

PATHOGEN GENOMICS FUNDERS FORUM— DRAFT CHARTER*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Summary</i>	2
<i>History</i>	2
<i>Categories of Pathogen Genomics</i>	2
<i>Goals and Objectives</i>	3
Goal	3
Objectives	3
<i>Membership</i>	3
Membership Types	3
Funders (“Funders”).....	3
Intergovernmental organizations and regional genomics initiatives (“Advisory Members”)	3
Industry (“Corporate Members”)	4
Member Roles	4
Decisions Regarding Membership.....	4
<i>Operations</i>	4
Decision-Making	4
Workgroups	4
Steering Committee.....	4
<i>Secretariat</i>	5
Secretariat	5

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SUMMARY

The Pathogen Genomics Funders Forum (the Forum) is a coalition of organizations that fund pathogen genomics in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The Forum aims to enhance the impact of investments in genomics by providing a forum for information exchange and collaboration. The Forum is not itself a funder of pathogen genomics projects or infrastructure.

HISTORY

With the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 variants starting in late 2020 came an increasing interest in genomic surveillance of pathogens and the number of funders supporting genomics in LMICs. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) hosted a series of meetings for funders in 2021 that culminated in two projects: (1) to explore options for establishing a funders forum, carried out by the Task Force for Global Health and funded by BMGF; and (2) a landscape analysis, carried out by FIND and funded by Wellcome Trust. In November 2024, BMGF provided the initial operating funds for the Forum.

CATEGORIES OF PATHOGEN GENOMICS

Pathogen genomics activities can be considered to fall within the following areas:

- *Research:*
 - *Basic (early-phase):* application of pathogen genomics, generally in academic settings, usually for the advancement of scientific understanding of the biology and evolution of pathogens
 - *Translational (applied):* developing or evaluating applications of genomics for routine implementation
- *Implementation:* application of genomics to assist in addressing a specific health problem; examples include:
 - *Genomic surveillance:* inclusion of genomics in routine infectious disease surveillance
 - *Outbreak response:* use of genomics to help guide response to an outbreak of infectious disease
 - *Clinical use:* use of genomics to customize therapy in individual patients (this is uncommon at this point; an example would be the use of genomics to determine drug susceptibility in an individual case of tuberculosis to inform the antimycobacterial therapy for that patient)

All of these categories of genomics are considered within the scope of the Forum. Other areas of genomics, such as human genomics for chronic disease research or the treatment of neoplasms, are not within scope. However, the Forum recognizes that those working in such fields often share infrastructure and other resources with those working in pathogen genomics, and values the opportunity to get input from and collate with funders of such work.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL

To improve health globally by increasing the effectiveness, coherence, and equity of investments in pathogen genomics in LMICs.

OBJECTIVES

- To improve communication and collaboration among funders of pathogen genomics
- To improve the coherence of investments in pathogen genomics and to decrease duplication, redundancy, and fragmentation.
- To identify gaps in global investments in pathogen genomics—orphan areas for which there is currently inadequate investment but are critical for other investments to succeed
- To promote improvements in the quality of pathogen genomics outputs and to encourage the adoption of appropriate standards
- To define and address relevant policy considerations that bear on the use of pathogen genomics
- To update members on important and relevant areas of technology
- To identify potential opportunities for collaboration or joint investment by members

MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP TYPES

FUNDERS (“FUNDERS”)

This category includes the following organizations that directly support pathogen genomics in LMICs:

- Foundations and other private entities
- Government agencies, including (but not restricted to) bilateral aid and development agencies, research funders, and public health agencies
- Large secondary funders that consolidate funds from various donors and offer grants or other funding opportunities in LMICs. Not included in this category are smaller secondary funders for which operational costs are the largest expense.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONAL GENOMICS INITIATIVES (“ADVISORY MEMBERS”)

This category includes the following:

- WHO, represented by its secondary headquarters in Berlin
- Regional intergovernmental organizations such as the Africa CDC
- Regional genomics initiatives, such as the Asia Pathogen Genomics Initiative

These organizations are often recipients of funding from the funders described above. Their close connection to implementers, researchers and member states provides them with a perspective that is invaluable to the Forum. In addition, the authority and leadership role of intergovernmental organizations makes their participation particularly valuable and important.

INDUSTRY (“CORPORATE MEMBERS”)

Corporate members include representatives of nucleic-acid sequencer manufacturing firms as well as members of other industries providing equipment, supplies or services needed to carry out pathogen genomics.

MEMBER ROLES

Funders (the first category described above) are the principal members of the organization and are the Forum’s ultimate decision-makers. Funders are encouraged to participate in all general meetings of the organization. Advisory Members and Corporate Members (also described above) may participate in the open sessions of these meetings.

DECISIONS REGARDING MEMBERSHIP

Participation is voluntary in all categories of membership. The Forum secretariat (described below) will grant membership to new applicants as long as the applicant fulfils the criteria described above for membership categories. If any questions arise about the appropriateness of an applicant, the secretariat will refer those questions to the membership (i.e., to the Funders). Members may withdraw from the Forum by contacting (by email or otherwise) the Forum secretariat.

OPERATIONS

DECISION-MAKING

Members (i.e., Funders) can modify this charter at any time by majority vote (i.e., a majority of all Funders in the Forum).

All other decisions will be made by consensus of the Funders.

WORKGROUPS

The Forum may establish a time-limited workgroup at any time to address a specific issue. The Forum may also establish standing (i.e., permanent) workgroups by modification of the charter. When establishing a workgroup, Funders will decide which members to participate and a criteria for the same documented

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Forum has the option of creating a steering committee. If the Forum does not establish a steering committee, it will continue operating without one. If the Forum explicitly votes to establish a steering committee, it will operate as described here:

Purpose: The Steering Committee will set the direction for the Forum.

Membership: The Steering Committee will include five members (Funders) and the Secretariat co-leads. Only the five members will have voting privileges on the committee.

Appointment and term: The Steering Committee membership will be approved by majority vote at the annual in-person meeting and will serve until the following in-person meeting. There is no limit to the number of terms a member may join.

Meetings: The Steering Committee will decide when and how often to meet. Meetings will be mostly or entirely virtual rather than in-person.

Decision-making: Decisions by the Steering Committee will be made by consensus. In the event that consensus can't be reached, the committee will either refer the decision to the wider Forum or adopt a decision by majority vote (i.e., by three of the five voting members).

SECRETARIAT

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The secretariat of the organization is co-hosted by the Task Force for Global Health (TFGH, based in Decatur, Georgia, USA) and the Science For Africa Foundation (SFA Foundation, based in Nairobi, Kenya). Each of those two organizations will appoint a lead for the secretariat.