

GEO Programme Board Terms of Reference

Excerpt from the GEO Rules of Procedure, as approved by the GEO-21 Plenary on 28 May 2026.

The main change is an addition to the Programme Board Duty 6.2.d.

Please note that the revision of the GEO Rules of Procedure is still in progress. As a result, the proposed updates to the Programme Board Terms of Reference have not yet been fully incorporated, and some references to previous terminology remain. Once the revisions are finalized, the Programme Board will operate under the updated Terms of Reference.

Programme Board members' terms will begin immediately after the GEO Plenary (exact dates TBD), in accordance with the new GEO governance meeting calendar. However, in this version of the Programme Board Terms of Reference, the commencement date is stated as 1 January. This inconsistency will be addressed in the next revision of the GEO Rules of Procedure.

6. GEO PROGRAMME BOARD

6.1. Function: The GEO Programme Board supports the ongoing development and implementation of the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016 – 2025: Implementing GEOSS* through multi-year GEO Work Programmes.

Specifically, the GEO Programme Board:

- Works to ensure the overall coherence and alignment of the GEO Work Programmes with GEO's Strategic Objectives and Core Functions;
- Works to align the scope and substance of tasks, GEO Initiatives and Flagships in the GEO Work Programme with the resources committed by Members and Participating Organizations;
- Supports and enables cross-cutting coordination and knowledge exchange, especially best practices; and
- Promotes GEO Work Programmes and engagement of stakeholders in their implementation.

6.2. Duties: The GEO Programme Board will:

- a. Review the scope and substance of GEO Work Programme activities (that is, GEO Initiatives, Flagships, Regional GEOs, and Foundational Tasks) proposed for the multi-year GEO Work Programme;
- b. Review the progress of all GEO Work Programme activities;
- c. Recommend GEO Work Programmes for Plenary acceptance; including assessing whether resources committed are commensurate to the activities scoped for inclusion in the Work Programme;
- d. Evaluate, technically and financially, proposals submitted to potential dedicated GEO financing mechanisms or pooled funds to support the GWP, and make funding recommendations to the Executive Committee;

- e. Examine proposed Implementation Plans for GEO Initiatives and Flagships and take decisions to accept new ones;
- f. Collaborate with and assist GEO Work Programme activities and candidate activities to maximize the quality and sustainability of the GEO Work Programme;
- g. Collaborate with the Secretariat to convene symposia or other events in support of the development and implementation of the GEO Work Programme;
- h. Provide high-level recommendations to the Executive Committee;
- i. Nominate Participating Organization observers to the Executive Committee; and
- j. Undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to the Programme Board by the Executive Committee or the Plenary.

6.3. *Membership*

- 6.3.1. Membership on the GEO Programme Board is open only to GEO Members and Participating Organizations.
- 6.3.2. The GEO Programme Board will be composed of no fewer than 16 and no more than 32 members. At least 40% of Programme Board members must be from GEO Members and at least 40% of Programme Board members must be from Participating Organizations.
- 6.3.3. Programme Board member terms are for a period of three calendar years, beginning January 1, unless the member resigns, or their membership is terminated early (see article 6.3.5). Programme Board members whose term has ended may reapply for another term.
- 6.3.4. To assure continuity of processes and retention of knowledge, Programme Board member terms will be set so that approximately one-third of member terms end each year.
- 6.3.5. If neither the principal nor the alternate representatives of a Programme Board member have participated, either in-person or by teleconference, in two consecutive Programme Board meetings, and if the principal and alternate representatives of that Programme Board member have not been active in Programme Board subgroups or review teams, the term of that Programme Board member may be terminated early by the Executive Committee on advice from Programme Board Co-chairs.

