Call for Expressions of Interest to Host the International Programme Office of the ISC World Data System

# Background

The World Data System (WDS; <http://world-data-system.org>) was established in September 2008 by ICSU, the predecessor of the International Science Council (ISC; <https://council.science/>), to promote long-term stewardship of, and universal and equitable access to, quality-assured scientific data and data services, products, and information across all disciplines in the Natural and Social Sciences, and the Humanities. WDS facilitates scientific research by coordinating and supporting trustworthy scientific data services for the provision, use, and preservation of relevant datasets, while strengthening their links with the research community.

The strategy for achieving these objectives is outlined in the current five-year [Strategic Plan 2019–2023](https://www.icsu-wds.org/organization/strategic-plan), structured around three major targets:

1. Improve the sustainability, trust in, and quality of open scientific data services
2. Support active disciplinary and multidisciplinary scientific data services communities
3. Make trustworthy data services an integral part of international collaborative scientific research

WDS is governed by a Scientific Committee ([WDS-SC](https://www.icsu-wds.org/organization/scientific-committee)) appointed by ISC and made up of leading scientists and experts who are actively involved with data and/or computer sciences. The Committee includes directors of WDS member organizations and covers a broad range of disciplines and geographical areas.

An International Technology Office ([WDS-ITO](https://wds-ito.org/)) was established in April 2018 by the WDS-SC and is hosted and funded by the University of Victoria. Under the oversight of the WDS-SC, the WDS-ITO has the task of operating and managing the contribution of WDS to operational systems that form part of global research data infrastructure (GRDI).

# WDS International Programme Office

The current WDS International Programme Office ([WDS-IPO](https://www.icsu-wds.org/organization/international-programme-office)) was created in March 2011. It has been hosted since that time by the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) in Tokyo, Japan with funding from the Japanese government. The WDS-IPO has operated under two 5-year hosting agreements (Letters of Cooperation) between ISC and NICT, and the current agreement ends on 31 March 2021.

In light of this, ISC and the WDS-SC **invite Expressions of Interest from interested parties to host the WDS International Programme Office by 10 May 2020**. The establishment, funding model, and governance of the new WDS-IPO will build on the examples of the current WDS-IPO and the recently established WDS-ITO.

## WDS-IPO Remit

Under the guidance of the WDS Scientific Committee, the WDS-IPO:

1. Manages the further development and the day-to-day operations of the World Data System.
2. Builds and coordinates the WDS membership, supervising the accreditation process and connecting Member Organizations with ISC/WDS strategic activities.
3. Is responsible for implementing WDS-SC decisions.
4. Organizes meetings, including the monthly WDS-SC teleconferences, WDS regional and disciplinary conferences, training workshops, International Data Week, and Data Repositories Day.
5. Takes responsibility for outreach and promotional activities, including communication functions (website, webinars, blog posts, social media, newsletters) and representing WDS at international events.
6. Works with major partners (research programmes under ISC and beyond, funders, organizations creating and managing GRDI, scientific publishers) on issues concerning the long-term preservation of and access to trustworthy scientific data.
7. Oversees the WDS contribution to working groups in organizations such as the Research Data Alliance.
8. Identifies potential funding opportunities and develops proposals to respond to such opportunities.

# WDS-IPO Hosting Requirements

## Funding

While the World Data System is an ongoing endeavour, it is recognized that a host institution is unlikely to be able to make an unlimited financial commitment regarding a new WDS-IPO. Nevertheless, bids are expected to cover an initial five-year duration at a minimum, with longer commitments desirable for ensuring better sustainability. Co-hosting arrangements by partner institutions within or across countries are welcome.

It is anticipated that most of the funding from the host/sponsoring institution(s) will be used for the salaries of staff members of the WDS-IPO (outlined below), and the cost of staff operations, including travel. In addition, the budget of the WDS-IPO is expected to be at a level where it can sufficiently cover the costs of two face-to-face WDS-SC meetings per year, as well as enable members of the WDS-SC to represent the World Data System at international meetings considered important (e.g., International Data Week).

