

OSPAR Project Mechanism¹

A. Aim and objectives of the OSPAR Project Mechanism

The OSPAR Project Mechanism sets out the aims and conditions for OSPAR's engagement in external projects that will help to implement [OSPAR's objectives](#). This will be done through:

- Supporting projects that will help to implement OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Strategy (NEAES) and fill the knowledge gaps and science needs identified in the OSPAR Science Agenda;
- Ensuring OSPAR's participation in projects, with a view to strengthen the links between science and policy and contribute towards policy-relevant project outputs for the North-East Atlantic; and
- Encouraging scientists, experts, and policy makers to develop and implement OSPAR relevant projects.

The [OSPAR Science Agenda](#) provides an important basis to guide OSPAR's engagement in external projects and in supporting the implementation of OSPAR's objectives and is therefore intrinsically linked to this OSPAR Project Mechanism.

B. Identification of Relevant Project Calls

Contracting Parties, Committees, and expert groups should inform the OSPAR Secretariat, as early as possible, of suitable calls for projects which can further the implementation of OSPAR's objectives. The OSPAR Secretariat will also endeavour to identify such suitable project calls or possible projects and inform relevant Contracting Parties, Committees, and expert groups.

Contracting Parties, Committees, and expert groups are also encouraged to inform the OSPAR Secretariat of relevant funding sources. The OSPAR Secretariat will also endeavour to inform the Chairs of Committees and Co-convenors of expert groups of relevant funding opportunities.

C. OSPAR's Engagement in External Projects: Application and Review Process

OSPAR welcomes the submission of project proposals. Priority will be given to those projects which best address OSPAR needs. At all times, the OSPAR Secretariat will follow [OSPAR's Data and Information Policy](#) for this application and review process. There are five different ways for OSPAR to be engaged in external projects:

- a) Providing a letter of support to a project;

¹ As agreed at CoG(2) 2023 (CoG(2) 23/9/1, §6.3a) in December 2023.

- b) Participating in a project's Advisory Board or Steering Committee;
- c) Being an associate partner (i.e., no financial implications for OSPAR) in a project;
- d) Being an implementing partner (i.e., with financial/resource implications for OSPAR) in a project; or
- e) Being the project coordinator.

For project submissions, the application and review process is as follows:

- Project coordinators should complete the relevant sections of request form at Appendix 1 and send it to the OSPAR Secretariat (secretariat@ospar.org) as soon as possible. The level of information needed will depend on the level of OSPAR engagement being sought. The Secretariat will require at least 4 weeks to consider any requests;
- The OSPAR Secretariat will do a pre-screening of the information received to ensure that the request is complete and, where necessary, seek input from the relevant Chair or Vice-Chair / Co-convenors. A decision to support a request for support will be based on the criteria outlined in section D;
- Once OSPAR's participation in projects has been agreed, the specific steps in the process for each level of OSPAR engagement are outlined in Appendix 2.

Please note that, if requests are accepted, project coordinators are expected to provide relevant updates about the implementation of their project and may be invited to present their projects at a relevant OSPAR meeting. The OSPAR Secretariat, together with the Committee Chair and Group Co-convenors, will ensure that the relevant OSPAR Subsidiary Bodies are aware of OSPAR's support to the project.

D. OSPAR's Engagement in External Projects: Criteria and Selection Process

OSPAR's participation in projects will be assessed according to the following selection criteria (in no particular order of importance).² Requests for OSPAR engagement will be treated on a first come, first served basis. If necessary, the Secretariat will consult OSPAR Heads of Delegation in written procedure.

Selection criteria

Engagement with OSPAR during the proposal phase

- Has the project proposal been received early enough to allow for internal OSPAR review and consideration?
- Have the project coordinators engaged with OSPAR Secretariat and/or OSPAR subsidiary bodies?

Alignment with and support of OSPAR's policies

- Does the project support the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 and the implementation of its Strategic and Operational Objectives?

² Adapted from 'OSPAR strategic approach to projects': https://www.ospar.org/site/assets/files/41141/strategic_approach_to_projects2020.pdf.

- Does the project address science needs and/or knowledge gaps identified in the OSPAR Science Agenda?
- Does the project focus on specific OSPAR work areas and/or regions where particular needs have been identified or where particular topics have long been lacking targeted resources to progress?
- Does the project also contribute to meeting international marine policy requirements (e.g., EU requirements particularly the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity), or the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- Does the project align with OSPAR timelines for delivery of products, e.g., JAMP products, QSR/IA assessments?

Geographical scope and representativity

- Does the project cover the OSPAR region adequately and involve an adequate number of OSPAR Contracting Parties?
- Does the project have an interregional scope and/or specific aim to help implement global marine policy objectives?

Project Engagement

- Does the project commit to providing updates on development of project deliverables to relevant OSPAR subsidiary bodies according to the OSPAR meeting schedule with the aim of receiving and taking up any feedback given by the OSPAR subsidiary body?

Does the project engage stakeholders of relevance to OSPAR work that can support OSPAR needs?

For projects where OSPAR is being invited to be an implementing partner or project coordinator: administrative and financial implications

- The level of OSPAR engagement is expected?
- The level of assistance required from the OSPAR Secretariat for the: a) preparation; b) implementation; and c) post-project phases?
- In the case of a participation of OSPAR in the implementation of the project, are additional project management support posts planned?

