

CoARA Rules of Procedure

Working Groups

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Introduction

The role of these Rules of Procedure (RoPs) is to describe the conditions and procedures for the creation and management of Working Groups (WGs) within the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). This Rules of Procedure document is the responsibility of the CoARA General Assembly. It can be amended, based on suggestions from CoARA member organisations or the Steering Board, to be reviewed by the Steering Board, and approved by the General Assembly.

In particular, it is envisaged that following the first year of operations of the CoARA, this document will be reviewed to integrate any possible lessons learned that can contribute to the improvement of the present rules.

1. Working Groups within the CoARA

1.1. Context

The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment ([CoARA](#)) is a public, community-driven initiative constituted of volunteer organisational members from across the world. The CoARA aims to enable systemic reform of research assessment on the basis of common principles and commitments within an agreed timeframe, as set in the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#). This is achieved through exchange of information and mutual learning between all those willing to improve research assessment practices.

Working Groups (WGs) are a central component of the CoARA. The purpose of WGs is to exchange knowledge, learn mutually, discuss and develop any outputs to advance research assessment and help with the implementation of the members' commitments. WGs operate as 'communities of practice' on specific topics. WGs are proposed at the initiative of members, and participation from other members is voluntary. In some limited cases, WGs may be proposed by the Steering Board.

The work of the CoARA can nevertheless also be based on other complementary means like workshops, webinars, (annual) conferences, seminars, trainings, etc.

1.2. Value of Working Groups (WGs)

WGs are expected to develop concrete tasks and outputs within a specific timeframe. These may include:

- Collecting, defining and sharing good practices and challenges faced;
- Exchanging information on changes piloted and implemented by the members within the CoARA, and also beyond;
- Defining joint pilots and initiatives as appropriate;

- Establishing guidelines that can be considered by all or part of the Coalition members and beyond;
- Exchanging information on the impacts – benefits and costs – of the changes implemented for further evidence-informed changes;
- Developing and sharing toolkits, games and interactive tools.

WGs will also strive to collaborate and seek synergies with like-minded initiatives.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities of WGs

The WGs responsibilities are outlined in the CoARA Governance document. WG members (including Co-Chairs) and external experts are expected to contribute to the WG activities in kind.

1.4. WGs topics

Topics addressed by the Working Groups may cover, for example:

- Working together to produce guidelines on ad-hoc horizontal topics like peer review and qualitative evaluation, alternative metrics, narrative CVs, conflicts of interest, fair assessment, research on research needed, balance between research and other academic activities, etc. (“**interest communities**”);
- Exchanging on approaches to tailor criteria and processes by discipline, inter-disciplinary field or thematic area (“**discipline communities**”);
- Exchanging on topics specific to a given type of organisation, like for example the use of metrics in the assessment of institutions by national evaluation agencies, the assessment of research projects by research funders, etc. (“**institution communities**”);
- Facilitating the exchange on issues specific to different types of organisations of a given country or group of countries (“**national communities**”). Such communities may be relevant for only some countries or group of countries.

2. Creating and managing WGs

2.1. Creating a WG

Candidate WGs are proposed bottom-up by member organisations and approved by the Steering Board, to ensure alignment of the WGs with the objectives of the CoARA, and with the procedures and criteria for the establishment and operation of the WGs.

The Secretariat will periodically open calls for applications to create new CoARA WGs. Applications need to be received by the Secretariat by the deadline indicated in the call.

An online forum or another equivalent tool will be established by the Coalition Secretariat to discuss ideas of Working Groups, across the Coalition.

