

Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE)

Terms of reference

Functions

SAGE is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. It is charged with advising WHO on overall global vaccination policies and strategies, ranging from vaccines and technology, research and development, to delivery of vaccination and its linkages with other health interventions. SAGE's remit extends to the control of all vaccine-preventable diseases as part of an integrated, people centred platform of disease prevention that spans the human life-course and in the context of health systems strengthening.

SAGE advises the WHO Director-General specifically on the:

1. adequacy of progress towards the achievement of the goals of control of vaccine-preventable diseases worldwide such as those laid out in the Decade of Vaccines Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020.
2. major issues and challenges to be addressed with respect to achieving the disease control goals, including issues and challenges to achieving and sustaining high and equitable vaccination coverage;
3. immunization programme response to current public health priorities;
4. major general policies, goals and targets including those related to vaccine research and development;
5. adequacy of WHO's strategic plan and priority activities consistent with its mandate and considering the comparative advantages and the respective roles of partner organizations;
6. engagement of WHO in partnerships that will enhance achievement of global immunization goals.

Membership

SAGE comprises 15 independent experts, who shall serve in their personal capacity and represent a broad range of affiliations and a broad range of disciplines encompassing many aspects of immunization and vaccines. Members should refrain from promoting the policies and views and products of the institution for which they work.

SAGE members are recruited and selected as acknowledged experts from around the world in the fields of epidemiology, public health, vaccinology, paediatrics, internal medicine, infectious diseases, immunology, drug regulation, programme management, immunization delivery, health-care administration, health economics, and vaccine safety.

The membership of SAGE shall seek to reflect a representation of:

1. professional affiliation (e.g., academia, medical profession, clinical practice, research institutes, and governmental bodies including national immunization programmes, public health departments and regulatory authorities);
2. major areas of expertise (e.g., vaccine research, vaccine and immunization safety, optimization of immunization schedules, vaccine delivery, disease control strategies, impact monitoring); and
3. the strategic focus areas of the WHO's vaccine and immunization work including vaccines norms and standards, vaccine regulation, vaccine programme management, delivery and surveillance and monitoring, and vaccine research & development.

SAGE members, including the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson, are appointed by the WHO Director-General. Members are selected upon the proposal of an independent selection panel including representatives of key partner organizations. A public call for nominations is issued. After determination of eligibility, nominations are submitted to the selection panel. Members will be selected on the basis of their qualifications and ability to contribute to the accomplishment of SAGE's objectives. Renewals of term are also submitted to the selection panel.

Consideration will be given to ensuring appropriate geographic representation and gender balance. Chairs of regional technical immunization advisory groups are not eligible to serve on SAGE but are invited to attend SAGE meetings. WHO staff and United Nations staff members are not eligible to serve on SAGE.

Members of SAGE shall be appointed to serve for an initial term of three years. This three-year term may only be renewed once. To allow for continuity and efficiency, the Chairperson of SAGE is expected to act as Chairperson for a minimum of three years, not taking into account if he/she has already served three years or has been renewed for a further three years as a member of SAGE. He/she needs however, to be a member of SAGE for a minimum of one year before taking up Chairpersonship.

Prior to being considered for SAGE membership, nominees shall be required to complete a WHO Declaration of Interests form as per the attached form (Annex 1).

All papers presented to SAGE, which may include pre-publication copies of research reports or documents of commercial significance, shall be treated as confidential. SAGE deliberations are confidential and may not be publicly disclosed by SAGE members. Therefore, prior to confirmation by WHO of their appointment as SAGE members, SAGE nominees shall be required to sign a Confidentiality Undertaking (Annex 2).

A register of members' interests and signed confidentiality agreements shall be maintained by WHO.

Membership in SAGE may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

1. failure to attend two consecutive SAGE meetings;
2. change in affiliation resulting in a conflict of interest or involvement in activities resulting in a conflict of interest incompatible with serving on SAGE; and
3. a lack of professionalism involving, for example, a breach of confidentiality.

