

I. ROLE OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

All Technical Working Groups are responsible for some or all of the following:

1. Reviewing science and the evidence base in relation to their particular area of expertise.
2. Developing educational and awareness-raising resources for relevant audiences, including farmers, veterinarians, and other relevant stakeholder groups and otherwise contributing to the knowledge exchange with these audiences; for example, through training and field events.
3. Developing options for the delivery of future animal health programmes.

In addition to the above, it is recognised that those Technical Working Groups which operate in an area in which an AHI priority programme has been established and in respect of which an Implementation Group has been convened, are responsible for the additional functions listed below, and that the TWG may need to acquire additional relevant competencies through alterations to its membership, or otherwise, in order to deliver these functions.

- a. Supporting the delivery of the priority programme through the assessment of risks to the programme and the provision of considered, evidence-based scientific advice to the Implementation Group.
 - b. Responding to requests for advice which may be made from time to time by the relevant Implementation Group, or by AHI directly. A timescale and priority may be set for the provision of advice following consultation with the Chairperson of the Technical Working Group. The request for advice should be clear, contextualised and be accompanied by an indication of the desired scope of the advice.
 - c. The initiation of analysis or research and the engagement of external experts in relation to any matter falling within the remit of the Technical Working Group, subject to prior agreement with the CEO of AHI on the financial and other resource implications of the proposed analysis, research or engagement of experts.
 - d. The establishment of *ad hoc* sub-groups to prepare advice on specific issues.
4. Technical Working Groups are not responsible for, and should avoid public comment on, the management of risks relating to individual AHI priority programmes, this being the responsibility of the relevant Implementation Group.

Rules governing the conduct of Technical Working Groups and sub-groups are set out in Section IV.

II. MEMBERSHIP OF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

5. The Chairperson of a Technical Working Group is also regarded as being a member of that group for the purposes of this document.
6. Members of the Technical Working Groups are appointed in their individual capacity, independent of their organisations of employment.
7. Applications for membership of Technical Working Groups may be made either on foot of an invitation from the Chairperson of the relevant group to a suitably qualified individual, or directly by an individual, in the absence of a prior invitation. An application form, published by AHI, is

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available from the AHI website for this purpose (Appendix 1). Chairpersons may consult with AHI prior to taking a decision in relation to the application.

8. When evaluating applications for membership of a TWG, or when considering issuing an invitation to an individual to participate in a TWG, the Chairperson will take into account the following:
 - a. Whether the individual in question possesses relevant qualifications and is able to demonstrate considerable work experience relevant to the group's particular area of expertise.
 - b. Whether the inclusion of the individual in question will enhance the collective competency of the group to address the issues which fall under its remit, taking account of the overall mix of qualifications, skills and experience within the group as a whole.
9. Chairpersons are asked to exclude from their considerations the nature of a proposed new member's employing organisation, on the basis that mechanisms are in place to ensure that the material produced and decisions taken by the TWGs are evidence-based and free from commercial or any other form of bias. Chairpersons and the individual members themselves are tasked with ensuring, insofar as is possible, that the individuals comprising the TWGs take an impartial, professional and objective approach to their work in these groups (see also Section V).
10. Chairpersons shall seek to establish an equitable balance between men and women in the Technical Working Group.
11. Staff members of AHI holding a significant level of expertise on a particular topic may participate in relevant Technical Working Groups as full members thereof, subject to the agreement of the Chairperson.
12. Staff members of AHI are precluded from being the Chairperson of a Technical Working Group.
13. Notwithstanding the above, a staff member of AHI, or any other member of the Technical Working Group may, deputise for the Chairperson in the event that the Chairperson is unavoidably absent and urgent work is required to be undertaken by the group. In such instances, the Chairperson will communicate in writing to the Technical Working Group in advance of the meeting to set out the arrangements that are being put in place for his or her deputisation for that particular meeting.
14. Members of Technical Working Groups should be willing and committed to participate proactively in the Group's activities and should have enough available time and resources to dedicate to the activities of the Group.

III. MEETINGS OF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

15. A quorum shall consist of 50% of the members of the Technical Working Group plus one, whether present in person or by means of teleconference or videoconference. The quorum must be reached and the Chairperson (or their nominated Deputy – see 13) of the TWG must be present in order for a meeting of a Technical Working Group to proceed.
16. Members unable to attend a scheduled meeting should send their apologies as soon as possible, but in any event not later than 24 hours before the meeting date.

17. The minutes of the meeting of a TWG will be recorded by the secretariat, provided by AHI. The draft minutes will be circulated to members not later than two weeks after the meeting has taken place and comments on the draft minutes should be sent to the Chairperson within two weeks of receipt of the draft minutes. The updated draft minutes will be submitted for adoption at the next meeting of the Technical Working Group.

