IWC11 Pre-Conference Workshops

Concept Note

Workshop 2: Strategic Communications

18 October 2026

09:00 – 15:00 Kuta, Bali

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About IWC11 Pre-conference Workshops

The pre-conference workshops will provide the opportunity for a hands-on learning and exchange experience targeting GEF International Waters (IW) project managers, thematic specialists, and country representatives. Three workshops will take place on 17-18 October 2026 at Anvaya Beach Resort in Kuta, Bali, Indonesia, as follows:

Day 1: 17 October 2026:

1. Sustainable Financing

Day 2: 18 October 2026:

2. Strategic Communications
3. SIDS Inter-regional Dialogue

Pre-conference Workshop 2 - Strategic Communications

Over the past years, IW:LEARN has built a strong foundation for communications across the International Waters portfolio, providing project teams with training, webinars and tools on storytelling, media engagement and communicating project results.

The pre-IWC11 workshop, co-organised by IW:LEARN and GRID-Arendal, with the support of the Communications Team of the GEF Secretariat, builds directly on this foundation and take the next step: exploring how communications can be used strategically to help projects achieve wider objectives.

Building on the **GEF Assembly Learning Station on Strategic Outreach,** this workshop provides project teams with dedicated time to apply those models directly to their own results. It tackles a challenge familiar across the IW portfolio: how strong technical results, compelling evidence, and successful solutions can be translated into political support, strategic partnerships, new investments, and wider uptake.

The workshop is practical, hands-on, and highly participatory. At its core is a single operational question: How do we turn a strong project result into a compelling reason for someone else to engage, support, invest, or act?

To maximize practical application, participants will be asked in advance to bring one concrete project result, solution, or opportunity that they want others to support, finance, adopt, or scale. Working with this single case throughout the day, participants will map its trajectory through a structured sequence:

Result > Priority Audience > Relevance > Evidence > Opportunity > Ask > Pitch

Given the range of target audiences covered, participants will select **one primary priority audience** for their main exercise and Strategic Message Framing Canvas, before examining how their framing shifts when adapting the pitch for a **secondary target audience**.

By testing their framing against key stakeholders—including policymakers, journalists, private-sector partners, and financiers—participants will leave with a completed **Strategic Message Framing Canvas**, a tested pitch, and a clear communication pathway ready to extend the impact of their work beyond the project cycle.

Aim and Objectives

The overall aim is to strengthen the ability of GEF International Waters project teams and communication specialists to use strategic communications to extend the influence, visibility and sustainability of project results beyond the project cycle.

The workshop will enable participants to:

- Deepen and apply the strategic framing models introduced at the GEF Assembly Learning Station, tailoring them specifically to the needs and contexts of the IW portfolio.
- identify and prioritize the audiences that can help move an IW result, solution or idea forward
- understand what policymakers, donors, private-sector actors and journalists need in order to pay attention and engage
- communicate not only what a project has achieved, but why the result matters, what it demonstrates and what could happen next
- use storytelling, data and credible voices strategically rather than simply as communications products
- practice adapting one project result for several different audiences and channels
- explore how communications can contribute to GEF priorities including country ownership, resource mobilization, private-sector engagement, scaling and visibility.

Further objectives include:

- Develop participants' confidence in pitching project results, solutions and ideas in a clear, credible and compelling way.
- Explore how strategic storytelling and constructive journalism can increase the relevance and reach of project results.
- Help participants use communications to build support, partnerships and opportunities beyond the project cycle.
- Encourage peer learning and exchange of experiences across the International Waters portfolio.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Using the Strategic Message Framing Canvas to systematically translate complex project data into tailored, audience-specific narratives.
- Map influence, identifying who needs to know, care, decide, finance, amplify or act for a project result to have continued impact.
- Develop audience-specific value propositions rather than relying on one generic project message Turn technical results into strategic narratives supported by evidence, people and a clear reason to care.
- Frame a result for policymakers and donors around relevance, credibility, impact, value and opportunity.
- Frame a result for private-sector partners or financiers around partnership value, risk, scalability, incentives and potential.
- Identify and pitch a credible media story, distinguishing a news story from an institutional project update.
- Develop a practical communication pathway for taking a result from project achievement to wider uptake, investment or influence.

Target audience

The primary audience is:

- IW project communications specialists;
- IW project managers;
- Thematic and technical specialists with external engagement responsibilities;

- Country representatives.

The workshop is intended particularly for participants who already have some familiarity with project communications and want to strengthen their ability to use communications strategically to engage decision-makers, partners and external audiences.

Participant Advance Request

Prior to attending the workshop, **all participants will be asked to identify and bring one concrete project result, solution, or opportunity** from their active portfolio that requires external support, financing, policy adoption, or scaling.

Invited Contributors

Selected journalists, media practitioners, private-sector or finance representatives, GEF representatives and communications specialists may participate as resource people and provide an external "audience perspective" during practical exercises.

Workshop 2. Provisional Agenda

Sunday 18 October 2026

Venue: The Anvaya Beach Resort Bali, Kuta, Bali

Time	Section	Topics to be covered	Lead / Contributors
09:00-09:10	**Welcome**		IW:LEARN, GEF Sec
09:10-09:40	**Opening: From communication to influence**	Introduction to the day's challenge: *How can we turn a strong project result into a compelling reason for someone else to engage, support, invest or act?*	IW:LEARN / GRID-Arendal
09:40-10:30	**Exercise 1 – Start with the audience, not the message**	Design-thinking-inspired stakeholder/influence mapping. Participants identify decision-makers, donors, partners, businesses, media and other actors needed to advance one real result.	GRID-Arendal
10:30-11:00	**Coffee & tea break**		
11:00-12:00	**Exercise 2 – The Message Lab**	Participants work with their own project results to develop audience-specific messages and value propositions. Focus on relevance, evidence, credibility and *Why should this audience care?*	GRID-Arendal + invited contributors
12:00-13:00	**Exercise 3 – The strategic pitch**	How to move from explaining a project to making a compelling case for engagement. What makes an effective pitch to policymakers, donors, private-sector partners, financiers and journalists?	GRID-Arendal + invited contributors
13:00-14:00	**Lunch**		
14:00-15:00	**Beyond the project cycle**	GEF Comms Network Participants identify how they can use what they have developed after	GEF Sec GRID-Arendal & IW:LEARN

		IWC11: priority audience, opportunity, messenger, channel and next step. Linking strategic communications to wider uptake, partnership and influence beyond the project cycle.	
15:00-15:20	Ask the experts	Q&A session	GRID-Arendal / IW:LEARN
15:20-15:30	Closing	Key takeaways, next steps and links to existing IW:LEARN communications resources and learning materials.	IW:LEARN / GRID-Arendal