

FVON Secretariat Terms of Reference

Drafted December 2024

INTRODUCTION

FVON's vision:

FVON is a global network that collaboratively collects rigorous, cost-effective ocean data with end-users, driving a transformative shift in our understanding of the changing oceans and informing sustainable decision-making.

The governing bodies operating within FVON include the Steering Committee led by two Co-Chairs, the Secretariat, and various subcommittees. Together, this governance structure enables FVON to achieve its vision.

The FVON Secretariat's role is primarily to advise and support FVON's governing bodies and relevant partners to achieve FVON's strategic goals. This includes engaging in a range of key communication, coordination, and research functions.

This document details the Secretariat Terms of Reference (ToR) in the following sections:

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REPORTING STRUCTURE

At least one member of the Secretariat attends and documents meetings held by the Steering Committee and shapes the agenda with the Co-Chairs.

The Secretariat regularly communicates progress on implementation of FVON's workplan to the Steering Committee. This requires drafting and submitting a written report during the annual reporting period of November 1 – October 31.

Additionally, the Secretariat attends other committee and partner meetings as needed and reports on them to the Steering Committee for coordination purposes.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Support the implementation of FVON's workplans under the supervision of the Steering Committee.
- Provide administrative support to the Steering Committee.
- If capacity is available, provide support to other FVON governing bodies.
- Provide coordination support between FVON members, governing bodies, and external partners.

- Provide communications support through the development of materials, advocacy, and the promotion of FVON's brand.
- Complete necessary fiscal activities.
- Ensure accurate and quality documentation and record-keeping.
- Assist FVON governing bodies with research and technical support as needed.
- Facilitate endorsement of existing and upcoming projects.
- Any other mutually agreed upon responsibilities.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Secretariat responsibilities listed below include aspirational tasks to be undertaken once the capacity of the Secretariat has increased. For now, all Secretariat responsibilities are subject to the time constraints of its members. Tasks below are prioritized to stress this point.

Administrative functions

- Serve as the secretary for the Steering Committee and perform administrative actions such as organizing meetings, drafting agendas, circulating minutes and monitoring progress on actions. If capacity is available, provide administrative support for sub-committees
- Manage information: organize contact lists for stakeholders, maintain and update an electronic filing system, etc.
- Serve as a focal point for day-to-day information and outreach.

As capacity allows:

- Plan and execute conferences and workshops when required.
- Provide research and advise the Steering Committee on policy processes, potential funding pathways, or various other relevant expertise upon request.

Operational functions

- Draft and lead consultation on strategic workplans for FVON governing bodies subject to approval from the Steering Committee.
- Document and report progress on the implementation of workplans to the Steering Committee.
- Support proposal development for various stakeholders.
- Coordinate fundraising efforts.

As capacity allows:

- Consolidate analysis and advise FVON governing bodies on presenting findings to stakeholders.
- Commission research and draft background documents on relevant issues as required.
- Support capacity building efforts for FVON members as needed.

Fiscal functions

- Manage FVON's fiscal budget and bookkeeping until the potential formation of a Finance Subcommittee.

Coordination functions

- Facilitate communication between FVON members, governing bodies, and external partners at local, national, and international levels.

- Advise the Steering Committee on strategy and vision and task team activities.

As capacity allows:

- Encourage stakeholder involvement, generate new relationships with partners, and propose areas of future engagement in consultation with the Steering Committee.
- Support task team activities.

Communications functions

- Develop and oversee the FVON communications strategy and workplan under the supervision of the Steering Committee.
- Develop and manage FVON's filing system, ensuring accurate and quality-controlled documentation. Gather knowledge, records, media, and other assets and disseminate accordingly.
- Ensure visibility and advocacy in line with FVON's brand.
- Communicate to internal and external stakeholders conveying FVON's strategic goals and agenda.

As capacity allows:

- Manage communications outlets and produce content materials. Manage media relations in coordination with the Steering Committee and develop media products.

STAFFING AND CAPACITY

The interim Secretariat is staffed with five members. Members are projected to commit to FVON on the following basis:

- Aubrey Taylor is available for 28 hours per week through July 2026.
- Dustin Colson Leaning is available for 7 hours per week.
- Matt Irwin is available for 1 hour per week.
- Emilie Breviere is available for 1 hour per week.
- Rita Esteves is available for 4-5 hours per week.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

When possible, the Secretariat consults with the Steering Committee or Co-Chairs on workplans, technical research, communications materials, and all other activities. The Secretariat must receive approval from the Steering Committee or Co-Chairs if an activity has substantial consequence on FVON.

COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS

The Secretariat frequently engages with internal FVON members and governing bodies and keeps the Steering Committee informed of Secretariat activities. When possible, the Secretariat consults with the Steering Committee or Co-Chairs before communicating externally. For communications that may have substantial consequence on FVON, the Secretariat must receive approval from the Steering Committee or Co-Chairs.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Secretariat Terms of Reference are subject to a revision process once every year. During the revision period of March 1 – 31, Secretariat members may meet to amend democratically the Terms of Reference and submit the revised document to the Steering Committee for approval.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- It may be important to support Secretariat work beyond 2026 through a stipulation for coordination funding from a host institution.
- In the future, this document may incorporate a full-time General Secretary role to oversee the Secretariat and work with the Co-Chairs to alleviate some decision-making responsibilities from the Steering Committee.