

Introduction for the annual Belmont Forum meeting

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The following amendment has been done to the document:

- Streamlining the document with the ToR.
- Removal of the Working Group, as suggested by the iSC
- Creating a more formal document that can be attached to agreements and handed out to potential members.
- Structured the document to make it easy to read and follow.
- Taking into account the comments and decisions at the 9th Belmont Forum meeting (Oct. 2014)

Belmont Forum Secretariat operational guidelines

Background

The Belmont Forum has previously operated using a part-time secretariat since its inception in 2009. The Secretariat function has historically been associated with the respective Chairs of the Belmont Forum, first the NSF and NERC, and subsequently with the ANR and NRF which brought about discontinuity in coordination of activities. It also resulted in time lost in bedding down the secretariat operations at ever revolving locations.

Over the years the activities and commitments of the Belmont Forum have escalated significantly. This trend can only be expected to grow as Future Earth is established. Although the current Collaborative Research Actions (CRAs) are driven by designated Agencies from within the Belmont Forum, the overarching coordination required to keep these activities going has placed significant pressures on staff that are still trying to do their “day jobs” effectively as well.

In delivering effectively on a series of CRAs and other follow up actions that arise from the Belmont Forum meetings, it is also important that a certain degree of continuity is established in the operations of the Forum. This is particularly important in the context of Rotating Chairs. It was the view of the current Chairs and the general sentiments expressed by Belmont Forum Members (‘Members’) that the current situation was not sustainable or optimal and that the Belmont Forum would have to strengthen its operations in order to remain viable and effective into the future.

At the 2013 Cape Town Belmont Forum meeting, a proposal for establishing a secretariat put forward by the co-Chairs was approved by Members and the following was decided:

- To establish the Belmont Forum Secretariat by September 2014. Given the complexity of the matter and the constraints of some Members, a mechanism would be designed for operationalising the Secretariat.

In the following document, the principles and structure of the Secretariat governance, methods of interaction, functions, roles and funding are described.

Governance

The secretariat implements the decisions taken at the annual Belmont Forum meeting. It works under the guidance and instructions of the co-Chairs and the Steering committee and is accountable to Belmont Forum Members (‘Members’).

Roles, responsibilities and composition

The Secretariat will be the primary administrative element of the Belmont Forum and will be composed of at least 3 full time (or close to full time) employees, including the Secretariat Director.

Director

The Secretariat Director is appointed by the Steering Committee for a 3-year period and is accountable to the co-Chairs, Steering Committee, and Members.

The director leads and manage the Secretariat and its staff and is responsible for the secretariat daily operations, and to monitor progress towards achieving the Secretariat’s objectives and policies. He/she is responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the Annual Financial Report and to report on activities stated in the section ‘Secretariat functions and responsibilities’, to co-Chairs, Steering Committee, and Members.

Secretariat staff

The Secretariat staff works directly under the Secretariat Director’s authority and reports to the Secretariat Director. Appointment of Secretariat staff is managed in consultation and in agreement with the Secretariat Director.

Interactions and collaborations within Belmont Forum

The Secretariat mission is to liaison and interact with all Belmont Forum functions in order to increase coordination and the efficacy within the Belmont Forum. The Secretariat insures the links between co-Chairs, the Steering Committee and Members, as well as the Groups of Program Coordinators (GPC) and Theme Project Offices (TPO) in charge of running the various Collaborative Research Actions (CRA) (see figure 1 and Appendix 1).

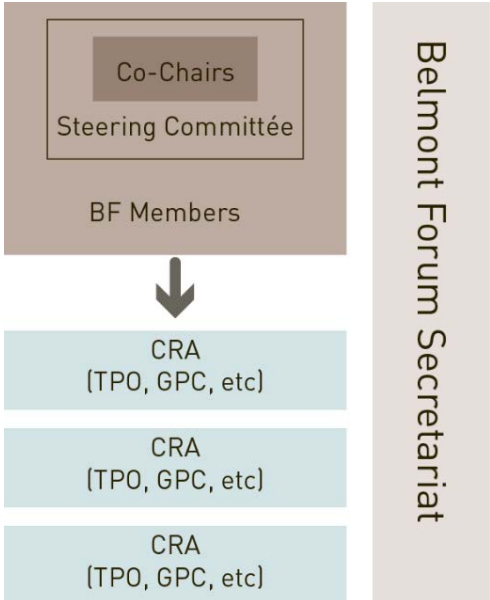


Figure 1. Schematic illustration showing the interactions and links between the Belmont Secretariat and other functions within Belmont Forum i.e. co-Chairs, Belmont Forum Members, the Groups of Program Coordinators (GPC) and Theme Project Offices (TPO). (OBS PICTURE NEED TO BE UPDATED AND REPLACED WHEN ToR IS FINISHED – SHOULD SHOW SAME PICTURE.)

Location and method of interaction

The Secretariat is geographically distributed and Secretariat members can be located in the offices of any Members’ organizations.

