

# CHARLES DARWIN FOUNDATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 - 2027



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**GALAPAGOS**

# **2022 -2027**

## **CDF STRATEGIC PLAN**





## INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARLES DARWIN FOUNDATION

The Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) is an international non-profit organization with an operational base in the Galapagos Islands, a UNESCO world heritage site located 1,000 kilometers off the coast of Ecuador. All research projects operate from the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) under the mission of CDF to ensure the conservation of the environment and biodiversity of the Galapagos archipelago.

For more than 60 years, the research undertaken at CDRS has focused on furthering our understanding of the unique natural systems of Galapagos, their relationship with those living in the archipelago, and the intricate and delicate balance between climate and nature. Major research efforts have also focused on the prevention, control, and eradication of invasive species to conserve the iconic flora and fauna of the islands and maintain Galapagos as one of the best-preserved archipelagos in the world.

Nonetheless, the Galapagos Islands continue to face significant challenges driven in large part by the rapid growth in tourism and associated increase in the resident human population, both of which place burdens on limited resources and pressure on the fragile ecosystem and natural resources of this archipelago.





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Galapagos also faces numerous ecological threats – chief among them the impact of invasive non-native species and the potential imposed by newly introduced species; the impacts of climate change on highly sensitive ecosystems and the services they provide; and the loss and degradation of critical native habitat across different biomes.

Given the great conservation challenges we face today, furthering scientific research and understanding in the archipelago could not be more important and we must continue to lead innovative efforts to effect transformative change in Galapagos and the critically important Eastern Tropical Pacific region as a whole. Furthermore, with its unique agreement with the State of Ecuador to provide technical advice to the Galapagos National Park Directorate and other stakeholders, CDF is positioned at the forefront of efforts to protect and conserve

the islands' unique ecosystems. A large team of dedicated scientists, volunteers, students, and national and international collaborators, underpin the work that we do with support from the local community and partner conservation organizations. Additionally, CDF's extensive and collaborative research history has generated one of the largest collections of Galapagos specimens – a critical baseline data repository for advancing research in both the marine and terrestrial sciences.

Over upcoming years, and within the framework envisioned by this Strategic Plan, we plan to not only build upon our many successes but also expand our research portfolio throughout the Eastern Tropical Pacific region in order to meet the multitude of challenges that this iconic archipelago faces today.





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## INTRODUCTION TO THE CDF STRATEGIC PLAN

The Galapagos archipelago faces a broad range of challenges for long-term conservation and sustainability. This Strategic Plan is framed around six core strategic pillars: Scientific Research, Infrastructure, Education and Outreach, Partnerships and Visibility, Financial Stability, and Institutional Governance and Culture. Each pillar has a key objective and set of sub-objectives that will strengthen and better position the Charles Darwin Foundation to address today's challenges, through the diversification of our research agenda, establishment of new alliances or the strengthening of existing ones, by improving infrastructure, strengthening fundraising efforts, improving organizational efficiency, and working closely with the local community. The Strategic Plan will be supported by a complementary Science Plan that is being developed at the same time.

Both plans have been developed in a highly participatory manner and have included the advice and ideas of CDF staff, board members, general assembly members and close partners. They are also fully aligned with the CDF mission to ensure the conservation of the environment and biodiversity of the Galapagos archipelago.

The process also considered multiple internal and external frameworks that regulate and guide the operation of CDF in Ecuador (i.e., CDF Bylaws, UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Galapagos Plan 2030, the National Agenda for Research, the Galapagos Protected Areas Management Plan, the Invasive Species Plan for Galapagos, and the Biosphere Reserve Management Plan, among others).

This Strategic Plan, and its complementary Science Plan, are a template that will guide the Charles Darwin Foundation and its operative arm, the Charles Darwin Research Station, for the next five years. The implementation and progress achieved under both plans will be monitored and evaluated through the Annual Operative Plan of the Charles Darwin Foundation.





## MISSION



TO TACKLE THE GREATEST THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO GALAPAGOS THROUGH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION ACTION, IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST IMPORTANT NATURAL TREASURES.

## VISION



TO BE THE WORLD'S LEADING RESEARCH INSTITUTION DEDICATED TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF GALAPAGOS, AND COMMITTED TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE AND COLLABORATIVE SOCIETY TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE.

The Charles Darwin Foundation carries out its mission with the endorsement of an Agreement with the Ecuadorian State since 1964 that was renewed on July 29, 2016 for an additional 25 years. The new agreement ratifies the importance of the unique alliance between the Ecuadorian Government and the Charles Darwin Foundation for the conservation of the Galapagos Islands.



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## VALUES

### EXCELLENCE

Continually strive to improve all facets of what we do and who we are.

### DISCOVERY

Foster creativity and innovation for the benefit of the environment, our communities, and society at large.

### BRAVERY

Empower scientists to explore, question, and engage in the work that matters.

### COLLABORATION

Engage with partners and leverage respective strengths and knowledge to be more effective stewards of our environment.

### RESPECT AND DIVERSITY

Recognize, appreciate, and value the qualities and perspectives of others and their inalienable rights.

### SUPPORT

Provide an engaging and motivational work environment by being at the forefront of discovery, fostering institutional trust and the means for individual growth.

# **STRATEGIC PILLARS, OBJECTIVES, AND SUB - OBJECTIVES**



# 1 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

**Be the central research enterprise advancing discovery and sustainability in Galapagos and the Eastern Tropical Pacific.**

Scientific research represents the core of what we do. For more than 60 years, scientists at the Charles Darwin Research Station have been leaders of key research initiatives and discoveries that have helped inform, and better conserve the Galapagos islands. Given the great conservation challenges we face today, furthering scientific research and understanding in the archipelago could not be more important and CDF must continue to lead innovative research efforts that effect transformative change in Galapagos and the Eastern Tropical Pacific region as a whole.

