

# Program, Pathogen Genomics Funders Forum (PGFF) in-Person Meeting

Wellcome, Gibbs Building; 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE; 19-20 May 2025

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# Agenda

## Monday, 19 May 2025

8:30 *Arrival & Registration - (Coffee/tea, light breakfast)*

9:30 *Introductions*

- *A word from our hosts – Natsuko Imai (Wellcome) and David Blazes (Gates Foundation)*
- *Introduction – All (all participants: name, organization, role)*
- *Setting the scene: Dr. Greg Armstrong*
- *Objectives of the meeting : Mr. Caxton Murira*
- *Brief presentations by non-funders*

10:15 *Presentations by funders (Part 1)*

- *See “Guidelines for Presentations”, below*
- *Brief discussion will follow each presentation*

11:00 *Break*

11:30 *Presentations by funders (Part 2)*

- *Continuation of funder presentations*
- *At end of session, funders will be asked to prioritize discussion topics, as described “Discussion Topics” below; please note that the “potential discussion topics” below are provided as a starting point: the final topics for the afternoon may or may not include some of these and may include other topics recommended by members.*

12:45 *Lunch*

2:00 *Special topic discussions: plenary session*

*Moderated discussion of three to four topics selected by funders (see “Discussion Topics” below)*

3:30 *Break*

4:00 *Special topic discussions: breakout sessions*

*[two to three break-out groups, see “Discussion Topics below)]*

5.15 *Wrap-up, Day 1*

5:30 *Reception*

6:30 *Dinner*

## Tuesday, 20 May 2025

8.30 *Coffee/Light Breakfast & Reflection – Dr. Evelyn Gitau*

9:00 *Special Topic(s)*

- *Supply Chain*

10:00 *Break*

10:30 *Concurrent Sessions:*

*Funders-only meeting (moderated by David Blazes)*

*WHO/PGI/PGFF Secretariat meeting (moderated by Caxton Murira and Greg Armstrong)*

12.30 *Working Lunch*

- *How to keep members /funders updated about ongoing work/funding / prioritize*
- *Next steps*
- 

1.45 *Thank you note – Dr. Greg Armstrong/ Mr. Caxton Murira*

*Closing Remarks – David Blazes*

## Meeting Objectives

- To provide the first opportunity for funders supporting pathogen genomics in LMICs to meet and hear in-person from other funders in order ultimately:
  - to better understand the priorities of other organizations;
  - to develop a connections with other organizations;
  - to have more visibility on opportunities and challenges facing other organizations.
- To advance discussions of topics of importance in guiding funders' investments in pathogen genomics, including potential topics such as
  - Addressing procurement and supply chain management challenges
  - Practical policies to promote data sharing
  - Improving visibility of funders investments
  - Coordinating investments in the next pandemic
- To shape the activities and objectives of the Forum going forward

## Guidelines for Funder Presentations

The following are *optional guidelines* for the presentations on day one of the meeting.

Participants are not required to follow this template but are encouraged to cover the items below that are relevant for your organization and in particular to discuss your organizations priorities and strategies for funding pathogen genomics. In addition, funders should feel free to provide other relevant information not requested below.

Each organization should plan to present for five minutes and allow seven minutes for discussion (i.e., a total of 12 minutes for each organization).

- Organization
  - Name of the organization
  - If a large organization, where within the organization, do you work?
  - Are there other parts of the organization that fund pathogen genomics work
- Strategy/objectives/priorities for the organization's pathogen genomics investments
  - With respect to your genomics investments, is your focus primarily:
    - Health system strengthening?
    - Surveillance?
    - Research?
    - Other?
  - Why does your organization see investing in this area (pathogen genomics) as important, and what are your objectives in investing in this area?
  - How do you see these investments changing into the future?
- Where (i.e., in which countries or regions) does the organization invest in pathogen genomics
- Examples of current pathogen genomics investments

- What topics you would like to discuss during the afternoon session of this meeting?

## Discussion Topics

### Process for prioritizing discussion topics at this meeting

The discussion topics for the first afternoon of the meeting will be selected by the funders that morning. In the meeting room, there will be white-boards with titles of the potential discussion topics. These potential discussion will include both those listed below and any additional topics that emerge from the discussions that morning. Each funding organization will be given 20 small Post-It notes. Just before lunch, the funders will be asked to put those Post-It notes next to the topics that are of particular interest to them. Funders can (and are encouraged to) post more than one of their Post-It notes next to topics of particular interest. They may play three, four or more Post-It notes next to particular topics if they are of strong interest. Once this is complete, the Forum secretariat will tally up the number votes (i.e., the number of Post-It notes) for each topic and will present a proposed prioritization after lunch, at the start of the discussion session.

