

2023-2025 GEO Work Programme Development: Proposed Objectives, Process, and Timeline

This document is submitted by the Secretariat to the Programme Board for decision.

1 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the Secretariat recommendations for the process of developing the 2023-2025 GEO Work Programme (GWP). The GWP development process will occupy most of the attention of the Programme Board during 2022. It provides a key opportunity to shape the GWP and thereby contribute significantly to realizing GEO's Mission and Vision.

Following a brief setting of the context, the document lays out a proposed set of objectives for this GWP, as a starting point for Programme Board discussion. Following this are several matters of process and procedure. A companion document (PB-21.10) will then address the guidance materials for the GEO community, which are required to launch the process.

2 BACKGROUND

The activities that comprise the GEO Work Programme (formerly Work Plan) are collectively the primary means by which GEO achieves its Vision and Mission. The Programme Board provides an essential role in shaping the GWP.

The development of the GWP takes about 15 months to complete, including the call for contributions, the preparation of the Implementation Plans (IPs), review of the IPs, and the consultation and endorsement by the GEO community. Since GEO was established in 2005, there have been six three-year plans/programmes (including the current one) and two one-year transitional plans/programmes. The structure and content of these plans/programmes has evolved considerably over time.

Responsibility for the development of GWPs is shared between the Programme Board and the GEO Secretariat.¹ The Secretariat is responsible for initiating the development of the GWP and for supporting the Programme Board on its finalization. Also, as it is responsible for implementing and/or supporting the Foundational Tasks, it has a key role in proposing the structure and composition of these activities. In the GWP development process, the Programme Board is responsible for:

- Reviewing the scope and substance of the GWP activities;
- Examining proposed IPs for GEO Initiatives and Flagships and taking decisions to accept new ones; and

¹ As defined in the GEO Rules of Procedure.

- Recommending GWPs for Plenary acceptance, including assessing whether the resources committed are commensurate to the activities scoped for inclusion in the GWP.

3 LESSONS FROM THE 2020-2022 GEO WORK PROGRAMME PROCESS

At the conclusion of the development process for the 2020-2022 GWP, the Programme Board at its 15th meeting reviewed its experience and identified several recommendations. These recommendations are listed below along with proposed actions from the Secretariat.

Table 1: Recommendations for the GWP Development Process

PB Recommendation	Secretariat Proposal
Start the process earlier	Agreed. Call for IPs targeted for October (previous call was in mid-December).
Provide more guidance on the full process and timelines	Agreed. The present document and document PB-21.10 are intended to provide more detail than in previous iterations. Explanatory material for GWP activities (to be developed) will also provide more guidance in this respect.
Provide more explanation to proposers on differences between IM categories and on the policy mandate	Agreed. This will be addressed in document PB-21.10. It should be noted that the interpretation of what constitutes a policy mandate was not agreed by the Programme Board until several months after the call for IPs in 2019.
Ask the community about the usefulness of the GWP format	While a specific process to solicit feedback on the format was not conducted, the Secretariat has received comments from the community in the time since the previous GWP development. The primary concern expressed has been for an online tool that facilitates data entry and updating, as well as supporting data analysis.
Show linkages to outside organizations [in the IPs]	Agreed. This will be addressed in document PB-21.10.
Provide more guidance (to PB members) on how to handle activities that do not provide the required information	Agreed. The review criteria will be addressed in document PB-21.10. A recommendation from the Mid-Term Evaluation that the Programme Board should apply its review criteria more strictly is under consideration by the Executive Committee.
Invite experts from outside the PB to participate on the review teams	Agreed. This will be addressed below in the current document.

4 PROPOSED OBJECTIVES FOR THE 2023-2025 GEO WORK PROGRAMME

The set of objectives below are intended to identify the key aspects in which the 2023-2025 GWP development process be improved from previous GWPs. These objectives are based on feedback received from the GEO community since the last GWP development cycle, as well as on strategic directions discussed at the GEO Executive Committee and the findings and recommendations of the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation. Implementation of these objectives will be largely through the criteria and templates for the GWP activities, which will be considered in detail in the discussion of document PB-21.10.

The proposed objectives are as follows:

1. **Greater collaboration and integration** across GWP activities, with the aim of providing users with the greatest benefit from the collective resources provided by the GWP, as well as broader portfolios of solutions to address the engagement priorities.

This will be implemented by a combination of Secretariat efforts before and during the development of the IPs and the advice from the Programme Board through the review process.

