Topic editor guidelines

How to ensure the success of your Research Topic.

Your Frontiers Research Topic will allow you to foster collaboration, shape discussion around a key question and guide the research direction in your field.

The following guidelines provide you with practical information about the Research Topic Management platform, your role as a topic editor, and the Frontiers peer-review process. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the teams of the relevant Frontiers journal directly (see section 9)

Last update: 11 April 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 YOUR ROLE AS A TOPIC EDITOR

As a topic editor and expert in the field, you are responsible for

- Defining the scope of your Research Topic, with the guidance of the journal team
- Identifying and contacting potential contributors
- Assessing and providing feedback on abstract submissions
- Ensuring that there are sufficient contributions for a comprehensive collection
- Overseeing the review process of submitted manuscripts by acting as a handling editor (where your expertise is best suited to the paper from amongst your co-topic editors)
- Ensuring the completion of your Topic by providing an editorial prior to eBook production

You will be listed as a guest associate editor on the Frontiers editorial board for the duration of the project.

1.2 YOUR ROLE AS A TOPIC COORDINATOR

The topic coordinator plays an important role, supporting the topic editors and ensures the Research Topic proceeds smoothly and successfully. Topic coordinators have access to the Research Topic Management Platform as soon as the Research Topic is launched. Some of their key responsibilities include sending the call for participation, tracking the number of confirmed contributors, approving suggested contributors in the platform, and liaising with topic editors in their role accepting or rejecting abstracts.

It is important that the topic coordinator does not act as a topic editor. The topic coordinator will not take any action in the Review Forum on behalf of an editor, including accepting invitations to handle manuscripts.

The topic coordinator may participate in authoring the Editorial article for the Research Topic and will be acknowledged in the Research Topic public page.

1.3 From launch to completion: an overview

Research Topic publication	Once your Research Topic is approved by the specialty chief editor, the Frontiers team will create a dedicated Research Topic homepage online.	See details in section 2
Meeting with Submissions team	The Submissions team will schedule a call with you and your topic editor team, to guide you through the process.	See contact details in section 9
Call for participation	A formal call for participation must be sent via the Frontiers platform to your selected potential contributors.	See details in section 3
Abstract submissions	You and your co-topic editors will assess the suitability of abstract submissions to your Research Topic.	See details in section 4
Full manuscript submissions	You will be automatically assigned manuscripts to edit (see section 5.2) which will undergo the standard Frontiers peer review process. Our Peer Review Operations team will guide you throughout the review process.	See details in section 5
Editorial	Once all manuscripts have finished peer review, you will be sent guidelines on how to prepare your free-of-charge Editorial.	See details in section 6
eBook	Research Topics with 10 or more published manuscripts will be compiled into a free, Gold Open Access eBook by our Production team.	See details in section 6

1.4 What does a successful Research Topic look like?

The success of your Research Topic depends on the active involvement of all topic editors. Your Research Topics should:

- Include high-quality submissions from a diverse and representative author base with respect to institution, gender, and geographical location
- Have comprehensive coverage of the key areas defined in your Research Topic scope
- Aim to receive 20+ submissions - the ideal aim for your specific Research Topic can be discussed and tailored with your Submissions Team contact.
- Stimulate discussion and collaboration within your community

Note: Should a Research Topic close with fewer than four published manuscripts, the Submissions team will notify the topic editors, and the Research Topic will be subsequently dissolved and removed from the Frontiers website. In this case, any published articles would remain online within the journal they were published. Any manuscripts under review would still be considered for publication within the journal to which they were submitted.

1.5 MEETING WITH THE SUBMISSIONS TEAM

Your Submissions team will contact you soon after your Research Topic has been launched online. They will invite you to a webinar or conference call to give you a live demonstration of your Research Topic management platform. It is important that you attend so that you are aware of the next steps to take, including sending the formal call for participation as well as tips to ensure the success of your project. This is also your opportunity to ask questions.

1.6 YOUR FRONTIERS TOOLS

1.6.1 LOOP

Loop is the first research network integrated into all journals and academic websites – making researchers discoverable across the boundaries of publishers and organizations. Loop maintains a very simple mission: increase the visibility of authors and increase the readership of their work within their communities as well as to the public. In addition, Loop enables scientists to stay up to date with new research and connects them with their peers. You are able to communicate with your fellow researchers on Loop using the private messaging feature.

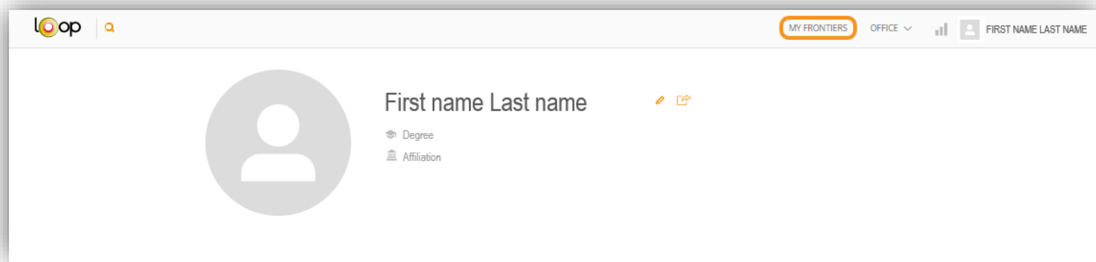
We identified three key profile features that, when added, result in 4x more profile views:

- Profile picture
- Brief bio

To maximize your readership and impact, we encourage you to take a few minutes to complete or update your Loop profile. To create a Loop account or access your already-existing account, please click on the following link. To edit your bio and profile picture click the pencil beside your name.

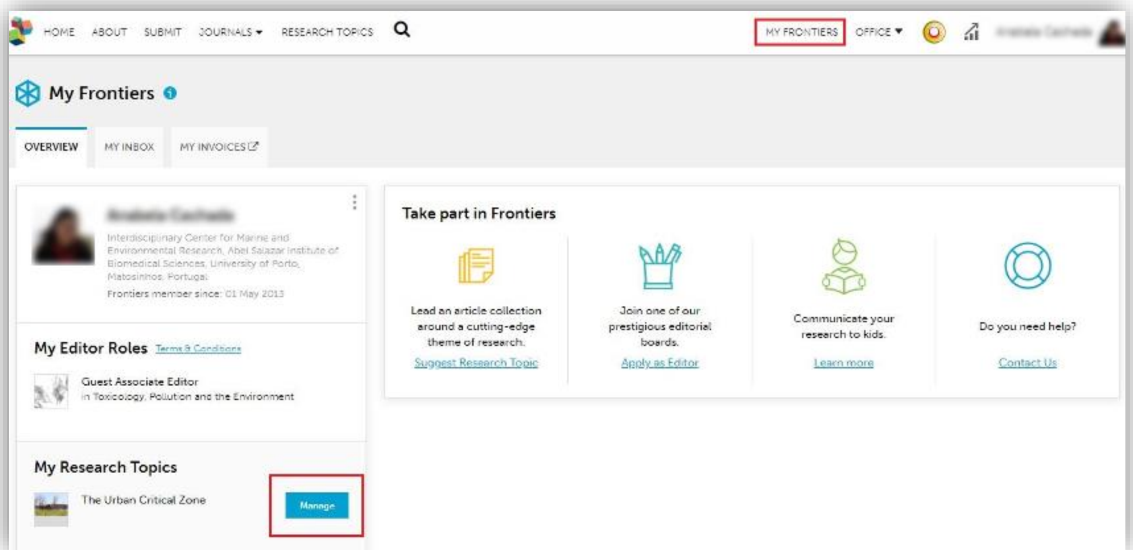
1.6.2 My Frontiers

From your Loop profile you will gain access to My Frontiers. My Frontiers is a centralized platform where you can oversee your submissions, editing assignments and Research Topics.



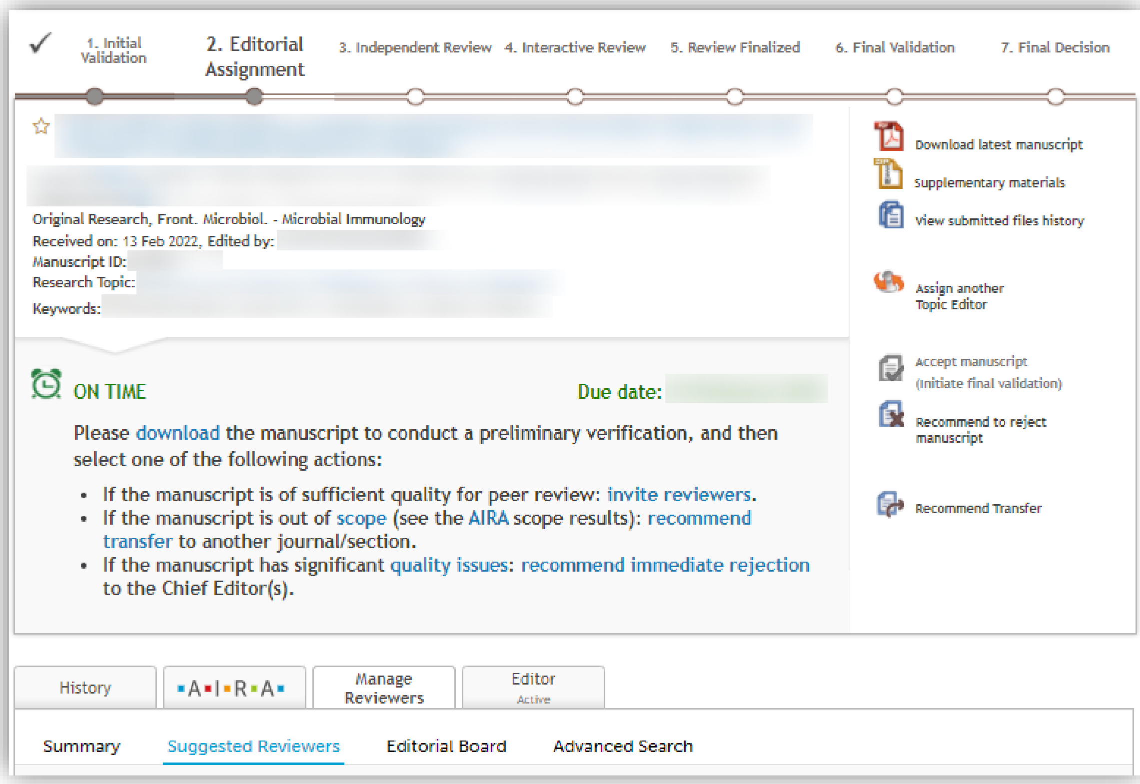
Once you access My Frontiers, you will have different tabs and boxes giving you an overview of your submissions, assignments, and achievements. If you are also a board member, please refer to the editorial board role guidelines which will provide information on any additional tabs.

- Associate editor guidelines – link
- Review editor guidelines – link



1.6.3 Review forum

The Review Forum is a tool developed in-house to unite authors, reviewers and the handling editor – and the specialty chief editor if necessary – in a direct online dialogue, enabling quick interactions and facilitating consensus. Editors and reviewers work with the authors to improve their manuscript.

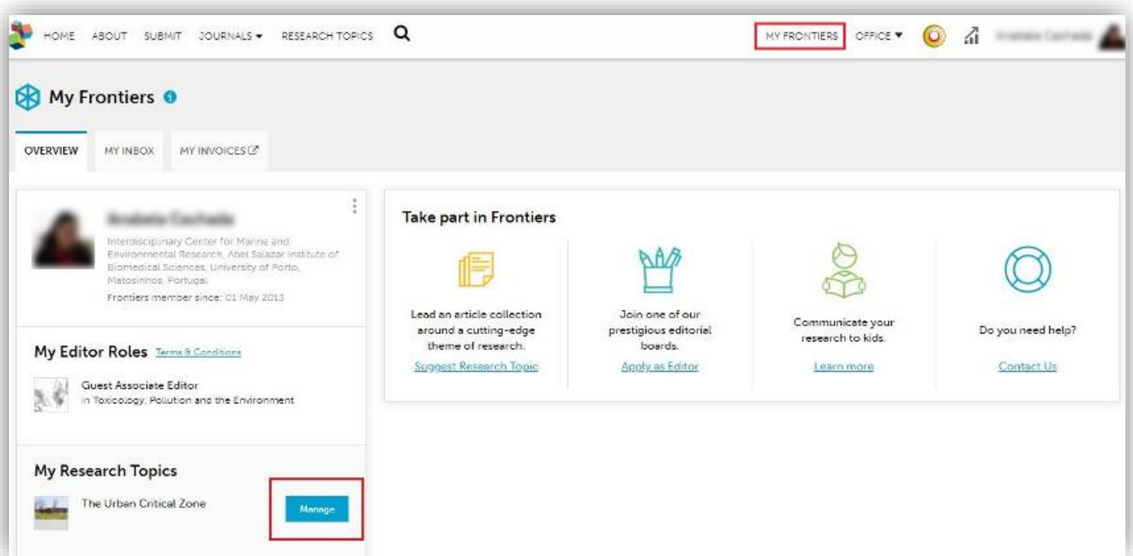


2 THE RESEARCH TOPIC MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

Your Research Topic Management platform will provide you with an overview of your entire Research Topic.

