



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Thursday, 7 November 2024 at the Herbert Park Hotel, Dublin 4.**

**Present:** Dr Tracy Cunningham (Chairperson)  
Dr Sarah Barry  
Dr Leonora Bishop  
Dr Julie Ling  
Dr Terry McWade  
Dr Cliona Saidlear  
Prof Peter Doran  
Dr Martina Ni Chualain

**Apologies:** Prof Tom Fahey  
Prof Mark Lawler

**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 7.1 & 7.2.  
Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, attended for items 9, 10 & 11.  
Dr Annalisa Montesanti and Dr Anne Cody, Research Strategy and Funding Directorate, attended for Item 9.1.  
Dr Caitriona Creely, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, attended for item 10.1.  
Ms Oonagh Ward & Mr Gavin Lawler, Research Strategy and Funding Directorate, attended for item 11.1.

## **1. Apologies**

Prof Tom Fahey and Prof Mark Lawler sent apologies.

## **2. Conflicts of Interest**

A Conflict of interest was declared for Item 11.1 by Prof Peter Doran who recused himself for this item.

## **3. Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on September 27 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:

- Baggot St Funds and Bequest
- National Clinical Trials Oversight Group
- NDRDI data highlights use of some benzodiazepines in poisoning deaths
- Mapping NASS Data to assist with service planning
- Research Security
- Minister for Health publishes report of the Emerging Health Threats Function Expert Steering Group
- HRB contribution to book 'Meaningful and Safe: The ethics and ethical implications of Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in health and medical research'
- Communications and Events
- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority

## **6. Programme of Work for the Board**

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

## **7. 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 September 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. Contracts valued in excess of €75,000**

The Board approved the award of a two-year contract to the Mespil Hotel with an option to extend twice by twelve months for the provision of Hotel Accommodation services. The maximum value of this contract is €196,000 excluding VAT.

## **8. Other Governance Matters**

### **1. Draft ARC Minutes**

The Board reviewed the Minutes from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on October 11 2024 and approved them in principle, assuming that there are no changes made by the Committee when they review the minutes at the December 6 ARC meeting.

### **2. HRB Board Committees**

The Board reviewed the current Committee structure in the HRB, which currently consists of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Management Development Committee (MDC). Board members expressed the view that as the organisation develops, the MDC should be replaced with a 'Development Committee', which would meet quarterly, the Terms of Reference of which will potentially incorporate areas such as succession planning, management development, culture, and organisational structure. The membership of this Committee was also discussed. A draft Terms of Reference for this Committee will be presented at the next Board meeting for review.

## **9. Approval of Call Principles**

### **1. Post-doctoral stage career grants**

The Board discussed the principles set out in the proposal to enhance the research capacity of health and social care researchers at postdoctoral level using a twin-track approach (academic-researcher track and practitioner-researcher track). A strategic review is due to be completed in early 2025, however intelligence from the review to date, (in particular from the analysis of internal data and consultation with stakeholders), prompted the team to reflect and re-evaluate elements of the current approach and the original phasing of investments. The Board requested that a short narrative piece be produced which sets out clearly what intelligence the team are relying on regarding the revision of their approach, and that this be presented to the Board at the next meeting when the proposal will be brought back for decision.

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## **10. Approval of Panel recommendations on awards**

### **1. Collaborative Research Networks: dementia and palliative care 2024**

The Board approved the recommendation from an International Panel of experts to fund two Collaborative Research Network awards – in Dementia and Palliative Care - at a cost of €1.75M to HRB over five years (overall value of €2M with co-funding included from HSC R&D Division of €250k for the Palliative Care Research Network).

## **11. Reviews, Evaluations & Outputs**

### **1. Outcome of review of National Irish Covid-19 Biobank review**

The Board noted the International Review Panel Report following their review of the National Irish Covid-19 Biobank grant on 2 September 2024.

## **Executive Session of the Board**

Signed:  (Chairperson)  
Signed by: Tracy Cunningham  
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