

## **45th Session of the WCRP Joint Scientific Committee (JSC)**

27-30 May 2024

### **DEADLINE: 1 May**

#### **Instructions**

**Overarching content/goal:** *To provide an update on progress made during the last year, as well as your future plans, and highlight any aspects that you want to bring to the attention of the JSC.*

- *The length of the report should be kept to around 4 pages if possible (appendices and links can of course be used).*
- *Include the topics indicated below.*
- *Work with the WCRP secretariat responsible for your activity, in the preparation of the report and/or presentation.*

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### **Report to the WCRP Joint Scientific Committee**

#### **WCRP Task Team Report on Global Fellowship**

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**Secretariat: Hindumathi Palanisamy, Narelle Van der Wel**

#### **Purpose of the task team:**

The concept of WCRP Global South Fellowship scheme was introduced at the JSC44 session (see report). Fellowships were also mentioned when discussing the Academy with reference to Future Earth. “In Future Earth, a fellowship scheme, which include travel and mentoring, is done regionally. Perhaps this model can be attractive to the Academy” (JSC44 report).

The overall idea of a WCRP fellowship was agreed but the need to further develop this scheme and how it fit in the overall vision of the way WCRP budget is allocated to the different WCRP activities was also highlighted. The conclusion was to further discuss it and have a first proposal by the end of 2023.

The fellowship was further discussed at the JSC44b session in November 2023. The finance tiger team document provided for discussion at JSC44b highlights that that 2024 is a transition year for the allocation of the budget. The proposal is also that the first fellowship in 2024 be for Africa, in line with the fact that the OSC conference was in Africa. A budget of 50 k CHF has been proposed to the fellowship. This will pay a salary for one year and enable the recruitment of a person to help strengthen WCRP activity in Africa. It is also mentioned that discussions with the African alliance lead to the suggestion that “the most promising and realistic opportunity is to support the formation of an African alliance in the context of GPEX”. The information was also provided that discussions was going on with USGCRP/LACI to create a fellowship in South America.

It was decided at the following JSC's recommendation during the secondary JSC44 session in November 2023, a task team connected to the task team on finance is set up to brainstorm ideas on how WCRP's new annual fellowship programme for the Global South can be effectively and efficiently put into place in a way that guaranty the ownership of the whole programme. The task team should also make more specific recommendation/proposition for the African fellowship that need to be launched in 2024.

### ***Major points of discussion during task team meetings***

Three meetings have taken place:

- (1) 11 December 2023: The first meeting was mainly devoted to the exchange of the different visions on the fellowship. Several questions were addressed (with a need for blue sky thinking): purpose, type of fellowships, stage of fellow career, administrative constraints, first rules to put it into place and fellowship for Africa in 2024
- (2) 6 February 2024 (but limited attendance due to several problems faces by the task team members). Refinement of the questions raised during the first meeting and Fellowship for Africa in 2024. First proposal of general rules for the implementation of the process; specific case for Africa in 2024.

### ***Email exchanges for the elaboration of the task team synthesis report:***

28 February 2024: discussion of the report and first conclusions on the outline of the Fellowship program with the Finance Tiger Team. The African fellowship process is launched in parallel under the leadership of Detlef. The fellowship task team continues to prepare a proposal for the fellowship program that will serve as reference for the following calls. The TT proposal will be discussed at JSC45.

- (3) 14 May 2024 : Task team meeting on the WCRP-fellowship program proposal, including the overall process and different points that needed to be refined to guarantee the ownership of all WCRP activities and the respective roles and responsibilities with regard to the overall fellowship program and the content of the calls and the evaluation and selections of the applications and candidates.

### ***General statements that have emerged:***

- The 2024 fellowship is a particular case, and, given the time line, the process will be slightly different from the general case.
- Following some of the conclusions of the Kigali conference and outcome of the EMCR symposium the fellowship should not be "parachuted science" and the best use of the funding should be decided by the people who it should serve.
- CP and LHA should be involved in the designed and selection of the fellowship.
- We should avoid funding conference, workshop or school etc.. if no specific action or product is proposed as part of these activities (I.E only for training), as there are already possibilities in place to support EMCR and more broadly attendees from the Global South

- we need to consider having several types of fellowships (amount of funding, type of constructions) possible each year, because there is the risk to spend too much energy and mobilise too many people for only one fellowship, and to miss opportunities to cover more broadly WCRP activities.
- We should also have in mind processes to have co-funded fellowships with some of the sponsors or partners of the WCRP CP (this was not discussed further at this stage).

Note that the term Global South will not be considered anymore and that the wording should align with with the WCRP recommendation:

<https://www.wcrp-climate.org/about-wcrpx/governance/terminology-and-conventions>

***Purposes / objectives of the fellowship:***

It is important that the objectives are clearly stated for the fellowship. Here are the major points on which there is a consensus, and which can serve as a starting point to draft the fellowship objectives.

