

The “IODP³ Scientific Projects using Ocean Drilling Archives” (SPARCs) initiative supports large-scale research projects that address any aspect of the 2050 Science Framework. It particularly encourages the development of ambitious projects that contribute to the Flagship Initiatives defined in the 2050 Science Framework.

Submission Guidelines for “Scientific Projects using Ocean Drilling Archives” (SPARCs)



**INTERNATIONAL
OCEAN DRILLING
PROGRAMME**

Submission Guidelines for “Scientific Projects using Ocean Drilling Archives” (SPARCs)

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1. Overview of Scientific Projects using Ocean Drilling Archives (SPARCs)

1.1. Introduction and Scope

The IODP³ “Scientific Projects using Ocean Drilling Archives” (SPARCs) initiative supports large-scale research projects that may address any aspect of the “*2050 Science Framework*”. However, it particularly encourages the development of ambitious projects that contribute to the implementation of the Flagship Initiatives defined in the “*2050 Science Framework*”.

Alongside scientific ocean drilling proposals, SPARCs provide a mechanism for the international scientific ocean drilling community to propose new large-scale projects involving interdisciplinary collaborations. They further extend the legacy asset-based concepts introduced towards the end of the International Ocean Discovery Program (LeAPs, ReCoRD), or other long-established legacy grants (e.g. ANZIC IODP Legacy Analytical Funding).

SPARCs should address globally significant processes/problems and use innovative, creative, and multidisciplinary approaches that could include, for example, the production of large new datasets from samples, integration of data across multiple expeditions and/or multiple boreholes, and/or the application of new methods or technologies (e.g. XRF core scanning, AI, “big data” approaches) that were not available when the legacy assets were collected.

The scientific ambition of SPARC projects should far exceed that of standard requests for samples or data as they are intended to provide a new avenue to facilitate collaboration at scales larger than conventional single or multi-proponent research projects. Standard requests for access to legacy samples and data by the science community are unrelated to the SPARC initiative and may be submitted at any time.

SPARCs will have objectives that maximise the return on the legacy assets (i.e. cores, samples, and data) from current and past scientific ocean drilling programmes without new drilling or other operations at sea. SPARC proposals that seek to exploit legacy assets to add value to upcoming scheduled expeditions are permitted if they have stand-alone scientific objectives that are not reliant on the success of future offshore operations.

The SPARCs initiative also provides the following community benefits:

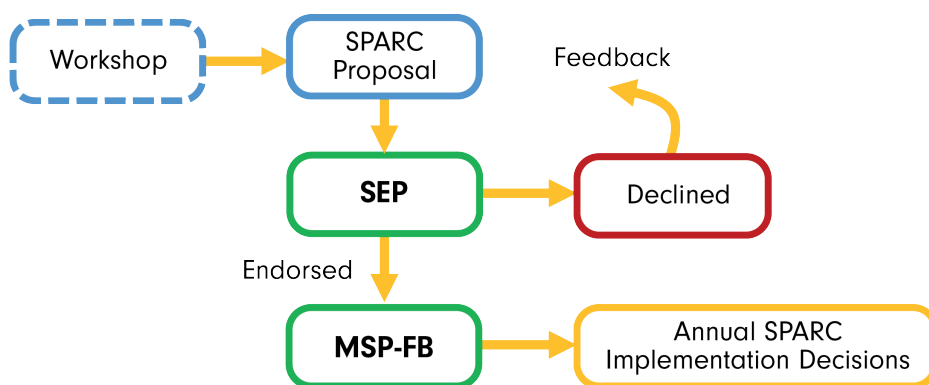
- it encourages open involvement and participation from the community, expanding the shore-based participation in scientific ocean drilling.
- it provides opportunities to mentor early career scientists through their inclusion in SPARC Expedition Science Teams, and to generate particularly attractive research opportunities for early career researchers, to support their transition from training to scientific leadership roles.

