



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Friday, 9 December 2022 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,  
Dublin.**

**Present:** Prof B Hannigan (Chairperson)  
Dr L Bishop  
Dr T Cunningham (on Zoom)  
Prof M Harding (on Zoom)  
Prof T Fahey  
Dr J Ling  
Dr T McWade  
Prof C Normand  
Dr C Saidlear

**Apologies:** Prof S Donnelly

**In attendance:** Dr M O'Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer  
Ms C Cronin, Board Secretary and Head of Governance  
Dr H Sinclair, Director of Evidence and Information, Dr S Craig, Head of National Health Information Systems, and Ms A O'Donohoe, Health Information Manager, National Health Information Systems attended for item 6  
Dr H Sinclair attended for item 7  
Mr M Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations and Mr D Murphy, Finance Manager, attended for items 7 and 13  
Dr T Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, attended for items 7, 10, 11 and 12  
Dr A Cody, Head of Investigator-Led Grants, Research Careers and Enablers attended for item 10  
Ms O Ward, Head of Research and Innovation Infrastructures attended for items 11(a) and 11(b)  
Dr M Hiney, Head of International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes attended for items 11(c), 11(d) and 12.

## **1. Conflict of Interest**

Dr McWade declared that the matter of the Patient Safety Research Network fell within his domain of business/research. The Chairperson advised that Dr McWade take part in general discussions in this area but not take part in formal decisions relating specifically relating to funding streams. On the matter of the Rare Diseases Research and Innovation Catalyst Awards Dr Bishop informed the Board that she was a member of the Board of Debra Ireland and Dr Cunningham reminded the Board that she is an employee of a company that is focussed on rare diseases.

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

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 November 2022 were approved.

## **3. Action points from previous meetings**

The Chairperson reported that all of the action points arising from previous meetings had been completed.

## **4. Review of outcome from strategy sessions**

The Board discussed the outcomes from its strategy away day held on Friday 11 November 2022. It was agreed that it would be desirable to have a dynamic corporate strategy and the possibility of establishing a task and finish group to consider how that might be actioned was discussed. The Board also discussed the staffing required to support a dynamic strategy and agreed that the matter would be discussed by the HRB's Management Development Committee.

It was agreed that external communications would be included on the Board's work programme as a matter for strategic discussion during 2023.

## **5. CEO's Report**

### **HRB Budget and Business Plan 2023**

The CEO referred to the *draft* budget and business plan 2023 which was a matter for discussion later in the meeting. The Board noted with concern the matter of the impact of public sector salary increases on the budgets of existing grants and the requirement that grant holders find the funds to pay salary increases from within existing funds.

The CEO informed the Board that assurances had been received that the HRB will be included in the national review of the PhD stipend.

### **Facilities - third floor of Grattan House and sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street**

The CEO informed the Board that the Department of Health had decided not to renew its sub-lease on part of the third floor of Grattan House. The sub-lease expires at the end of February 2023 and, consequently, the HRB will become liable for the rent.

She also said that the tender process to appoint an estate agent to handle the sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street was close to completion and that it was hoped to put the building up for sale early in 2023.

### **HRB Conference**

The Board discussed the The HRB conference which took place on 30 November 2022 and congratulated the HRB staff for arranging an excellent event that brought many differing perspectives together.

### **Other matters**

The CEO also reported on:

- HERA delegation
- Genomics and Genetic Medicine Strategy
- National Open Research Forum (NORF) Report
- National Research Integrity Engagement
- Updates from around the organisation
  - NDRDI completes its collection of data for HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)
  - IMPACT award
  - HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority.

## **6. Output, developmental issues and impact of the National Health Information Systems (NHIS) databases**

The Board was provided with a presentation that set out the strategic role of the National Health Information Systems; an overview of the existing systems; information on engagement across the health service, the public sector and academia; an overview of the technical operation of the LINK databases and key outputs, impacts and planned future developments.

The Board thanked the team for an excellent presentation, and it was agreed that the Board will be kept up to date on the work of the Team.

## **7. HRB Draft Budget 2023 and Draft Deliverables Plan 2023**

The Board noted the HRB draft budget for 2023 and the paper setting out key elements of the draft HRB deliverables plan for 2023, the third year of the HRB Strategy 2021-2025.

