



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board
held on Friday, 26 September 2025 held at the HRB Offices, Grattan House, Dublin 2.**

Present: Dr Tracy Cunningham (Chairperson)
Dr Sarah Barry
Dr Leonora Bishop
Prof Peter Doran
Prof Tom Fahey
Prof Mark Lawler (online via Zoom)
Dr Terry McWade
Dr Martina Ní Chúlain
Dr Cliona Saidlear

Apologies: Dr Julie Ling

In attendance: Dr Mairead O’Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer.
Ms Lorna Purcell, Board Secretary and Head of Governance.
Ms Mellisa Tierney, Governance and Compliance Officer.
Mr Martin Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations, attended for items 6 & 13.
Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of RSF, attended for items 6, 8, 9, 10 & 11 & 14.1.
Dr Sarah Craig, Director of NHIS, attended for items 6, 12 & 13.2.
Ms Gillian Markey, Head of Communications, attended for item 6.
Mr Dara Murphy, Head of Finance, attended for item 13.
Dr Anne Cody, Head of Investigator-Led Grants, RSF, attended for item 10.1.
Dr Annalisa Montesanti, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 10.1.
Dr Camille Boostrom, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 11.1
Dr Catherine Gill, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 11.2
Ms Oonagh Ward, Head of Research and Innovation Infrastructures, RSF attended for items 11.3 and 14.1.
Dr Jean Long, Head of Unit, Evidence Centre, attended for items 12.1, 12.2 & 12.3.
Dr Tonya Moloney, Research Officer, Evidence Centre, attended for item 12.1.
Dr Jane Murphy, Research Officer, Evidence Centre, attended for item 12.2.
Dr Aine Teahan, Research Officer, Evidence Centre, attended for item 12.3.

HRB Board meeting minutes 26 September 2025

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Julie Ling.

2. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on June 27, 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
- Launch of National Rare Diseases Strategy
- 12th Meeting of the Impact 2030 Implementation Forum
- Outcome of the interim review of the two national PhD programmes ICAT and SPHeRE
- Research Ireland Challenge Fund call (Innovating in Health and Wellbeing)
- Update on Developments in the U.S – Implications for the HRB
- Fulbright HRB HealthImpact Scholarships
- NHIS updates
- National Office for NRECs
- Health Research Consent Declaration Committee (HRCDC) Update
- Launch of the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC) Roadmap
- Launch of the TILDA Wave 6 Report
- HR Updates
- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority

HRB Board meeting minutes 26 September 2025

6. Strategy Development

The CEO provided an update on the Strategy development so far, including feedback from the Dept of Health which was circulated to the Board. There was some discussion around the communication of the public consultation and the launch of the final strategy. The draft Strategy Away Day Agenda was reviewed, with some suggestions and amendments received. The Board requested that the public consultation feedback is shared with the Board in advance of the Strategy Away Day via circulation of papers.

7. Programme of Work for the Board

The Board reviewed the Programme of Work for the Board.

8. Research Security

The Board was provided with a high-level update on what is currently happening regarding research security including what is planned at EU and member state level, most notably in Ireland, facilitating a discussion with the Board about implications for the HRB and possible next steps.

9. Progress Update: Project to procure and implement a new grant management solution

The Board was provided with an update on the status of the project to procure and implement a new grant management solution.

10. Approval to Issue Calls

1. Post-doctoral funding (academic & practitioner track)

The Board approved the launch of two parallel calls to build postdoctoral level capacity for academic and practitioner-researcher paths. With a proposed investment of €12M (over five years), funding in the region of 22 grants is anticipated.

2. Capacity Building for Evidence Synthesis (CBES) 2025 - Panel recommendation

The Board approved the recommendation from an International Panel of experts to fund one award under the CBES 2025 programme at a cost of €6M over 5 years (including a contribution of €1.25M from HSC R&D Division).

11. Approval of Panel Recommendations

1. Collaborative Research Network (Mental Health) Award Approval

The Board approved the recommendation of an international panel of experts to fund a Collaborative Research Network for Mental Health at a cost of €1M over 5 years, with funding from Sharing the Vision.