2.1 Accessing the Research Topic Management platform

1. Log into your Frontiers account
2. Enter 'My Frontiers' > Overview tab
3. Under 'My Research Topics', click on 'Manage'



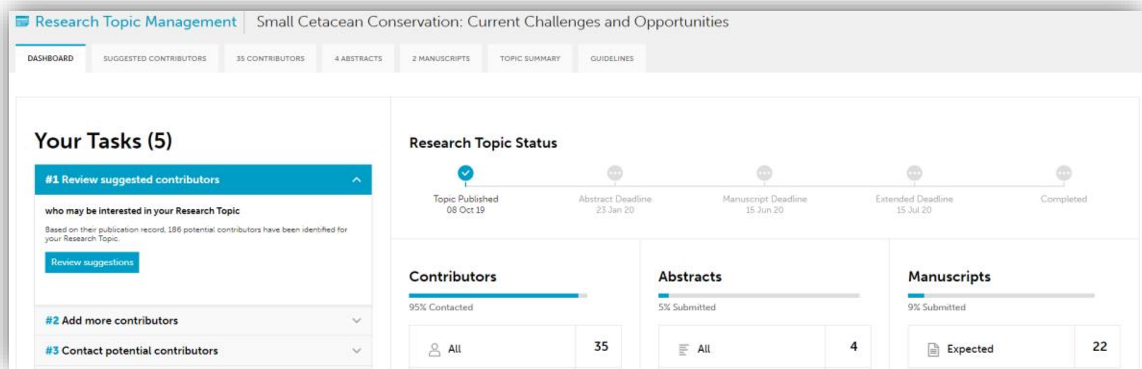
You can also access the Research Topic management platform when you are logged in via the 'Manage Topic' button on your Research Topic homepage. This button is only visible to Research Topic editors.

2.2 YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC DASHBOARD

The ‘Dashboard’ tab provides you with an overview of the status of your Research Topic including:

- Contributor numbers and statuses
- Abstract submissions
- Expected articles
- Manuscript submissions
- Your pending tasks

You can act on a pending task by clicking the relevant button on the task card. Your tasks will be updated regularly as your Research Topic progresses. Remember to take timely action to avoid delays.



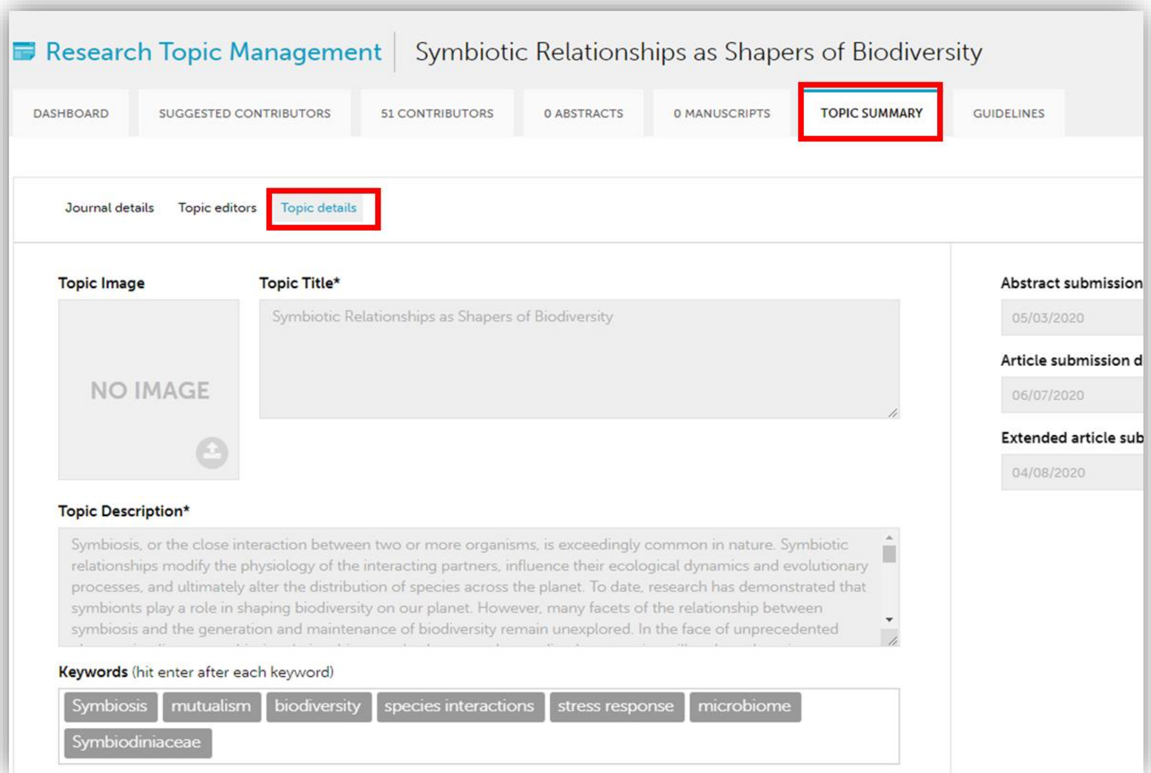
The current deadlines for your Research Topic are indicated in the progress bar. The deadlines are as follows:

- **Abstract submission deadline:** Abstracts are not mandatory, and can still be submitted after the deadline has passed
- **Manuscript submission deadline:** Confirmed contributors will receive up to 3 reminder messages throughout the project and one additional email 7 days before the deadline if they have not yet submitted their manuscript(s).
- **Extended manuscript submission deadline:** This is set in advance and will not be visible on the homepage until after the original deadline has passed. A notification will be sent to confirmed contributors who have not submitted their paper after the original deadline, informing them of the extended deadline. A final reminder will be sent before the extended deadline itself.

2.3 VIEWING THE DETAILS OF YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

To view the details of your Research Topic, navigate to the 'Topic Summary' tab. You will then be able to access the following three subtabs:

- **Journal details:** See the details of the specialty section(s) and journal(s) to which your contributors can submit as part of your Research Topic
- **Topic editors:** View the full topic editor team
- **Topic details:** View your Research Topic title, description, image, and deadlines



Note: The details of your Research Topic can only be modified in consultation with the Submissions Team. Should you wish to add or remove a topic editor, or modify the deadlines, please contact your Submissions Team.

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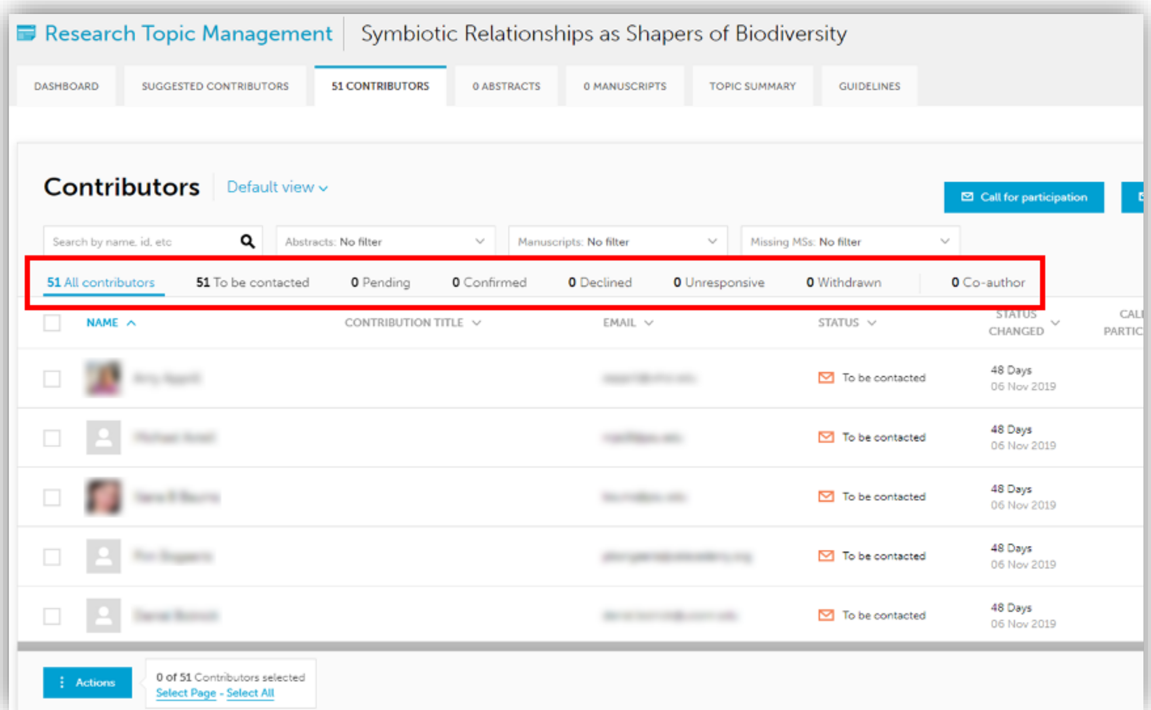
3 Potential contributors and call for participation

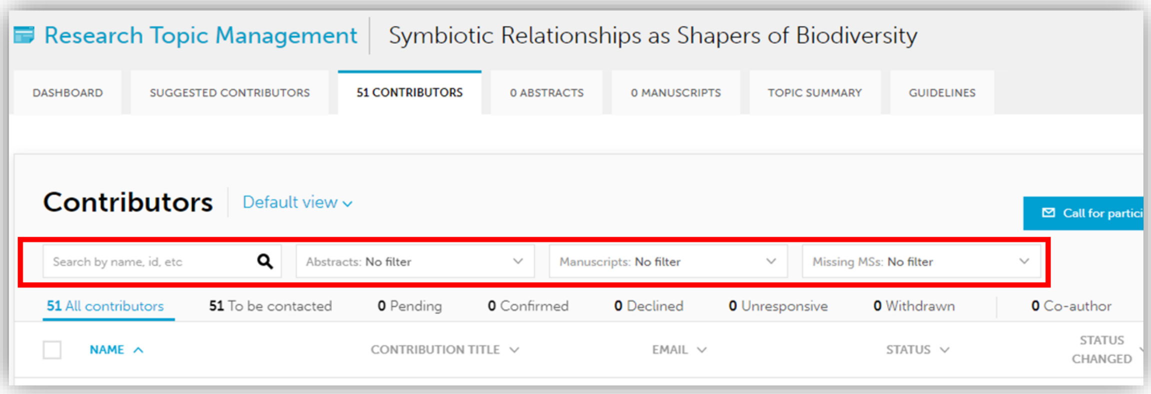
3.1 Accessing the list of potential contributors

The list of potential contributors that you provided with your Research Topic proposal will be uploaded in the 'Contributors' tab and can be seen in the 'To be contacted' list.

