

SciPost

Business Plan

August 2016

Introduction

This document outlines the business plan for the SciPost initiative. For a detailed description of SciPost itself, its aims and organizational structure, we refer to the website <https://scipost.org> and more specifically to scipost.org/about.html and scipost.org/FAQ.html.

1 Support

SciPost relies on the scientific community for providing all its contents, from submitted manuscripts to Reports, Comments and Replies. The Editorial College, composed exclusively of practising professional scientists, is responsible for all editorial activities. The website is developed and maintained by the founder J.-S. Caux, with incidental technical advice from a small team of programmers.

1.1 Financial model

The planned sources of funding for SciPost are divided into two categories:

- incidental
- structural

Incidental sources are non-periodic, larger-scale contributions from donors, foundations, governments and funding agencies. We will rely on these in the startup phase, allowing to implement operations, demonstrate viability and build up support from the community. Later incidental contributions will be sought to ensure long-term financial stability and fund further developments and expansions of the SciPost initiative.

Structural sources are periodically renewed contributions from international, national and institutional funding sources (the latter including university libraries). We aim to develop a membership model similar to the one used by [arXiv.org](https://arxiv.org). We envision different categories of members: agency-level and institution-level. Agency membership is meant for (inter)national funding agencies, whereas institutional membership is for individual (or groupings of) universities and research institutes. Membership costs for institutions could range between a few hundred to around a thousand euros per year; for (inter)national agency members, they could be around an order of magnitude larger. The level of contributions would be determined based on the operational costs during a financial exercise. As a service to its members, SciPost will offer institutions and agencies useful compiled publication metadata, statistics and API services.

SciPost will not rely on any form of advertizement or of reselling of information contained in its database of contributors.

Financial reports will be published on the site shortly after the closure of each financial exercise.

1.2 Requirements

1.2.1 Startup phase

The first financial exercise of SciPost covers the period from early 2016 up to the end of 2017. During the startup, operations are developed, implemented and run using the personnel of the

Foundation as a basis. No remuneration is associated to this work. In order to cover all the incidental costs for startup (see separate budget), the envisioned startup subsidy from the NWO (€25 000) is expected to be sufficient.

The production costs per article on SciPost will be lower than the current form for Open Access publications (SciPost will not perform extensive rewriting/typesetting of articles). At the moment, the estimate is that costs will be at the level of €300 per paper. This includes production of the final version ('version of record') of the article, metadata uploading and references cross-linking via CrossRef, and online publication of the article on scipost.org.

The unknown factor at the current (2016-08) stage is the number of submissions which will need to be processed during the startup phase. From the €25 000 from the NWO, we expect to have approximately €15 000 leftover for covering production costs, allowing us to publish around 100 papers before the end of the first financial exercise. In case the number of incoming submissions is under this level, the funds will simply be utilized to cover later productions. In case this number is higher than expected, additional funds will need to be quickly secured, preferably via the accelerated implementation of the long-term stability plan detailed below. In case of needs, we shall make arrangements for emergency funds from the University of Amsterdam (which has already expressed support for the initiative, in a first instance by allowing the three Foundation members to spend a fraction of their work time on it).

1.2.2 Long-term financial plan

The financing model for publishing in SciPost is designed to be maximally efficient, streamlined and favourable to scientists. The idea is that instead of authors having to secure funding for and process payments to publishers for each individual article, SciPost will function through its membership scheme and seek appropriate contributions directly from the relevant funding agencies and institutions.

The implementation of this plan requires arrangements to be made between SciPost and ideally all relevant funding agencies and institutions worldwide. We envision substantial difficulties in the realization of this vision, in that not all agencies and institutions will agree to joining the membership scheme. On the other hand, based on the experience of the arXiv, we also anticipate to be able to come to such arrangements with a sufficient number of agencies in order to guarantee long-term financial stability. The first step would be to make a template for such an arrangement, starting with the NWO and other organizations such as (for example, in an initial stage) CNRS, MPI, EPSRC, the Royal Society etc. The fact that our production costs will be substantially lower than the norm, coupled with the international recognition of the need for proper implementations of Open Access publishing principles, gives us hope that our model can be successfully implemented.

2 Implementation timeline and plan

- 2015-10 onwards: *Development of the online portal*
Performed by the founder, with the help of the foundation and external consultants. As of 2016-08, the portal is sufficiently developed to guarantee operations for the initial phase.
- 2016-03 onwards: *Invitations for membership of the Advisory Board*
Figureheads of academia are directly contacted by the foundation and invited to join. Coverage of a broad set of fields of Physics is aimed for. The current list of members is maintained on scipost.org/about.html.
- 2016-06: *Opening of submissions to the Journals*
In a first instance, two journals are opened, namely SciPost Physics (all fields of Physics) and SciPost Physics Lecture Notes.
- 2016 summer: *Worldwide publicization phase*
This is done using individual-level and institution-level emailing.

- 2016-06 onwards: *Invitations for Fellows to serve on the Editorial College*
Faculty-level researchers are personally contacted with an invitation to serve as Editorial Fellows. These are sought to cover all fields of Physics, and their number is adjusted in order to be able to cover the workflow of incoming submissions.
- 2016-08: *Processing of first submissions*
The first wave of submissions is used to polish the editorial workflow and familiarize the Fellows with all details of the refereeing procedure.
- 2016-08: *Opening of SciPost to other fields*
Researchers from the fields of Astrophysics, Mathematics and Computer Science can now become Contributors to SciPost. Commentary facilities are made available.
- 2016-10: *Publication of first issue of SciPost Physics*
The production of the first publications is ensured by the personnel of the Foundation.
- 2016 autumn: *Appointment of executive officers*
As a first step towards larger-scale operations, the production of publications is progressively transferred to specialized officers.
- 2017 onwards: *Negotiations with funding agencies and institutions for the implementation of the membership funding model*
This major element is taken care of by the founders. The first step is to develop a workable template for the membership funding model, with the NWO and other agencies.
- 2017 onwards: *Financing campaign, to raise funds from donors and charitable foundations*
This will be performed by the founders, personally approaching a number of potential donors and filing in applications to well-known charitable foundations.
- 2017: *Scaling up of operations according to realized rate of submission*
- 2017: *Nominations to the Editorial College in the fields of Astrophysics, Mathematics and Computer Science*
- 2017: *Release of extensions to the suite of online tools within the SciPost portal*
A number of publication/bibliography/reading lists tools are currently under development in response to suggestions and requests from community members. The first set of tools are planned to appear by mid-2017.
- 2017: *Professionalization of operations by progressive transfer of responsibilities from the founders to the executive team*
The size of the executive team will be adapted to the influx of submissions.
- 2017: *SciPost now operating fully within the field of Physics*
- 2018 and after: *Consideration of opening SciPost Journals in other fields of science*
Although the set of SciPost Journals is at first covering only the field of Physics (in which the founders are active), the design of the initiative (including its underlying codebase) is in fact implemented as field-agnostic. Extending of publication activities to other fields of science could occur if interest from other fields is expressed.
- continuously: *Publicization and improvements to the portal in response to feedback from the community*
Needless to say, the founders will carry on promoting the initiative within their professional circles.