

Interim Steering Committee Statutory Note

Note: The purpose of this working document is to set the Interim Steering Committee structure, functions and processes during the IPOS ramp up phase (2025 - 2027). Responsibilities and certain substantive components which will apply only after the ramp up phase, are included in the Appendix.

The Interim Steering Committee shall operate in accordance with the IPOS Values Charter, which prevails in matters of values, principles and standards across all IPOS governance bodies and activities.

1. MANDATE

The Interim Steering Committee (ISC) is the body charged with the strategic orientation and oversight of IPOS. It ensures that activities, governance and priorities remain aligned with the platform's shared purpose, and it guarantees transparency, accountability and adherence to good practice across operations.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Policies and Procedures. The ISC approves and updates IPOS's internal policies and governance procedures, and ensures their consistent application across the organisation and regions

2.2 Ramp up Phase Work Plan. The ISC adopts the work plan for the ramp up phase submitted by the IPOS Secretariat, verifying coherence between global direction and regional implementation.

2.3 Budget. The ISC approves the consolidated budget and exercises strategic budgetary oversight to align resources with the approved strategy and work plan.

2.4 Decision-making Protocols. The ISC establishes and publishes decision-making protocols for IPOS (consensus-first with a fallback of two thirds majority where necessary), to guarantee transparency and accountability in institutional decisions. Decisions include approval of work plans, policies, procedures, request selections, budget, fiscal policies and amendments required to IPOS governance or processes from lessons learned during the ramp up phase.

2.5 Core Values. The ISC safeguards adherence to IPOS's core values (credibility and rigour, impartiality, inclusion and equity, systems approach, contextual relevance, effectiveness and timeliness, adaptability and learning, transparency and accountability, open access, sustainability, confidentiality and ethical and safe use of AI).

2.6 Regional Coherence. The ISC promotes inter-regional coherence of governance and operations and may arbitrate, at strategic level, to maintain alignment with the organisation's shared purpose.

3. ROLES

3.1 Capacity Management. The ISC is consulted on capacity management for incoming organisational demands, at the level of governance rules and principles.

3.2 Requests. The ISC the prioritisation framework (i.e., the criteria used by operational bodies to rank and select requests) and ensures that this framework is applied consistently across all requests during the ramp up phase.

3.3 Final Selection of Requests. The ISC arbitrates the final decision on which incoming service requests to take forward - after prioritisation by the Acting Knowledge Committee in accordance with the prioritisation framework - taking into account diversity of requesters and thematic topics as well as alignment with the shared purpose and objectives of IPOS and the availability of financial resources.

3.4 Work Flow. The ISC monitors the platform's work flow through periodic reports from the Secretariat covering progress of ongoing requests and delivery of outputs, regional balance in the distribution of work flow and delivery risks, and it may authorise re-sequencing or re-balancing of tasks to preserve strategic coherence.

3.5 Guardrails. The ISC sets guardrails (performance expectations and risk thresholds) and mandates corrective actions at governance level where the work flow deviates from the approved strategy, work plan or capacity constraints.

4. LIMITS OF COMPETENCE

4.1 The ISC does not rule on the scientific content of reports or responses. Scientific rigor and the approval of IPOS outputs rests with the Acting Knowledge Committee, supported by independent reviewers, using agreed uncertainty/consensus and review procedures.

4.2 The ISC does not rule on expert selection. Expert selection rests with the Acting Knowledge Committee, following the IPOS Charter of Values.

5. GOVERNANCE

5.1 Composition. The ISC comprises the IPOS Secretary (without voting rights), a representative of the Coalition of Scientific Institutions, the Co-Chairs of the Knowledge Committee, representatives of invited UN agencies, and the head of the

hosting organisation. The head of the hosting organisation chairs the Interim Steering Committee. In addition, in order to complement the ISC with additional strategic competencies and to broaden the perspective, the ISC may include up to two *appointed expert members*, proposed by the chair of the ISC and validated by the other ISC members. These elected experts may offer insights into the needs of States using IPOS services, the expectations of funders, or share their extensive knowledge of ocean governance. The election or renewal of these external expert members shall take place annually at the first ISC meeting of the calendar year, ensuring continuity and rotation as appropriate.

5.2 Institutional interfaces.

The ISC operates within a collaborative architecture alongside the Secretariat, the Knowledge Committee, Strategic Partners and the broader Knowledge Network and Regional Nodes which will be established during the ramp up phase, balancing global coherence with regional relevance:

5.2.1 Secretariat. Together with the Secretariat, the ISC provides strategic oversight and coordinates on planning, intake/prioritisation policy, response development and performance follow-up.

5.2.2 Acting Knowledge Committee. The ISC and AKC have complementary roles: the ISC sets direction, rules and resources and makes the final decision of the selection of requests based on diversity and balance and the application of a development index multiplier; the AKC scores incoming requests against pre-determined criteria and safeguards scientific quality and approves outputs.

5.2.4 Strategic Partners. Strategic Partners may contribute to the generation and delivery of IPOS outputs as key collaborators, or may provide advisory input in an observing capacity to keep IPOS complementary to existing assessment processes, depending on the nature of the Partner and its relationship with IPOS.

PROCEDURES

6.1 Decision-making and transparency. Decisions are made by consensus, with a two-thirds majority fallback if consensus cannot be reached. In line with IPOS's transparency principle, decision protocols as well as the minutes of ISC meetings and summaries of key decisions shall be made publicly available through the Secretariat's website, except where confidentiality obligations apply.

6.2 Reporting. The ISC requires regular reporting from the Secretariat on budget execution, work-plan progress and work flow (including request intake, throughput, regional balance and delivery risks), and it supervises the publication of governance information (approved policies, procedures and key decisions).

Appendix: Post Ramp up Phase

Once IPOS is fully implemented, the ISC will revise this Statutory Note as necessary taking into account lessons learnt during the initial demonstration period and will include at least the following:

1. **Broadening Institutional interfaces.** The Steering Committee (SC) will adjust the institutional interfaces to a decentralised, collaborative architecture which includes Regional Nodes alongside the Secretariat, the Knowledge Committee, Strategic Partners and the broader Knowledge Network, in order to balance global coherence with regional relevance.
2. **Regional Node representation.** The heads of Regional Nodes will have a seat on the Steering Committee, without voting rights (to ensure separation of power with regard to request selection and budget allocation).
3. **Provisions for the inclusion of Regional Nodes.** The SC will ensure inter-regional coherence between Regional Nodes and, via the Secretariat, may be consulted on phasing of services that are relevant to different regions.
4. **A Multi-year strategy and annual workplan.** The SC will adopt a multi-year strategy and the annual work plan submitted by the IPOS Secretariat, verifying coherence between global direction and regional implementation.