

## **Minutes of the ESSENCE Members' Meeting 2019: Maturing for Impact**

**15 –16 April 2019**

*Wellcome, Darwin 1 & 2 Meeting Room – Ground Floor  
215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, United Kingdom*



**Annex:** Agenda

**Links:** [List of Participants](#)

[PowerPoint Presentations](#)

[ESSENCE Members Programs and Updates](#)

[ESSENCE proposed mechanism for review of current and planned investments in research capacity strengthening in LMICs](#)

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### **1. Welcome and self-introductions**

*Simon Kay, Wellcome; Hannah Akuffo, Sida; Linda Kupfer, FIC/NIH*

Participants were welcomed to the meeting followed by welcome and introductory remarks from ESSENCE co-chairs who expressed gratitude to everyone and presented the agenda. Each participant then introduced themselves, including those participating via Zoom.

## 2. ESSENCE update and progress since Ottawa

*Garry Aslanyan, ESSENCE Secretariat, TDR*

Garry provided updates on the annual meetings of members (previously held in Washington, DC and Ottawa, Canada) and underlined their usefulness in ensuring regular interaction between members and giving an opportunity to align and harmonize research activities. He clarified that ESSENCE is guided by a results based biennial workplan with a primary focus on research capacity building. He gave an update on some of the ESSENCE best practice guidance documents in terms of revision, and development of new ones, particularly around the funding areas (RM and IS) that are being prioritized by the group. These documents have helped to summarize good practices of funders, including universities, science agencies and research councils.

Although ESSENCE is operating with a lean Secretariat (in both resources and time), Garry noted the improved value recognition over the years (i.e. ESSENCE Working Group on developing a mechanism for reviewing investments in clinical research capacity building - WGRI), and increased interest from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) based on emerging areas and the global effort for more coordination among funders. His presentation was followed by reflections from the SC members and a fruitful discussion guided by Hannah Akuffo, especially around the use of communication tools (i.e. Twitter) to ensure broader impact dissemination of ESSENCE activities. It was also mentioned that greater efforts should be made to include more funders from LMICs in ESSENCE.

### **Action:**

- ***ESSENCE Secretariat to explore the use of social media to create awareness for the analysis that is being produced and to elevate the profile of ESSENCE. Members were invited to identify potential resources (funding or communications experts) who can work with the ESSENCE Secretariat on this item.***

## 3. Partnership and funding Models

*Marta Tufet, UKCDR; Val Shewin, DHSC/NIHR; Sian Rowland, UKRI; Shahid Jameel, Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance; Gary Parker, GACD; Heide Hackmann, ISC*

- Detailed presentations were given on different partnership and funding models. Although the activities of some of the models overlap with ESSENCE, the presenters remarked that they are open to exploring synergies and encouraged members to explore collaboration/cooperation needs with other global health partnerships. PowerPoint presentations are linked to this report which provide further update on the work of the different partnerships.

#### 4. Update on other initiatives

*Peter Kilmarx, FIC/NIH; William Hall, Wellcome; Vasee Moorthy, WHO; Rachel Grant, CEPI; Maria Bellocchi, AREF; Clare Wenham, LSE*

- Short presentations were given on relevant initiatives and the ongoing transformation of WHO aimed at strengthening its normative work and ensuring better coordination of research. Some of the participants were particularly interested in learning how to identify and incentivize LMICs with great potential in health research capacity, as well as establish interaction with ESSENCE members through sharing experiences and insights. The presenters informed that they remain open to explore possibilities for collaboration in the context of research capacity strengthening and gaining insight from members to enable support to reach more recipients in Africa.

#### 5. ESSENCE response to the International Vaccine Task Force (IVTF) report recommendation

*Peter Kilmarx, FIC/NIH and Thabi Maitin, SAMRC, WGRI co-chairs*

Peter presented a two-page document on the proposed recommendation and the possible role of ESSENCE moving from recommendations to implementation and communication planning. He shared the results of the March 2019 Consultation, noting that priorities were to ensure coherence in the envisaged mechanism and that actionable recommendations were reached on the desired future state and scope. Members were invited to give their feedback on finalizing the proposed mechanism, especially on the desired characteristics.

Initiating implementation of the proposed mechanism as it relates to coordinating resources and governance, and optimizing available data, generated discussion for the most part on articulating the envisaged mechanism in response to the World Bank and CEPI report - [Money and Microbes: Strengthening Research Capacity to Prevent Epidemics](#). Members noted that it is important to clarify the question of “implementation and feasibility” of the proposed mechanism as ESSENCE takes this task forward, unless a funder is willing to underwrite it. A link to the two-page document, with revised mechanisms, including three changes from meeting participants, is included with these minutes.