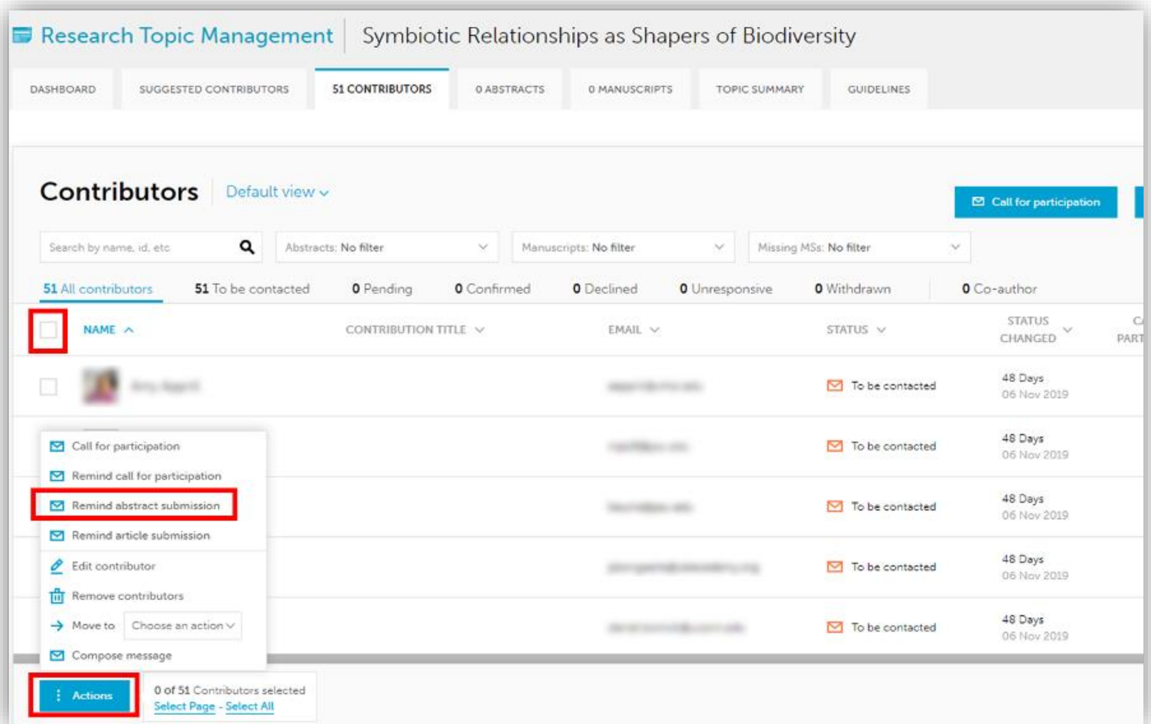


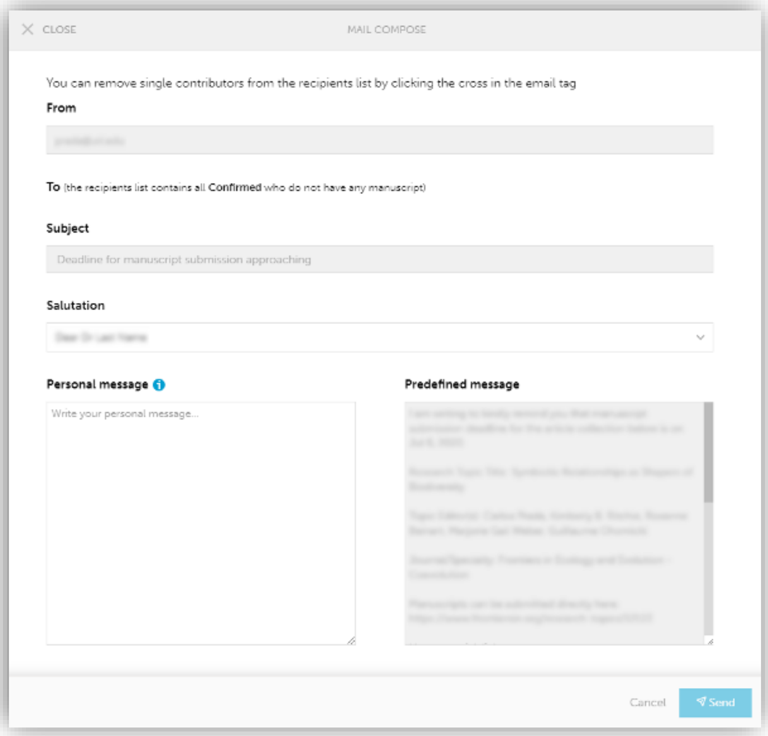
- All contributors: All contacts for the Research Topic, including potential contributors uploaded to the platform and all corresponding authors of submitted abstracts.
- To be contacted: Potential contributors who have not yet received the formal call for participation.
- Pending: Potential contributors who received the call for participation but have not yet responded.
- Confirmed: Confirmed contributors who have either accepted the call for participation or are listed as the corresponding author on a submitted abstract that has been accepted.
- Declined: Contacts who indicated they would not be able to contribute.
- Unresponsive: All contributors who have received a call for participation but not registered their response within 8 weeks.
- Withdrawn: Contributors who confirmed their interest, but did not submit a manuscript before the Research Topic closed
- Co-author: All co-authors of submitted abstracts that were accepted (not including the corresponding author).

You can search for individual potential contributors by clicking on the search icon and entering a name or email address in the search bar. Contributors can also be filtered by whether they have submitted an abstract or manuscript. You can also filter for confirmed contributors who have not yet submitted a manuscript by selecting 'Missing MS' and then 'Yes'.



Selecting a potential contributor and clicking 'Actions' will give you the option to compose a personal message. You may also use this tool to send a pre-filled reminder message for contributors. Please contact your Submissions team if you would like to edit potential contributor details or statuses.



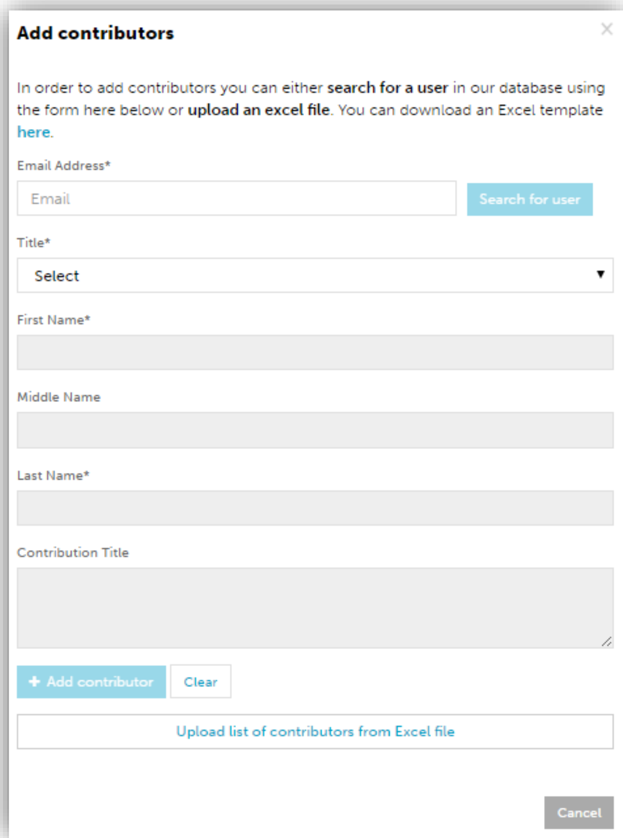

CLOSE
MAIL COMPOSE
You can remove single contributors from the recipients list by clicking the cross in the email tag
From
To (the recipients list contains all Confirmed who do not have any manuscript)
Subject
Deadline for manuscript submission approaching
Salutation
Personal message
Write your personal message...
Predefined message
Cancel
Send

3.2 Adding new potential contributors

A carefully selected group of researchers whose work directly relates to your Research Topic should yield enough confirmed contributors to create a comprehensive collection. Please consult your Submissions team if you wish to add more potential contributors.

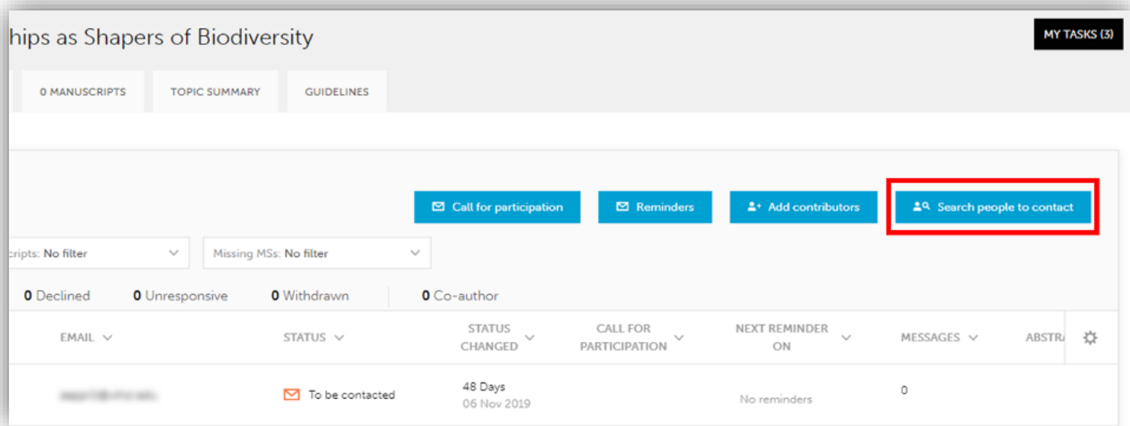
There is no limit to the number of submissions and published manuscripts that a Research Topic can include.

To add additional potential contributors, click on the 'Add contributors' button on the 'Contributors' tab. You can add researchers individually or, if you wish to bulk upload, ask the Submissions team for assistance.

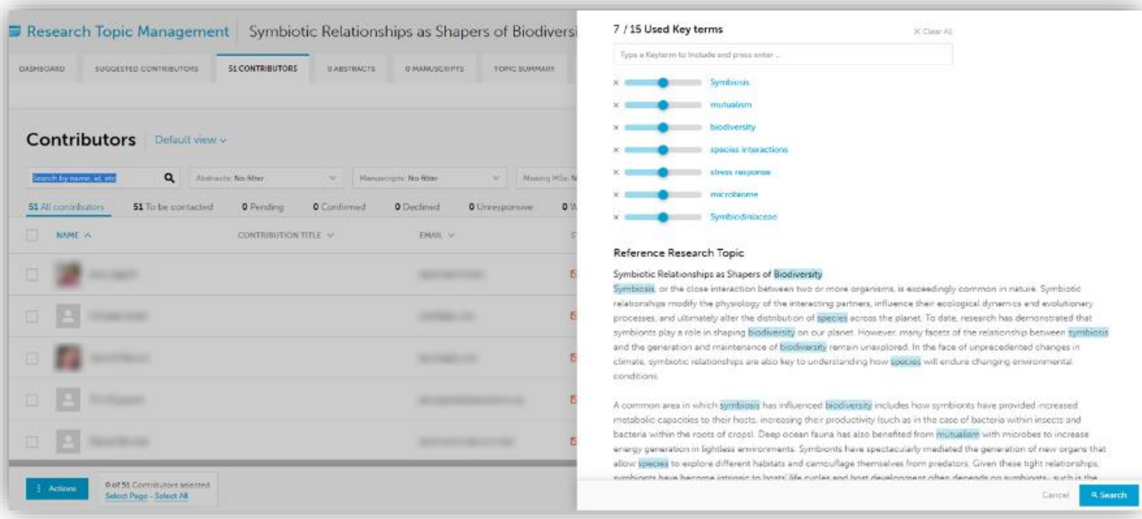


3.3 SEARCHING FOR NEW POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

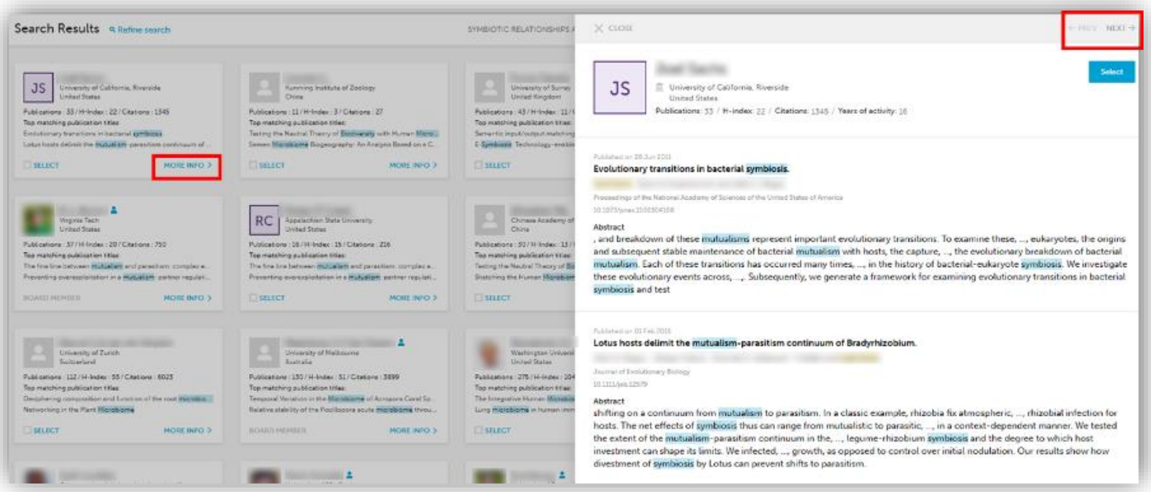
You can search for new potential contributors from a worldwide database of researchers directly from your 'Contributors' tab. To access this tool, click on 'Search people to contact'.