Each SPARC will have a funded duration of three years and will receive €300,000 for its implementation. Proposals should have a **maximum of five co-proponents**, with the maximum possible diversity within this team in terms of scientific expertise, affiliation, nationalities, gender, and career stage. Proponents can be from any nation that is currently or was previously a member of a scientific ocean drilling programme, with at least three out of the five proponents coming from IODP³ member nations. Lead proponents from non-IODP³ member nations are permitted. Proponent groups consisting of participants from a single country, from a single career stage, or representing a single scientific discipline are not permitted. SPARC proposals are submitted through the **IODP³ Gateway**, available via the IODP³ website at <https://www.iodp3.org>.

All co-proponents of a funded SPARC will automatically become SPARC Expedition Science Team members (with two selected as Co-Chief Scientists), but the remaining Science Team members will be selected following an open call for applications. The overall size of the final Expedition Science

Team for a SPARC is flexible and can be adapted to project needs, but should typically consist of ~30 scientists (with a minimum permissible size of 15 scientists and with no fixed upper limit).

Proposals may be submitted at any time, but the final deadline for submission to each annual SPARC funding round is **31 January each year**. The suite of applications received by this deadline each year will then be assessed by the Science Evaluation Panel (SEP), resulting in proposals either being forwarded to the MSP Facility Board (MSP-FB) for potential funding or being declined (with feedback). The MSP-FB will make SPARC funding decisions each year, with successful proponents being notified no later than one month after the MSP-FB meeting. SPARC proposals that are not selected for immediate implementation will be held at the MSP-FB and considered for implementation in subsequent rounds. Note that there is no guarantee that all SPARC proposals forwarded to the MSP-FB will be implemented within the timeframe of IODP³, as the number of proposals that can be funded each year will depend on available programmatic budgets.



The SPARC proposal evaluation process

1.2. Formation of SPARC Expedition Science Teams

1.2.1. SPARC Proponents

Proponents of SPARC proposals selected for funding in each round will be notified by the MSP-FB, who will also invite two proponents to lead the SPARC as Co-Chief Scientists (based normally on SEP nominations). The other proponents will automatically be included in the SPARC Expedition Science Team.

1.2.2. Announcement of Opportunities

Once appointed, the Co-Chief Scientists will be required to write a *Scientific Prospectus* for their SPARC. The prospectus should provide details of:

- The background to the SPARC.
- The scientific objectives of the SPARC and how they relate to the ambitions of the “2050 Science Framework” or beyond.
- The scientific ocean drilling legacy resources planned to be used by the SPARC.
- The range of analytical techniques and methods planned to be employed in the SPARC that are considered critical to its success.
- Sampling and data collection strategies.
- Risks and contingency planning.
- Plans for sample and data sharing among the Science Team.

Following editorial and peer review, the *Scientific Prospectus* will be published in the IODP³ journal “*Proceedings of the International Ocean Drilling Programme*” and on the IODP³ website, and an open

call for participation in the SPARC will be issued by the IODP³ Science Office (IODP³-SO). Applications to participate will be open to scientists from IODP³ member nations and more generally to scientists from any nation that was a member of a predecessor scientific ocean drilling programme. However, ≥75% of the SPARC Expedition Science Team must come from IODP³ member nations.

The Co-Chief Scientists will also be required to hold a webinar for the wider scientific community before the application deadline of the call for participation, organised with the assistance of the IODP³-SO.

1.2.3. Evaluation of Applications for SPARC Expedition Science Team Membership

Applications for participation in the SPARC Expedition Science Team in response to the open call will be submitted to the IODP³-SO via the online **IODP³ Gateway** (available at <https://www.iodp3.org>), which will make them available to the relevant IODP³ Programme Member Offices (PMOs) for scientific evaluation. Based on their evaluations of the applicants, each PMO will provide a nomination proposal to the IODP³-SO, taking into account the need to balance required expertise, national quotas (according to financial contributions to IODP³), and gender and career stage profiles.

