



Process to establish the permanent secretariat of Future Earth

Call for expressions of interest

Deadline for expression of interests: 23rd September 2013

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Introduction

Background information

Future Earth is a 10-year international research programme that will provide critical knowledge required for societies to face the challenges posed by Global Environmental Change (GEC) and to identify opportunities for transitions to global sustainability.

Future Earth is sponsored by a Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability comprising of the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum - council of principals of the International Group of Funding Agencies for global environmental change research (IGFA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations University (UNU), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as an observer.

Future Earth will answer fundamental questions about how and why the global environment is changing, what are likely future changes, what are risks and implications for human development and the diversity of life on Earth, and what the opportunities are to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, enhance resilience and innovation, and implement transformations to prosperous and equitable futures.

Key characteristics of Future Earth include:

- delivers science of the highest quality, encompassing bottom-up ideas from the wide scientific community, and being inclusive of existing international Global Environmental Change projects and related research activities, notably those coordinated by four major international research programmes (International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, International Human Dimensions Programme, DIVERSITAS programme on biodiversity and ecosystem services and World Climate Research Programme);
- solutions-oriented research to address policy needs at different scales and fundamental societal questions regarding global environmental change and pathways toward sustainable futures;
- interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, bringing together disciplinary strengths from across the natural and social sciences, engineering and humanities, and engaging stakeholders across the public, private and voluntary sectors in defining and delivering the research (co-design and co-production);

- capacity building among the scientific and other stakeholder communities to strengthen integrated research for sustainability and the uptake of this research in decision-making processes.

Future Earth is led by a multi-stakeholder Governing Council, advised by a Science Committee and an Engagement Committee, and supported by a dedicated Secretariat with regional components.

These core elements of Future Earth are described in more detail in the Future Earth initial design report. The final draft of the report can be downloaded using the following link:

http://www.icsu.org/future-earth/media-centre/relevant_publications/FutureEarthdraftinitialdesignreport.pdf

As Future Earth is moving towards implementation, steps have been taken to establish the governance structure of the programme. During the interim operating phase (June 2013 – end of 2014) the Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability will act as the interim multi-stakeholder Governing Council. The Science Committee [<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth/who/future-earth-science-committee>] was appointed in June 2013 with membership renewals and turnover starting from June 2015. Initial steps have been taken to form an interim Engagement Committee. Finally, Professor Frans Berkhout has been appointed as interim Director to lead the interim Secretariat, hosted by ICSU for 18 months (ending in December 2014) to move forward the implementation of Future Earth while the permanent Secretariat of Future Earth is being selected.

The initial duration of Future Earth is 10 years, starting from the appointment of the permanent Secretariat.

The need for a permanent globally distributed secretariat

The initial design report explains that an international call will be made for bids to support a globally distributed Future Earth Secretariat, which is expected to have a headquarters and regional nodes.

The report explains the requirement for a Secretariat which: organises the implementation of the approved research strategies and activities; performs the day-to-day management of Future Earth, ensuring the coordination across themes, projects, regions and committees; and liaises with key stakeholders. The initial design report lays out the administrative, communication, engagement and science-policy roles of the secretariat (see Annex 1).

The Secretariat headquarters will provide overall leadership for the implementation of Future Earth, host its Executive Director, and play the lead role in delivering the secretariat tasks. Regional nodes will perform some of the roles of the Secretariat at regional level¹. These will have an emphasis on providing the link to regional, sub-regional and national science communities, stakeholders and funders; regional nodes may also undertake delegated secretariat tasks for the overall global programme, and provide secretariat support for regional science initiatives contributing to the global Future Earth programme.

The Secretariat will need an innovative management model to ensure it can operate efficiently and effectively and fully support the communities of researchers and stakeholders in the delivery of Future Earth. It must ensure engagement of developed, developing and least developed countries. Consideration should be given to how best to interact at sub-regional level and also to opportunities to engage with existing regional structures of the GEC projects.

Bidders are encouraged to consider opportunities to engage regional offices of the Alliance members (e.g. ICSU, UNESCO, UNEP and UNU regional offices) in the delivery of Future Earth at the regional level.

Alliance members and their regional offices are not, however, intended to be part of bidding consortia. Should any of these organisations wish to be part of a bidding consortium, then that Alliance member would not be eligible to participate in the selection process for the secretariat; this should be discussed and agreed with their Alliance representative prior to the submission of the expression of interest.