HRB Board meeting minutes 26 September 2025

2. Approval of awards under Evidence for Policy (EfP) Programme 2025

The Board approved the International Panel recommendations to fund three Evidence for Policy (EfP) Programme Awards at a cost of approximately €1.2 Million over two years, funded from dedicated 'DOH research priorities' funding.

3. Secondary Data Analysis Projects (SDAP) 2025 Cycle I Funding Recommendations

The Board approved (1) the International Panel recommendations to fund six Secondary Data Analysis Projects (SDAP) at a cost of approximately €2.1M over 4 years and (2) one ranked project as a reserve, and to delegate authority to the Executive Team to action this as they deem appropriate, subject to availability of funds.

12. HRB Publications: Evidence Reviews

1. Women's health treatment interventions and outcomes: An evidence and gap map

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

2. The effectiveness of public health interventions in reducing sunbed use and rates of skin cancer

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

3. The effectiveness, safety, and cost-effectiveness of pharmacist prescribing: An evidence review

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

13. Corporate Reporting

1. Procurement Reports

The Board noted, between the period 01 June 2025 to 31 August 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 the period 01 January 2025 to 31 August 2025:

HRB Board meeting minutes 26 September 2025

- Supplier expenditure of more than €25,000

2. Contracts valued in excess of €75,000

The Board approved the award of:

- a) an initial two-year contract to Trinity College Dublin for the provision of an Addiction Research Network Ireland service. This contract has the option to extend two times by a period of one year at each extension. Any contract extension will be subject to funding by the Department of Health and achievements in line with milestones. The maximum value of this contract is €300,000 for the first two-year period. Any extensions will be subject to the same terms and conditions, and rates.
- b) a three-year sales order (contract) to [REDACTED] for the licensing, maintenance, support and cloud hosting of the HRB's Financial Management System. The service will cost €67,920 per annum for three years - €203,760 ex VAT.

3. HRB 2025 Management Accounts as at 31 August 2025

The Board noted the revised 2025 forecast as at 31 August 2025 and the updated Correction Factor.

4. HRB Service Plan 2025 - Status report as at 30 June 2025

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

14. Approval of Call Principles

1. Towards an effective and competitive national clinical trials ecosystem in Ireland

Further to meetings of the Board subgroup on clinical trials, the Board considered high-level principles for proposed new investments in Trial Delivery Units, a Specialist Trial Support Service (for investigator-led clinical trials) and a HRB Trials Reporting Platform. More detailed call documents for Board approval in December 2025.

15. Other Governance Matters

1. Dates & Calendar for HRB Board & Committee Meetings 2026

The Board noted the dates and calendar for 2026.

2. Training for the Board

The Board reviewed and noted the training plan for 2025. It was agreed that the AI training to be offered to the Board will be carried out online and recorded if possible.

HRB Board meeting minutes 26 September 2025

3. Development Committee Meeting update (verbal)

The Chair of the Development Committee Dr Tracy Cunningham provided a verbal update on the Development Committee meeting that took place just before the Board meeting, where participation rates for the Pulse Survey were discussed, along with how to meaningfully interpret the results of the Survey. The importance of succession planning was also discussed, and this will be added to the agenda of the next Development Committee meeting.

4. ESG Reporting

The Board approved the ESG Reporting plan.

5. Board Excellence Report

The Board reviewed and noted the final findings and recommendations of the 2025 external Board Effectiveness Survey, along with the Action Plan. The Action Plan will be added as an item to the Board Programme of Work to appear at every second meeting.

As this was the final Board meeting for the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Mairead O’Driscoll, the Board thanked her for all of her dedication to the role over the preceding five years.

Executive Session of the Board

Decision taken by the Board between June and September meetings:

In accordance with S.I. No. 205/2002 - The Health Research Board (Establishment) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order, 2002 (2) *The Chief Executive shall be appointed and may be removed from office at any time for stated reasons by the Board with the consent of the Minister.* The Board approved the appointment of Professor Gorman as CEO of the HRB, subject to the approval of the Minister.

Signed:  (Chairperson)
Signed by: Tracy Cunningham
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