### Potential discussion topics

The following are provided as some options for the topical discussion. The process for choosing among these is outlined above. The compilation of topics below is provided only as a starting point. We anticipate that participants may want to focus on different topics for the discussions.

#### How to move forward in the new global health landscape

*The challenge:* Until relatively recently, global health could very roughly be thought of in three tiers: foundations and other private funders that provide catalytic funding, including funding for higher risk or more politically sensitive projects; bilateral national funders such as USAID or large international organizations such as the Global Fund that could bring proven, lower risk interventions to scale; and finally, the countries themselves who would assume ultimate financial responsibility as they acquired the means to do so. This landscape has now changed markedly, particularly with the thinning out of the middle tier.

*The discussion:* What does this change imply for the development of pathogen genomics in LMICs? How can funders address this either individually or collectively?

#### How to improve visibility of ongoing investments

*The challenge:* When funders receive proposals to, for example, establish genomic surveillance for a particular pathogen in a particular country, the question often arises as

to what else is being funded in that area—for that pathogen or in that country. Are other funders planning to invest or already investing in similar projects? Are there opportunities for collaboration? Could an investment in this project potentially take advantage of existing infrastructure, or alternatively, increase effectiveness of another project? Has another funder invested in this area in the past and do they have insights and lessons learned that would be of value? There is often no easy means to answer these questions.

*Some potential options (not listed in any particular order):*

- Online catalogue of ideas (ongoing “landscape analysis”): Such a resource would provide funders with a quick means of seeing what other projects are being supported, and thereby let them see if there are other funders they may want to reach out to. An example of this is the [Universal Influenza Vaccine Technology Landscape](#), which provides information on dozens of candidate universal influenza vaccines. One advantage of such a resource, if open publicly, is the potential for other, secondary uses. The challenge of this approach is keeping the data updated: funders would need to agree to provide updates on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly), and this could be a challenge even if the information is minimal. This would be particularly challenging for larger funders where multiple groups within the organization may be working in this area.
- Establishment of a Slack or Teams channel (or other group communications system): This might be a forum, for example, for querying other funders about whether they’re investing in genomics in a specific country or perhaps for a specific use-case. It might be a means for determining which other funders to reach out to offline for more confidential discussions. The forum could include clearly specified membership criteria and perhaps a non-disclosure agreement, to give members more confidence in discussing issues that come up.
- Other options: There may other, more efficient ways to improve this sort of communication among funders

## Outbreak and pandemic response

*The challenge:* In any infectious disease public health emergency, there’s likely to be a demand for pathogen genomics early on and likely to be urgent requests to funders to take this on.

*To be discussed:* Do funders have emergency funding policies and procedures to address such requests? Are there steps the forum should take to support funders during such an emergency?

## Approaches to encouraging data sharing among fundees

*The challenge:* There is consensus on the benefits of open sharing of pathogen genomic data. At the same time, requiring the sharing of such data, for example by including data sharing provisions in grants, potentially impinges on data sovereignty and on the ability of a fundee to realize certain benefits from the data.

*To be discussed:* How are funders approaching this issue? Do they include data sharing provisions in their grants, and if so, what are the key parts of those? What does “open data” mean: does that imply making data available for any use, only for non-commercial uses, or are there other definitions that funders use?

## Platforms for facilitating bioinformatics analysis

*The challenge:* Funders often receive proposals to set up bioinformatics analysis platforms with the potential, for example to automate analysis or facilitate collaborative analysis; think, for example, of Galaxy, Nextflow Tower, or Terra.bio, or platforms built on top of these. There’s often an implicit or explicit assertion that these will evolve into a global standard. However, these proposals often raise similar questions, such as whether the platform will gain widespread acceptance and whether it’s sustainable in the long run.

*For discussion:* How common are these sorts of proposals now? How do funders approach these sorts of proposals? How do they determine whether the proposed platform will gain acceptance? Do the proposals include specifics about data ownership will be handled, and are there policies for who has access to the data? Are there standards that should be enforced, such as around workflow languages (e.g., WDL vs Nextflow) or containerization?

## Procurement and supply chain management

[Note: unlike the other topics in this section, this topic has already been chosen for discussion and is on the agendas for Tuesday morning]

Maeve Magner (Scaling & Sustaining Innovation for Impact) and Trevor Peter (Clinton Health Access Initiative) will be leading this session. The objective will be to review potential options for funders to consider in addressing supply chain issues, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia. These options, which will be distributed ahead of time, come in two forms:

- Changes funders can make to their granting policies and procedures
- Specific projects or types of projects to fund