Meetings and operational procedures

SAGE meetings occur biannually, in April and October, and are scheduled 3 years ahead. The frequency of meetings may, however, be adjusted as necessary. The WHO Secretariat will work with SAGE members and key global stakeholders to develop SAGE priorities and workplans as well as specific meeting agendas.

SAGE members are asked to update their declared interests before each meeting. SAGE members with potentially conflicting interests will not participate in deliberations on the specific topic(s) for which they would have a conflict of interest. SAGE member's relevant interests will be made publically available four weeks in advance of the meeting for public comments. Background documents, presentations, final agenda and final list of participants are posted after the meeting are posted on the SAGE public website after the meeting.

Decisions or recommendations by SAGE will, as a rule, be taken by consensus.

The WHO Regional Offices, Chairs of regional technical immunization advisory groups and Chairs of relevant WHO technical advisory committees will be invited to participate in SAGE meetings and contribute to the discussions. The major global immunization stakeholders such as UNICEF, the Secretariat of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and representatives of civil society organizations will also be invited to attend and contribute to SAGE meetings.

WHO may also invite other observers to SAGE meetings, including representatives from non-governmental organizations, international professional organizations, technical agencies, partner organizations, Chairs and members of national technical advisory groups on immunization as well as associations of manufacturers of vaccines and immunization technologies and representatives from the manufacturing companies.

Additional experts may be invited to meetings, as appropriate, to further contribute to specific agenda items. Observers and invited experts will not participate in the decision making process but will be allowed to contribute to the discussions as directed by the Chairperson.

SAGE reports to the WHO Director-General. The SAGE Chairperson will debrief the Director-General (or designee) following each SAGE meeting. The conclusions and recommendations of SAGE meetings shall be published in the Weekly Epidemiological Record and posted on the website within two months of each SAGE meeting. These conclusions and recommendations and will be translated into all the WHO headquarters official languages. A brief summary report of the meeting shall also be posted on the SAGE website the day after the SAGE meeting.

Roles and responsibilities of SAGE members

Members of SAGE have a responsibility to provide WHO with high quality, well considered advice and recommendations on matters described in these SAGE terms of reference. Members play a critical role in ensuring the reputation of SAGE as an internationally recognized advisory group in the field of immunization. In keeping with SAGE's mandate to provide strategic advice rather than technical input, members will be committed to the development and improvement of public health policies.

SAGE has no executive or regulatory function. Its role is solely to provide advice and recommendations to the Director-General of WHO. This includes providing advice and recommendations on urgent public health issues as needed.

SAGE members may be approached by non-WHO sources for their views, comments and statements on particular matters of public health concern and asked to state the views of SAGE. SAGE members shall refer such enquiries to WHO.

SAGE members will not be remunerated for their participation in SAGE; however, reasonable expenses such as travel expenses incurred by attendance at SAGE or related meetings will be compensated by WHO.

SAGE members are expected to endeavour to attend all biannual meetings. Further active participation will be expected from all SAGE members throughout the year, including participation in SAGE Working Groups, video and telephone conferences as well as frequent interactions via e-mail. Review of documents may also be solicited. SAGE members may be requested to participate as observers in other important WHO or partners meetings. As a result SAGE members are expected to commit to invest a substantial amount of their time to SAGE.

The secretariat of SAGE is ensured by the Immunization Policy Unit of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals. The function of Executive Secretary is ensured by the Senior Health Advisor who directs this Unit.

SAGE will be kept informed by WHO and partner agencies on progress concerning implementation of strategies and the attainment of objectives at country and regional level. SAGE will also be informed of conclusions and recommendations from WHO relevant technical advisory groups including regional technical advisory groups.

