

OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE  
ON-SITE SATELLITE EVENT:  
12 APRIL 2024

# BUILDING OCEAN LEADERSHIP

80 APPROX.  
PARTICIPANTS

This satellite event was co-organized by the ECOP Programme and Edinburgh Ocean Leaders (EOL), along with additional partners, and designed to explore key themes of navigating career paths across from early to mid-career stages:

**Networking, Creativity, and Resilience.**

## INTRODUCTIONS BY EDINBURGH OCEAN LEADERS & EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONALS PROGRAMME

Jessie Turner and Evgeniia Kostianaia opened the event, representing both organizing parties who had joined together to collaborate and develop the format. Jessie is Executive Director of Ocean Acidification Alliance (OA Alliance) and an Edinburgh Ocean Leader with 15 years of experience working in public policy development, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. Evgeniia is the Global Coordinator of the UN Ocean Decade endorsed Programme for Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP Programme).



## KEY NOTE SPEAKER: ERIC MARKOWITZ

Executive leadership coach Eric Markowitz kicked off the event with an engaging and interactive presentation especially curated for an audience of ocean professionals. He gave vital insights into effective networking and communication skills, including the capability to create networks and achieve shared goals. His exercises provided opportunities for the audience to interact and practice these methods in real time, and served as an ice breaker to lead into further discussions with the invited panelists. Eric's 20 years experience, and rich background in transforming companies and empowering leaders across Fortune 500 companies, added a broader perspective to the topic of ocean science, igniting the motivation and confidence needed to rise above career hurdles and achieve success.



Founder and CEO of  
HERO Business Coaching



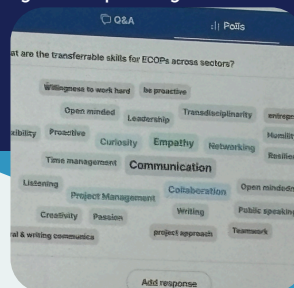
MODERATOR:  
**Laura Hernandez  
Merlano**



ECOP Canada

## INTERACTIVE PANEL SESSION

The moderator for this next part was Laura Hernandez Merlano, ECOP Canada steering committee member, who used her powerful voice to advocate on behalf of those not able to be in the room, and then introduced the panelists to begin the discussion. Laura expertly coordinated the interactive element that allowed for audience participation, whilst the emerging and established ocean leaders shared perspectives, experiences, insights and lessons learnt around the following key topics: Leadership, Networking, Creativity and Resilience. The audience were asked about transferrable skills, of which communication came out on top - followed by collaboration, project management and empathy. Empathy was also highlighted as the most important value for leadership, followed by listening and humility.



Organizing partners:



## NETWORKING EVENT

### PANELISTS AND PANEL OUTCOMES

The panelists were a mix of emerging leaders across ocean research, academia, education, governance and non-profits; working in international, national and local spheres. They gave their perspectives on the four topics, summarised below.

**João  
Canning-Clode**



Edinburgh Ocean  
Leader

**Imogen  
Napper**



Edinburgh Ocean  
Leader

**Yolanda  
Sánchez**



Edinburgh Ocean  
Leader

**Evgeniia  
Kostianaia**



ECOP  
Programme

**Crawford  
Nimea**



Federated States  
of Micronesia  
Pacific Islands



1. **Leadership:** The panelists gave insights into how they developed their leadership skills throughout their early to mid-career stages, and offered advice to emerging professionals seeking to enhance their leadership capabilities in ocean-related fields.
2. **Networking:** In the realm of ocean-related professions, the panelists shared how networking played a pivotal role in their career journeys, and what strategies they recommend for building meaningful professional connections within the marine science and conservation community.
3. **Creativity:** The panelists provided examples of innovative solutions or projects they have been involved in, highlighting the role of creativity in driving positive outcomes for the ocean environment.
4. **Resilience:** Considering the long-term goals of the UN Ocean Decade, the panelists reflected on how they sustain resilience in their commitment to ocean-related work, and offered advice for early career professionals seeking to navigate and persist in this challenging field.

### CLOSING REMARKS

Antonella Vassallo is Managing Director of the International Ocean Institute (IOI), at its headquarters in Malta. Her closing remarks wrapped up the event perfectly and she represented a figure of genuine and sustained ocean leadership. Her attention to the words of the keynote speaker, moderator and panelists, and her ability to tap into their key messages, gave the audience further suggestions of how they can approach their own unique journey within the ocean professional route. She encouraged more collaboration and especially, the art of listening, as we move forward into the next stage of the Ocean Decade.

**Antonella  
Vassallo**



### Event outcomes /Take away reflections:

This event was designed to build an enhanced understanding of career navigation for early to mid-career professionals in the Ocean sector. A key takeaway was the importance of networking that promotes collaboration over competition, supporting diversity, interdisciplinarity, and dialogue. Experiences, insights, and lessons learned from ECOPs and Edinburgh Ocean Leaders were

shared, and the panelists openly discussed their strengths, vulnerabilities, training, and interdisciplinary perspectives, providing diverse viewpoints. There was a strong emphasis on developing capacities, talents, and recognition of leadership skills, highlighting how an effective leader can bring change, support, and empower others. Additionally, audience engagement was enabled through discussions and reflections, with interactions facilitated via Slido, and this encouraged a participatory and inclusive approach encapsulated within the whole event.