



GLOBAL
FORUM ON
CYBER
EXPERTISE

Strategic Guidance 2025 - 2027

**GFCE Strategic Steering
Committee**

March 2025

Introduction

Where the GFCE Started: Since 2015, the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) has been working to map, advocate for, enable and coordinate cyber capacity building (CCB) efforts and activities around the world. The year of 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the organization in strengthening international cooperation on CCB. Since the publication of the GFCE Global Agenda for CCB as part of the 2017 Delhi Communique, the organization has contributed to building national and regional capacity in the following areas: cyber policy and norms; cyber incident response; critical infrastructure protection; combating cybercrime; raising public awareness; growing cyber workforces, including women in cyber; and working to identify and adapt to emerging technology. The GFCE aims to connect needs, resources, and expertise to make practical knowledge in these areas available to the global community.

What Changed: The increasing demand for capacities to enable cybersecurity and combat cybercrime has led to significant growth in CCB efforts — both in number and diversity of donors and implementers engaging in CCB activities, as well as the number of CCB resources and projects. CCB is a key part of international dialogues and is recognized as essential to sustainable development goals.

The Need for Strategic Steering Committee (SSC): As a result of these achievements, the GFCE multi-stakeholder community has grown exponentially — from 42 founding members to 200+ participating members and partners. Such expansion and growth of the organization must be accompanied by new levels of accountability, vision, planning and coordinated activities that can effectively guide the organization and enable a new decade of GFCE impact that reflects the diversity of its global community. It is with that intention that the GFCE announced the establishment of the Strategic Steering Committee (SSC) during the 2024 Annual Meeting in Washington D.C.

The SSC Focus: Per the SSC Terms of Reference, the GFCE SSC, as representatives for all GFCE members and partners, provides guidance to the GFCE Foundation (Secretariat and Board)—hereby also referred to as ‘the Foundation’—on community-driven CCB needs and objectives. At the core of the SSC’s work is its dedication to improving the Foundation’s ability to facilitate capacity building and sustaining the commitment of GFCE members and partners to the principles of the GFCE. The SSC holds the Foundation accountable to the GFCE community for supporting and identifying members’ needs to the greatest extent possible.

Recognizing the upfront investments in structures and practices—as well as limited resources—the primary focus for the Foundation must be on the GFCE core functions, as noted in Goal 1 below, which includes: facilitating CCB partnerships, information sharing and deconfliction; access to CCB programs, networks, and resources for the GFCE community; and demonstrating the GFCE’s value/impact to supporting global cybersecurity and resilience.

The Purpose for The SSC Strategic Guidance: The SSC Strategic Guidance is responsible for providing input from the GFCE membership to inform and guide the Foundation’s planning in 2025-2027. The

document reflects on the challenges and opportunities that have so far shaped the role of GFCE, sets the ambition for the further development of the GFCE, and offers to its community stronger connections between donors, recipients and implementers on CCB activities. It intends to strengthen the GFCE structure, impact, communications and reputation by delineating key goals and objectives that can inform the GFCE's actions.

Included in the Strategic Guidance is a framework that models for the Foundation the actions that the GFCE Secretariat could take to meet the needs and expectations of its members. The SSC recommends the Foundation use of SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) metrics and other best practices to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of its actions in any implementation plan developed by the Foundation in accordance with the Strategic Guidance.

The SSC Strategic Guidance is provided as advice from the GFCE community and is not binding. For improved transparency across the GFCE and additional counsel, the SSC seeks to establish coordination between the Foundation and the SSC to review the bi-annual GFCE Strategy and annual implementation plan(s) in accordance with the SSC Strategic Guidance.

Vision Statement

The GFCE is a “pragmatic, action-oriented and flexible [global] forum” that “strengthens cyber capacity and expertise globally” in support of “a free, open and secure cyberspace.”¹

Context²

The GFCE has so far:

- Established a global platform, with name recognition, that connects communities of practice on cyber-related issues;
- Achieved convening power for a global multi-stakeholder community united under a common mission;
- Created and maintained a robust library of CCB best practices and resources that are used across sectors and regions through the Cybil Portal;
- Built a community of interest that allows for the GFCE to be flexible and innovative in ways to address the variety of CCB needs; and
- Developed a needs-based approach.

