



Freedom Online Coalition Working Groups – Terms of Reference

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) is a partnership of 27 governments, working to advance Internet freedom. Coalition members work closely together to coordinate their diplomatic efforts and engage with civil society and the private sector to support Internet freedom – including respect for freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and privacy online – worldwide.

The FOC working groups are multistakeholder, encompassing Coalition country members, representatives of civil society, academic and technical experts, and private sector representatives. They are established to explore in more detail important policy issues facing online freedom and to inform the work of the Coalition and its members. While working groups are initiated by the Coalition itself, working group members will determine the framing of issues and outputs.

The day to day management of the working groups will be the responsibility of the working group co-chairs, supported by the FOC Support Unit. The groups shall have at least one governmental and one non-governmental co-chair.

Membership of the working groups will consist of FOC country members that have expressed interest in participating in the group and named staff to represent them, as well as participants from other stakeholder groups—such as academia, industry, NGOs, and the technical community—who will serve in an individual capacity. Co-chairs will select individual participants through an open application process, taking into account expertise, geographic representation, and gender balance. Membership of the working groups will be published on the Coalition website.

Participation in working groups will be voluntary. Any member of a working group may step down at any time. In the case of a selected member, the working group co-chairs may either contact individuals who previously applied, or may initiate a new open call. If the affiliation of a selected member changes, they may remain a member of the working group.

Members are expected to play an active role in all communications – online or through conference calls. They are expected to read the relevant documentation and provide input when requested. Members who do not participate in calls, emails, or other working group activities for a period of at least three months may be asked to step down at the working group co-chairs' discretion. On an exceptional basis, a member who cannot participate in a call or meeting, the member can send a colleague from his or her organization to participate in the meeting as an observer.

The timeframe for the working groups' current mandate runs from the FO conference in 2015 until the next FO conference in 2016. At the end of the working group mandate, members will be asked to reconfirm their intention to take part in the working group. Openings created by non-renewing members will be filled through a new open call.

Working groups will conduct research and consultations to further public understanding of relevant Internet freedom issues. Any recommendations made through these efforts will not be binding on the Coalition or on Coalition members. Final documents will be the product of the working group itself rather than the Coalition, though they will be published on the Coalition website and made available to all Coalition members. Any specific recommendations to the Coalition itself will be considered by the Coalition through a separate process.

Working groups will operate virtually with occasional meetings of members at scheduled international events such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Outputs will be arrived at by consensus.

These general terms of reference should be seen as complementary to a more detailed work-plan specific to each working group.