- Most of the candidates from the Global South lack international experience; WCRP can help provide such opportunities for international experience and at the same time fulfil its objective to link climate science to society by carefully selecting candidates and topics for training. This way, scholars get immersed in the multi-dimensional perspectives of WCRP and can become ambassadors of WCRP.
- The proposal for the Fellowship call must have a very clear idea encompassing WCRP science as well as the region. Research and capacity development are crucial. The latter must also help build networks in the region. It needs to respond to the main question - What can WCRP bring to the local communities and what the local communities can bring to WCRP?
- The fellowship shouldn't become a funding resource for a specific CP but rather encompass several of the activities. The scholar that is chosen must have the multidimensional perspective of WCRP activities (as a whole) as well as contribute to the creative idea of connecting science and society in the region.
- Tutors should be identified. Tutors from different WCRP activities can work with the fellow. Certainly, the way to proceed will depend on the topic, stage of career of the fellow, as well as the multidisciplinary dimension of the project.

In conclusion there is a broad range of possibilities and type of profiles that may fit with these general guidelines. In addition, some of the fellowship could contribute to capacity building if developed between the WCRP Academy and other WCRP activities (CP /LHA).

Given the limited number of fellowships to be distributed initially, the best profile for the fellowship is that of the EMCR, either with the aim of creating a network on a particular topic, or with the aim of preparing the next generation of leaders from the South. The general consensus is that funding PhDs does not seem appropriate in the context of these fellowships. Post-doctoral fellows or permanent researchers (EMCR) are more appropriate.

A broader range of possibilities have been discussed. For some of them it was unclear whether they comply with the purpose of the fellowship, and additional thought would be requested if we decide to move on these directions.

- The possibility to have two tiers of fellowships: one for PhD students and one for the early career scientists for building the future leadership. Note: this also raises also the question to have a particular type of fellowship for the Academy.

- Graduate students in the final stage of dissertation and publishing results: experts in the domain can help the students to move forward. Universities generally don't provide incentives to the students for publishing their research. This will include travel of the student to the mentor's institution and presentation to WCRP sponsored workshops. Note : it is unclear that this a university level targeted by WCRP.

### ***Recommendation on the procedure for fellowship call and selection.***

Several concerns and recommendations have emerged from the discussion on the implementation and the various steps attached to a call for applications. Additional brainstorming is needed, since several aspects are missing in the current proposal below; such as who is writing the call, when the call is issued, for how long the call should be opened, and how long it will take the applicants to know the outcome of the selection process etc... ). The task team highlighted the following points:

- A first principle is that it should be open and non- prescriptive on the type of funding, which implies that terms of references (ToR) are properly drafted to ensure that the proposal meets the expectations (and funding criteria and limits). The different types of funding would have to fit with the possible categories:
  - (1) Salary : up to 1 year
  - (2) Visit (1 to x months)
  - (3) Networking (travel)
  - (4) Workshop (if part of the workplan and not only for training)

It was mentioned that small equipment like a laptop, or small office equipment might also be needed in some cases.

The ToR can clearly mention what cannot be funded (ex the training schools or workshops as this can be obtained externally, except when it is to produce a piece of work with the Academy).

- The expectations for the fellowship are quite high, so, only a minimum WCRP fellowship should be awarded per year. A number that seems reasonable for fellowship between 10 to 50 k (in this case only 1 and full salary included, as for the African call) is 1 to 3-4. It remains selective, but can cover several topics or activities which is reasonable given the size of WCRP.
- Need to create a fellowship committee for the selection: Subset of JSC members + members from CP, LHA and Academy (number to be discussed). There is the feeling that the committee or part of it should be renewed each year, the composition can also depend on the way the subjects are chosen (if subject guidelines are provided).
- given the wide range of activity and potential huge potential number of applications, there is certainly the need to predefine each year a portfolio of topics for which innovation, networking, new directions, improved linkages between WCRP activities and society etc... are expected. This can be co-design with CP and LHA by receiving topic proposals (broad and only a few lines) on the priority they see and then have the final decision of the priorities at the annual JSC meeting. The request to CP and LHA could be sent at the same time as the request for the funding. It is also a way to keep them engaged as they should be in the process. A caveat is to avoid to have a fellowship dedicated to the work of one person. If the proposal to have inputs for the WCRP family is retained, it will then be a necessary to decide how many "general" topics should be

mentioned in the call. The call will then recommend to align the proposal with these key topics of interest. The balance between keeping the call as open as possible and making sure we do not receive too many applications for too limited funding is an issue.

