

**Coastal States Organization**

**2023-2028 Strategic Plan**

February 2023

# **Introduction**

The Coastal States Organization (CSO) represents the nation’s coastal States, Territories, and Commonwealths on ocean, coastal, and Great Lake management issues. CSO works at the nexus of coastal science research, social science, policy, and outreach to inform decision-making and provide coastal communities with tools to improve their capacity to understand, plan for, and respond to changing coasts now and into the future. CSO’s Membership consists of Governor appointed delegates, typically the head of the State, Territory, or Commonwealth’s Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP).

CSO’s organizational objectives are summarized in our vision, mission, who we serve, and niche.

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| **Our Vision** | The vision of CSO is that the nation’s coastal areas are sustainably and equitably managed to balance economic and resource values and uses. |
| **Our Mission** | The CSO mission is to support the work and shared vision of the coastal states and territories for the protection, conservation, responsible use, and sustainable economic development of the nation’s coastal resources. |
| **Who We Serve** | CSO represents the nation’s coastal states and territories on coastal management issues. |
| **Our Niche** | The Coastal States Organization represents the interests of the State and Territory Coastal Management Programs and their work with federal decision-makers.  CSO is a leader and trusted source of information for coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes management.  CSO is a respected, unified voice that brings together the coastal states and territories on issues of mutual interest. |

The audience for the CSO Strategic Plan is CSO Members and Staff, nonprofit partners, and potential funders.

# **CSO 2023-2028 Strategic Goals and Objectives**

CSO’s 2023-2028 strategic goals are divided into External Campaign Goals and Internal Organizational Goals. The External Campaign Goals center around our work to advance CSO Member priorities on ocean, coastal, and Great Lake management issues. The Internal Organizational Goals are focused on ensuring the long-term sustainable operations of CSO.

# **External Campaign Goals**

## **Goal 1. Enhance the capacity of Coastal Zone Management Programs (CZMPs)**

State CZMPs have a wide range of coastal responsibilities and are tasked with balancing multiple competing uses of the coastal zone. CSO works to increase CZMPs ability to achieve their goals in ways that enhance coastal community resilience, address climate impacts, and new pressures in the coastal zone. We do this through advocacy, education, network and relationship building, and justice-oriented programming.

We will do this through the following Strategic Objectives –

### **Objective 1. Funding**

*CSO will work to increase funding to CZMPs.*

* **Focus Area 1. Annual Appropriations –** CSO will work to maintain or increase annual appropriations for CZMPs.
* **Focus Area 2. Infrastructure/IRA/Supplemental Appropriations Implementation –**CSO will work with federal agencies to ensure that CZMPs have access to funding from one-time funding legislation, and coastal funding is spent effectively, efficiently, and equitably.
* **Focus Area 3. Funding Sources that CZM Programs Utilize –** CSO will work to maintain or increase annual appropriations for federal programs that CZMPs use and/or support the broad work of CZMPs (e.g., NCRF, SRF, USACE coastal, Justice40, ROP).
* **Focus Area 4. Federal Funding Alignment** **–** CSO will work with Congress and federal agencies to ensure federal funding within and across agencies is easier to access for CZMPs and is coordinated to achieve the highest priority and justice-oriented coastal goals.

### **Objective 2. Networking and Peer-to-Peer Sharing**

*CSO will support relationship building and peer learning across CZMPs, together with coastal practitioners at the federal, regional, state and local levels.*

* **Focus Area 1. Work Groups –** CSO will administer member driven working groups on critical and timely coastal topics.
* **Focus Area 2. Hosting meetings –** CSO will convene two member meetings annually.
* **Focus Area 3. Informational Webinars –** CSO will host informational webinars for members on coastal topics that share best practices and new information relevant to CZMPs.
* **Focus Area 4. Facilitating Member-to-Member Requests –** CSO will facilitate direct requests for information or best practices between CZMPs.
* **Focus Area 5. Exchange Program** **–** CSO will provide administrative and planning support to allow CZMPs to have temporary programmatic staff exchanges to enhance learning and support regional priorities.