SAGE Working Groups are established as resources intended to increase the effectiveness of SAGE deliberations by reviewing and providing evidence-based information and options for recommendations together with implications of the various options to be discussed by SAGE during one of its biannual meetings. These Working Groups are normally established on a time-limited basis to help address specific questions identified by SAGE when the issue is particularly complicated or time-consuming and could not be addressed by an existing standing WHO advisory committee. The need and charge for a Working Group is discussed and agreed during SAGE meetings. The purpose, structure and functioning of the Working Groups is described in detail in Annex 3 (Purpose, structure and functioning of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Working Groups).

For its proceedings, SAGE shall follow an evidence-based review process as outlined in the SAGE guidance document on evidence-based vaccine-related recommendations

(http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/Guidelines_development_recommendations.pdf?ua=1).

More detailed information on SAGE operating procedures is available on the SAGE website

(http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/working_mechanisms/en/).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FOR WHO EXPERTS

WHO's work on global health issues requires the assistance of external experts who **may have interests related to their expertise**. To ensure the highest integrity and public confidence in its activities, WHO requires that experts serving in an advisory role disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a potential conflict of interest related to the subject of the activity in which they will be involved.

All experts serving in an advisory role must disclose any circumstances that could represent a **potential conflict of interest** (i.e., any interest that may affect, or may reasonably be perceived to affect, the expert's objectivity and independence). You must disclose on this Declaration of Interest (DOI) form any financial, professional or other interest relevant to the subject of the work or meeting in which you have been asked to participate in or contribute towards **and** any interest that could be affected by the outcome of the meeting or work. You must also declare relevant interests of your immediate family members (see definition below) and, if you are aware of it, relevant interests of other parties with whom you have substantial common interests and which may be perceived as unduly influencing your judgement (e.g. employer, close professional associates, administrative unit or department).

Please complete this form and submit it to WHO Secretariat if possible at least 5 weeks before the meeting or work. You must also promptly inform the Secretariat if there is any change in this information prior to, or during the course of, the meeting or work. All experts must complete this form before participation in a WHO activity can be confirmed. Please note that not fully completing and disclosing all relevant information on this form may, depending on the circumstances, lead WHO to decide not to appoint you to WHO advisory bodies / functions in the future.

Answering "Yes" to a question on this form does not automatically disqualify you or limit your participation in a WHO activity. Your answers will be reviewed by the Secretariat to determine whether you have a conflict of interest relevant to the subject at hand. One of the outcomes listed in the next paragraph can occur depending on the circumstances (e.g. nature and magnitude of the interest, timeframe and duration of the interest).

The Secretariat may conclude that no potential conflict exists or that the interest is irrelevant or insignificant. If, however, a declared interest is determined to be potentially or clearly significant, one or more of the following three measures for managing the conflict of interest may be applied. The Secretariat (i) allows full participation, with public disclosure of your interest; (ii) mandates partial exclusion (i.e., you will be excluded from that portion of the meeting or work related to the declared interest and from the corresponding decision making process); or (iii) mandates total exclusion (i.e., you will not be able to participate in any part of the meeting or work).

All potentially significant interests will be **disclosed** to the other participants at the start of the activity and you will be asked if there have been any changes. Whereas this form is confidential, a summary of declarations and actions taken to manage any declared interests will be **published** on the SAGE public website). Furthermore, if the objectivity of the work or meeting in which you are involved is subsequently questioned, the contents of your DOI form may be made available by the Secretariat to persons outside WHO if the Director-General considers such disclosure to be in the best interest of the Organization, after consulting with you. Completing this DOI form means that you agree to these conditions.

If you are unable or unwilling to disclose the details of an interest that may pose a real or perceived conflict, you must disclose that a conflict of interest may exist and the Secretariat may decide that you be totally recused from the meeting work or process concerned, after consulting with you.

Name: Institution: Email:

Date and title of meeting or work, including description of subject matter to be considered (if a number of substances or processes are to be evaluated, a list should be attached by the organizer of the activity):

Please answer each of the questions below. If the answer to any of the questions is "yes", briefly describe the circumstances on the last page of the form.