6.4. *Appointment of Programme Board Members*

- 6.4.1. Appointment of Programme Board members is by decision of Plenary.
- 6.4.2. A Call for Nominations to the Programme Board will be issued by the Secretariat at least four months prior to the end of the calendar year. At least three weeks will be provided from the Call for Nominations to the deadline for submission of nominations.
- 6.4.3. Nominations must identify one principal representative and may identify up to two alternate representatives to the Programme Board. Nominations of representatives must be approved by the GEO Principal of the nominating GEO Member or Participating Organization. Both principal and alternate representatives may attend Programme Board meetings and participate in Programme Board subgroups and review teams.
- 6.4.4. The Secretariat will review the nominations received and propose to the Executive Committee a slate of candidates for Programme Board seats that are or will be vacated. The Executive Committee will review all nominations and recommend a slate of Programme Board members for appointment by the Plenary.
- 6.4.5. Principal and alternate representatives may be changed during the Programme Board member term at the request of the GEO Principal of the Programme Board member.

6.4.6. Programme Board member representatives are expected to take a broad, comprehensive perspective of GEO, working constructively toward common objectives.

6.4.7. Each Programme Board member will be responsible for their own costs connected with participation in Programme Board activities. Subject to the availability of funds and the approval of the Executive Committee, participation in Programme Board activities may be supported from the GEO Trust Fund for members from developing countries.

6.5. *Programme Board Co-chairs*

6.5.1. Programme Board members will elect three co-chairs from among the principal representatives. At least one Programme Board co-chair will be from a GEO Member and at least one Programme Board co-chair will be from a Participating Organization.

6.5.2. The term of each Programme Board co-chair will end at the conclusion of the term of the Programme Board member of which they are the principal representative. If that Programme Board member term is renewed, the principal representative may be re-elected to a second term as co-chair.

6.5.3. The Programme Board co-chair election process will follow the procedure described in Annex E.

6.5.4. Programme Board co-chairs, with the support and collaboration of the GEO Secretariat, are jointly responsible for:

- a. Setting Programme Board meeting agendas;
- b. Reviewing Programme Board documents prior to distribution to Programme Board members;
- c. Chairing meetings of the Programme Board;
- d. Identifying strategic and tactical issues relevant to successful implementation of the GEO Work Programme and formulate them for discussion within the Programme Board and/or the Executive Committee;
- e. Representing the Programme Board at Executive Committee and Plenary meetings; and
- f. Preparing reports from the Programme Board to the Executive Committee and the Plenary.

6.6. *Programme Board Meetings*

6.6.1. Programme Board will convene an in-person meeting at least two times per year. Means for Programme Board representatives to participate by teleconference will be provided for each meeting. Additional meetings, including meetings solely by teleconference, may be convened at the discretion of the Programme Board co-chairs.

6.6.2. Quorum for Programme Board meetings will be 50% of Programme Board members.

6.6.3. Decisions by the Programme Board will be by consensus, taking account of decisions taken previously by the Programme Board and in other GEO governance structures. In the spirit of GEO being open, inclusive and transparent, consensus is reached when there is no strong objection from a Programme Board member to the proposed decision before the Programme Board. In cases where consensus cannot be achieved, the Programme Board co-chairs may decide to bring the matter to the Executive Committee for resolution.

6.6.4. If more than one representative of a Programme Board member attends a Programme Board meeting, the attending representatives will coordinate their positions.

6.6.5. Documents for decision at a Programme Board meeting will be sent to the Programme Board

co-chairs at least three weeks prior to the meeting for their review and comment. Once approved by the Programme Board co-chairs, documents for decision will be distributed to all Programme Board members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Documents that are for information or discussion will be distributed at least one week prior to the meeting. Documents having significant implications, and which have not been previously reviewed by the Programme Board will be distributed to all Programme Board members at least four weeks in advance, the determination of significance to be decided by the Programme Board co-chairs.

6.6.6. The Secretariat will distribute to all Programme Board members, within two weeks of each meeting, a report which will include a list of all meeting participants and the key outcomes and actions from the meeting.