The nomination proposals will then be used by the Co-Chief Scientists to select the remaining SPARC Expedition Science Team members, ensuring that ≥75% come from IODP³ member nations and taking into account, wherever possible, any additional requirements specified by the PMOs. The Co-Chief Scientists will be advised during the selection process by the MSP-FB Co-Chairs (in consultation with the PMOs) to ensure that the final selection is appropriate in terms of desired programmatic balances.

In addition to the main SPARC Expedition Science Team selected via the competitive open call, up to two additional “**Widening Participation**” places can be assigned to scientists from nations with no previous formal involvement in scientific ocean drilling at the invitation and discretion of the Co-Chief Scientists (who should email details of scientists selected for Widening Participation places to the IODP³-SO at proposals@iodp3.org).

1.3. Budget and Implementation Plans

Each SPARC approved for implementation by the MSP-FB will receive a fixed budget of **€300,000** to be used over a three-year funding period. If the scope of a SPARC requires additional funding above this amount, then it is expected that the SPARC Expedition Science Team will raise the extra funding required from other sources, as no additional funding from IODP³ will be made available.

Once the SPARC Expedition Science Team is finalised, the Co-Chief Scientists must produce an **Indicative Budget Statement** that outlines how the award of €300,000 will be used to support the project most effectively, covering travel and subsistence, analytical work, consumables, bench fees and similar items. SPARC funds may not be used for salary support for SPARC Expedition Science Team members or associated researchers, or for the purchase of new equipment. Note that some SPARC funds may be used to facilitate short visits by Widening Participation SPARC Expedition Science Team members to research facilities provided by other team members to conduct SPARC-related analyses.

The €300,000 budget must be held at the institution of one of the SPARC Expedition Science Team members based in an IODP³ member nation (normally that of one of the Co-Chief Scientists), and this institution must be named in the indicative budget statement. The budget will be subject to that institution’s internal financial regulations. **However, no overheads may be charged to the award, and this should be considered when deciding which institution will hold and administer the budget.** The Indicative Budget Statement must therefore be accompanied by an **Overhead Waiver Letter** from the administration of the institution identified to hold the budget stating that they agree to administer the award without charging overheads (see [Section 2.5](#)).

The Co-Chief Scientists will also be required to provide a SPARC Implementation Plan outlining project milestones and deliverables for the three-year funded period. In the case of SPARCs that require extensive sampling of legacy cores, **this plan must be discussed with the Curators of the Core Repositories before it is submitted** (see [Section 1.4](#)).

The Indicative Budget Statement and SPARC Implementation Plan must be approved by all SPARC Expedition Science Team members before submission to the IODP³-SO. These documents will then be reviewed by the MSP-FB Co-Chairs in consultation with the IODP³ Vision Task Force.

1.4. Interaction with Core Repositories

1.4.1. Responsibilities of SPARC Proponents and Science Team Members

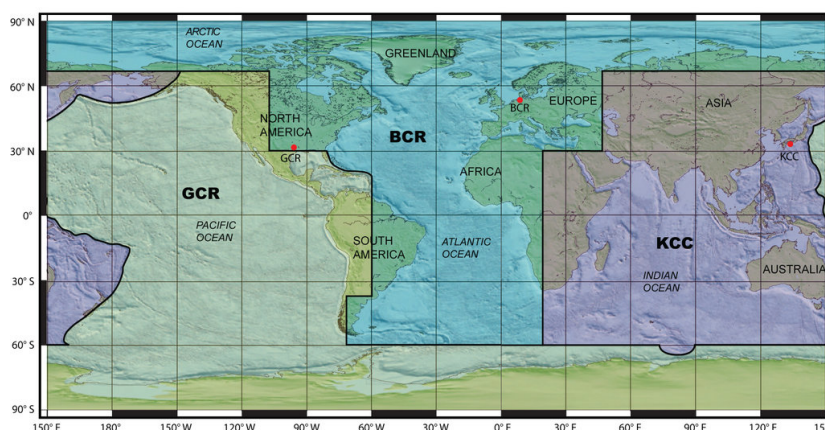
Successful SPARC proposals that involve new analyses of core materials are likely to require numbers of samples that far exceed those commonly associated with individual sample requests. Proponents of SPARC proposals are therefore strongly encouraged to discuss the scope of their project with the Curators of the three Core Repositories [Bremen Core Repository (BCR), Gulf Coast Repository (GCR), Kochi Core Center (KCC)] during the earliest stages of development of their proposal to discuss the availability of staffing resources and of materials to ensure the feasibility of their research plans. Contact details of the Curators are provided in [Section 4](#).

