

IFISH Innovation Exchange



Connecting people, creating opportunities, and working to improve the health and safety of aquatic food supply workers



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What is an IFISH Innovation Exchange?

A primary aim of the IFISH conference has always been to bring stakeholders together to achieve the long-term goal of a healthier, safer seafood industry. IFISH conferences are designed to offer opportunities for trans-disciplinary discussions and problem-solving that have often led to effective partnerships post-conference. In an effort to increase scientific collaboration and knowledge exchange in between conferences, attendees discussed an initiative entitled “International IFISH Innovation Exchanges” at the IFISH 6 conference in 2024.

The overarching goal of the Innovation Exchange concept will be to encourage knowledge exchange, transdisciplinary problem-solving, data publication, skills development and the dissemination of evidence-based health and safety solutions to international worker populations in various geographic locations. To do this, the Innovation Exchange organizers will seek opportunities for increasing partnerships between stakeholders in both developing and developed countries to ensure that solutions are equitably disseminated to seafood workers in a variety of coastal communities. Another primary objective of the exchange will be to identify high priority, important occupational safety and health issues, as well as innovative research methods, interventions and implementation solutions that could lead to improvements in worker safety and wellbeing. This type of collaboration on the international stage has occurred informally in the past. However, the Exchange mechanism seeks to further support and increase interactions between disciplines and regions in ways that catalyze the development and adoption of scalable solutions in the years ahead.

In discussing the idea with IFISH 6 attendees, there was widespread interest and support for the concept. However, figuring out how to bring the Innovation Exchange from idea to execution will be the challenge. During the Innovation Exchange workshop, participants were asked to consider and discuss for four key components that would be important to address in order to make the concept a reality. These were:

1. how to pay for administration, program promotion and associated participation costs,
2. how to outline the basic the components of the program and how it should function,
3. whether there should be an application process for participating and if yes, what should this look like, and
4. should the Exchange be governed by an advisory body and if so, who should be involved and how should it function?

A summary of participant responses to these questions is presented in the following section.



Feedback from workshop participants

1. Funding

In this group, participants shared a number of ideas regarding fundraising and who might be willing to underwrite Innovation Exchange activities. One suggestion was to develop a Core Fundraising Team to develop a funding case statement. This could be used to pitch the concept to potential funders. In addition to fundraising, participants underscored the need to set up a system for accepting and managing funds, as well as dispersing them. The system would need to be managed by an independent company with a designated legal team and accounting firm. The particulars around mailing reimbursements and working with applicants on the paperwork would also need to be considered. In order to gain interest from funders, it would be important to formalize the Innovation Exchange as an international organization, which would allow organizers to build relationships across global, national, regional, and local entities/agencies. The “Application Process” group also noted that matching funds should not be required as this would exclude individuals or organizations who could benefit from the resources.



If a core administrative team could be assembled, this group could set up a contract with international organizations, so that funds could be used to provide consulting services to monitor funding. This would benefit international organizations because informed policies could be more easily implemented internationally, which would be a win-win for all involved.

Specific things that could be emphasized in a funding Case Statement would include the potential for research within the Exchange to improve international standards for a safe and sustainable fishing industry since attendees represent the leading global experts in fishing safety. With global collaboration as a core objective, the Exchange would bring diverse voices to the table, inform research and policy and offer opportunities for sharing updates using community-specific language and understanding. Most importantly, the Exchange could serve as a communication hub for researchers, fishers, community members, and industries to discuss and integrate ocean harvesting and occupational health and safety solutions.

A list of potential funders was also outlined by the group. These included:

1A. IFFS. One suggestion was to solicit funds from the International Fund for Fishing Safety (IFFS). This is managed by Tina Barnes from the Seafarers' Charity in the UK. While IFFS is a new fund in the early stages of providing support to international fishing causes, it could provide funding for specific things such as travel for people from developing countries (particularly those directly and severely impacted by climate change). It would also be important to develop criteria around what type of applicants would be eligible. One important eligibility guideline might be to examine what the applicant would bring to the table and their potential for global impact. However, funding from IFFS would be more ideally aligned with covering the travel expenses of events and conferences like IFISH vs. individual research missions.

1B. World Bank. The World Bank already sponsors students and collaborators, providing travel funds. One of the IFISH attendees had indicated they had received World Bank funds to obtain training in social science research previously so this could potentially be a funding mechanism for Exchanges.