The host institution would, within and as part of its own accounting system, be expected to maintain separate records of all income and expenditure for the WDS-IPO as governed by national law and conditions set by funding organizations. Overhead charges would be kept to a strict minimum.

All financial activities of the WDS-IPO would be subject to the host institution’s internal rules and regulations with regard to signature of contracts, approval of expenditure, receipt of donations, financial control, and audit. This includes any expenditure associated with the ongoing activities of the WDS-SC and its Subcommittees.

## Human Resources

The WDS-IPO staff is expected to comprise of a minimum of four Full-time Equivalent positions. This consists of an Executive Director plus at least three other supporting staff: a Programme Officer, Communications Officer, and Administrative Officer.

The Executive Director would be appointed through open, international competition, and the appointment would be made by ISC, in consultation with the WDS-SC and the host institution. The other posts may be filled by suitably qualified candidates through national recruitment, but in full consultation with the WDS-SC and the Executive Director.[[1]](#footnote-1) The host institution would be expected to provide all possible assistance in securing appropriate residential and working papers for international staff appointed. All post holders would be appointed by the host institution in accordance with national labour laws, and their salaries would be in line with international research pay scales (potentially adjusted up or down based on local cost of living).

Performance assessment and contract renewal of the Executive Director and all other staff of the WDS-IPO would be the subject of joint consultation among ISC, the WDS-SC, and the host institution.

## Location

Hosts are expected to provide a fully equipped office space and supporting services in an internationally recognized institution with experience and expertise in an area of scientific data stewardship or data services, data products, and/or information provision. The new WDS-IPO should ideally to be established at a single location. However, bids will be considered from those who are partially able to meet the hosting requirements or who have innovative solutions (e.g., partnerships within or across countries) for meeting the requirements.

A fundamental prerequisite of the WDS-IPO is it must be accessible in terms of international transport. Moreover, there needs to be unimpeded access for international scientific visitors attending meetings. The face-to-face meetings of the WDS-SC and other international events are likely to be held on or close to the WDS-IPO premises. The WDS-IPO will be expected to provide adequate support for such meetings.

# Expressions of Interest

Expressions of Interest can be submitted via the online form [available here](https://forms.gle/jBaHq7EMcc23m6xQ9); or completed offline using the form below and returned to [ipo@icsu-wds.org](mailto:ipo@icsu-wds.org) **no later than 10 May 2020**.

All Expressions of Interest will then be reviewed by ISC, in consultation with the WDS-SC, and further negotiations with selected bidding organizations will take place to finalize the hosting arrangements, governance model, and funding.

Expression of Interest to Host the WDS International Programme Office

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| **Basic Information** | |
| **Name of point of contact** |  |
| **Affiliation and position of point of contact** |  |
| **Email address of point of contact** |  |
| **Name of proposed WDS-IPO host institution(s)** |  |
| **Earliest operational starting date (1 April 2021 is the expected starting date)** |  |
| **Expected period of hosting (Minimum 5 years; longer term preferred)** |  |
| **Positions to be supported, including any additional positions that the host(s) would propose. (Minimum 4 Full-time Equivalent is expected: Executive Director, Programme Officer, Communications Officer, Administrative Officer)** |  |
| **Do you have any specific recruitment procedure? If yes, please explain.** |  |
| **Experience and Track Record of the Host Institution(s)** | |
| **In providing expertise to support scientific data, data services, data products, and scientific information.** |  |
| **In hosting and/or contributing to multinational programmes.** |  |
| **Financial Information** | |
| **Name of the organization(s) providing the funding for the WDS-IPO** |  |
| **Estimated annual cost/budget for hosting/operating the WDS-IPO** |  |
| **Level of secured funding, starting date, and duration.**  **Please specify: likelihood of approval, when funds would be available, and duration of support** |  |
| **Expected in-kind support and duration** |  |
| **Additional information** | |
| **Other relevant information you would like to share (500 words maximum)** |  |

1. Current IPO staff wishing to relocate will be given first consideration for the positions in the new WDS-IPO, conditional on their eligibility to work in the host country, and upon agreement from ISC, the WDS-SC, and the host institution. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)