##### **Action(s):**

- **ESSENCE members endorsed the proposed mechanism with minor changes.**
- **WGRI will use the opportunity at the next HIROs meeting to communicate ESSENCE activities and progress, and to get ESSENCE on the agenda of the World REPORT SC meeting in Brussels in May 2019.**
- **ESSENCE co-chairs and WGRI to consult the GCM in the process of finalization and to draft a letter to the Global Emergency Coordinating Board (GECB) and IVTF to communicate ESSENCE progress and to request funding.**
- **ESSENCE SC to develop an implementation plan, including how to extend/reconstitute the WGRI.**

## 6. Brainstorming for ESSENCE Working Groups - Implementation Science (IS) and Research Management (RM)

*IS – Robert Scherpbier, UNICEF/World Bank and GFF; Lewis Temple, BRAC UK; Malabika Sarker, BRAC Bangladesh; Morven Roberts, MRC UK; Elena Netsi, Wellcome*

- The speakers were invited to give an overview on their work areas and to present some of the key activities that they are involved in, as well as the barriers/facilitators to implementing future activities. It was reported that a contractor has been hired to move the “best practice” document forward. The document is expected to be finalized at the end of June 2019. Following the presentations, participants were encouraged to join the discussion to ensure valuable feedback was received to support joint learning and IS good practice document under development. The discussion that followed highlighted the importance of developing a network of supporting agencies to create a stable platform to work with partners.

*RM – Garry Aslanyan, TDR; Allen Mukhwana, ReMPRO, AAS; Genny Kiff, GFPG; Pamisha Pillay, SARIMA*

- Each presenter gave a summary of some of the current activities they are engaged in, as well as their capacity building roles in the area of RM. As noted by Garry, a key task of the ESSENCE RM WG is the ongoing update of the second in the ESSENCE series of good practice documents ([Five keys to improving research costing in LMICs](#)) to reflect the most recent experiences of funders and funding recipient organizations. Further input from members will be required to support the revision process. Allen, Genny and Pamisha provided updates on their efforts to strengthen research capacity and highlighted the importance of developing and introducing benchmark practices, as well as having commonly agreed global standards in the research space.

## 7. Emerging Themes/Discussion of new areas for ESSENCE

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- There is a strong interest within the research community in the costing of research and the need for ESSENCE to contribute to the value guiding principles, especially concerning salaries and allowances paid to PIs, co-PIs, research assistants and fellows, and students.
- An ad hoc working group has been set up to allow for the exchange of ideas and to explore where ESSENCE could better contribute in research costing. Participation is open to all interested agencies.

## 8. Roundtable updates and list of side events for 2019/2020

- A link to the members’ status updates, including their current plans/developments, is included with these minutes.
- Tentatively, it was agreed that Institut Pasteur would host the next annual ESSENCE meeting in the spring of 2020 in Paris, France.
- List of side events for 2019:
  - [The Global Forum for Funders Meeting](#), 8-9 July 2019, Washington, D.C.
  - [ECTMIH 2019 in Liverpool, UK](#), 16-20 September 2019, Liverpool, UK

## 9. ESSENCE entering the second decade

*Hannah Akuffo and Linder Kupfer, ESSENCE co-chairs*

- During the session, the risk of one funder (Sida) which provides a modest investment to support the ESSENCE Secretariat was discussed extensively. It is essential to quickly identify at least two other funders to join Sida as core contributors by reinforcing their support to TDR with specific allocation to support the ESSENCE Secretariat.
- It was recommended to consider developing criteria by which funders could be invited, and are able to join the initiative. The importance of the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) and other funders interested in development in health (agencies from India/other parts of Asia) was emphasized to ensure stronger engagement from LMICs. It was pointed out that many of the current members within the SGCI are in the process of developing and do not have funds for disbursing to their scientists. Furthermore, some members advised caution when reaching out to “all funders” in LMICs, noting this should be kept to those who focus on research capacity strengthening and development.
- Some members commented on the need to conduct another review of the ESSENCE funder initiative (seven-year review done in 2015) to evaluate the scale, further drive the agenda, and shape follow-up actions from the second decade onwards.

**Action:**

- ***ESSENCE SC to develop criteria and systematic approach to expand membership. Accordingly, the discussion with SGCI should continue.***

