

INVITATION TO TENDER

cOAlition S Host Secretariat

Launched in 2018, cOAlition S brings together a group of organisations, principally research funders with national or international responsibilities, all committed to achieving full and immediate Open Access to scholarly publications in line with Plan S. Seven years on, and after significant progress in achieving the goals of the members, cOAlition S has adopted a new [strategic plan](#) and [governance structure](#) to take forward its work on Open Access.

Our goal is a scholarly communication system that enables rapid, open, transparent, and equitable sharing of trustworthy scientific knowledge by:

- strengthening the foundations for full, immediate, sustainable, and equitable Open Access to scholarly peer-reviewed articles;
- supporting digital infrastructures that enable Open Access; and
- exploring financially sustainable and equitable publishing systems and monitoring mechanisms.

The governance of cOAlition S is set out in its Terms of Reference and is composed of a Leaders Group (LG), an Executive Steering Group (ESG), a Host Secretariat, and a series of committees that support expert work.

We now wish to appoint the Host Secretariat to implement the strategy of cOAlition S through its yearly Work Plans, as adopted by the Leaders Group. An [overview of the 2026 Work Plan](#) is presented in Annex A.

Role of the Host Secretariat

The Secretariat of cOAlition S will be hosted by an organisation with a legal entity that enables it to manage funds from an international group of research organisations and provide secretariat support. It must be able to deal with funds from any organisation across the globe.

The Host Secretariat is funded by cOAlition S members via a multi-party Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the terms of which are reflected within the wider Terms of Reference. The Secretariat is appointed by and reports to the Leaders Group. It operates within a central budget (around €0.8 million/annum) approved by the same body. It reports to the Executive Steering Group (ESG) on a working basis.

The ESG and the host organisation will agree to the staffing and technical resources required, driven by the yearly work plans. This is expected to include a Director – appointed by the Leaders Group but employed by the host organisation – and a Project Manager, Communications Manager, and Financial Manager who will be appointed by the Host Secretariat resulting from this tender exercise.

As a membership organisation, cOAlition S depends on active collaboration among its members. The Host Secretariat must therefore engage with the membership—helping to represent, articulate, and advance the shared strategy and objectives of the members—while fostering cohesion across a diversity of Open Access policy approaches. In this respect the Host Secretariat attends the Executive Steering Group and the Leaders Group in an observer capacity.

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Scope of work

The Host Secretariat will be responsible for:

- Administrative support for the Leaders Group, Executive Steering Group and expert committees;
- Coordination and monitoring of annual Work Plans;
- Financial and risk management, including preparation of annual budgets and reports;
- Definition of the communications strategy, including website hosting and maintenance, press and media communications management, and publication of key outputs;
- Organisation of meetings and public events;
- Support for the preparation of documents for meetings, events, and publishable reports;
- Maintenance of documentation and archives;
- Assistance to the Director in stakeholder engagement and reporting.

Relationship and accountability

- The Secretariat ensures HR, legal, and administrative compliance while the Director provides strategic leadership and coordination.
- The Director is appointed by, and accountable to, the Leaders Group, while employed or contracted by the host organisation.
- The Secretariat reports regularly to the ESG which normally meets on a monthly basis, and to the Leaders Group on a biannual basis.

Monitoring and reporting

The Host Secretariat will submit:

- Quarterly financial and activity reports to the ESG;
- An annual report and financial report for approval by the Leaders Group;
- A risk register and mitigation plan updated twice per year.

Performance will be reviewed annually against agreed KPIs.

Financial and contractual framework

The Host Secretariat will operate under a multi-party Memorandum of Understanding between cOAlition S members. The MoU will define financial contributions, payment schedules, auditing, and reporting obligations. The Host Secretariat must be able to:

- Receive and disburse international funds in EUR or GBP;
- Provide audited annual accounts;

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- Comply with the host organisation's national legal framework, and relevant international data-protection regulations.

The agreement will be governed by the jurisdiction of the host organisation's country.

Term of Office

The Host Secretariat term will align with the current strategic cycle: an initial term of two years, extendable for a further three years subject to satisfactory progress and outcomes.

Qualifications and experience

Candidate organisations should have:

- Excellent track record of hosting services to third parties, including financial management and reporting;
- The ability to work collaboratively with the Director, experts of cOAlition S member organisations, the Executive Steering Group, and the Leaders Group;
- The capacity to balance diverse stakeholder perspectives while maintaining a cohesive membership;
- Proven ability to propose, lead, and manage supporting actions, including the development of influential narratives for Open Access;
- Experience in the scholarly publication system and in Open Access practices and policies (desirable but not essential).

This position may suit organisations with experience in providing services to public and non-profit research bodies at an international level. Members of the coalition may apply to host the Secretariat but must demonstrate their capability to manage finances and engagements internationally.

Eligibility and diversity

Bids are open to organisations worldwide that are non-profit or public in nature, with proven capacity for international collaboration.

cOAlition S encourages applications demonstrating commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

All work must be conducted in English, but multilingual capacity will be viewed favourably.

Assessment criteria

In assessing proposals, cOAlition S will consider:

- Understanding of, and commitment to, the objectives of Open Access and Plan S (15%)
- Organisational capacity, governance and financial probity (20%)
- Experience in hosting multi-partner or international research programmes (20%)

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- Proposed staffing, management structure and quality-assurance arrangements (20%)
- Demonstrated ability to maintain neutrality and cohesion among diverse members (15%)
- Cost effectiveness, transparency of budgeting, and value for money (10%)

Indicative budget and value

The annual operating budget of cOAlition S is expected to be in the range of €0.8 million, inclusive of staffing, overheads and communications.

