EXCOM/COs Meeting 2011
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Horizon Scanning:
A View of the Future
Executive Summary

**Title:** Horizon Scanning: A View of the Future

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**Relevant URLs or references to other reports:** Not applicable

**Introduction/ Background:** To sustain a position of leadership SCAR must maintain a continually evolving vision of frontiers and emerging directions in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science. To this end, SCAR will sponsor a periodic assessment of scientific frontiers and grand challenges in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science. The world’s leading experts will be assembled to scan the horizon for emerging frontiers and identify gaps in knowledge. These assessments will inform SCAR’s leadership and members as they evaluate the organization’s scientific portfolio, conclude programs, and approve new directions. An overall framework will be developed that utilizes opportunities to engage the scientific community and provide input to the ultimate horizon scanning event.

**Important Issues or Factors:** There is an increasing mandate and need for SCAR to provide advice to a range of stakeholders on future directions in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science. The proposed activities create a rigorous process that will provide the information needed to make informed assessments of future directions and research needs.

**Recommendations/Actions and Justification:** Approve the concept of developing a “Horizon Scanning” event.

**Expected Benefits/Outcomes:** Adoption of a horizon scanning process will reinforce the reputation of SCAR as a leader in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science and research. This activity will inform decision-making so that SCAR’s portfolio of science activities is responsive to emerging trends and issues.

**Partners:** As deemed appropriate to inform the process.

**Budget Implications:** Initial funds ($5,000 for a planning meeting) are requested to progress planning efforts. Funding for the horizon-scanning event is expected to be solicited from external sources though some seed funds from SCAR may be needed.
Horizon Scanning: A View of the Future

To sustain a position of leadership, SCAR must maintain an evolving vision of frontiers and emerging directions in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science. To this end, SCAR will sponsor a periodic visioning exercise that will assemble the world’s leading experts to scan the horizon for emerging frontiers and identify critical gaps in knowledge in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science and research. The assessment will produce a vision of future directions and grand challenges in Antarctic science. These assessments will inform SCAR leadership and members as they evaluate SCAR’s scientific portfolio, conclude programs and approve new directions.

A Strategic Framework

Horizon scanning identifies emerging issues sufficiently early to plan for future directions in research. A systematic search is conducted to discern trends in research to be used to improve SCAR’s ability to respond to emerging issues and position itself for greatest affect. These activities provide information that can be used to set research priorities, inform scientific advice to policy makers, and assist in strategic planning. Demand will always exceed resources so decisions must be made among often equally deserving choices and priorities must be set. The aim of horizon scanning is not to predict the future, but to identify emerging issues in sufficient time to inform decision making in regard to resource allocation and future directions (Sutherland et al. 2009). The process engages a broad cross-section of the communities that SCAR serves.

Engagement Activities

The process of horizon scanning will be conducted within a framework of on-going discussions about future direction across the SCAR community and beyond. Various opportunities will be capitalized on to provide information to the ultimate activity. This will include, but not be limited to, charging the SCAR Standing Scientific Groups with including “future directions” discussions in their biennial meetings. Disciplinary-focused events, such as SCAR symposia, will also be asked to include “future directions” types of activities including surveys and discussion groups. These activities provide regular input to the horizon scanning process.

Information will be gathered at SCAR conferences, workshops, meetings and other scientific gatherings. Outcomes from SCAR’s Action, Expert, Scientific Research Programmes and Program Planning Groups will be a source of information. Strategic planning activities and outputs by SCAR members, such as National Antarctic Programs, will be consulted.

The Horizon Scanning Event

It proposed that a formal, horizon scanning event be staged every four or five years to synthesize input from the sources listed above. It is expected that 40 to 50 experts, that span the range of Antarctic and Southern Ocean science, will be invited. The format and structure of the event will be determined by a steering group that will assess the advantages and disadvantages of various models for these types of events. A summary report of deliberations and recommendations will be issued.

Financial Considerations

Estimates suggest that a horizon scanning event will cost about $200,000 to $250,000 USD depending on the number of participants, the location, and the duration of the meeting. An event such as this would most likely attract significant offers to host the meeting including underwriting partial costs for the meeting. The event would also be attractive to various Foundations and it is expected that the bulk of the funding can be solicited through proposal submission to Foundations and other funding agencies.
Next Steps
To move this concept forward, it is recommended that a small group of five or six of SCAR’s leadership be asked to develop a model for the overall process including, but not limited to: information gathering, a structure for the conduct of the event itself, identification of potential sponsors, and definition of expected outputs. It has been suggested that the Horizon Scanning event be coupled with a Colloquium of Muse Prize awardees and aim for 2014 for the first event in conjunction with the SCAR meetings in New Zealand.