



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board
held on Friday, 27 September 2024 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,
Dublin.**

Present: Dr Tracy Cunningham (Chairperson)
Dr Sarah Barry
Dr Leonora Bishop
Prof Tom Fahey
Dr Julie Ling
Dr Terry McWade
Dr Cliona Saidlear
Prof Peter Doran
Prof Mark Lawler

Apologies: None.

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 Item 8.
Mr Dara Murphy, Head of Finance, attended for item 8.
Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, attended for items 10, 11 & 12.
Mr Gavin Lawler & Ms Oonagh Ward, Research Strategy and Funding Directorate, attended for Items 10.1 and 12.1.
Dr Caitriona Creely, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for items 10.2 & 11.1.
Dr Camille Boostrom attended for items 10.2 and 11.1.
Dr Annalisa Montesanti & Dr Anne Cody attended for item 10.3.
Dr Jean Long attended for items 13.1 & 13.2.

HRB Board meeting minutes 27 September 2024

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest were declared for Prof Mark Lawler on items 10.1 and 10.2, and Dr Sarah Barry on items 10.1, 10.2 & 10.3.

3. Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on June 28, 2024 were approved.

4. Matters Arising and action points from previous meetings

Action points from the previous meeting were either addressed or appear as an agenda item.

5. CEO's Report

The CEO reported to the Board on the following matters:

- Budget 2025
- Baggot St funds & bequest
- Report on Emerging Health Threats Function
- National Clinical Trials Oversight Group
- Health Information Bill published
- New National Adult Palliative Care Policy
- HRB joins group on Climate and Climate-Related Research and Innovation
- Report of Expert Review Body on Nursing and Midwifery
- Alcohol Bulletin
- Drug Poisoning Deaths in Ireland in 2021
- Biobanking Matters
- NI R&D Office Strategy
- TILDA designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Longitudinal Studies on Ageing and the Life Course
- Update on Horizon Europe Health Cluster calls 2024
- Update from the National Office for RECs
- Communications & Events

HRB Board meeting minutes 27 September 2024

- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under Delegated Authority

6. Draft Agenda for Board Strategy Away Day (November)

The CEO presented the draft Agenda for the Board's Strategy Away Day in November. The Board agreed with the proposed structure for the day, the use of a facilitator and requested access to some specific resources in advance of the day in order to allow sufficient preparation.

7. Programme of Work for the Board

The Board reviewed and agreed the Programme of Work for the year.

8. Corporate Reporting

1. Service Plan Reports: Quarterly Report on Service Plan Delivery

The Board noted the report on status of HRB's Service Plan for 2024, as at 30 June 2024 ,and approved its submission to the Department of Health's Research Policy and Innovation Unit as the progress report on the annual Performance Delivery Agreement.

2. Procurement Reports

The Board noted the following:

Between the period 01 June 2024 to 31 August 2024:

- 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 2024 to 31 August 2024:

- Supplier expenditure more than €25,000

3. Management Accounts

The Board noted the revised 2024 forecast as at 18 September 2024.

4. Staff Survey – verbal update

The CEO provided a verbal update to the Board regarding the Staff Survey.

9. Other Governance Matters

1. Terms of Reference of the ARC

The Board approved the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee.

2. Dates & Calendar for HRB Board & Committee Meetings

The Board was provided with the list of dates for Board and Committee meetings in 2025.

3. Board Self Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire – verbal update

The Secretary to the Board provided a verbal update on the Self Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire which is on the Programme of Work for 2024. Board Excellence, an external Governance specialist who will be carrying out the Board training in October, will carry out the evaluation in Q1 2025.

4. Updated Guidance – Conflicts of Interest

The Board reviewed and approved the updated Conflicts of Interest Guidance.

10. Approval of Panel recommendations on awards

1. All Ireland NCI Cancer Consortium (AICC) Research & Innovation Awards

The Board approved the International Panel's recommendations to fund four All-Ireland NCI Cancer Consortium (AICC) Research and Innovation Grants at a cost of €1.1 million over 36 months and also approved one application ranked on a reserve list and delegated authority to the Executive Team to action as they deem appropriate, subject to availability of funds in this and subsequent years. Prof Lawler and Dr Barry recused themselves for this item.

2. Applied Partnership Awards 2024 (Cycle I)

The Board approved the recommendations of an International Panel to fund three Applied Partnership Awards (under Cycle 1) at an approximate cost of €0.6M to the HRB over two years. Prof Lawler and Dr Barry recused themselves for this item.

3. Emerging Investigator Awards & Emerging Clinician Scientists Awards

The Board approved the recommendations of two international review panels to make 12 awards, seven Emerging Investigator Awards and five Emerging Clinician Scientist Awards, at a combined cost of approximately €11.5 million over five years. The Board also approved one

HRB Board meeting minutes 27 September 2024

ECSA application as a reserve and delegated authority to the Executive Team to action as they deem appropriate, subject to availability of funds in this and subsequent years (which would bring the total number of awards to 13 at a cost of €12.5M). Dr Barry recused herself for this item.

11. Other Research Funding Matters

1. Approval of National Mental Health Research Strategy

The Board approved the publication of the National Mental Health Research Strategy, developed by a HRB-convened National Mental Health Research Strategy Expert Group, in accordance with Recommendation 93 of Sharing the Vision.

2. HRB & Commercial Determinants of Health

The Board noted the current position of the HRB in relation to the commercial determinants of health and approved the proposed recommendations.

12. Reviews, Evaluations & Outputs

1. Cancer Research Investment in Ireland Report

The Board noted the Cancer Research Investment in Ireland (2019-2022) report and approved it for publication.

13. HRB Publications – Evidence Reviews

1. Community water fluoridation: An evidence review

The Board reviewed the process by which this evidence review was undertaken and requested that further work is carried out before it is brought back to the Board.

2. Health-promoting interventions in prisons: An evidence review

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

Executive Session of the Board

In light of the Evidence Review matter, item 13.1, the ‘Peer Review of HRB Research Publications’ process should be brought to the Board.

HRB Board meeting minutes 27 September 2024

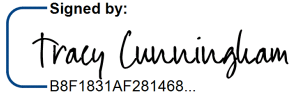
The Board requested that certain documents (such as the Appendices of an Evidence Review) are saved in the Reading Room, and also that peer reviewer input is divided out per peer reviewer and hyperlinked appropriately.

The Board requested that the draft questions on the Culture Survey are shared with the Board before they are circulated to staff.

Decisions taken electronically in between meetings of June 28 and September 27 2024

On July 11th, the Board noted the confirmation of co-funding from the European Commission to co-fund the Genome of Europe Project and approved HRB support for the Department of Health to manage an application and review process (and contract management, if successful) for the 'Genome of Ireland' collection within the wider project. This decision was made via the circulation of papers and agreed electronically.

On July 19th the Board approved the awarding of a contract to Savenet Solutions Ltd for ICT Services Provision, including Disaster Recovery, Backup Services, Hardware Support, Licensing, and IT Consulting. The initial contract for this work is for two years, with an option to extend up to six years. The maximum value of this contract over the eight years will be €800,000 excluding VAT. This decision was made via the circulation of papers and agreed electronically.

Signed:  (Tracy Cunningham, Chairperson)
Signed by: Tracy Cunningham
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