



Agenda item item 5: Strategy

IAH Strategy to 2030

Background

The IAH Forward Look initiative arose out of consultations with IAH members, Council and a meeting in Reading (UK) in 2010, with actions proposed under five headings:

1. Education and academic development
2. Internal development of IAH
3. Informing and influencing global policy
4. Enhancing alliances with external agencies
5. Enhancing the development of groundwater science.

This initiative provided a strategic plan to guide the Association's development from 2010-2020 with two audits of progress with the Action Plan in 2017 and 2020.

In 2020, the outgoing Secretary General, Bruce Misstear, wrote Forward Look beyond 2020 posing a list of questions about IAH's future which formed the basis of a members' survey in 2021.

The actions now proposed are based on the results of the members survey, some further consultations, more to be done in future with selected groups.

Objectives and aspirations

The concerns and wider aspirations of IAH leading to 2030 are enshrined in the São Paulo-Brussels Groundwater (BraBel) Declaration. In order to meet the objectives and progress the urgent actions, IAH and its members requires a strategy to continue the good work already underway and improve the sustainability, equality and diversity of the organisation by increasing membership, retaining members by providing benefits and good communication, education, outreach and knowledge transfer and collaboration with other organisations to promote understanding, wise use and protection of global groundwater resources.

Main themes and actions for future strategy

- Active involvement of members, diversity and inclusion

National Chapters

Although many National Chapters (NCs) are very active, IAH needs to encourage all of them to provide activities and support for members, and for members to take active roles in NCs. Action is for regional VPs to promote this and ensure that members in countries with no NC are given the opportunity to join in the activities of a neighbouring NC. This requires support from regional VPs. IAH expects NCs to be cost neutral /self-sufficient but limited central funding could be available for strategically important initiatives.

IAH should promote twinning arrangements and support for new NCs from established groups as current and previous arrangements e.g., Portugal and Afghanistan, in addition to sponsored memberships.

Commissions and Networks (C&Ns) need to be more transparent and encourage wider participation. Although some are very active and disseminate information widely, IAH should encourage more communication and regularly inform members that they can join any C+Ns.

Early Career Hydrogeologists Network (ECHN) is a key feature of IAH and its future sustainability. ECHN should be independent with its own business plan. The enthusiasm and activity are tremendous, but this is not always sustained over long periods. IAH should encourage ECHN to develop a succession plan and rolling recruitment of active members to assist in continuity and sustainability as the leadership at that time move on with their careers.

IAH should require all committees (NCs, C&Ns, Council, congress organisers etc) to have at least 2 EC members and to openly aim for diversity when recruiting new members. This promotes opportunities, career development, continuity and inclusion.

Recommended Actions

Ensure members in countries with no NC are given an opportunity to join activities and benefit from other suitable NCs

Encourage established NCs to support others with less experience, fewer advantages etc. Promote this and facilitate matching of NCs.

Expect C&Ns to have an organising committee, with at least three members, including two early career members) and not be reliant on one or two individuals. Encourage sharing of information and encouraging wider member participation. All committees should aim for diverse membership.

ECHN to provide business plan and plan for succession and sustainability.

- [Education and career development](#)

Education and outreach

There are many other initiatives as well as IAH. IAH should work more closely with the Groundwater Project and GroundwaterU to develop resources jointly and raise awareness. Many IAH members already contribute to the Groundwater Project.

Career development

Continue mentoring scheme.

IAH should develop guidelines for professional development, essential skills and core competencies for hydrogeologists, similar to those used for professional qualifications by chartered institutions (Geological Society etc). These can be linked to training modules and work experience, thus providing a framework for members' (mostly early career development, but not a formal chartership scheme.

Recommended actions

Continue to explore links and collaborate with Groundwater project, GroundwaterU etc. This may require a new working group or network for coordination.

Continue IAH mentoring scheme

Establish a new education working group or network to develop guidelines for professional development.

- [Communications](#)

Website

IAH is upgrading the website to enhance look, content and user experience and ensure future functioning and security.

Member communications

Communications from NCs and directly from the secretariat, through emails and social media, are essential. IAH needs to review what is the most effective method and which languages should be used, as member comments are contradictory. This needs more consultation.

Other suggestions for improving internal communications were periodic joint meetings (online where appropriate) of IAH's groups (NCs, C&Ns) to encourage sharing of success stories and to provide mutual support.

Recommended actions

Complete current upgrade of website

Consult selected members about communications based on the survey responses

Organise periodic joint meetings of IAH's groups to share success stories and provide mutual support

- [Congresses](#)

Some members commented that IAH doesn't need a big congress every year, more regional congresses are needed, hybrid options important but opportunities to meet are valued. Some think congresses are too long and academic.

IAH could

- Continue with annual congresses moving around to different regions as usual
- Always offer hybrid options with reduced fee for online only
- Ask organisers to consider a more compact programme with mid-congress trips at the beginning or end (like Montpellier 2016)
- Consider themed conferences rather than the current broad content with some applied sessions focussed on practical solutions
- Encourage NCs and C&Ns to continue with and organise more, short, online (and in person) meetings/technical presentations throughout the year (many already do).

