

## **Championing a GLEON project - Tips & Tricks**

### **Introduction**

The people that lead and coordinate a GLEON project are termed “project champions”. To undertake such a task, especially for the first time, might seem a bit daunting to some, and therefore we provide some tips & tricks here that could help you out. Note that there are no strict rules on how to coordinate your project - you are free to follow your own preferences as long as these are in line with the GLEON Mission, Vision, Values, and Code of Conduct (which can be found on the website). This document is purely meant as guideline and support.

### **Role of GLEON project champions**

The role of a champion can strongly vary depending on the type of project. For example, if the project is part of the champion’s main PhD project and they have a central role in data collection and analysis, the champion may have a large share of the tasks and act as a project leader that guides the rest of the team. At the other extreme, a champion may have similar tasks as other project members, but simply coordinates the efforts and plans next steps. It can be a good idea to establish early on with the team what the champion’s role will be. In this document, we mostly write “champion” in singular, but a project can have multiple champions (usually 1-3).

Tasks that are usually assigned to a champion:

- Project organisation, planning meetings, and coordinating the writing phase
  - o With “project organisation”, we mean keeping track and documenting contributions from participants, ensuring that there is a clear aim of the project, and managing the project’s files and meeting notes
- Establishing agreed-upon goals and guidelines
- Communicating clearly and transparently with the participants
- Keeping the project on track (e.g. checking in on deadlines, plan next steps, making contributions)

Any other tasks may depend on the champion’s role and the aim and setup of the project. A champion does not necessarily do the bulk of the work (GLEON projects are team science projects, after all), nor does the champion need to be an expert in the topic. Champions may also ask specific team members to do certain tasks.

### **General tips**

- **Be rigorous in organising the project**
  - o Clear folder structure, data management plan, document meetings, etc. in a centralised place.
  - o This makes it easier to continue progress at a later stage.
- **Create a co-author policy early-on**
  - o Decide what minimum contributions are needed to be considered a co-author.
  - o GLEON has templates available.
- **Create an open, inclusive space for collaboration**
  - o Consider differences in career stage and background - everyone should feel safe to share their thoughts and contributions
  - o Acknowledge participants’ contributions
- **Create consensus, but don’t be afraid to give direction and provide leadership**
  - o The team should agree on the plan, but if the champion makes a decision and takes initiative, this is usually appreciated a lot

- The collaborative vs. hierarchical organisation of a project can vary over time, depending on the tasks that need to be done.
- **Be clear about how the project will proceed**
  - Participants should know what to expect. Who will do what? And when?
- **Taking a first step motivates others**
  - However, it is not necessarily expected that you do the bulk of the work!
- **Reach out to experienced GLEON members for help and guidance**
  - For students or early career scientists leading a project for the first time, it can be helpful to lean on experienced project members

### Data collection/compilation tips

GLEON projects can take many different forms, but many involve data collection or compilation of some kind. Here are some tips for managing data from many different collaborators.

- Be as clear as possible on data format and units in data collection/submission sheets. For example, date and time formats vary around the world, and can cause confusion if not specified.
- If data collection is involved, make sure methods are standardized, straightforward, and repeatable.
- Communicate where the data will end up. If the data will go to a repository, make sure all contributors are aware and approve.

### Managing expectations

Taking on a champion role can feel daunting, especially early in your career. Many GLEON projects are side efforts for most participants, and it's easy to worry that leading one will add stress or stretch your time too thin. But remember: when someone steps up, the whole community benefits. Without champions, projects simply don't move forward—and people genuinely appreciate those who take initiative.

At the same time, everyone recognizes that capacity can ebb and flow. You don't need to be perfect or have unlimited time to make a meaningful contribution. What matters most is your willingness to help guide a project and keep momentum going.

At the same time, leading a project can be incredibly rewarding. You get to dive into exciting research, collaborate closely with colleagues from around the world—including potential future employers or co-workers—and build valuable skills in organization, communication, and mentorship. Championing a project isn't just about getting work done; it's an opportunity to grow, connect, and shape the direction of science within GLEON.

General advice to manage expectations:

- Especially as a MSc student, PhD student, or post-doc: check with your supervisor if they're OK with you taking on a championing role. They may be able to judge if it fits in with your other responsibilities.
- Be aware of the time commitment early-on. In some projects, sharing tasks is easier than in others.
- It is OK to ask for help!

### Resources

- Cheruvilil & Soranno (2018). Data-Intensive Ecological Research Is Catalyzed by Open Science and Team Science. *BioScience*, 68(10). [doi:10.1093/biosci/biy097](https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biy097)
- Frassl et al. (2018). Ten simple rules for collaboratively writing a multi-authored paper. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 14(11). [doi:10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006508](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006508)

- Oliver et al. (2018). Strategies for effective collaborative manuscript development in interdisciplinary science teams. *Ecosphere*, 9(4). [doi:10.1002/ecs2.2206](https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.2206)
- Read et al. (2016). Generating community-built tools for data sharing and analysis in environmental networks. *Inland Waters*, 6(4). [doi:10.1080/IW-6.4.889](https://doi.org/10.1080/IW-6.4.889)
- Rose et al. (2016). Insights from the Global Lake Ecological Observatory Network (GLEON). *Inland Waters*, 6(4). [doi:10.1080/IW-6.4.1051](https://doi.org/10.1080/IW-6.4.1051)

### Contact

Please contact the GPA (GLEON Post-Student Association, [gpa.gleon@gmail.com](mailto:gpa.gleon@gmail.com)) or GSA (GLEON Student Association, [gsa.gleon@gmail.com](mailto:gsa.gleon@gmail.com)) for questions you might have regarding championing a project, for example if unexpected things happen in an ongoing project that you would like advice about. Also, if you would like to have a mentor that has more experience in leading projects, the GPA could try to pair you to an experience GLEON member.