The GFCE is challenged by:

- A. A large number of competing and fragmented GFCE activities—in response to multiple stakeholders demands—that have obscured the GFCE's brand and identity;

¹ Compiled from the text of the GFCE Declaration - <https://thegfce.org/the-hague-declaration-on-the-gfce-2/>

² The list below is indicative of the strengths, challenges and opportunities identified by different stakeholder groups represented in the SSC and are not prescriptive of what the GFCE should do—that is the case of the goals and objectives outlined in the following sections.

- B. The need to address and coordinate expectations of the multi-stakeholder membership, including the private sector and civil society;
- C. Difficulties in developing standardized impact assessment metrics and effectively communicating GFCE's contributions to stakeholders;
- D. Sustaining financial resources;
- E. The task of incentivizing and coordinating working groups and community-driven products;
- F. Erroneous perceptions of the GFCE's political orientation and the lack of sufficient geographical representation; and
- G. The risk of overlapping with CCB efforts, including with GFCE members and non-members.

The GFCE has the opportunity to:

- Support strategic partnerships across multistakeholder groups and multiple regions and communities;
- Produce comprehensive frameworks, approaches, and CCB best practice that support a shared vision for cyberspace and support emerging technologies;
- Offer an economy of scale for CCB that can align resources to address the increasing global CCB needs on emerging topics;
- Broker the increasing demand and CCB supply by acting as a trusted intermediary that connects stakeholders;
- Support global CCB discussions and become the CCB focal point for adjacent communities (e.g.: Digital Development, regional political, security and economic organizations, and large multinational initiatives); and
- Grow its civil society and private sector presence and offering.

The GFCE work is dependent on:

- Members' expertise and interests, engagement and resources;
- Continued commitment of incentivized volunteers that are essential for the GFCE to fulfill its chartered role;
- Evolving technology landscape and additional capacity needs;
- Digital development community investment in CCB; and
- International security community (e.g.: UN First Committee) prioritization of CCB.

A Framework

The Strategic Guidance orients the work of the GFCE during the period of 2025-2027. It does so by establishing a framework with three goals that will enable action and consistency in planning to make GFCE's activities and outcomes sustainable, affordable, and adaptable over time.

These goals seek to address the GFCE's regional and global CCB efforts, as well as lay the foundations for a sustainable GFCE platform. The three goals seek to address: **internal services** that position members' and partners' needs predominately through a regional approach; **external** information sharing and demonstration of GFCE impact through global engagement; and enablers for GFCE accountability in internal and external processes.