Recommended actions

Continue congress programme ensuring good geographical spread

Ensure that all congresses consider hybrid options

Support and promote local conferences organised by NCs and regions

Encourage NCs and C&Ns to organise short online technical meetings and share with wider IAH membership

- [Publications](#)

Hydrogeology Journal

Continue to publish printed journal as now with Cliff Voss and his editorial team.

Moving forward, IAH should consider moving to online publication only and long term sustainability and succession planning. This requires discussion with Cliff Voss, the editorial team and Springer.

Books

Current book series has now been completed and the books editor has retired.

Future books to be digital with a wider audience than IAH members. There's a potential overlap with the Groundwater Project, so IAH work could with the GWP to produce and promote books.

The MAR commission's latest book on MAR Overview and governance has been published in 2022 as the first online free book. The preparation, writing and peer review was all done by the MAR commission.

SOS series are highly rated in the member survey but looking and reading a bit old style so IAH could:

- finish off the series with Groundwater and Rural water supply (with RWSN) and Groundwater and irrigated agriculture, which are being prepared in 2022, and then stop with the current format apart from translations.
- relaunch a new overview series in a more modern format and style and some different themes. C+N's could provide content, the Groundwater Quality commission is planning one on PFAS, potentially supported by some videos.
- Consider reissuing updated and shortened versions of some of the existing SOS papers.

Recommended actions

Discuss future and sustainability of HJ with editorial team and publisher

New digital book series started with MAR overview published online. Consider how to continue with other topics

Complete current SOS series with Rural water supply and Irrigated agriculture topics in 2022

Translate more existing SOS papers to other languages

Start new format SOS series with Groundwater Quality topic – Groundwater Quality Commission is preparing a paper on PFAS.

- [Member benefits](#)

The survey responses to this question were very varied and tended to focus on jobs, career progression and training. Many NCs have a jobs page, and this is more appropriate at local level, otherwise there's no need to duplicate Josh's water jobs.

Others include commercial deals (e.g., with Dell computers), joint memberships with other organisations, education and webinars, national chapters as covered above.

Recommended actions

Many member benefits will follow from the actions covered in other topics, but this needs revisiting in the near future

Follow up commercial deals e.g., Dell

- Outreach and influencing global policy

Members commented on establishing links to other organisations, greater visibility, press releases and following up on the recommendations from congresses. The BraBel declaration is an important step forward on this, along with the World Water Day and Year of Groundwater activities in 2022. The importance of reaching outside the professional hydrogeology community and inclusion of groundwater management were also highlighted. The executive, council, C&N members and other proactive members of IAH do a lot of this outreach, but it is very time consuming so requires additional inputs. The key issues are to focus the activity to maximise effectiveness and involve more IAH members in this activity. This may require forming a new working group or network to coordinate the efforts. There are many opportunities for more members to 'carry the groundwater flag' for IAH. The Executive proposed that a 'call tree' approach should be established to engage more members and harness this widespread expertise. Where IAH centrally is informed of a need or opportunity to participate and influence, a request to members can be put out via a 'call tree'. It is envisaged that this could be organised in line with IAH's Regions, national chapters, and commissions and networks, to utilise the collective wisdom from our thousands of members.

Recommended actions

Review current activities for effectiveness and impact and decide priorities for future strategy

Consider creating a new working group or network to involve more IAH members in outreach and influencing policy

Set up a 'call tree' approach for contacts and recruiting volunteers for interaction with international organisations

- Finance

IAH needs to be sustainable and self-supporting financially with sufficient reserves to weather difficult periods such as the Covid pandemic, but it is not intended to make a profit. Any surplus income is used to promote the organisation's aims, with a focus on the charitable objectives of education, outreach, supporting members in low-income countries and influencing policy. The membership fees contribute a substantial proportion of the income, including those from corporate members. IAH has considered international sponsorship in the past, but one view is that this is best done on a local basis as not all potential sponsors are considered acceptable by the global community.

In 2022, the Executive proposed that membership fees should, once again, be maintained at current levels for the next year, but that there will need to be modest increases in the future. Membership has fallen a little during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Executive is keen to help members renew their subscriptions.

Students make up around 8% of IAH's membership. IAH Council would like to encourage all students who are currently studying hydrogeology or any groundwater related subject to become members of IAH, by offering three years' free membership. The aim for IAH is to attract members and introduce them at an early stage to the benefits of belonging to IAH. Free membership would not include

Hydrogeology Journal. It is hoped that many will remain members of IAH following the free period of student membership.

IAH has different fee bands, offering lower fee rates to individuals and organisations who live or are based in non “high income” countries and territories. Our policy is based on World Bank economic data which uses four income groupings: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high. It is many years since IAH reviewed its fee categories. During this time the alignment between IAH’s categories and the World Bank’s income groups has diverged significantly. It is therefore proposed that IAH’s fee categories should be realigned with the World Bank’s income groupings, to re-establish a more realistic and fairer scheme. The fees would be adjusted gradually and overall the revised fees as proposed would have a neutral effect on IAH’s membership income. An advisory vote is proposed at the 2022 AGM to help the IAH Council to consider how such changes could be made from 2024 onwards.

Recommended actions

Freeze membership fees for 2023 but consider modest increases in future

Introduce 3 years’ free membership for students

Realign fee categories with the World Bank income groupings

Recruit more corporate members

Consider options for international sponsors

Allow NCs and conference organisers to seek sponsorship according to local preferences

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