### **Objective 3. Assistance in Program Implementation**

*CSO will directly assist CZMPs in the implementation of project or programmatic work where CSO is better able to achieve management objectives, such as when multi-state collaborations make a national NGO better suited to lead or when policy or federal expertise is needed. Assistance may include facilitation, project management, technical assistance, serving as a federal liaison, or more.*

* **Focus Area 1. Facilitate Regional Collaborations** **–** CSO will directly support regional coordination across CZMPs to achieve better regional management outcomes (e.g., this has been done across Islands state and territories, and in support the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study).
* **Focus Area 2. Building and Implementing the Project Slate to Support CZM Programs –** CSO will provide technical assistance and project management to advance on-the-ground project work, including pre-planning, planning, and engineering & design (E&D) in coordination with state CZMPs that have restoration project goals. (e.g., CSO is currently supporting Great Lakes States with E&D work; supporting natural infrastructure projects in frontline communities in three states; and to providing technical assistance to communities in the Great Lakes in partnership Association of State Floodplain Managers).
* **Focus Area 3. Addressing CZM Program Implementation Challenges with Federal Agencies** **–** CSO will work with federal agencies to better understand and improve regulatory and procedural impediments to CZMPs’ functioning.

### **Objective 4. Improving Technical Capacity**

*CSO will directly provide tools, training, and resources to state CZMP staff to equip them to better do their job.*

* **Focus Area 1. Developing Tools to Improve Coastal Management –** CSO will develop specific products (factsheets, white papers, trainings) to educate and inform CZMP staff on key issues.
* **Focus Area 2. Develop Technical Guidance –** CSO will provide technical policies, procedures, regulatory, and scientific guidance that state CZMPs (or local coastal managers who work with state CZMPs) can directly use (e.g., CSO is currently developing guidance for how to manage acquired properties, and will be developing policies and procedures for more just and equitable coastal management).

## **Goal 2. Educate decision-makers on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes management and coastal zone management programs**

Effective education of coastal decision-makers on needs, value, and benefits of coastal zone management and CZMPs is critical for galvanizing support for CZMPs and coastal management efforts. CSO implements numerous strategies to inform and influence coastal decision-makers. These strategies range from the development of compelling communication materials and public education to amplifying messaging through coalitions to the direct development and maintenance of relationships with decision-makers.

CSO’s efforts to educate decision-makers will be done through the following Strategic Objectives –

### **Objective 1. Building Federal Relationships**

*CSO will maintain and enhance existing relationships with the Executive Branch (e.g. NOAA, FEMA, USACE, EPA, USFWS, White House OMB, CEQ), foster relationships with new political appointees, encourage interagency collaboration, and to leverage these relationships to advance CSO priorities.*

* **Focus Area 1. Maintain and Enhance Existing Relationships with Federal Agencies** **–** CSO will maintain existing relationships, communications channels, and collaborations with federal agencies. CSO will regularly identify opportunities to enhance engagement with federal agencies.
* **Focus Area 2. Maintain and Enhance Existing Relationships with White House Offices and Councils –** CSO will work to cultivate dialog on CSO policy and funding priorities with the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget.
* **Focus Area 3. Foster Relationships with New Agency Leadership –** CSO will work to foster robust relationships with incoming agency leadership, particularly following administration transitions.
* **Focus Area 4. Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice & Accessibility (DEIJA) with Federal Agencies –** CSO will work with federal agencies to address DEIJA priorities in CZM issues.
* **Focus Area 5. Foster Relationships with Interagency Efforts –** CSO will identify opportunities for federal interagency, state, and tribal collaboration to advance CSO priorities.

### **Objective 2. Communications**

*CSO will implement a comprehensive strategy to maximize communications resources and deliver clear and convincing messaging to target audiences—Congress, federal agencies, and the public—to advance organizational objectives.*

* **Focus Area 1. Provide CSO Staff and Members with Effective External Communications Tools and Messages –** CSO will develop, maintain, and update external communication tools and messages and provide these to CSO staff and members.
* **Focus Area 2. Utilized Existing CSO and Partner Communications Channels to Promote Awareness and Support for CZM and CZMPs –** CSO will use communications channels to provide key audiences—Congress, federal agencies, and the public—with content to promote awareness and support for coastal zone management and coastal zone management programs.
* **Focus Area 3. Develop New Communications Materials That Fill Gaps and Expand Reach –** CSO will regularly identify communication needs and develop new products to address these needs, fill tool and resource gaps, and expand CSO and CSO members communication reach on coastal zone management and coastal zone management programs.
* **Focus Areas 4. Ensure CSO Members Are Regularly and Effectively Updated –** CSO staff will share and inform CSO members about current activities, significant developments, and coastal management tools and resources; these communications will come via multiple channels including but not limited to email, CSO’ newsletter, podcasts, and the CSO website.