From here you can search for new potential contributors using up to 15 personalized key terms. Each term can be weighted in terms of importance using the sliders (exclude from search, less important, important, more important, required in results) to help you focus your search. Once you have entered your key terms, click on 'search' to display the relevant researchers.

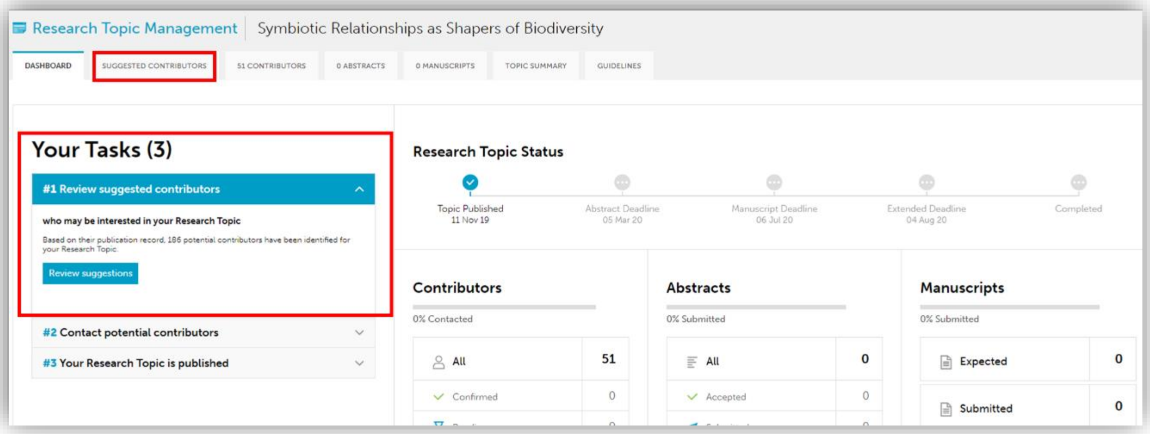


You can select individuals directly from this list or click on ‘MORE INFO' to display more details on their publication history related to your Research Topic. You can scroll through detailed information on all the suggested contributors by using the ‘PREV’ and ‘NEXT’ button in the pop-up bar provided. When you are ready, you can click on the ‘contact’ button to send an official ‘call for participation’ email directly to your selected individuals. There is a dedicated box in this invitation for you to add a personal message. This tool is also accessible from your ‘Suggested Contributor’ tab (section 3.4).

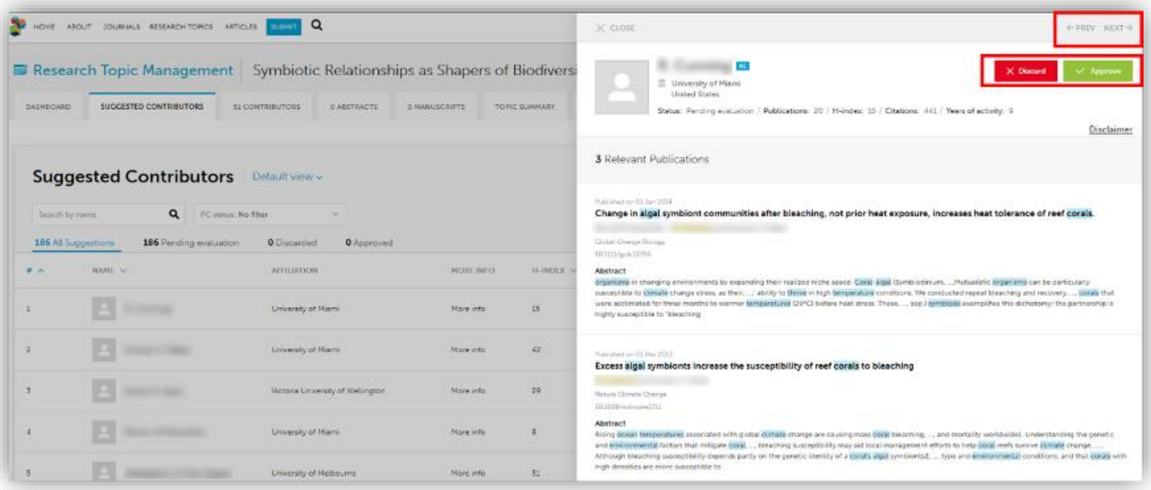


3.4 SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTORS (FROM YOUR SUBMISSIONS TEAM)

To expand the reach of your Research Topic further, the Submissions team can suggest additional potential contributors who have published in the field. You will be notified if these suggestions are available via email and a task card when accessing your Research Topic management platform. To evaluate these suggestions, click on the task card or the ‘Suggested Contributors’ tab.



From your Suggested Contributor tab, click on ‘Evaluate Suggestions’. A pop-up window will appear for each suggested contributor with details of their publication record relating to your Research Topic. You can ‘Approve’ or ‘Discard’ individuals from the list. Approved suggestions will be added directly to your ‘To be contacted’ list in your ‘Contributors’ tab. You can now send them a formal call for participation as explained below in section 3.4.



3.5 Sending the call for participation

Sending the call for participation is the <u>critical</u> first step to create awareness and engagement for your topic. The call for participation is a message that contains important information about your topic which is sent to your list of potential contributors.

It is important to create an <u>engaging</u> message and send it as <u>early as possible</u> to allow potential contributors enough time to complete their submissions.

Week 0	Week 1	Week 2
Your Research Topic is officially launched You will receive a suggested call for participation template that you can edit to make the message more personal	Finalize the edits for your call for participation	Send your call for participation via your Research Topic Management Platform

3.5.1 Creating your call for participation

You will be provided with a **suggested call for participation message by your Submissions Specialist**. This template message includes important information about your topic that you can edit and send to your author list.

Timeframe: Complete these edits within 3-5 days so that we can send the call for participation as early as possible

We advise that your call for participation message includes the following information:

- A link to the Research Topic homepage
- A short summary of the scope of your Research Topic
- Manuscript deadline
- Details of the Topic Editor team
- Information about the peer review
- EBook possibility after 10 published articles
- Open Access publishing fees, and fee solutions including institutional agreements and the Frontiers fee support scheme

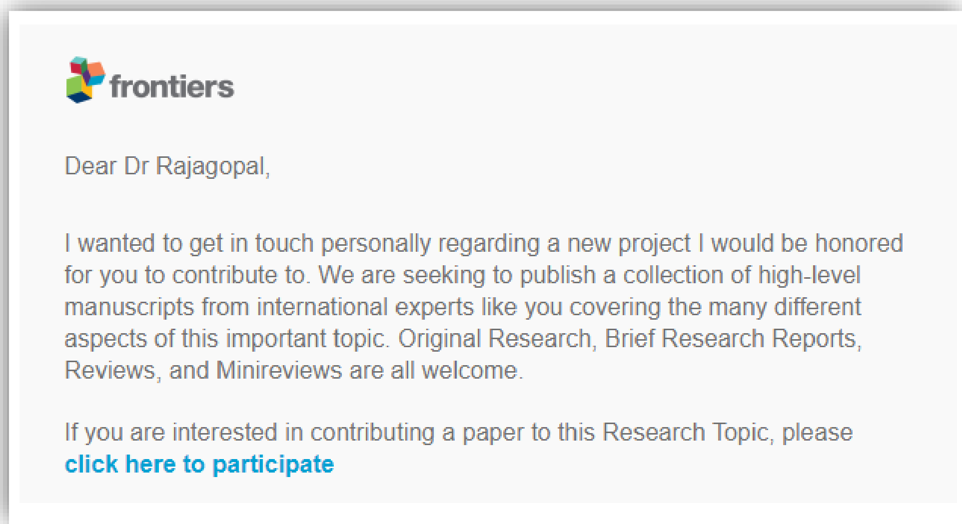
Note: Frontiers supports complete transparency around our Open Access article processing charges, which are applied to all submissions including the contributions to your Research Topic. Therefore, it is important to include some details on all resources available to our authors in your call for participation message. If you receive author queries about fees and fee support, please forward these queries to the Submissions Team who can handle them.

3.5.2 Sending your call for participation

Your Research Topic Management platform allows you to send your call for participation very easily to all your potential authors. You can choose from the following options how you would like the call for participation to be sent:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
You can request your submission specialist to send your prepared call for participation in your name via your My Frontiers account	Send it yourself via your Research Topic Management platform (process outlined below)	We can send a general message from the host journal instead. Please note that this generates substantially less interest, so we strongly urge you to send it yourself

Note: When you send the call for participation via the platform, a link will be added automatically to the end of the message which will allow contributors to directly register their participation.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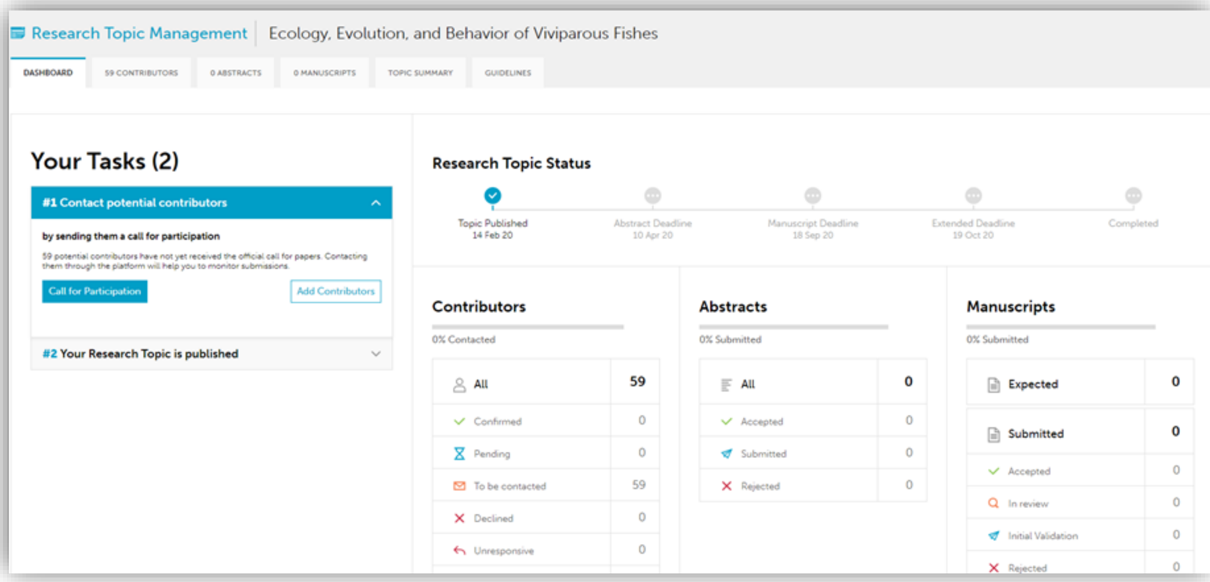
Dear Dr Rajagopal,

I wanted to get in touch personally regarding a new project I would be honored for you to contribute to. We are seeking to publish a collection of high-level manuscripts from international experts like you covering the many different aspects of this important topic. Original Research, Brief Research Reports, Reviews, and Minireviews are all welcome.

