

CALL FOR EXPERTS - WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE)

Issued on: 07 July 2021

Deadline: 10 September 2021

The World Health Organization (WHO) is seeking experts to serve as members of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE). This “Call for experts” provides information about the advisory group in question, the expert profiles being sought, the process to express interest, and the process of selection. Through this current effort, WHO is seeking to fill an opening on the advisory group as of January 2022, but also aims to develop a roster of candidates for future openings, with a view to ensuring a more rapid and efficient recruitment and onboarding process, as the need arises.

BACKGROUND

SAGE is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. SAGE reports to the Director-General of WHO and advises on global policies and strategies, ranging from vaccines and technologies, research and development, to vaccination recommendations and delivery of immunization, its linkages with other health interventions and integration into health systems. All vaccine- and immunization-related topics of public health relevance for which WHO requires strategic and policy advice are typically reviewed by SAGE.

FUNCTIONS

Members of SAGE have a responsibility to provide WHO with high quality, well considered advice and recommendations on matters of relevance to immunization policy and strategies. 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 are 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.

OPERATIONS

SAGE is expected to meet annually at least two times virtually or in person at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, usually for 2-3 days each time, with working groups established for detailed review of specific topics prior to discussion by the full group. Additional ad hoc meetings are scheduled on an as needed basis. Priorities of work and meeting agendas are developed by WHO. The working language of the group is English.

UNICEF, the Secretariat of the GAVI Alliance, and WHO Regional Offices participate as observers in SAGE meetings and deliberations. WHO also invites other observers to SAGE meetings, including representatives from WHO regional technical advisory groups, non-governmental organizations, international professional organizations, technical agencies, donor organizations and associations of manufacturers of vaccines and immunization technologies. Additional experts may be invited, as appropriate, to further contribute to specific agenda items.

SAGE working groups are established as resources intended to increase the effectiveness of SAGE deliberations. Members of working groups provide evidence-based information and options for recommendations for discussion by the full SAGE in an open forum. The need and charge for a working group is discussed and agreed upon during SAGE meetings.

EXPECTATIONS OF SAGE MEMBERS

In addition to attendance at meetings, active participation is expected from all SAGE members throughout the year, including participation in SAGE working groups, video and telephone conferences and interaction via e-mail. Review of documents may also be solicited. SAGE members may be requested to participate as observers in other WHO departmental or cross-departmental meetings.

WHO CAN EXPRESS INTEREST?

SAGE is a multidisciplinary group of experts. Members have highest standing in their field, and have a range of technical knowledge, skills and experience relevant to vaccines and immunization. In recognition of the regular, phased rotation of SAGE members, WHO is seeking to constitute a list of highly qualified experts to fill seats in the Advisory Group as they become available.

It should be noted that there will be no call for SAGE nomination in 2022 or 2023. Anyone with a potential interest to be considered for selection for SAGE membership during the course of the next 24-30 months, is encouraged to apply now.

The current call for experts constitutes the first of a two-phased process for SAGE member selection. During the initial phase, a diverse set of strong candidates for SAGE are to be retained on a roster. These candidates will then be further reviewed in a subsequent phase of the selection process as the more specific need for new members arises. Selection for the SAGE roster does not guarantee an eventual seat on the Advisory Group.

The candidates selected in the roster may also be considered for expert positions in SAGE working groups for which the candidates may be suitable.

WHO welcomes expressions of interest from Scientists, Researchers, healthcare professionals, and healthcare regulators of highest credentials with expertise in the following areas:

- epidemiology, public health, immunology, vaccinology, clinical practice (in particular infectious diseases, pediatrics, internal medicine, geriatrics, obstetrics and maternal health, etc.), biologicals regulation, programme management, vaccine delivery, immunization and health systems, health-care administration, vaccine research and development, clinical trials, mathematical modeling, ethics, health communication, health economics, and vaccine safety.

Chairs of regional or headquarters technical immunization advisory groups and staff of WHO, other agencies of the United Nations, and donors are not eligible to serve on SAGE. Significant conflicts of interest may also exclude candidates from serving on SAGE.

SUBMITTING YOUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

To register your interest in being considered for the SAGE, please respond to the series of questions appearing in THIS LINK : <https://extranet.who.int/dataformv3/index.php/943417?lang=en> which will include a request to upload the following documents **by 10 September 2021**:

- A cover letter, indicating your motivation to apply and how you satisfy the selection criteria. Please note that, if selected, membership will be in a personal capacity. Therefore, please do not use the letterhead or other identification of your employer;
- Your curriculum vitae; and
- A signed and completed Declaration of Interests (DOI) form for WHO Experts, available at <https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>.

After submission, your expression of interest will be reviewed by a dedicated selection panel which is composed of representatives from WHO and key partner organizations. This panel will first select individuals for the roster, and at the required time, further decide on a nominee to fill an available SAGE seat to propose to the WHO Director-General for appointment. Due to an expected high volume of interest, only applicants selected for the roster (and in turn, eligible for actual SAGE membership) will be informed.

Important information about the selection processes and conditions of appointment

Members of WHO advisory groups (AGs) must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, applicants are required to complete the WHO Declaration of Interests (DOI) for WHO Experts, and the selection as a member of an AG is, amongst other things, dependent on WHO determining that there is no conflict of interest or that any identified conflicts could be appropriately managed (in addition to WHO's evaluation of an applicant's experience, expertise and motivation and other criteria). In the context of the two-phased SAGE member selection process, DOIs are requested for initial consideration for the roster, and again on further review for appointment to the AG.

All AG members will serve in their individual expert capacity and shall not represent any governments, any commercial industries or entities, any research, academic or civil society organizations, or any other bodies, entities, institutions or organizations. They are expected to fully comply with the Code of Conduct for WHO Experts (<https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>). AG members will be expected to sign and return a completed confidentiality undertaking prior to the beginning of the first meeting.

At any point during the selection process, telephone interviews may be scheduled between an applicant and the WHO Secretariat to enable WHO to ask questions relating to the applicant's experience and expertise and/or to assess whether the applicant meets the criteria for membership in the AG.

The selection of members of the AGs will be made by WHO in its sole discretion, taking into account the following (non-exclusive) criteria: relevant technical expertise; experience in international and country policy work; communication skills; and ability to work constructively with people from different cultural backgrounds and orientations. The selection of AG members will also take account of the need for diverse perspectives from different regions, especially from low and middle-income countries, and for gender balance.

If designated by WHO during the second phase of SAGE membership selection, proposed members will be sent an invitation letter and a Memorandum of Agreement. Appointment as a member of an AG will be subject to the proposed member returning to WHO the countersigned copy of these two documents.

WHO reserves the right to accept or reject any expression of interest, to annul the open call process and reject all expressions of interest at any time without incurring any liability to the affected applicant or applicants and without any obligation to inform the affected applicant or applicants of the grounds for WHO's action. WHO may also decide, at any time, not to proceed with the establishment of the AG, disband an existing TAG or modify the work of the AG. WHO shall not in any way be obliged to reveal, or discuss with any applicant, how an expression of interest was assessed, or to provide any other information relating to the evaluation/selection process or to state the reasons for not choosing a member.

WHO may publish the names and a short biography of the selected individuals on the WHO internet.

AG members will not be remunerated for their services in relation to the AG or otherwise. Travel and accommodation expenses of AG members to participate in AG meetings will be covered by WHO in accordance with its applicable policies, rules and procedures.

The appointment will be limited in time as indicated in the letter of appointment- usually 3 years, renewable once.

If you have any questions about this “Call for experts”, please write to sageexecsec@who.int well before the applicable deadline.