GFCE Pillars

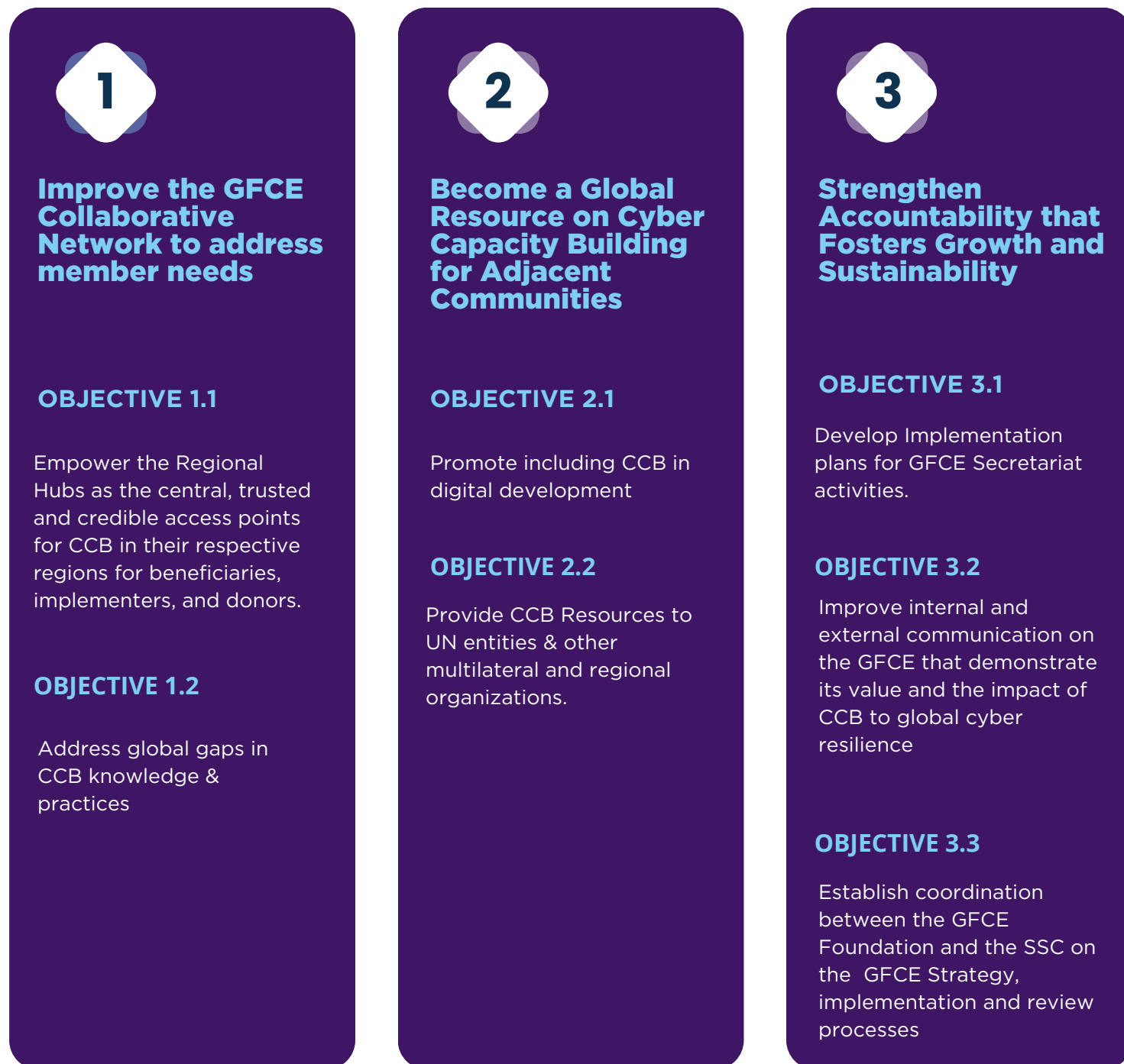


Figure 1: Three pillars of the SSC Strategic Guidance

Goal 1: Improve the GFCE Collaborative Network to address member needs

With 10 years of experience and over 200 members and partners, the GFCE community seeks to improve its collaborative network for actions that better address the diverse and localized needs of its members. CCB coordination is about establishing and using central, trusted and credible access points to facilitate CCB programs, networks, and resources. The objectives in Goal 1 seek to improve the core functions of the GFCE that facilitate information sharing about and access to CCB programs, networks, and resources for the GFCE community, including by developing a structured methodology and platform for regional coordination.

Objective 1.1 – Empower the Regional Hubs as the central, trusted and credible access points for CCB in their respective regions for beneficiaries, implementers, and donors.

Objective Justification: Given the complex global cyberspace threat landscape, it becomes easier to find common purpose to address shared threats by taking a regional approach with a smaller set of stakeholders. The Hubs offer the GFCE the ability to locally address members' interests, needs and CCB offerings. The Hubs are the entry points for countries in the region and donors to align needs and activities that are fit for a specific country and/or region. They work in coordination with existing CCB initiatives by GFCE members and/or individual nations. In order to empower the respective regions, with the goal of avoiding duplication and overlap during their development, each Hub will need a structured operating plan that is supported by the Foundation, to include the financial support and tools for member engagement. Each Hub is unique, yet the objective seeks to achieve functional maturity across all hubs.

Objective Risk: The five existing hubs are at different points of their maturity in interacting with their members and donors and facilitating the implementation of CCB activities. There is a risk that the Hubs will not obtain or generate the local agency necessary to create an identity that is fit for purpose. Equally each region has a different landscape of donors and implementers, market interests, and levels of regional/domestic capacity. The regional Hubs are not legal entities and thus fit under the purview of the Foundation.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 1.1:

A. Maintain overview of national and regional needs, CCB programs, networks, and resources for the region, to include activities such as:

- a. [Annually] update Cybil with the inventory of active CCB programming in the region
- b. [Biannually] inventory regional and country-specific CCB needs and gaps

B. Connect GFCE regional stakeholders to information, activities, resources and CCB community through a "Clearing House Function,"³ to include activities such as:

- a. Establish [within a year] an operating plan for each Hub that outlines how they will connect GFCE regional stakeholders to information, activities, resources and CCB community
- b. Host [annual] meeting with regional members & stakeholders with the objective to connect needs with available CCB programs
- c. Develop a calendar of regional Hub activities, initiatives & communications that showcase resources from Cybil applicable to the region
- d. Count number of CCB needs met in the region [on an annual basis]

C. Assess the impact of CCB networks and resources, to include activities such as:

- a. [Annually] conduct anonymous annual survey on the GFCE CCB network and resources in the region by participating GFCE members and partners.

