



# EARTH BIOGENOME PROJECT GOVERNANCE

EARTH BIOGENOME PROJECT WORKING GROUP  
NOVEMBER 4, 2022

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION: THE EBP .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>GOVERNANCE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. THE MEMBERSHIP COUNCIL .....	2
2. THE EBP EXECUTIVE COUNCIL .....	3
3. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL .....	4
4. COMMITTEES .....	4
5. THE SECRETARIAT .....	5
6. EBP REGIONAL NODES .....	6
7. EBP POLICY AND GUIDANCE .....	6

## Introduction: The EBP

Increasing our understanding of Earth's biodiversity and responsibly stewarding its resources are among the most crucial scientific, social, and cultural challenges of the new millennium. The Earth BioGenome Project (EBP) aims to advance that goal by sequencing, cataloging, and characterizing the genomes of all of Earth's eukaryotic biodiversity over approximately 10 years. The EBP's principal activity will be to coordinate a globally distributed group of individuals and organizations to reach that goal. This network of networks will require diverse specialists and working groups to address specific parts necessary for completion of the main project goals, including 1) collection and storage of high-quality samples for whole genome sequencing, 2) whole genome sequencing, 3) genome assembly and associated analyses, 4) data curation and sharing, and 5) fundraising and related outreach activities. All of these efforts should be undertaken in ways consistent with the goals of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The EBP officially launched November 1, 2018 in London. The EBP has been operating under an interim governance structure as outlined under an initial EBP Memorandum of Understanding, which will be retired when the permanent governance model, as described in this document, is in place.

### Governance

EBP will have a global hub-and-spokes model with the EBP as the hub for coordinating and assisting in work done by its Members. The EBP's activities will be implemented by an EBP Secretariat, with the potential for there to be EBP Regional Nodes and Regional Secretariats as the Project progresses. The main governance bodies of the EBP are the Membership Council, which is made up of representatives of all the EBP Members, and the Executive Council, which is elected by the Membership Council.

#### 1. The Membership Council

The EBP Membership Council shall be made up of all EBP Affiliates. Affiliates may be regional, national or multi-national initiatives that focus on large-scale sequencing of eukaryotes. Affiliates may also be other institutions with active programs that support the goals of the EBP, such as biological resource collections, museums, genome institutes, and others. Acceptance of an Affiliate, and consequent admission to the Membership Council, will be determined by a vote of Membership Council, after it receives notice of an Affiliate's application and has an opportunity to comment on the admission.

##### 1.1 *Status as a Member*

At the time this governance document comes into effect, members of the EBP Working Group will be accepted as Members of EBP. Thereafter, acceptance of an Affiliate, and consequent admission to the Membership Council, will be determined by a vote of Membership Council, after it receives notice of an Affiliate's application and has an opportunity to comment on the admission. Similarly, the Membership Council can vote to remove a project or institution as a Member.

## *1.2 The Role of the Membership Council in EBP Governance*

In addition to determining who are Members of EBP, the EBP Membership Council must approve any amendments to this document. It will also elect the Executive Council and its Chair as well as the members of the Nominations Committee. All formal EBP Policies or Guidance will be adopted only if approved by the Membership Council. The Executive Council may designate other important matters as requiring approval by majority of the Membership Council. The Executive Council may also consult with and seek advice from the Membership Council on any topics it chooses and the Membership Council may provide advice or suggestions to the Executive Council on any matters. For all Membership Council votes, a quorum of a majority of the Membership Council is required and election or approval will require an affirmative vote of a majority of those counted in the quorum or some other voting method, such as proportional or preference voting, as approved by the Membership Council.