## **8. Programme of Work for the Board 2023**

The Board noted its programme of work for 2023. It was noted that the document would be presented at each meeting of the Board and amended and updated during the year when necessary.

It was also agreed that the document would be circulated to members of the Board to gather information on Conflicts of Interest.

### **9. HRB Service Plan 2022 – Status Report as of 30 September 2022**

The Board noted the report on the status of HRB's Service Plan for 2022 as at 30 September 2022 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

### **10. Approval to issue calls**

#### **Applied Programme Grants (APRO) 2023**

**The Board approved a call for Applied Programme Grants** (see [link](#)) where 5-6 awards will be made in 2023.

### **11. New Scheme/Call Principles Papers**

#### **(a) Rare Diseases Research and Innovation Catalyst Awards (RDCAT)**

The Board considered the high-level principles for a new call entitled Rare Disease Research and Innovation Catalyst Awards. The HRB's strategy in relation to translational research was discussed and it was noted that in collaborative initiatives the HRB was not overly restrictive in the nature of the research that it funds. **The key principles set out in the paper were approved.**

#### **(b) Cancer Clinical Trials Group Enhancement Awards (for Galway and Limerick)**

**The Board approved the high-level principles of a proposed new process to enable two groups to make a case for funding in the form of Cancer Clinical Trials Group Enhancement Awards in 2023.**

#### **(c) Policy Research Programme**

The Board noted the background and **approved the high-level principles of a proposed new Policy Research Programme** to generate the evidence for policy priorities of the Department of Health through a structured programme.

#### **(d) Patient Safety Research Network**

The Board noted the background and **approved the high-level principles of a proposed Patient Safety Research Network call**. It also noted that the call principles had been informed by HRB engagement with the HSE National Quality and Patient Safety Directorate (NQPSD).

## 12. Other Research Funding Matters

### Collaboration in Ireland for Clinical Effectiveness Reviews (CICER)

The Board **approved a 12-month extension to the HRB-CICER Award** (see [link](#)) at a cost of approximately €450k to ensure continuity of delivery of specialist support for the Minister beyond April 2023, while parallel detailed discussions are prioritised with Department of Health about any future investment in evidence supports to inform National Clinical Guidelines

## 13. Corporate reporting

### Management Accounts

The Board noted the HRB management accounts for the period ended 23 November 2022 and the updated forecast of outturn for the full year.

### Procurement Activity Report

The Board noted a report on the following procurement activity:

Between the period 01 August 2022 to 31 October 2022

- 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

The Board also noted a table listing supplier expenditure exceeding €25,000 during the ten months 1 January 2022 to 31 October 2022

### Contracts valued at in excess of €75,000

The Board **approved the award of a six-year contract to Matrix Internet Applications Ltd**, with option to extend by four years for the provision of a new content management system (CMS) for the HRB website and support, maintenance, and hosting services at a maximum value of €500,000 excluding VAT.

## 14. Other governance matters

### Report from the HRB Audit & Risk Committee

The Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee reported on proceedings at the meeting held earlier that day. Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 October 2022 had been circulated to the Board.

### HRB Risk Register

In accordance with the HRB Risk Management Policy and Procedure, the Board noted the extract from the HRB Risk Register detailing the risks considered to be of most significance to the HRB as of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The document had been considered at the meeting of the HRB Audit & Risk Committee held earlier that day.

### **Board self-assessment evaluation questionnaire**

**The Board agreed to complete the online self-assessment evaluation questionnaire in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).**

### **Programme of work for the Board 2022 and conflicts of interest**

The Board noted the programme of work completed during 2022 and the listed conflicts of interest.

### **Retirement by rotation of Prof Mairead Harding**

The Board noted that this was the last board meeting to be attended by Prof Harding prior to her retirement by rotation. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked Prof Harding for her excellent service on the Board and her informed and insightful contributions to discussions of both the Board and the Audit & Risk Committee over the previous five years.

### **15. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for Friday 17 February 2023.

### **16. Executive session of the Board**

No decisions were taken during the executive session of the Board.

  
Signed:   
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Prof Bernie Hannigan (Chairperson)