

Handbook for the GBIF Executive Committee

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Introduction

This document describes the duties and responsibilities of the GBIF Executive Committee members. It is intended that the guidelines and information in this document should assist the Executive Committee members, especially the Chair in fulfilling his/her obligations and at the same time help to ensure a more effective, efficient, and timely administration of all aspects of the GBIF governance activities.

Further recommended reading

This document should be read in association with the [GBIF Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#), [Rules of Procedure \(RoP\)](#), the Financial Regulations (FR) and the [Terms of Reference for the GBIF Executive Committee \(EC ToR\)](#).

Role of the committee

The Executive Committee will be responsible for monitoring the performance of the Secretariat in implementing the decisions taken by the Governing Board including the Strategic Plan, the Work Programme, and the budget. It is further responsible for taking decisions on behalf of the Board, especially in the intersessional period between Governing Board meetings, in those areas delegated to it by the Board (MoU, 4.7).

The members of the Executive Committee are operating in the interest of GBIF and not representing their national interest (EC ToR 3).

The Executive Committee will strive to work by consensus. If the Executive Committee cannot come to an agreement on a particular issue, the Chair will decide (EC ToR 4.3).

The main responsibilities of the Executive Committee are highlighted in the Rules of Procedure and the Executive Committee Terms of Reference:

Finance

- A [Table of suggested basic financial contributions](#) for Voting Participants should be calculated and presented by the Executive Committee for approval by the Governing Board on a multi-year basis (MoU, 9.1.a).
- The Executive Committee may approve a [later payment](#) of a Voting Participants' financial contribution if the Participant has applied for this (RoP 4.2).
- The Executive Committee will decide on [writing off financial contributions in arrear](#) following general guidelines decided by the Governing Board (EC ToR 2(ii)).
- The Executive Committee will [oversee the Supplementary Fund](#) and decide on whether contributions can be accepted or not accepted into the Supplementary Fund when contributors have stipulated particular uses of their contribution funds (RoP 8.2).
- The management of the Supplementary Fund will be the responsibility of the Executive Secretary, following the [guidance](#) of the Executive Committee (RoP 8.3).
- Changes to the [budget](#) during the financial year with no implication for the financial contributions of the Voting Participants may be approved by the Executive Committee based upon recommendations from the Budget Committee (FR 2.3).

Membership

- The Executive Committee will [consider all petitions to become Voting or Associate Participants](#). When a signed MOU - and for Voting Participants, the financial arrangements - have been received by the Secretariat, and the Executive

Committee has accepted them, the Secretariat will on behalf of the Chair inform the country of its official status as either a Voting Participant with voting rights or an Associate Participant (RoP 4.1.4 and 4.3.4).

- The Executive Committee will consider petitions for affiliation to GBIF according to guidelines decided by the Governing Board (RoP 9.2).
- The Executive Committee will decide on Participants or non-members to be observers to GBIF (EC ToR 2(ii)).
- The Executive Committee will decide on Participants to be disassociated from GBIF (EC ToR 2(ii)).
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Voting rights

- The Executive Committee has the authority to suspend the voting rights of Voting Participants if the financial contribution set out in the financial arrangement is not received within the first three months of the GBIF financial year, unless the Executive Committee has approved a later payment arrangement for the financial year (RoP 4.2.1).
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Ad hoc committees

- Ad hoc committees may be constituted by the Executive Committee between Governing Board meetings (RoP 7.2.2).
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Intersessional decision making

- Between meetings of the Governing Board, the Executive Committee is authorized to make decisions consistent with the scope of their responsibilities as outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Executive Committee (RoP 6.1).

GBIF Secretariat

- The Executive Committee will advise on staff issues presented by the Executive Secretary (EC ToR 2(i)).

Special for Chair

New members

- Petitions to become either Voting or Associate Participants will be sent to the Chair of the Governing Board (RoP 4.1.2 and 4.3.1).

Governing Board meetings

- The Chair will dispatch the draft agenda and all available supporting documents for the Governing Board meeting to the Participants at least four weeks before the meeting will take place (RoP 3.10). The Secretariat will assist in developing the agenda and documents and making them available in electronic format to the Board.
- Meetings of the Governing Board shall be led by the Chair of the Governing Board. In the Chair's absence or at the Chair's request the meeting may be led by the 1st Vice-chair or the Chair of the Budget Committee (RoP 3.13).
- The Chair is to provide at the beginning of each Governing Board meeting a list of current Voting Participants (RoP 3.16).

- Extraordinary meetings of the Governing Board may be called by the Chair of the Governing Board in consultation with the Executive Committee or by written request from a quorum of Voting Participants (RoP 3.3).
- The Chair will ensure that the minutes of each Governing Board meeting clearly describe actions taken. The Chair will also ensure that the minutes and any resolutions adopted are distributed promptly after the meeting to each Participant and other meeting attendees (RoP 3.15). The Secretariat will assist the Chair in this matter.

