



Plan S

Making full & immediate
Open Access a reality

cOAlition S

**Strategy
2026-2030**

November 2025

cOAlition S Strategy 2026-2030

Launched in 2018, cOAlition S emerged as an informal coalition of organisations that publicly expressed their intention to implement Plan S. Seven years later, the coalition is defining a new strategy plan and governance structure to take its work on open access forward. This strategy is guided by a refreshed, shared vision: a scholarly communication system that enables rapid, open, transparent, and equitable sharing of trustworthy scientific knowledge. It takes into account current scholarly publication models and emphasises the need for more sustainable and equitable models — such as the ‘Publish-Review-Curate (PRC) model’, diamond open access and preprints.

INTRODUCTION

cOAlition S began as a collective of research funders united by a simple principle: the outputs of the research they support should be freely available to read and reuse. Leveraging the powerful tool of funding conditions, the coalition sought to make open access the default.

From the outset, however, its ambition extended beyond the work funded by its organisations. cOAlition S envisioned a system in which research outputs of all kinds, from any source, would be openly accessible. To pursue this vision, the coalition engaged with the full range of stakeholders in the research ecosystem: individual researchers, employers of researchers (often responsible for funding publication costs), different regional groups (with cOAlition S building outward from its European base), and publishers across the spectrum. These engagements revealed the complexities behind the seemingly straightforward goal of “free to read and reuse,” raising questions about the role of preprints and peer review, the drivers of publication costs, and the interplay between diverse publication systems worldwide.

Working alongside other initiatives in scholarly publishing—notably OA2020 but many others as well—cOAlition S helped to accelerate progress. Significant progress was made primarily through the adoption of agreements, typically negotiated between research institutions and publishers, that enabled authors to publish open access without per-article charges.

During this period, whilst cOAlition S organisations largely achieved their initial objective, the publishing landscape has continued to evolve. Concerns that were once peripheral have become central. Equity across regions is now recognized as essential, ensuring that authors are not disadvantaged by geography. The economic constraints of universities have made it harder to sustain costly publishing agreements. Meanwhile, there is growing pressure for community ownership of the scholarly publishing system and increased use of preprints and post-publication peer review to accelerate dissemination.

cOAlition S organisations acknowledge these changing conditions and reaffirm their shared commitment to shaping the future of scholarly publishing. Our engagement will extend beyond mandates and funding conditions, recognising that no single model can meet all needs. Instead, cOAlition S pledges to work collaboratively to develop a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable publishing system — one that maximises the benefits of open dissemination for the research they fund and for the global scientific community. This document outlines the specific areas in which cOAlition S intends to focus its efforts and the strategic framework that will guide our work.

UNIQUE PROPERTIES OF THE COALITION

As research funders, we have a vital stake in how scientific knowledge is communicated. Acting jointly as a multi-disciplinary and multi-national coalition, we want to ensure our funding fosters the public good of science through open practices, recognising a variety of routes to open access and working collaboratively with other key actors. Since the launch of cOAlition S, we have pushed for full and immediate open access, contributing to the broader development towards open science. To continue this work, we must build upon our achievements while also adapting to the evolving scholarly publishing landscape.

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS AND ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Plan S was launched with a bold vision to revolutionise scholarly communication. What began as an initial collaboration of twelve organisations has developed into a robust network of 28 funders, encompassing agencies from Europe, North America, Jordan, Zambia, South Africa, and Australia. This expansion reflects the global momentum towards full and immediate open access, a fundamental shift in the landscape of academic publishing. An independent study on the impact of Plan S ([Galvanising the open access community: A study on the impact of Plan S](#)) confirms the key role of cOAlition S in raising the profile of Open Access and bringing publishers to the negotiating table.

Our objective of accelerating open access to peer reviewed publications remains unchanged. However, our approach needs to evolve to address both the opportunities and persistent challenges within the scholarly communication landscape. We therefore recognise the need for a new phase in our collaborative effort.

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The shift towards full and immediate open access has become global, but more work is needed to make the entire corpus of future research findings accessible to all and to address several interrelated trends that have emerged during this transition.

The dominance of Article Processing Charges (APCs), Book Processing Charges (BPCs) and Read & Publish Agreements as open access business models has contributed to a growth in open access publishing but also led to increasing costs. This, in turn, has highlighted issues of inequity, particularly in terms of affordability for researchers from less-resourced institutions or regions. Meanwhile, rapid technological advancements in artificial intelligence promise to accelerate research and its dissemination but also pose new challenges. Furthermore, concerns around knowledge security and increasing political volatility are shaping discussions on open science and the resilience of core infrastructures.

Amidst these developments, there is a growing recognition of the importance of open science practices beyond just open access to publications. For example, the [stakeholder consultation](#) that cOAlition S commissioned to receive feedback on its 'Towards Responsible Publishing' proposal concluded that the global research community appreciates the benefits of preprints and open peer review and is ready to adopt these practices provided they are adequately recognised and rewarded.

Having actively tracked and engaged in this changing landscape, cOAlition S is thus in a strong position to build on its past experience to advance more sustainable and equitable open science practices while addressing the key barriers to open scholarly communication.

PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE COALITION

cOAlition S is intended to support its organisations in their work with open access practices and policies, as well as related open sciences issues. It is recognised that cOAlition S organisations operate in different contexts, serve diverse research communities, and work under varying mandates. However, by working together we will be more likely to make a difference even if we cannot work in identical ways.