## *1.3 Meetings of the Membership Council*

The Executive Council will schedule meetings of the Membership Council at least once each quarter of the year, unless the Executive Council cancels the meeting because of unusual circumstances. The Executive Council Chair shall preside over meetings of the Membership Council; the Chair may designate another member of the Executive Council to preside should the Chair be unable to attend. Meetings may be held in person, by electronic communication, or by a combination of those methods. A majority of the Membership Council will constitute a quorum and that number must be present for any business to be transacted. Actions will normally require affirmative votes of a majority of the members present. The Executive Council may, with reasonable notice, choose in particular cases to allow electronic communication of Membership Council votes over a reasonable time to allow voting by members who are not able to attend the relevant meeting, in which case approval will require a majority of those voting. The Executive Council shall set the initial agenda for each meeting of the Membership Council but the Membership Council shall have a reasonable opportunity to discuss additional issues. The Executive Council may invite others to attend the meetings of the Membership Council, with or without the right to speak, but without the right to vote.

## **2. The EBP Executive Council**

After receiving recommendations from the Nominations Committee, the Membership Council will elect the EBP Executive Council to undertake the immediate direction of the EBP. The Executive Council will have 9 members; its members will serve three-year terms, in staggered groups of three. Executive Council members may serve no more than two consecutive terms, but can be re-elected after at least one year off the Council.

### *2.1 Executive Council Chair*

The Membership Council, advised by the Nominations Committee, will elect one person to serve as the Executive Council's Chair. The Chair will be chief executive of the EBP. The Chair will have a three-year term, subject to only one consecutive renewal.

## 2.2 *Other Officers*

The Membership Council may choose to create the positions of EBP Treasurer and Secretary. If it does, it will elect such persons from the Executive Council, after receiving recommendations from the Nominations Committee. The Chair of the Executive Council will designate one member of the Council as vice chair to serve in the Chair's place when necessary.

## 2.3 *Ex officio members of the Executive Council*

The Executive Council may designate chairs of some or all EBP committees as ex officio members of the Executive Council, with the right and duty to attend (personally or through a committee member they name) and to participate in the Executive Council's meetings but without a vote.

## 2.4 *Meetings of the Executive Council*

The Executive Council will set its own meeting schedule. It shall meet at least once each month unless the Executive Council cancels the meeting because of unusual circumstances. Meetings may be held in person, via electronic communication, or a combination. A majority of the voting members of the Executive Council will constitute a quorum and that number must be present for any formal business to be transacted. Actions will normally require affirmative votes of a majority of the members present. The Executive Council may, with reasonable notice, choose on a case by case basis to allow electronic communication of votes over a reasonable time to allow voting by members who are not able to attend the relevant meeting.

## 3. *The Advisory Council*

The Membership Council shall have the power to create an Advisory Council, if it feels it is appropriate, which would serve solely in an advisory role to both the Executive Council and the Membership Council. If the Membership Council decides to create an Advisory Council, it can determine the details of its powers and meetings.

## 4. *Committees*

The Executive Council shall have the power to create both standing and ad hoc EBP Committees and to set out their powers and duties. These Committees will report to the Executive Council, with appropriate assistance from the Secretariat. The Executive Council is required to appoint at least the following six standing Committees: a Scientific Advisory Committee; an Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Committee; a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee; a Governance Committee; a Communications Committee; and a Nominations Committee.

#### 4.1 *Committee Chairs*

The Executive Council shall select the chairs of all standing committees of EBP, after receiving recommendations from the Nominations Committee. Chairs shall serve for three-year terms with only one consecutive renewal possible.

#### 4.2 *Committee Members*

The Membership Council shall elect members of the Nominations Committee, after receiving recommendations from the current version of that Committee (if any). For all other Committees, the Executive Council Chair shall have the power to appoint members of any EBP Committee. Committee members need not be associated with EBP projects or member institutions. The Chair may delegate the appointment of members to the Nominating Committee, to the Committee itself, or to another member of the Executive Council. Committee members shall serve for staggered three-year, renewable terms.

#### 4.3 *Committee Meetings*

Each Committee Chair will set the Committee's meeting schedule except that the Executive Council Chair may require a particular number of meetings per month, quarter, or year. Meetings may be held in person, via electronic communication, or a combination. A majority of the Committee members will constitute a quorum and that number must be present for any business to be transacted. Actions will normally require affirmative votes of a majority of the members present. The Committee Chair may, with reasonable notice, choose in particular cases to allow electronic communication of votes over a reasonable time to allow voting by members who are not able to attend the relevant meeting.

