheries and tourism. These challenges are further complicated by upstream development in neighboring countries Y and Z, where transboundary rivers carry untreated waste and agricultural effluents into the shared marine ecosystem. In recent months, community protests and inter-agency conflicts have delayed coastal infrastructure expansion, prompting Country X to seek urgent guidance on applying a science-based and precautionary cumulative impact framework. Specifically, Country X is requesting a Rapid Response to identify best practices for environmental impact assessments (EIA) that integrate multiple pollution stressors across terrestrial and marine systems. The aim is to adopt immediate regulatory and planning measures before the next phase of national infrastructure investments (Q4 2025), while also fostering regional cooperation.

9. Provide a detailed explanation of how you expect the service deliverables to be used.

The deliverables will inform a cabinet-level emergency review of marine pollution control policy in Country X, with a focus on near-term reforms to national EIA legislation. Findings will also shape Country X's proposal to the Regional Sea Programme for the creation of a transboundary pollution risk map and a shared water quality monitoring strategy. At the international level, the insights will feed into Country X's GBF National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) update and a BBNJ regional preparatory workshop hosted later this year.

10. Since IPOS Rapid Responses take several weeks to complete, do you agree that this timeline is aligned with the intended use of the deliverables?

Yes

11. Please indicate which month and year you would require the Rapid Response to be completed by.

October 2025

12. What practical deliverables should the IPOS Rapid Response support or co-develop?

- Scientific synthesis assessment
- Review of methodologies
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement strategy

13. Please upload any relevant files that can help the IPOS team better understand the context and challenges of the Rapid Response (max. 5 files)

- Draft National EIA Reform Bill (PDF)
- Recent coastal pollution reports (Country X Environmental Agency)
- Joint communiqué from Countries X, Y, and Z on marine pollution cooperation
- Community testimony and stakeholder position statements (summary PDF)
- Satellite imagery showing coastal algal bloom trends (GeoTIFF, optional)