The Secretariat of Future Earth is expected to start operating from mid-2014 – allowing for a hand-over period with the interim secretariat - and be fully operational by December 2014. The initial commitment period from organisations hosting the Secretariat headquarters and regional nodes is 5 years, renewable for a further 5 years. An evaluation will be carried out during the first 5 years and performance will be monitored regularly to allow for learning and timely adjustments as the programme develops.

Selection process

A three-stage selection process is proposed to solicit proposals from organisations to establish, resource and run the Secretariat.

¹Regions could include, but are not limited to: Africa; Asia Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; Middle East and North Africa; and North America. The headquarters may provide the regional role within the region in which it is based, but other options could be considered, for example an additional regional node.

Step I: Call for expressions of interest

Step II: Bidders' conference

Step III: Call for full proposals

In step I, the Alliance is inviting any organisation or consortium of organisations to express interest in hosting the headquarters or individual regional nodes of the permanent secretariat. In step II, credible bidders will be invited to a conference to discuss further the requirements for the permanent secretariat, and meet other potential bidders, to support community self-organisation. In step III, full proposals for the permanent secretariat will be sought. It should be noted that full proposals must be fully networked, i.e. include the headquarters and the regional nodes.

In step I, bidders are required to demonstrate their funding strategy and capacity to mobilise the necessary resources (including in-kind contributions and human resources); however, funding commitments are not required at this stage. All full bids (step III) must be backed by the necessary funding secured by the host institutions (the funding could come from a consortium of organisations), for 5 years, renewable for a further 5 years. The funding is expected to support: the staffing required for the secretariat's role; office space; IT and furniture; operating and travelling expenses; and the cost of Committee and community meetings. For reference, it should be noted that the IGBP, DIVERSITAS, IHDP and WCRP typically employed directly 28 FTE staff in total in their secretariats (and benefit from some additional services provided externally) and that the Future Earth Secretariat role is more ambitious than the current arrangements. Whilst Alliance members aim to secure existing national contributions to GEC programmes for Future Earth, bids for the secretariat should not be predicated on this funding.

As part of its provision of the headquarters secretariat, the host organisation is expected to employ, and provide the salary of the Future Earth Executive Director. The Executive Director will be recruited in open, international competition, by the Alliance members; the Alliance will engage the host institution in this recruitment process.

This document sets out the call for expressions of interest (step I). Annex 2 provides draft information on steps II and III, and the selection approach (and will be updated ahead of step II commencing).

Call for expressions of interest (step I)

Process

The Alliance has released this open call for organisations interested in hosting the Future Earth permanent secretariat headquarters or regional nodes. This call for expressions of interest is accompanied by the role specification of the Secretariat (Annex 1), and respondents are asked to:

- Introduce the organisation (or consortium of organisations) they represent and whether they would like to be considered as the headquarters or regional node. The organisation(s) might be an academy of sciences, research institute, university, government agency, private sector or civil society organisation, or other relevant body.
- Justify why the organisation has the capability to deliver against the role specification
- Provide evidence that they can fund the necessary activity (no funding commitments are required at this stage, but they must have a credible funding plan).
- Share preliminary information of likely partnerships with organisations in other regions that may ultimately become part of a full bid.

Expressions of interest will be assessed by a selection committee, and all credible bids will be invited forward to take part in the bidders' conference.

Selection criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed with regard to the following criteria:

- Vision for a successful Future Earth Secretariat
- Capabilities to deliver against the role specifications, taking into account:
 - Experience in managing global environmental change and sustainability research
 - Experience in managing international research programmes
 - Capacity to support effective collaboration and exchange between countries and regions

- Capacity to convene different stakeholder groups (e.g. academia, funders, governments, international organisations and science assessments, development groups, business and industry, civil society, and the media)
- Proposed funding strategy

How to participate in Step 1

Organisations (or consortia of organisations) that wish to express their interests in hosting the Future Earth Secretariat headquarters or regional node are required to **fill out the template provided and send it by email to contact@futureearth.info with subject 'secretariat' by September 23rd 2013, 23:59 CET.**

Contacts

For any question or points of clarification on the process outlined above, please contact the Future Earth interim secretariat at ICSU.

Email: contact@futureearth.info with subject 'secretariat'

Phone: +33 1 45 25 03 29

Annex 1: Role of the Future Earth Secretariat

Adapted from Initial Design Report (Annex 3.4.)

