



## **Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board held on Friday, 6 March 2026, held on Zoom.**

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

**Apologies:** Dr Terry McWade

**In attendance:** Dr Gráinne Gorman, Chief Executive Officer.  
Ms Lorna Purcell, Board Secretary and Head of Governance.  
Ms Mellisa Tierney, Governance and Compliance Officer.  
Dr Sarah Craig, Director of NHIS.  
Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of RSF, attended for items 6, 8.1 & 9.1.  
Ms Vydehi Muppavarapu, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for item 6.  
Mr Dara Murphy, Head of Finance, attended for items 10.1 & 10.2  
Ms Gillian Markey, Head of Communications, attended for items 5 & 6.  
Dr Patricia Clarke, Programme Manager, Ms Cathy Kelleher, Research Officer, Ms Hazel Quigley, LINK System Manager, & Dr Jane Bryant, Programme Officer, attended for item 7.  
Dr Fiona Manning, Programme Manager, RSF, attended for items 8.1 & 9.1

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## 1. Apologies

Dr. Terry McWade provided apologies.

## 2. Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest were declared for item 8.1 & 9.1 by Prof Peter Doran. Prof Doran recused himself for the entirety of item 8.1, and attended the discussion on item 9.1 but recused himself before any decision was made. Dr Gráinne Gorman recused herself for item 11.6. The Secretary reminded the members that it is good practice to regularly review the Conflicts of Interest guidance available on Diligent.

## 3. Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on February 6, 2026, 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:

- Research Ireland Strategy launch
- Update on HRB IT Issues

## 6. Strategy Development

On behalf of the Strategy Steering Group, Sarah Craig presented an update on the Strategy development project plan and timelines. She confirmed that work was ongoing, the latest KPIs had been updated, and the timeline for publication of the Strategy, which is on track to be published in May. Vydehi Muppavarapu presented a sample KPI template. The Board noted the update and thanked the team for all of the work carried out so far.

## 7. Elevate Presentation

### 1. HRB Collab: Cross-function working in action

Members of the HRB staff who participated in the ELEVATE Emerging Leaders programme provided the second of four ELEVATE presentations to the Board, entitled 'HRB Collab: Cross-function working in action' to the Board. The Board was informed that the HRB Collab programme is an innovative model for cross-function working, to maximise the potential of the HRB's greatest asset, its people. They outlined how the gains will extend beyond people and projects, to promoting organisational excellence and enabling HRB to be future ready, all with the ultimate goal of bettering health and social care for the people of Ireland. The Board was very complementary of the presentation and offered to assist with any aspects of the

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project as required, and also requested that the presenters are invited back to present on progress made later in the year.

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

### **1. ILCT Cycle II**

The Board approved the International Panel recommendations to fund five investigator-led clinical trials grants (one subject to a condition) under Cycle 2 of the ILCT 2025 at an anticipated cost of approximately €2.89M over five years.

## **9. Other research funding matters**

### **1. Bridging Grants for Clinical Trials Infrastructure**

The Board approved the bridging support for current Clinical Trials Infrastructures grants (Clinical Research Facilities/Centres, Cancer Groups, Cancer Clinical Trials Network, and Trials Methodology Research Network) to ensure continuity of clinical trial capabilities and activity whilst advancing plans for future investments in Trial Delivery Units (aligned with NCTOG) and a Specialist Investigator Led Trial Support Unit. The bridging grants proposed are for a period of 12 months beyond the current grant end dates, with an anticipated cost of approximately €10M.

## **10. Corporate Reporting**

### **1. Contracts valued at in excess of €75k**

The Board approved the award of:

- a) an initial four-year contract to [REDACTED] for the provision of a cloud-based voice system. This contract has the option to extend three times by a period of two years at each extension. The maximum value of this contract is €200,000 excluding VAT.
- b) a two-year contract to [REDACTED] for the provision of legal services. This contract has the option to extend twice by a period of one year at each extension. The maximum value of this contract is €200,000 excluding VAT.

### **2. Centre for Inclusion Health - Verbal update**

The Board was updated in relation to the funds received for the sale of the Baggot St premises and their use in the Centre for Inclusion Health call. A project plan will be brought to the April Board Meeting.

## **11. Other Governance Matters**

### **1. Board Excellence Report**

The Board noted the updated action plan and that a further update will be brought to the Board at the May 2026 Board meeting.

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**2. Programme of Work for the Board**

The Board noted the Programme of Work for the Board.

**3. Employment Advice CEO**

The Board was asked to consider an employment query posed by the CEO, and whether it consented to the CEO undertaking work outside of her role as CEO of the HRB. The Board agreed that the CEO could undertake work outside of the HRB in line with the caveats outlined within the paper.

**4. Committees & Working Groups in the HRB**

The Board noted the overview of committees and working groups operating across the HRB; and requested the Governance Team to prepare a detailed review and set of recommendations for discussion for the May 2026 Board Meeting.

**12. AOB**

**1. Organisational Design Terms of Reference**

The Board reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Organisational Design Lead. The CEO agreed to update the Terms of Reference and subject to this review by the CEO, the Terms of Reference were approved.

The Chair acknowledged that Dr Terry McWade’s term on the Board of the HRB had come to an end, and thanked him for all of his hard work, dedication and insights over the years, and particularly in his role as Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

**Executive Session of the Board**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed by:  
*Tracy Cunningham* (Chairperson)  
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