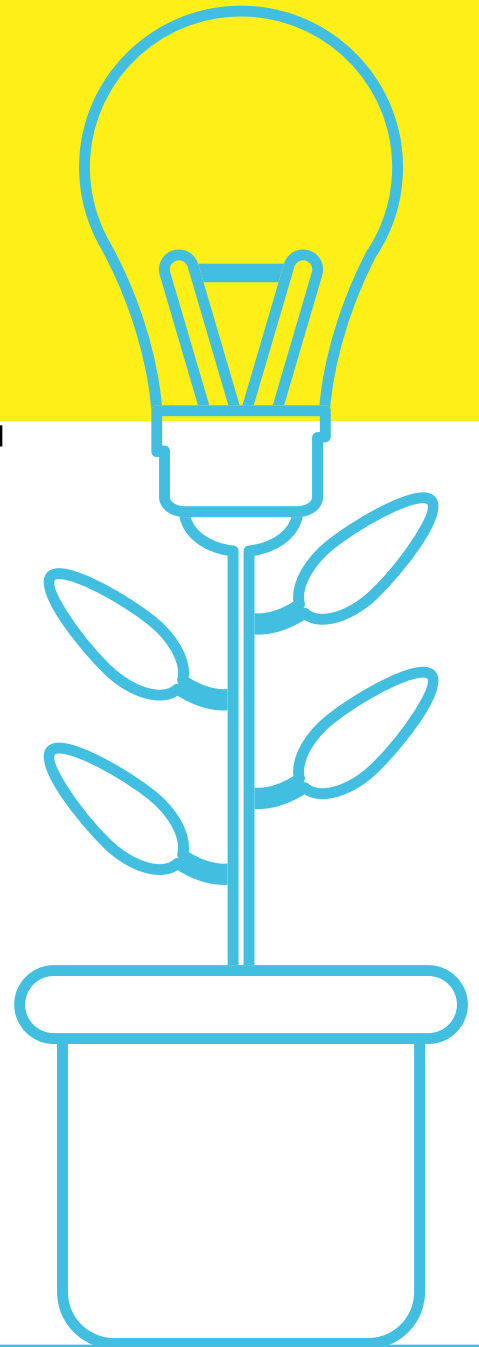


SCOSS STRATEGY

2022 - 2024



SCOSS

SUSTAINING THE OPEN

MISSION

We create connections to sustain vital Open Science Infrastructure.

VISION

A world where research is supported by a sustainable and thriving ecosystem of Open Science Infrastructure.

VALUES

- Community led
- Expert driven
- Global in reach
- Collaborative
- Equitable and inclusive
- Practical and outcome driven
- Here to make a difference

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS) was established in 2017.

Well over €3m has been pledged by the community since the beginning of 2017; awareness of the need to support Open Science Infrastructure providers has increased.

This strategy seeks to build on that success; it sets out SCOSS's goals for the next 3 years and the steps SCOSS will take to achieve them.

SCOSS's goals for the period 2022 to 2024 will be:

- **GOAL 1** - Promote the sustainability of Open Science Infrastructure through funding and support
- **GOAL 2** - Raise global awareness about the value of non-commercial Open Science Infrastructure through advocacy and connection building
- **GOAL 3** - Build and maintain trust in Open Science Infrastructure through vetting and selection

HISTORY OF SCOSS

The Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS) was established in 2017.

SCOSS is a network of organizations raising funds and awareness to secure the future of non-commercial providers of Open Access and Open Science Infrastructure.

SCOSS was set up as an attempt to 'stem the bleeding' as many such providers were seeking commercial funding or acquisition, or considering whether to cease operations, due to unsustainable business models.

SCOSS sought to ask stakeholders in the research sector to consider the consequences if open infrastructure was lost.

Via an application and assessment process, SCOSS offers a small number of selected Open Science Infrastructure providers access to support and funding from its global community. This provides capital and space for the selected organizations to develop models that preserve their non-commercial status and sustain the open nature of their products and services.