## **a. PLAN**

Develop a cutting-edge interdisciplinary Science Plan that incorporates the research priorities and major threats to Galapagos and the Eastern Tropical Pacific.

## **b. SCALE**

Scale up applied research to the landscape and regional level to drive substantive change in conservation and restoration efforts.

## **c. COLLABORATE**

Expand scientific reach by developing and strengthening tangible relations with scientists at key institutions, and by providing mechanisms to encourage collaborative research.

## **d. VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND OPEN SOURCE MINDSET**

Increase the reach of Galapagos-related information and knowledge, through web-based databases, visualizations tools, and interactive digital platforms.





# 2

## INFRASTRUCTURE



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**A modern physical plant that strives toward a carbon-neutral research station, while providing the platform and resources to support state-of-the-art research and interactive engagement with visitors.**

Central to enabling cutting-edge scientific research is the provision of facilities that allow us to investigate the often complex and multifaceted conservation challenges of today. While some buildings at CDRS have been recently upgraded and provide for state-of-the-art research, others such as the Fischer complex, are outdated and require significant overhaul in order to meet today's research needs. Supporting infrastructure – such as advanced informatics networks is also essential. Finally, it is important to develop a long-term vision for the physical plant that allows for growth and expansion of our scientific portfolio and research mandate, while also providing for an engaging and interactive dynamic with the visiting public who play a pivotal role as ambassadors for the Galapagos.

### **a. MASTER PLAN**

Develop a master plan for the research station that contemplates long-term growth, sustainable infrastructure, and the science services we envision.

### **b. FISCHER COMPLEX**

Overhaul the Fischer buildings to optimize building footprint, modernize facilities, and bring them in-line with researcher needs.

### **c. COLLECTIONS**

Re-envision the potential of the scientific collections by housing them in a state-of-the-art facility that provides for interactive engagement with visitors.

### **d. INSPIRATION COMPLEX**

Fully equip and leverage the new marine science facility to enable next generation research and attract top visiting scholars.

### **e. INFORMATICS**

Upgrade campus-wide information technology framework to support the needs of modern-day research, administration, and virtual resources, and prepare for fiber-optic arrival.



# 3 EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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## **Leverage environmental education and community outreach to drive conservation awareness and inspire behavioral change.**

While scientific research represents the core of what we do, our ability to translate our findings, and engage effectively with the broader community, is critical. Furthermore, most if not all conservation challenges in the Galapagos today comprise a human dimension. As such, actively involving and considering the needs of key community stakeholders in the research and conservation efforts we engage in has to be a central mandate. A central goal of all community engagement is to improve the living conditions and opportunities of Galapagos communities.

### **a. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Expand and diversify program to incorporate all areas of CDRS research, and integrate efforts with other locally-based partners and initiatives.

### **b. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Enhance outreach efforts by increasing community engagement with core CDRS research and conservation initiatives.



# 4 PARTNERSHIPS AND VISIBILITY

**Leverage research portfolio to strengthen institutional partnerships, and increase local and global awareness for critical regional conservation issues.**

Although the Charles Darwin Foundation has existed for more than 60 years, and we have a broad research mandate with scientific staff and infrastructure to execute many projects, we do not have the expertise to tackle all threats that the Galapagos islands face today. Partnering with key institutions to expand our research portfolio and address the myriad of challenges in Galapagos is essential to long-term success. Engaging with the broader scientific community also requires increasing the visibility of what we do to enhance partnerships and increase the potential impact of our scientific findings.

## **a. PARTNERSHIPS**

Expand reach and impact by developing effective partnerships with key conservation organizations, research and academic institutions, and public stakeholders.

## **b. POSITIONING AND RECOGNITION**

Enhance research and conservation visibility of CDRS.





# 5 FINANCIAL STABILITY

**Secure long-term financial stability for research and operations.**

Underpinning all major strategic objectives is the need to secure a stable funding platform that provides the means to tackle these goals. This involves not only expanding our current fundraising strategy but also envisioning new and innovative means to secure long-term funding.

**a. PORTFOLIO**

Expand and diversify fundraising base beyond grant writing.

**b. ENDOWMENT**

Build out a science research and mission program fund.

**c. CHAIRS**

Seek out sponsors for endowed chair research positions to attract and secure top talent.

**d. INFRASTRUCTURE**

Leverage physical plant to increase fundraising potential.

**e. MARKETING**

Optimize CDF brand and synchronize fundraising efforts to strategic goals.



# 6 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE



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## **Improve institutional governability and ensure that values and principles provide for transparency and strengthen the organization's culture.**

An efficient and transparent governing structure is key to a robust and resilient organization. CDF is a mature and well-established foundation with a solid operating platform and governance structure. Nonetheless, it is imperative to periodically review norms and make sure they are current and effective, while also streamlining processes wherever possible to maximize efficiency and strengthen the organization's culture. Assessing adequate staffing and providing incentives and mechanisms for long-term retention of staff are also essential to a healthy work environment.

### **a. STRUCTURE**

Review governance structure and interaction dynamics to better define the role for each body, and improve their integration and collaboration.

### **b. STATUTES**

Revise normative framework to align with the new governance structure.

### **c. POLICIES AND PROCESSES**

Procure and standardize administrative and scientific operating procedures and processes to improve efficiency, safety, and clarity and enhance organization culture.

### **d. MEMBERS**

Prioritize selection of new members that expand reach and potential of CDF.

### **e. STAFFING**

Assess current staffing against needs to determine key strategic areas for institutional growth and development.

### **f. RETENTION**

Provide growth and development opportunities for scientific and administrative staff to improve long-term retention.



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