



Ocean
Alliance
Canada

Guidelines for Application

International Applicants

The Sustainable Blue Economy Professional

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1.0 Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Sustainable Blue Economy Professional (SBEP) designation with Ocean Alliance Canada in partnership with ECO Canada.

This designation process is overseen by the Blue Economy Certification and Approvals Board (BECAB), a body dedicated to recognizing competent professionals in the Blue Economy. BECAB reviews and ratifies all candidates, supports the ongoing development of the designation process, and ensures that the SBEP Code of Ethics is upheld.

This guide was developed to assist those who are applying for one of the designations under Ocean Alliance Canada. If you require any support, accommodations or additional guidance as you prepare your application, please contact us at SBEP@eco.ca. We are happy to assist!

2.0 Terminology

2.1 Sustainable Blue Economy

An approach to ocean-based economic growth that balances environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic prosperity. It recognizes the ocean as a living system supporting innovation, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

2.2 Sustainable Blue Economy Professional

A professional who integrates ecological, social, and economic perspectives to promote sustainability across ocean sectors. SBEPs possess interdisciplinary knowledge of marine governance, resource management, technology, and community engagement.

2.3 Blue National Occupancy Standards (BNOS)

BNOS stands for the Blue National Occupational Standards. It is a national framework that outlines the skills and competencies people need to work in ocean-related careers. These standards help guide training programs and support the SBEP designation.

2.4 Career Explorer Tool

The Career Explorer Tool by Ocean Alliance Canada is the first of its kind. It provides a platform to explore ocean-based career pathways, see typical salary ranges for those roles and regional career support. This tool is part of the SBEP application process.

3.0 The Sustainable Blue Economy Professional Designation

3.1 SBEP at a Glance

The Sustainable Blue Economy Professional (SBEP) designation recognizes individuals whose knowledge, experience, and ethics support a sustainable global ocean economy.

Developed by Ocean Alliance Canada in partnership with ECO Canada and supported by the Future Skills Centre, this credential validates your education, skills, and real-world experience in the sustainable blue economy.

Built on the Blue National Occupational Standards (BNOS), SBEP defines the competencies that strengthen the ocean workforce across research, industry, policy, science, technology and community leadership.

This designation serves as a trusted benchmark of professionalism and ethical practice across ocean sectors and roles worldwide.

3.2 The Blue National Occupancy Standards (BNOS)

In 2021, ECO Canada, with support from the Future Skills Centre, introduced the first National Occupational Standards for the Blue Economy (BNOS). These standards help strengthen the ocean workforce by defining the core competencies needed across the sector. They also provide a foundation for professional recognition and support the development of training programs that meet current and future workforce needs.

The BNOS project identified six key blue economy sectors and outlined the essential roles within each one. For every role, comprehensive competency profiles were created, covering technical, personal, regulatory, and environmental skills. These profiles helped shape the SBEP designation and ensure it remains aligned with the evolving needs of the ocean workforce.

3.3 Who is an SBEP?

Ocean professionals work across many ocean-dependent industries, including shipping fisheries, marine technology, tourism and energy (for example). They apply sector-specific skills to support operations, encourage innovation, and strengthen overall industry performance.

Sustainable Blue Economy Professionals (SBEPs) build on this foundation. They focus not just on what ocean activity is carried out, but how it is done, ensuring growth, livelihoods and innovation happen in balance with the long-term health of marine ecosystems. SBEPs are experienced, dedicated and committed to upholding a national Code of Ethics for the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Sustainable Blue Economy Professional

Ensures ocean-based activity is carried out sustainably across industries

Integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability into practice

Measures success by economic growth and long-term ocean health

Works in any ocean-dependent industry (e.g., shipping, fisheries, oil & gas, tourism).

Focuses on sector-specific expertise and operations.

Measures success by output, efficiency, and industry performance.

