Future Earth Global Research Networks (GRNs)\(^1\) are scientific organisations representing sustainability researchers who collaborate in knowledge generation and synthesis under the umbrella of Future Earth's mission and objectives\(^2\). They represent the scientific core expertise of Future Earth.

These Terms of Reference provide guiding principles, within which the Future Earth Secretariat and each GRN will negotiate and manage their relationships.

**Research and mandate**

The core objective of the Global Research Networks is to generate high quality fundamental and applied research on the most pressing global change and sustainability challenges. They set international agendas for collaborative research and scholarship, as well as capacity building, promoting inter- and transdisciplinary research.

Global Research Networks are encouraged to engage with other Future Earth structures (other GRNs, regional networks, national committees, etc.) through initiation, development, and/or implementation of activities.

**Governance**

The activities of each GRN shall be governed by a Steering Committee (SC) representing the relevant scientific and stakeholder communities. The composition of GRN SCs should represent the international and demographic diversity of the community and should foster leadership capacity in under-represented sectors. Before appointing new SC members, GRNs shall consult with the Directors' Council of the Future Earth Secretariat, which will provide advice and feedback, particularly on engagement with under-represented communities. Every GRN is required to provide the Future Earth Secretariat with updates on changes in SC membership no later than one month after appointment.

GRNs shall submit Research Plans of their priorities for the subsequent three to ten years, as well as annual activity reports to the Future Earth Secretariat.

Future Earth will conduct periodic reviews of each GRN to assess progress and relevance to the Future Earth mission. The goal of these reviews will be to generate advice to GRNs on potential improvements to their missions and activities. Following each review, the Future Earth secretariat will submit a recommendation to the Governing Council to either continue or terminate the sponsorship agreement with the GRN.

---

\(^1\) GRNs constitute the former Global Research Projects (GRPs) and Knowledge-Action Networks (KANs), as well as new networks.

\(^2\) See "Future Earth Mission and Vision FAQs"
Two representatives of each GRN will be voting members of the Future Earth Assembly.

**Staffing and management**
GRNs should make sincere efforts to establish independent International Project Offices with professional staff. The Future Earth Secretariat will appoint dedicated liaison staff to maintain regular and effective communication, and to attend GRN meetings as appropriate.

**Hosting and resources**
All Global Research Networks will be supported by the Secretariat through equal annual grants. To the extent possible, the use of such annual grants should be at the discretion of the GRN in support of the Future Earth mission and objectives. GRNs may also apply to Future Earth for additional funding for cross-cutting and synthesis initiatives that address Future Earth priorities and/or foster collaboration among Future Earth networks.

GRNs should make sincere efforts to obtain financial, administrative and/or intellectual endorsement from other sponsors, in addition to Future Earth.

The Future Earth Secretariat will support cross-network collaboration and dissemination of research results through dedicated facilitation, as well as internal and external communication.

**Recognition and termination of support to GRNs**
The Future Earth Governing Council may endorse new Global Research Networks, based on proposals submitted to the Assembly, outlining the proposed GRN mission and research gaps to be filled. The proposal should include a 3-10 year Research Plan.

There should not be a cap on the number of Global Research Networks under Future Earth, but balance between the number of GRNs, overlap of activities, and the staffing and financial resources of the Secretariat should be considered as part of the endorsement process.

The sponsorship agreement between a GRN and Future Earth may be terminated when either the SC of the GRN or the Future Earth Governing Council determines that the relationship is no longer of mutual benefit, or when the GRN SC chooses to dissolve the GRN.

**Amendment of the Terms of Reference**
Changes to these Terms of Reference for GRNs must be approved by the Governing Council.

---

3 See “Future Earth Mission and Vision FAQs”
4 See “Guiding principles on the Use of the Core Fund” for further details.