IV. CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

18. Members should strive to attend all meetings of the Technical Working Group in person, whenever possible. Members who are unable to attend meetings should send their apologies to the secretariat, as specified at 17.
19. Chairpersons will review the extent of participation in meetings of Technical Working Groups by individual members at the end of each year and, in the event that a member has been unable to participate in any of the meetings held in the course of that year, may write to the member concerned, or may request AHI to do so on his or her behalf, to request that the member clarify whether they wish to continue to participate in, or withdraw from, the Technical Working Group.
20. Members expressing views in public on matters within the terms of reference of the Technical Working Group should ensure that it is made clear that they are doing so in their private capacity. Members shall not purport to represent the views of the Technical Working Group without the prior consent of the Chairperson of the Technical Working Group.
21. Members are entitled to claim for direct expenses incurred in their work on the Technical Working Group, in line with the rules and procedures of AHI.
22. Members should be aware that matters dealt with during the course of a Technical Working Group meeting, and any associated documentation, may be private and confidential in nature and they should therefore exercise caution in publicly disclosing or discussing such information. Furthermore, unless the Chairperson has declared specified documentation, circulated within the Technical Working Group, not to be private and confidential in nature, or unless such documentation is already in the public domain, it should be treated as being private and confidential and should not be disclosed outside of the Technical Working Group.
23. Members may resign from a Technical Working Group at any time by confirming same in writing to the AHI secretariat or the Chairperson.
24. Sub-groups should strive for unanimous agreement of its advice by the members; however, where this is not possible, advice must be adopted by at least 50% plus one of the members of the sub-group, including members present via teleconference or videoconference. Members with minority views should be invited to briefly record their views and these should be noted in, and appended to the minutes of the meeting of the sub-group.
25. Advice prepared by a sub-group shall not be published or provided to the relevant Implementation Group, or to AHI, until it has been discussed at a properly constituted meeting of the Technical Working Group and adopted thereat as per the procedures set out at 27.
26. Technical Working Groups should strive for unanimous agreement of its advice by the members; however, where this is not possible, advice must be adopted by at least 50% plus one of the members of the Technical Working Group, including members present via teleconference or

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videoconference. Members with minority views should be invited to briefly record their views and these should be noted in, and appended to the minutes of the meeting.

27. The agreed advice will be circulated by correspondence to all members of the Technical Working Group by the secretariat, immediately after the meeting. A period of 7 working days shall be allowed to elapse after a decision on advice is agreed by the Technical Working Group in order to allow for reflection by members present or views from absent members to be submitted to the secretariat. In the event of additional views being expressed by members during this period, the Chairperson of the Technical Working Group will decide on the status of the advice.
28. The advice of the Technical Working Group shall be communicated to the relevant Implementation Group, to AHI, or to external parties, including the media, by the Chairperson of the Technical Working Group. In exceptional circumstances, where the Chairperson is unavailable, he or she may nominate a Member of the Technical Working Group to deputise. In such instances, the Chairperson will communicate the identity of the nominated individual to the Technical Working Group in advance of the public communication.
29. AHI may publish the advice of the Technical Working Group.

V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

30. Objectivity is one of Animal Health Ireland's core values and it is for this reason that it seeks to ensure that the resources developed and the advice produced by the Technical Working Groups is free from undue influence or bias.
31. It is nonetheless recognised that the possession by an individual of high quality scientific expertise, which is a prerequisite for that person's participation in a TWG, is generally a result of considerable prior experience in the area of interest. Moreover, having an interest does not necessarily imply that there is a conflict of interest.
32. In considering whether it is appropriate to declare a specific conflict of interest in relation to a particular matter, the Chairperson and Members should have regard as to whether, in respect of a commercial entity operating in the animal health domain in Ireland which has a commercial interest in the matter under discussion, any of the following applies to the Member:
 - a. the holding of employment in the entity;
 - b. the holding of a financial interest in the entity, including, assets, shares and intellectual property rights;
 - c. the holding of membership of a Managing Body or equivalent structure in the entity;
 - d. the holding of other memberships or affiliations with the entity;
 - e. the provision of consultancy or advice to the entity;
 - f. the receipt of research funding from the entity;
 - g. the holding by close family members of any of the above interests in the entity;
 - h. the existence of other activities or interests relating to the entity that may be perceived as being relevant.
33. The Chairperson will decide on the appropriate action in the event of a member declaring an interest and this will be recorded in the minutes.
34. All Technical Working Group members should annually complete a Statement of Interest form, published by AHI and available from its website (Appendix 2).

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35. Irrespective of the completion or otherwise of an annual Statement of Interest, any member of any Technical Working Group who believes he or she has an interest in a specific item on the agenda at any particular meeting, where that interest may be perceived as being prejudicial to their independence in relation to that item, shall declare that interest at the start of the meeting. The opportunity for such a declaration to be made will be provided by the Chairperson on the order of business at the commencement of each meeting.
36. In the event that a Member is precluded from participating in a decision as a result of the existence of a conflict of interest, the calculation of the required quorum for reaching the decision on that matter shall be adjusted accordingly.
37. A member of a Technical Working Group who fails to declare a conflict of interest of which he or she should reasonably have been aware will be considered to be in breach of these guidelines and may therefore be asked to resign from the group.

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF A TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

[PENDING]

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APPENDIX 2
SAMPLE ANNUAL DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

[PENDING]