



# An online tool to determine Plan S aligned publishing venues: an invitation to tender

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## Overview

**cOAlition S members are seeking to procure a “journal checker tool” to enable their researchers to identify publishing venues which offer a route to comply with the Plan S Principles. We envision a simple web interface that will provide an author with concise information regarding their ability to publish in a journal while complying with Plan S.**

The user should be able to type in the name of their preferred journal, pick their institution, choose their funder, and easily see if that journal enables compliance with their funder’s OA policy and if so, via which route.

We recognise that there are many compliance requirements within the Plan S Implementation Guidance and in time, the tool will provide a yes/no answer to **all** the individual requirements and then determine a final yes or no as to whether that venue is compliant with Plan S. In the first iteration, however, the focus of the tool is to provide an answer as to whether the journal:

- Offers a route to compliance, as set out in the [Implementation Guidance of Plan S](#)
- Offers a CC BY option to all researchers working under a Plan S policy
- Allows the author to retain copyright

In this document, we refer to this set of requirements as the “*initial requirements*”.

All other requirements regarding compliance – such as the journal displaying its commitment to adhering to the COPE guidelines or the journal providing transparent pricing – are referenced as “*future*” requirements.

This tool must be functional - in terms of meeting the initial requirements - from 1 November 2020, with a beta version available from September 2020. We anticipate that the “*future*” requirements will be implemented iteratively during 2021.

### **Fully OA Publishing Venues**

The first query the tool will need to make is whether a specific journal or platform is fully OA or not, whether it publishes articles under a CCBY licence, and whether the title allows the author to retain copyright. Where these conditions are met, the journal can be deemed to meet the Plan S “*initial*” requirements.

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If the title is fully OA but does not permit CC BY licence, the tool will need to identify whether it allows author self-archiving of the “Author Accepted Manuscript” (AAM) with no embargo period, whether the title allows the AAM to be assigned a CC BY license and whether the author can retain copyright. Where these conditions are met, the journal can be deemed to meet with the Plan S “initial” requirements.

### **Non-fully OA Publishing Venues**

For those journals and platforms that are **not** published fully OA, there are several different publishing routes that will need to be assessed by this tool.

Plan S allows publications in non-OA titles included within “transformative OA agreements” (TA) to be considered compliant (until the end of 2024). In addition, there may be certain titles which chose to be “transformative journals” (TJ), researchers publishing in these venues would thus comply with Plan S. Transformative OA agreements will be between the publisher and the institution, as brokered by national or institutional consortia and will add a layer of complexity to the tool as compliance will vary dependent on the country and institution that the user is based at. In cases where a TA or a TJ has been brokered and is available to researchers at their institution the journal can be deemed to support researchers in meeting the Plan S “initial” requirements.

If the journal is not accessible by either of the two previous transformative routes (TAs and TJs), the user will want to know if it allows author self-archiving of the AAM with no embargo period, whether the title allows the AAM to be assigned a CC BY license and whether the author can retain copyright. Where these conditions are met, the journal can be deemed to meet with the Plan S “initial” requirements.

The information required to answer these queries is currently disparate. Several potential data sets exist already that a provider may choose to use and/or collaborate with<sup>1</sup>. Alternatively, a provider may also choose to develop their own data sources.

## **A phased approach**

We anticipate that this tool be built iteratively, as set out below.

### **Initial requirements**

For go-live in November 2020 the tool must provide guidance on whether a journal or publishing platform:

- Offers a route to compliance, as set out in Implementation Guidance of Plan S
- Offers a CC BY option to all researchers working under a Plan S policy
- Allows the author to retain copyright

### **Future requirements**

Over time, the tool will need to provide guidance as to whether the journal or publishing platform meets all the “basic mandatory conditions for all publication venues” and all the “mandatory technical conditions for all publication venues”, as specified in Part III: Technical Guidance and Requirements, available [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Jisc commissioned DeltaThink, on behalf of cOAlition S, to study the current data environment for ascertaining compliance with Plan S, their independent report is available [here](#).