The Secretariat interacts through electronic communication means and meets tentatively once a year back-to-back (before and/or after) with the annual Belmont Forum meeting. Travel expenses of Secretariat staff are supported by the Secretariat budget.

Secretariat functions and responsibilities

The following sections described the activities conducted by the Secretariat. The secretariat role is to support the work of the co-Chairs of Belmont Forum with the implementation of activities as proposed and adopted by the Members. Further the secretariat should support the co-Chairs with forward looking activities and inform the co-Chairs, Steering Committee and Members of any opportunities for actions, development and collaborations.

The implementation of all activities will be planned and developed under the guidance of the co-chairs and the Steering Committee. When the Steering Committee find it advisable, Members should also be consulted. The secretariat is to report on the outcome of each activity to co-Chairs, Steering Committee, and Members and a summary is also to be included in the Annual Report. The Secretariat Director will be responsible for overseeing and ensuring the implementation of the following functions and responsibilities through the Secretariat Staff.

1. Co-ordination, Implementation and Monitoring

- Act as Secretariat to co-Chairs, the Steering Committee, and Members of the Belmont Forum and as such, participate ex officio in meetings of the Belmont Forum;
- Support the work of the co-Chairs, including within the Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability¹, and of the Belmont Forum by carrying out the necessary administration tasks (e.g. planning and operations of nomination and appointment processes, annual meetings, MoU signatures and ToR development, etc.);
- Manage the funds and prepare an Annual Report and an Annual Financial Report, in close interactions with the co-Chairs, to be presented to and approved by Members;
- Implement, coordinate and oversee activities and actions as proposed and adopted by Members, including coordination of the planning and scientific and technical delivery of activities;
- Oversee the preparation of timely reports for the co-Chairs, Steering Committee and Members; Implement and monitor Belmont Forum's administrative policies and procedures;
- Develop mechanisms to improve and streamline the Belmont Forum administrative procedures;
- Design and develop the monitoring system of Belmont Forum activities including all CRA steps (scoping processes, call opening, selection, framework for project reporting, project mid-term and end-term meetings, etc.), to ensure a continued improvement of their design and management, and implement those systems when approved by Members.
- Provide coherence and coordination across the Secretariat, Theme Programme Offices and Groups of Programme Coordinators in charge of specific CRAs. It includes development of internal communications tools and activities with the goal to enhance information flows, knowledge management and experience sharing, and avoid duplication of efforts;
- Provide support to Theme Programme Offices to ensure that the CRA's are run according to Belmont procedures and observe appropriate standards and good practices during the development and implementation of CRA activities;

¹ Belmont Forum Secretariat staff cannot be part of the Alliance's Secretariat. If one of the BF co-chairs takes over the role of Alliance co-chair, the staff he/she will contribute to the Alliance secretariat will come from his/her organization and not from the Belmont Forum Secretariat.

2. Value-Enhancing and Forward-Looking Activities

As proposed and adopted by Members, the secretariat could implement strategies and activities for Value-Enhancing and Forward-Looking, in close interactions with the co-Chairs or/and Steering Committee. When appropriate, these activities could be performed in synergy with partners such as Future Earth.

The following items are envisaged:

- Support relevant Theme Programme Offices (TPO) and Members with CRA valorisation and visioning and where appropriate, develop these activities in synergy with partners such as Future Earth.
- Implement forward looking activities, as proposed and approved by Members, to identify new and emerging GEC challenges, opportunities, research areas, and approaches in view of informing and harnessing future Belmont Forum strategic decisions;
- Obtain, synthesize and communicate information and insights about the global change research environment and promote its effective utilization in the design and execution of Belmont Forum programs;

3. External Communication and Partnership

- Support and implement strategies for partnership, as developed by the Co-Chairs and Steering Committee and adopted by Members;
- Support co-Chairs and Steering Committee in developing strategies for membership extension and implement those strategies when adopted by Members;
- Jointly with the co-Chairs and/or Steering Committee develop strategies for external communication towards key stakeholder groups (science community, research funders, other potential funding partners, decision makers, etc.) and implement those communication strategies when adopted by Members;
- Promote and represent the Belmont Forum when appropriate.
- Coordinate the Belmont Forum outreach activities and initiatives, such as:
 - Organize scientific events to enhance the visibility and impact of Belmont Forum activities;
 - Edit and publish a series of Belmont Forum publications, such as policy briefs (CRA-related or transversal to Belmont Forum activities) to boost the profile of these activities.
 - Develop and maintain networks of partners from all regions and all relevant sectors;
 - Maintain Website and insure dissemination of Belmont Forum news and publications;
 - Liaise where appropriate with the Future Earth Secretariat and other partners to develop and organize joint activities for External Communications and Value-Enhancing when adopted by Members.

The Belmont Forum Secretariat and the Future Earth Secretariat are independent. However, if relevant², some activities of the Belmont Forum Secretariat should be coordinate with the Future Earth Secretariat.