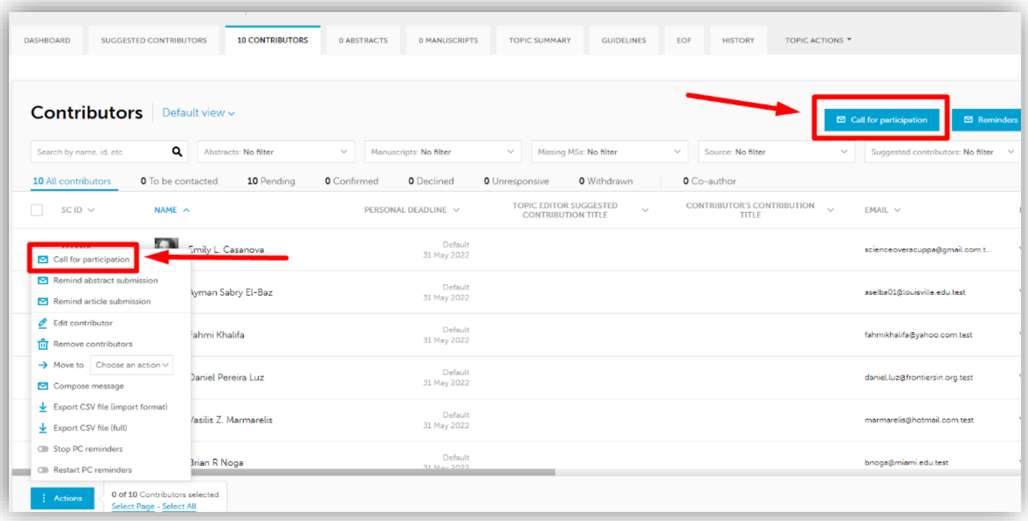
If you are interested in contributing a paper to this Research Topic, please **click here to participate**

Step 1: Log into your **My Frontiers** account and go to your Research Topic Management platform



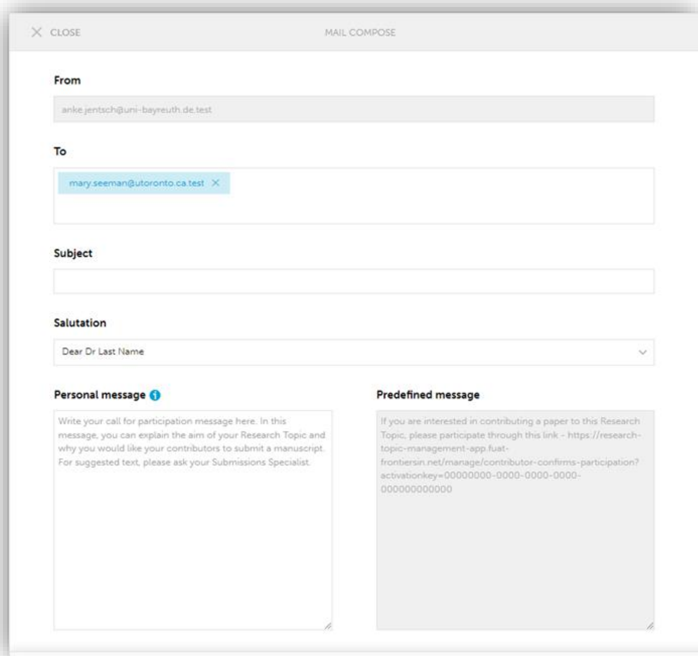
Step 2: Navigate to the **'Contributors'** tab of the Research Topic Management platform where you will find all potential contributors listed under the 'To be contacted' list.

Step 3: Select your chosen potential contributors and click the 'Call for participation' button to prepare your message.



If you want to send a specific message to a particular contributor, select the tick-boxes next to the individual(s) name(s) and click the 'Call for participation' button. You can also select the whole list by ticking the box next to the 'Name' heading

Step 4: Copy and paste your call for participation into the 'Personal message' box, add your subject line, choose your salutation.



Step 5: Click the 'send' button to send your call for participation to the selected contributors.

When you send the call for participation via the platform a link will be added automatically to the end of the message which will allow contributors to directly register their interest in participating – Dependent on their response, they will move into the 'Confirmed', 'Declined' or 'Unresponsive' contributors' tabs.

Note: If there are contributors still in the 'to be contacted' list after 2 weeks, we will consult you and send the call for participation in your name.

3.6 Promoting your Research Topic

There are several ways in which you can stimulate discussion around your Research Topic. Increasing the visibility will also encourage more contributors to submit their research to your collection. Promote and share your Research Topic:

- On social media:

Each Frontiers journal has a Twitter account which you can tag

- At workshops and conferences (please get in touch with your Submissions team to enquire about promotional material)
- Via your institutional email signature
- On your institutional homepage and university press center
- On your external research community mailing lists

3.7 Monitoring and reminding contributors

Once the call for participation has been sent, potential contributors will automatically be moved from a 'To be contacted' status to a 'Pending' status. From there they will be moved to 'Confirmed' or 'Declined' once they click on the accept/decline links in the call for participation.

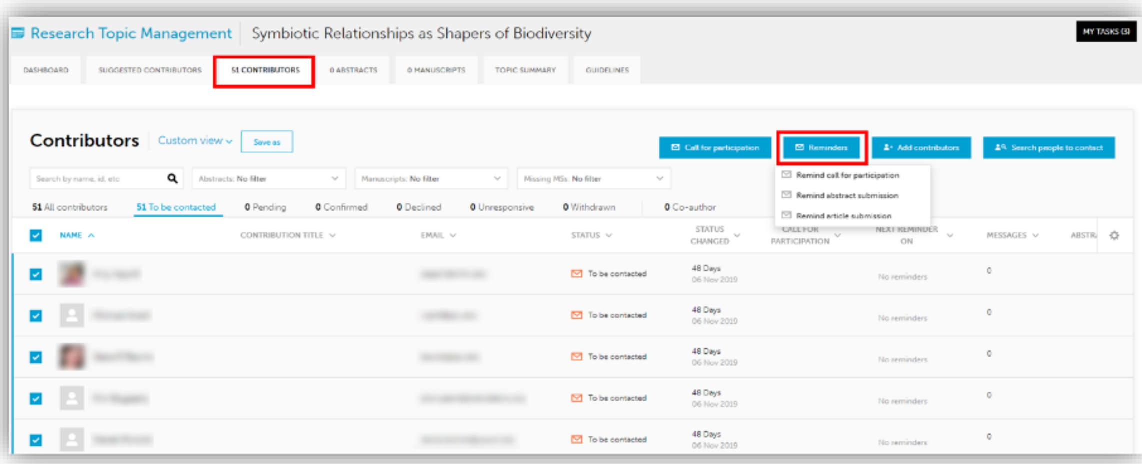
Pending contributors will be sent scheduled reminders to respond to the call for participation by the automated platform. You can see the date of the next scheduled reminder in the management platform. If they do not register their response within 4 weeks of receiving the call for participation they will be automatically moved to an 'Unresponsive' status. Please inform the Submissions team if you have received a confirmation via email outside of the management platform.

When a contributor confirms their participation, they can indicate how many manuscripts they are planning to submit.

'Confirmed' contributors who have not submitted their manuscript(s) will be sent check-in messages reminding them of the submission deadline. These messages give them the opportunity to ask questions and to inform the topic editor and Submissions team of any delays.

If any 'confirmed' contributors miss the manuscript deadline, they will automatically be informed of the extended deadline. The extended deadline will now be visible on the Research Topic homepage.

We provide reminder templates specific to the status of each potential contributor. To send a reminder, navigate to the 'Contributors' tab and click on the 'Reminders' button. Like the call for participation, reminders can be personalized by adding a note at the top.



4 SUBMISSIONS TO YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

4.1 VIEWING, ACCEPTING AND REJECTING ABSTRACTS

Abstracts can be submitted by people on your contributor list or from the general research community via your Research Topic homepage. They do not undergo peer review, nor are they published online and are for internal use by the topic editor team and Submissions team.

Confirmed contributors will be sent a call for abstracts, provided that the abstract deadline has not already passed when they join the authors list for the Topic. Abstracts submitted by the scheduled deadline will give you and your co-topic editors advanced information on the prospective submissions so that you can provide guidance and feedback to the authors. Contributors can also submit an abstract after the abstract deadline.

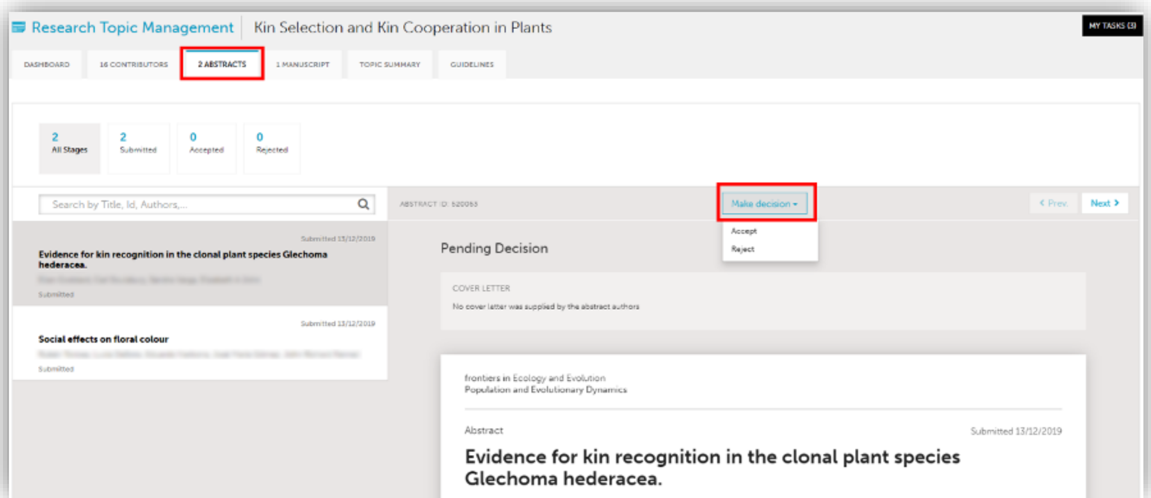
Submitting an abstract is **not a prerequisite** for submitting a full manuscript, however they are strongly encouraged. Abstracts are an excellent tool for motivating and gauging the interest of contributors and previewing the scope of their submission.

Each topic editor is informed of a new abstract submission. Please coordinate your responses as a team and either accept or reject the abstract via the 'Abstracts' tab in the Research Topic management platform. A list of submitted abstracts and their status will be displayed. If you would like to gather more information before making a decision, click on 'Contact submitting author' and send them an email. The author's reply will go to your email address and you can continue your conversation off-platform. When you are satisfied you have all the information you need, return to your 'Abstracts' tab and either accept or reject.

When assessing abstracts consider the following:

- Provide your constructive feedback to the author(s) in the free text box.
- Does the subject fit within the scope of your Research Topic, specialty section and journal?
- Is the level of English sufficient?
- Are there any objective errors or ethical concerns?
- Would there be any overlapping submissions in terms of content?

If an abstract is accepted, the corresponding author and co-authors will be listed with the status ‘Confirmed’ and ‘Co-author’ on the ‘Contributors’ page, respectively.



4.2 SPONTANEOUS SUBMISSIONS

Although most submissions will result from the call for participation, researchers and scholars looking to submit to Frontiers may find that their manuscript fits within your topic. In such cases, we encourage authors to first contact the topic editors and to submit an abstract, but some might submit the full manuscript directly through the Research Topic website. You can then decide whether you would like to include these papers in your Topic. Spontaneous submissions often turn out to be valuable contributions; however, should you have concerns regarding a submitted manuscript, please contact the Review Operations team immediately.

4.3 SUBMITTING A MANUSCRIPT TO YOUR OWN RESEARCH TOPIC

We, of course, welcome contributions from topic editors. Please note, to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest, and to maintain firm perception of a Research Topic as an inclusive, objective and globally balanced research collection, topic editors should not:

- **edit their fellow co-topic editors' manuscript submissions.** In these instances, an associate editor from Editorial Board will be assigned to handle the manuscript. You can select your preferred associate editor during the submission process. Please contact the Submissions team for special cases, for example niche fields of research.

- **appear as authors/co-authors on more than 30% of the total manuscripts** published in the Research Topic. If you foresee that your Topic may be an exceptional case on this point, please contact your Submissions Team directly to discuss, as to exceed this threshold will require prior approval with the specialty chief editor.

Note for exception: Topic editors may evaluate each other's abstracts (if any), as these are only for record-keeping purposes.

We appreciate in advance your understanding that the position to which you are appointed is one of privileged trust: in enabling you to oversee your complete Research Topic (including full review details of articles you are not directly editing, via read-only access), we require that you treat **all peer review details as confidential** until the article is published.

In cases where one of your co-topic editors has submitted a manuscript to your collection, you will have oversight of the identities of the handling editor and reviewers of their manuscript, and in order to avoid any conflicts of interest, you must respect the single-blind nature of the peer review by not disclosing any details to the author(s). Any ethical breach of this requirement could result in the article being refused publication or withdrawn. Your co-topic editor authoring the manuscript will, of course, have full disclosure of the Editor and reviewer names once the article is published.

5 SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS AND REVIEW PROCESS

Different article types can be submitted to your Research Topic and the options available vary across Journal fields. Please refer to the Specialty Section homepage for more information about the available article types. Please note that all submissions to the Research Topic must also be within scope of the Section and Journal mission statements. Links to these are available via your Research Topic homepage. Exceptionally, manuscripts which are deemed out of scope of the section but still relevant to your Research Topic can be redirected to a more appropriate section and remain linked to your article collection. Should the manuscript be considered in a section that does not host the Research Topic, it may be edited by an Editorial board member of the selected section.

If a manuscript does not fall within the scope of the Research Topic, please contact the Review Operations team (see section 9). We will either redirect it to another and more relevant section or desk-reject it.