Once approved for funding, SPARC Co-Chief Scientists and Expedition Science Team members will be responsible for submitting sample requests (and requests for use of any of the analytical equipment housed in the Core Repositories) via the relevant repository systems for approval in advance, following appropriate guidelines. They will also need to negotiate the timing and the number of scientists attending associated SPARC sampling events with the individual repositories well in advance to ensure that these activities can fit within the schedules of these facilities.

1.4.2. Core Distribution Scheme

The geographic distribution scheme for the storage and curation of scientific ocean drilling cores and samples acquired during successive drilling programs (Deep Sea Drilling Project; Ocean Drilling Program; Integrated Ocean Drilling Program; International Ocean Discovery Program) is:

- The BCR stores all cores from the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans as well as the Mediterranean, and the Black and Baltic Seas.
- The GCR stores all cores from the Pacific Ocean (defined as east of the western boundary of the Pacific Plate), Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and all Southern Oceans (defined as south of 60° except for the Kerguelen Plateau).
- The KCC stores all cores from the Pacific Ocean (defined as west of the western boundary of the Pacific Plate), Indian Ocean (North of 60°S), the Kerguelen Plateau, and the Bering Sea.



U. Röhl adapted from Firth, JV, Gupta, LP and Röhl, U (2009) New focus on the Tales of the Earth - Legacy Cores Redistribution Project Completed. *Scientific Drilling*, 7. 31-33. doi:10.2204/iudp.sd.7.03.2009. [Map Mar 15, 2016]. Retrieved from http://www.marum.de/en/Cores_at_BCR.html

1.5. Availability of Data Generated by a SPARC

All data generated during the three-year funded period of a SPARC must be made available to the wider scientific community via the *Proceedings of the International Ocean Drilling Programme*. This serial publication is managed by the IODP³-SO and acts as the formal record of scientific analyses and results funded by IODP³ through its drilling expeditions and SPARCs. Data generated after the end of the funded period should also, where possible, be made freely available via an open-access route. This can be achieved via: (i) reporting data in open-access primary journal publications and their supplementary materials; (ii) uploading datasets to an appropriate open-access database; and/or (iii) publication in a *Data Report* associated with the SPARC *Proceedings* volume.

1.6. Publication Requirements

1.6.1. IODP³ Publications

SPARC Expeditions are treated similarly to IODP³ scientific ocean drilling expeditions in terms of programmatic publication expectations. Each funded SPARC will be assigned its own volume of the IODP³ journal *Proceedings of the International Ocean Drilling Programme*. Each SPARC *Proceedings* volume will consist of:

- i. the *SPARC Scientific Prospectus*, written by the Co-Chief Scientists following approval of the SPARC by the MSP-FB (see [Section 1.2.2](#))
- ii. a *SPARC Summary*, written by the Co-Chief Scientists and Expedition Science Team members, submitted no later than 18 months after the start date of the SPARC. This should expand upon the content of the *Scientific Prospectus* to outline the full scope of the project, describe the range of activities being conducted by the Expedition Science Team, and highlight progress made so far. To facilitate publication of high-impact results obtained early during the funded period in the open literature, the SPARC Co-Chief Scientists may request a delay to publication of their SPARC Summary in the *Proceedings* volume by negotiation with the *Proceedings* Editorial Board (contactable by email at publications@iodp3.org).
- iii. a series of *SPARC Data Reports* that present the new data produced during the three-year funded period. These may be submitted at any time, but the final deadline for submission will be six months after the end of the funded period. Results should be organised logically by discipline into individual *Data Reports*, with each describing the context and rationale for the analyses undertaken, including an outline of the method(s) employed. Results should be presented and briefly described without detailed interpretation, and associated datasets should be appended in an accessible format (e.g. as Excel spreadsheets). Full presentation, discussion and interpretation of SPARC results should be achieved via publications in the open literature (see [Section 1.6.3](#)). To facilitate this, authors of individual *SPARC Data Reports* may request a delay to publication of their reports in the *Proceedings* volume by negotiation with the *Proceedings* Editorial Board (contactable by email at publications@iodp3.org).

