

# SUPPORT FOR CoARA SIGNATORIES IN THE PREPARATION OF ACTION PLANS

This document is a resource to support signatories of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and members of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in preparing an action plan towards achieving the commitments they have signed up to.

## Purpose of this document

In the context of the CoARA [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#), signatory organisations are invited to share with each other and with their community how their organisation has started the process of implementing the Core Commitments according to an action plan with defined milestones within one year of signing the Agreement.

In light of certain organizations nearing their first anniversary as signatories at the time of the dissemination of this resource, the CoARA Steering Board suggests that these signatories and members consider extending the timeframe for preparing and publishing their action plans by an additional six months.

While organisations have full freedom in the development of their action plan, several CoARA members have indicated that a light-touch resource would be helpful to support this.

To that end, the CoARA Extended Secretariat has identified a series of Guiding Questions that can help organisations when designing and defining the different steps they will undertake in this process. These Guiding Questions are meant to:

- Take into account the fact that the organisations are numerous and diverse. The guiding questions for the development of an action plan should therefore be inspiring and incentivise reflection for all the different types of organisations in CoARA.
- Encourage not only the reflection about the content but mainly about the change approach, involving researchers across all career stages and people working in research and innovation in the broadest possible sense, including research support personnel, in the process and in conducting dialogue.

### Considerations for using the Guiding Questions

The Guiding Questions should be helpful for organisations to create an action plan to implement the Core Commitments of the CoARA Agreement and to guide self-reflection on progress made by year 5, within the scope of their own organisation. Given the diversity of Signatory organisations, not all Questions might be equally relevant to each organisation type. We invite organisations to approach them critically and incorporate them where they resonate with the strategy, vision, mission and characteristics of their organisation.

- Signatories and CoARA members are not required to use the Guiding Questions, which do not serve as a rigid template but rather as a resource and suggestion. Signatories who have already developed an action plan are not asked to duplicate efforts.
- CoARA members are best positioned to know what they want to change, so the Guiding Questions were designed to invite reflection on the ‘how?’
- No one size fits all: action plans are to be customised to individual members’ context and mission.
- Sharing action plans enables CoARA members to signal their practical Commitments to the reform and gain mutual inspiration from each other. Organisations who have their action plan in place are invited to share this with the CoARA community via a dedicated [Zendodo community](#). Please find depositing guidelines [here](#).
- Action plans are living documents and as such, can be updated any time within the 5-year time frame according to monitoring carried out by the organisation.
- No top-down involvement of the CoARA Steering Board: the communication of individual members’ progress in implementing the Commitments will primarily be based on publicly shared action plans (year 1) and thereafter self-assessment with respect to their action plan (with a milestone set out in the Agreement in year 5).

## Guiding Questions

The guiding questions are organised into two sections: the first block reflects on the organisational context and baseline for implementing the Core Commitments while the second block contains Guiding Questions for each of the Core Commitments.

Phase	Reflection Point	Guiding Questions
Starting Point	Reflect on your strategy and change approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What guiding principles do you (and your community) think are priorities in your approach to reform?</li> <li>How does your organisation intend to make the reforms in order to meet the guiding principles?</li> <li>What is the process by which your organisation will work on the reform?</li> </ul>
	Involve your institutional community in the change process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are you planning to involve relevant actor groups (such as researchers at different career stages, research support staff, administrators, and others, depending on the scope of your organisation)?</li> <li>How will you share good practices (internally and with others)?</li> </ul>
	Identify key challenges to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you identified the Identify key challenges to address key challenges/gaps/bottlenecks/barriers in your organisation with regards to reforming research assessment and the adherence to the action plan? For which does your institution have the power/authority/resources to address?</li> <li>What will be needed to efficiently address them? And what alternatives/strategies can be useful in overcoming some of these challenges?</li> </ul>
	Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your organisation plan to enable recognition of more diverse contributions to research?</li> <li>How does your organisation plan to enable greater diversity in career paths and profiles?</li> </ul>
	Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your organisation plan to actively engage in and learn from research on research work?</li> <li>How does your organisation plan to accommodate qualitative evaluation mechanisms and base the use of metrics in a way that is aligned with your organisation's value system?</li> </ul>
	Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on JIF and h-index?</li> </ul>

Operational action plan for a 5-year time frame (CoARA Core Commitments listed)	particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index	
	Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on organisation rankings?</li> </ul>
	Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which resources will your institution allocate to the implementation of the research assessment reform? (Whether in terms of capacity or budget, to actively engage in the reform Journey)</li> </ul>
	Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your organisation plan to pilot or implement alternative/new assessment criteria, tools, and processes (e.g. narrative CV format, competency-based CV format, evidence-based CV format, diversification of research careers and associated career progression)?</li> </ul>
	Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your institution plan to provide training, guidance and support to assessment panels, committees, and juries?</li> </ul>
	Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your organisation plan to exchange practices and foster exchange of good practices in national and international contexts?</li> </ul>
	Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will your organisation ensure the transparent communication of the organisation's research evaluation processes within and outside of the organisation?</li> </ul>
	Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does your institution plans to monitor and (re)evaluate its assessment criteria, tools, and processes? What will be the frequency? Who will be involved in the evaluation?</li> </ul>

You can find more inspiration and recommendations along the lines of the Core Commitments in Annex 3 and 4 of the Agreement (Annex 4 for guiding questions from the Agreement ([2022\\_07\\_19\\_rra\\_agreement\\_final.pdf \(coara.eu\)](https://coara.eu/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf)).

**Further guidance on how to share your action plan with the broader CoARA community can be found [here](#).**