

CEOS WORKING GROUP PROCESS PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION

The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) **Working Groups** are one of two permanent working-level mechanisms for coordinating CEOS Agencies' multilateral activities. Working Groups typically address topics that are cross-discipline such as calibration/validation, data portals, capacity building, and common data processing standards, as well as thematic topics such as climate and disasters, which are shared across a wide range of Earth observation domains. As a consequence, their activities are intimately connected with, and complementary to, the work of the CEOS Virtual Constellations (please see the *CEOs Virtual Constellations Process Paper*, November 2013). Furthermore, the activities of Working Groups are usually structured to respond to requirements from the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and other organizations, both internal and external to CEOS. Working Groups may also be led jointly by CEOS and another international organization with shared interest in the activities of the Working Group to ensure synergies among international Earth observation community.

History

CEOS Working Groups were initially established to ensure the long-term continuity of work in areas where the magnitude and complexity of a task was not suitable for short-term, project-based solutions. "Standing" Working Groups, as they were previously known, did not require annual confirmation by the CEOS Plenary

2. GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES

Governance

Each Working Group will prepare Terms of Reference, which may be supported by a short Working Group Work Plan that is consistent with the *Strategic Guidance* Document and relevant activities outlined in the CEOS Three-Year Work Plan. The Working Group Terms of Reference require CEOS Plenary approval while the Working Group Work Plans, if prepared, do not.

The Working Group Terms of Reference should include the following:

- Purpose (Mission of the Working Group)
- Organization (including membership and leadership)
- Objectives of the Working Group
- Key external and internal stakeholders

The Working Group Work Plan, if prepared, should provide a credible way forward for the realization of overall CEOS and specific Working Group objectives and for achievement of the deliverables set forth in the CEOS Work Plan.

The Working Group will also prepare relevant inputs to follow-on CEOS Three-Year Work Plans, as appropriate.

The Working Group inputs to the CEOS Three-Year Work Plan, and if appropriate, to the detailed Working Group Work Plan, may include the following:

- Proposed implementation strategy and coordination issues
- Key activities, outcomes, and deliverables identified to accomplish the CEOS priorities
- Other activities identified to accomplish secondary Working Group priorities

As stated previously, joint Working Groups may be established with other organizations, if agreed by Plenary based on mutually agreed Terms of Reference. In such case, the Chair of the Joint Working Group will also prepare a unique report to the parent organizations, and if appropriate or desired, a Joint Working Group Work Plan.

Priorities

It is understood that the Working Groups sometimes involve entities and organizations whose priorities, interests, and objectives may not be directly aligned with established CEOS priorities. The Working Group members have the ability to pursue activities in support of other entity or organization activities but such activities should not be in conflict with the execution and implementation of CEOS priorities.

3. WORKING GROUP ORGANIZATION

Leadership

Each Working Group is led by a Chair and a Vice Chair, with a two-year term for each position. It is expected that the Vice Chair will assume the duties of the Chair at the end of the Chair's two-year term, thus the Agency sponsoring the Vice Chair is essentially committing to a four-year term (two years as Vice Chair and two years as Chair). Each Working Group has the authority to select the Vice Chair. Candidates for Vice Chair must demonstrate technical and leadership skills relevant to the Working Group and have the commitment of their Agency (i.e., financial resources and personnel time) to support the approximately four-year leadership term. A candidate for Vice Chair, therefore, will be required to provide a formal letter from their Agency to the current Working Group Chair confirming the Agency is committed to supporting the Vice Chair candidate for the four-year term. The CEOS Chair, Strategic Implementation Team (SIT) Chair, and Executive Officer (CEO) will be copied on the letter. Some Working Groups require specific secretarial support and if applicable, the Agency commitment letter will also state that the Agency is committed to providing secretarial support during the two-year period when the Agency is the Working Group Chair.

All efforts will be made to ensure only one CEOS Agency at a time is invited to serve in the position of Vice Chair but there may be instances where multiple CEOS Agencies are interested. In the case where more than one viable candidate for Vice Chair occurs, the Working Group will adhere to principle of consensus decision making where the clear majority of Working Group

members is reflected in the decision on one candidate for Vice Chair who will be proposed to the Plenary (refer to *CEOS Governance and Processes*).

The Vice Chair must be approved and endorsed by the CEOS Plenary. The terms for the Chair and Vice Chair will begin with the CEOS Plenary, normally held in October/November each year.