### **Objective 3. Building NGO Partner Relationships**

*CSO will leverage and build Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) relationships and networks to amplify and broaden CSO’s efforts to educate coastal decision-makers and advance organizational priorities.*

* **Focus Area 1. Build, Collaborate With, and Represent CSO On Diverse NGO Coalitions to Advance CZM Interests –** CSO will represent and advance organizational priorities on coalition groups including the National Ocean Service Roundtable, Friends of NOAA, the National Infrastructure Work Group, etc.
* **Focus Area 2. Collaborate with NGO partners on Initiatives that Benefit CSO, CZM, and/or CZMPs** **–** CSO will partner with NGOs on programmatic work that will advance one or more objectives within this strategic plan. CSO will identify new opportunities for partnership—on policy and legislation, projects, fellowship, etc – through engaging new partners, with a focus on NGOs representing diverse communities.
* **Focus Area 3. Work with NGO Partners to Advance DEIJA Priorities –** CSO will prioritize opportunities to work with NGO partners to address DEIJA efforts set by the CSO Membership.

### **Objective 4. Capturing the value/impacts of CZM**

*CSO will develop new and compelling economic, social, environmental, and other impact analyses, stories, and case studies to better inform coastal decision-makers of the value of investments in coastal zone management and CZMPs.*

* **Focus Area 1. Economic Analysis of CZM –** CSO will assess the need for additional analysis on the economic benefits of coastal zone management. Where needs are identifies, CSO will seek to undertake efforts to obtain meaningful and accurate economic analyses.
* **Focus Area 2. Documenting Impacts of CZM –** CSO will identify areas where documentation of impacts will enhance efforts to educate decision-makers (e.g. on-the-ground impacts of Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, benefits to underserved and disadvantaged communities, Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study outcomes, project outcomes, etc.)

**Goal 3. Advance policy that improves coastal management**

One of CSO’s foundational purposes is developing consensus organizational policy positions across our members. CSO will then share these consensus positions with thought-leaders and federal decision-makers, and bring these positions to regulatory and legislative forums.

CSO will formulate and advance policy that improves coastal management through the following Strategic Objectives –

### **Objective 1. Policy and Regulations Analysis**

*CSO will build consensus policy positions on existing and emerging ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resource issues among the CSO membership. CSO will track and assess emerging policy, regulatory, and legal issues and will inform and advise CSO membership on implications and recommended actions consistent with organizational priorities.*

* **Focus Area 1. Build Consensus Amongst States on CZM Issues** – CSO will identify emerging issue areas where a unified policy positions would enable CSO to more effectively advance state priorities and will lead the development of such consensus positions.
* **Focus Area 2. Review and Assess New, Proposed, and Existing Federal Policies for Recommendation to Agencies** – CSO will track proposals for new policies and modifications to existing policies, identify proposals for which it is recommended that CSO take a position, and develop the appropriate input to federal agencies.
* **Focus Area 3. Explaining New Federal Policies to Members** – CSO will provide CSO Members with materials explaining new federal policies including analyses of the relevance and impact on CZMPs and states more broadly.
* **Focus Area 4. Review and Compile State-by-State Coastal Policies and Procedures** –CSO will identify areas where state-by-state policy analysis will inform effective ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes management and or effective education of decision-makers. CSO will implement projects to develop such content as needed.
* **Focus Area 5. Develop Legal Interpretations on CZM Issues** – CSO will monitor litigation affecting coastal zone management, alert members of relevant developments, and where appropriate develop legal interpretations to inform CSO actions to influence litigation (e.g. through amicus briefs), regulations, legislation, or other policy.

### **Objective 2. Congressional Policy Development and Analysis**

*CSO will advance consensus policy positions on existing and emerging ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resource management issues through direct engagement with Congress.*

* **Focus Area 1. Authorization of CZMA Related Policies** – CSO will identify legislation amending the CZMA, inform CSO members of the implication of legislation, develop consensus positions, and educate Congress in accordance with the consensus positions. CSO will work with congressional Members and staff to identify means to reauthorize and/or enhance the CZMA.
* **Focus Area 2. Other Coastal Policy Authorization** – CSO will identify legislation with ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resource management impacts and inform CSO members of the implications of the legislation including DEIJA considerations, develop consensus positions where relevant, and educate Congress in accordance with those positions.
* **Focus Area 3. Including CZM Consideration in Non-Coastal Policy** – CSO will identify non-coastal legislation which could incorporate coastal zone management considerations (e.g., social equity and justice in coastal areas in Housing and Urban Development legislation, or coastal wetland considerations in the Farm Bill) and, where relevant, develop consensus policy positions and educate Congress in accordance with these positions.