The term "you" refers to yourself and your immediate family members (i.e., spouse (or partner with whom you have a similar close personal relationship) and your children). "Commercial entity" includes any commercial business, an industry association, research institution or other enterprise whose funding is significantly derived from commercial sources with an interest related to the subject of the meeting or work. "Organization" includes a governmental, international or non-profit organization. "Meeting" includes a series or cycle of meetings.

EMPLOYMENT AND CONSULTING

Within the past 4 years, have you received remuneration in excess of US\$ 5,000 from a commercial entity or other organization with an interest related to the subject of the meeting, work or process?

- 1a Employment Yes ☐ No ☐
- 1b Consulting, including service as a technical or other advisor Yes ☐ No ☐

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Within the past 4 years, have you or has your research unit received support from a commercial entity or other organization with an interest related to the subject of the meeting, work or process?

- 2a Research support, including grants, collaborations, sponsorships, and other funding Yes ☐ No ☐
- 2b Non-monetary support valued at more than US \$1000 overall (include equipment, facilities, research assistants, paid travel to meetings, etc.) Yes ☐ No ☐
- 2c Support (including honoraria) for being on a speakers panel, giving speeches or training for a commercial entity or other organization with an interest related to the subject of the meeting, work or process? Yes ☐ No ☐

INVESTMENT INTERESTS

Do you have current investments (valued at more than US\$5,000 overall) in a commercial entity with an interest related to the subject of the meeting, work or process? Please also include indirect investments such as a trust or holding company. You may exclude mutual funds, pension funds or similar investments that are broadly diversified and on which you exercise no control.

- 3a Stocks, bonds, stock options, other securities (e.g., short sales) Yes ☐ No ☐
- 3b Commercial business interests (e.g., proprietorships, partnerships, joint ventures, board memberships, controlling interest in a company) Yes ☐ No ☐

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Do you have any intellectual property rights that might be enhanced or diminished by the outcome of the meeting, work or process?

- 4a Patents, trademarks, copyrights or other intellectual property (including pending applications) Yes ☐ No ☐
- 4b Proprietary know-how in a substance, technology or process Yes ☐ No ☐

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS (during the past 4 years)

- 5a As part of a regulatory, legislative or judicial process, have you provided an expert opinion or testimony, related to the subject of the meeting, work or process, for a commercial entity or other organization? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 5b Have you held an office or other position, paid or unpaid, where you represented interests or defended a position related to the subject of the meeting, work or process? Yes ☐ No ☐

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 6a If not already disclosed above, have you worked for the competitor of a product that is the subject of the meeting or work, or will your participation in the meeting, work or process enable you to obtain access to a competitor's confidential proprietary information, or create for you a personal, professional, financial or business competitive advantage? if so, please elaborate? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 6b To your knowledge, would the outcome of the meeting, work or process benefit or adversely affect interests of others with whom you have substantial common personal, professional, financial or business interests (such as your adult children or siblings, close professional colleagues, administrative unit or department)? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 6c Excluding WHO, has any person or entity paid or contributed towards your travel costs in connection with this WHO meeting, work or process? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 6d Have you received any payments (other than for travel costs) or honoraria for speaking publicly on the subject of this WHO meeting, work or process? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 6e Is there any other aspect of your background or present circumstances not addressed above that might be perceived as affecting your objectivity or independence? Yes ☐ No ☐

TOBACCO OR TOBACCO PRODUCTS (answer without regard to relevance to the subject of the

7. meeting or work)

Within the past 4 years, have you had employment or received research support or other funding from, or had any other professional relationship with, an entity directly involved in the production, manufacture, distribution or sale of tobacco or tobacco products or representing the interests of any such entity? Yes ☐ No ☐

EXPLANATION OF "YES" RESPONSES: If the answer to any of the above questions is "yes", check above and briefly describe the circumstances on this page. If you do not describe the nature of an interest or if you do not provide the amount or value involved where relevant, the conflict will be assumed to be significant.

