2nd Call for Working Groups

The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) is opening a call for Working Groups. This call is structured around two steps: a call for Expressions of Interest, followed by a call for full proposals. **Only CoARA members can submit Expressions of Interest and full proposals, and only a designated point of contact in each CoARA member can submit an Expression of Interest and/or a full proposal on behalf of their organisation.**

Call Launch	29 April 2025
First deadline for Expressions of Interest (for new WGs)	20 May 2025 (Midnight CEST / Brussels time)
Online Brokerage event	23 May 2025
Deadline to submit full proposals	12 June 2025 (Midnight CEST / Brussels time)
Result communication	15 July 2025
WGs' expected start date	September 2025

1. Background and scope

Working Groups are central to CoARA as they are the main mechanism to exchange knowledge, learn mutually, discuss, develop and deliver outputs to advance research assessment and help with the implementation by members of CoARA of the commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.
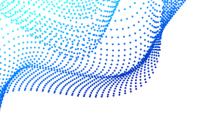
Working Groups will be proposed at the initiative of CoARA members on a voluntary basis. All CoARA members can respond to the call for Working Groups.

In the present call, two types of proposals are invited:

1.) Call for new Working Groups

2.) Extension requests from existing Working Groups.

1.1 Applications from new Working Groups

This call is looking to fill some identified gaps in the current Working Group portfolio that the

Steering Board has identified as critical to delivering on the CoARA vision. A recent report on the progress of the research assessment report in Europe (Oancea and Wilson 2024) has also informed specifications of the call. These topics include:

- Core Commitment 4: **Avoiding the use of university rankings in research assessment**
- Guidance and concepts for **qualitative assessment** and for the assessment of the quality of research: in particular comprehensive, general framework formats, including mechanisms **for combining both qualitative and quantitative elements** of assessment
- **The assessment of team science, interdisciplinarity**, intersectoral, and **multisectoral aspects of work experience** and roles outside academia.
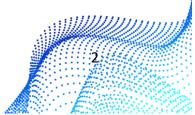
A brief description of each of these topics is added in Annex III.

This call for CoARA Working Groups adopts a staged approach:

> **i) the submission of Expressions of Interest**
>
> **ii) community discussions, in the form of an online brokerage event, and then**
>
> **iii) development into full proposals for Working Groups to be submitted according to given cut-off date**.

Note: submission of an Expression of Interest is mandatory to be able to submit a full proposal for new Working Groups.

Proposals should state how they address at least one of the proposal topics and demonstrate how their work will address at least one of the four core commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.

1.2 Extension requests from existing Working Groups

Another possible outcome of the call is to allow for a very limited number of already existing Working Groups to extend the lifetime of their operations and receive support to it from CoARA Boost. For existing Working Groups who submit applications to extend their operation by a year, submitting an Expression of Interest is not necessary. Instead, they shall base their request based on progress, preliminary results and justification in their work plans (see a specific application template in Annex III).

2. Requirements and expected outputs

It is very important to note that Working Groups should add value to what is already being done within the community and should strive to collaborate and seek synergies with like-minded initiatives and activities.

Working Groups are expected to be inclusive, involving organisations of different types and sizes, from different geographical areas and from a wide range of experience level. Whenever possible, Working Groups are expected to include the direct participation of researchers at all career stages.
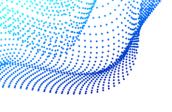
Working Group proposers should put forward i) a convincing membership structure, including co-chairs, and ii) a robust plan and convincing mechanisms to ensure that other CoARA member organisations interested in the topic and the work of the WG can contribute to and benefit from its work (e. g. through webinars, toolboxes and potential recommendations).

Duration for 2nd wave Working Groups is one year. They are expected to finish their operations with the conclusion of the CoARA Boost project (30 September 2026). Due to the short time frame, Working Groups that build on existing community expertise and activity are particularly welcome.

As described in the CoARA Rules of Procedure for Working Groups, these are expected to operate as "*communities of practice*" on specific topics and to develop **concrete tasks** within a specific timeframe. The outputs are expected to be actionable policy resources (frameworks, guidelines, tools and toolkits, policy recommendations, interactive tools) that CoARA members can rely on in their efforts to implement the ARRA. Working Groups that seek to develop alternative approaches to assessment concerns that may be added to the CoARA Toolbox will score particularly well. *These may include, for example:*

- *Defining joint pilots and initiatives as appropriate*

- *Establishing guidelines that can be considered by all or part of the Coalition members and beyond*
- *Developing and sharing toolkits, games and interactive tools.*

Such concrete deliverables are expected to support the implementation by the members of CoARA of at least one of the Agreement's core commitments, and of supporting commitments where relevant.