E. OSPAR Guidance for Developing Project Proposals

This section provides guidance for cases where OSPAR experts lead the development of project proposals where OSPAR will be involved, either as a project partner (associate partner or implementing partner) or as project coordinator:

- Need to identify a project coordinator for the project consortium at an early stage of the project development and application phase. The project coordinator takes on the financial and managerial responsibility of the project;
- Where the OSPAR Secretariat is the project coordinator, a dedicated project manager and additional financial and administrative support posts need to be included in the project proposal;

- Need to engage OSPAR Committees, and relevant OSPAR expert groups, at the drafting stage to ensure adequate coordination, communication, and engagement within OSPAR;
- Need to have clear and early Contracting Party engagement and securing of national contributions for OSPAR projects seeking external funding;
- Need to recognise the mandate for the project coordinator to determine the partners of the consortium, noting that there will be a trade-off between involving as many Contracting Parties as possible, for example, to reach a wide geographical spread and executing and managing the project efficiently through a small number of partners;
- Should aim for focused consortia with clear task allocation between engaged parties;
- Should ensure efficiency of OSPAR work by building on relevant projects in other organisations.

Request Form

Please fill out the relevant sections of the following form to invite the OSPAR Commission to support or participate in projects and send the request to the OSPAR Secretariat (secretariat@ospar.org). We invite you to consider the OSPAR selection criteria in Section D when filling out this request form.

Question/field	Input required / To be filled-in	Explanation
PROJECT		
Name and organisation making the request	Free text	
Title of project	Free text	
Planned project start and end	Date range	Project start & end date
Brief description of the project	Free text (max. 250 words)	
Key objectives of the project	Free text (max. 250 words)	
Project coordinator/lead	Name, Email & phone number	
Participating partners in the project	Free text	Include name(s), organisation and country
OSPAR's role in the project	Drop down and free text for added information (max. 250 words)	Letter of Support; Advisory Board; Associate Partner; Implementing Partner; Project Coordinator
How will this project support and/or contribute to OSPAR's objectives?	Free text (max. 250 words)	
Geographical scope of the project	Free text (max. 250 words)	Sub regional, regional, inter regional
FUNDING		
Funding source and call	Free Text (max. 250 words)	
Date of funding call	dd/mm/yyyy	Date of call being issued
Project application deadline	dd/mm/yyyy	Deadline for application
Total project cost	Local currency & GBP	
What are the financial requirements and implications for OSPAR?	Free text (max. 250 words)	Co funding, staff resources, time resources.

Specific Steps for Each Level of OSPAR Engagement in Projects

Levels of OSPAR Engagement in Projects <i>(in increasing level of engagement)</i>	Steps for when Requests are Approved
Letter of support to a project	<p>If the request is approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OSPAR Executive Secretary will sign a letter of support for the project. <p>Please note that the OSPAR Secretariat will not provide letters of support at very short notice (less than 4 weeks) or where no previous engagement with the Secretariat on the project's development has taken place.</p>
Participation in a project's Advisory Board or Steering Committee	<p>If the request is approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OSPAR Secretariat, with support from the relevant OSPAR body, will nominate a relevant OSPAR expert who will participate in the project's Advisory Board or Steering Committee. This person can be from an OSPAR Contracting Party or from the OSPAR Secretariat.
Associate partner in the project <i>(i.e., no financial implication for OSPAR)</i>	<p>If the request is approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OSPAR Secretariat, with support from the relevant OSPAR body, will nominate a relevant OSPAR expert, or group of OSPAR experts, from OSPAR Contracting Parties who will be the project partner(s) for OSPAR; and The OSPAR Secretariat will have some capacity to help with the coordination of the project proposal and, if successful, some capacity to assist with the administration of the project in which OSPAR is involved. However, the OSPAR Secretariat has a very limited support capacity. <p>Please note that, if OSPAR's participation in a project is not approved, a letter of support could be considered as an alternative.</p>
Implementing partner in the project <i>(i.e., with financial implication for OSPAR)</i>	<p>If the request is approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSPAR Heads of Delegation will be invited to approve the participation of OSPAR in the implementation of the project in written procedure (2 weeks' review) as there is a financial implication for the OSPAR Secretariat; The OSPAR Secretariat, with support from the relevant OSPAR body, will nominate a relevant OSPAR expert, or group of OSPAR experts, from OSPAR Contracting Parties who will be the implementing partner(s) for OSPAR; and The OSPAR Secretariat will have some capacity to help with the coordination of the project proposal and, if successful, some capacity to assist with the administration of the project in which OSPAR is involved. However, as the OSPAR Secretariat has a very limited

	<p>support capacity, additional project management support posts should be included in the project proposal.</p> <p>Please note that, if OSPAR's participation in a project is not approved, a letter of support could be considered as an alternative.</p>
Project coordinator	<p>Please note that the active participation of OSPAR experts will be required to suggest, co-design and co-develop relevant project proposals where OSPAR is the project coordinator (see section E on the OSPAR guidance for developing project proposals).</p> <p>If the request is approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSPAR Heads of Delegation will be invited to approve the participation of OSPAR as project coordinator in written procedure (2 weeks' review) as there is a financial implication for the OSPAR Secretariat; and • A project manager and additional financial and administrative support posts need to be included in the project proposal.