Secretariat funding mechanism and financial governance

The Belmont Forum Secretariat's staff and activities are funded by Members through cash and /or in-kind contributions. Approved Members will be asked to give an equal contribution (either in cash or in kind) on an annual basis. Larger or voluntary contributions from Members are also welcomed.

An Annual Report and an Annual Financial Report is to be presented to and approved by Members no later than Mars 31 each year. The Annual Report should include information about the secretariat and report on the outcome of all the activities performed during the year. The Annual Financial Report should be in accordance with applicable law and regulations and include the contributions type and provenance of all Members.. An annual budget for the upcoming year for the secretariat should be presented for Members for approval at the annual Belmont Forum meeting.

The budget year for the Secretariat runs from 1st of January to 31st of December.

The secretariats funds should only be used according to approved budget and on salary and activities stated in this document. Changes within the budget during the financial year should be approved by Co-Chairs and Steering Committee.

Evaluation

A full evaluation of the secretariat and its activities, is to be performed by the Steering Committee in conjunction with co-Chairs and in consultation with Members. The evaluation report as well as a proposal for extension including a financial plan for 2018-2020 shall be presented to Members for approval, no later than at the Annual Belmont Forum meeting 2017.

A financial audit for the financial years 2015-2017 should be presented to all Members no later than at the Belmont Forum meeting 2017. The audit shall be conducted in accordance with international auditing standards issued by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB). The audit shall be conducted by an external, independent and qualified (approved or certified) auditors. The cost of the audit shall be included in the Secretariat's budget.

Legal Governance

The secretariat will have no legal status on its own and employees will be under the same legislations and taxations as the hosting funder where they will be stationed.

² For instance, if a synthesis of research outputs of projects funded through a given CRA is published and edited by the Belmont Forum secretariat and the given CRA is in support of a Future Earth theme, the synthesis would eventually be co-labelled Belmont Forum and Future Earth; and the work would be done in collaboration with the Future Earth secretariat's team in charge of the Synthesis function.

Secretariat funding, 2015-2017

For the 3 first years of operation (2015-2017) the Secretariat Executive Director and the Deputy Director will be based at Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) in Paris, with two complementary staff based with the National Science Foundation (NSF) in US and European Commission (EC) in Belgium:

- **ANR** will fund 20% of the Secretariat Director's salary (for the remaining 80% see below);
- **NSF** has committed an in-kind contribution of one full time staff member based in Washington;
- **EC** will support one full time based in Brussels;
- **MEXT/JST** will fund 100% of the Deputy Director's salary;
- All 4 agencies will also provide associated logistics.

The director will be employed by ANR and under French legislation concerning employment regulations and taxation.

The remaining cost of Secretariat personnel (at least 80% of the Secretariat Director's salary) and other running expenses will be supported through cash contributions from Members. The minimum budget for these expenses is as follows for year 2015 (2015 contribution to the secretariat will only be mandatory for Members):

2015 Budget	Expenses (€/year)
80% FTE salary of Director, based in Paris	80 000
Coordination expenses*	40 000
Total:	120 000

**See the section on Secretariat's functions and roles.*

For cash contribution a contract will be drafted between contributing Member and host (i.e. ANR) regulating the money transfer. Cash contribution can also be managed through the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and an additional contract for money transfer will then be drafted between IIASA and ANR. Depending on the number of Members who will be able to support the Permanent Secretariat through cash contributions, agencies should expect to provide annual fees around € 20 000 per year.

Those Members who cannot contribute in cash will be asked to provide in-kind contributions (staff³, meeting hosting, technical support, etc.) of the equivalent value as in-cash contributions. Larger or voluntary contributions, either cash or in-kind, are also welcomed and would support a larger, more effective Secretariat and more activities as proposed and adopted by the Members (see the section on Secretariat's functions and responsibilities).

Staff at the secretariat, which are part of an in-kind contribution from a Members, will have individual contracts with their respective funder and be under the legislation, concerning employment regulations and taxation, for the country were they will be stationed.

³ Nota: the various members of the Groups of Programme Coordinators (GPCs) and of Theme Programme Offices (TPOs) cannot be considered as a contribution to the Secretariat. However Members can contribute to the secretariat by allocating additional time GPC or TPO members or additional staff to secretariat' functions.

Appendix 1

An overview of key roles within Belmont Forum which the secretariat will interact with, and their functions:

Co-Chairs assistant

- Each co-Chair is supported by an assistant from his/her staff to ease interactions between the co-Chairs and the Secretariat Director. A co-Chair's assistant is formally not part of the Secretariat and remains under the responsibility and authority of the co-Chair.

GPC

- A "Group of Program Coordinators" (GPC) is responsible for the practical implementation of a given CRA. It is composed of one mandated representative from each Partner Organization participating in the CRA, who provides overall responsibility for her/his Organization's involvement in the CRA.

TPO

- A "Theme Program Office" (TPO) is established by one of the Partner Organizations' Head Offices which, for the entire period of a CRA implementation, is entrusted by the Partner Organizations to prepare, publish, and manage activities decided in the framework of the CRA, in cooperation and consultation with the Group of Program Coordinators.