All manuscripts are subject to peer review and, if accepted, will appear both as part of the online collection on the Research Topic homepage and later within a downloadable eBook, if applicable (see details in section 6). At Frontiers, articles are published immediately upon acceptance on a rolling basis, independent of the peer review status of other submissions within the same Research Topic.

The articles in your Topic will be freely available online and submitted to the digital archives under which the related Frontiers journal is indexed (see our full list of Partners and Collaborations here. Indexing will be journal dependent

The Frontiers Review Process consists of seven stages. Your input is required primarily for stages three through to six.

Topic editors act as handling editors for manuscripts submitted to their Topic and are responsible for:

- The initial assessment of the manuscript
- Inviting reviewers and ensuring the thoroughness of the reviews
- Checking the review reports and initiating the interactive phase of the review process
- Mediating the discussion to ensure a timely and fair review
- Making a final decision for acceptance or recommendation for rejection

The Frontiers Collaborative Review process has been designed to optimize the quality of published articles by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Handling editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles, and your final decision on a manuscript should consider all the reviewers' feedback. It is important that you are familiar with the Frontiers policies and practices outlined below. An overview of the peer review process can be found here.

In our experience, finding suitable reviewers is the most time-consuming step in the review process. We therefore encourage you to start making a list of potential experts early on, once you know what types of contributions will be coming in.

5.1 Initial validation

To support you in ensuring the quality of the manuscripts, all submissions, including submissions to your Research Topic undergo standard initial quality checks by the Research Integrity team. All submissions are pre-screened for:

- Textual overlap with and similarity to published material
- Potential image or data manipulation
- Language quality
- Adherence to editorial policies
- Adherence to ethical standards
- Potential conflicts of interest

Following completion of these initial checks, the manuscripts are automatically assigned to one of the topic editors.

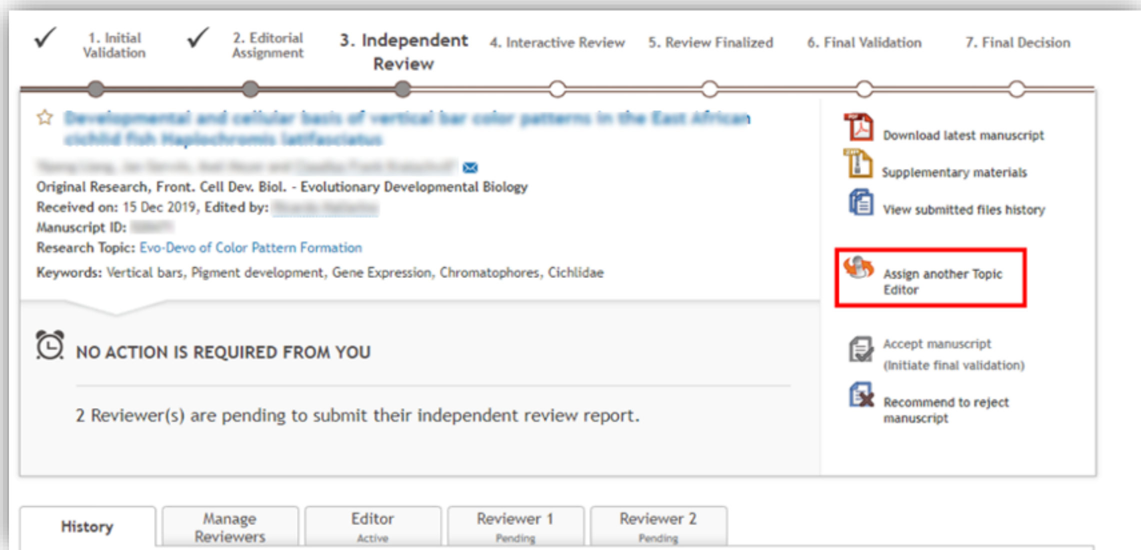
If issues are identified in manuscripts you are handling, the Research Integrity team will notify you and the authors as part of our standard procedure. No action is required from you unless specifically requested.

For more information on the Frontiers Research Integrity policies and the activities of our Research Integrity team visit https://www.frontiersin.org/about/author-guidelines and watch our webinar on YouTube or BiliBili.

5.2 Editorial Assignment:
Accessing manuscripts and entering the review forum

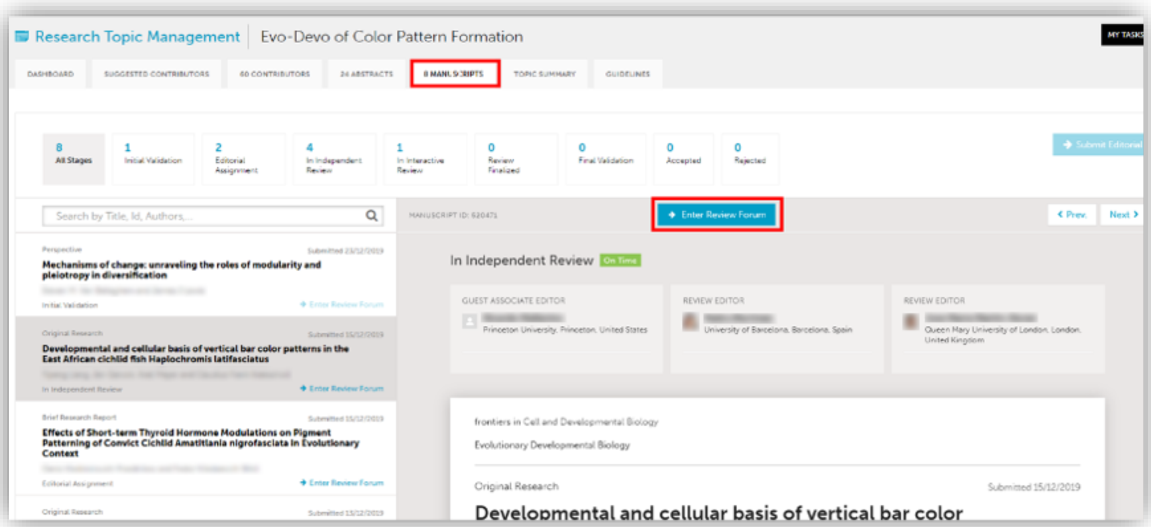
When submitting a manuscript to your Topic, authors are requested to select the topic editor who they believe to be the most appropriate for editing their manuscript. This 'preferred' editor will be automatically assigned to handle the review process.

Should you be assigned to handle a manuscript, you will receive an email with a direct link to the review forum, once the manuscript has passed our initial quality checks and is deemed fit for review. The first time you enter the forum, you will be prompted to answer a list of questions regarding potential conflicts of interest. If appropriate, you may also re-assign manuscripts you are handling to your co-topic editors by selecting the corresponding option in the right-hand side of the review forum (please discuss with the other topic editor before taking such action).



5.2.1 How to have an overview of all my assignments?

To view the manuscripts that have been submitted to your topic, navigate to the ‘Manuscripts’ tab on your Research Topic Management page. On the left of the page, a list of all submitted manuscripts and their status will be displayed. Clicking on a manuscript will display the manuscript details, including the abstract, handling editor and reviewers (if appointed). To access your editing assignments, navigate to a manuscript for which you are listed as guest associate editor and click on the ‘Enter Review Forum’ button.



5.3 INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Once you have accepted the assignment, please read through the manuscript and determine whether it should be sent for review or recommended for rejection to the specialty chief editor. Whilst doing so, please consider the following:

- Does it contain fundamental objective errors that cannot be rectified?
- Does the research adhere to ethical standards and research quality in the field?

Please refer to our VALID criteria when assessing manuscript submissions (see our acceptance and rejection criteria for guidance).

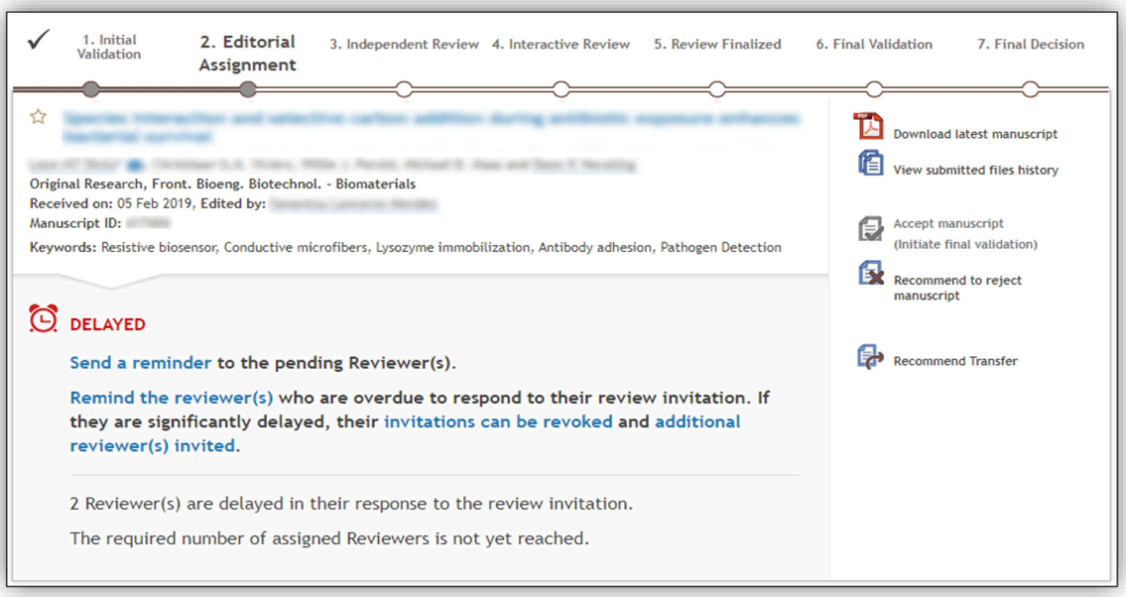
5.3.1 Your initial options

Assess the manuscript within 5 days and **start the Review Process** by inviting reviewers	Assess the manuscript within 5 days and **recommend it for rejection** to the chief editor	Contact our Review Operations team and **ask for more time** to assess the manuscript (See section 9)

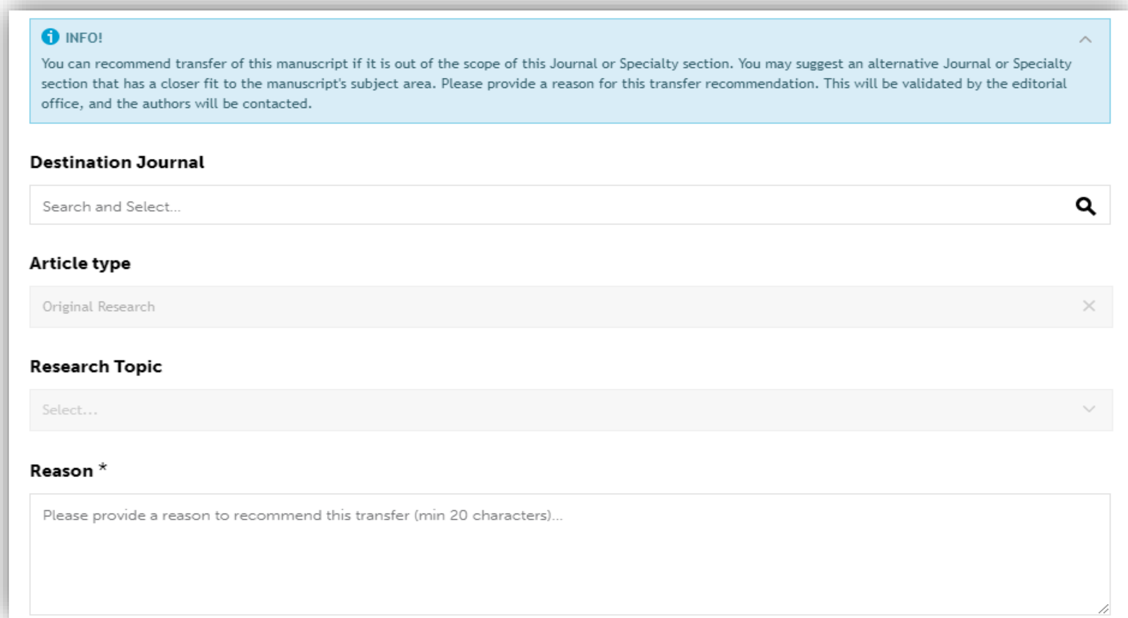
If you did not recommend the manuscript for rejection within 5 days and did not contact our Review Operations team to ask for more time to assess the manuscript, **our automated review invitations will be sent out to the most suitable review editors** from our reviewer board.