OUR WORK IS GUIDED BY A SHARED VISION: A SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM THAT ENABLES RAPID, OPEN, TRANSPARENT, AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF TRUSTWORTHY SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE.

More specifically, the purpose of the collaborative effort of the coalition is:



To align our policies and develop evidence-based implementation in accordance with the goal of a rapid, open, trustworthy and equitable scholarly communication system



To share good practices, experiences and expertise



To provide a clear common voice and direction around open scholarly communication



To engage with relevant partners and develop communication strategies

OBJECTIVES

cOAlition S will facilitate and support its organisations in using their funding requirements, infrastructure investments and research assessment processes to contribute to the development and maintenance of a rapid, open, trustworthy and equitable scholarly communication system. It will do so by actively sharing practices and policies, undertaking joint efforts to develop policy and practice, as well as common communication and advocacy activities.

Recognising the varying national and international priorities within its membership and their research communities, cOAlition S will endorse and advocate for a multitude of routes to open access and open science that align with our vision. cOAlition S will seek to do this work in partnership with the research community and other key stakeholders.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2026-2030

The scholarly publishing landscape continues to evolve into an increasingly complex and costly environment. Our continued collaboration must adapt to meet these developments. While the strategy covers five years, its implementation unfolds in two-phases: an initial two-year period (2026-2027) followed by a three-year period (2028-2030) based on lessons learned and subject to decision by the Leaders Group.

The following proposed actions cover primarily the first two years (2026-2027), though some of these will most likely continue into subsequent years. These actions are organised around key strategic priorities as identified through a consultation process with our organisations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR FULL, IMMEDIATE, SUSTAINABLE, AND EQUITABLE OPEN ACCESS OF SCHOLARLY PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

The first strategic priority focuses on fostering the best conditions for full, immediate, sustainable, and equitable open access. This involves enhancing our internal collaboration and coordination mechanisms, reviewing our foundational principles that guide the coalition's work in light of current scholarly publication models and future perspectives, both including more sustainable and equitable models (such as PRC, diamond open access and preprints) and new opportunities/challenges (e.g. artificial intelligence). The priority also seeks to deepen strategic partnerships to align open access policies with other relevant policies, such as the reform of research assessment and researchers' careers.



To advance this priority, cOAlition S will:

- » Deliver and develop basic member services to strengthen mechanisms and processes for sharing practices and policies that affect scholarly publishing
- » Review and update the [Plan S principles and implementation guides](#), including enhancing the focus on sustainable and equitable models, such as PRC, diamond open access and preprints
- » Identify new projects to undertake regarding implementation of updated policies on immediate and equitable Open Access, including infrastructure needs
- » Define a communication plan that amplifies our collective voice
- » Expand strategic partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders across the research ecosystem

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

SUPPORTING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES THAT ENABLE OPEN ACCESS

The second priority acknowledges that robust, accessible, and interoperable infrastructures are essential for the delivery and sustainability of open access. It includes actions to support funders to identify ways to enable the technical and service infrastructures that underpins immediate, free, sustainable, and equitable OA publishing and ensures long-term data preservation. This priority also addresses the emerging challenges and opportunities posed by artificial intelligence in the context of open science, aiming to develop a shared understanding of how AI intersects with open copyright and data reuse practices.



To advance this priority, cOAlition S will:

- » Advance funders support for publishing infrastructures and services that deliver immediate, free, sustainable, and equitable open access to research publications while ensuring long-term data preservation
- » Develop a common understanding of and response to AI in the context of open access, addressing both opportunities and risks. For example, a joint position on using CC BY licensed publications for AI model training or mitigating potential new inequities from widespread AI adoption

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

EXPLORING FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE PUBLISHING SYSTEMS AND MONITORING

The third priority focuses on the long-term financial and operational sustainability and equitability of open access publishing. It seeks to explore new models for funding scholarly communication and to establish effective mechanisms for monitoring the financial impact of OA policies.



To advance this priority, cOAlition S will:

- » Develop monitoring and reporting activities that can visualise the results and impact of the open access policies and practices of cOAlition S organisations.
- » Investigate models and mechanisms for how scholarly communication can be funded in a more sustainable way for funders and higher education institutions.

LOOKING AHEAD: SECOND PHASE PRIORITIES

During the second phase of the strategy period (2028-2030), it is envisaged that new priorities and specific action points will be decided by the Leaders Group based on experiences from the first phase. One possible option is to focus more intensively on ways to develop sustainability and equity in scholarly communication, building upon what has already been achieved by the cOAlition S organisations in the fields of PRC, diamond open access, preprints and other OA venues.



Potential areas for deeper exploration include:

- » Costs: addressing both the affordability of access to read and reuse scholarly publications and the financial barriers to publishing new research
- » Merit-based valuation: ensuring research results are assessed on the merits of the work itself, rather than geographic location or publication venue
- » Bias reduction: supporting initiatives that improve fair treatment across all aspects of the scholarly communication system

Throughout both phases, cOAlition S will keep paying attention to the emerging opportunities and challenges – particularly those arising from artificial intelligence, as discussed above – while seeking to resolve the structural issues in scholarly publishing through sustainable and equitable solutions.

GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

To realise these strategic priorities, cOAlition S requires a coordinating function responsible for membership services and management of joint activities. Accordingly, the revised Terms of Reference outline the governance structure and operating procedures, providing the organisational capacity to deliver the strategy while preserving the coalition's collaborative character.

www.coalition-s.org

