



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board
held on Friday, 12 December 2025 at the HRB Offices, Grattan House, Dublin 2.**

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

Apologies: Prof Tom Fahey

In attendance: Prof Grainne Gorman, Chief Executive Officer.
Mr D'Arcy Donnelly, Acting Board Secretary.
Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of RSF, attended for items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11.
Ms Oonagh Ward, Head of Research and Innovation Infrastructures, RSF, attended for item 7 & 10.
Dr Caitriona Creely, Head of International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes Unit, RSF, attended for item 8 & 11.
Dr Fiona Manning, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 7.
Dr Emily Vereker, Head of National Office, attended for item 7.
Dr Amanda Daly, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 8.
Dr Gavin Lawler, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 10 & 12.
Mr Dara Murphy, Head of Finance, attended for item 13 & 14.
Dr Bríd Burke, Project Manager, HRCDC, presented item 15.
Dr Camille Boostrom, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 15.
Dr Aine Teahan, Research Officer, Evidence Centre, attended for item 15.

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1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Prof Tom Fahey.

2. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on November 06, 2025 were approved.

4. Matters Arising and action points from previous meetings

Action points from previous meetings were either addressed or appeared as an agenda item.

5. CEO's Report

The CEO reported to the Board on the following matters:

- HRB Strategy 2026 – 2030
- Business Planning 2026
- EU Updates – Implication for HRB
- Update on Developments in the U.S – Implications for the HRB
- NHIS Updates
- HRB Evidence Centre Updates
- Strategic Communications and Outreach
- National Conference 3rd December 2025
- ICT and Finance Activities and Updates
- HR Updates
- HRB Media Coverage

6. Strategy Development

On behalf of the Strategy Steering Group, Dr Maguire presented a project plan and timelines. Both were broadly agreed, with the Board noting the need for ongoing and high-level engagement with the Dept of Health from January through to the Estimates 2027 process. The Board enquired about the status of the planned work on Organisational structure/competencies and highlighted that they would like to see this started earlier than March 2026.

7. Evidence Synthesis Hub for Pandemic Preparedness and Response

In advance of the Board meeting, the Board agreed to review this proposal using an expedited procedure, aligned with urgent deadlines set for the CMO Office in the Dept of Health. The Board

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approved the proposal to support an Evidence Synthesis Hub for Health Threats for Ireland, at a cost of up to €2M over 24 months for an initial establishment phase, conditional on the HRB receiving the costs related to staff management of the Hub within the allocation provided.

8. Approval of Call Principles

1. All Ireland Cancer Consortium awards

The Board approved the high-level principles of a new call for All Ireland – Cancer Consortium R&I Grants. It was agreed that a more detailed paper will be tabled for Board approval in February 2026 setting out the aims and objectives, cost, and process for the call.

2. Clinical Trials Infrastructures

The Board was asked to consider the approaches, planning and external engagement for the HRB for the year ahead following the publication and launch of the report of the National Clinical Trials Oversight Group report, and the vision set out for trials infrastructure. The Board discussed the alternative scenarios set out in the paper and concluded that an urgent meeting should be requested with Muiris and colleagues in the Department of Health to garner clarity on the role of the HRB in the delivery of the NCTOG recommendations. The Board acknowledged that HRB staff should start preparatory work linked to bridging extensions for existing trials infrastructures.

9. Approval to Issue Calls

1. Applied Partnership Awards – Women’s health 2026

The Board approved the launch of Applied Partnership Awards (APA-WH 2026) focusing exclusively on applications for women’s health research, aimed at supporting up to 10 projects at a cost of approximately €2M, to be funded through dedicated funding from the Department of Health.

10. Other Research Funding Matters

1. Status update on HRB investments in EU awards

The Board noted the summary report on the HRB’s investment in EU research initiatives at the end of 2025.

2. Collaborative Research Networks – Learnings

The Board noted the update on HRB investment in Collaborative Research Networks, with a focus on maximising learnings between the funded networks. They requested a further paper in the months ahead focusing on the wider range of HRB funded research-related networks, with a focus on need, purpose, costs and impacts.

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11. Other HRB Publications

1. Report on International Cancer Research Expenditure (2019-2022)

The Board noted and welcomed the report, and it was agreed that Mark Lawler would forward written comments to the team shortly after the meeting for consideration prior to publication.

12. Quarterly Report on Service Plan Delivery

The Board noted the report on status of HRB's Service Plan for 2025 as at 30 September 2025.

13. Corporate Reporting

1. Procurement Reports

The Board noted, between the period between the period 01 September 2025 to 31 October 2025:

- Purchase Orders raised with a value more than €20,000 (ex VAT)
- 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 between period 01 January 2025 to 31 October 2025:

- Supplier expenditure more than €25,000

2. Management Accounts

The Board noted the revised 2025 forecast as of 24 November 2025 and the updated Correction Factor.

14. Other Governance Matters

1. ARC Minutes & Risk Register

The Board approved the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee held on Friday, 3rd October 2025. The Board noted the HRB Risk Register which shows the risks considered to be of most significance to the HRB as of 12th December 2026.

2. Verbal update on ARC meeting (December 12)

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee Dr Terry Wade provided a verbal update on the ARC meeting that took place just before the Board meeting. Several items were discussed by the Board including the new grant management tender.

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3. Board Effectiveness Review - Action Plan

The Board approved the Board Effectiveness Review - Action Plan for the Board.

4. Programme of Work for the Board 2025

The Board reviewed the Programme of Work for the Board.

5. Programme of Work for the Board 2026

The Board approved the 2026 Programme of Work for the Board.

6. Cyber Security Overview

The Board noted the cyber security update for 2025.

15. HR Matters

1. November Pulse Survey including participation rates

The November Pulse Survey including participation rates was deferred to the Development Committee meeting in February 2026.

2. Elevate Presentation

Members of the HRB Staff who attended the ELEVATE Emerging Leaders program provided the first of four presentations titled 'Keystones and Kites' to the Board. The Board was informed that the 'Keystones and Kites' program is a practical framework designed to strengthen alignment between the HRB's upcoming 2026–2030 strategy and day-to-day activities across units.

Executive Session of the Board

Signed:  (Chairperson)
Signed by:
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