1.6.2. Co-Chief Scientist Responsibilities Within the IODP³ Publication Process

Co-Chief Scientists will be responsible for coordinating the production of content for the *Proceedings* volume associated with their SPARC, and for leading the writing of the *SPARC Summary*. They will ensure that all SPARC Expedition Science Team members complete and submit their contributions to the *Proceedings* report by fixed deadlines, without requiring extensions.

The Co-Chief Scientists should select appropriate SPARC Expedition Science Team members to attend a virtual editorial meeting, organised by the IODP³-SO, where the content of the *SPARC Summary* will be finalised prior to submission. They are also responsible for responding to external

reviews of the *Scientific Prospectus* and *SPARC Summary* and for reviewing final galley proofs promptly.

The Co-Chief Scientists will also be required to monitor the status of the SPARC Expedition Science Team members actions to fulfil their publication obligation requirements (see [Section 1.6.3](#)) and ensure that details of accepted publications outside of the *Proceedings* volume are reported to the IODP³-SO Publications Manager (at publications@iodp3.org).

1.6.3 Individual Researcher Obligations

In addition to the formal IODP³ publications outlined above, SPARC Expedition Science Team members are obligated to conduct research and to publish their results in the open literature, i.e., a peer-reviewed scientific journal or book that is published in English. To fulfil this obligation, manuscripts must be submitted no later than 12 months after the end of the funded period. Failure to meet this obligation may adversely affect future applications to participate in IODP³.

All publications submitted to the open literature should be authored by all SPARC Expedition Science Team members. The lead authors of such publications are strongly encouraged to list all SPARC Expedition Science Team members individually as co-authors in full to ensure that publications are linked to the ORCID, Scopus or other online bibliographic database records of team members. If journal guidelines prevent this then the form “and IODP³ Expedition xxxS’ Scientists” in the authorship may be used instead, where ‘xxxS’ refers to the expedition number assigned to the SPARC by IODP³.

Any datasets produced after the funded period that are not reported in the open literature may alternatively be published as additional *Data Reports* within the relevant issue of the *Proceedings of the International Ocean Drilling Programme*. Such additional Data reports may be submitted up to 36 months after the funded period.

1.7. Financial Requirements

The formal start date of a SPARC is the date on which the €300,000 budget is transferred to the institution selected to administer the award. As noted in [Section 1.3](#), this institution must agree to administer the award without charging overheads, and this must be confirmed by submission of an **Overhead Waiver Letter** to the IODP³-SO (by email to proposals@iodp3.org) after selection for implementation by the MSP-FB, along with the **SPARC Implementation Plan** and **Indicative Budget Statement** (see [Section 2.5](#)). Approval of these documents by the MSP-FB then triggers payment of the award to the host institution. It is essential, therefore for the nominated budget holder **to receive approval of the award through their own institution’s research grant administrative processes** in advance of submitting the SPARC Implementation Plan, Indicative Budget Statement and Overhead Waiver Letter to the IODP³-SO.

At the end of the three-year funded period of the SPARC, the Co-Chief Scientists must submit a **Final Financial Statement** accounting for the actual use funds, accompanied by an explanatory covering letter. This must be received by the **IODP³ Managing Agency** no later than six months after the end of the funded period (i.e. within 42 months of the SPARC start date), along with the return of any unspent funds.