2. **Stronger emphasis on open knowledge**, that is, the sharing of methods, models, algorithms, and other components required to replicate the solutions developed by GWP activities and to adapt them to specific circumstances. This should be viewed as not only fundamental to GEO's value proposition but is the essential foundation for capacity development. This will be realized through revisions to the review criteria, guidance materials to IP preparers, the Open Knowledge Statement, and other means as appropriate.
3. **More specific identification of intended/actual users** of the solutions they are developing and to involve such users in the development of those solutions from an early stage (co-design/co-production). While this will be reflected in the review criteria and guidance to the GWP activities, it should also be a key focus of the Programme Board review process.
4. **Clearer definition of the GWP categories**, the expectations for transition between the categories, and the expected lifecycle of GWP activities. As was noted above, the review criteria during the 2020-2022 GWP development process were not finalized until after the call for IPs. It is the intent in this round to provide the criteria to IP preparers at the time of the call so they may use them as a self-assessment tool and address the criteria directly in their plans.
5. **Simplification of the IP template**, making use of standardized classifications where possible, as well as providing for online entry and updating of IP information. The Secretariat also intends to use the data collected for the IPs to populate the static fields of GWP activity webpages on the GEO website.

5 PROPOSED PROCESS

The general outline of the 2023-2025 GWP development will follow the approach used for previous GWPs, with some new elements (in italics):

- Step 1.** The Secretariat issues a call for new IPs, including for activities currently in the GWP. The call will include a request for new activities to address the engagement priorities, including the new priority of Resilient Cities and Human Settlements.
- Step 2.** GWP activity teams prepare their draft plans. The Secretariat will provide one-on-one guidance as required, *and will work with specific GWP activities, groups of activities, and/or communities to encourage re-focusing, integration, or cross-linkages*. The Secretariat will also do an initial review of the IPs against the review criteria to ensure that the IPs are reasonably complete prior to the Programme Board review.
- Step 3.** Review teams composed of Programme Board members, *supplemented with external experts*, review the IPs of candidate Flagships, Initiatives, Regional GEOs, and Foundational Tasks. The review process will include preparation of written comments to be provided to IP drafters, as well as teleconferences with each activity to discuss the comments and recommendations in greater detail.
- Step 4.** The GEO Symposium will provide an opportunity for the Flagships, Initiatives, Regional GEOs, and Foundational Tasks to present a summary of their plans to the GEO community and to obtain feedback. It will also be an opportunity to further develop the aspects of integration and cross-fertilization across the GWP.
- Step 5.** GWP activity leads submit revised IPs to respond to the review team comments and the feedback from the GEO community.

- Step 6.** The Secretariat compiles the IP summaries into the first draft of the GWP summary document and circulates it to GEO Principals for comment and for offers of additional participants and/or contributions.
- Step 7.** The Secretariat prepares a revised version of the GWP summary document for Programme Board approval.
- Step 8.** Presentation of the 2023-2025 GWP for Plenary acceptance.

There are two significant new elements proposed to this process:

- The Secretariat will play a more active role at the early stages in shaping the IPs, particularly to respond to the key themes of Agriculture-Forests-Water; Oceans and Climate; and Biodiversity and Ecosystems, that have been explored initially at the 2021 GEO Symposium and will be further examined at GEO Week 2021. The expected outcomes of these efforts will be the realization of greater value to EO users from the integration of the existing capabilities of GWP activities, as well as possible new activities that will complement existing activities. This direction is aligned with, and responds to, the recommendations of the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation.
- The Secretariat proposes to establish a list of potential external reviewers to supplement the capabilities of the Programme Board review teams, particularly with respect to the review of the technical aspects of the IPs and engagement of users. This proposal responds to the request by Programme Board members for such additional support. These reviewers will be drawn from within the GEO community but will not be involved in the activities being reviewed.

6 PROPOSED TIMELINE

The proposed process follows a similar approach to the one used for the 2020-2022 GWP, but with a slightly earlier starting date.

Table 1: Key Steps for the 2023-2025 GEO Work Programme Development

Timing	Action
PB-21: September 2021	Agree on objectives, process, timeline, review criteria and IP templates.
21 October 2021	Secretariat issues call for IPs
GEO Week 2021	PB co-chairs inform Plenary of the GWP development process and timeline
PB-22: January 2022	Secretariat proposes Foundational Task structure and detailed review process
Early February 2022	Deadline for submission of IPs. Review process begins.
57 th ExCom meeting: March 2022	Update to the Executive Committee on GWP development.
GEO Symposium: late March / early April 2022	Consultation with the GEO community.
PB-23: April/May 2022	Assess review status and recommendations for each of the GWP activities.
June 2022	Deadline for submission of revised IPs.
June/July 2022	Draft GWP summary document sent to GEO Principals for consultation and additional contributions.
58 th ExCom meeting: July 2022	Update to the Executive Committee on GWP development.
PB-24: September 2022	Final Programme Board review and approval of the GWP.

Timing	Action
September/October 2022	2023-2025 GWP summary document sent to GEO Principals for approval at Plenary.
GEO Week 2022	Approval of the 2023-2025 GWP.
December 2022	Final version of the GWP summary document, incorporating changes from Plenary, is posted on the GEO website.

7 RECOMMENDATION

The Secretariat recommends that the Programme Board approve the proposed objectives, process, and timeline for the development of the 2023-2025 GWP, subject to further elaboration of the details at the 22nd Programme Board meeting.