

“Quest for reproducibility - Forming a next-level funders community”: A summary of the first TIER2 funder workshop

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1. INTRODUCTION

TIER2 is a three-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme and UKRI to boost knowledge on reproducibility, create tools, engage communities, implement interventions and policies across different contexts to increase re-use and overall quality of research results. TIER2 aims to engage and address researchers, funders, and publishers with co-creation activities central to the project.

On October 18th, 2023, TIER2 convened its first workshop for funders, attended by 4 representatives of major funders in Europe. The meeting agenda and list of attendees is provided in the Appendix.

The workshop's aim was to:

- Introducing the TIER2 Project.
- Initiating an active stakeholder community of funders who are interested in the project and willing to invest time and energy in future empirical steps in this space
- Discussing key topics on reproducibility which are important for funders
- Discussing strategies which funders could use to facilitate reproducible research

This report summarises the outcomes from the workshop and the brainstorming activity.

The workshop focused on three questions that were posed to explore the views and perceptions of funders:

- From a funder's perspective – how important is reproducibility and why is it important?
- How can funders facilitate and monitor reproducible research?
- What tools, resources, or support would funders need to increase and track reproducible research in a) proposal assessment and b) their funded projects and outputs/results?

By answering these questions, this report seeks to add knowledge to the next steps of the project; namely organize co-creation workshops to explore the important topics for funders to promote reproducibility; and provide valuable insight to TIER2's pilot project activities.

Using Zoom, virtual breakout rooms hosted small-group discussions on three main topics (described above) in more detail. These breakout discussions were facilitated with digital interactive whiteboard/sticky-note boards in Mural (an online notetaking platform that could be accessed by all participants with a link to this digital board).

QUESTION 1

"From a funder's perspective – how important is reproducibility and why is it important?"

The workshop participants defined reproducibility as the ability of research findings to be replicated or validated. Reproducibility was seen as important, and as sign of a healthy research culture, signalling trustworthiness. Reproducibility could increase the efficiency of design and evaluation of research, as a key part of the collaborative and iterative process of creating trustworthy research.

A key question that arose from this discussion topic was; how to fund responsible and reproducible research?

QUESTION 2

"How can funders facilitate and monitor reproducible research? "

Some key parts in the process where funders saw their role:

- At the time of funding application, where there is also a peer-review process. This step was described as providing strong incentives for researchers to describe thorough reproducibility practices in future research projects.
- To have Open Science policies and guidelines in place. Clear expectations towards openness and replicable standards built into the invitations to bid from the beginning. Guidelines can be strengthened further to become requirements.
- Guidelines can then be followed up with training opportunities (e.g., workshops and seminars) for researchers on topics such as 'what is reproducibility and how should I incorporate reproducibility practices in my research proposals?'.
- Creating or increasing targeted calls on reproducibility studies was suggested.

- Funders saw their role in monitoring and assessing the reproducibility of the results that were produced or funded by their funding calls/programmes.

Our discussions identified a gap: Funders called for further evidence on interventions or tools that support the process from a funder's perspective. This was felt as an urgent need.

QUESTION 3

"What tools, resources, or support would funders need to increase and track reproducible research in a) proposal assessment and b) their funded projects and outputs/results? "

Funders suggested a range of tools and resources that would support their role in increasing reproducible research.

- Tools and methods to track, measure, and assess the reproducibility of funded research outputs.
- Guidelines tailored specifically to funders. This included requests for guidelines for external reviewers, guidelines to provide the applicants with best practices on how to produce reproducible research (e.g., guidelines on data collection and tools on Open Science practices).
- The ability for researchers to be able to self-assess their processes and methods, so researchers themselves can confirm that their findings are reproducible.

3. SUMMARY

In summary, funders value reproducibility for increasing trust and efficiency. It is valued as a sign of a healthy research ecosystem. Challenges currently faced by funders are that it is difficult to assess and monitor reproducibility. Further challenges occur when different research domains define the relevance and importance of reproducibility differently. Funders see potential actions on their part in providing clear expectations to researchers on reproducibility, enabling training opportunities, setting targeted funding calls, and monitoring the reproducibility of outputs. Funders voiced their needs for tools to support the monitoring of research outputs, the need for tailored guidelines throughout the funding process, and self-assessment tools for researchers.

4. NEXT STEPS

There was a short discussion on where TIER2 could make the most impact on the needs and actions for funders in the course of the project. The urgency expressed by funders for more evidence on interventions or tools that support the process from a funder's perspective is particularly relevant for TIER2's strategy. It validates our approach in designing, implementing and assessing a range of new interventions and tools, including those for funders (e.g., Reproducibility Promotion Plans, Funder metrics dashboard, Reproducibility Management Plans).

Co-creation on development and implementation with funders and other relevant stakeholders will continue across all these activities. Within the Pilot on funder Reproducibility Promotion Plans (RPPs) particularly, we will continue to conduct co-creation workshops with funders to develop a policy template with recommendations for funders to foster reproducible practices in the research they fund. The policy template with recommendations will be available to funders who are interested in developing a Reproducibility Promotion Plan (RPP) best suited to their funding streams. The secondary aim of the workshops is to identify how the RPP can be applied, thinking ahead of any issues and barriers that could arise and ways they could be addressed.

5. APPENDIX – AGENDA AND ATTENDEE LIST

5.1 MEETING CHAIRED BY ALEXANDRA BANNACH-BROWN, TECHNICAL FACILITATION BY BARBARA LEITNER

15:00-15:10 CET	Short Introduction of TIER2 & OSIRIS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TIER2 Presentation – Joeri Tjldink ● OSIRIS Presentation – Inge Stegeman
15:10-15:15 CET	Presentation of the results of the future studies workshop (Joeri Tjldink)
15:15-15:40 CET	Breakout sessions with funders (2 breakout groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mural Board interactive activity on 3 questions
15:40-15:50 CET	Presentation of summary discussion topics from each breakout session (led by funders in each breakout room)
15:50-16:00 CET	Next steps & Future Projects (Joeri)
16:00 CET	Meeting Close

5.2 ATTENDEE LIST

Alexandra Bannach-Brown	TIER2 – Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin
Joeri Tjldink	TIER2 – VUMC
Barbara Leitner	TIER2 – VUMC
Inge Stegeman	OSIRIS - UMC Utrecht
Patelis Tziveloglou	EU Horizon

Carla Carbonell	Fundació "la Caixa"
Michael Ball	MRC - UKRI
Myles Furr	Research England - UKRI
Sven Ulpts	TIER2 – Aarhus University
Jesper Schneider	TIER2 – Aarhus University

