

African Open Science Platform (AOSP) Technical Advisory Board

Draft Terms of Reference

Name

The group is referred to as the AOSP Technical Advisory Board, AOSP TAB, or African Open Science Platform Technical Advisory Board.

Context & Background Information

The [African Open Science Platform](#) (AOSP) is a major outcome of the [Accord on Open Data in a Big Data World](#), which promotes the values of open data in the emerging scientific culture of big data. The [Accord](#) recognizes the need for an international framework of principles on "Open Data in a Big Data World" and proposes a comprehensive set of principles.

These principles provide a guiding framework for an African data science capacity mobilization initiative spearheaded by the [International Council for Science](#) (ICSU) and supported by other Science International partners. This initiative – referred to as the [African Open Science Platform](#) (AOSP) – puts forward a comprehensive capacity mobilization plan, co-designed and delivered with key partners in Africa. The [African Open Science Platform](#) will coordinate a series of actions at different levels of national science systems in Africa.

For the continental project to succeed there is a need to harness diverse national perspectives – representing experience in individual African countries – in the following core areas:

- 1) Policies;
- 2) Infrastructure;
- 3) Incentives; and
- 4) Capacity building.

Most African countries belong to regional economic blocks. These blocks will be used as a basis to determine representation on the AOSP-TAB.

Purpose, Scope, and Objectives

The objective of the AOSP-TAB is to advise the AOSP Working Group (AOSP-WG) on technical priorities and processes. The AOSP-WG comprises of both regional and non-African experts.

The role and responsibilities of the AOSP-TAB in general will be to assist the AOSP-WG to review the activities and outputs of the project. The AOSP-TAB will critique these activities and in the process, help to improve project activities and outputs. Specifically, the role of the AOSP-TAB during the project life-span will be to guide and assist the project to:

- Identify the status of national and regional systems of scientific priority setting, funding and institutional research management;



- Analyze, map and present the African scientific landscape of policies, infrastructure, incentives, capacity building, and frontiers, in order to provide a comprehensive view of the current landscape in terms of Open Science (including Open Data);
- Identify 'soft' infrastructure of protocols and procedures at all levels in the science system that provide support, advice, management and incentives to ensure that AOSP operates in a way that permits it to achieve working in a collaborative science environment;
- Serve as a conduit for links with continental and international Open Data and Open Science programs and standards;
- Develop an Open Science concept that builds on Open Data in a way that is adapted to African needs and perspectives in collaboration with other stakeholder groups;
- Harvest and circulate good practice to help develop the capacities of individuals and institutions through various interventions;
- Develop an awareness raising and training strategy and presenting workshops on regional level;
- Develop frameworks of incentives for open data, that are highly Africa relevant, to test and demonstrate the benefits of open data in an open science context and the impact of the platform in the regional context;
- Research and produce an infrastructure roadmap, towards an [African Open Science Platform](#), which will make recommendations for optimal regional coordination to achieve economies of scale and the benefits of collaboration in the development of both hard and 'soft' infrastructure components;
- Finally, some members of the TAB may be asked to assist in the writing and production of some project outputs.

Working Approach & Methodology

The African Open Science Technical Advisory Board (AOSP-TAB) will serve for a term of three years (May 2017-April 2020).

This group will meet twice annually, rotating between the represented countries. Virtual meetings will also be used to maintain momentum between physical meetings, and on occasion to discuss pressing matters. A chair will be appointed to guide and preside over the activities of the AOSP-TAB. The Board will be co-chaired by ASSAf ([Academy of Science of South Africa](#)).

The AOSP-TAB's first meeting of 8th June 2017, will achieve the following objectives. To:

- Launch the project,
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of the members and,
- Give initial direction for the AOSP project.

Later in 2017 a second meeting will further advise on the direction of the project and on meeting deliverables, once the project's foundations are more fully in place.

Role of AOSP-TAB members

The AOSP-TAB members will serve as ambassadors for the project. They are expected to be knowledgeable about the AOSP objectives and expected outcomes and will remain current on progress that will be made throughout the project. Members are also expected to support



outreach and strengthen dialogue with a wider group of stakeholders in regional blocks across Africa. TAB members should be able to represent AOSP during identified events (provided their schedules allow for it), and engage in dialogue, in the best interest of the project.

- The members will be reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses, where those were incurred, and where directly related to the AOSP.
- The names of the members (excl. personal information) will be made public on the AOSP web page, and shared via the AOSP mailing list.

Distribution of work among Members

For the AOSP-TAB to function effectively, it will be led by the Chairperson supported by other members.

The Chairperson

This is a key role in the TAB. As such the Chairperson will:

- Work for up to 15 working days per annum;
- Propose the agenda of the two meetings;
- Chair and direct the meetings;
- Summarise the main conclusions and actions arising before closing each meeting;
- Organise and coordinate the work, assigning responsibilities and tasks to members as appropriate;
- Moderate and facilitate exchanges between and amongst members;
- Consult further experts with complementary expertise and geographical origin and
- Set reporting requirements in agreement with the Rapporteur.

The Rapporteur

This is very important and technical role that involves recording the technical inputs and outputs of the TAB. Specifically, the Rapporteur will:

- Work for up to 10 working days per annum;
- Draft the Board deliverables;
- Provide technical advice to the Chairperson;
- Generate technical reports as required by the Chairperson;
- Initiate technical proposals to guide the Chairperson;
- Have editorial responsibility for any reports or deliverables that the Board makes.

Individual Members

Individual members will contribute to the success of the Board as outlined below. They will:

- Work for up to 5 working days each per annum;
- Participate in meetings and commenting on contributions of other members;
- Contribute to the preparation of written documents;
- Prepare written individual or joint contributions, projecting their main area of expertise;
- Comment on draft project reports as appropriate;
- Providing relevant data and information as requested by the Chairperson.

Meetings, Reports & Deadlines

The meetings of the Board will be organized by the AOSP Working Group. The agenda of all meetings will be decided by the members in consultation with the AOSP Working Group.

The Board will sign-off the following deliverables:



- Minutes of Board meetings;
- Presentations for discussion with the Council;
- Final annual reports including advice on the direction of the [African Open Science Platform](#) initiative.

Scheduled meetings will only continue with a quorum present. To qualify as a quorum, the following need to be present:

- Either the Chairperson or Co-Chairperson, or both; incl.
- 50% of the ordinary members.

Should a quorum not be present, limited procedural actions can be taken only. Any other business conducted will not be valid, unless ratified at a later meeting where a quorum is present.

Member Profiles

The members were selected on the basis of criteria respecting the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and absence of conflict of interest. They are appointed in their personal capacity to act independently and in the public interest.

It is expected that this group will expand, through adding members from regions/countries not initially represented.

Members of the Board are leaders in the field of open science, research data sharing and scientific data infrastructures. They are experienced in scientific data sharing and re-use across disciplinary boundaries and conversant with issues of privacy and data protection in relation to scientific data sharing.

The members were identified on the basis of their skills, experience and knowledge (to carry out the tasks assigned to them). Criteria such as gender balance, geographical balance and diversity of disciplines have been respected.