1C. IMO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP USAID, NIOSH, USCG. These groups were listed as other options, but further investigation of these potential resources would need to be undertaken.

2. Logistics

Discussions in this group focused on the mechanics of developing a network of participating organizations. Questions for group discussion included consideration of adding an Innovations Exchange page to the IFISH website and a list of what could be included (e.g., participating organizations, applications for short-term missions, a list of research/training/publication opportunities or virtual team meetings for groups focused on specific topics in fishing OSH). Participants were also asked to consider how participating organizations might be vetted for inclusion. Discussions indicated that participants were in favor of adding an Innovations Exchange page to the website following the model of the International PFD Work Group. The page would include the contributions of any interested parties. Another model that could be followed is Agrisafe's Mental Health website, which includes contributions from many speakers and is not focused on a particular sponsor. Considerations outlined by the group include:



2A. Work team meetings. If an opportunity to post topic or workgroup meetings on the page is included, team leaders would have to be mindful of time zone differences. One recommendation was to rotate times so the burden of tuning in outside of work is not carried by one particular group or meetings could be recorded and comments shared with the group post-meeting. For these virtual workgroup meetings, attendees could focus on a specific topic and include multiple speakers. Speakers should also be instructed to be mindful of the audience in preparing their comments. Leaders who are setting up virtual work teams could be given a format for meeting structure that includes a "What's new?" section that might offer lightning talks - quick overviews of what groups are working on in fishing OSH. Meetings could also be organized by various interest groups.

2B. Participating organizations: A list could initially be prepared from the group of IFISH 6 attendees. These attendees could be asked to recommend other organizations. One concern with this approach was the possibility of excluding informal fisheries or countries that were not represented at IFISH 6. There was also a suggestion to bring fishers into the dialogue through the website, although language and technology access may present barriers to some. Inviting fishermen to attend and participate in meetings would also require organizers to be mindful of their interests and not to be too academic in discussions. By including fishers, these sessions may present opportunities to better understand in these worker's lives.

2C. Hub for resources. Attendees thought it would be helpful to have a section that includes resources for those visiting the Innovations Exchange page. A listserv or a directory of individuals working in fishing OSH would also be very helpful. Participants observed that there is a cost associated with directories, but it does provide more information than a listserv. Listing other conferences where researchers and advocates can get together would be a beneficial addition, as well as “Seafood Source” which puts together a list of seafood expos. If a scholarship program could be created to encourage participation from individuals in developing countries this could be included in the list of resources. The hub could also feature a professional network, chat forums for people to ask questions or fishing committee online sessions to share innovations. The Exchange should also consider posting notices about the transfer of used, but still usable, equipment from developed to developing nations.

2D. Staying connected. LinkedIn and Facebook were listed as opportunities for staying connected. It would be necessary to think carefully about the group name and to vet questions featured in Facebook groups. Participants noted that it is possible to add a requirement to be invited by a group member, although a group administrator would be necessary for setting rules and removing people whenever necessary. A potential way to address this is to rotate administrative responsibilities. Hiring an information technology coordinator for this would ensure that large amounts of information could be presented in an organized fashion and would be easily searchable.

3. Application Process

Participants in this group were asked to consider the process for vetting Innovation Exchange applications for participation in short term scientific missions. Considerations included eligibility and application criteria, who should review proposals, the length of exchanges and output/reporting requirements.

3A. Defining the scope. Short-term scientific missions should focus on occupational health and wellness. Fishermen should also have a role in the process and exchanges should facilitate the sharing of ideas and solutions among nations. Clarifying roles would also be helpful. The Exchanges should also allow diverse perspectives to be heard and to encourage consensus on OSH approaches. Expanding research could be within the scope of the initiative, as well. Consideration of who is capable of generating valuable data might also be something to consider.

3B. Eligibility. Criteria for application selection should include consideration of how workers are represented and the application’s potential to facilitate a positive impact. Those who have access to fisheries and opportunities for engagement could be prioritized. A positive impact might be defined by the potential for the application to benefit fishers/workers and the capacity to communicate solutions or recommendations to fishers/workers. Applications could be filtered by scoring and the Review Team could lead the review process. Membership in the review team could rotate, but it would be important to keep the review process simple to accommodate new reviewers.



