

# Changes to the management and structure of Cochrane Review Groups

## Procedures to be followed during a change in management of a Cochrane Review Group

### 1 Background

Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs) operate within Cochrane's organizational framework of accountability in all of their activities and actions. Under the new accountability and management structure approved by Cochrane's Governing Board in September 2017, CRGs report to the Senior Editor (SE) of their designated Network, who reports to Cochrane's Editor in Chief (EiC) and, through him/her to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO reports and is accountable to the Governing Board.

Co-ordinating Editors of CRGs are accountable for the production of systematic reviews within their Group. The key responsibilities of CRG Co-ordinating Editors are:

- leading the CRG and taking responsibility for its ability to deliver on its core functions;
- ensuring that funding is in place to support the CRG team's work and that this is stable for an agreed period, which is normally no less than two years;
- working with the SEs, Associate Editors (AEs), and the EiC's team to ensure the efficient delivery of high-quality, high-relevance reviews in the topic area;
- ensuring that the CRG adheres to Cochrane's policies and quality standards;
- ensuring that there are processes in place for actively prioritizing key research questions relevant to the CRG scope;
- ensuring that there are appropriate, transparent, and equitable editorial processes in place, and signing off reviews that meet the quality criteria (or delegating to the Network SE, or a senior and independent colleague, where appropriate);
- creating relationships with key decision maker networks (consumer groups, policy makers, or health professionals) in relevant fields outside Cochrane;
- managing relationships with hosting institutions and funders;
- engaging with other CRG Networks, Cochrane Groups, and the Central Executive Team (CET) to support the production and use of Cochrane evidence, and deliver Cochrane's organizational mission and strategy.

Cochrane has a responsibility to ensure that all CRGs are run effectively and efficiently, and that the reviews each CRG produces are of the highest quality and in line with current standards and procedures.

## Scope

This document sets out the procedures that should be followed when a change to the leadership of the CRG is under consideration by the EiC or his/her nominee.

## 2 Procedure

In order to fulfil its responsibilities in monitoring the quality of the output of each CRG, Cochrane will appraise each CRG to decide upon its effectiveness in achieving its core functions at least once every five years. The process for conducting these reviews will be agreed by the EiC in line with Cochrane's agreed policies as determined by the CEO, with advice and guidance (from January 2018) of the Cochrane Editorial Board.

### Stage 1 – Outcome of the appraisal

The outcome of the appraisal will be communicated to the Co-ordinating Editor of the CRG (and – from January 2018 – to the SE of the appropriate Network) at the earliest opportunity. The reason(s) for the conclusions reached should be explained fully to the Co-ordinating Editor, SE and other relevant personnel, and the Co-ordinating Editor and CRG team members will have an opportunity to respond.

The CRG may be judged to be either meeting or exceeding expectations in terms of performance; or underperforming and requiring improvement.

### Stage 2 – Preparation of an action plan

Should the CRG be considered to be underperforming and requiring improvement, a remedial action plan with a clear timescale and metrics of performance will be prepared by the Co-ordinating Editor and CRG team, and if approved this will be agreed between the EiC (or his/her nominated deputy), the SE, and the CRG Co-ordinating Editor. Where additional support or training is agreed by both parties, this should be specified within the action plan.

Discussions may take place with the CRG funder and hosting institution, to inform them of the process and seek its support in implementing the action plan.

### Stage 3 – Further remedial action

If the action plan fails to lead to the required improvement in the CRG's performance, the SE and EiC may consider that further changes are required which may affect the leadership, working practices, or scope of the group. This decision will be communicated to the individual(s) affected as soon as possible.

### Stage 4 – Appeal process

Any individual whose role is affected will have the right to appeal against the decision reached by the SE and EiC to a sub-committee of the Governing Board.

The appeal process to be followed will be, or will be aligned with, the '[Procedure for dealing with CRG Transformation Programme appeals to the Governing Board against decisions made by the Editor-in-Chief](#)', recently approved at the Governing Board Meeting in September 2107.

Once the appeals process is complete, if appropriate, discussions will be held between Cochrane, the CRG funder, and host institution to determine any changes that are required.

### **Stage 5 – Recruitment of a new Co-ordinating Editor**

The recruitment process for a new Co-ordinating Editor of the affected CRG will be decided on a case-by-case basis, according to individual circumstances.

Any vacancy for a Co-ordinating Editor position will be advertised on the Cochrane website and that of the host institution (if appropriate) for a minimum of 21 days. The advertisement should contain details about the role and the person specification relevant to the position as outlined below, together with information about how to apply.

In addition to demonstrably possessing the qualities, experience, and skills required to perform the responsibilities of a Co-ordinating Editor (see above), new candidates must demonstrate:

- strong commitment to Cochrane’s *Strategy to 2020*, and the importance of high-quality, relevant systematic reviews that impact on health care and policy;
- strong interest in and commitment to conducting systematic reviews within the scope of the CRG;
- experience in preparing a Cochrane Review(s), or other systematic reviews;
- experience of research within the scope of the CRG;
- experience with peer review;
- institutional and personal commitment to ensure time to carry out required tasks;
- ability to secure funding to support the CRG team’s work;
- ability to meet relevant deadlines;
- leadership and strategy skills and experience;
- problem-solving and communication skills;
- a knowledge of clinical trial design and epidemiological methods;
- familiarity with a range of research methods.

Applicants would be expected to send, as a minimum requirement, a CV and letter of application describing their suitability for the role.

All applications will be reviewed by the EiC and his/her deputy (or other nominee) and a shortlist drawn up for interview. The outcome of each interview will be written up and scored in accordance with usual Cochrane CET practice, and a preferred candidate identified. Cochrane’s CEO, the CRG host, and the CRG funder will be consulted before any final decision is made.

An offer for the position of Co-ordinating Editor of a CRG will not lead to a contract of employment with Cochrane. However, the successful applicant will be expected to sign a Collaboration Agreement with

Cochrane regarding the leadership of the CRG, and have agreement from their employer (if appropriate) to take on the required responsibilities.

Cochrane reserves the right to appoint independently of this procedure if no suitable candidate is identified through the recruitment process. No decision in this regard will be made without the express approval of Cochrane's EiC, in consultation with the host institution and funder and, if necessary, the Co-ordinating Editor's employer. In exceptional circumstances, this approach may be followed to put in place an individual to cover the role on an interim basis, pending a formal recruitment process.