SCOSS has been through one pilot and one full funding round, supporting six infrastructure providers. The third funding round, supporting three further infrastructures, was announced in September 2021. Well over €3m has been pledged by the community since the beginning of 2017; awareness of the need to support Open Science Infrastructure providers has increased.

This strategy seeks to build on that success; it sets out SCOSS's goals for the next 3 years and the steps SCOSS will take to achieve them.

CONTEXT

Resourcing and supporting infrastructure is a collective action problem; these are notoriously difficult to solve. They are not well addressed by markets, and communities/groups struggle to overcome them unless appropriate mechanisms can be developed. The problem is compounded when the infrastructure is open, provided by non-commercial entities, and strives to serve global and local needs simultaneously.

SCOSS does offer a single, once-and-for-all solution. It is a pragmatic initiative put together rapidly to solve some elements of the problem. The initiative prioritises an action-oriented approach. It works through a community of members and their institutions, funders, and infrastructures/services, namely the SCOSS community.

The goals and priorities set out in this document preserve that approach and specific elements of SCOSS's success to date:

- SCOSS has developed an approach that works for its community. SCOSS exerts influence not control over its members' funding decisions
- SCOSS is responsive and flexible. As such, it is administratively light and it does not hold funds or make grants. It does not exist as an independent entity in its own right, but as a project hosted by SPARC Europe, and other than 0.7 FTE at SPARC Europe relies on members' time and resources
- SCOSS seeks to empower the infrastructure providers it supports rather than dictating a 'right approach' or model
- SCOSS support offered to selected infrastructures lasts for 3 years, as does the strategy set out in this document, although supporting open infrastructure is a longer-term project
- SCOSS's network is global, and it seeks to embrace diversity and inclusivity where possible. It seeks pledges of funding from institutions irrespective of where they are based. It seeks to support infrastructure providers irrespective of where they are based, but with the scope to support researchers globally
- SCOSS looks to achieve its goals through the levers under its control. Many other existing or emerging entities have similar or complementary goals; some of them are SCOSS members. SCOSS welcomes the emergence of alternative solutions and seeks to work in parallel or partnership with others wherever possible

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 1

Promote the sustainability of Open Science Infrastructure through funding and support

SCOSS was created to address an urgent and immediate need to support Open Science Infrastructure. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of organizations is a deeper challenge, however.

Sustainability is not just about ensuring income exceeds (or even covers) cost. The definition of sustainability offered in *Non-profit Sustainability* by Bell, Masaoka and Zimmerman is useful (Bell, Masaoka, and Zimmermann, 2010, p.13):

Sustainability is an orientation not a destination. Sometimes the phrase 'sustainable business model' sounds as if it refers to a place that, once reached, will allow the organization to generate financial resources on an ongoing basis while the board and staff sit back and watch it happen. But what is sustainable today may be unsustainable tomorrow. Funding streams dry up or shift focus; programmatic practices evolve; client populations change; We never arrive at a mix of programs and revenue streams that can be described as permanently sustainable. But we can always be heading in the right direction.

We identify two types of sustainability here:

- Financial - the ability to generate resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future
- Programmatic - the ability to develop, mature, and cycle out programs to be responsive to constituencies over time

SCOSS is designed to promote these differing types of sustainability; it seeks to help organizations recognise and develop them without creating a dependency.

References:

Bell, J, Masaoka, J & Zimmerman, S (2010) *Non-Profit Sustainability*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Over the next 3 years, SCOSS will continue to review and adapt its model to better support sustainability in the organizations it supports. SCOSS's core processes will not fundamentally change, although SCOSS will actively seek ways to support organizations currently disadvantaged by the model.

