



14 September 2016

**Dr Nick Austin**

**Interim Executive Director, SMO**

Dear Nick

I have pleasure in submitting, on behalf of the ISPC, our assessments of the proposals for 11 CRPs and 3 Platforms. As agreed earlier, we will submit our analysis of the GLDC proposal on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Extra time was required since this proposal has been significantly revised and we sent it out for external review.

Also attached is a Table which rates the 11 CRPs and their constituent 52 Flagships. CRPs were considered against the following rating categories:

A+: Outstanding – of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field (fully evolved, exceeds expectations; recommended unconditionally).

A: Excellent – high quality research and a strongly compelling proposal that is at an advanced stage of evolution as a CRP, with strong leadership which can be relied on to continue making improvements.

A-: Very good – a sound and compelling proposal displaying high quality research and drawing on established areas of strength, which could benefit from a more forward-looking vision.

B+: Good – a sound research proposal but one which is largely framed by ‘business as usual’ and is deficient in some key aspects of a CRP that can contribute to System-wide SLOs.

B: Fair – Elements of a sound proposal but has one or more serious flaws with only a weakly compelling vision; not recommended without significant change.

C: Unsatisfactory – Does not make an effective case for the significance or quality of the proposed research.

CRPs are highly complex constructs and no proposal has yet evolved to the level of outstanding, in the opinion of the ISPC, although much progress has been made. A one-page summary of the key characteristics of each CRP is provided. Please note that we have included the beneficiary targets estimated by each CRP which were requested by the Guidance Notes, but the ISPC considers these in most cases to be aspirational.

Each Flagship was assigned a rating of ‘Strong’, ‘Moderate’ or ‘Weak’, based on assessment of strategic relevance and theory of change, scientific quality and comparative advantage. A table summarises the content of each FP, together with bullet points describing its strengths and ‘weaknesses or risks’, where ‘risks’ includes risks in relation to delivery of outcomes associated with the nature of the

research. This column is intended to enable donors to identify a balanced portfolio of FPs, in the knowledge of associated risks and the 'upstream/downstream' nature of the research

We also rated the 3 Platform proposals using the Categories described above for CRPs. Modules were not rated.

We would like to make it clear that the overall ratings of a CRP are not the sum of the ratings for the FPs. The CRP ratings reflect ISPC confidence in the ability of the leadership team and lead Center to deliver a coherent, integrated programme of research which has a long-term vision, is well aligned with the SRF and has a strong feasibility of delivery. The FP ratings reflect ISPC assessment of whether that FP is likely to generate international public goods which will make a significant contribution to the CRP as a whole.

Only 6 FPs are considered to be weak, compared to 15 as moderate and 31 rated as strong.

The ISPC compared these ratings with the equivalent ratings given at pre-proposal stage. At that stage there were 69 Flagships, whereas this latest round of submissions has 52 Flagships (excluding GLDC).

Of the 52 FPs (and taking account of mergers and re-ordering), 24 improved their rating, 25 stayed more or less the same and only 3 decreased in their ratings (i.e. the full proposal did not meet the expected earlier potential).

The ISPC recognizes that the funds requested in these proposals exceed the total amount likely to be available in Windows 1 and 2. We will therefore provide a short paper on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September, at the same time as the commentary on the GLDC proposal, which will suggest further analysis that could contribute to decisions on W1 and 2 funding in the November SC meeting.

Section 3 of the assessment is an appraisal of the CRP responses to the major comments the ISPC made on the CRP proposals in our June 16 commentaries. This analysis is intended primarily for CRP leaders' use. The ISPC will be also continue analysing and assessing the additional comments and responses the CRPs have made in their revised proposal submissions and addendum of July 31, and we will make the results of this further analysis available to CRP leaders where needed and relevant.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Gill', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Margaret Gill

Chair of the ISPC