3. WG Composition

In line with WG Rules of procedures, the WG will be composed as follows.

Leadership

A WG will be led by at least two Chairs, who will be the main points of contact and responsible for communication within the CoARA and more broadly. The Chairs will be formally appointed during the first meeting of the WG by its members. They should be from different organisations and different countries. Specific responsibilities of the Chairs include ensuring the following:

- Quality, scope, timeliness and usefulness of the work in progress
- An effective organisational structure for the WG
- Progress within the WG as evidenced by meeting the expected outcomes
- Facilitating the participation and the expression of different views from member organisations.

Note: WG Chairs and CoARA members' designated points of contact for WG address different needs and have different roles. Some WG chairs can also be their organisations' point of contact, but this is not a requirement.

Membership

- WGs are open to participation from all CoARA member organisations
- Member organisations can nominate a representative from their organisation to participate in a given CoARA WG. This means that the person representing the organisation in the WG can be different from the person representing the organisation in the General Assembly. It is up to the organisation to decide on the representative to nominate, taking into account the topic, work plan and expected outputs/deliverables of the WG

- Once nominated by their organisations, participants should commit to be the persons participating in the WG activities, to ensure continuity
- Experts external to the CoARA may contribute to the WGs when nominated by the member organisations involved in these groups
- WG member organisations and their participants, as well as potential additional individuals and experts external to the CoARA, are expected to actively contribute to the work of the WGs and to the delivery of the proposed outputs / deliverables, and work plan
- WGs should strive for broad and balanced geographical participation among the CoARA member organisations, and for the direct involvement of researchers at all career stages
- Member organisations and their participants within a WG must agree to the CoARA Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles contained in its Governance Document. Other individuals and experts external to the CoARA could participate to the WG activities when needed and nominated by the member organisations involved in these groups, in which case they must also agree to the CoARA Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles contained in its Governance Document;
- Experts external to the CoARA will participate in-kind and will not be remunerated for the external advice provided.

4. Application procedure

The template to be used for Expressions of Interest and for full proposals is in Annex I.

The following steps must be followed for the submission of Expressions of Interest and proposals:

- *__Step 1:__* Designated points of contact should first submit Expression(s) of Interest (see the timeline page 1). Expressions of Interest should address only points from 1 to 13 of the proposal form. Submissions will be made online on a form accessible on CoARA website.
- *__Step 2:__* Proposers will be invited to present their Expressions of Interest during an online **workshop ("brokerage event")** organised on 23 May 2025. The workshop will support the exchange of information on EoIs, help develop them and allow them to mature and facilitate the streamlining of similar proposals.

- *Step 3*: **Full proposals,** addressing all sections of the template, should be submitted online on the CoARA website by 12 June 2025 (Midnight CEST / Brussels time). Full proposals have to be an adaptation of an EoI or result from the merging of several EoIs.

5. Eligibility criteria

For Expressions of Interest:

An Expression of Interest will be considered eligible if all the following conditions are met:

- The Expression of Interest is submitted by a designated point of contact (principal or alternate) authorised to do so on behalf of the CoARA member they are affiliated with and on behalf of the other CoARA members cited in the Expression of interest.
- Minimum of 3 proposing CoARA member organisations.
- The Expression of Interest is complete (sections 1 to 13 of the full application are filled in) and is written in English.
- The Expression of Interest has been submitted before the indicated deadline.
- The proposed topic matches one of the indicated in the call – for a focused WG.

For full proposals:

The full proposal will be considered eligible if all the following conditions are met:

- The proposal is submitted by a designated point of contact (principal or alternate) authorised to do so on behalf of the CoARA member they are affiliated with and on behalf of the other CoARA members cited in the Expression of Interest.
- The proposal is submitted by minimum 5 proposing CoARA member organisations (including potential Chairs).
- The proposal is an adaptation of an – or a merge of several – Expression(s) of Interest.
- The proposal is complete (all sections of template addressed) and is written in English.
- The proposal has been submitted before the cut-off date.
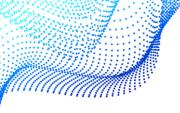
6. Evaluation and selection process

Evaluation of both new Working Groups and extension requests
In line with the Rules of Procedure, the CoARA Steering Board will evaluate the proposals

considering nine criteria. Criteria will bear an equal weight in the assessment and each criterion will be qualitatively assessed following the scales provided in the table below.