## Responding to the ITT

This document expands on the above requirements and provides details on the timeline that we are working to. Suppliers interested in responding to this invitation to tender are invited to complete the response form in **Annex A**. These responses must be received by 09.00 CET Monday 6 April. Responses will be evaluated based on the criteria within **Annex B**.

## Statement of Requirements

cOAlition S requires a provider or consortium to develop, host and maintain a journal checker tool that will support cOAlition S funded researchers in complying with Plan S. A 3-year contract will be issued in the first instance. Table 1 provides a list of minimum requirements that the provider and tool must deliver.

| Requirement Summary   | Description   | Requirement      |
|---|---|------------------|
| <b>User interface</b>   |   |                  |
| Open webpage  | Anyone should be able to access the tool with no login required to get the relevant information.<br><i>We don't want to burden our grantees with more login credentials.</i>  | Mandatory        |
| The webpage should be easy to navigate with a clean, simple design.   | Some of this information can be complicated for authors not familiar with "Open Access jargon". The interface should support authors with all levels of Open Access knowledge.<br><i>Your response should indicate how you are going to make this information clear and easy to understand.</i> | Mandatory        |
| There should be a main page for searching, and additional pages for FAQs, feedback, and contact information.          | We see the landing page for the service to be the main search function. Additionally, we envision linked pages to an FAQ, a place to leave feedback, and contact information.   | Mandatory        |
| The webpage should be accessible and fully functional on mobile devices.  | As more and more users tend to utilize mobile devices, we want to ensure that this type of information can be accessed on the go.   | Highly Desirable |
| The webpage should meet EU accessibility requirements necessary to enable persons with disabilities to use this tool. | We want to be as inclusive as possible and support the wide diversity of our research community.  | Mandatory        |

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| Functionality  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| The user can enter the journal name, ISSN, or ESN of the journal they wish to query.   | This shall be one of the main features of the search--the user will be looking to identify whether their preferred journal title is compliant.   | Mandatory   |
| The user can select the funder (or funders) that have supported their work.  | The user should be able to select one or more funders that support their work.<br><i>Your response should indicate how this tool could be extended to other funders who may have different requirements from Plan S.</i>   | Mandatory   |
| The user can identify their institution(s).  | Additionally, the user should be able to select one or more institutions that their work is affiliated with. This will be key in identifying whether a transformative agreement applies to their journal of interest.  | Mandatory   |
| Upon the return of results, the user should see very clearly if the journal they searched for meets the "initial requirements" or not. | If a journal supports Plan S, then the route the user needs to take to enable them to comply with Plan S should be clearly stated.   | Mandatory   |
| Upon the return of results, the user should see if the journal they searched meets any/all of the "future requirements".               | The tool should indicate which of the "future" requirements the journal supports.<br><i>Your response should indicate how the tool will be developed to allow subsequent incorporation of the "future" requirements as the information becomes available.</i>  | Highly desirable  |
| If the journal is not aligned to Plan S, the tool should suggest alternatives.   | We want the authors to know that they still have many choices independent of their favourite journal to publish in if it happens to not meet our requirements for open access.<br><i>Your response should indicate how you can offer this advice and a timeline for developing this functionality if secondary to search by topic.</i> | Optional upon initial launch if ability to search by topic present            |
| The ability to search for journals based on topic of research should be present.   | Authors should be able to look for journals by topic relevant to their research area to enable them to identify venues for publication.<br><i>Your response should indicate how you would deliver this and a timeline for developing this</i>  | Optional upon initial launch if ability to suggest alternative titles present |