3C. Length of the exchange. The exchanges should have a flexible, but definite end date. Partnering with a larger organization, such as FAO, to handle grant management might be beneficial. To launch this initiative it will be important to develop a strong steering group that can outline and implement the process.

3D. Scalability. Applied research is important, but research is underfunded in developing countries. Researchers have less access to important research and the Exchange might develop solutions for this inequity. Another question to consider is how to compensate fishers who might be engaged in or who could facilitate this work.

3E. Scoring proposals. Primary components for applications could include the academic value, the scope of the Exchange and the short/long-term benefit. Perhaps applicants could also be scored on the potential for catalyzing change post project.

3F. Accountability. Exchange participants would be asked to report progress/outcomes.

4. Exchange Governance

Individuals in this group were tasked with outlining how an exchange could be organized and agencies/individuals who should be assembled to provide oversight and input on its structure and functioning. This was a difficult task given the fact that the Exchange was more of a concept vs. a fully functioning initiative, but participants offered their thoughts about how a website devoted to the Exchange should be set up, how the governing body would interact, and how they might create policies for the Innovation Exchange.



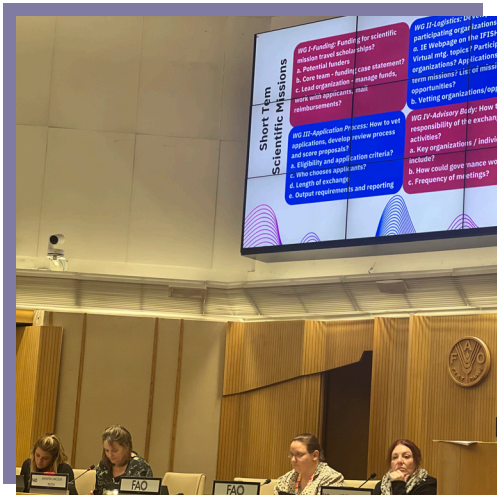
4A. Who should be involved? Workgroup participants first discussed who else could be part of the exchange and noted that organizers should be proactive about identifying and inviting these groups. The governing body should be transdisciplinary, establishing a certain number of seats for government, academics, NGOs, industry, etc., with members rotating on and off depending on representation needs. Some of the stakeholders identified included:

- Investigators: For example, the Marine Accident Investigators International Forum (MAIIF)
- Resource management: Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other international resource management boards, NOAA regional fisheries councils, and other resource management groups
- Tribal groups, Indigenous groups
- Industry: Safety and health professionals, producer groups, UK fish producers' organizations, regional fishing groups
- Retailers and supply chain groups, including fish buyers and processors
- Equipment manufacturers: safety equipment, gear, and other equipment

4B. How should a governing body be organized? Participants discussed what an initial organizing board would look like and the need for a Secretariat (Coordinator) for scheduling meetings and taking minutes. The organizing board should be small but should have all regions represented. Once the organizing board establishes the bylaws and structure of governance, an advisory/governance board can be convened. A good example of a governance board might be the UN Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Program for Sustainability. In addition, the governance board could have sub-committees that focus on topics such as data sharing, application processing, and research which can report back to the board.

4C. What should the governing body do? An Exchange advisory board would be tasked with creating objectives that are based on the needs of IFISH members. Members should have clear definitions of their roles and responsibilities, be proactive in their governing role and their terms of service, and develop a plan for ensuring representation and drafting bylaws. Fishing industry and developing country representation on the board would be important and members should be aware of convening legislation, conventions, and other applicable legislation.

4D. How could the governing body meet? One recommendation was to develop an online resource exchange forum (both educational materials and even safety equipment). The governing board could possibly meet through this forum.



What's Next?



Here are the action steps developed from our initial investigation of IFISH Innovation Exchanges:

1. Develop IFISH Innovation Exchange Report for IFISH Participants
2. Submit a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funding application to support the IFISH Conference website and develop the Innovation Exchange online framework.
3. Develop an Innovation Exchange Hub on the IFISH Website
4. Identify other funding opportunities that can support the development and sustainability of the Innovation Exchange Hub and in-person collaboration and scientific exchange opportunities.

Want to be involved in this forum? Have an idea that could benefit Innovation Exchanges? Stay in touch with the Innovation Exchange group:

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