

Great Barrier
Reef Foundation

Building the Foundations of a Reef Data Economy



Discover Explore Protect

Acknowledgement of Country

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation extends its deepest respect and recognition to all Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, including the Great Barrier Reef and its Catchments. First Nations Peoples maintain a unique, unsevered and strong spiritual and cultural connection to their land and sea Country, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

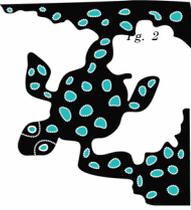
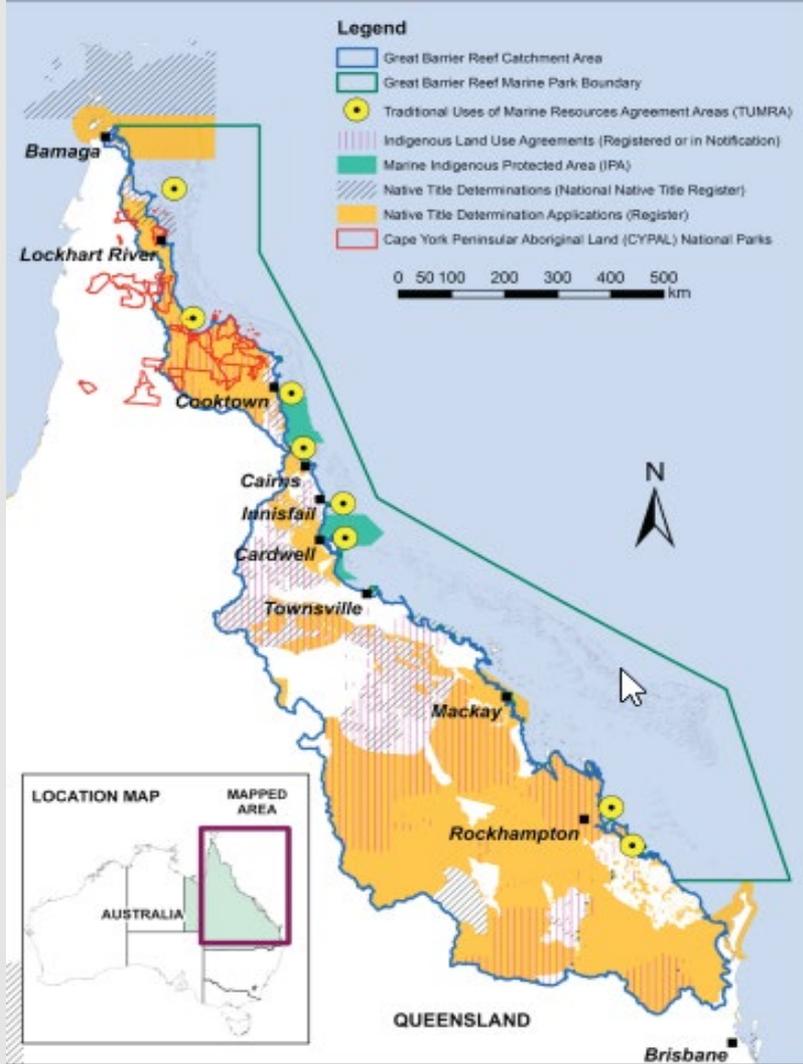


Reef Wonderland' artwork by Melanie Hava, Mamu Aboriginal woman, Dugul-barra and Wari-barra family groups, from the Johnstone River catchment of the Wet Tropics of Far North Queensland and the adjoining Great Barrier Reef sea Country.



Where?

Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef



Reef Trust Partnership – 7 years of momentum and learning

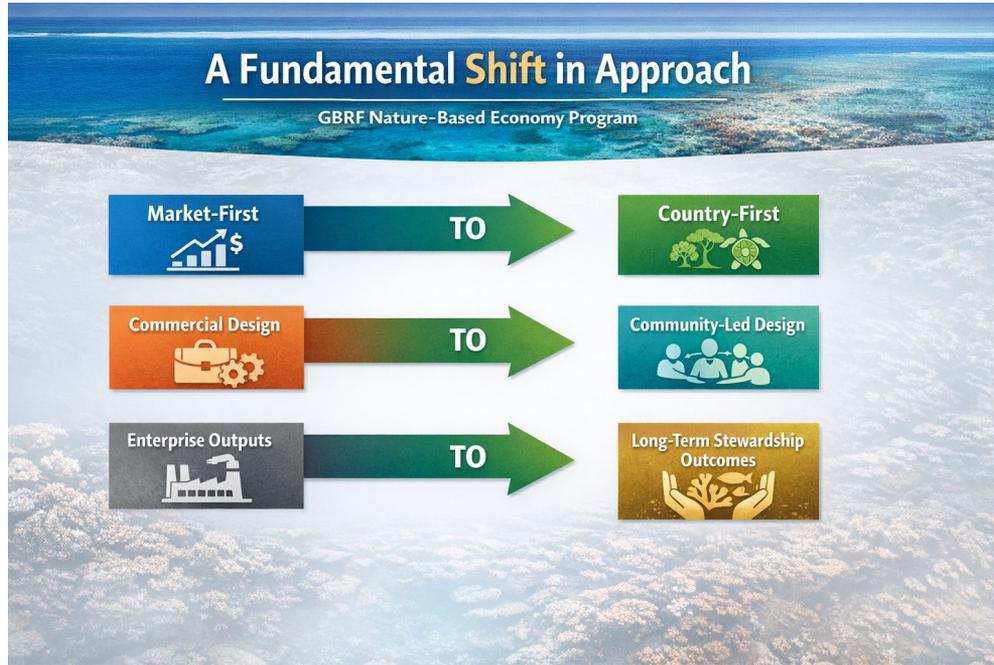
Three Core Areas of Impact

1. Integrated Monitoring and Reporting (IMR): Enabling SP-SC in the Traditional Owner Space
 - Focus: Enabling the SP-SC framework
 - Assessed group readiness in data, monitoring & analysis
2. Grants – Funding What Others Don't
 - Backed Traditional Owner priority projects
 - Mapped existing funding landscape (strategically fill gaps)
3. Evolving as a Stronger Partner
 - Reflected on co-design practice
 - Recognised improvement — but not consistency



Reframing Nature-Based Economies

GBRF Nature-Based Economy Program



Why This Matters

Aligns with cultural values and responsibilities

Respects seasonal and community rhythms

Builds strong foundations before scaling enterprise



Designed for Trust, Readiness & Long-Term Success



Traditional Owners at the Centre

Start with priorities, aspirations, and governance
Build from where each group is today



Flexible, Fit-for-Purpose Pathways

Multiple entry points
Tailored support at every stage
Progress at a culturally appropriate pace



Result

Locally led, culturally grounded economies
Stronger, more resilient long-term outcomes



The Data Economy



Start With the Why: Data Is Economic Infrastructure

On the Great Barrier Reef, data is no longer just compliance or reporting
it is:

- Evidence of stewardship
- Currency in environmental markets
- A lever for negotiating power
- A foundation for Nature-Based Economy (NBE) participation

Position data as **economic infrastructure for self-determination**



The Opportunity: Nature-Based Economy Is Expanding

Carbon, biodiversity, water quality, blue carbon, reef restoration – all require measurable outcomes.

Traditional Owners are:

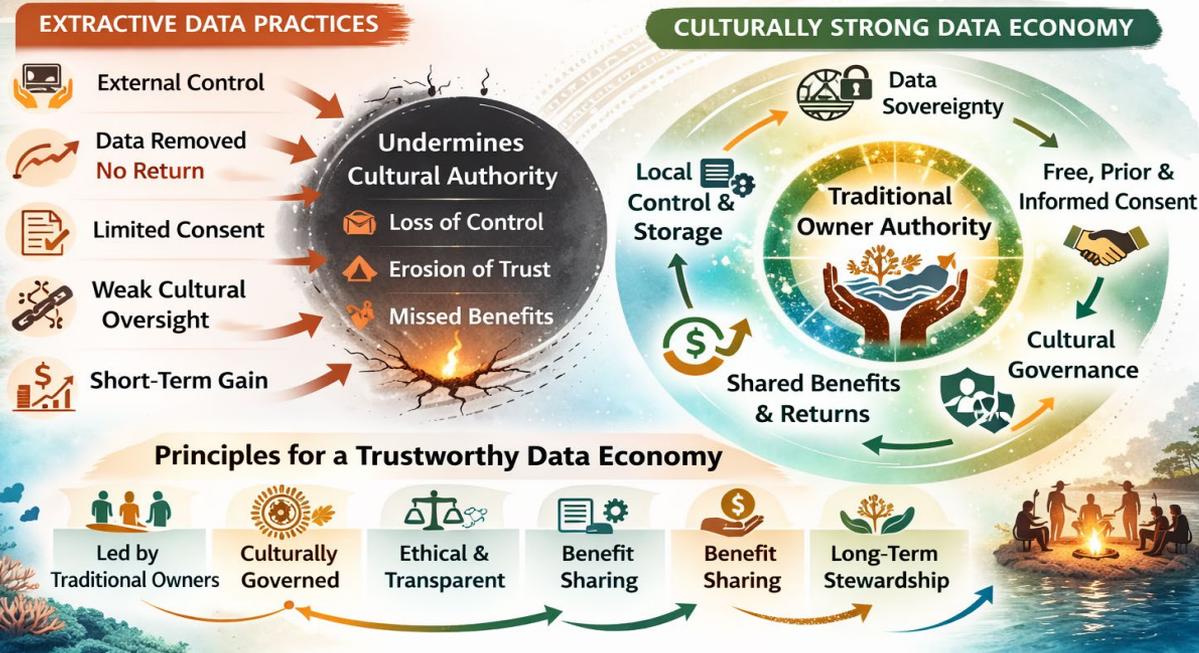
- Already managing Country
- Already generating knowledge
- But often not positioned to **capture the economic value of the data they produce**