Elections

- The Chair shall ask the Executive Secretary or other GBIF Secretariat staff members and two appointed members of the Governing Board or staff to carry out counting of votes at elections at the Governing Board meetings (RoP 5.6).
- The Chair will announce the results of elections at the Governing Board meetings (RoP 5.7).

Intersessional decision making

- The Governing Board may also authorise the Chair or the Executive Secretary with a mandate to take decisions on matters that may seriously delay the works or operations of GBIF. The authorisation may be given either in a meeting of the Governing Board or by electronic (e-mail) or web-based voting procedure or other appropriate means of communication on a specific item (RoP 6.2).
- Whenever appropriate the Chair may make use of electronic (e-mail) or web-based processes or other appropriate means of communication for decision making between meetings (RoP 6.4).

Executive Committee meetings

- The Chair will normally dispatch a draft agenda and copies of any documents to be considered at the meeting no later than one week before the meeting date (EC ToR 4.2). The Secretariat will assist in developing the agenda and documents and make them available in electronic format to the committee.

Members

The composition of the Executive Committee is:

- 1 Chair (elected)
- 3 Vice-chairs (elected)
- 3 members (Chairs of standing committees)
- 1 Ex-officio member (Executive Secretary)

Chair

The Executive Committee Chair is also the Governing Board Chair.

The Chair shall be elected from Voting Participants for a two year term (RoP 1.7.3). The Chair shall be elected by super majority¹ (RoP 1.7.7)

The Chair may be elected for only two consecutive terms in the same position (RoP, 1.7.6.).

The term of the Chair expires at the end of the Governing Board meeting at which election for the replacement takes place. If , due to timing of Governing Board meetings, the

¹ Super majority = 2/3 majority of the Participants present and voting (MoU 4.5.c).

election of the new Chair takes place more than two years after the previous election, then the already elected Chair's term will be automatically extended to the time of the meeting (RoP, 1.7.10.)

If it is not possible at the annual meeting to elect a Chair, the already elected Chair will automatically have his/her term extended until an election can take place, either intersessionally or at the next Governing Board meeting (RoP 1.7.11).

Once elected, the Executive Committee Chair cannot be a member of a delegation (RoP, 1.7.8.). The Chair shall not have a vote at the Governing Board (RoP 3.14).

The Chair is an ex-officio member of the Budget Committee and the Science Committee (BC ToR 2.4 and SC ToR 2.5).

Vice-chairs

The 1st Vice-chair will serve as the general substitute for the Chair and substitute the Chair whenever the Chair is unable to perform his/her functions (RoP 1.7.1).

If the Chair resigns before the end of his/her term, the 1st Vice-chair will assume the Chair's position until the next meeting of the Governing Board when an election can be held (RoP 1.7.13).

The 1st Vice-chair shall be elected from Voting Participants for a two year term (RoP 1.7.3).

If it is not possible at the annual meeting to elect a 1st Vice-chair, the already elected 1st Vice-chair will automatically have his/her term extended until an election can take place, either intersessionally or at the next Governing Board meeting (RoP 1.7.11).

The 2nd and 3rd Vice-chairs may be from Voting of Associate Participants (RoP 1.7.4). The normal term for the 2nd and 3rd Vice-chairs is two years. The Board may limit the term to one year as appropriate (RoP 1.7.5).

The three Vice-chairs may be elected for only two consecutive terms in the same position (RoP, 1.7.6). The Vice-chairs shall be elected by simple majority² (RoP 1.7.7).

The term of the Vice-chairs expires at the end of the Governing Board meeting at which election for the replacement takes place. If, due to timing of Governing Board meetings, the election of the new Vice-chairs takes place more than two years after the previous election, then the already elected Vice-chairs' term will be automatically extended to the time of the meeting (RoP, 1.7.10.)

Vice-chairs remain part of their delegations except when they are undertaking Board-specific duties assigned to them by the Chair (RoP 1.7.9).

The three Vice-chairs are ex-officio members of the Science Committee (SC ToR 2.5).

Members

The chairs of the GBIF standing committees (Budget, Nodes and Science) are automatically members of the Executive Committee (EC ToR 2.1.1).

² Simple majority = affirmative votes of more than ½ of the Participants present and voting (MoU 4.5.d).

Ex-officio members

The Executive Secretary is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee (EC ToR 2.1.1).

Meetings

Face-to-face meetings

The Executive Committee will have a meeting back to back with the ordinary Governing Board and at least one meeting in between the annual Governing Board meetings (EC ToR 4.1).

GBIF Secretariat staff members may attend the meetings of the Executive Committee, upon invitation of the Chair. When appropriate, the Chair may also invite guests relevant for the discussion of a specific item on the agenda (EC ToR 3).