Ocean Professional

3.4 Your Designation Options

There are three (3) levels within the Sustainable Blue Economy Professional designation available to applicants. Each level reflects a different combination of experience and skill development, providing clear benchmarks for professionals as they grow in their ocean careers. These levels help individuals understand where they are in their professional journey and offer a standard to measure their skills and experience against.

The first level is designed for early career professionals or those entering the ocean sector from another field. As individuals progress, they can either move into a specialized stream or be recognized as a general practitioner within the sector.

3.4.1 SBEP *in-training* (SBEPt)

An SBEP in-training is a professional within the first five (5) years of their ocean career. This criterion represents a brand-new entrant into the ocean industry whether having just finished formal education or as a worker transferring into the ocean sector.

3.4.2 SBEP *General* (SBEP)

A general SBEP is a professional with five (5) years or more experience in the ocean sector without necessarily specializing in one area or occupation type within the industry.

3.4.3 SBEP *Specialized* (SBEP, *Listed specialization*)

A specialized SBEP is someone with five (5) or more years of experience in the ocean sector in a role that matches one of the seven (7) thematic specialization areas.

3.5 Areas of Specialization

SBEPs who are applying to receive recognition in a specialized area within the Blue Economy, can apply to one or more of the following specializations.

Specialization	Defined	Typical Roles
Operations & Navigation	Professionals who operate, navigate, and maintain marine vessels while ensuring safe, ethical, and sustainable practices at sea.	- Navigation Officer - Marine Technician - Deckhand - Offshore Operations Supervisor
Science & Ecosystem Management	Professionals who study and monitor marine environments to support evidence-based, ethical, and sustainable ecosystem management.	- Marine Biologist - Fisheries Analyst - Water Quality Specialist - Oceanographer - Marine Mammal Technician
Technology & Engineering	Professionals who design and maintain marine technologies using responsible engineering practices that support innovation and long-term sustainability.	- Acoustic Engineer - Software Developer - Ocean Engineer - Robotics Technician - Instrumentation Technologist
Geoanalytics & Spatial Planning	Professionals who use spatial data and GIS tools to guide ethical, evidence-based decisions in marine planning and resource management.	- GIS Technician - Marine Spatial Planner - Remote Sensing Analyst - Hydrographic Surveyor
Sustainable Infrastructure	Professionals who develop and monitor ocean infrastructure and renewable energy systems with a focus on stewardship, safety, and sustainable design.	- Hydrographer - Wind Turbine Technician - Geotechnical Engineer - Coastal Engineer
Fisheries & Aquaculture	Professionals who support the sustainable cultivation and management of aquatic species through ethical, compliant, and ecosystem-focused practices.	- Aquaculture Technician - Fisheries Observer - Fisheries Compliance Officer - Hatchery Technician
Support & Leadership	Professionals who advance ocean-sector work through leadership, education, communication, and policy, promoting ethical practice and continuous learning across the sector.	- Ocean Literacy Specialist - Ocean Policy Analyst - Outdoor Animators - Program Managers in the Blue Economy

Marine & Coastal Tourism	Professionals who support sustainable tourism in ocean and coastal settings through responsible operations, environmental stewardship, cultural respect, and community-focused visitor experiences.	○ Travel consultant ○ Marine Adventure guide ○ Naturalist
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4.0 Benefits of Designation

Certification delivers measurable value: trusted standards enhance your credibility, a professional network expands your opportunities, and continuous development keeps your skills competitive. Together, these benefits increase your impact, visibility, and long-term career returns in the ocean sector.

Beyond these long-term career advantages, designated SBEPs also receive a range of exclusive benefits, discounts, and professional supports that add even more value to their certification.