Note that if three invitations are sent within three days, the automatic invitations are postponed by a further three days.

If you consider a manuscript to be out of scope, please do not recommend the manuscript for rejection. Instead, let the Review Operations team know by recommending the manuscript for transfer by clicking 'Recommend Transfer'.



You will be able to provide a reason for suggesting the transfer (mandatory) as well as suggest an alternative journal and/or section (optional).



Once a suggestion is provided, no further action is to be required from your side. The Review Operations team will follow up with the authors to complete the needed transfer.

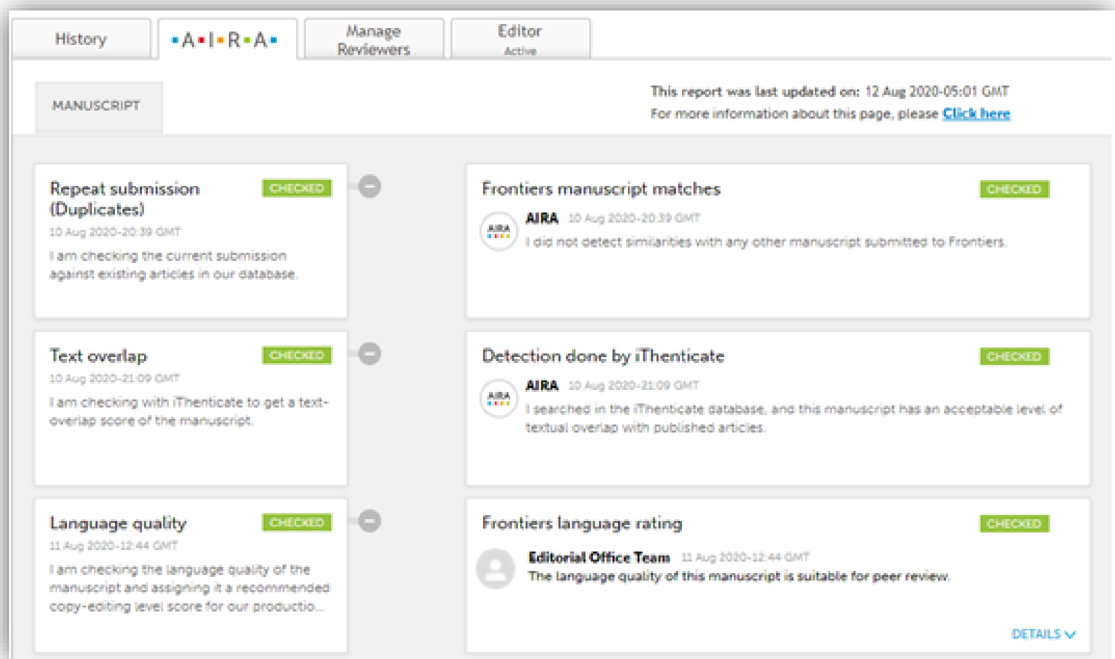
5.4 AIRA – Artificial Intelligence Review Assistant

Frontiers peer review incorporates powerful AI technology to safeguard both manuscript and peer-review quality more efficiently. AIRA assists editors, reviewers, and internal teams by analyzing, interpreting, and communicating the quality of submitted manuscripts.

Its algorithms quickly and accurately evaluate submitted manuscripts against a set of quality measures, including, but not limited to:

- Ethics guidelines
- The presence of human images
- Text overlap
- Language quality
- Scope verification
- Duplicate submissions
- Controversial topics
- Commercial Conflicts
- Data Availability verification

If you identify an issue in the manuscript regarding the quality checks, you can communicate this to the authors and ensure that the concerns will be addressed during review. For major concerns, please contact the Review Operations team (see section 9)



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5.5 INVITING REVIEWERS

If no issues are identified in the initial assessment of the manuscript, you will be asked to invite reviewers within 5 days of accepting to handle the manuscript. When Inviting reviewers take into consideration the following:

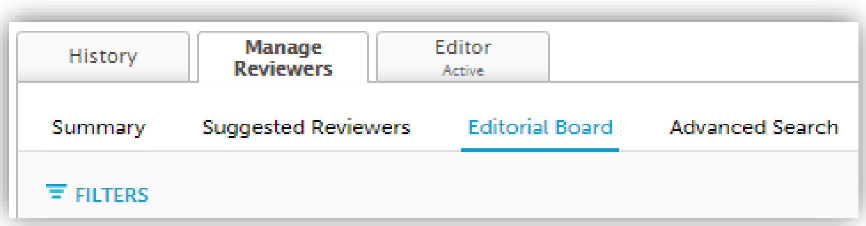
- They should hold a PhD with post-doctoral experience OR have several years of professional or academic experience
- Diver in age, gender, and geographic location
- Their affiliation should be recognized

Frontiers offers you different resources to find suitable experts to review manuscripts.

Invite Review Editors from our **Reviewer Board**	Invite external reviewers suggested by our **artificial intelligence**	Invite **external reviewers** from your network

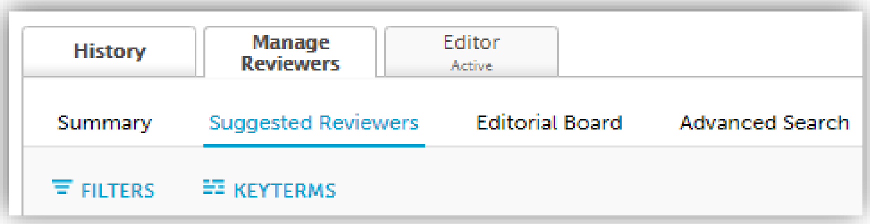
5.5.1 Review editors from our Editorial Board

- Select the 'Manage Reviewers' tab
- Select Editorial Board
- Select Filters to search through the review editors by name, institution, keyword etc.



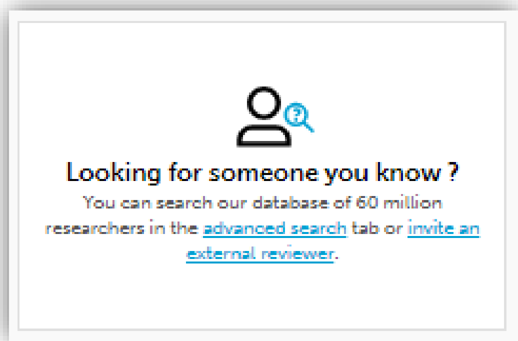
5.5.2 Suggested external reviewers

- Select the ‘Manage Reviewers’ tab
- Select ‘Suggested Reviewer’ sub-tab
- Please check the ‘Keyterms’ and adapt them as you wish to ensure the suggested reviewers have the appropriate experience
- Select ‘Filters’ to search through the Reviewers by name, institution, keyword etc.



5.5.3 External reviewers from your personal network;

- Select the ‘Manage Reviewers’ tab
- Select ‘Invite an external reviewer’
- Fill out the relevant information



5.6 Independent Review

During the Independent Review phase, the reviewers assess the manuscript according to a review questionnaire. Once reviewers are assigned, they are expected to fill out this review questionnaire within 7 days. The review questionnaires vary depending on the article type and have been designed to facilitate the work of the reviewers as well as to focus on objective issues and the validity of the manuscript.

Reviewers can, of course, request an extension. Note that reviewers can grant themselves a one-off extension of 5 days without contacting the Review Operations team. Should they require a longer extension please let the Review Operations team know so that they can update the system accordingly.

At this stage, reviewers conduct their review independently and do not have access to any comments made by the other parties. The status of each review report is shown in the 'Manage Reviewers' tab, where it is also possible to send reminders to delayed reviewers. A reviewer's submitted report is stored in their dedicated tab.

Upon completion of their review report, the reviewer will submit a recommendation to the editor to assist in guiding your decision.

Recommendations to the editor:

- Minor revisions - Manuscript can be accepted
- Revision is required
- Substantial revision is required
- Recommend rejection

If the reviewer indicates that the manuscript can be accepted, they can endorse the article in the Independent Review stage and finalize their review. If you would like the authors to respond directly to the reviewer, you can reactivate the reviewer's tab, once the article enters the Interactive Review or Review Finalized stage. This will require the reviewer to then reconfirm their decision on the manuscript.

If you receive the required number of reviewers endorsing the manuscript in the Independent Stage, the article will directly move to the Review Finalized stage for your final decision.

You will be notified once an independent review report has been submitted. Reviewers are expected to provide rigorous and in-depth reports. Your next step is to assess their quality, ensure they are comprehensive and thorough and carry out an appropriate action. To assess the review reports, we recommend that you ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ Is the reviewer's feedback objective and constructive?
- ✓ Is the reviewer's feedback appropriate, sufficiently rigorous, comprehensive and in scope?

✓ Is the reviewer's identifying fundamental flaws that cannot be addressed via revisions?

Based on the potential scenario, here are your options

The reviewer recommends revisions to the authors

You think the manuscript has potential for publication: Activate the Interactive Review Forum and select the necessary level of revisions: **Minor**, **Moderate**, or **Substantial**	**You wish to recommend rejection:** Post your reasoning in the Editor tab and activate the Interactive Review Forum with **Major concerns**	**Invite more reviewers** to take a more **informed decision**

The reviewer withdrew recommending rejection

You wish to recommend rejection: Post your reasoning in the Editor tab and activate the Interactive Review Forum with **Major concerns**	**Invite more reviewers** to take a more **informed decision**

You consider the review report too brief/not sufficiently rigorous/inappropriate/out of scope and you cannot make an informed decision

Contact the reviewer via the Review Forum to ask for **additional feedback**	**Consider revoking** the reviewer and invite a further reviewer	**Inform** the Editorial Office

5.6.1 Activating the Interactive Review Forum

If you are satisfied that at least two review reports are complete and adhere to the criteria above, you may grant authors access to the review reports by clicking ‘Activate the interactive review’. Please select the appropriate level of revisions (minor, moderate or substantial) and enter a personal message, that will accompany the automatically generated message detailing the necessary action.

It is possible to activate the Interactive Review forum with only one Review Report submitted, however, you will need a minimum of two Reviewer endorsements in order to accept the manuscript for publication. These review reports will allow you to make an informed decision on the manuscript.

If the completed review report endorses the manuscript as it is, a second review report will be required to move forward.

Note: In the interest of maintaining a timely review process, please note that if a Reviewer requests revisions and does not immediately endorse the paper, the Interactive Review Forum will be automatically activated three days after the required number of review reports have been submitted.

You can always provide further feedback to the Authors, or invite additional Reviewers where necessary, once the manuscript is in the Interactive Review."

5.6.2 Recommending rejection specifically during the independent review

If you would like to recommend rejection during the independent review, follow these steps:

1. If you have not already done so, provide feedback to the authors in the Editor tab regarding your decision to recommend rejection
2. Click on ‘Recommend to reject manuscript’ in the review forum in the right-hand column.
3. The authors will be informed of the recommendation and any active reviewers will be made inactive on the assignment. The authors will then have 7 days to submit a rebuttal and/or upload a revised manuscript. During this time, any outstanding reviewer invitations will also be revoked, however they can be re-invited if a rebuttal is successful
4. If the authors respond, please take one of the following actions:
    - Re-invite the previous reviewers or new reviewers if you are convinced by the author’s rebuttal and think the manuscript can remain in review.

- Confirm your recommendation for rejection by clicking on ‘Recommend to reject manuscript’. Note that your previous recommendation for rejection comments will be preserved in the Editor tab.

5. If, after 7 days, the authors do not respond, the recommendation for rejection will be sent directly to the specialty chief editor and no action is required from you.

5.6.3 Invite more reviewers

If you wish to invite more reviewers, please refer to the section 5.5 (‘Inviting Reviewers’) of these guidelines.

5.6.4 Contacting the reviewers or the Review Operations team

There are two channels that you can use to communicate with participants of the review process:

- During the independent review: please send a message to either the authors or a reviewer via the review forum with the Review Operations team in copy (see section 9)
- At the point of making the review reports available – you can leave comments for the authors in the Editor tab. The reviewers will also be able to see these comments; accordingly, please refrain from posting any identifying or sensitive information in this tab. Please note that the Review Operations team will not be notified about comments posted by the handling editor. If you would like to get in touch with the Review Operations team, please proceed to do so via email.

5.6.5 Revoke a reviewer

You can directly revoke a reviewer by clicking on the red cross next to their name, in the ‘manage reviewers’ tab. You may add a personal note explaining why this action had to be taken. Please note that if the minimum number of active reviewers is not met and you wish to continue with the review process, you will be required to secure a replacement reviewer.