Data Sovereignty Comes First

Data Economy \neq **Extractive Data Practice**

It Must **Strengthen** – Not **Undermine** – **Cultural Authority**



Data economy \neq extractive data practice.

It must strengthen not undermine cultural authority.



Readiness Before Revenue

From our experience, the biggest barrier isn't willingness, it's readiness

Readiness includes:

- Clear governance structures
- Agreed monitoring priorities
- Role clarity (Rangers, Elders, boards)
- Data storage systems
- Partnership literacy

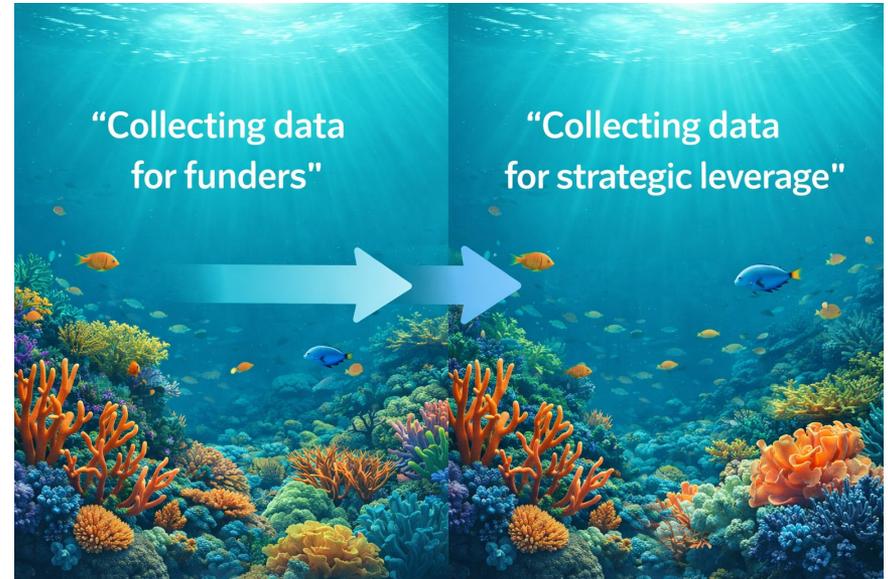
Economic opportunity fails when governance foundations aren't in place.



Monitoring Is Not Just Science - It's Strategy

Monitoring data should serve three purposes:

- Cultural knowledge protection
- Environmental stewardship evidence
- Commercial positioning



Partnerships Must Shift Power

Many Reef partnerships have historically:

Extracted data

Controlled analysis

Controlled narrative

A mobilised data economy requires:

Co-designed data frameworks

Transparent IP agreements

Revenue-sharing mechanisms

Shared interpretation processes

Partnership maturity is an economic issue.



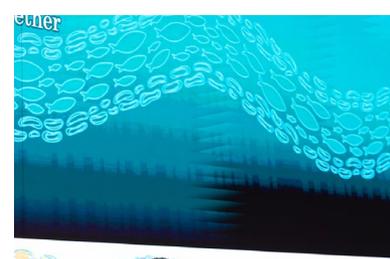
Case studies that guide us

SP-SC

Cassowary data

Jaguar credits

Southern Barrier Reef monitoring gap



The Big Shift: From Participants to Market Shapers

The end goal is not participation – it's influence.

When Reef Traditional Owners:

- Control monitoring frameworks
- Own data systems
- Demonstrate outcomes
- Negotiate from evidence

**Program
recipients**



**designers and shapers
of the Reef data economy**



Mobilising a data economy is not about more spreadsheets.

It is about strengthening cultural authority, economic agency, and long-term stewardship of the Reef.





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Build Internal Capability, Not Dependency

Short-term consultants don't build a data economy.

Key capabilities needed:

- Data literacy
- Contract literacy
- Understanding environmental markets
- Ability to interpret and use datasets in negotiations



Demonstration Projects Create Confidence

Documenting and sharing case studies of existing NBE initiatives linked to monitoring (peer to peer learning)

- Record and return case studies as an asset
- Establish and run sharing opportunities (peer to peer or workshops)
- Put learning and scale in the hands of Traditional Owners

