

# FVON Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Drafted December 2024

## PURPOSE

The mission of the Steering Committee is to make progress toward FVON’s vision, primarily through activities that support the pillars of FVON’s identity:

<b>Vision</b>
<i>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.</i>
<b>Pillars</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Quality Data:</b> FVON fosters a paradigm shift in the availability of rigorous, high-quality data, ensuring equitable access at scale, while adhering to CARE and FAIR data practices.</li><li><b>2. Mutual Benefits:</b> FVON maximizes the value of ocean data for users and fishing industry observer-users, ensuring direct benefits for those who collect and use the data while enabling the sustainable management of the blue economy.</li><li><b>3. Global Advocacy:</b> Through strategic engagement and communication, FVON amplifies stakeholders’ understanding of the link between ocean data collection and human impact and advocates for meaningful change.</li><li><b>4. Inclusivity:</b> FVON ensures equitable access to ocean data collection and its benefits, empowering all stakeholders to contribute and benefit.</li><li><b>5. Global Coordination and Collaboration:</b> Achieving global change requires strategic engagement with key stakeholders across national, regional, and global levels.</li><li><b>6. Financial Innovation:</b> FVON promotes opportunities for financial innovation while maintaining scientific rigor with its broad consortium of public and private entities.</li></ol>

## SCOPE OF WORK

- 1. Governance and Oversight:**
  - Provide leadership for the implementation of strategic plans or operational objectives.
  - Define the scope, objectives, and priorities of the organization's work.
  - Oversee alignment with broader strategic frameworks or stakeholder goals.
- 2. Coordination:**
  - Ensure collaboration across relevant sectors, regions, and organizations.
  - Promote stakeholder engagement and foster international or cross-disciplinary partnerships.
- 3. Operational Support:**
  - Supervise or provide guidance to technical coordinators, task teams, or other working groups.
  - Manage administrative, financial, or logistical issues as they arise.
  - Ensure FVON has the financial and human resources to meet its objectives.

- Define FVON's legal framework.
- 4. Scientific and Technical Guidance:**
- Evaluate, ensure, and document data quality, technical innovation, and scientific rigor.
  - Liaise with related programs or organizations for interoperability and resource sharing on international and national scales.
  - Consider the unique capabilities and opportunities of fishing vessel-based ocean observing, striving for complementarity with other observing systems, and incorporating recommendations from numerical design studies (e.g. OSE/OSSEs), and regional observing system developments.
- 5. Reporting:**
- Prepare and present reports on activities, progress, and outcomes internally within FVON and to oversight bodies and/or broader communities.
  - Review and update key operational documents regularly (e.g., strategic plans, implementation plans).
  - Publish FVON activities synthesis reports periodically.
- 6. Stakeholder Engagement:**
- Promote the long-term sustainable success of FVON by generating and leveraging value for its stakeholders.
  - Maintain and expand stakeholder networks to support sustainable funding and growth at scale.
  - Generate and review feedback from FVON members and stakeholders.
  - Maximize the positive impacts of FVON's data by creating meaningful and regular dialogue with observer-users and other data users.
  - Form a stakeholder reference group that provides expert advice and promotes the shared understanding and support of FVON objectives.
- 7. Capacity Development, Accessibility and Inclusivity:**
- Increase representation of women, minorities, and representatives of all geographies across all levels of FVON and build a community centered around inclusivity.
  - Consider historical and structural inequities and support FVON capacity building and activities in underserved geographies worldwide by emphasizing education, resource sharing, and support for technical and operational training.
  - Promote cost-efficiency, capacity building, and systems that are user-friendly and require less capacity to benefit from to promote the accessibility of ocean observation in all countries.
  - Acknowledge and appreciate that science, fishing industries, and broader culture will vary substantially for different regions. FVON shall strive to meet people where they are, while not compromising the core mission.
- 8. Financial Innovation**
- Catalyze economies of scale for FVON technology providers such that there are clear market signals and well-articulated development targets.
  - Explore new paradigms for funding ocean observations, such as funding through blue economy and adjacent industries.
  - Acknowledge that there can be a tension between scientific and commercial interests, and FVON will strive to find balance and compromise. However, FVON is first and foremost a scientific organization committed to CARE and [FAIR data standards](#).