#### 4.4 *Subcommittees*

The Executive Council, the Executive Council Chair, or the Committees may create within Committees specific subcommittees to pursue specific tasks, for either a continuing period or on an ad hoc basis.

#### 4.5 *The Nominations Committee*

The Nominations Committee shall provide at least twice as many nominees as there are openings for a position. In making nominations and recommendations, the Nominating Committee shall ensure that it provides for broad diversity, including but not necessarily limited to diversity of geographical origin, culture, gender, indigenous origin, and academic field.

### 5. *The Secretariat*

The Secretariat will consist of an Executive Director as well as any additional staff members whose positions will be approved by the Executive Council. Subject to available funding, the Secretariat performs day-to-day operational management for the EBP. The Secretariat will report to the

Executive Council and is bound by decisions of the Executive Council or, as long as consistent with Executive Council decisions, those of the Executive Council Chair.

### *5.1 Term of the Secretariat*

It is expected that The Secretariat will be run by an institution that volunteers to do so, i.e., those that provide space, resources, and personnel for the Secretariat. The Executive Council shall appoint a Secretariat for a three-year, renewable, term. The Executive Council shall require advance budgets and annual financial reports from the Secretariat if appropriate.

## 6. EBP Regional Nodes

To facilitate the achievement of the EBP's goals, EBP Regional Nodes may be established to coordinate EBP-related activities across broad geographical areas, including continents and political unions (e.g., European Union, African Union) and countries with multiple Affiliates. EBP Regional Nodes will establish their own governance structures but are expected to abide by the principles set forth in this document. To be recognized as an EBP Regional Node, it will be necessary to codify coordination with EBP in its governance document, and a stated commitment to adhere to all EBP recommendations and guidelines.

### *6.1 Regional Secretariats*

Each EBP Regional Node will be expected to establish a Secretariat in accordance with the Secretariat structure outlined in this document (see section 5). Other official organs of a Regional Node Secretariat are permitted, subject to oversight by the EBP Executive Council.

## 7. EBP Policy and Guidance

The Executive Council may propose policies and guidance for EBP, usually after they have been considered by one or more standing or ad hoc committees. The policies or guidance will become effective if adopted by the Membership Council. These may state that they are, in whole or part, either binding on Affiliates or are recommendations to them. In particular, the EBP will maintain policies or guidance—existing, amended, or new— on the specific issues set out below.

### *7.1 Compliance with the Convention on Biodiversity*

EBP supports wide access to biological materials and data but within a context that provides fair benefit sharing to the countries, indigenous peoples, and local communities from which those samples and those data are derived. The EBP shall adopt a policy that EBP and its Affiliates will abide by the Convention on Biological Diversity and, more directly, national legislation and regulations adopted pursuant to it, whether or not they are legally binding on the EBP or any given Affiliate. The EBP also recognizes that the acquisition and sharing of data may be

subject to the rights of local peoples and jurisdictions which may sometimes limit any or all forms of data acquisition or sharing.

### *7.2 Data Sharing and Management*

EBP is committed to open access and sharing of biological and especially genomic data to enable all nations and peoples to progress and share the benefits of global biodiversity.

### *7.3 Publication*

EBP encourages Affiliates to promote the open and responsible sharing and reuse of data prior to first publication and supports rapid formal publication of EBP reference genomes where credit is fairly attributed to all contributors. However, EBP respects that some Affiliates may wish to safeguard the interests of their members to the rights of first publication through an embargo period codified in the Affiliate's explicit Publication Policy.

### *7.4 Intellectual Property*

A major objective of EBP is to maximize public benefit from data produced by the member Affiliates. Many EBP Members will agree that this goal is best achieved if the data remain publicly accessible without any restrictions, but different institutions, cultures, peoples, and countries may have policies or laws that are in tension with this goal.