This will likely include early-stage, small infrastructure providers who offer innovative technological solutions, business models or new non-commercial alternatives to existing commercially provided infrastructure. Alternative mechanisms

- seed funding for capacity building at start of process
- separate funding round with changed process
- SCOSS badge for 'Most Innovative' or 'Most promising'
- access to network of established infrastructures

SCOSS's application process is designed to encourage organizations to consider and articulate how they can develop a sustainable model and set milestones that will help them achieve this. The process has evolved in response to feedback from applicants and the SCOSS Advisory Group and will continue to do so.

SCOSS's selection criteria and model do not favour any particular non-commercial business model over another. They are designed to identify infrastructures and organizations with the capability and potential to achieve long term sustainability.

The fundraising process requires organizations to build capacity and connections across the sector in order to achieve their targets. By selecting annual cohorts with a three year cycle SCOSS offers a balance - organizations gain access to a network from which they can attract resources, but the process is time-limited and can accommodate changing needs from those pledging and receiving funds. SCOSS will continue to review whether it is getting this balance right.

SCOSS priorities over the next three years to achieve this goal will be:

- Selecting and supporting infrastructure providers that have the potential to achieve financial and programmatic sustainability by:
 - Offering a value proposition that enables them to build and maintain relationships with supporters and/or customers
 - Developing increased organizational resilience, capability, and capacity

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

- Seek feedback on the application and funding process at the completion of each three-year funding cycle. SCOSS will particularly focus on reviewing alternative possible relationships between infrastructures and SCOSS after the three year funding cycle
Options might include:
 - Encourage members to keep funding infrastructures after 3 years
 - Provide greater visibility to some entities after 3 years than others
 - Consider repeat applications after a certain period
 - Have a forum / event at which the progress of selected orgs is monitored
 - Have a mechanism for making donations to former orgs on its website
 - Develop an ecosystem approach to funding decisions, so there is a greater coherence to supporting all of the selected infrastructures in perpetuity
- Identifying alternative mechanisms through which SCOSS can support organizations for whom the current process is too demanding; this will likely include early-stage, small infrastructure providers who offer innovative technological solutions, business models or new non-commercial alternatives to existing commercially provided infrastructure

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 2

Raise global awareness about the value of non-commercial Open Science Infrastructure through advocacy and connection building

SCOSS will continue to address the relative invisibility of open and non-commercial infrastructure providers against commercial alternatives. SCOSS raises awareness about the value of Open Science Infrastructures by:

- Creating connections between its global community and selected infrastructure providers
- Advocating for the value of open and non-commercial infrastructure and the value of supporting that infrastructure

SCOSS will continue to operate on a global basis. SCOSS will add new members to its community from all continents; SCOSS will proactively select providers of open infrastructure to develop a global portfolio of supported infrastructures.

Universities and their libraries will continue to play a central role in the SCOSS community. While there is continual financial pressure on their budgets, these bodies have played a central role in the development of Open Access and Open Science. They produce and disseminate knowledge and supporting Open Science Infrastructure is an efficient way for them to do that.

SCOSS prioritises relationships with library consortia and national level funding as these facilitate its success and enhance the effectiveness of its processes. Many other entities in the research community benefit from open infrastructure, such as research funders, so SCOSS will identify new partnerships and create more connections and awareness in other groups of stakeholders.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

SCOSS will continue to facilitate new connections between the providers of Open Science Infrastructure, helping them to share experiences and learn from one another.

SCOSS will continue to find ways of making its processes more efficient for infrastructure providers and those pledging funds, without compromising the independence or agency of either group.