³ See: <https://thegfce.org/clearing-house/>

Objective 1.2 - Address global gaps in CCB knowledge & practices

Objective Justification: The GFCE Secretariat based in The Hague is well placed to be the “shared service center” for the Hubs. The GFCE seeks to identify cross-region and cross-sector resources that facilitate knowledge sharing that all can benefit from as CCB gets tailored to their organization, nation, and/or region.

Objective Risk: The GFCE is a volunteer organization that is as good as its members put in and take from it. Much of its success depends on the communication plans to ensure the global community, within and outside the GFCE, know of the growing depth and diversity of its CCB offerings, and their ability to contribute resources.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 1.2:

A. Optimize the Cybil Portal, to include activities such as:

- a. Count the number of [quarterly] CCB resources added to the database through the community and Hubs.
- b. Generate a [25]% increase in Cybil portal usage and positive feedback on relevance to determine improvements.

B. Convene the GFCE Community, to include activities such as:

- a. Host [annually] a global GFCE conference
- b. Ensure civil society organizations and private sector companies are strongly represented in GFCE’s platforms and engagements and lead [at least one] deep dive engagement per year.

C. Strengthen cross sectoral CCB ecosystems through Working Groups, to include activities such as:

- a. [By 2026,] validate and adapt GFCE Working Group themes, objective/outcomes, approaches and working methods.
- b. [Biannually] coordinate Working Group meetings and cross-thematic meetings.

D. Promote Public Private Partnerships, to include activities such as:

- a. [By 2027,] research and share the findings on how the GFCE platform is best utilized to strengthen PPPs on CCB and recommend adjustments to GFCE services accordingly.

Goal 2: Become a Global Resource on Cyber Capacity Building for Adjacent Communities

Throughout the past decade, CCB has become a main topic in international processes and forums—including in the UN and regional security and economic organizations to international development. The

GFCE should be ready and able to effectively advocate, integrate and share CCB resources with stakeholders in other fields.

Objective 2.1 – Promote including CCB in digital development

Objective Justification: The GFCE seeks to leverage and share GFCE international and regional CCB networks and resources to inform and support the cooperation in different areas of digital development. As nations invest in their digital future—and to reap the benefits from the technology—it is imperative they have the necessary capacities to execute best practices for a national approach to cybersecurity and combating cybercrime. While the GFCE community understands the role of cyber resilience as an enabler for sustainable digital development, there remains a gap in the development community’s understanding and appreciation for integrating cybersecurity into development initiatives.

Objective Risk: As with other topics, CCB as concept might change and evolve in the coming years. The success of this objective relies on the GFCE’s capacity to inform and support international development while adapting communication in the changing field of technology.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 2.1:

A. Support development community with progress on the Accra Call commitments, to include activities such as:

- a. Expand frameworks for official development assistance (ODA) to include CCB
- b. [By 2026,] develop an engagement plan with the digital development community to showcase programs/resources from Cybil, identify best practices of CCB with digital development activities, and communicate impact of CCB on digital development.
- c. [By 2026,] set up regionally based cooperation agreements with two development organizations and/or two private sector entities that support CCB inclusion.

B. Expand the development community participation in the GC3B, to include metrics such as:

- a. Increase development community participation in the 2025 GC3B by [10]% from 2023

Objective 2.2 – Provide CCB Resources to UN entities & other multilateral and regional organizations.

Objective Justification: Multilateral processes and organizations have incorporated CCB considerations as a core part of their mission, mandate and/or agenda—as it is the case with, most notably, the UN’s Open Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), as well as regional organizations’ efforts to support the implementation of confidence building measures that can reduce the risk of escalation, among others. As these processes evolve and take on new forms, the GFCE seeks to be a resource on CCB topics, programs and network of expertise.

Objective Risk: Growing geopolitical tensions and polarization might challenge the access and opportunities to engage in some processes. The GFCE will need to monitor and adapt accordingly, engaging formally into processes only when requested by its membership.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 2.2:

A. Showcase GFCE programs/resources from Cybil and demonstrate impact of CCB on the sidelines of multilateral meetings, and/or in conjunction with a UN or multilateral organization, to include activities such as:

- a. [By 2026,] develop a multilateral engagement plan to ensure contribution, cooperation and coordination that will reduce the duplication of efforts.

