

Virtual Meeting Pathogen Genomics Funders Forum

13 December 2024, 15:00 UTC

Moderators:

Caxton Murira, Science for Africa Foundation (Nairobi)

Greg Armstrong, Consultant to Task Force for Global Health (Atlanta)

1

Agenda

- Brief Introductions
- Background
 - History
 - Report from earlier project (“options document”)
 - Proposal for going forward
- Q and A (open)
- Decisions for today
 - Membership categories
 - Other members (we will email a query)
 - Next virtual meeting

2

Introductions: Caxton Murira, MSC PM

- **Background**
 - Trained as a computer scientist, data and project delivery expert
 - Experience in delivering global health projects, specializing in health governance, ARV supply chain, human resources for health, and clinical research in Africa.
 - Currently a programme manager for the clinical research and trials programme (CRTC) at SFA Foundation
- **Science for Africa Foundation (SFA Foundation)**
 - Pan African organization based in Nairobi, Kenya
 - Serves the African research ecosystem by prioritising, designing, funding and oversight for programmes that support excellent science and innovation
 - Focuses on delivering programmes in Health, Climate and Environment and Agriculture
 - Current programmes and initiatives cover 40 countries and 21 consortia in Africa with over 100 + grants awarded
 - Hosted programmes such as Genomics H3Africa, Grand Challenges Africa, DELTAS Africa + others

3

Introductions: Gregory Armstrong, MD

- **Background**
 - Originally trained as infectious disease physician, retired from CDC in 2022 after 25 years
 - Experience in various areas of infectious disease public health, including control of viral diseases, mathematical modeling, refugee health, emergency response
 - Was first director of CDC's Advanced Molecular Detection (AMD) program, focused on pathogen genomics (2015-2022)
- **Task Force for Global Health (TFGH)**
 - Based outside Atlanta (Decatur, Georgia)
 - Established 40 years ago by Bill Foege as a convening force for funders of EPI
 - Works with partners in more than 150 countries to eliminate diseases, ensure access to vaccines and essential medicines, and strengthen health systems
 - Since 2017, TFGH has hosted the 20-member Global Funders Consortium for Universal Influenza Vaccine Development ("UniFluVac" Consortium)

4

Disclosures

- Gregory Armstrong
 - Current: board member (unpaid) for the Theiagen Global Health Initiative (a non-profit 501(c)(3))
 - Past: private sector consulting, including ClearLabs, Ginkgo Bioworks, and Merck
- Caxton Murira
 - Current: SteerCo member (unpaid) for the Research Software Alliance (ReSA)

Both GA and CM are bound by non-disclosure agreements that prohibit disclosure of non-public information shared during work with the forum

5

Background

6

History

- 2020 – '22: emerging interest
 - Increased interest in genomic surveillance, including in LMICs
 - Questions about potential for redundancy, duplication, fragmentation
 - Several teleconferences of funders, organized by BMGF, to discuss strategy for investments in pathogen genomics and potential opportunities for collaboration
- 2023– '24: two parallel projects
 - “Options Project” (final report* sent to today’s participants)
 - Funded by BMGF, carried out by TFGH
 - Objective: develop potential models for a funders’ forum
 - Two phases
 - Discussions with similar forums
 - Discussions with funders
 - Landscape analysis
 - Funded by Wellcome Trust, carried out by FIND
 - Traditional landscape analysis looking at current support for pathogen genomics in LMICs
- 2024: Funding from BMGF for first 18 months of forum

**Options for establishing a forum for funders of pathogen genomics in low- and middle-income countries (2023)*

7

Summary, Options Project* (1 of 3)

- Categories of pathogen genomics
 - Research
 - Basic (early-phase)
 - Translational (applied)
 - Implementation
 - Genomic surveillance
 - Outbreak response
 - Clinical use
 - Other areas of genomics
 - Human genomics
 - Environmental genomics
 - Agricultural genomics
- } Considered within scope of the forum
- } Considered out of scope

**From: Options for establishing a forum for funders of pathogen genomics in low- and middle-income countries (2023)*

8

Summary, Options Project* (2 of 3)

- Potential roles for a forum
 - Provide a forum for communication and networking among funders
 - Reducing redundancy, duplication and fragmentation
 - Identifying and addressing important “orphan issues”
 - Addressing supply-chain issues
 - Promoting standards and quality
 - Defining relevant policy considerations
 - Providing updates in relevant technological areas