Nos. 1 - 4: Type of interest, question number and category (e.g., Intellectual Property 4.a copyrights) <u>and</u> basic descriptive details.	Name of company, organization, or institution	Belongs to you, a family member, employer, research unit or other?	Amount of income or value of interest (if not disclosed, is assumed to be significant)	Current interest (or year ceased)
Nos. 5-8: Describe the subject, specific circumstances, parties involved, time frame and other relevant details				

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE. By completing and signing this form, you consent to the disclosure of any relevant conflicts to other meeting participants and in the resulting report or work product.

DECLARATION. I hereby declare on my honour that the disclosed information is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Should there be any change to the above information, I will promptly notify the responsible staff of WHO and complete a new declaration of interest form that describes the changes. This includes any change that occurs before or during the meeting or work itself and through the period up to the publication of the final results or completion of the activity concerned.

Date: _____

Signature_____



CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

1. Commercial, academic and other research institutions and individual scientists often submit or present for discussion by committees or groups of WHO on research, products and processes (hereafter referred to as "Information") which the institutions and individuals consider proprietary. To help ensure the appropriate use by WHO of such Information whilst protecting the institutions' or individual's proprietary rights, WHO undertakes to release such Information only to persons who have signed this agreement.
2. Information submitted by such institutions or individuals through WHO to committees or groups for review, discussion or comment, whether at meetings, on internet-based collaborative workspaces, during telephone conferences or otherwise, shall be regarded by the Undersigned as confidential, unless clearly stated otherwise, by the institution, individual concerned and/or the WHO Secretariat.
3. The Undersigned undertakes to treat such confidential Information as proprietary information and agrees not to make copies of it, nor to disclose or use the same in whole or in part.
4. If requested to do so, the Undersigned agrees to return to WHO any and all Information identified as confidential.
5. The Undersigned shall not be bound by confidentiality if he/she is able to demonstrate that the Information:
 - (a) was known to him/her prior to any disclosure to him/her by the institution or individual or WHO;
 - (b) was in the public domain at the time of disclosure by the institution or individual;
 - (c) becomes part of the public domain through no fault of the Undersigned; or
 - (d) becomes available to the Undersigned from a third party not in breach of any legal obligations of confidentiality to the institution, individual or WHO.
6. This Confidentiality Undertaking is valid during the entire time the Undersigned participates in the work of the committee or group, in whatever capacity, and for a period of ten (10) years thereafter.

Signed:

Signature.....

Name.....
(print or type)

Purpose, structure and functioning of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Working Groups

Purpose and decision to establish a SAGE Working Group

SAGE Working Groups are established as resources intended to increase the effectiveness of SAGE deliberations by reviewing and providing evidence-based information and options for recommendations together with implications of the various options to be discussed by SAGE in an open public forum.

These Working Groups are normally established on a time limited basis to help address specific questions identified by SAGE when the issue cannot be addressed by existing standing WHO advisory committees. Some Working Groups such as that on polio eradication or the Decade of Vaccines Working Group can be established for a number of years.

The need for and creation of a Working Group is discussed and agreed during SAGE meetings, preparatory teleconferences for SAGE meetings, or in case of urgency via email interaction.

Terms of reference of the Working Groups and identification of needed expertise to serve on the Working Group
Each Working Group operates under specific terms of reference (TORs). These TORs are defined within 30 days of the SAGE decision to establish the Working Group.

Proposed TORs and related expertise to serve on the Working Group are developed jointly by the SAGE member serving as Working Group Chair, the Lead WHO technical staff and SAGE Executive Secretary. Draft TORs and related expertise are reviewed by SAGE members. Final decision is taken jointly by the SAGE Chair, Working Group Chair, SAGE Executive Secretary, and the Director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals.