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|  |   |                  |
|--|---|------------------|
|  | <i>functionality if secondary to suggesting alternative titles.</i>   |                  |
| Feedback mechanism   | Users should be able to provide feedback on the tool and its accuracy to the provider, who will be expected to respond appropriately. Users should be able to search and view existing queries that have not yet been resolved.   | Highly Desirable |
| <b>Data, Software and Code</b>   |   |                  |
| The tool should use publicly available data.   | See potential data sources section below.<br><br><i>Your response should include an indication of the data sources you propose using, collaborating with or developing. Where providers are developing their own data sources, plans for maintaining them should be included.</i><br><br><i>Third party costs associated with data source development can be included within the proposal. Letters of support from that third party must be provided.</i> | Mandatory        |
| The tool must provide a freely and openly accessible application programming interface (API)             | It must have a freely and openly accessible API that enables the underlying data sources to be queried programmatically.  | Mandatory        |
| Data sources developed under this project (i.e. creation of a registry for TAs) must be openly licensed. | Data sources created under this project must be released CC 0.  | Mandatory        |
| Code developed under this project must be openly licensed  | Software created under this project must be openly licensed, using the MIT licence.   | Mandatory        |
| <b>Support, SLA, training, change control, project management and risks</b>                              |   |                  |
| Support  | The system including managing and responding to user feedback should be supported by the tool provider.<br><br><i>Your response should indicate what levels of support you offer. Costs related to support must be disclosed.</i>   | Mandatory        |

|                    |  |           |
|--------------------|--|-----------|
| SLA                | The appointed supplier must provide a Service Level Agreement including but not limited to uptime objectives, maintenance and support protocols, response times (from outage through to client and user queries).<br><br><i>Please provide a copy of your standard SLA, which should include details of what happens when the SLA terms are not met.</i>   | Mandatory |
| Training           | You should provide virtual training for how to use the tool via the FAQs and videos.   | Mandatory |
| Change control     | The appointed supplier must outline a process in which additional requirements – both the known “future requirements” and as yet unknown requirements – could be considered and accommodated within the Journal Checker Tool   | Mandatory |
| Project Management | The appointed supplier must provide a project plan, including key milestones   | Mandatory |
| Risk Register      | The appointed supplier must provide a risk register, which includes details of the risk, their likelihood/severity and mitigation strategies.  | Mandatory |
| <b>Cost</b>        |  |           |
| Cost               | Development of the tool will be funded by cOAlition S members via European Science Foundation (ESF). Payments will be made in Euros.<br><br><i>Your response must include a full break down of development, hosting and support/maintenance costs, for years 1, 2 and 3.</i><br><br><i>The response must provide a fixed cost to develop the functionality to support the “initial requirements” and should include an initial estimate as to what it might cost to implement the “future developments”.</i><br><br><i>The response should also include a rate card showing the day rate you charge (in €) for the following activities. These elements will be used to calculate the costs of the “future developments”, whether they are known or unknown.</i> | Mandatory |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Project Management</i></li> <li>• <i>Software development</i></li> <li>• <i>Software testing and deployment</i></li> <li>• <i>Any other core activities (please specify)</i></li> </ul> |  |
|--|---|--|

Table 1: Statement of requirements

## Use Cases

The tool should be able to respond to the following fictional use cases, and inform the user whether they can publish in line with the Plan S Guidance in any specified journal:

*1). A researcher “ABC”, funded by cOAlition S member “x”, wishes to know whether they can publish in the “Journal of Left Handed Surgery” published by “The Society of Left Handed Surgery” and comply with their funders OA policy.*

*Researcher “ABC” is based at the “Institution of Left Handed Surgery” in the UK.*

*cOAlition S member “x” Plan S policy applies to all researchers regardless of when their grant was funded.*

*The “Journal of left handed surgery” is not a fully open access journal, it is a hybrid journal. It’s publisher “The Society of Left Handed Surgery” has negotiated a transformative agreement in the UK and the “Institution of Left Handed Surgery” has subscribed to this agreement.*

*2). A researcher “DBE”, funded by cOAlition member “y” in March 2020, wishes to know whether they can publish in the journal “Keep Trying” published by “I heart open access” and comply with their funders OA policy.*

*Researcher “DBE” is based at the “Institute of life” in the Netherlands.*

*cOAlition S member “y” implemented a Plan S policy on all grants awarded after 1 January 2021. For all grants prior to that date funder “y” funded open access costs in hybrid and fully open access journals, with no requirement for transformative agreements.*

*The journal “Keep Trying” is a hybrid journal not included in the transformative agreement that publisher “I heart open access” has negotiated in the Netherlands.*

## Potential Data Sources

As noted at the beginning of this document there are a range of existing international and national data sources that could be used by this tool to respond to user queries. Jisc commissioned Delta Think, on behalf of cOAlition S, to assess the current status of some of these sources for the purpose of assessing Plan S compliance. This report is available [here](#).

