



Improving Practices
in the Assessment of
Research Proposals



CoARA
Coalition for Advancing
Research Assessment

CoARA Working Group

Improving Practices in the Assessment of Research Proposals

The CoARA Working Group “Improving Practices in the Assessment of Research Proposals” (2023–2025) provides strategic guidance for research funding organisations seeking to align their assessment practices with CoARA commitments, in particular commitments 1, 2 and 3.

Framework for navigating the reform process

Overall premise



As a funder, be as explicit and self-reflective as possible in all your decisions regarding research assessment

Fostering the diversity of research contributions, activities, and careers



Reflect on whether your review criteria are sufficiently open for a diverse range of contributions and activities.



Be as clear and transparent as possible in the description of your criteria and your processes.



Recognize the importance of a diverse pool of reviewers.



Consider incentivizing open science practices.



Identify, avoid and counter conservative biases in your assessment procedures.



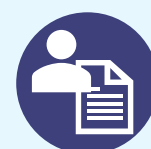
Reflect on whether your programmes, calls and competition spaces are sufficiently open for a diverse range of contributions and activities.



Design your proposal and CV forms to encourage a broad variety of research outputs, activities, and career trajectories.



Welcome applicants with non-linear career paths.



Consider an applicant's qualifications and past contributions not in their own right, but in the context of the proposal.



Encourage applicants, wherever appropriate, to reflect on sex, gender and other diversity dimensions in the project design (scientific content).

Optimizing qualitative review



Reflect on the different roles in assessment: reviewers, panelists, rapporteurs, chairs and science officers contribute in different ways.



When searching for reviewers for a given proposal, make sure that all aspects of the proposal are covered with suitable expertise.



Provide review panels with sufficient time and resources to enable deep, qualitative review.



Encourage deep qualitative review through the guidance and training of reviewers.



Make the work of reviewers as interesting and rewarding as possible.



In your feedback to applicants, give reasons for the decision and show your commitment to responsible research assessment.



About the Working Group



58 organisations

mainly funders, but also organisations representing the research community; chaired by the European Commission, the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Knowledge Foundation (KKS)



2 years

of collaborative work (2023–2025)



Guidance for funders

seeking to implement CoARA commitments 1, 2 and 3



No one-size-fits-all

The recommendations acknowledge the diversity and complexity of funding systems.



Questions for reflection

Structured considerations help funders identify context-specific approaches.



50+ practice examples

from a wide range of funders illustrate different implementation pathways.

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