The Future Earth Secretariat ensures that the strategies and activities approved by the Governing Council are realised. It has a headquarters and regional nodes, and carries out the day-to-day functions of Future Earth and acts as a hub to synthesise input from all components of Future Earth. The functions of the Secretariat are defined as follows (not in order of priority):

Administrative:

- Provide coherence and coordination in the scientific work of Future Earth by liaising with the leadership of all research themes and projects;
- Plan activities and oversee management of synthesis and integration across (multiple) Future Earth activities and themes;
- Design and manage innovative mechanisms for idea generation (e.g. fast-track research, a web-based platform etc.);
- Organise the submission of ideas for proposals for new projects for discussion by the Science and Engagement Committees and approval by the Governing Council (horizon scanning);
- Support the work of the Governing Council, the Science Committee and the Engagement Committee by carrying out the necessary administration tasks (planning and operations, including nomination and appointment processes, council and committee meetings etc.);
- Implement the fundraising strategy adopted by the Governing Council, with help from the Alliance and other relevant experts; including coordination of seed funding for development of new ideas;
- Prepare the Secretariat's budget for submission to the Governing Council, manage the funds and prepare financial reports;
- Support the monitoring and evaluation process for Future Earth;
- Provide coherence and coordination by across the full Secretariat structure;
- Provide coherence and coordination by liaising with National Committees;

- Support the design of a Future Earth data policy and facilitate its implementation by research themes, projects and activities of Future Earth data producers, in particular by liaising with World Data System, CODATA, GEO/GEOSS and the observing systems, research funders, and others, as appropriate; and
- Develop and facilitate implementation of a sustainability strategy for all operations of Future Earth (including Secretariat, projects offices, procurement, travel, operations of Science Committee, Governing Council and Alliance etc.).

Communication, engagement and science-policy assessments:

- Jointly with the Science and Engagement Committees, develop strategies for communication, capacity building, education and engagement with key stakeholder groups;
- Implement and coordinate with relevant partners on communication, capacity building, education and stakeholder engagement to implement strategies, as above;
- Ensure that Future Earth has a prominent role within the international science-policy processes such as UNFCCC, CBD; definition of SDGs, etc.
- Coordinate scientific input from Future Earth into assessment processes (such as IPBES, IPCC).
- Organise and manage outreach activities (e.g. conferences, workshops, stakeholder fora, panels in partnership with key stakeholders etc.);
- Develop a network and engage stakeholders from all regions, with a particular effort to engage young scientists and scientists from developing countries; and

Role of the Executive Director

The Future Earth Executive Director will work with the scientific community, stakeholders, and members of the Alliance to:

- Lead and manage the Secretariat.
- Provide visible executive leadership for Future Earth with the science community and stakeholders.

- Lead the continued development of Future Earth as a new programme engaging the global environmental change research, user and funding communities.
- Create funding opportunities to support Future Earth research and develop the mid- to long-term funding base, including engaging new potential funders, for example development donors, foundations and venture philanthropists.

Annex 2: Overview of the selection process (step II and step III), selection criteria and timetable

Step II: Bidders' conference

All credible bidders, judged against the criteria for expressions of interest will be invited to a bidders' conference. The purpose of this conference will be for the Alliance, Science Committee, interim Engagement Committee and interim secretariat to provide more details of the role of the secretariat and the selection process, and for participants to discuss these requirements so that they are well defined and understood. Bidders will fund their own costs to attend the bidders' conference. Alliance members may invite additional organisations to attend the conference, notably to engage relevant organisations who may not have been reached by the Expressions of Interest call.

The conference will also provide space for bidders to meet each other and support the community self-organisation required to develop full proposals which will include the headquarters and regional nodes, as required in the third stage of the process.

Step III: Call for full proposals

All those who are judged by the selection committee to have submitted credible expressions of interest and participated in the bidders' conference are eligible to participate in the full proposal stage. The selection committee may consider participation by new organisations (i.e. those not involved in steps I and II) in order to address specific gaps.

The Alliance will release an open call for full proposals for the Future Earth Secretariat. Full proposals must be fully networked, i.e. include headquarters and the regional nodes. Bidders will be asked to:

- a. Introduce the organisations they represent, their vision for the Future Earth Secretariat and present the headquarters/regional structure.
- b. Explain how the organisations will meet the role specification, and justify why they have the capability to do so, present a credible management plan, and explain how they will address any regional/sub-regional gaps. We encourage bidders to bring their ideas, experience and creativity to address the role requirements.