Goal 3: Strengthen Accountability that Fosters Growth and Sustainability

The growth and sustainability of the GFCE relies on the Foundation's ability to work with the SSC and the GFCE community, beneficiaries, implementers, and donors in operationalizing the organization's plan for delivering impact for CCB which will contribute to the financial sustainability in the coming years. While the Foundation manages resources and delivers work according to goals and objectives of the community, the SSC and the GFCE members play an important role in advocating for the GFCE and the information, activities, resources and network within the platform.

Objective 3.1 - Develop Implementation plans for GFCE Secretariat activities.

Objective Justification: The development of implementation plans for GFCE Secretariat deliverables/activities ensures not only that there is a predictability in action when speaking to the GFCE community, CCB donors and GFCE funders, but that the lines of effort and activities can more effectively get input and engagement from the GFCE community throughout their lifecycle. SMART metrics included in the plans will offer the GFCE the ability to evaluate progress and impact.

Objective Risk: Significant shifts in donor requirements or areas of investment can influence and/or impact the lines of effort and activities in implementation plans. The GFCE needs to ensure that plans are clear, realistic and understanding of such external constraints. It is critical the constraints are transparent to the SSC on behalf of the community.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 3.1:

- A. [By mid 2025,] the GFCE Secretariat delivers a 2-year implementation plan for the GFCE Strategy that incorporates the SSC Guidance and the Hub implementation plans.**
- B. [By 2026,] develop 2-year implementation plans for each regional Hub that aligns to Objective 1.1 and includes the service level needed by the Secretariat to support the Hub.**

Objective 3.2 - Improve internal and external communication on the GFCE that demonstrate its value and the impact of CCB to global cyber resilience.⁴

Objective Justification: The Foundation will ensure that information about activities, engagements and strategic action are shared internally and externally with a focus on communicating the impact of the GFCE and the impacts of CCB. GFCE community expertise will be leveraged accordingly. Demonstrating the impact of CCB and the work of the GFCE will improve the reputation of the GFCE as a trusted access point for CCB. It will be critical to find ways to grow its global audience.

Objective Risk: Lack of impact metrics, collection of success stories and identification of lessons learned within the GFCE will present the organization with substantive challenges to achieving effective internal and external communication. With a multistakeholder community it is important the communication channels and content are appropriate and visible to the variety of stakeholders.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 3.2:

A. [By 2026,] launch an external communication and outreach strategy to highlight impact from Goals 1 and 2, to include activities such as:

- a. Develop a calendar of communications that showcase resources from Cybil and demonstrate impact from CCB.
- b. Improve accessibility to the Cybil Portal and awareness via social media

Objective 3.3 - Establish coordination between the GFCE Foundation and the SSC on the GFCE Strategy, implementation and review processes.

Objective Justification: The Foundation seeks to streamline its structures and activities for effective and concerted action. By establishing a systematic process for the SSC to represent the GFCE community in providing input on and the review of strategic planning documents (i.e. strategies, implementation, operating, and/or engagement plans, etc.), the Foundation will foster transparency and buy-in from its membership. The SSC Strategic Guidance is a tool to help establish GFCE activities and thus the SSC is a stakeholder in the progress of the implementation of the GFCE's bi-annual strategy.

Objective Risk: The Foundation will need to ensure continuity of dialogue as SSC and Foundation members change. Falling short of doing so could foster silos and lack of coordination that is essential to achieving the goals of the SSC Strategic Guidance and the GFCE community's impression of progress.

Suggested lines of effort in support of the Objective 3.3:

⁴ We recognize that objectives as set out in this Strategic Guidance are complementary. That is the case between Objective 3.2 and Objective 2.2 which mutually support each other and can include similar activities in the dissemination and communication of the strategic actions taken in both.

A. Demonstrate GFCE progress under the SSC Guidance, to include activities such as:

- a. Deliver a [mid-year] condensed GFCE Foundation activity report & joint briefing to the SSC that demonstrates progress against the metrics included in the implementation plan(s) of the bi-annual GFCE Strategy.

B. Demonstrate GFCE financial sustainability, to include activities such as:

- a. [By June 2025,] develop & present a 2-year fundraising strategy.
- b. Publish an [annual] report with a joint briefing on activities, funding, distribution of resources, and prospective funders for the next financial year.