

Scientific Drilling Forum: Terms of Reference

Approved by Forum: 10/15/25

Latest Revision: 10/15/25

Overview

The Scientific Drilling Forum is a venue for open communications aimed at enhancing opportunities for collaboration and coordination between research programs that employ scientific drilling to explore Earth's history and dynamics and to encourage collaboration amongst existing organizations and those seeking involvement in scientific drilling. The Scientific Drilling Forum is guided by the principle that open exchanges between programs can leverage resources, increase operational efficiency, and enhance scientific outcomes to the benefit of all participating entities.

Mandate

The Scientific Drilling Forum will serve as a venue for exchanging information between China's Deep Ocean Drilling Program (DODP), the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program (ICDP), the International Ocean Drilling Programme (IODP³), the U.S. ocean drilling program, and other organisations or entities with an interest in participating in scientific drilling programs.

The Scientific Drilling Forum may:

- | Share information about upcoming or planned activities
- | Discuss areas of overlapping scientific priorities and how they might be jointly addressed
- | Identify opportunities for potential collaboration (e.g., workshops, expeditions, scientific meetings, outreach, legacy asset programs, flagship initiatives)
- | Share knowledge about operational activities (e.g., new or non-standard drilling approaches, permitting obstacles)
- | Discuss joint policies, where appropriate (e.g., core and sample policy for the scientific ocean drilling repositories)
- | Discuss other topics of interest and relevance to multiple programs
- | Participate in outreach with representatives from related scientific organizations and potential new partners

Participants

Participation in the Scientific Drilling Forum is open to representatives from the DODP, the ICDP, the IODP³, and the U.S. ocean drilling program, and other countries or consortia connected to scientific drilling programs (e.g., entities that are members, or potential members, of scientific drilling programs).

Forum members will determine who and how many representatives from their program will attend meetings of the Scientific Drilling Forum. Funders of the programs will be encouraged to attend. If the meeting location has space limitations, the planning committee will distribute attendees between in person and hybrid participation.

A priority of the Forum should be to broaden the scientific drilling community. To this end, during organization of the annual meeting new related scientific organizations and potential partners should be identified and approached to participate in the upcoming Forum. Participation of representatives from related scientific organizations and potential new partners should not impact the number or balance of seats for the affiliated programs. Invitations among program members and to related organizations and potential new partners should be coordinated with the meeting host to assure space availability and facilitate planning and logistics.

Leadership

The Scientific Drilling Forum will be led by four co-chairs, with the DODP, the ICDP, the IODP³, and the U.S. ocean drilling program each selecting one co-chair. The co-chairs will serve two-year terms, with the terms staggered between the co-chairs.

Meetings

The Scientific Drilling Forum will convene at least once annually to execute its mandate, and the four programs recognize that in-person meetings are more effective for building relationships and discussing complicated multi-lateral collaborations than virtual meetings. For each annual in-person meeting, the meeting host will be from one of the member programs. The meeting host will organize the venue, arrange local logistics, and support the co-chairs in planning the meeting and communicating with meeting participants.

The Scientific Drilling Forum co-chairs will develop meeting agendas with input from the Scientific Drilling Forum Planning Committee. The Planning Committee will consist of the following members: the four co-chairs, one additional representative from each of the four programs, one member to represent non-program leads (e.g., smaller countries or consortia of the programs), and a representative from the local planning team and/or host program's coordination/science office. Each of the four programs will determine its own representation on the Planning Committee, and the four co-chairs will collectively invite a member to represent non-program leads based on input from active partners.

Outcomes of the Forum meeting will be determined by consensus during the annual meeting. Finalization and dissemination of the Forum outcomes will be the shared responsibility of the four co-chairs and their affiliated program offices. Each group should enable the broad distribution of the Forum Consensus Statements to the science community once finalized.

Change Process

Scientific Drilling Forum Terms of Reference will become effective upon agreement from China's Deep Ocean Drilling Program, the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program, the International Ocean Drilling Programme, and the U.S. ocean drilling program. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually at the Forum meeting and revised, as needed, to support the Scientific Drilling Forum's evolving needs. Changes to the Terms of Reference will be agreed upon at the meeting, as part of the Consensus Statements.