

DFF CoARA ACTION PLAN

2024-2027

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DANMARKS FRIE
FORSKNINGSFOND
INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
FUND DENMARK

INTRODUCTION

Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF) signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) and joined the Coalition on Reforming Research Assessment (CoARA) to ensure that our evaluation practices reflect the diverse contributions of researchers, thereby fostering a more inclusive and impactful research environment. By joining this global coalition, we are dedicated to advancing assessment practices that improve qualitative assessment practices and promote the responsible use of metrics, enhancing the integrity and quality of Danish research.

The agreement sets a shared direction for changes in assessment practices for research, researchers and research performing organisations, with the overarching goal to maximise the quality and impact of research. The Agreement includes principles and four 'Core commitments' as well as six 'Supporting commitments' for reforms.

The DFF CoARA Action Plan 2024-2027 consists of seven work packages and three overarching initiatives designed to ensure the alignment of DFF with the CoARA commitments.

The plan outlines initiatives that will be developed into concrete deliverables over the course of the project period. The action plan will ensure that DFF takes concrete steps to contribute to ensuring that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. The action plan will be updated when relevant.

Would you like to follow our implementation process? We will provide updates on our initiatives along the way through the general DFF newsletter (in Danish) and on our website dff.dk.

Page 2 contains a visual timeline of the DFF initiatives. Deliveries will be specified gradually, considering dependencies and best practices from other organisations.

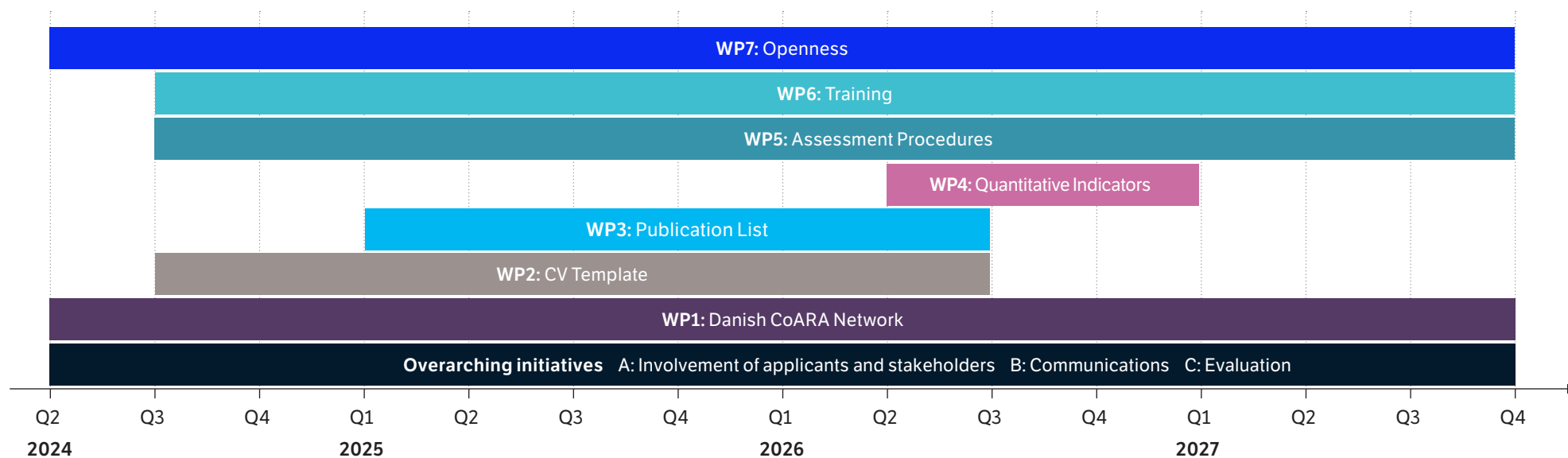
Page 3 provides an overview over the ten commitments of the Agreement.

Page 4-6 gives an overview of the work packages' and overarching initiatives' general objectives and tentative deliverables.

CoARA ACTION PLAN INITIATIVES

WORK PACKAGE	OBJECTIVE	COMMITMENT
WP1: Danish CoARA Network	A Danish CoARA network for knowledge sharing	Supporting Commitment 8
WP2: CV Template	New CV format	Core Commitment 1
WP3: Publication List	New publication list format	Core Commitment 1,2
WP4: Quantitative Indicators	Analysis and definition of appropriate use of quantitative indicators	Core Commitment 2,3
WP5: Assessment Procedures	Adjusting the fund's evaluation processes	Core Commitment 1, 2, 3, 4 Supporting Commitment 6
WP6: Training	Training the fund's assessors and administration	Supporting Commitment 5, 7
WP7: Openness	Ensuring openness in the assessment process	Supporting Commitment 7, 10
Overarching Initiative A	Involvement of applicants and stakeholders	Supporting commitment 6
Overarching Initiative B	Communication	Supporting Commitment 8, 9
Overarching Initiative C	Evaluation	Supporting commitment 10

TIMELINE



Core Commitment 1

Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.

Core Commitment 2

Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.

Core Commitment 3

Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.

Core Commitment 4

Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.

Supporting Commitment 5

Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to.

Supporting Commitment 6

Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.

Supporting Commitment 7

Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.

Supporting Commitment 8

Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.

Supporting Commitment 9

Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.

Supporting commitment 10

Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.