Below is a brief summary of some of the potential data sources.

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**DOAJ** - DOAJ is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. The database contains information on fully OA journals and the licence under which they publish, data within the database is available as a csv as well as via an API.

**Sherpa Romeo** – SHERPA RoMEO is an online resource that aggregates and analyses publisher open access policies from around the world and provides summaries of self-archiving permissions and conditions of rights given to authors on a journal-by-journal basis. RoMEO is a Jisc service and has collaborative relationships with many international partners, who contribute time and effort to developing and maintaining the service. An API is available.

**ESAC Agreement Registry** – Registry provides summary data on transformative agreements that national or institutional consortia and publishers have negotiated. The registry does not hold data on which journals within a publisher’s portfolio are included within an agreement nor which institutions have subscribed to the agreement. This information currently resides with the negotiating consortia, publisher and/or institution. Accessibility is therefore highly variable.

## Timeline

Table 2 shows an indicative timescale for this piece of work.

| Activity  | Date                                   |
|---|--|
| <b>Invitation to Tender for Journal Checker Tool issued</b>                     | Friday 7 February 2020                 |
| <b>Webinar/Q&amp;A with potential suppliers – <a href="#">register here</a></b> | Wednesday 4 March 2020 at 14.00 CET    |
| <b>Responses returned to cOAlition S by email</b>                               | Monday 6 April 2020 at 09.00 CET       |
| <b>Supplier interviews (video conference)</b>                                   | w/c Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2020 |
| <b>Supplier appointed (contract for services signed)</b>                        | Friday 30 April 2020                   |
| <b>Beta version of tool launched</b>  | w/c 7 September 2020                   |
| <b>Product launch</b>   | w/c 1 November 2020                    |

*Table 2: Timeline*

## Budget

Providers or consortia responding to this Statement of Requirements must provide a full cost breakdown for developing and hosting/supporting this service over a three-year period.

A contract will be issued to the appointed Provider (or lead member of a Consortium), by the European Science Foundation. Payments will be linked to the delivery of milestones, which will be agreed with the Provider or Consortium.

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## Working with cOAlition S

The appointed Provider or Consortium primary contact for this work will be the cOAlition S programme manager. A task force of cOAlition S members also exists to support the development of this tool. The appointed Provider or Consortium will need to work with this group and, in the development phase, provide updates at monthly virtual meetings. The Provider or Consortium will be expected to attend an in-person meeting in May 2020, in Europe.

## Responding to this invitation to tender

Providers or Consortia who wish to respond to this invitation to tender should apply, using the attached template, set out in Annex A. The completed document should be sent (by email) to [info@coalition-s.org](mailto:info@coalition-s.org), no later than **09.00 CET Monday 6 April 2020**. The criteria by which responses will be judged is set out in Annex B. As set out in Table 2, we will be hosting a webinar on the 4 March 2020 to answer any questions you may have about this procurement exercise. If you wish to take part in the webinar, please register [here](#).

European Science Foundation reserves the right not to award a contract if no suitable supplier(s) is identified.

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# Annex A – An online tool to determine Plan S aligned publishing venues: response to the invitation to tender