4.1 Ocean Alliance Canada Benefits

- Digital badge to display designation on social platforms
- Discounts to OAC and ECO Canada events including:
 - Blue Economy Summit, Ocean Alliance Canada Conference, ECO Impact and other sponsored international OAC events
- Networking and mentorship opportunities
- Eligible for OAC and ECO Canada award nominations
- Preferential opportunities to share expertise through webinars and blog posts
- Continued access to existing tools and resources
 - Career explorer
 - Webinars

4.2 Professional Service Benefits

- Discounts on HR services (prepare for interviews, resume and cover letter assistance, LinkedIn branding, skill mapping)
 - Please refer to our [HR Services for Individuals](#) webpage for more information.
- Discounts on ECO Academy learning and training events
- Early access to industry reports and insights

4.3 Apparel, Retail & Travel

- Park n' fly and car rental discounts (only in Canada)

5.0 Application Process

The application process is broken down into four (4) main components. In the next section, you will find a general description of the required criteria for each step.

The Four main components are:

1. Experience & Education Verification
2. Self-Assessment
3. Knowledge & Ethics Exam
4. Declaration of the Code of Ethics

5.1 Experience & Education Verification

Applicable step for all applicants.

In this step, applicants provide their education and work experience. This section must be completed before moving onto the self-assessment or career exploration activity and cannot be edited once submitted. Applicants should be ready to enter their relevant work history, including years of employment and a brief outline of key duties and responsibilities. Relevant volunteer experience may be included if the applicant feels it strengthens their application.

5.1.1 International Applicants Residing in Canada Education Requirements

Applicants working or living in Canada with International education (outside of the US, UK and AUS) will be required to submit an equivalency report after submission as this can only be done by the applicant and all costs must be paid for by the applicant.

5.1.2 International Applicants Education Requirements

International applicants who are living and working internationally, do not need to have their education verified against Canadian standards, are required to go through an alternative verification process or upload additional documentation such as an official transcript or diploma (with translation if needed).

Other scenarios that will be considered with International applicants:

- An applicant has graduated from an accredited program or recognized in their country
- The program is registered by a reputable international database:
 - UNESCO Global Education Monitoring
 - World Higher Education Database (WHED)
 - Country-specific Ministry of Education listings

5.2 Self-Assessment

Applicable step for all applicants. SBEpt applicants have a slightly modified activity (see below).

This step allows applicants who are applying to become an SBEP or SBEP specialized to compare their experience against the benchmark assessment criteria from the Blue National Occupancy Standards. You will be presented with a list of skills and asked to indicate your level of competence for each one. Your responses will generate a graded result, which must then be validated by up to three peers.

5.2.1 SBEP^t Self-Assessment Activity

In-training SBEPs are not required to complete a full skills assessment. Instead, they participate in a skills and career pathway mapping exercise using the Ocean Alliance Canada Career Explorer. Through this tool, SBEP^t applicants identify at least three jobs of interest and review the skills connected to each one. This is a reflective, exploratory activity designed to help new industry entrants understand their options and areas for growth. The components of the exercise are outlined below.

Step	Activity	Outcome
1. Reflective Pre-Questions	Respond to a short set of personal reflection prompts	Clarifies motivation and interests
2. Explorer Activity	Use the Career Explorer Tool to explore at least 3 roles	Identifies potential pathways and associated skills
3. Skills Mapping	Record key skills from each role and compare against current strengths/interests	Builds self-awareness of alignment and gaps
4. Post-Reflection	Respond to guided reflection questions based on insights	Connects exploration to personal development goals
5. Optional Action Planning	Identify one small next step	Encourages movement toward career pathway clarity

5.3 The SBEP Body of Knowledge

Applicable to all applicants

What truly sets an ocean professional apart is not just what they know, but how they apply that knowledge in their daily work to support sustainable, responsible ocean practices. The [SBEP Body of Knowledge \(BOK\)](#) outlines the core knowledge expected of an SBEP and sets the benchmark for how that knowledge should be applied ethically in professional practice.

The BOK consists of two parts:

1. Guidelines to Ethical Practice
2. Core Knowledge Areas

5.3.1 SBEP Guidelines of Ethical Practice

The *SBEP Code of Ethics* defines the values and professional behaviours expected of all Sustainable Blue Economy Professionals. By committing to these principles, SBEPs reinforce public trust in sustainable ocean management and demonstrate their dedication to ethical, responsible practice.