WORK PACKAGE 1: DANISH CoARA NETWORK

Objective(s)
DFF wants to contribute to establishing a Danish CoARA network for knowledge sharing among Danish institutions that have signed the agreement, if possible a National Chapter. The network can facilitate the exchange of best practises, and, possibly, some degree of alignment to the benefit of the research community.

Planned deliverable(s)
Establishment of a network in cooperation with other Danish signees, and arrangements for keeping it running for as long as relevant.

Status
The network was established in 2024 in collaboration with Aalborg University and Villum Foundation. The participants are Danish research funding institutions, universities, university colleges, etc. that have an interest in working with research assessment within the CoARA framework. In Dec 2025, the network became an official Danish CoARA National Chapter. DFF, Aalborg University and Villum Foundation act as chairs.

WORK PACKAGE 2: CV TEMPLATE

Objective(s)
The work package will result in a template for a new CV format designed to recognise a broader range of research activities and outputs. A new CV format aims to facilitate the recognition of the diverse roles and careers in research and research projects.

Planned deliverable(s)
(New) CV template. If possible, fully or partially aligned with other funds' templates.

Status
Following a process of gathering experience and discussions, DFF has decided on an adjusted format for the applicant's CV, which applies to all applications from 2026 onwards.

WORK PACKAGE 3: PUBLICATION LIST

Objective(s)
A new format for publication lists aims to ensure that it's not quantity but quality and relevance that matters when an applicant's profile is assessed. It should also provide researchers, including younger ones, with a better opportunity to showcase their research profile, describe its impact, and highlight research relevant to the project.

Planned deliverable(s)
A new format for publication lists. If possible, fully or partially aligned with other funds' templates.

Status
Following a process of gathering experience and discussions, DFF has decided on an adjusted format for the applicant's publication list, which applies to all applications from 2026 onwards.

WORK PACKAGE 4: QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS

Objective(s)
One of the key elements of the agreement is that the use of quantitative indicators as a direct measure of quality and impact should be restricted. DFF has already banned the use of Journal Impact Factor. It will be clarified how the fund uses quantitative indicators, in particular the h-index, and it will be defined how DFF understands 'inappropriate' and 'appropriate' uses. This will be integrated into the fund's assessment procedures.

Planned deliverable(s)
DFF guidelines or policy for appropriate and inappropriate uses of quantitative indicators, particularly the H-index.

Status
DFF has decided that applicants may not include quantitative indicators other than citation counts. Further guidelines are currently under discussion and are expected to be finalised in 2026.

WORK PACKAGE 5: ADJUSTMENT OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

Objective(s)

A central element of the agreement is that the signatories reassess and improve peer review practices regularly. The purpose of the work package is to evaluate and develop DFF's evaluation processes in alignment with the agreement.

Planned deliverable(s)

Revised evaluation criteria; revised requirements for project descriptions, and revised reviewer forms and processes.

Status

Following a thorough process of analysis and discussions, DFF has decided to introduce adjusted assessment criteria applying from 2026. DFF is currently working on revised assessment processes and requirements for the project description, which will be implemented in 2027 or 2028.

WORK PACKAGE 6: TRAINING OF ASSESSORS AND ADMINISTRATION

Objective(s)

The work package will ensure both general capacity building in terms of quality assurance of assessment practices, with a special focus on bias awareness and practical tools. In addition, the work package supports the implementation of the plan's deliverables by offering training sessions on an ongoing basis.

Planned deliverable(s)

Training programs for fund members, external reviewers and administrative personnel.

Status

DFF launched a bias training programme within the fund in 2026. The fund's permanent members, members of its ad hoc committees, as well as the secretariat, will receive training in identifying and addressing bias in the assessment process.

WORK PACKAGE 7: OPENNESS

Objective(s)

DFF plays a significant role in the Danish research funding landscape as one of the primary sources of funding for ideas originating from researchers' own initiatives. As a public fund, part of the public administration, DFF has a particular obligation to be transparent and open regarding its activities and internal decision-making processes.

Planned deliverable(s)

DFF openness policy and a plan for release of i.e. internal process guidelines and tools.

Status

DFF has adopted its openness policy and published it in 2025. Documents will be made publicly available on the website on an ongoing basis.

OVERARCHING INITIATIVE A: INVOLVEMENT OF APPLICANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Objective(s)

This initiative aims to ensure that the fund engages applicants (and possibly other stakeholders) in the implementation of the agreement, and generally speaking. The initiative will identify various tools and initiatives for applicant involvement where relevant, in coordination with the work packages.

Status

DFF has identified potential tools for applicant and stakeholder involvement, which may be employed in individual work packages where relevant. DFF conducts applicant surveys with questions relevant to the fund's implementation of ARRA.

OVERARCHING INITIATIVE B: COMMUNICATION

Objective(s)

The agreement obliges the fund to continuously communicate about the work on ARRA. There will be ongoing coordination of communication efforts, both at the overall level and tied to the individual work packages.

Status

DFF communicates regularly about its activities and has published a CoARA page on its website, dff.dk, which includes, among other things, a series of questions and answers about the fund's work with ARRA.

OVERARCHING INITIATIVE C: EVALUATION

Objective(s)

The fund has adjusted the purpose of this initiative so that, instead of focusing on impact measurement, it now aims to gather insights and share data for the benefit of research, in line with the intention of Supporting Commitment 10.

Status

DFF is exploring formats for knowledge gathering to support the fund's evaluation, as well as possibilities for data sharing.