Criterion	Assessment scale
For new WGs: Addresses at least one of the proposal topics specified	- Fully addresses - Partly addresses - Does not address
For extension requests: Justification of extension based on past achievements and rationale for continuation	- Strong justification1 - Partial justification - Weak justification
Added value of the proposed Working Group over and above what is currently being done within the community	- High - Moderate - Low
Diverse types and sizes of organisations, and wide range of experience level represented	- Highly diverse representation - Diverse representation - Low diversity
Broad and balanced geographical participation from the CoARA member organisations	- High geographical balance - Moderate geographical balance - Low geographical balance
Direct involvement of researchers at all career stages (including early career researchers)	- Highly diverse representation - Diverse representation - Low diversity
Feasibility of the proposed work plan and	Highly feasible

1

Strong justification: Well-articulated rationale for extension clearly linked to deliverables; difficulties are honestly acknowledged; concrete, realistic, and well-planned measures proposed to address challenges and complete the work.

Partial justification: Rationale for extension is provided but could be more compelling; some recognition of difficulties; remediation measures are outlined but may lack full detail or realism.

Weak justification: Weak or unclear rationale for extension; difficulties are vaguely described or overlooked; little or no convincing plan to remediate challenges and ensure progress.

outcomes/deliverables within the indicated timeframe	• Feasible • Not feasible
Concrete research assessment solutions proposed: The proposed outputs will provide actionable resources to signatories of the ARRA in implementing commitment 4 or other thematic areas defined in the call	• The proposed outputs are strongly aligned with the expectations defined in the call • The proposed outputs are partially aligned with the expectations defined in the call • The proposed outputs are not aligned with expectations defined in the call
Expected impact, notably expected adoption and implementation scenarios	• High expected impact • Medium expected impact • Low expected impact
Robust plan to engage with other CoARA member organisations interested in the work of the Working Group, and with other organisations including outside Europe	• Plan will allow to engage with all relevant and interested organisations • Plan will allow to engage with some relevant and interested organisations • Plan will not allow to coherently engage with relevant and interested organisation

Selection

The CoARA Steering Board will select Working Groups, basing its decision on the outcome of the assessment and on WG portfolio management considerations (e.g. balance in topics, geographical balance, institutional balance).

7. Collaboration with the Secretariat

The CoARA Secretariat will support Working Groups by:

- Publishing information on the mission, objectives, work plan and membership of the approved Working Groups on the CoARA website.
- Facilitating complementarities and synergies among existing Working Groups within CoARA and beyond.
- Publishing the Working Group results on the CoARA website and supporting their dissemination via social media and other relevant channels (provided a decision to publish such results has been made). For this purpose, CoARA will establish an endorsement process and publication policy for Working Groups' outputs/deliverables

and other CoARA documents.

- Pass on to the Working Group Chair(s) any request received by CoARA member organisations interested to contribute to the group.
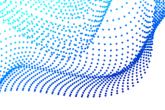- Participate to relevant meetings of the Working Groups, when needed.

Note that this is only a preliminary outline of the envisaged Secretariat support. More detailed plans will be defined in the coming months, based on resources becoming available and the feedback provided by the first approved Working Groups.

8. Contact

Any questions regarding the call can be directed to the CoARA Secretariat by writing to workinggroupcall@coara.eu

9. Feedback to applicants

All applicants submitting a Working Group proposal will be informed of the outcome of the selection process on 15 July 2025. A short evaluation report will also be provided.

Annex I - Application template – Call for Working Groups

Please note: Fields marked with an asterisk (1-13) need to be completed at the Call for Expression of Interest stage. The remaining fields will need to be completed for full proposals.

