TOAR-III Working Group Guidelines

Authored by the TOAR-III Steering Committee, October 27, 2026

Summary

The third phase of IGAC's Tropospheric Ozone Assessment Report (TOAR-III) was initiated on January 1, 2026 (https://igacproject.org/activities/TOAR/TOAR-III). The scope of the Activity and its publication procedures are defined in the *TOAR-III Scope and Roadmap* document on the TOAR-III website. The TOAR-III assessment will be based on the results from Focus Working Groups and other contributions to an open Community Special Issue. TOAR-III working groups (WGs) shall be established by the scientific community and will form the backbone of TOAR-III data analyses and the synthesis of scientific discoveries. WGs operate under the guidelines described in the *TOAR-III Working Group Guidelines* document (available on the TOAR-III website). This document describes the procedures for establishing new TOAR-III WGs, including the application and review process.

Definition

TOAR-III Focus Working Groups (WGs) consist of at least six scientists from a minimum of three countries, and their primary goal is to synthesize, conduct, and/or support the science that will be in the TOAR-III assessment.

WG life cycle

TOAR-III WGs are established through a proposal from a team of scientists who wish to collaborate on a specific aspect of the TOAR-III assessment report. This can be a specific science question or synthesis effort, a comparative analysis of data, the development of new (statistical) methods, etc. For details on the application procedure, see the *Application Procedures for TOAR-III Working Groups* document on the TOAR-III website. WG proposals will be reviewed and approved by the TOAR-III Steering Committee (SC), provided they are within the scope of the assessment and meet the criteria outlined in the *TOAR-III Scope and Roadmap* document (available on the TOAR-III website). Approved WGs will be listed on the TOAR-III website, including the contact details of the WG co-leads. All WGs start out as Focus WGs, since WGs are expected to focus on specific topics. The outcome of a WG will generally consist of one or more contributed papers to the TOAR-III Community Special Issue. However, it is also possible that WGs specializing in data access or data analysis produce, for example, will generate datasets for inclusion in the TOAR-III data infrastructure or software code (e.g., to perform a new type of statistical analysis).

As TOAR-III evolves, the TOAR-III SC may invite individual WGs to prepare specific parts of the assessment, e.g., one of the core assessment papers. This may involve a re-organization of the WG in close coordination with the TOAR-III SC. After this transition, the Focus WG will be called an Assessment WG. It is also possible that WGs can be merged or re-focused during this procedure. The lifetime of a TOAR-III WG ends either when the originally specified objectives have been met or ultimately with the termination of the TOAR-III activity in 2030.

WG operating guidelines and governance principles

1) The primary goal of a WG is to synthesize, conduct, and/or support the science that will be in the TOAR-III assessment and publish these results. The WGs provide the environment for developing the TOAR-III publications that will comprise the assessment report.

- Focus WGs will generate results that help the preparation of the TOAR-III assessment and also publish these results in the Community Special Issue and/or as datasets or code for use in the TOAR data infrastructure.
- Assessment WGs will synthesize and evaluate the state of the science on tropospheric ozone and produce the individual core assessment papers that comprise the TOAR-III assessment. Each invited TOAR-III core assessment paper must originate from an Assessment WG. It is possible for an Assessment WG to continue focused studies and prepare papers for the Community Special Issue while beginning to work on the assessment papers.

2) TOAR-III WGs should fit the scope of TOAR-III (see the *TOAR-III Scope and Roadmap* document on the TOAR-III website) and must be approved by the TOAR-III SC (see the *Application Procedures for TOAR-III Working Groups* document on the TOAR-III website). The TOAR-III SC will encourage ideas and research through open discussion with the WGs.

3) WGs will be openly announced and solicit participation from the TOAR community. WGs shall seek consensus on all matters in a spirit of community.

4) WGs last for the duration of TOAR-III, and they will terminate at the end of TOAR-III, unless the WG reaches consensus that its activities end earlier (i.e., the WG's objectives have been reached, or they are impossible to reach).

5) WGs will review their scope and objectives at least annually in coordination with the SC. To facilitate the coordination, each WG has a member from the TOAR-III SC (referred to as the SC liaison), who will keep the SC informed of WG progress. Each WG will also provide brief quarterly written progress updates to the SC. The annual review is especially relevant if the WG objectives are to be expanded and new WG members with new foci are to be added, as the SC must seek to maintain the most efficient structure and distribution of work across the entire TOAR-III activity.

6) TOAR-III WGs consist of at least six scientists from a minimum of three countries. Depending on the topic of the WG the TOAR-III SC may also advise a larger minimum group size to encourage a broad community perspective.

7) A TOAR-III WG shall be led by one to three co-leads. WGs appoint their co-leads and agree on the duration of their tenure or potential rotation principles. For Assessment WGs, the WGs should be led by the identified lead authors of the assessment papers.

8) WGs may convene their own workshops/meetings and define their collaboration protocols and platforms.

9) TOAR is committed to open data practices and all WGs will follow COPDESS (Coalition on Publishing Data in the Earth and Space Sciences) principles: http://www.copdess.org/statement-of-commitment/

Funding

TOAR-III WGs provide voluntary in-kind contributions to the TOAR-III assessment. There is no funding available to compensate WG members for any work they conduct, nor can TOAR-III cover publication fees or travel expenses. If the TOAR-III SC secures funding for TOAR-III, it will first be directed towards covering publication fees for the core assessment papers and supporting larger TOAR-III meetings and workshops. The TOAR-III SC will, however, support the WGs' initiatives to leverage funding, for example, by providing recommendation letters if the requests are reasonable.