The discussion group concluded there is need for at least one or more Ocean Observing Communities of Practice. There was an effort in the discussion to understand how such CPs would be unique from other efforts already underway. Two areas drew the most discussion: 1) the potential need for specific technical CPs, essentially operational CPs, where the IEEE Ocean Engineering Society and similar organizations could provide valuable contributions and 2) higher level, strategic CPs, where in spite of other efforts there was, it was judged, too little attention. The technical CPs could be organized as task groups below the Strategic CP.
For operational tasks of a future CP two examples were discussed. The first group was for specific technical CPs. Examples: Calibration issues – establishment of a common portal for calibration standards and procedures; best practices; etc; for new sensors often the expertise on calibration lies with a few key people, and with the push for fielding multidisciplinary sensors on observing platforms, the expertise needs to be shared and common practices and standards developed and adopted; this can result in considerable savings for different groups that lack the expertise while also helping to achieve uniformity of practice across the observations. Another example would be a CP of data managers. Some in the group felt that some technical efforts, such as ACT, were underway and that the pressing need was for higher level or strategic CPs.

There was a discussion of a layered approach, where the attention should be paid to the highest level and then work down by assigning task groups to address specific scientific or technical issues. The highest level would be the strategic level. It was expressed that there are no bodies of discussion now for two high level issues: 1) global coordination of ocean observatories and 2) articulation of the societal value and need for global ocean observations. There are bodies such as the OOPC that consider ocean observations for climate, but there should be a body that is broader in scope, including issues beyond climate and also addressing operational issues. There should also be effort focused on the utilization of the observations and an effort to reach policy makers and funding agencies. There should be outreach that conveys the knowledge and awareness needed to make the statement of why ocean observations are important and how they make a difference. This should convey to governments the societal benefits of ocean observations and should also appeal to philanthropic interests to be engaged and concerned about the ocean.

There was concern that at a high level the leadership in different nations does not get together either to 1) coordinate and facilitate global ocean observations or 2) articulate the value of ocean observations. Thus, two strategic CPs for ocean observations were recommended.

The first would focus on the coordination and facilitation of ocean observations. Included in this would be the building of commitments from the different nations to implement and sustain global ocean observations, capacity building, coordination of the initiation and use of platforms, including fielding and sharing the ships required for supporting in situ observations, coordination across diverse elements of ocean observing (e.g. for climate and for disaster warning), and development of processes to ensure essential new elements of the observing system successfully transition from research support to sustained operational support.

The second strategic CP would focus on articulation and outreach, making clear to governments, industry, and NGOs the need for and value of ocean observations. This group should use opportunities such as the Deepwater Horizon spill to articulate the value of ocean observing. The overall field of ocean observations must be considered, not particular subsets or agency or national efforts.