## Annex – AGENDA

Monday, 15 April 2019	
12:00	<b>Lunch and Networking</b>
13:00	<b>Agenda item 1: Welcome and greetings.</b> Simon Kay, Wellcome, host of the meeting
13:05	<b>Agenda item 2: Introductions and overview of the agenda</b> Linda Kupfer, Co-Chair ESSENCE, Senior Scientist, <i>Fogarty International Center - National Institutes of Health (FIC/NIH)</i> and Hannah Akuffo, Co-Chair ESSENCE, Senior Specialist, Methods in Research Cooperation, <i>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)</i>
13:15	<b>Agenda item 3: ESSENCE update and progress since Ottawa – Chair: Hannah Akuffo</b> Short update on ESSENCE progress since last year, value creation (implementation research, research management, coordinating mechanism), funding, reflections, successes, opportunities followed by reflections from SC members and participants.  <u>Presenter</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Garry Aslanyan, ESSENCE Secretariat, Manager, Partnerships and Governance, <i>World Health Organization (WHO)/Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)</i></li> </ul> <u>Reflections:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Steering Committee members</b></li> </ul> <u>Reflections from the floor</u>
13:45	<b>Agenda item 4: Partnership and funding Models – What can we learn and what can ESSENCE do to engage and support? – Chair: Garry Aslanyan</b> Short presentations describing partnership models, followed by discussion on opportunities and challenges of funders working together.  <b>Each participant will address:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your funding model? How is your organisation funded and how do you fund?</li> <li>What is your partnership model for global collaborations?</li> <li>What are the impacts of your partnerships?</li> <li>What were some of the barriers to partnerships and how did you overcome them?</li> <li>How best can your organization interact with ESSENCE?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marta Tufet/Sheila Mburu – UKCDR, Val Snewin – DHSC/NIHR, Sian Rowland – UKRI, Jo Mulligan – DFID</li> <li>Shahid Jameel - Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance (<i>joining remotely</i>)</li> <li>Gary Parker - Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD)</li> <li>Heide Hackmann – International Science Council (<i>joining remotely</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <u>Discussion</u>
15:00	<b>Coffee Break and Photo de Famille</b>

15:30	<b>Agenda item 5: Update on other Initiatives – Chair: Garry Aslanyan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peter Kilmarx – U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)</li> <li>- William Hall – Wellcome</li> <li>- Vasee Moorthy – World Health Organization (WHO)</li> <li>- Rachel Grant – Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)</li> <li>- Maria Bellocchi – African Research Excellence Fund (AREF)</li> <li>- Clare Wenham – London School of Economics (LSE)</li> </ul> <a href="#">Discussion</a>
16:15	<b>Comfort Break</b>
16:30 – 18:20	<b>Agenda item 6: ESSENCE response to the International Vaccine Research Taskforce report recommendation – Chair: Linda Kupfer</b> <p>Short presentation from the Working Group on the Review of Implementation (WGRI) on progress achieved, consultation and proposed response. Next steps and possible role of ESSENCE in the implementation of proposed mechanism.</p> <a href="#">Presenters</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Peter Kilmarx and Thabi Maitin, WGRI co-chairs</li> </ul> <a href="#">Reflections from the floor</a> <p>Endorsement of the proposed recommendation</p>
18:30	<b>Dinner - Wellcome Kitchen, Level 2, Wellcome Collection</b>

## Tuesday, 16 April 2019

09:00	<b>Agenda item 7: Brainstorming for ESSENCE Working Groups</b> <p><b>Implementation Science: Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> Linda Kupfer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Robert Scherpbier – UNICEF/World Bank and GFF (<i>joining remotely</i>)</li> <li>- Lewis Temple and Malabika Sarker (<i>joining remotely</i>) – BRAC UK</li> <li>- Morven Roberts/Elena Netsi – MRC UK, Wellcome</li> </ul> <p><b>Research Management: Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> Ole Olesen &amp; Hannah Akuffo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garry Aslanyan – ESSENCE</li> <li>- Allen Mukhwana – ReMPRO, AAS (<i>joining remotely</i>)</li> <li>- Genny Kiff – GFGP</li> <li>- Pamisha Pillay – SARIMA</li> </ul> <a href="#">Reflections from the floor</a>
10:30	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45	<b>Agenda item 8: Emerging Themes/Discussion of new areas for ESSENCE - Chair: Hannah Akuffo</b>

	<p><b>Roundtable discussions and feedback:</b> Short presentation on areas followed by roundtable discussion on the themes listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of salaries and allowances in LMICs – update on information gathering exercise and defining of scope. <a href="#">Discussion</a></li> <li>• Open brainstorm on other emerging areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Roundtable updates</b></p> <p>Updates from agencies on their current and future plans</p> <p>Review of relevant meetings coming up</p>
11:45	<p><b>Agenda item 9: ESSENCE entering the second decade</b></p> <p>Re-envisioning/scaling up the initiative - expanding membership, funding, structure – reflections, successes, opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESSENCE co-chairs – Linda Kupfer and Hannah Akuffo</li> </ul>
12:30	<p>Networking lunch with the Research Capacity Strengthening group of the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) (<i>Mendel Atrium, Ground Floor</i>)</p>
13:30	<p>Join UKCDR Research Capacity Strengthening meeting (<i>Mendel 1 &amp; 2</i>) (<i>agenda attached separately</i>)</p>