

Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 May 2020

To be held by webconference (due to COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions)

**REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNING COUNCIL SPECIAL FUND:
SCIENTIFIC IT PLATFORM
AND RETURN OF UNUSED FUNDS**

1. Scientific IT platform

1. This proposal aims to provide the necessary infrastructure to store all of IARC's scientific data safely (whether epidemiological, omics, images or databases), consistent with current best practices and regulation such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), consolidating data centrally to allow efficient and easy access as well as fostering Open Science through data sharing.

2. Currently, scientific data is stored across multiple systems, which leads to increased maintenance costs, difficulties in moving data, and a lack of a global view of what scientific data is held at IARC. Data analysis is often performed on local computers increasing security concerns about the safety of the data held on those devices.

3. The estimated cost of this proposal for storage servers (€115 000), compute servers (€70 000), network equipment (€25 000), data management and analysis software (€120 000), professional services (€20 000) as well as maintenance of the platform, for a period of four years is €350 000.

4. IARC has already started to implement such an approach for large datasets (mostly omics) requiring high performance computing (HPC). IARC's current HPC environment was put into production in September 2018, partially funded by the Governing Council Special Fund in 2017 and old environments were decommissioned. The migration phase was used to introduce a new data centric model for both storage and management of large data sets, which has proved to be a great success. The Agency progressed from four users of IARC's HPC platform in 2014 to 19 users in 2016 to its current level of 70 users across nine Groups and five Sections and 80 scientific projects storing their data on this system.

5. Applying the lessons learned from the HPC platform, IARC aims to generalize this approach to all its scientific data, by providing a unified centralized storage system, including backup and archive. The creation of a catalogue of our data will help to alleviate the lack of a global view of all our scientific data. The provision of associated data analysis software and hardware will ensure that our data stays in one unique place where scientists can work directly on the data with tools such as R, SAS and Stata, as well as potentially allowing remote access to these resources to external collaborators.

6. In line with the governance of the current HPC resources, as outlined in a request presented in 2017 (see document [SC/53/6](#) and Governing Council [Resolution GC/59/R9](#)), the Scientific IT platform would be operated as a shared resource under the responsibility of the IT Working Group of the Computational Biology, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Committee (C3B), who would provide access and support to the other research groups at IARC.
7. The Scientific Council discussed the requirement for adequate human resource capacities to sustain this project and recommended this to be considered during the development of IARC's next Medium-Term Strategy.
8. The Scientific Council asked how scientists in LMICs can use and access these tools. Stored data – which can be any kind of scientific data - will be secured and accessible through online platforms in the next phase of this project.
9. The Scientific Council acknowledged the need for safe storage of all IARC's scientific data on a scientific IT platform, strongly supported the request and recommended that the Governing Council approves the allocation of €350 000 from the GCSF for the scientific IT platform.
10. The Governing Council is requested to approve at its 62nd Session in May 2020 the use of €350 000 from the GCSF.

2. Return of unused funds

11. In May 2018, the Governing Council approved a budget of €115 000 from GCSF for the purchase an automated system for plasma phospholipid fatty acid profiling ([Resolution GC/60/R16](#)). Due to the change of personnel and reprioritization of research thereof, the concerned Section decided not to proceed with the purchase. The Scientific Council was informed of this during its 56th session in January 2020.
12. The Governing Council is requested to note this change of plan and the return of the unused funds to the GCSF.