Working Group composition and selection of membership

Each Working Group should include two or more SAGE members (one of whom functions as Chair), and additional subject matter experts serving in their own individual capacity and with a view to meet the identified needed expertise for the group. SAGE members and other experts who have identified conflicts of interest cannot serve on the Working Group charged with responsibility in the identified areas of conflict. WHO staff (one of whom functions as the Working Group technical lead serve as secretariat to the Working Group. In some instances other UN or non UN agencies can be co-opted as part of the secretariat. For Working Groups which terms of reference require proceedings over a number of years, if a SAGE member rotates out of SAGE while the Working Group is still active, then he/she remains on the Working Group but a new SAGE member should be enrolled to serve on the group. A new SAGE member should be appointed as Working Group Chair when the previous Chair rotates out of SAGE. For Working Groups having proceedings spanning over a number of years, the same rotation process as applied to SAGE membership should be applied i.e. two 3-year terms, the renewal being determined by the Working Group Chair, Lead WHO technical staff and SAGE Executive secretary based on the contribution of the member to the group. If some members resign for personal reasons, are no longer eligible to serve on the group, or are unable to meaningfully contribute to the proceedings of the group, they can be replaced with first considering an appointment from the list of initial candidates to join the group. The decision will be made as for the selection of candidates (see below). If no one from this list is suitable then another expert could be solicited and co-opted without resorting to an open call for nomination.

The size of the Working Group should not exceed 10-12 members and will be adjusted based on the need for expertise and representation.

A public call for nomination for Working Group members will be posted on the SAGE website together with the relevant TORs of the Working Group and indication of the desirable expertise. SAGE members, regional offices, diplomatic missions, WHO staff and key partner organizations will also be approached for potential nominations. Nominees will be requested to provide both a Curriculum Vitae and a completed Declaration of Interests form prior to being considered for membership on the Working Group. From the pool of nominees, the Working Group Chair, SAGE Executive Secretary and Lead WHO staff will propose a Working Group composition for endorsement by the SAGE Chair and the Director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals. The proposed list should be accompanied by the rationale for the proposed selection. In addition to meeting the required expertise, attention will be given to ensure proper diversity including geographic and gender representation. Chairs of regional technical immunization advisory groups are not eligible to serve on SAGE Working Groups.

On rare occasions joint reviews of evidence by SAGE and another area WHO advisory committee (focusing on another area than immunization but with expertise and relevance to the topic being considered) may have to be organized. As a result a SAGE Working Group may be formed in conjunction with this other solicited advisory committee. In this instance members of the solicited advisory committee might also be co-opted on the Working Group and a Working Group co-Chair may be appointed from among members of this other advisory committee. In this case, the selection of Working Group members will equally involve the Chair and secretariat of the solicited advisory committee.

Working Group members will not be remunerated for their participation in the Working Group; however, reasonable expenses such as travel expenses incurred by attendance at Working Group meetings, SAGE meetings or related meetings will be compensated by WHO.

Working Group Process

Working Groups, with support of the WHO Secretariat will perform or coordinate, systematic assessment of the evidence such as analysis of data addressing efficacy, effectiveness, safety, feasibility, and economic aspects of immunization policy to address questions developed by the Working Group in order to propose appropriate vaccine policy recommendations. This is done in accordance with the process for evidence –review and development of recommendations by SAGE as available at http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/Guidelines_development_recommendations.pdf?ua=1. SAGE uses the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) process for the review of evidence. The Working Group will be expected to define the questions to inform the recommendations. It should identify critical questions for which an in-depth review/systematic review of the evidence is needed and determine important outcomes. In developing proposed recommendations the Working Group should complete an evidence to decision table and systematically consider the following criteria: balance of benefits and harms of the intervention, resource use and value for money, equity impacts, feasibility, acceptability, values and preferences, and other relevant considerations. Recommendations should be based on GRADIng of evidence. Only when not appropriate (and as per criteria stated in the Guidance for the development of evidence-based vaccine related recommendations) the group may opt to develop Good Practice Statements.

