

Press Release

October 14, 2026

**Recipient of the Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Science,
Inria Chile receives US\$2.5 million to accelerate an AI-powered digital
twin of the ocean**

The only Latin American institution among the 17 recipients of the Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Science, Inria's center in Chile will build MOFOMO, a multimodal foundation world model of the ocean to anticipate the effects of climate change on marine ecosystems.

PARIS / SANTIAGO, October 14, 2026 – Inria, the French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology, announced today that its center in Chile, Inria Chile, is a recipient of the Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Science. Inria Chile will thus receive US\$2.5 million to build a multimodal foundation world model of the ocean, the basis of a digital twin that will allow us to better understand Earth's last great unknown.

Inria Chile is one of 17 organizations selected globally from more than 3,000 applicants across 30 countries to share an updated total of US\$36 million in funding. It is the only institution from Latin America among the recipients, alongside leading universities and research institutions from around the world.

The ocean regulates the climate and feeds billions of people, yet it remains the least observed system on Earth, and its data – satellites, floats, biological and genomic surveys – remain scattered in mutually incompatible formats. Scientists still cannot reliably connect the warming and acidification of the ocean to their effects on marine life: harmful algal blooms, coral bleaching, the collapse of fisheries. MOFOMO (Multimodal Ocean Foundation Models for an Ocean Digital Twin) will build the first open multimodal foundation world model that learns at once from the ocean's physical, biological and genomic observations, coupled with physics-based models for reliable and explainable forecasts.

In its first six months, supported by the Google.org Accelerator, MOFOMO will deliver several foundational elements:

- the programme's governance framework and the data-sharing agreements with its partners;
- version 0.1 of the open multimodal ocean data lake;

- the specification of the public benchmark, together with baseline models;
- the advisory group for the two pilots, with its first consultations completed;
- the architecture of the first version of the multimodal foundation world model, with its training pipeline running at scale.

By the end of the 36 months, it will have delivered:

- the full, harmonised data lake;
- the public benchmark against which any ocean AI model can be compared;
- the MOFOMO multimodal foundation world model itself, pre-trained at scale and released with its weights, code and documentation under permissive licences;
- a hybrid version coupled with physics-based ecosystem models, with calibrated uncertainty;
- two early-warning services validated with their end users, for harmful algal blooms with Chile's aquaculture sector and for coral bleaching with reef managers in French Polynesia, the first building blocks of an AI-based digital twin of the ocean.

MOFOMO takes over from OcéanIA, Inria's research challenge on artificial intelligence for ocean science, led by Inria Chile for five years. In this new phase, Inria Chile will lead a multidisciplinary team spanning several institutions and three continents, with Inria project-teams in France and other scientific partners in Chile and French Polynesia.

*“AI for Science means, for us, designing a new generation of models: models that learn at once from the ocean's physics, its biology and its genomes, from sparse and heterogeneous data and in keeping with the laws that govern it, so that we can ask what climate change will do to marine life before it happens. That is MOFOMO's ambition and its research challenge: a digital twin of the ocean, built by physicists, biologists, oceanographers and computer scientists around the same model, and Google.org's support lets us accelerate it: train at scale, release openly and bring forward the answers the ocean needs. That is what AI for good means to us. Being selected among 17 recipients out of more than 3,000 proposals is a recognition of the work carried out at Inria Chile over many years”, said **Nayat Sánchez-Pi, Director General of Inria Chile and principal investigator of MOFOMO.***

*“I welcome this success, which illustrates how profoundly AI is transforming research on issues that are critical to our future. That Inria Chile is among the recipients of the Google.org Impact Challenge: AI for Science, alongside the world's leading research institutions, shows what Franco-Chilean cooperation and the mobilisation of the entire artificial intelligence ecosystem can achieve in the face of a global challenge. This ambitious project builds on the Inria OcéanIA Challenge, whose full potential it will now realise, and I also want to salute all the work accomplished over the years,” said **Bruno Sportisse, Chairman and CEO of Inria.***

*“We're at an extraordinary moment for science, as advances in AI open up new possibilities for discovery that were difficult to imagine just a few years ago,” said **Leslie Yeh, Director of Scientific Progress, Google.org.** “Inria Chile is bringing together AI and deep scientific expertise in ambitious, creative ways to address some of humanity's most important questions. We're honored to support their work as they apply AI to the ocean, the least observed system on Earth, to push the boundaries of scientific discovery and turn breakthrough ideas into real-world impact.*

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About Inria: Inria, the French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology, supports the French State's national research and innovation strategies in digital science as a Programme Agency. Inria conducts more than 300 research and innovation projects with its 3,500 scientists, engineers and support staff, in partnership with universities and the digital ecosystem (companies, entrepreneurs, public actors). Together, we explore key areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, quantum computing, cloud, the digital transformation of healthcare, digital twins and digital technologies for defence. We build concrete solutions such as software, technology startups, partnerships with companies across France and cutting-edge training. Our goal: scientific, technological and industrial impact in the service of France's digital sovereignty. www.inria.fr

About Inria Chile: Inria Chile is Inria's center in Chile, operated by Fundación Inria Chile, a foundation under Chilean law created by Inria in Santiago in 2012 with the support of the Chilean government. Its teams conduct research in artificial intelligence and its applications to science, industry and public policy, in partnership with universities, public bodies and companies in Chile and Latin America, and transfer their results in the form of open software, research-based training and industrial collaborations. Its OcéanIA programme has released open models and datasets for ocean science, including Planktonzilla, the largest open collection of plankton images in the world. MOFOMO (Multimodal Ocean Foundation Models for an Ocean Digital Twin) is a 36-month multidisciplinary research programme led by Inria Chile with the support of Google.org, spanning several institutions and three continents, with Inria project-teams in France and other scientific partners in Chile and French Polynesia. <https://inria.cl>

About Google.org: Google.org Scientific Progress is focused on accelerating science from discovery to real-world impact. By equipping scientists and researchers with AI tools, we aim to support breakthroughs that address society's biggest challenges and improve lives globally.