- c. Provide a funding plan with clear funding commitments to meet the requirements of the Future Earth Secretariat.

All full bids must be backed by the necessary funding secured by the host institutions (the funding could come from a consortium of organisations), for 5 years, renewable for a further 5 years. The funding is expected to support: the staffing required for the secretariat's role; office space; IT and furniture; operating and travelling expenses; and the cost of Committee and community meetings. For reference, it should be noted that the four existing GEC programmes - IGBP, DIVERSITAS, IHDP and WCRP - currently employ directly 28 FTE staff in total in their secretariats (and benefit from some additional services provided externally), and that the Future Earth Secretariat role is more ambitious than the current arrangements. Whilst Alliance members aim to mobilise existing national contributions to GEC programmes for Future Earth, bids for the secretariat should not be predicated on this funding.

As part of its provision of the headquarters secretariat, the host organisation is expected to employ, and provide the salary of the Secretariat Executive Director. The Executive Director will be recruited in open, international competition, by the Alliance members; the Alliance will engage the host institution in this recruitment process.

Additional assessment factors

In addition to the requirements specified above, the following factors will be taken into account in the decision-making:

1. Experience of the host organisation/institution in networking and fostering and managing interdisciplinary research; and creating opportunities for the involvement of scientists and other stakeholders beyond the host institution (including intergovernmental organisations, funders and civil society).
2. Access – is the host institution easy to get to? What are the visa formalities for international visitors to the Secretariat? There must be no barriers to involvement of scientists of whatever nationality/background.
3. Little or no overhead charge made by host institution on funding received by the Secretariat (from whatever source). Is the host likely to be attractive to potential donors?
4. Provision of a suite of fully equipped offices, access to appropriate meeting facilities, provision of administrative/accounting support, and access to public transportation.

5. Unhindered access to, and transfer of, scientific information/literature through high speed Internet connection; tele/video conference facilities; ability to set up and run an independent website devoted to the programme.
6. Ability to attract excellent candidates for the post of Executive Director through open, international recruitment. Ease with which other qualified staff can be recruited locally or internationally, noting that English is expected to be the main language of communication in this international programme.
7. Administrative and financial management processes and regulations that are conducive to the running of the Secretariat, providing the necessary financial accountability required by funders, and including the facility to receive and transfer funds from and to institutions and individuals outside of the host country. Bidders will be asked about the possibility of establishing the Secretariat headquarters as an independent legal entity, in order to support its international role.

Selection

The Alliance will establish a selection committee comprising of Alliance representatives, with due consideration to avoid potential conflicts of interest, together with one representative from each of the Science and interim Engagement Committees. The membership of the selection committee will have due regard to regional balance. The selection committee will elect its own Chair and use selection criteria set out above. Consideration will be given during the process to taking advice from an organisational expert, and seeking comments from relevant organisations and programmes that have experience in setting up global and regional offices.

The selection committee will be responsible for assessing expressions of interest and full bids. In the case of expressions of interest, the selection committee will be delegated to decide which organisations to invite forward to the bidders' conference (recognising that any credible bidder should be invited). The selection committees' assessment and recommendations regarding full bids will be directed to each Alliance member organisation and approval by each organisation will be sought.

The process outlined above (and negotiation with the successful bidders) will be managed by ICSU, on behalf of the Alliance. The Future Earth interim secretariat will provide support in this process, taking care to manage any conflicts of interest.

Provisional timetable

The following provisional timetable is proposed:

- a. *Interim Director starts (1st July 2013)*
- b. Call for Expressions of Interest (9th July 2013)
- c. Deadline for Expressions of Interest (23rd September 2013)
- d. Assessment of Expressions of Interest (mid October 2013)
- e. Invitations to participate in the Bidders conference issued (mid October 2013)
- f. Bidders conference (mid November 2013)
- g. Call for full bids (end of November 2013)
- h. Deadline for full bids (end February 2014)
- i. Assessment of full bids (by end March 2014)
- j. Co-decision by Alliance members (complete by mid-April 2014)
- k. Negotiation with successful bidders (Apr-May 2014)
- l. Award in place (June 2014)
- m. *Interim Director ends (Dec 2014)*