Only for full proposals: Title of the submitted Expression(s) of Interest related to this proposal	
1. Working Group title∗	
2. Issues to be addressed: 50 words max∗	
3. Main keyword∗	Please select one among the following: • Assessment of research organisations • Assessment of research proposals • Careers • Changing culture • CVs and Narrative • Disciplines and inter, trans and multidisciplinary • Diversity • Equity • Ethics and integrity • Impact • Language • Metrics and indicators • Open Science • Peer-review • Quality and excellence • Raising awareness and engagement • Sharing good practices • Sustainability (e.g. costs, over-assessment, reviewer fatigue) • Team science • Transparency

	• *University rankings* • *Other: please specify:*
4. Second keyword (optional)∗	*Please select one among the following:* • *Assessment of research organisations* • *Assessment of research proposals* • *Careers* • *Changing culture* • *CVs and Narrative* • *Disciplines and inter, trans and multidisciplinary* • *Diversity* • *Equity* • *Ethics and integrity* • *Impact* • *Language* • *Metrics and indicators* • *Open Science* • *Peer-review* • *Quality and excellence* • *Raising awareness and engagement* • *Sharing good practices* • *Sustainability (e.g. costs, over-assessment, reviewer fatigue)* • *Team science* • *Transparency* • *University rankings* • *Other: please specify:*
5. Contact details of the lead scientific proposer (can be different from the organisation's designated Point of Contact)∗	Name, department and e-mail
6. I confirm that my	• Yes

organisation is a member of CoARA and that I have the authority to submit the proposal on behalf of my organisation and on behalf of the organisations mentioned in point 7 below∗	• No
7. List of at least 3 (EoIs)/5 (full proposals) member organisations proposing the Working Group∗	Drop Down
8. Short description of the mission and objectives of the group, and of how it fits with the overall CoARA vision: *200 words max∗*	
9. Alignment to the pre-defined topic areas of the call∗	*Please select one or more among the following:* 1. *Core Commitment 4: Avoiding the use of university rankings in research assessment* 2. *Guidance and concepts for qualitative assessment and for the assessment of the quality of research, in particular comprehensive, general framework formats* 3. *The assessment of team science, interdisciplinarity, intersectoral, and multisectoral aspects of work experience and roles outside academia.*
10. Expected impact, notably expected adoption and implementation scenarios: *300 words max∗*	
11. Added value of the	

Working Group over and above what is currently being done within the community: *300 words max∗*	
12. Work plan and outputs / deliverables that can be accomplished within the timeline proposed (max. 1 year): *600 words max∗*	
13. Proposed membership structure, involving organisations of different types and sizes, and from different geographical areas, and including a wide range of experience levels: *300 words max∗*	
14. Envisaged co-chairs leading the Working Group, representing different types of organisations and countries/regions	
15. Mechanisms to ensure that a broader range of CoARA member organisations, including from outside Europe, contribute to and benefit from the Working Group work: *250 words max*	

16. Envisaged support needed from the Secretariat and resources expected to be provided in-kind by Working Group members: *100 words max* *Please note: this will be provided for information only and will <u>not</u> be evaluated by the CoARA Steering Board.*	

Annex II - Application template – Extension requests

1. Title of the existing Working Group	
2. Contact details of the lead scientific proposer: - can be different from the organisation's designated CoARA Point of Contact - can be different from the previous lead scientific proposer of the Working Group	Name, department and e-mail
3. I confirm that my organisation is a member of CoARA and that I have the authority to submit the proposal on behalf of my organisation and on behalf of the organisations mentioned in point 4 below	• Yes • No
4. List of at least 5 member organisations proposing the Working Group	Drop Down
5. Highlight key achievements of your WG, (narrative self-assessment) _300 words max_	
6. Outputs of the WG published so far _300 words max_	
7. Outputs of the WG that are not yet finalised _250 words max_	

8. Rationale for requesting an extension of the WG's lifetime *250 words max*	
9. How do you propose to remediate any difficulties experienced that may have led to the request for extension? *250 words max*	
10. Work plan for the coming 12 months *600 words max*	
11. Expected outputs *300 words max*	
For items below, please describe changes compared to the composition of your current WG:	
12. Proposed membership structure, involving organisations of different types and sizes, and from different geographical areas, and including a wide range of experience levels: *300 words max*	
13. Envisaged co-chairs leading the Working Group, representing different types of organisations and countries/regions	
14. Mechanisms to ensure that a broader range of CoARA member organisations,	

including from outside Europe, contribute to and benefit from the Working Group work: *250 words max*	
15. Envisaged support needed from the Secretariat and resources expected to be provided in-kind by Working Group members: *100 words max* *Please note this will be provided for information only and will <u>not</u> be evaluated by the CoARA Steering Board.*	

Annex III – Topics description

- **Core Commitment 4: Avoiding the use of university rankings in research assessment**

Avoiding the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment is one of the four core commitments of the [Agreement on Reform Assessment](#). As such, it is a key component of the shared direction that has been agreed and endorsed by over 700 research organisations, funders, assessment authorities, professional societies, and their associations globally. Whilst all signatories committed to implementing changes in line with this Commitment within their organisations, it remains the least addressed core commitment of the Agreement so far in both Action Plans and exiting Working Groups.