## **WORKING PROCEDURES**

### **Meeting Protocols**

- The Steering Committee meets virtually at least twice a year and in person at least once per biennium, with consideration given to geography and time zones.
- The agenda for each meeting is prepared by the Co-Chairs with the support of the Secretariat and circulated two weeks in advance.
- FVON seeks funding to support travel where possible but may not cover the costs for Steering Committee members to meet. In-person attendance is encouraged but not mandatory.
- At least one member of the Secretariat attends each meeting to prepare and disseminate meeting outcomes.

### **Decision-Making**

- The quorum for voting is attendance by at least half of the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee votes by simple majority. In the case of a tie, the Co-Chairs make the final decision. In the case of a tie between Co-Chairs, a coin flip will occur.
- Co-Chairs will strive to have full voting participation. Members may notify the Co-Chairs and delegate their votes or vote virtually if they are unable to attend a meeting.
- The Co-Chairs have decision-making authority between meetings but must notify the Steering Committee of any updates. The Co-Chairs must receive Steering Committee approval if an item represents a significant deviation from the workplan.

### **Communication**

- Members report key developments or issues to the Secretariat for periodic updates across the Steering Committee.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

### **Composition**

- Membership is designed to broadly represent FVON national or regional programs, involvement in the development of networks, or expertise and experience deemed relevant for the advancement of FVON.
  - An FVON program can be represented on the Steering Committee when it gets beyond a pilot stage: nominally at least 10 fishing vessels or having existed for several years.
- Membership reflects diversity in gender, race, geographic region, expertise, and career stage, where possible.
- The Steering Committee consists of at least one representative from each of the following geographies, where possible: North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.
- The Steering Committee includes representatives from both public and private spheres and a range of key stakeholder organizations. The Steering Committee may include *ex officio* members of funding or oversight organizations.

- No more than one Steering Committee member may represent a single organization or FVON regional program.
  - Some larger organizations such as NOAA in the USA are so broad that it makes sense to have representation from multiple sub-organizations. Determination of eligibility of an organization shall be determined by the Steering Committee.
  - In the event where an individual represents multiple organizations and one of the organizations is already represented within FVON, it will not exclude membership for that person if representing a different organization.

## Roles

- Two Steering Committee members are elected Co-Chairs.
- Each subcommittee and task team must be overseen by one representative of the Steering Committee. Subcommittee leadership is appointed by the Co-Chairs after soliciting expressions of interest and can include broader FVON members as long as there is also a leader representing the Steering Committee.

## Selection

- New members are nominated by existing members and approved through a simple majority vote of the Steering Committee.
- Members may be removed by a unanimous vote from the rest of the Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee members may nominate themselves for the position of Co-Chair. Each member receives one vote, and the Co-Chairs are elected by simple majority.
  - In the case of a tie for first place between two candidates, both candidates will be invited to fill the positions of Co-Chairs.
  - In the case of a tie for first place between more than two candidates, a re-vote will take place with just those candidates on the ballot.
  - In the case of a tie for second place by two or more candidates, the first-place candidate will assume a position as Co-Chair and the tied second place candidates will enter into a re-vote with just those candidates on the ballot.

## Tenure

- There is no fixed term limit for Steering Committee membership.
- There is a Co-Chair election every two years. Each Co-Chair serves a maximum of four years.

## Conflicts of Interest

- Acknowledge that many members of the group have multiple groups they may be representing, particularly public-private partnerships.
- Members are required to solely represent the interests of FVON or recuse themselves from decisions in the event that separation of interests is not possible.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION**

- Every November, measure and review the implementation of the workplan against objectives in collaboration with subcommittees, task teams, technical coordinators, and the Secretariat.

- Update operational and strategic documents to remain aligned with emerging needs or priorities.

## **REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS**

- Review the Steering Committee Terms of Reference every March.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

- The Steering Committee's financial responsibilities will need to be amended after the selection of a legal entity type, which may include stipulations for a host institution.