



## **Policies and Practices for SCOR-Sponsored Projects**

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The intention of this document is to clarify expectations for current and potential SCOR-sponsored projects. The document includes minimum requirements for the management and structure of projects as well as additional options for their structures based on past experiences. The document is not meant to be comprehensive in the information it provides about how to develop and manage an international science project.

### **Purpose of a SCOR-Sponsored Project**

SCOR funds large-scale research and infrastructural projects to plan and facilitate ocean research through international cooperation. By developing and supporting interactions through international networks, SCOR's projects add value to national and international research and infrastructure investments by facilitating alignment of priorities, promoting comparability of results, and increasing the number of nations and scientists involved in addressing globally important ocean science objectives.

Though research and infrastructural projects differ in their objectives and outcomes, they are expected to be managed and structured in similar ways. Therefore, the policies and practices in this document apply to both with few differences. In contrast, working groups, which are shorter duration and narrower in focus, follow different requirements as described in the documentation found at <https://scor-int.org/work/groups/proposals/>. Each project type is defined by the following minimum requirements, though with recognition that a project of one type may also include objectives pertinent to the other type.

**Large-scale research projects** develop priorities and coordinate global- or regional-scale research activities (field work, theoretical work, modeling), conducted and funded at the national or multinational level, that accomplish scientific goals that cannot be accomplished by individual nations alone. They primarily facilitate the production of peer-reviewed scientific publications at the national or international (project) level, including review articles.

**Infrastructural projects** provide central coordination for the development and implementation of support structures to research activities conducted at national, regional, and global levels.

Specific focuses can include developing and managing databases, building and coordinating communities, organizing workshops, developing standards, developing training materials and opportunities, and/or otherwise addressing methodological issues. These projects primarily facilitate the production of white papers, manuals/recommended practices, or data products.

### **Defining Features of a SCOR-Sponsored Project**

A SCOR-sponsored project is defined by the following features:

1. Is motivated by the need to advance ocean science in a particular area. Advancing the science is accomplished both (1) by convening a network of international scientists to lead progress on the science and (2) by building capacity globally to enable more scientists to participate and achieve the goals of the project.
2. Is of global relevance and broad scale, or regional relevance with global implications.
3. Has a scientifically well-integrated theme that is based on fundamental questions in the natural sciences and invites interdisciplinary contributions.
4. Has broad international in membership, with committee membership that rotates on a regular basis.
5. Includes representation of different expertise, geographies, genders, and career stages.
6. Has demonstrated interest from an international community including cosponsors, partners, and participating scientists from academia, industry, government, and/or nongovernmental organizations.
7. Produces products documenting the findings and outcomes of the project. Emphasis is given to open-access publications or other products easily accessed by the broader community.

### **Guiding Documents**

Science and implementation plans or terms of reference guide the activities of a project so that there is consistency and adherence to the goals and procedures approved by the sponsors even as membership to the project changes over time.

Scientific objectives: A large-scale research project is guided by a science plan that defines the scientific objectives of the project, including themes and research questions (or example questions) that the project is meant to facilitate. An infrastructural project is guided either by a science plan or by scientific terms of reference, depending on the scale and scope of the project. A science plan lays out scientific objectives to be met by the global scientific community with the facilitation of the international project. Terms of reference specify the activities of the project. These objectives are time-limited, not to exceed 10 years at a time. Science plans and/or terms of reference undergo a review and approval process in order to be sponsored by SCOR. These objectives are the standard against which SCOR reviews and evaluates the project's mid-point progress, final outcomes, and potential for continuation. Projects that intend to last more than 10 years can make this clear in the development of their plan, but still establish what they expect to achieve within the most immediate phase of the project.

**Implementation:** All projects have an implementation plan and/or administrative terms of reference that define the governance structure and management of the project (e.g., steering committee member terms, compositions of Executive committees, and other roles and responsibilities that will be assigned to project participants). These are also approved by SCOR's Executive Committee (see more under "Structure and Management"). A more comprehensive implementation plan would identify community activities (e.g., open science meetings, capacity building events) and/or any data management activities. The implementation plan or administrative terms of reference may be combined with the documentation of the scientific objectives or be separate.

### **Initiation and Approval of a New SCOR-Sponsored Project**

The majority of scientific activities supported by SCOR since its inception have been working groups (<https://scor-int.org/work/groups/>). This should be the first option considered by most groups of scientists seeking sponsorship by SCOR.

Project ideas are generated by the scientific community; SCOR does not specify priority themes or topics. A group of scientists interested in developing the project idea should consult with the SCOR Secretariat on whether the idea may be appropriate for SCOR, how to proceed, and whether funding is available for planning activities. Generally, a planning group will oversee a planning phase where a broad community is engaged (often through an open science meeting or workshop), financial support for the future project is sought, and participants and stakeholders identified. This culminates in the production of the science plan or terms of reference that will undergo a review and approval process overseen by SCOR in collaboration with other expected sponsors.