Signatories of the Agreement recognise that the international rankings most often referred to by research organisations are currently not 'fair and responsible', nor do they always accurately reflect universities' value propositions and the diversity of their missions. Rankings prioritise publication-based metrics and simplistic notions of excellence over understanding regional and local contexts, particularly those in the global south. Consequently, the criteria used by these rankings should not be used in the evaluation of individual researchers, research teams, and research units.

This commitment helps the research community and research organisations regain the autonomy to shape their assessment practices, rather than having to abide by criteria and methodologies set by external, commercial companies. This could include regaining control over institution-level assessment methodologies and data. In cases where ranking approaches are deemed unavoidable, as may be the case in forms of evaluation beyond the scope of this Agreement such as benchmarking and performance reviews of countries or institutions, the methodological limitations of such approaches should be acknowledged, and institutions should avoid trickle-down effects on research and researcher assessment.

Signatories of the Agreement are encouraged to redefine what they value in research based on the grounding principles, values and mission of each signatory organisation. This step is

essential towards a more differentiated, more accurate and a more holistic picture on where and how high-quality research is being produced.

Expected outputs of Working Groups addressing commitment 4 include solutions, toolboxes or sets of actionable recommendations for universities to:

1. Raise awareness of the limitations associated with university ranking

2. Showcase alternative forms of university-level assessment

3. Prevent trickle-down effects of university rankings to the assessment of units, research teams and individuals

4. Gain inspiration from a collection of impact case studies showcasing and analysing instances where universities have moved away from rankings, with special sensitivity to regional and national flavours.

- ### Qualitative Assessment and Research Quality Frameworks

Commitment 2 of CoARA calls on signatories to base research assessment primarily on qualitative assessment supported by the quantitative use of indicators. However, to date there has been a lack of focus on guidance and concepts for qualitative assessment and for the assessment of the quality of research. More work is needed as to how assessors might successfully understand and define the quality of research, and how they might evaluate it in a robust and meaningful way. This might incorporate the development and piloting of frameworks and practices relating to qualitative assessment, including the need for more rigorous guidance and training for qualitative assessors. **A related question relates to how best to combine qualitative and quantitative forms of assessment as specified by Commitment 2.** In which contexts might which indicators be responsibly used to support qualitative forms of assessment, and how might they be combined to provide a fair and responsible form of assessment?

Expected outputs from Working Groups on this topic might include solutions, toolboxes or sets of actionable recommendations to:

1. Enable assessors to define and/or understand research quality in a particular setting

2. Develop and/or pilot frameworks and practices relating to qualitative assessment

3. Combine qualitative and quantitative forms of assessment in specific contexts.

- **The assessment of team science, interdisciplinarity, intersectoral, and multisectoral aspects of work experience and roles outside academia**

This thematic area directly supports the goals of ARRA Commitment 1 by enabling fairer, more holistic recognition of modern scientific contributions across roles and sectors. Modern research increasingly relies on collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts that span sectors and roles beyond traditional academic boundaries. However, current academic assessment systems remain largely optimised for individual competition and linear academic trajectories, often failing to fairly recognize and credit these diverse contributions. **This thematic area of the 2nd Call for Working Groups aims to address these challenges by fostering actionable solutions that support researchers engaged in team science, interdisciplinary work, and multi-sectoral career paths.**

Working Groups are expected to deliver outputs that help shift evaluation practices toward inclusivity and fairness, such as:

1. Inventories and pilot projects exploring formal evaluation processes that foster effective interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

2. Toolkits and implementation scenarios to promote transparency in author contributions and support career development in collaborative research environments.

3. Recommendations for academic institutions to recognise collaborative work in hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions, moving beyond traditional individual-focused metrics.

4. Evaluation frameworks that acknowledge the diverse roles within large, cross-sectoral research teams and value varied career trajectories across academia, industry, public administration and entrepreneurship.

5. Case studies and resources that enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers across different sectors, promoting mobility and diversity in research pathways.