



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Friday, December 8, 2023 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,  
Dublin.**

**Present:** Prof Tom Fahey (Interim Chairperson)  
Dr Leonora Bishop  
Dr Tracy Cunningham  
Dr Julie Ling  
Dr Terry McWade  
Dr Cliona Saidlear  
Dr Sarah Barry

**Apologies:** Prof Seamus Donnelly

**In attendance:** Dr Mairead O’Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer  
Ms Lorna Purcell, Board Secretary and Head of Governance  
Mr Martin Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations, attended for items 12 & 17.  
Dr Hamish Sinclair, Director of Health Information & Evidence, attended for items 9 & 12.  
Dr Sarah Craig, Business Lead, Health Information Systems, attended for Item 9.  
Mr Dara Murphy, Finance Manager, attended for items 12 & 17.  
Dr Caitriona Creely, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for Items 13 (a), 13 (b), 14 (a) & 15 (a).  
Dr Camille Boostrom, Health, Research & Evidence, attended for Item 13 (a) & 14 (a).  
Dr Catherine Gill, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for items 13 (b) & 14 (a).  
Dr Amanda Daly, Research, Strategy & Funding attended for item 15 (a).  
Dr Jean Long, Head of HRB Evidence Centre, and Dr Lisa Murphy, Research Officer, Health Information and Evidence, attended for Item 16 (a).

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## **1. Apologies**

Apologies received from Prof Seamus Donnelly.

## **2. Appointment of a Chairperson for the meeting**

It was agreed that Prof Tom Fahey would chair the meeting.

## **3. Role of the Chairperson between meetings**

The Board was requested to agree whether the Chairperson appointed for this meeting should be:

- (a) authorised to arrange and prepare the agenda for the next Board meeting (to avoid confusion as to when the next meeting would take place and what the agenda would be) or,
- (b) conferred with the full role of the Chairperson set out in Section 4.2 of the Governance Handbook until the next meeting of the Board.

The Board agreed that the Chairperson should be conferred with the full role of the Chairperson set out in Section 4.2 of the Governance Handbook until the next meeting of the Board.

## **4. Executive Session**

There were no decisions taken during the executive session of the Board.

## **5. Conflicts of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest noted.

## **6. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meetings held on Thursday November 9, 2023 were approved by the Board.

## **7. Matters arising and action points from previous meeting**

The Board noted the progress on the Action Points from the previous meeting, and their current status.

## **8. CEO's Report**

The CEO reported to the Board on the following matters:

- Budget 2024
- Initial stakeholder consultation on the establishment of a new national research and innovation funding agency resulting from a merger of SFI & IRC
- HRB NDTRS to include questions on drug related intimidation

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- LINK system assists with recording of Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) data
- A new Health Information System for Fluoridation monitoring
- Update on HRB's development of a national mental health research strategy
- Report on mental health related indicators
- Update on the annual meeting of the International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders
- Update on ResearchFish implementation.
- National Open Research Forum Festival, 2-3 November
- Update on Horizon Europe Health Cluster and Cancer Mission
- Update on the 1+ Million Genomes Initiative and GDI project
- Rare Disease Strategy/Plan
- Awards made under delegated authority

#### **9. HRB National Health Information Systems (NHIS) (Presentation & Discussion)**

The Board was provided with annual input from NHIS on its activity and developments with a presentation entitled 'Update on and impact of the HRB's national health information systems, 2023', presented by Dr Sarah Craig. This presentation was very well received and generated some interesting discussion points.

#### **10. HRB Response to new National funding agency**

The Board discussed the potential purpose, vision and priorities of the new national funding agency being established through a merger of SFI and IRC, and its relationship with the HRB, and advised on specific points that should be raised in the stakeholder consultation.

#### **11. Programme of Work for the Board 2024 & Conflicts of Interest**

The Board noted the Programme of Work for 2024.

#### **12. Draft HRB Budget 2024 and Deliverables Plan**

The Board noted the HRB draft budget for 2024 and key elements of the draft HRB deliverables plan for 2024, the fourth year of the HRB Strategy 2021-2025, Health research – making an impact.

#### **13. Approval to Issue Calls**

##### **(a) Applied partnership Awards 2024**

The Board approved a call for Applied Partnership Awards (APA 2024) with two staggered deadlines, aimed at supporting approximately 14 projects at a cost to the HRB of €2.4m (and where

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additional applications in mental health and inclusion health may be supported through additional resources).

#### (b) Pilot Evidence-for Policy Research Programme

The Board approved the launch of the first call under the new Evidence for Policy (EfP) Programme, a collaborative initiative between the HRB and the Dept of Health, aimed at attracting suitably qualified teams to advance research and evaluation projects that have been prioritised by policy units in the Dept of Health. If successful across all seven topics included in this round, the overall cost would be €2.7M (paid over for 3 years).

### 14. New Scheme / Call Principles papers

#### (a) Principles Paper: Collaborative Research Networks

The Board considered the high-level principles for advancing and streamlining investments in Collaborative Research Networks in thematic areas. A more detailed paper will be tabled for Board approval in February 2024.

### 15. Other Research Funding matters

#### (a) Report to the Board on EU and International Investments under Delegated Authority

The Board noted the summary report on the HRB's investment in EU research initiatives as at end of 2023.

### 16. HRB Publications – Evidence Reviews

#### (a) Primary Prevention of dental caries: An evidence review

The Board reviewed and approved the process by which this evidence review was undertaken to allow it to go forward for publication.

### 17. Corporate Reporting

#### (a) Procurement Reports

The Board noted the following:

Between the period 01 August 2023 to 31 October 2023:

- Purchase Orders raised with a value more than €20,000
- Contracts awarded between €25,000 and €75,000 (ex VAT)
- Contracts approved by the Board more than €75,000 (ex VAT)
- Authorised exceptions to the competitive procurement guidelines

Between period 01 January 2023 to 31 October 2023

- Supplier expenditure more than €25,000

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**(b) Contracts valued at in excess of €75,000**

The Board approved the award of a four-year contract to University College Cork for the provision of research services to report on drug prevalence, health correlates of drug use, consequences of drug use and prison data to the EMCDDA 2024-2027, and update of Estimation of Problem Drug Use in Ireland. The maximum value of this contract is €231,000 excluding VAT.

**(c) HRB Management Accounts**

The Board noted the revised 2023 forecast as at 20 November 2023.

**16. Other Governance Matters**

**a. Verbal Update re: ARC meeting and minutes of October 13 meeting**

The Board approved the minutes of the October 13 ARC meeting. The Risk Management Policy and updated Risk Appetite Statement will be brought to the Board at the next meeting.

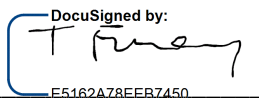
**b. Risk Register**

The Board noted the HRB Risk Register which shows the risks considered to be of most significance to the HRB as of 28th November 2023.

The Board were informed that ARC member training be brought forward to earlier in 2024 than what is set out in the Programme of Work, and a suggestion that Cyber Security training could be helpful. There was also a general discussion around Board training. The Secretary will contact all Board members before the end of the year to assess training needs.

**c. MDC Committee (additional discussion point)**

The Board requested a review of the Management Development Committee Terms of Reference in advance of the next Board meeting.

Signed:  DocuSigned by:  
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(Chairperson)