SCOSS priorities over the next three years to achieve this goal will be:

- Increase year on year the funds pledged via SCOSS through:
 - Increasing the current membership base and funding support
 - Attracting new library consortia members or national level funders, using established models of current members
 - Identifying legal and structural obstacles to pledging funds and work to remove them
 - Attracting funding from new sources via advocacy and partnerships
- Develop a balanced portfolio of supported Open Science Infrastructures by selecting and supporting infrastructure providers that are 'location agnostic' in that they:
 - Are located across the globe
 - Have the potential to benefit users worldwide, and
 - Promote open standards to stimulate an interoperable OS ecosystem
- Advocate the value of supporting non-commercial providers whenever there are relevant developments in the research sector; communicate the value of Open Science Infrastructure to the full range of research stakeholders
- Develop a Community of Practice by facilitating communication in the network of selected providers of Open Science Infrastructure and beyond. This would provide an extended forum for consistent and regular communication and sharing of best practices, case studies, data and developments that could improve the sustainability of business models. It could include, but not be limited to, fundraising, financial planning, marketing and staff incentives & retention

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 3

Build and maintain trust in Open Science Infrastructure through vetting and selection

There remain concerns that open, non-commercial infrastructure providers are not robustly run and are at risk of disappearing overnight. This view persists in particular among budget holders and decision-makers within universities and government funders. These organisations which are also naturally conservative, are experiencing ongoing budgetary pressures.

A change in culture is required to address these concerns, in part by developing greater trust. However, organisations can only design for trustworthiness, and aim for trust over time through clear goals, processes, and standards. SCOSS seeks to build trustworthiness through its own strategy and selections.

Institutions that pledge funds have complex and varied priorities. SCOSS acts as an intermediary, signaling the trustworthiness of a select number of infrastructure providers by undertaking assessments and making recommendations. SCOSS's relationships with library consortia boost the strength of this signal to their members.

SCOSS builds trust by focusing on sustainability and empowering organisations to develop themselves. Through its Advisory Group, SCOSS assesses whether applicants meet or have the potential to meet a range of relevant standards; the highly selective process supports no more than three organisations every year. SCOSS also prioritises infrastructures whose value or potential value proposition to its community is clear.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

SCOSS priorities over the next three years to achieve this goal will be:

- Supporting applicants that demonstrate they have the potential to:
 - Demonstrate value to the community, and the SCOSS community in particular
 - Establish appropriate governance structures reflecting community interests
 - Transparency in finances and operations
 - Adopt open practices in their operations, specifically open source and data standards
 - Exhibit interoperability, in particular with other Open Science Infrastructure providers
- Develop greater transparency in the SCOSS process, reflecting changes to funding criteria and the demands placed on selected infrastructures
- Ensure that as the number of infrastructures supported by SCOSS continues to grow that it forms a coherent, interoperable ecosystem

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

1

Manage the application and decision making processes, providing support to applicants, supported infrastructures and other SCOSS community members

2

Identify ways to make the annual application process more efficient, transparent and understandable

3

Communicate & market: how to make applications, decisions on supported infrastructure and fundraising progress

4

Maintain a visible presence within the OS community through the SCOSS team, its members & supported infrastructures, speaking at significant conferences and running SCOSS-branded events

5

Facilitate communication and learning between infrastructure providers, relevant experts and industry stakeholders through SCOSS branded events

6

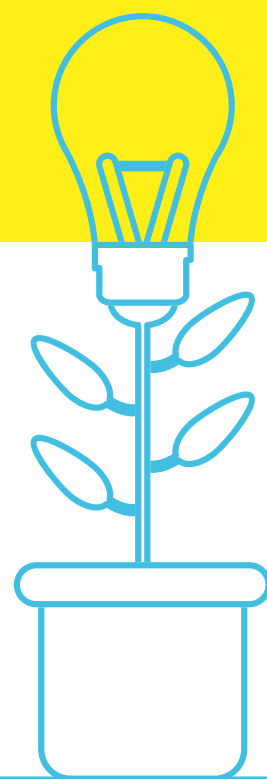
Maintain active participation and support (i.e. funding) from community members

7

Seek new partnerships and new community members from currently under-represented regions and stakeholders

SCOSS STRATEGY

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www.scoss.org



Contact: Agata Morka, SCOSS coordinator
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Twitter: @scossfunding

Newsletter: <https://scoss.org/newsletter/>

Find out how to pledge:

<https://scoss.org/help-sustain-open-infra/become-a-funder/>