2. SPARC Proposal Guidelines

SPARC proposals are submitted to the **IODP³ Gateway** system via the “Submit a Proposal” link on the IODP³ website (<https://iodp3.org>), and should be prepared following the guidance below.

2.1. Structure of SPARC Proposals

SPARC proposals should contain self-contained, well-justified scientific plans that can be implemented with available legacy assets and within a reasonable length of time.

Proposals will consist of the following elements:

- a) an **IODP³ Proposal Cover Sheet** (generated interactively via the IODP³ Gateway system) containing:
 - the title of the SPARC project
 - a list of proponents (maximum 5), specifying the name, affiliation, country, email address, ORCID identifier, and area of expertise of each proponent. The Lead Proponent must be listed first. (See also [Section 1.1](#) for guidance regarding the composition of the proponent team).
 - up to 5 keywords
 - an abstract (≤ 400 words)
 - a statement of scientific objectives (≤ 250 words)
 - confirmation that the proponents have discussed the scope and feasibility of the project with the Curators of the Core Repositories (see [Section 1.4](#)).
 - a Science Communication Plain Language Summary (≤ 400 words) describing the proposed research and its broader impacts in a way that can be understood by a general audience (see [Section 2.4](#)).
 - a table outlining the range of legacy resources required by the SPARC (see [Section 2.3](#))

- b) a **PDF of the Main Text of the proposal** with embedded figures/tables (≤ 8000 words, including figure/table captions but excluding the reference list; ≤ 10 figures/tables), following the guide to content provided in [Section 2.2](#) and the format requirements listed in [Section 2.6](#).

- c) **two-page Curricula Vitae of proponents**, each including a list of up to 10 significant publications and an outline of prior experience in scientific ocean drilling (if any). Each CV must follow the format requirements listed in [Section 2.6](#), and then be combined into a single PDF for upload via the IODP³ Gateway system.

2.2. Content of the Main Text of a SPARC Proposal

The **Main Text** of a SPARC proposal should describe all aspects of the scientific objectives of the SPARC, the use of legacy assets, the research approaches, and indicate expected outcomes and deliverables. It should:

- Outline the background and rationale for the SPARC, including reference to any previous relevant research.
- State the scientific aims and objectives and explain how they relate to or advance the *2050 Science Framework*.
- Describe the target legacy assets and justify the need for using legacy assets to accomplish the scientific objectives. If using legacy cores, ensure that the prime targets referred to here are consistent with those listed in the Cover Sheet.
- Describe the proposed research approach and suitability of the methods for addressing the scientific objectives.
- Describe any planned development or application of advanced and non-standard research or technical approaches.
- Note any relationships to other bio- or geoscience programmes or initiatives, if applicable.

- Describe the expected outcomes and deliverables, likelihood of success, and how success will be assessed and measured.

The main text of a SPARC Proposal can contain a maximum of 8,000 words, including captions for figures and tables but excluding the reference list. Proposals may contain a maximum of 10 figures and/or tables, that should be embedded in the text.

2.3. Table of Scientific Ocean Drilling Legacy Resources Required by the SPARC

This will require input of the following information via the IODP³ Gateway system:

- Leg/Expedition, Site and Hole numbers and Core Repository codes (BCR, GCR, KCC) related to legacy core materials targeted by the SPARC and estimated associated intervals of interest specified by ranges of Core numbers
- Leg/Expedition, Site and Hole numbers and associated types of legacy data to be used by the SPARC

2.4. Science Communication Plain Language Summary

Information provided in the Science Communication Plain Language Summary is used to support the development of SPARC communication plans and other IODP³ outreach goals. The Science Communication Plain Language Summary asks proponents: “Using simple terms, describe in 400 words or less your proposed research and its broader impacts in a way that can be understood by a general audience.” This is intended to provide a non-technical summary of a proposal’s research and societal impacts; it is not intended to include specific outreach activities. Proponents should consider the unique aspects of their proposed research in writing their summary. The Science Communication Plain Language Summary will be evaluated during the SPARC proposal review process, and proponents of successful SPARC proposals may receive feedback and advice on how to improve their summary prior to the start of the project (e.g., by speaking with communication specialists within IODP³).