The *SBEP Guidelines for Ethical Practice*, which accompanies the Code of Ethics, provides practical examples to help professionals interpret and apply these values in real-world situations. As members of a profession that serves both society and the environment, SBEPs play a vital role in promoting responsible ocean stewardship.

By adhering to the Code of Ethics, SBEPs:

- Uphold a shared set of professional values that ensure consistent, competent, and ethical service to the public.
- Demonstrate leadership within the blue economy by guiding society toward practices that support economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.
- Maintain the trust of communities, employers, and the public, who increasingly look to SBEPs for credible guidance as the ocean sector continues to grow and evolve.

To remain a member in good standing, all certified and in-training SBEPs must follow the Code's five core tenets:

Section	Topic	Description
1	Marine Stewardship	SBEPs recognize the value of environmental efficiency and sustainability, determine the benefits and costs of additional marine and aquatic stewardship, and continue to implement sustainable solutions.
2	Blue Economy Advocacy	SBEPs empower coastal communities around them, enhancing the dignity and reputation of both the profession and the designation, while respecting the welfare, health, and safety of all persons and the environment through competency, honesty, and transparency.
3	Professional Responsibilities	SBEPs commit to continuous learning and uphold the profession's ethical, regulatory, and practice standards by acting responsibly, staying accountable, and working within the full scope of their expertise as the sector evolves.
4	Ethical and Moral Standards	Because SBEPs influence public health, safety, and the future of marine ecosystems, they must follow an ethical code that ensures integrity,

		objectivity, and advocacy for those who cannot advocate for themselves
5	Confidentiality	SBEPs must safeguard all confidential information obtained through their work, use it only as permitted by law and contract, and never for personal gain.

5.3.2 Core Knowledge Areas for SBEP

The Body of Knowledge, though applicable Internationally and highlighting international topics, occasionally uses Canadian examples, especially within the Indigenous Knowledge section. International applicants are encouraged to explore regional equivalencies for these sections and will not be expected to know Canadian specific knowledge in their exam.

Sustainable Blue Economy Professionals (SBEPs) need both technical expertise in their field and a broad understanding of ocean systems, governance, and sustainability. Section C outlines the [SBEP Body of Knowledge \(SBEP BOK\)](#), the core knowledge areas that support effective, responsible practice in the blue economy.

A strong understanding of the SBEP BOK enables professionals to:

- Integrate ecological, social, and economic dimensions of the blue economy.
- Apply the laws and regulations that guide ocean and coastal management.
- Interpret technical standards, monitoring systems, and marine operations.
- Assess environmental, operational, and socio-economic impacts of ocean activities.
- Communicate data, findings, and recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Build respectful, collaborative relationships with governments, industry, communities, and Indigenous partners.

The SBEP Body of knowledge consists of seven (7) core knowledge areas, that are broken down into subsections within the BOK.

Section	Topic	Description
1	Ocean Governance and Regulatory Frameworks	This area covers the laws, policies, and institutions that guide how the ocean is managed, protected, and regulated in its marine and coastal resources.
2	Marine Ecosystems, Biodiversity, and Conservation	This area focuses on how marine ecosystems function, how biodiversity is protected, and how conservation tools and indicators are used to monitor ocean health.

3	Blue Economy Sectors and Technologies	This area provides an overview of key ocean industries and the emerging technologies and innovations that are transforming them toward cleaner and more sustainable growth.
4	Sustainability and Climate Resilience	This area examines how science, policy, and technology work together to reduce emissions, adapt to changing ocean conditions, and build climate-resilient coastal communities.
5	Marine Resource Management	This area explores sustainable approaches to using, protecting, and restoring marine resources while balancing ecological integrity with social and economic needs.
6	Community Engagement and Indigenous Knowledge	This area highlights the importance of working with communities, honouring Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and supporting inclusive, collaborative approaches to sustainable ocean governance.
7	Ocean Data and Innovation	This area examines how digital tools, monitoring systems, and emerging technologies improve ocean forecasting, support open science, and strengthen sustainable decision-making.