### **Structure and Management**

The structure and management of a project includes the roles and responsibilities of the people involved and will depend on the scale and scope of its objectives as well as the funding available. A project determines its own structure, which is documented in terms of reference.

### **Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) Composition**

The SSC is the minimum structure required to manage a project. SSCs are composed of rotating memberships of scientists who serve in a voluntary capacity, led by a chair or co-chairs (and potentially a larger Executive Committee), who guide the implementation of the project.

- The composition reflects:
  - the range of expertise relevant to the project.
  - participation by a wide range of countries. No more than two members should come from the same country and no more than one member from the same institution without justification. Positions on the SSC should not be reserved for representatives from specific countries, though may be designated for representation from specific regions.
  - inclusion of developing-country scientists (SCOR maintains a list of countries considered eligible at <https://scor-int.org/work/capacity/>).

- inclusion of early-career scientists (defined as no more than 10 years since degree, not including time off for family leave).
- The size (number of members) of the committee might not be a fixed number and will be a balance between achieving the composition requirements and keeping within the available budget to support travel expenses of members to attend SSC meetings.
- SSCs may specify an Executive Committee composed of a combination of chairs/co-chairs, vice chairs, project officers, and/or other members. The Executive Committee is typically more involved in the project between SSC meetings than other members.
- SSCs may include ex-officio positions such as for people representing subsidiary committees to the projects, representing international project office institutions, or recent chairs.
- SSCs may identify liaisons such as representatives from sponsors, partner organizations or projects, or national committees. These may be designated as ex-officio positions.
- The structure of the SSC and roles of chairs/co-chairs, vice chairs, ex-officio, and regular members as well as the composition and role of the Executive Committee are documented in one or more terms of reference.
- The SCOR Executive Committee (and other sponsors at their discretion) approve the regular membership of the SSC, including the positions of chair/co-chair/vice chairs of the SSC but not ex-officio and liaison positions (see information about the nomination memo under “SSC Membership Rotations”).

### **SSC Membership Rotations**

Term limits and revisions to the membership of the SSC are required to ensure broad participation at the international level by individual scientists and countries.

- Term lengths:
  - SSCs have typically allowed for 2–4-year term lengths, often with the potential for one renewal, and the potential for additional time due to service as vice chair or chair/co-chair.
  - The terms of reference should set a general upper limit for consecutive membership of the SSC so that the possibility of serving as a full member, chair/co-chair or vice chair, and ex-officio member does not lead to over-representation by a single person on the SSC.
- Membership nominations:
  - The project identifies which members of the SSC and project office serve as the nominating committee that will lead the search and recommend new members, including nominations to chair and vice-chair positions.
  - Projects may choose to conduct an open call for nominations and/or conduct targeted recruitment to identify qualified candidates to meet the composition requirements.
  - Chairs/co-chairs and vice chairs are recommended to be selected from people with experience on the SSC or a subsidiary committee, or at minimum some experience with the international project.

- The nomination process, justification for the selections made, and resulting complete SSC slate are described in a nomination memo presented to SCOR and other sponsors when requesting approval of members. If the SSC composition does not meet the composition requirements set by SCOR, the memo will include an explanation of why and describe plans to address the issue in the future.

### **SSC Subsidiary Committees, Sponsored and Endorsed Activities, and National Committees**

Depending on the goals of the project, additional committees may be included in the project structure in order to achieve the intended outcomes of the project. These may include but are not limited to the following options, which are examples of structures utilized by projects to date.

- A project may compose temporary or permanent subsidiary committees, for example data management committees, regional or thematic working groups, and early-career scientist committees. The chairs of these committees might be designated as ex-officio members of the SSC.
  - SCOR does not approve the membership of these subsidiary committees. However, the project members should make their best effort to follow SCOR's composition requirements.
- Endorsed and sponsored activities are activities that were initiated outside the project that have been identified as serving the goals of the project. Sponsored activities receive funding from the project's budget while endorsed activities do not. These activities receive visibility and a means of coordination with related efforts by being associated with the project. Clear expectations should be communicated by the project SSC regarding the expected use of the sponsored funding and the intended outcomes resulting from the support.
- National committees to the project are composed of scientists from individual nations conducting research that contributes to the goals of the project. Frequently, a national liaison is identified to report these national activities to the project. These committees also provide a mechanism for broader feedback on the project outside the SSC membership.

### **International Project Offices (IPOs)**

IPOs support one or more paid staff to manage the project. The ability to find an institutional host and funding for an IPO significantly impacts the possible scope of the project; most projects cannot be conducted without one. In the absence of an IPO, the SSC is responsible for the administration and logistics of the project. Specifically, the staff of an IPO provides:

- **Project Management:** General staffing of the SSC, working with co-chairs, representing the project, creating reports from meetings, liaising with other projects, and reporting to sponsors.
- **Financial Management:** Developing the project budget in cooperation with the SSC, tracking expenses, fundraising, and maintaining financial records for any funding held by the IPO's institution.
- **Communications/outreach:** Maintaining the website, producing a newsletter, managing mailing lists, and producing social media products.