Teleconferences

In addition to the face-to-face meetings the Chair will schedule regular telephone or video conferences to conduct the regular business of the Executive Committee (EC ToR 4.1).

Conflict of interest

Each member of the Executive Committee is required to identify all issues in which s/he has a conflict of interest, and may not participate on any discussion or decision on those issues. In cases where there is ambiguity about a particular item, the Chair will rule whether a conflict of interest exists or not (EC ToR 4.3).

Observers

Other Governing Board delegates may attend meetings as observers but should give at least one week's notice to the Chair. Observers may not participate in the discussions and will bear their own cost for attending the meetings (EC ToR 4.6).

Meeting quorum

A quorum for an Executive Committee meeting is defined as at least five committee members, including the Chair or the 1st Vice-chair.

Meeting planning

The GBIF Secretariat will provide administrative support in connection with meetings of the Executive Committee. This includes helping with drafting and sending out agenda and documents, setting up meeting room, minute-taking, etc. See separate document 'GBIF Secretariat administrative support to committees' for more information.

The agenda and supporting documents should be sent out to the Governing Board at least four weeks before the agreed dates of a Governing Board meeting (RoP 3.10).

The agenda and supporting documents should be sent out to the committee no later than one week before the agreed date of an Executive Committee meeting (EC ToR 4.2).

The Secretariat will keep a record of the decisions taken at the meetings of the EC. The Secretariat will circulate the record to the Governing Board within one month of the EC meeting. The decisions taken will also be presented at the following business meeting of the Governing Board in the report from the Executive Committee (EC ToR 4.4).

The Secretariat has created a secure web repository where the meeting agendas and supporting documents for each committee meeting can be found. Only current members of the committee will have access to the documents.

The Executive Committee documents can be accessed from https://directory.gbif.org/documents/executive_committee/.

Funding

The Chair, Vice-chairs and members of the GBIF Executive Committee are not paid positions.

Attending meetings in conjunction with the Governing Board meetings

The Chair's cost of participation in Governing Board meetings shall be covered by the GBIF budget (RoP 1.7.8).

The costs of the Vice-chairs' and members' participation in meetings held back-to-back with Governing Board meetings shall normally be covered by the Participant from which the EC member comes (RoP 1.7.9 and EC ToR 4.5). Committee members from Voting Participant developing countries (i.e. countries that qualify for the developing country discount under the Financial Model) may apply for partial travel support to attend the relevant Committee meeting and Governing Board, so long as the Participant is in good standing. Approval of such support will be at the discretion of the Secretariat based on the availability of funds.

Attending intersessional meetings

The cost of participation in meetings not that are not in conjunction with the Governing Board meetings will be paid by the Secretariat (EC ToR 4.5).

The [GBIF Travel Guidelines](#) offer more information about travel approval and travel reimbursement.

Annex 1 - Current composition of the Executive Committee

Composition of the Executive Committee as of 26 March 2026.

Chair	Liam Lysaght, Ireland
1 st Vice-chair	Sharon D. Grant, United States
2 nd Vice-chair	André Heughebaert, Belgium
3 rd Vice-chair	Anne-Sophie Archambeau, France
BC Chair	Raoufou Pierre Radji, Togo
NC Chair	David Jennings, United States
SC Chair	Birgit Gemeinholzer, Germany
Ex-officio	Joe Miller (Executive Secretary)

Annex 2 - List of Executive Committee Chairs and Vice-chairs over time

List of GBIF Executive Committee Chairs

- Liam Lysaght, Ireland (2022-
- Tanya Abrahamse, South Africa (2017-2022)
- Peter Schalk, Netherlands (2013-2017)
- Joanne Daly, Australia (2009-2013)
- David Penman, New Zealand (2005-2009)
- Christoph Häuser, Germany (2001-2005)

List of GBIF Executive Committee 1st Vice-chairs

- Sharon D. Grant, United States (2023-
- Leonard Krishtalka, United States (2021-2023)
- Christoph Häuser, Germany (2016-2021)
- Jorge Soberon, Mexico (2011-2016)
- Keiichi Matsuura, Japan (2007-2011)
- Hideaki Sugawara, Japan (2005-2007)
- Kunio Iwatsuki, Japan (2001-2005)

List of GBIF Executive Committee 2nd Vice-chairs

- André Heughebaert, Belgium (2024-
- Andrew Young, Australia (2019-2024)
- Mark Graham, Canada (2015-2019)
- Motomi Ito, Japan (2011-2015)
- Wouter Los, Netherlands (2009-2011)
- Christoph Häuser, Germany (2005-2009)

List of GBIF Executive Committee 3rd Vice-chairs

- Anne-Sophie Archambeau, France (2025-

- Christoph Häuser, Germany (2021-2025)
- Leonard Krishtalka, United States (2016-2021)
- *Vacant* (2015-2016)
- Claude-Anne Gauthier, France (2011-2015)
- Gladys Cotter, United States (2007-2011)