The process to propose and obtain approval for the creation of a CoARA WG is as follows:

- **Application:** The application is sent to the CoARA Secretariat via a dedicated form available on the CoARA website. The request contains the following information:
 - Title of the proposed WG and specific issues addressed;
 - How the WG fits with the overall CoARA vision;
 - Agreement commitment(s), the implementation of which is supported by the WG;
 - Topics addressed by the WG (interest communities / discipline communities / institution communities / national communities / other);
 - Indication of the member organisations that will be participating in the WG. Except for “national communities”, where participation from member organisations from a given country or group of countries is acceptable, WGs should count on a broad and balanced geographical participation from the CoARA member organisations;
 - At least two proposed Chairs leading the WG, representing different types of organisations and countries/regions;
 - Mission statement, work plan and outputs / deliverables, that can be accomplished within two years, expected impact notably expected adoption and implementation scenarios;
 - Added value of the WG over and above what is currently being done within the community.
- **Review:** The Secretariat transmits the application to the Steering Board for review.
- **Approval:** The Steering Board decides if to approve the request for the creation of a new WG. The Steering Board can also recommend some changes, and propose to merge WGs, when applications received address a similar topic. The Secretariat notifies the applicants of the Steering Board decision. The Secretariat also publishes information on the approved WGs on the CoARA website.

WGs can also be proposed top-down by the Steering Board, in case a topic needs to be urgently addressed, or where a subject matter that is considered of high priority is not addressed by other CoARA activities and WGs. The number of such WGs should remain limited. Such WGs should be initiated provided that the number of member organisations interested in participating is sufficient to the delivery of the WG’s objectives.

2.2. Reviewing and approving a WG

Approval criteria

For “national communities”, approval criteria are:

- Alignment with the vision of CoARA;
- Alignment with the expected outputs of CoARA WGs;
- Support to the implementation of the Agreement as a whole;

- The WG members should comprise at least half of the CoARA member organisations from the country or group of countries concerned;
- Indication of at least two Chairs leading the WG, representing different types of organisations;
- Feasibility of the proposed work plan and outputs /deliverables within the indicated timeframe, and expected impact notably expected adoption and implementation scenarios;
- Added value of the WG over and above what is currently being done within the country or group of countries.

For “interest communities”, “discipline communities” and “institution communities”, and other types of WGs, approval criteria are:

- Alignment with the vision of CoARA;
- Alignment with the expected outputs of CoARA WGs;
- Support the implementation of at least one of the Agreement’s commitments;
- Broad and balanced geographical participation from the CoARA member organisations;
- Indication of at least two Chairs leading the WG, representing different types of organisations and countries/regions;
- Feasibility of the proposed work plan and outcomes /deliverables within the indicated timeframe, and expected impact notably expected adoption and implementation scenarios;
- Added value of the WG over and above what is currently being done within the community.

Complementarities with other groups outside the CoARA

The CoARA seeks for complementarities, collaborations and synergies with like-minded initiatives and organisations that identify and discuss challenges and good practices in research assessment. Proposers of WGs will be asked in their application to motivate the added value of the WG over and above what is currently being done within the community, so to ensure there is no competition and overlap with external structures or internal CoARA WGs.

Complementary issues with other CoARA WGs

CoARA WGs will be encouraged to interact with other CoARA WGs to leverage expertise and outputs, and avoid duplication of efforts and overlap. The Secretariat will support WGs in understanding eventual complementarity and possible synergies with existing groups.

Limit on number of WGs

During the review and the approval phases of WGs, the Steering Board will carefully consider

the size of the proposed WG and related activities, its added value, as well as the CoARA operational capacity and existing WGs, to ensure that the number of groups operating are representative and can be offered suitable support.

In the initial phases of CoARA operations, the initial number of WGs will be limited. This will allow all parties involved to fine tune the proposed processes. Such a limitation will be reviewed periodically and could be modified by the General Assembly.

2.3. WG Leadership

The WG needs to be led by at least two Chairs, who will be the main point of contact and responsible for communication within the CoARA and more broadly.

The Chairs are formally appointed during the first meeting of the WG by its members.