2.5. Additional Required Information (see also Section 1.3)

If your SPARC proposal is endorsed by the IODP³ SEP and is **selected for implementation by the MSP-FB**, once the SPARC Expedition Science Team is assembled you will also be requested to submit the following documents as PDFs by email to the IODP³-SO at proposals@iodp3.org (adhering to the format requirements listed in **Section 2.6**):

- a **SPARC Implementation Plan** of ≤ 1000 words (excluding title, Gantt chart title and any references). This should:
 - Describe the roles of the co-proponents in the leadership of the SPARC.
 - Describe plans for collaboration between SPARC Expedition Science Team members and how this will be facilitated and managed to promote focused research and progress (e.g., plans for in-person sampling parties, frequency of dedicated zooms, plans for SPARC workshops, e.g., attached to major conferences), and how results will be disseminated.
 - Outline discussions held with the Curators of the Core Repositories regarding the availability of core materials and plans for accessing and using repository facilities (see **Section 1.4**).
 - Plans for obtaining additional funding to complete the research, if this cannot be achieved using the € 300,000 SPARC award.
 - A Gantt chart showing the timelines for the research, key milestones and deliverables.

- an **Indicative Budget Statement** of ≤ 700 words that outlines how the award of €300,000 will be used to support the project most effectively. This should also outline any significant additional funding or in-kind contributions (e.g., analytical support) brought to the project by members of the SPARC Expedition Science Team.
- an **Overhead Waiver Letter** from the institution selected to hold the budget stating that they agree to administer the award without charging overheads.

Note that both the SPARC Implementation Plan and Indicative Budget Statement must be approved by all SPARC Expedition Science Team members before submission to the IODP³-SO, who will forward them to the MSP-FB Co-Chairs for review (in consultation with the IODP³ Vision Task Force).

2.6. SPARC Proposal Format Requirements

The main text of SPARC proposals, SPARC Implementation Plans and Indicative Budget Statements must adhere to the following formatting requirements:

- page size: A4
- font type: Arial (or equivalent)
- font size: 11- or 12-point
- line spacing: 1.5
- margin: 1.5 cm all around
- figures: cannot be larger than a single page A4
- in-text references: must be (Author, year) and not numerical superscripts

The two-page curricula vitae of proponents must adhere to the following formatting requirements:

- page size: A4
- font type: Arial (or equivalent)
- font size: 11- or 12-point
- line spacing: single
- margins: 1.5 cm all around.

The individual CVs should then be combined into a single PDF for submission.

Note that the maximum file size for individual PDFs is 15 MB.

3. SPARC Proposal Evaluation

3.1. Proposal Confidentiality

All SPARC proposals are confidential documents throughout the evaluation process. Individuals who receive and review SPARC proposals must agree not to disclose or disseminate proposal contents and not to discuss the proposal outside the context of their roles within IODP³. Unless a proponent requests otherwise, information in the proposal Cover Sheet will be publicly accessible on the IODP³ website upon acceptance of the proposal for consideration.

Before proceeding, please read the **Standard IODP³ Confidentiality Policy**, available at <http://www.iodp3.org>.

3.2. Review of SPARC Proposals by the SEP

3.2.1. SPARC Proposal Evaluation

Proposals submitted to the SPARC initiative will be evaluated by the IODP³ SEP at their first meeting following the submission deadline. The SEP Co-Chairs will assign reviewers from within the SEP-Science membership to examine and present each SPARC proposal to the panel. The review team will normally consist of three scientists tasked with assessing the scientific objectives of the SPARC proposal and an additional representative from the Core Repositories (for SPARCs that require access to cores and/or involve sample requests).