*From: *Options for establishing a forum for funders of pathogen genomics in low- and middle-income countries (2023)*

9

Summary, Options Document* (3 of 3)

- Membership (to be discussed later)
 - Funders
 - Foundations and other private funders
 - Government funders
 - Large secondary funders, such as the Global Fund and CEPI
 - Inter-governmental organizations and regional genomics initiatives
 - WHO/IPSN
 - Regional genomics initiatives, such as the Africa PGI or Asia PGI
 - Industry

*From: *Options for establishing a forum for funders of pathogen genomics in low- and middle-income countries (2023)*

10

Proposal for Moving Forward

All of these proposals are subject to debate

11

General Approach Envisioned

- Decisions by consensus
- Lightweight secretariat
 - Jointly run by TFGH and SFA Foundation
 - Focus on supporting funders
- Related projects, if any
 - Will be funded separately
 - Model: UniFluVac
 - Up-to-date vaccine development landscape analysis: funded by Wellcome Trust, executed by University of Minnesota CIDRAP
 - Roadmap: also funded by Wellcome Trust, executed by CIDRAP

All of these proposals are subject to debate

12

Main activities of the forum

- Convening
 - Regular, virtual meetings (monthly?)
 - Yearly, in-person meeting
- Education
 - Webinar series

All of these proposals are subject to debate

13

Meetings

- Virtual meetings
 - Monthly at first?
 - May combine with webinars
 - Examples of potential topics
 - Early on: organizing the forum
 - Emerging issues
 - Challenges faced by several funders
- In-person meeting
 - Yearly
 - Opportunity to network
 - Potential to coordinate with a relevant conference

All of these proposals are subject to debate

14

Webinars

- Format
 - Stand-alone, or
 - In coordination with forum meetings, for example:
 - 45-min public presentation and Q&A; 30-min private meeting of forum, or
 - 45-min public presentation and Q&A; 15-min private discussion between forum members and presenters; 30-min private forum meeting, or
 - Other options...
- Examples of potential topics
 - Genomic technology updates (e.g., sequencing technologies, bioinformatics)
 - Updates on other technology issues (e.g., internet access, Cloud services)
 - Software tools for visualizing genomic, clinical and epidemiological data
 - Use of genomics in specific areas (e.g., TB, malaria, wastewater surveillance)
 - Feedback from the field
 - Policy issues (e.g., issues around data sharing and data sovereignty)

All of these proposals are subject to debate

15

Relationship to other relevant entities

- WHO/IPSN
- Wastewater surveillance forum
- Asia and Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiatives
- Pathogen-specific organizations

All of these proposals are subject to debate

16

Issues to discuss in future meetings

- Should we form a steering committee?
- Webinars
 - What format should they take?
 - What topics to cover?
 - Should we organize the virtual meetings around the webinars?
- Adoption of a charter

All of these proposals are subject to debate

17

Questions?

18

Discussion / Provisional Decisions

1. Possible in-person meeting before ABPHM in May 2025
2. Membership categories

19

Potential opportunity for in-person meeting

(we are looking for input on this idea today, not necessarily consensus; all of this is up for discussion)

- Applied Bioinformatics and Public Health Microbiology (ABPHM)
 - Held every other year
 - 21 – 23 May 2025 (13:00 Wednesday through 13:00 Friday)
 - Location: Wellcome Genome Campus, Hinxton (south of Cambridge)
- Potential in-person meeting before ABPHM
 - When: Tuesday, 20 May
 - Where somewhere in London
 - Duration: one day
- Potential benefits of this
 - Combining two meetings in one trip
 - Potential for additional networking among members at ABPHM
 - Potential for networking with fundees at ABPHM

20

Membership Question

(for this we need a provisional decision today)

- Membership Categories

- Funders
 - Foundations and other private funders
 - Government funders
 - Large secondary funders, such as the Global Fund and CEPI
- Inter-governmental organizations and regional genomics initiatives
 - WHO/IPSN
 - Regional genomics initiatives, such as the Africa PGI or Asia PGI
- Industry

Question: Are these categories right? Should we combine the top two?

21

Next steps

- We will send out an email asking whom else to invite to the forum
- Question: May we include your organization on a list of tentative members of the forum?
- Question: Does this time (Friday, 15:00 UTC) work for most participants and if so, would Friday, January 10 work for the next meeting?

22