| Section 1: Contact Information   |  |
|--|--|
| Please provide contact details for the main contact for this project.  |  |
| Name of Organisation:  |  |
| Named contact:   |  |
| Position:  |  |
| Address:   |  |
| Email:   |  |
| Telephone:   |  |
| Section 2: Other Participants  |  |
| Please list any other individuals/organisations that will be participating in this project.  |  |
|  |  |
| I confirm that those named above have agreed to be involved as described below and are willing for their details to be included as part of this response |  |
| Section 3: Company information   |  |
| 3.1 Provide a concise description of your core business  |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 3.2 Specify: (i) the total number of employees in the organisation (ii) breakdown of staff between sales, support and development  |  |
| 3.3 Specify (i) any technical accreditations or certifications (ii) how long these have been held (iii) the number of staff with individual technical accreditations or certifications   |  |
| <b>Section 4: Financial information</b>  |  |
| 4.1 Provide details of your company's total annual turnover, net/profit loss and annual capital reserves for the past three years.   |  |
| 4.2 Provide details on new clients won and clients lost over the past 2 years  |  |
| 4.3 Has your organisation been involved in any court action and/or industrial tribunals over the last 3 years? If so, please give details.   |  |
| 4.4 Provide details on bankruptcy action (if applicable)   |  |
| <b>Section 5: Relevant experience and skills</b>   |  |
| Please provide a summary of your organisations skills and experience that demonstrates your organisation's ability to develop and maintain the tool outlined in the Statement of Requirements. Please give examples of any related products that your organisation has produced.                                     |  |
| Response:  |  |
| <b>Section 6: Approach</b>   |  |
| Please explain your proposed approach for delivering the statement of requirements including your methodology and data sources for determining Plan S journal compliance. A timeline with milestones for the delivery of the tool – focusing on initial requirements - should be included, based on the dates within |  |

the Statement of Requirements. Indicate if there are any mandatory requirements, specified in Table 1, which you cannot deliver.

Response:

### Section 7: Project management and team composition

Please describe how this project will be managed and led. Please explain the roles of any other participants.

Response:

### Section 8: Budget and justification

Please provide a full costing for the delivery of this work using the high-level cost headings of salaries, hardware, travel and subsistence, and miscellaneous. Costs for year 1, year 2 and year 3 must be provided.

Your costing should clearly identify the total cost of the initial development of the Journal Checker Tool (“initial requirements”) with a separate estimated cost for the subsequent development work (“future requirements”), as specified above

To support an effective means by which the “future developments”, both known and unknown, can be costed, suppliers are required to provide a rate card showing the day rate you charge (in €) for the following activities. This rate card must indicate if these rates are fixed for the period of the contract or not.

- Project Management
- Software development
- Software testing and deployment
- Any other core activities (please specify)

The annual cost of supporting and maintaining the tool post launch must be provided separately.

If you are responding on behalf of a consortia please include a breakdown of costs per organisation, this can be actual figures or a percentage.

This information can either be provided within the box below or a spreadsheet submitted with this response.

Response:

### Section 9: Outputs Management

Data created by the tool and source code should be openly licensed and appropriately documented to enable reuse. Please explain how you will deliver this requirement.

Response:

### Section 10: References

Please provide contact details of two clients (existing or former) that cOAlition S can contact for references.

Reference 1

Reference 2:

## Annex B - A online tool to determine Plan S aligned publishing venues: criteria for evaluating responses

Responses to the invitation to the tender will be evaluated using the following selection criteria and scoring methodology.

| Selection Criteria  | Weighting | Maximum Score Available   |
|---|-----------|---|
| The provider/consortium demonstrates high technical ability, experience and knowledge necessary to deliver and maintain this tool.  | 30%       | 5   |
| The provider/consortium's proposed approach addresses the requirements within the Statement of Requirements in an appropriate and achievable manner within the timeframe given. | 30%       | 5   |
| The provider/consortium demonstrates a clear understanding of the project, potential issues and the key stakeholders within the field.  | 20 %      | 5   |
| The budget proposed offers value for money.   | 20%       | Calculated rather than scored:<br><u>Most competitive price</u> X Weighting Percentage (20%)<br>Price being evaluated |

| Score | Definition   |
|-------|--|
| 0     | A response that provides no relevant answer and is therefore judged to NOT MEET the criteria.  |
| 1     | A response that provides no detail or has low relevance to the response sections and is therefore judged to LARGELY NOT MEET the criteria.   |
| 2     | A response that lacks evidence and/or relativeness to the response sections and is therefore judged to BARELY MEET the criteria.   |
| 3     | A response that provides a broadly relevant answer but that is missing a number of details and/or evidence from within the response sections and is therefore judged to PARTIALLY MEET the criteria. |
| 4     | A response that is reasonably detailed missing only very limited details and/or evidence within the response sections and is therefore judged to ALMOST MEET the criteria                            |
| 5     | A detailed response that provides a full, direct, evidenced answer and is therefore judged to FULLY MEET the criteria.   |

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