6.7. *Participating Organization Observers to Executive Committee.* The Programme Board members from Participating Organizations will nominate three of their members to serve as Participating Organization Observers to the Executive Committee. The term of each Observer will be one year, which may be renewed. The nomination process will follow that described in Annex E.

6.8. *Programme Board Subgroups*

6.8.1. The Programme Board may create, modify and disband subgroups to further its work on any matter related to its duties.

6.8.2. Any principal or alternate Programme Board member representative may participate in any subgroup. Programme Board subgroups may also include participants who are not Programme Board member representatives, at the discretion of the Programme Board. At least one co-chair of every subgroup must be a Programme Board representative.

6.8.3. Each subgroup will have a terms of reference which is approved by the Programme Board when the subgroup is established. The terms of reference will include, among other things:

- a. The purpose for which the subgroup was created;
- b. The scope and mandate of the subgroup;
- c. The expected outputs or deliverables of the subgroup; and
- d. Whether participation in the subgroup is open to those who are not Programme Board member representatives.

6.8.4. The status and terms of reference of all subgroups will be reviewed at the first meeting of the Programme Board in each calendar year.

6.9. *Support:* The Secretariat will provide administrative and analytical support to the Programme Board. The activities of the Programme Board will be closely coordinated with the Secretariat and other GEO entities to maintain consistency with the approved GEO Strategic Plan, and to maximize the effectiveness of GEO and the implementation of GEOSS.

Annex E: Programme Board Voting Procedure

The following voting procedure will apply to elections of:

- Programme Board co-chairs; and
 - Participating Organization nominees to Executive Committee.
- A. The Secretariat will inform Programme Board member representatives of the number and type of vacancies for which elections are required. In most instances, these vacancies will be anticipated due to completion of some member terms.
- B. Vacancies will be filled prior to the next Programme Board meeting using electronic voting, unless an objection is raised by a Programme Board member. If an objection is raised, vacancies will be filled at the next in-person Programme Board meeting as the first order of business.
- C. The Secretariat will invite nominations from Programme Board members for vacant positions. Nominations must be by individual Programme Board principal representatives on their own behalf. The period of time allowed for nominations will be no less than one week, in the case of anticipated vacancies, and no less than two weeks in the case of unanticipated vacancies. Nominations will be submitted via email to the Programme Board distribution list. The nomination email should include a short (less than 200 words) statement describing why they wish to serve and what they bring (e.g. experience, qualifications, perspectives) to the position.
- D. Following the close of the nomination period, the Secretariat will confirm the eligibility of the nominees and announce the candidates for the vacant positions. If only one valid nomination has been received by the end of the nomination period, the Secretariat will announce that the candidate has been elected by acclamation.
- E. If more than one valid nomination has been received, the Secretariat will circulate the list of candidates and their statements to all Programme Board members eligible to vote. Each Programme Board member will then be asked to submit one vote for each position for which an election is being held to the Secretariat only (as a secret ballot) via email. Where there are multiple representatives for a Programme Board member, the representatives must coordinate among themselves which representative will submit the votes on behalf of that member.
- F. If the election is being held at an in-person meeting, each candidate will be provided the opportunity to give their candidate statement verbally at the meeting, following which there will be opportunity for other Programme Board members to ask questions. Voting at in-person meetings will occur by secret ballot administered by the Secretariat.
- G. Before voting begins, the Secretariat will announce the number of eligible voters and the list of candidates. For Programme Board co-chair positions, all Programme Board members will be eligible to cast one vote per vacant position. For positions as Participating Organization Observers on Executive Committee, each Participating Organization Programme Board member will be eligible to cast one vote per vacant position. A nominating member may vote for themselves.
- H. In the event there is more than one co-chair vacancy, voting will be conducted for each vacancy in sequential rounds.
- I. If the number of votes is tied for a particular vacant position, a tie-breaker round of voting will be undertaken. If the tie remains after three rounds of tie-breaker voting, a member of the GEO Secretariat will flip a coin to determine the result of the vote.