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5.7 INTERACTIVE REVIEW

Once you have activated the interactive review forum, you, the authors, and the reviewers will be able to see all the comments in each Reviewer's and Editor's tabs. At this stage, authors are prompted to respond to reviewers' comments in the Review Forum and to upload a revised version of their manuscript.

If the authors require an extension for their resubmission, they may grant themselves a seven-day extension via the review forum; they can do this up to three times over the course of the review process. If they require an additional extension, they will be informed that they need to contact yourself as the Editor, or the Editorial Office for the approval and granting of the new extension.

Please note that our system automatically notifies participants when a new comment or revised manuscript is submitted.

You can add comments in the interactive review forum at any time.

- Click on the 'Add Comment' icon below the relevant comment that has been posted in the reviewer's tab
- Enter comments in the Editor tab

Once you have entered your comments, please ensure that you click 'Submit all Comments'.

During the interactive review stage, we ask you to ensure that the dialogue between the reviewers and the authors is constructive, professional, and timely. To ensure this, please pay attention to the following:

Are the reviewers providing an expert opinion and critical evaluation?

✓ Have there been multiple rounds of revisions, beyond what is necessary or feasible?
✓ Should a dispute arise at this stage, you will need to act as a mediator or invite new reviewers for additional opinions.

During the interactive review stage reviewers can either:

- Endorse – if they are satisfied with the changes made and have no further requests and you will be notified of this via email.
- Recommend rejection – if they disagree with the manuscript's contents or consider that it cannot be further improved.

- Withdraw – if they are no longer available, the manuscript develops beyond their expertise or personal circumstances prevent them from continuing with the review. If a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection, they become inactive, and you will be notified.

The reasons for a reviewer's recommendation or withdrawal are accessible in the review forum in their tab and will be visible at the top of the report in red font. These reasons are only visible to you and the chief editors – the authors or reviewers will not have access to these. This is also the case if a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection without submitting a report. If appropriate, you may forward these comments to the authors, with due care for preserving the anonymity of the reviewer. These reviewers will remain anonymous regardless of the final decision for the manuscript.

Please note that even if you have two reviewer's endorsements, you will not be able to provisionally accept the manuscript for publication if any other appointed reviewer is still due to act.

If a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection, you may consider one of the following actions:

- Invite additional reviewers if you either do not agree with the recommendation or require further input
- Recommend rejection based on the reviewer's comments.

5.8 REVIEW FINALIZED

Once all reviewers have finalized their review (through two endorsements), you will be asked to take the final decision on the manuscript.

You should read the final version of the manuscript, and consider all reviewer comments and author responses, whilst applying your own judgement and expertise. Please consider the following points:

- ✓ Are the reviews appropriate and of high quality?
- ✓ Has the final manuscript been submitted?
- ✓ Does the manuscript propose a suitable research question and hypothesis, supported by relevant theory?
- ✓ Do the authors apply a correct and transparent methodology?
- ✓ Are the study, design and materials clearly laid out?
- ✓ Is the language and presentation clear and adequate?
- ✓ Are figures and tables in line with scientific norms and standards?
- ✓ Do the authors follow Frontiers' Author Guidelines on editorial and ethical policies?
- ✓ Is the manuscript grounded in existing literature through sufficient referencing and does it offer an appropriate coverage of the relevant literature?

All reviewers have endorsed the manuscript, here are your options

Ready for publication: **Provisionally accept** the manuscript

Insufficient assessments: **Post feedback in the Editors tab, or Invite more Reviewers** to take a more informed decision

Premature endorsement: **Reactivate reviewer's review**

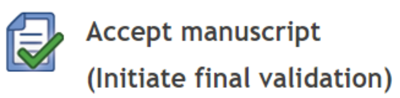
Remaining concerns: Request further revisions by **posting in the Editor tab** any unaddressed issues raised by withdrawn reviewers or your own additional comments

Remaining concerns: If the authors are unwilling or unable to address the remaining concerns, **recommend rejection** of the manuscript

5.8.1 Provisionally accept the manuscript

If you find the manuscript suitable for publication, please proceed with acceptance. You can do so by clicking 'Accept manuscript' icon on the right-hand side in the forum.

Please note that if you accept the manuscript your name will appear on the article as the handling editor. You thereby publicly certify the paper as a valid scholarly contribution. Do not accept a manuscript if there are concerns raised that have not been addressed – you are responsible for safeguarding the publication record in your role as editor.



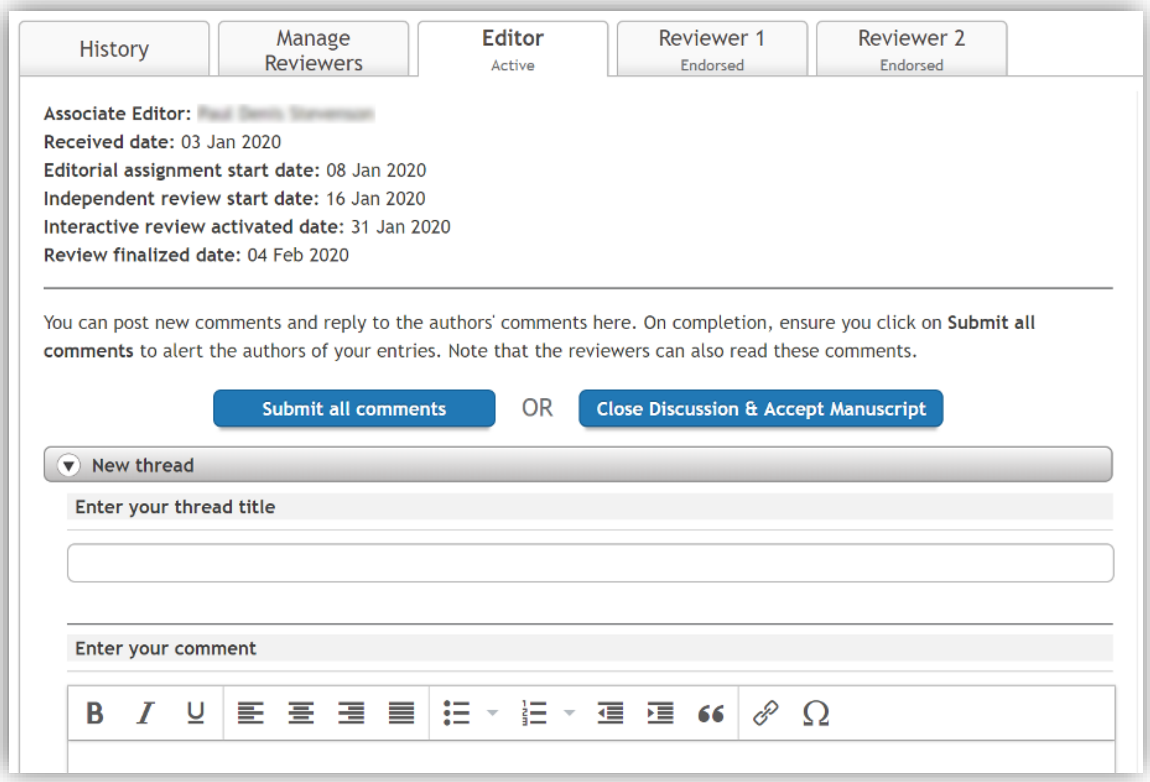
5.8.2 Re-activate a reviewer's review

If a reviewer endorses publication prematurely and you believe there are outstanding issues, you may reactivate their review by clicking on the 'Re-activate review' icon next to the reviewer's name.

We encourage you to ensure that the reviewers have read the revised version and are happy with it before they endorse the publication of the manuscript.

5.8.3 Post comments in the Editor tab

If there are pending comments in the manuscript that were not addressed, you can request the final changes in the Editor tab before accepting the final version of the manuscript.



5.9 Final validation

The final validation stage includes final quality checks by the Operations teams, to ensure that the manuscript is ready to enter production and starts immediately upon selection of the 'Accept manuscript' option. The Review Operations team will contact you in the following days to confirm that production has been initiated, or if there are any outstanding concerns.

6 EDITORIAL AND EBOOK

When the final manuscripts in your Research Topic have completed peer review, we will invite you to write an Editorial, summarizing the collection. The Editorial is an excellent way to introduce your Topic, summarize its contributing articles, and convey to the reader the aims and objectives of the research presented/published. Editorials have a maximum word count of 1,000 for Topics (with 5-10 articles published in the Research Topic) and can include up to 1 figure. They should be written by the topic editors only. The word limit can be increased for each additional article in the Topic, up to a maximum of 5,000 words for 50 articles or more (see our Author Guidelines for more details). When citing the contributions to your Research Topic in the Editorial, please do not list them in the reference list. Instead, hyperlink the in-text citation to the article directly.

Editorials are peer reviewed, receive a DOI, are citable, published in PDF and HTML format, and submitted for indexing in digital archives such as PubMed Central, depending on the hosting journal. Topic editors are not required to pay a fee to publish an Editorial.

You can submit your Editorial directly via your Research Topic Management page. To do so, navigate to the 'Manuscripts' tab and click 'Submit Editorial' in the top right. Once redirected to the submission system, please make sure you choose the hosting specialty for your Topic and choose 'Editorial' as Article Type. It is not necessary to associate your article with the Research Topic through the submission system, this will be done automatically after submission.

As a finishing touch, if your Research Topic has at least 10 published articles (including your editorial), a freely available eBook will be automatically produced, with its own ISSN (link). This will be made available on your Research Topic website and on the journal website and is a fantastic way to further promote/disseminate the findings from your Research Topic.

7 ARTICLE PUBLISHING FEES

While the fees help us offset the cost of all Frontiers internal staff who support the journal strategy and editorial boards as well as developing and maintaining the technology required to sustain the journals and the journal website, typesetting of articles, and many other associated costs, we of course do not want them to become an obstacle to publication. If a contributor does not have the funds to pay the publication fee, they may get in touch with our Fee Support team (more information can be found under Publishing Fees).

To strengthen our connection with the research communities we serve and to centralize communications, Frontiers is also working with libraries, funding agencies, and research consortiums to find ways to support researchers and scholars directly. These options allow authors to be supported in covering the APCs of their accepted articles. For a list of the institutions with which we currently have an institutional agreement, click here (you can recommend Frontiers to your library by clicking here).

8 DATA PROTECTION

These terms will apply, in addition to our general Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy, to any transfers of personal data between yourself and Frontiers during our cooperation on Research Topics. If you have any questions, please contact our data protection team at data.protection@frontiersin.org.

Where personal data is shared and transferred between us, each of us agrees:

- These terms apply to personal data as transferred by one of us to the other. They do not apply to any personal data held or collected by the recipient separately from our relationship.
- We will each comply with all applicable data protection laws concerning the transfer of that personal data outside our respective jurisdictions.
- We each commit to use personal data as received from the other only for the purposes for which it is shared. Those purposes are the launch, promotion, and management of Frontiers article collection initiatives, appointment of editors and reviewers, and purposes reasonably similar or ancillary to those main purposes.
- We become a controller of personal data received from you, subject to the agreed restriction on its use; you become Frontiers' processor of personal data you may receive from us.
- We have in place appropriate organizational and technical measures to ensure that personal data we hold is processed in accordance with applicable data protection laws.
- You confirm that you will store and handle personal data received by you from us in a confidential and secure manner.

9 JOURNAL CONTACT E-MAILS

Please use the contact guide below to direct all queries to the appropriate team:

Before launch

While your Research Topic is still in development, please keep in touch with your journal team. The contact email for each journal can be found under Journal Contact E-mails, Journal and Research Topics.

JOURNAL CONTACT E-MAILS

	Manuscripts in Review	Journal and Research Topics
Frontiers In Aerospace Engineering	aerospaceengineering.editorial.office@frontiersin.org	aerospaceengineering@frontiersin.org
Frontiers In Aging	aging.editorial.office@frontiersin.org	aging@frontiersin.org

After launch

Once your Topic has been launched, you will be put in contact with your journal-specific Submissions team as mentioned in section 1.5. They will remain your point of contact for the rest of the project.

Regarding potential conflict of interests, the review process, or platform queries, please contact your journal-specific Review Operations team. The contact emails for each journal's Operations team can be found under Journal Contact E-mails, Manuscripts in Review

JOURNAL CONTACT E-MAILS

	Manuscripts in Review	Journal and Research Topics
Frontiers In Aerospace Engineering	aerospaceengineering.editorial.office@frontiersin.org	aerospaceengineering@frontiersin.org
Frontiers In Aging	aging.editorial.office@frontiersin.org	aging@frontiersin.org

Technical support

For any technical or software issues, please contact our support team at support@frontiersin.org.