In the case where a Vice Chair candidate from a CEOS Agency cannot be found, the CEOS Chair will ask that the current Working Group Chair bring this issue to the attention of CEOS leadership at the next CEOS Secretariat teleconference or SIT/Plenary meeting for discussion. CEOS leadership and the Working Group Chair will then determine a path forward that is reasonable for all parties and consistent with CEOS goals and priorities.

In the case where a Chair, for any reason, cannot fulfill the duties of their term, the Working Group Vice Chair will assume the duties as the Chair. If the Vice Chair is unable to fulfill the duties as Chair, the Working Group will attempt to resolve the issue internally first in consultation with the CEO (i.e., select an interim Chair first from the Chair's Agency and then within the Working Group Members) and second, consult CEOS leadership to determine a path forward that is reasonable for all parties. If for any reason a Chair/Vice Chair for the Working Group cannot be identified, then the Working Group will be put in a "pause" status upon the completion of the current Chair's term, awaiting new leadership and endorsement from a CEOS Agency sponsor. It is incumbent on CEOS leadership to assist in resolving matters of Working Group succession in a timely manner, preferably well before a Working Group is considered for pause status.

Membership

Representatives from all CEOS Agencies are invited to participate in all Working Groups and to nominate a Point of Contact, failing which the Working Groups will keep the formal CEOS Contact for the Agency informed with respect to Working Group activities. CEOS Agencies (Members and Associates) will constitute the core membership of each Working Group. Working Groups, however, have the flexibility to invite individuals from other organizations that are not CEOS Agencies to participate in the Working Groups. Any organization invited to participate must have an endorsement from a CEOS Agency to participate. These organizations will be referred to officially as "observers" or "experts", depending on the role that the Working Group leadership has deemed appropriate.

Structure

The Working Groups have the flexibility to structure themselves internally, as appropriate, to execute their respective activities. Some Working Groups have instituted a structure of subgroups or interest groups to emphasize particular tasks or activities. Subgroups and interest groups are not self-standing CEOS entities and cannot commit CEOS resources to a particular activity without first getting approval from CEOS leadership, in this case through the Working Group Chair/Vice Chair, CEOS Executive Officer, and CEOS Chair. Working Groups will typically meet formally at least once per year, with the decision to meet more frequently left to the leadership of the Working Group.

4. EXECUTION OF ACTIVITIES

Reporting

Each CEOS Working Group's primary reporting path is to the CEOS Chair, with a secondary reporting path to the SIT Chair, if so delegated by the CEOS Chair.

Working Group Chairs, Vice Chairs, or other nominated representative, shall report at each CEOS Plenary session on accomplishments and future plans of the Working Group. Working Group Chairs or Vice Chairs also report on activities during monthly CEOS Secretariat (SEC) teleconferences.

A Joint Working Group may have additional reporting responsibilities to the Plenary or other annual meeting of the partner organization. In addition, a Working Group may also have an external reporting responsibility and those responsibilities should be clearly articulated in the Working Group Terms of Reference.

5. PROPOSING A NEW WORKING GROUP

Generally, a Working Group is proposed because there is a significant interest in enhancing technical cooperation among CEOS Agencies in specific topical areas with broad international benefit. The establishment of a new Working Group shall first be considered a "new initiative." The criteria for consideration, the process for submitting a proposal, and the process for approval are all defined in the *CEOS New Initiatives Process Paper*. Any proposal for a new Working Group shall be considered "significant in nature" and require discussion, review, and approval by CEOS Principals at the CEOS Plenary. This approval process is in line with the Working Group's primary reporting path to the CEOS Chair.

The proposal of a "new initiative" shall define the scope of the links to the existing Working Groups and Virtual Constellations and initiatives. A "new initiative" shall make use as much as possible of the products of the existing CEOS entities and shall iterate the proposal in advance with the concerned CEOS entity, in order to optimize the synergies that can be achieved in objectives and activities.

6. WORKING GROUP EVOLUTION

By default, Working Groups shall continue their existence and not require annual CEOS Plenary approval. A Working Group may at any time propose to modify its focus and activities. Any proposed modifications must be reflected in the Working Group Terms of Reference and presented for decision at CEOS Plenary.

If the consensus of the CEOS Plenary is such that a Working Group is no longer required, the Plenary may recommend that the Working Group be discontinued, with or without a proposal from the Working Group.