- **Administration/logistics:** Arranging logistics for meetings and capacity building events including hotel reservations, meal arrangements, and overseeing reimbursement of meeting participants.
- **Data Management:** May include oversight and management of metadata or actual data.

Funding: IPOs require funding (or in-kind support) to cover salary and benefits, overhead, and potentially also travel expenses and/or data infrastructure. The arrangement between the IPO and the project is documented in an agreement (e.g., memorandum of understanding) that ideally continues through to the end of the timeframe of the science plan. If any funding for an IPO is obtained through SCOR, SCOR would enter into an agreement with the host office. IPOs may be supported by a single institution or multiple institutions from the same or multiple countries. Multiple institutions may support a single office, or the project may be supported by multiple offices.

- If an agreement with an IPO does not extend for the length of the project, procedures for soliciting a renewal or a new IPO host should be developed.
- Sustained funding for the IPO may not be guaranteed for the full lifetime of the project—either through an inability to recruit new hosts on the timeline needed, or unexpected loss of funding within the host institution. A risk management strategy for IPO funding should be developed by projects that rely on paid staff to meet their objectives that considers options including but not limited to:
  - Diversification of funding to minimize the risk from one source, including establishing multiple IPO offices and sponsors.
  - Exploring the potential for reallocation of funding between the IPO and funding for other activities (travel, data infrastructure and products, etc).
  - Maintenance of reserve funding.

### **SCOR Oversight**

SCOR is composed of a Secretariat, Executive Committee, and member national committees.

- The main contact between the project and SCOR will be with the Secretariat (Executive Director and financial staff). The Executive Director will approve and process expenditures from SCOR's funding, disseminate community news and announcements for the project, advise the project regarding adherence to SCOR policies, and facilitate communication with the SCOR Executive Committee and national committees.
- The Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing the review and approving the science plan and terms of reference, approving new SSC members, overseeing mid-term reviews of the project, and raising any concerns about the project with the Secretariat. A member of the Executive Committee is identified to serve as the monitor or liaison to the project.
- The SCOR national committees have the opportunity to provide input to the project during the SCOR annual meeting both during the planning phase and during the implementation phase. Science plan and mid-term reviewers can also be drawn from national committees. Any project supported by SCOR member dues funding will have its budget approved annually at the SCOR annual meeting.

### **SCOR's Funding**

As a nonprofit organization, SCOR depends on external funding sources to support its activities. Core support for SCOR comes from its national committee membership dues. However, this funding can only support a limited number of activities of modest size. Planning groups should work with SCOR to explore additional funding options. The amount of funding that can be obtained, either through SCOR or other sponsorships, will determine the scope and structure of the project.

- SCOR funds can be used for travel and other meeting costs, open access publications, data products and their required infrastructure, website and other technology costs, and for project office staff if such funding has been arranged through SCOR. SCOR's funding is not meant for research activities.
- Supporting the cost of an annual SSC meeting is the priority use of the budget. SSCs should not meet in person more than once per year.
- Within budget, other experts may be supported to attend meetings at the discretion of the SSC.
- Within budget, funding may be used to support meetings of subsidiary committees or sponsored activities. These meetings should be aware of and acknowledge the support from SCOR via the project.
- Within budget or by applying to SCOR or other funders for a one-time budget increase, projects may also hold special meetings or workshops.
- Projects provide budgets in advance to SCOR related to their plans to utilize SCOR funds.

### **Acknowledgement of SCOR**

- Projects identify SCOR as a sponsor on their websites and when representing the project in presentations, posters, and other public materials.
- Projects acknowledge SCOR support in publications produced as a result of the activities of the international project sponsored by SCOR. Other activities related to the project (e.g., national research activities) can be encouraged to identify themselves as contributions to the international project.

### **Reviews and Reporting**

- Annual reports: SCOR projects submit annual reports in advance of the SCOR annual meeting and will typically be invited to deliver a short presentation and answer questions during the meeting. Annual reports are focused on reporting activities related to the scientific objectives, and on recent publications and meetings. Project representatives are encouraged to attend the full annual meeting remotely or in person if funding allows to network with other SCOR activities and the nations represented at the meeting.
- Mid-term reviews: SCOR may organize a mid-term review of the project, depending on the scope and duration of the science plan.
- Final report and synthesis products: The final annual report to SCOR should be a summary of the project's final/synthetic products and other accomplishments. Projects

are expected to devote their energy to producing products to be utilized by the scientific community rather than to the final report to SCOR. Often products produced toward the end of the project take the form of books or special issues of journals that synthesize the state of science, with explicit references to the role and accomplishments of the project. They may also include datasets or data products; videos (e.g., webinar recordings); and white papers aimed at scientists, policymakers, or other audiences. These requirements apply even to those projects seeking to renew their efforts under a new science plan.