5.3.3 SBEP Proctored Examination

Applicable only to SBEP & SBEP Specialized applicants.

Only Sustainable Blue Economy Professionals (SBEPs) and SBEPs pursuing a specialization are required to complete the SBEP Body of Knowledge (BOK) examination. *This requirement does not apply to Sustainable Blue Economy Professionals-in-training (SBEPTs).* The exam is multiple choice and applicants are provided 1.5 hours to complete the exam. SBEPs must achieve a minimum passing grade of 70 percent. The exam may be taken in person or virtually.

To support success, applicants are strongly encouraged to read and study the BOK in its entirety and the practice exam before scheduling their proctored session. Additional targeted courses will also be available for those who wish to deepen their knowledge in specific areas of the BOK.

Applicants may attempt the exam up to three times per year, with additional fees applied to retakes.

More information can be found in the [Written Exam Guidelines for Applicants and Proctors](#) document.

5.4 Declaration of the Code of Ethics

Applicable to all applicants.

The SBEP Code of Ethics forms the foundation for the Guidelines for Ethical Practice and sets the expectations for professional conduct within the designation. As the final step of the application process, all SBEP applicants must declare their commitment to this Code, demonstrating their dedication to upholding its values and the tenets it outlines.

5.5 Optional Portfolio Upload

Applicable to all applicants.

Once all the previous three sections of the application are complete, applicants have the option to upload additional supporting documents including but not limited to: reports, work examples, presentations, letters of support, micro credentials, certificates and any other documentation.

6.0 Maintenance Requirements

Designated individuals are required to complete a minimum of 20 professional development credits per year to maintain their designation. Professional development credits can be earned in many ways including: digital learning and micro credentials, attending webinars, conferences and networking events (for a full list of eligible activities please see the PD guidelines document). Continued professional development ensures that designated individuals remain committed to upholding high standards of work and staying up to date with industry activities.

7.0 Designation Fees

There are two payments associated with applying and becoming an SBEP

1. Application Fee (*one-time fee*)
 - Paid at time of application
2. Renewal Fee (*recurring fee yearly*)
 - Paid annually in April

Depending on the level of SBEP an individual is applying for, these costs are different. See the below table for the exact amounts.

SBEP Level	Application Fee (USD)	Yearly Renewal Fee (USD)
SBEPt	\$200.00	\$130.00
SBEP	\$300.00	\$230.00
SBEP specialized	\$300.00	\$230.00

All fees are processed through the SBEP portal where automatic payments can be set up for smooth yearly renewal.

7.1 Late Payment Policy

Renewal fee payment is due by April 30 and can be paid within the application portal. Late payments are subject to a penalty of \$100.00 (USD) for SBEP and SBEP *specialized*, and a \$50.00 (USD) fee for SBEpt. Until payment is received, the member is considered not in good standing. This status will be lifted once payment is received.

In certain circumstances, OAC and ECO Canada may approve a request for a “membership dues deferment”. If a member has been unable to make payments for reasons such as unemployment, health/disability issues or return to school, such a request must be submitted. It should be noted that a deferment of payment does not change an individual’s required date of term renewal.

If it has been more than 60 days without communication from a member with outstanding fees, their account will be removed, and they may have to re-apply as a new applicant. A lapsed member can apply to reinstate their designation within 3 years of the date lapsed provided they pay the reinstatement fee and update their professional practice and professional development logs.

8.0 Continued Support

Thank you for your interest in the Sustainable Blue Economy Professional designation and for your commitment to responsible, future-focused ocean practice. Our team is here to support you throughout your application and beyond, and we encourage you to reach out to us at SBEP@eco.ca if you have any questions. For quick answers and additional guidance, please also explore our FAQ page, where you’ll find helpful information to assist you at every step of the process.



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