Applicants should submit an itemised budget showing staff costs, overheads, and deliverables. Value for money will form part of the evaluation.

Submission process and timeline

Interested organisations should submit a cover letter outlining their suitability and motivation, a project proposal using the application template set out in **Annex B**, and contact details for references from currently hosted organisations.

All documents must be submitted in PDF format to coalitionshostcall@outlook.com by **31 January 2026 (17:00 CET)**, quoting "Tender: cOAlition S Host Secretariat" in the subject line. Late applications will not be considered.

For enquiries, contact coalitionshostcall@outlook.com with the same subject line.

Stage	Date
Tender publication	10 December 2025
Deadline for clarifications & questions	8 January 2026
Submission deadline	31 January 2026 [17:00 CET]
Evaluation and interviews	February 2026
Notification of results	March 2026
Expected contract start	April-May 2026

Transition and handover

If a new host organisation is appointed, a transition plan will be agreed between the incoming and outgoing Secretariat to ensure continuity of operations, transfer of records and financial reconciliation.

The new Secretariat should be ready to assume duties within 2–4 weeks of appointment.

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Annex A: 2026 Work Plan Overview

Strategic priority 1: Strengthening the foundations for full, immediate, sustainable, and equitable open access of scholarly peer-reviewed articles

- Deliver and develop basic member services to strengthen mechanisms and processes for sharing practices and policies that affect scholarly publishing
- Review and update the cOAlition S principles and implementation guides, including enhancing the focus on sustainable and equitable models such as diamond open access
- Identify new projects to undertake regarding implementation of updated policies on immediate and equitable Open Access, including infrastructures needs
- Define a communication plan that amplifies our collective voice
- Expand strategic partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders across the research ecosystem

Strategic priority 2: Supporting digital infrastructures that enable open access

- Advance funders support for publishing infrastructures and services that deliver immediate, free, sustainable, and equitable open access to research publications while ensuring long-term data preservation.
- Carry out a coalition-wide stocktake of digital infrastructures currently enabling open access publishing and data preservation, with a specific lens on their readiness for the emerging AI context.
- Develop a common understanding of and response to AI in the context of open access, addressing both opportunities and risks. For example, a joint position on using CC BY licensed publications for AI model training or mitigating potential new inequities from widespread AI adoption. (Year 1-2, initiating a longer running WP).

Strategic priority 3: Exploring financially sustainable and equitable publishing systems and monitoring

The third priority focuses on long-term financial and operational sustainability and equitability of open access publishing. It seeks to explore new models for funding scholarly communication and to establish effective mechanisms for monitoring the financial impact of OA policies.

Actions corresponding to this priority will commence from 2027 onwards upon successful completion of the above defined actions.

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Annex B: Tender for the Identification of cOAlition S Host Secretariat - Application Template

COVER LETTER

Present your interest and motivation to apply to host the Secretariat of cOAlition S

APPLICATION OUTLINE

1. Capability to deliver secretariat functions

a. Understanding of the role

Explain your organisation's understanding of, and commitment to, the objectives of Open Access and Plan S.

b. Organisational description

Demonstrate your knowledge of the skills and expertise that are essential to the successful delivery of this project. Describe your organisation's key capabilities, and capacity to host the cOAlition S Secretariat, according to the missions of cOAlition S organisations and the Governance Terms of Reference. Demonstrate ability to maintain neutrality and cohesion among diverse members.

2. Organisational profile, legal and governance information

Indicate the legal status of your organisation and how the hosting of cOAlition S would relate to the host governance.

3. Experience and track record

Demonstrate experience in hosting multi-partner or international research programmes. Describe your experience and track record and provide any reference letters in the annexes section.

4. Operational plan

a. Work plan delivery

Propose a secretariat structure, its management, staff needs and quality-assurance processes according to the cOAlition S Terms of Reference. Provide your methodology as to how you will maintain your ability to deliver these through the lifetime of the project and maintain continuity of the team members.

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b. Communications and outreach

Propose staff needs and secretariat efforts to ensure visibility of cOAlition S and support eventual expansion of the membership.

c. Take over plan

Provide a list of actions to prepare the takeover of the Secretariat tasks taking into account the new Strategy Plan of cOAlition S 2025-2030.

d. Risk assessment and management

Identify the top 3 risks associated with this requirement and provide a description of your risk management process for delivering the service.

5. Financial management and budget

a. Financial capability

Provide your organisation's financial probity and capability to deal with funds from public research organisations from different parts of the world.

b. Itemised budget

Propose a draft yearly budget based on your own direct and indirect costs estimates, knowing that the budget of cOAlition S is around 0.8M€/year.

6. Commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion

Present your organisational guidelines or policy regarding equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer.

7. Declaration of compliance

Express that the information provided is true and correct to the best of your knowledge on the date of submission of your application.

8. Annexes

Include any references, audited accounts or other relevant documents

Applications must be submitted in PDF format to coalitionshostcall@outlook.com by **31 January 2026 (17:00 CET)**, quoting "**Tender: cOAlition S Host Secretariat**" in the subject line.