All proposed recommendation and comprehensive evidence in support of recommendations including GRADE tables and evidence to decision tables should be presented to SAGE.

SAGE Working Groups are not allowed to render consensus advice or recommendations directly to the WHO Director-General. SAGE Working Group Chairs, other Working Group representatives, or the Working Groups per se are not empowered to speak on behalf of SAGE. Rather, they are utilized by SAGE to gather and organize information upon which SAGE can deliberate and act. Thus, while SAGE Working Groups can and should examine an area in detail and define the issues, including developing options for recommendations, the actual processes of group deliberation terminating in development of group consensus and recommendations must occur in the public forum of SAGE meetings by SAGE. If the Working Group cannot reach consensus then the diverging views will be reflected in the background document or Working Group report presented to SAGE. Such documents will be publicly posted on the SAGE website as soon as the SAGE meeting is over.

Effective communication and a strong working collaboration between the Working Group Chair, Lead WHO staff and the Working Group members are significant determinants of the effectiveness of a Working Group. Draft minutes of Working Group in person meetings or conference calls are produced. As soon as the minutes are approved by the Working Group, they are made available to SAGE members on a protected web workspace. Depending on the Working Group, minutes may be produced by the Secretariat or a Working Group member may be asked to serve as rapporteur. Minutes are not publicly available and only publicly shared in the context of a SAGE session when included in the background documents.

With the Lead WHO Staff, the Chair of the Working Group develops a plan for routine operations of the group. Working Groups accomplish most of their work through teleconferences. A set day and time for routine monthly teleconferences may be established, in order to allow standing teleconferences to be arranged and Working Group members to anticipate and reserve time for these teleconferences. The frequency of Working Group teleconferences may be changed depending on the urgency of issues being considered by the group and the amount of preparatory work needed prior to a topic being brought up for plenary discussion and decision making at SAGE. Some Working Groups may more effectively achieve their purpose through exchange of e-mail communications with intermittent teleconferences. WHO will establish a telephone bridge for the teleconferences and ensure free access that telephone charges are not impacted to Working Group members.

In-person meetings of Working Groups may facilitate the proceedings of the group and Working Groups are expected to have at least one face-to-face meeting. If a Working Group is planning to conclude its proceedings at a given face-to-face meeting, this meeting should be held at least one month in advance of the SAGE meeting during which the Working Group is expected to report to SAGE. These face-to-face meetings are normally held in Geneva but they may also be held in different locations if this minimizes cost and facilitates participation of Working Group members and necessary experts.

Individuals other than Working Group members and the Secretariat may participate in Working Group meetings only if their contribution is required by the Working Group. These may include organization representatives, industry representatives/experts, public health officials, faculty staff of academic institutions or other experts. These experts are excluded from any discussions and deliberations within the Working Group and are solely invited to provide specific requested information on a predefined topic. Observers are not allowed to attend Working Group proceedings.

Working Groups are terminated after completion of the TOR and reporting to SAGE unless SAGE asks for additional work. Working Group focused on the development of recommendations on vaccine use may only be closed after the WHO position paper is published following the issuance of recommendations by SAGE. Working Group members will be asked to contribute to the peer-review of the document prior to publication and might be asked to help address reviewer's comments.

Working Groups are encouraged to submit publications of the reviews of the scientific evidence in peer-review journals. This could be done before or after the SAGE meetings. If published before the SAGE meeting, the publications should reflect the scientific evidence only and not pre-empt the view of SAGE with stating the proposed recommendations and if published after the SAGE meeting should reference the SAGE report.

Management of Conflict of Interest

The value and impact of SAGE recommendations and WHO policy recommendations are critically dependent upon public trust in the integrity of the process. Reported interests are assessed and managed according to SAGE procedures. Summarized Declarations of Interest are publicly posted on the SAGE website in conjunction with the Working Group's TORs and composition (http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/working_mechanisms/en/). Members are expected to proactively inform WHO on any change in relevant interests. The posted summary will then be updated accordingly.