# **Internal Organization Goals**

## **Goal 4. Sustain organizational functional capacity**

In order to accomplish the above tasks and achieve the above goals, CSO must be a thriving, functional organization. Consideration for how we operate, how we support our people – both staff and members – and the financial stability of the organization is essential to the external effectiveness of the organization. CSO will strive to create a culture of passionate work, driven by a vision of more equitable, more resilient coast, achieved by people who feel valued as individuals while working together as a team.

We will do this through the following Strategic Objectives –

### **Objective 1. Staffing**

*CSO will support our support and expand our greatest asset: our staff and fellows.*

* **Focus Area 1. Maintain Staff** – CSO will support our staff in ways that support professional growth, value individual and team achievement, and provide just compensation.
* **Focus Area 2. Staff Growth Area Priorities** – CSO will seek to increase staff capacity in organizational areas that are under-supported, including programmatic work on DEIJA, and communications.

### **Objective 2. Budget/Funding**

*CSO will continue to be a financially sound organization, with immaculate bookkeeping and revenue that on average meets or exceeds expenses.*

* **Focus Area 1. Budget In the Black Over 3-Year Average** – CSO will ensure that over any 3-year period revenue will equal or exceed expenses.
* **Focus Area 2. Budget Growth Above Inflation** – CSO will expand funding streams and increase revenue from each funding stream so that aggregated revenue increases above inflation.

### **Objective 3. Membership Participation/Engagement**

*CSO will support member participation at every level of the organization, with members expected to support the unified goals of the organization with funding support, staff engagement, and sharing expertise (i.e., members provide their “time, talent, and treasury”).*

* **Focus Area 1. Percent of Members Paying Dues** – On average, 32 of the 34 states with CZMPs contribute to CSO financially each year.
* **Focus Area 2. Percent of Members Attending At Least One Member Meeting** – On average, 32 of the 34 states with CZMPs participate in at least one member meeting per year.
* **Focus Area 3. Workgroup Participation** – Each workgroup has representatives from at least 6 states, and across work groups, at least 25 of the 34 states participate.

### **Objective 4. Diversity**

*CSO will cultivate an inclusive and welcoming environment, value diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and will empower people with traditionally under-represented and marginalized backgrounds.*

* **Focus Area 1. Operational/Organizational Policies that Support Diverse Workforce and Membership Engagement** – CSO will review organizational policies – internal and external – to consider how they incorporate DEIJA, and as needed adapt them to be more equitable and justice seeking.
* **Focus Area 2. Foster Cultural Understanding around Justice and Equity** – CSO will support staff and members’ efforts to grow and evolve how they integrate principles of justice and equity into their work; CSO will bring Tribal Nation perspectives into organizational programming and events; and will seek out new, diverse, and historically marginalized perspectives when developing internal and external policies.

### **Objective 5. Planning**

*CSO will maintain organizational plans to guide our work, while being nimble enough to adapt and focus on changing needs.*

* **Focus Area 1. 5-year Strategic Plans** – CSO will maintain a 5-year Strategic Plan to be reviewed mid-way through the plan.
* **Focus Area 2. CSO Annual Work Plan** – CSO will develop annual action plans tied to advancing the goals, objectives, and focus areas of the 5-year Strategic Plan.
* **Focus Area 3. Staff Work Plans** – CSO staff will develop annual work plans that will achieve the outcomes of the annual action plan.

### **Objective 6. Operations**

*CSO will function as well run, cost-effective, modern organization that meets the standards of a Washington, D.C.-based association representing state governments.*

* **Focus Area 1. Office, Equipment and Technology** – CSO will maintain internal and public-facing equipment and technology (e.g., office equipment, website) that serves the staff and members of the organization.
* **Focus Area 2. Modernization** – CSO will maintain operations and policies that reflect the current business and non-profit trends and expectations (e.g., balance of remote and in-office work).