



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board
held on Thursday, 9 November 2023 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,
Dublin.**

Present:

Prof T Fahey (Interim Chairperson)
Dr S Barry
Dr L Bishop
Dr T Cunningham
Prof S Donnelly
Dr J Ling
Dr T McWade
Dr C Saidlear

Apologies: None

In attendance: Dr M O'Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer

Ms C Cronin, Board Secretary and Head of Governance

Ms L Purcell, Board Secretary and Head of Governance

Mr M Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations, attended for items 8 and 13.

Dr T Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, attended for items 8, 10 and 11.

Mr H Sinclair, Director of Health Information & Evidence, attended for item 8.

Dr C Creely, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for Item 10 (a).

Ms Catherine Gill, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for item 10 (a).

Ms O Ward, Research and Innovation Infrastructures, attended for items 10 (b) and 11.

Ms F Manning, Research Strategy & Funding, attended for item 10 (b) and 11.

Ms J Long, Head of HRB Evidence Centre, and Ms K Lambe, Research Officer, Health Information and Evidence, attended for Item 12.

Mr D Murphy, Finance Manager, attended for item 13.

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1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

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 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 decided that the interim Chairperson should carry out all of the responsibilities of the role of the Chairperson as set out in Section 4.2 of the Governance Handbook, until the next meeting of the Board.

4. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

5. Minutes of the previous meetings

Minutes of the meetings held on Friday 22 September and Thursday 26 October 2023 (Special Board meeting) were both approved.

6. Matters Arising and action points from previous meetings

There were no action points and no matters arising from previous meetings.

7. CEO's Report

The CEO reported to the Board on the following matters:

- Budget 2024
- The establishment of a new national research and innovation funding agency through the amalgamation of Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council
- PhD stipend
- DASSL event
- Advisory Committee for the National In – Patient Reporting System (NPIRS)
- National Health Information Systems engagement

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- Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use
- Upcoming Events
- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority.

During the discussion on the establishment of a new national research and innovation funding agency it was outlined how Professor Philip Nolan, CEO-designate of the new agency, has begun a process of consultation on its purpose, vision and priorities, and has requested to meet the Board of the HRB in February. The CEO outlined how she will be meeting Prof Nolan in December and the Board requested that they receive a briefing note on those discussions from the CEO, subsequent to her meeting with Prof Nolan, which the CEO agreed to provide in due course.

8. Strategy Progress Overview (Presentation & Discussion)

The CEO presented the Board with an overview of the progress made against the 2021 - 2025 strategy. There was a discussion around how best to measure progress made over time and the importance of not just measuring operational activity but also impact and the challenges around this. There was a request from the Board for a paper to be drafted outlining the process followed when developing the previous strategy, and the CEO offered to provide this, covering the development of several previous strategies.

9. Programme of Work for the Board 2023 and listed conflicts of interest

The Board noted the Programme of Work for the remainder of 2023.

10. Panel Recommendations on Awards

(a) Patient Safety Research Network (PSRN) 2023

The Board approved the recommendation from an international panel of experts to fund an award for a Patient Safety Research Network at a cost of €625,000 over five years (overall value of €1.25M with matched funding from HSE National Quality and Patient Safety Directorate, NQPSD).

(b) Cancer Trials Enhancement Awards (CTEA) 2023

The Board approved the International Panel recommendations to fund two Cancer Trials Enhancement Awards at an anticipated cost of approximately €1.42M over three years. Awards are anticipated to start on 1 January 2024.

11. Other Research Funding Matters

(a) National Clinical Trials Office (NCTO) – 12 month costed extension

The Board approved the HRB-led request to extend the current NCTO Award by 12 months to 30 April 2025 at an anticipated additional cost of €150k. This extension ensures that any decisions

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around trials coordination are taken in the wider context of a strategic review of the broader clinical trials ecosystem in Ireland, planned during 2024.

12. HRB Publications – Evidence Reviews

(a) Efficacy and safety of medicinal cannabis in adult populations: An evidence review

The Board reviewed the process by which this evidence review of the efficacy and safety of medicinal cannabis in adult populations was undertaken and approved it to go forward for publication.

13. Corporate and Financial Reporting

(a) HRB Service Plan 2023 – status report as at 30 September 2023

The Board noted the report on status of HRB's Service Plan for 2023 as at 30 September 2023 and approved its submission to the Department of Health's Research Services and Policy Unit as the progress report on the annual Performance Delivery Agreement.

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

The Board approved the award of:

- an initial four-year contract to Silverarm Solutions, with an option to extend three times by two years up to a maximum of ten years for the provision of support and maintenance, software development and hosting for the HRB National Drugs Library website. The maximum value of this contract is €400,000 excluding VAT,
- a two-year contract to Hibernia Services Limited (trading as Eir Evo), with an option to extend twice by one year up to a maximum of four years for the provision of three ICT support staff through a managed service. The maximum value of this contract is €990,000 excluding VAT,
- two four-year contracts for EMCDDA Research Services - combined maximum value of contracts is €288,000 excluding VAT,
- a four-year contract to Dr. Ciara Guiney (T/A Yin-Yang Wellbeing) for the provision of research services to report on crime and drug market indicators for Ireland's EMCDDA National Focal Point. The maximum value of this contract is €156,000 excluding VAT,
- a four-year contract to Lucy Dillon for the provision of research services to report on drug policy and prevention responses for Ireland's EMCDDA National Focal Point. The maximum value of this contract is €132,000 excluding VAT,
- an initial four-year contract to BDO Digital Ltd, with an option to extend twice by three years for the provision of an application management ICT solution, implementation, and support to the National Office for Research Ethics Committee. The maximum value of this contract is €600,000 excluding VAT.

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14. Other Governance Matters

(a) Report from the HRB Audit & Risk Committee

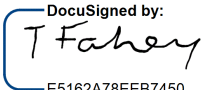
The Board approved the Report from the HRB Audit & Risk Committee.

15. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Board is on December 8, 2023.

16. Executive Session of the Board

It was agreed by the Board during the Executive session that Prof Fahey and Dr Cunningham would chair three meetings each, with Prof Fahey chairing the December and February meetings and Dr Cunningham chairing the meetings in April, May and June 2024.

Signed:  E5162A78EEB7450...
(Chairperson)