The SEP will assess each SPARC proposal in terms of its relevance to the *2050 Science Framework*, the suitability of the legacy assets for addressing the proposed scientific objectives, and whether the achievement of those objectives would likely result in scientific advances. The SEP will consider, based on input from the review team, the following questions while considering a SPARC proposal:

- Will the proposal produce transformative science that significantly advances one or more ambitions of the *2050 Science Framework*?
- How well-qualified is the proponent team to lead and engage in the proposed activity?
- Does the proponent team have appropriate diversity in terms of scientific expertise, affiliation, IODP³ member states, gender and career stages?
- Is the plan for conducting the research well-reasoned, well-organised, and based on a sound rationale?
- Are the proposed scientific questions likely to be able to be addressed effectively and in a novel way using available legacy assets (cores, samples, and/or data)?
- How well has the strategy to access cores, samples, and/or data been defined?
- Will the range of analytical techniques described in the SPARC allow the scientific objectives to be achieved, and are plans to access associated research facilities realistic?
- Do the proponents present a strong plan for managing the project and completing the work in a timely manner?

3.2.2. SPARC Proposal Decisions

Following SEP evaluation, proponents will receive a written summary of the SEP review, which will include one of the following two decisions:

- **Endorsed:** If the SEP endorses the proposal, it will be forwarded to the MSP-FB, along with SEP nominations for two SPARC Co-Chief Scientists drawn from the proponent team.
- **Declined:** If the proposal is declined by SEP, it will not be forwarded to the MSP-FB and will no longer be active in the system. Proponents may consider the SEP comments and re-enter the system through the submission of a new SPARC proposal to a future annual round.

Reasons that a proposal might be declined include:

- The proponent team is insufficiently diverse regarding scientific expertise, affiliation, nationalities, gender, and career stage (as outlined in [Section 1.1](#))
- The science outlined in the proposal does not meet the scope and ambition of the SPARC initiative, and/or could readily be achieved via one or more standard sample requests.
- The science objectives are not described well or are not compelling.
- The strategy for using legacy assets does not adequately support the science questions.

- The project is not feasible because the necessary legacy assets are not available or because the research approaches are unlikely to be successful.
- The proposal has scientific objectives that conform poorly with the overall ambitions of the *2050 Science Framework* or that do not bring sufficient added value to warrant support.

3.3. Consideration by the MSP Facility Board

Once the SEP has forwarded a SPARC Proposal to the MSP-FB, the MSP-FB will then be responsible for selecting projects to fund for implementation in each annual round and for notifying proponents of the status of their proposal. Selection may take into account a number of factors, including (but not limited to): the available budget for SPARCs in the year of submission; whether a SPARC proposal complements the science associated with MSP proposals residing at the MSP-FB and/or planned/recently implemented drilling/coring expeditions; and the diversity of science being funded by the SPARC scheme.

Selection for funding will trigger the start of the implementation of the SPARC via the procedures outlined in **Sections 1.2 to 1.4** above, with funding being released upon receipt of a satisfactory SPARC Implementation Plan, Indicative Budget Statement and Overhead Waiver Letter by the MSP-FB Co-Chairs.

SPARC proposals that are not selected for immediate implementation will be held at the MSP-FB and considered for implementation in subsequent rounds. Note that there is no guarantee that all SPARC proposals forwarded to the MSP-FB will be implemented within the timeframe of IODP³, as the number of proposals that can be funded each year will depend on available programmatic budgets.

4. Enquiries About SPARC Proposals

All enquiries about submission processes for SPARC proposals or the IODP³ Gateway system should be emailed to the IODP³ Science Office Proposal and Meetings Manager, Dr Chiara Amadori, at: proposals@iodp3.org.

Enquiries about the availability of legacy core materials (see **Section 1.4**) should be directed to the Curators of the Core Repositories, at the following email addresses:

Bremen Core Repository – bcr@marum.de

Gulf Coast Repository – curator@iodp.tamu.edu

Kochi Core Center – curator@jamstec.go.jp

Use the map of the core distribution scheme provided in **Section 1.4** to identify which repositories to contact regarding your SPARC proposal.