- Proposal should remain short and the applicant should be able to develop their own ideas (in line with the Terms of reference and guidelines for eligible funding) and should engage with WCRP activities to prepare the proposal. WCRP gives EMCR the opportunity to come forward with their ideas on how they would like to spend the money. This will ensure that people propose what is best for them and the Global South science, interface with society, capacity building, and that it fits with WCRP objectives.
- The guidelines can also provide a pool of WCRP experts that the candidates can contact based on their field of interest and then work together to come up with a proposal. This needs to be further discussed because it might also have consequences such as the proposal being written by scientists to get extra help for their existing projects instead of encouraging applicants' ideas.
- given the timing of JSC, and the time to put a call, analyse results, rank applications and select candidates, a first guess (to be refined on the timing) is something like:

Decision on topic and call at JSC meeting, call issued rapidly after the JSC, applications in Autumn, final selection, January-February start of fellowship between the time results are issued and mid-year.

### ***Specific case of the African fellowship for 2024***

The general rules are difficult to apply for 2024 and the first fellowship in Africa.

Two possibilities have been discussed by the committee and are proposed here. The first one is in the line of the general recommendations, with adjustments in the procedure. In its principle it received the agreement of all the members. The second one concerns the possibility to finance a PhD as part of African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), which would be somehow a follow-up of OSC in Rwanda. AIMS hosted the EMCR Symposium. This proposal, even though not aligned with the general recommendations, received a strong interest from half of the committee members.

### **Recommendation (1)**

- The proposal for GPEX of the tiger team on finance seems a little bit premature, since GPEX is not yet in operation. There is a risk that the salary is used for management and implementation of GPEX in Africa, and not for the promotion of research in an African network, as it would be the case when scientific activities are effective on GPEX. The task team would like to stay open on the call, so that if a good proposal emerges in relation with GPEX it can be considered. The recommendation is that the topic is not predefined.
- Other types of topics have been discussed in the EMCR symposium to better link research and society in Africa within networks, or on the need to have better access to data and share expertise on key topics (ex. Science needed for adaptation, science policy interfaces on different subject around climate changes, risks, monsoon etc..)
- The idea to have a fellowship in the form of one year salary is seen as a good way to start and prepare the next generation of WCRP leaders in the Global South.
- It seems important that this call addressed the need for improving networking between African countries in relation with WCRP activities, and that it starts with a project for which

there is an obvious high potential, so that the candidate is recognised at the end of the fellowship as a key researcher on the particular topic in the region in Africa.

- The call should be issued in the different African networks that have some connections with WCRP with the aims to better engage with these networks. The way to proceed to make sure proposal fit the expectation and the good match between research topic and candidate need to be refined in consultation with those networks. There is thus a need to inform and identify how the call should be phrased to reach its target.

This first fellowship will be a test and it is important it is a success.

## **Recommendation (2)**

The Rwanda PhD funding proposal received lots of attention, and was retained as a serious option to be retained for this first year. Following the successful EMCR Symposium hosted by AIMS, Rwanda, the latter submitted a PhD funding request to WCRP to further strengthen the links between AIMS and WCRP. The request is for WCRP to fund a 4 year PhD (approx. USD 50,000 for 4 years in total) that would be based in AIMS. The subject can be aligned with WCRP's interest but must ensure the relevance to the region (Africa). WCRP can also propose to co-mentor the PhD with one of its experts. AIMS PhD funding request also attached as a copy here. The task team discussed this funding request and the conclusions of the 6 February meeting with a subset of the committee member is that, for the first fellowship such a funding investment for 4 years would be useful to both Africa as well as for WCRP to engage in the region.

If WCRP go ahead with this proposal for 2024, various modalities need to be discussed as in how the fund would be provided to AIMS – fully or partly with the rest of the funding sent subject to successful annual evaluation. Further to this, WCRP also needs to investigate the financial and legal processes as well as constraints involved for such fellowship funding to be initiated through WCRP.

## **Funding constraints for the fellowship (what we know so far with respect to WMO finances):**

This last session provides a brief overview of what the WCRP Secretariat knows so far about the funding constraints. This may evolve in the coming weeks depending on ongoing discussion with WMO.

- The fellowship should not finance instruments, this is too complex.
- Funding for travel is easier.
- Salary arrangements are possible but would involve more paperwork and time, work in progress to see how to proceed, including through WMO which might be only through the member states.
- Publications through WMO are possible but with a limit of CHF 9000 and this would count publications for a certain journal within the whole of WMO.
- Internships/fellowships – WMO legal has mentioned that this is possible. If there is already an existing LoA, we can make an amendment and include this option but within the funding threshold.
- Fellowships through WMO regional offices is also a possibility. However, we don't know if there would be clauses involved.