Specific responsibilities of the Chairs include ensuring the following:

- Quality, scope, timeliness and usefulness of the work in progress;
- An effective organisational structure is in place for the WG;
- Progress within the WG is evidenced by meeting the expected outcomes;
- Facilitating the participation and the expression of different views from member organisations.

2.4. WG Membership

- WGs are open to participation from all CoARA member organisations;
- Member organisations can nominate different representatives from their organisation to participate in CoARA WGs. This means that the person representing the organisation in the WG can be different from the person representing the organisation in the General Assembly. It is up to the organisation to decide on the representative to nominate, taking into account the topic, work plan and expected outputs/deliverables of the WG;
- Once nominated by their organisations, participants should commit to be the persons participating in the WG activities, to ensure continuity;
- Experts external to the CoARA may contribute to the WGs when nominated by the member organisations involved in these groups;
- WG member organisations and their participants, and potential additional individuals and experts external to the CoARA, are expected to actively contribute to the work of the WGs and to the delivery of the proposed outputs / deliverables, and work plan;
- Except for “national communities”, WGs should strive for broad and balanced geographical participation among the CoARA member organisations;
- Member organisations and their participants within a WG must agree to the CoARA Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles contained in its Governance Document. Other individuals and experts external to the CoARA could participate to the WG activities when needed and nominated by the member organisations involved in these groups, in which

case they must also agree to the CoARA Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles contained in its Governance Document.

- Experts external to the CoARA will participate in kind and will not be remunerated for the external advice provided.

Joining an existing WG

- Any CoARA member organisation can join an existing WG;
- Participants and experts external to the CoARA may contribute to the WGs when nominated by the organisations involved in these groups;
- Interest to join an existing WG should be sent to the Chairs of the WG, with the Secretariat being in copy of the request. When sending a request to join, the CoARA member organisations should indicate the name of the participants they intend to nominate to participate in the WG activities.

2.5. Duration of WGs and progress report

The maximum duration of a WG is two years. A WG can however be renewed by submitting a new application. Every year, an established WG will submit a progress report to the Secretariat, which will review it. If a WG considerably deviates from its work plan without a reasoned justification, the Steering Board might decide on the termination of the WG.

2.6. WG Outputs

Outputs are deliverables of a Working Group developed and endorsed by the group. Each output should list the Working Group as author, in addition to individual authors having contributed to its development.

Examples of outputs include guidelines and recommendations, collections of good practices, reports from pilots, white papers, reports from workshops or conferences, toolkits, games and interactive tools. Some of the outputs, notably guidelines and recommendations, can be endorsed by the Coalition. For this purpose, the Steering Board prepares an endorsement process and publication policy for Working Groups' outputs/deliverables, to be adopted by the General Assembly. Such endorsement process is expected to involve consultation of the Coalition members and potentially also of the broader research community.

2.7. Dissemination of results

All approved WGs will be published on the CoARA website, with their mission, work plan and membership.

- The CoARA will establish processes for follow-up and coordination of the WGs. CoARA will also establish an endorsement process and publication policy for Working Groups'

outputs/deliverables and other CoARA documents. All WGs should comply with these policies and processes.

- The WGs should in principle openly disseminate the results from their work. Some WGs may however not share some results, when such results have a confidential nature or when the WG is meant to share information that are particularly sensitive to members. The decision of not sharing results shall be taken by the WG members and a motivation should be provided to the Steering Board for its approval.
- Following the decision to publish the results, these will be published by the Secretariat in the CoARA website. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the WG, will also disseminate the results via other appropriate communication channels (e.g., social media, web-articles, etc.).

2.8. Termination of WGs

A WG may be terminated:

- If the Chairs request it to the Steering Board and at least two-thirds of the member organisations of the WG agree;
- If the WG is not following the principles outlined in the CoARA Code of Conduct and in its Governance Document. Any decision in this regard will be made by the General Assembly on hearing evidence;
- If the WG is considered inactive by the Steering Board, following the information received from the WG in its annual progress report.
- If the WG has achieved its proposed objectives.