Quality Maternal and Newborn Care (QMNC) Research Alliance
Organizational Structure
(2020-01-22)

Introduction

This document outlines the organizational structure of the Quality Maternal and Newborn Care (QMNC) Research Alliance ("the Alliance") as it launches collective action following the roadmap laid out in the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. A task group undertook analysis and comparison of options that undergirds the Alliance structure.

WHO WE ARE
We are an alliance of researchers, clinicians, consumers, advocates, service users, policymakers, and other interested colleagues working together to foster and support research to improve quality maternal and newborn care. The alliance developed out of the seminal work published in the 2014 *Lancet Series on Midwifery* and follow up identification of research priorities published in *Lancet Global Health and Birth* and *Birth*.

OUR VISION
We envision a world in which equitable and quality maternal and newborn care for all is advanced through the promotion, conduct, and translation of research underpins optimal QMNC and that examines the contribution and impact of midwifery.

OUR MISSION
To collaborate in global research that promotes, generates, and translates knowledge, particularly of the integral role of midwifery, in order for women, childbearing people, and all families to survive, thrive and transforms lives.

Criteria Used for Selecting an Organizational Structure

To assess the benefits of one structure versus another, the task group set criteria to guide that assessment. Those criteria are:

1. Is clear, with enough specificity to make evident to all how we work together and make decisions
2. Facilitates and encourages communication and collaboration among participating individuals and entities at the community, country, regional, and global levels
3. Supports conducting and promoting research that develops QMNC knowledge, creates social change, and changes practice
4. Has principles that draw members together, while allowing communities and countries to make context-specific decisions (a good balance of "glue" and "freedom")
5. Is nimble, not overly bureaucratic, flexible enough to respond to emerging opportunities
6. Supports the alliance's aims to be inclusive, aware, and respectful of diverse cultural contexts, and to think critically about issues of power inequities and matters such as representation, advocacy and use of inclusive, non-discriminatory language
7. Is lean, not too costly

Options/Models

Several options for the organizational structure were considered by the working group. These models' attributes were assessed against the above criteria, and a model developed that combined aspects of several that seemed most likely to support our organizational aims.

Organizational Structure

1. **Membership**

   a. **Eligibility for membership:** Application for membership shall be open to any individual, group, or formal organization that supports the vison and mission of the alliance. The Alliance seeks a diverse and dynamic membership for QMNC research collaboration. The Alliance Secretary screens applicants and affirms their eligibility. Groups or organizations that desire membership shall have a designated representative.
   b. **Membership fees:** The Steering Committee may choose to assess membership fees, but initially, no membership fees will be charged.
   c. **Membership benefits:** The Alliance will facilitate the following benefits to members:
      i. Increased access to information and expertise relative to the research priorities
      ii. Increased efficiency and effectiveness in work in support of the Alliance's purpose
      iii. Increased visibility of issues, best practices, and underrepresented groups
      iv. Increased reach and impact of research on the priorities
      v. Solidarity and support, reduced isolation
      vi. Increased credibility

   The Steering Committee has the authority to offer, change, or remove any of these membership benefits.
   d. **Membership resignation and termination:** Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with the Chair of the Alliance. Membership may be terminated by decision of the Steering Committee.

2. **Steering Committee**

   a. **Role:** The Alliance shall be managed by an Steering Committee**.**
   b. **Authority:** The Steering Committee shall have control of and be responsible for the management of the Alliance's affairs. Its specific authorities are spelled out in provisions below.
   c. **Composition:** The Steering Committee shall have no fewer than 8 and no greater than 14 members and the members shall represent geographic diversity and the Alliance's research priorities.
   d. **Terms of service:** Members of the Steering Committee may serve for a term of up to three years, and that term may be renewed once to a total of six consecutive years, after which the person must not serve on the Steering Committee for at least a full year.

3. **Meetings and Decision Making**

   a. **Regular meetings:** The Steering Committee shall meet on at least a quarterly basis. As financially feasible, the Steering Committee shall hold at least one meeting per year in person.
   b. **Decision making and minutes:** The Steering Committee shall make decisions in a duly called meeting, having given at least 48 hours' notice, with a quorum (50+1%) present. All decisions shall be put in written minutes and these minutes shall be shared with the Alliance membership.
   c. **Quorum:** A quorum for a Steering Committee meeting shall consist of a majority of Steering Committee members.
   d. **Membership meetings:** The Steering Committee may choose to call a meeting of the membership for any purpose in support of the Alliance's work. Through meetings and other mechanisms, the membership shall be consulted on the Alliance's strategic direction and other matters significant to the membership as a whole. The membership collectively holds no decision-making authority.

4. **Officers and Members of the Steering Committee**

   a. **Appointment and Terms:** On an annual basis, the Nominating Subcommittee shall propose names of persons to serve as Officers of the Steering Committee for those whose terms have expired. Nominations shall also be received from other Steering Committee members. The Officers shall be approved by the Steering Committee. Officers of the Steering Committee (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, treasurer) may serve for a term of up to three years, and that term may be renewed once to a total of six consecutive years, after which the person must not serve as an Officer of the Steering Committee for at least a full year. Efforts will be made to make appointments on a rotating basis to preserve history and experience of each subcommittee or working group.
   b. **Chair:** The chair shall preside at all meetings of the Steering Committee and the membership. The chair shall send meeting notices, set meeting agendas, ensure decisions are documented in official meeting minutes
   c. **Vice-Chair:** The vice-chair shall assume the duties of the chair upon the request of the chair and carry out other duties as may be assigned to that officer.
   d. **Secretary:** The secretary shall record the minutes of the meetings and make those minutes readily available to the membership. The secretary shall carry out other duties as may be assigned to that officer.
   e. **Treasurer:** The treasurer shall track and manage expenditures of the Alliance in collaboration with the Finance & Fundraising Committee.
   f. **Additional Members**: Leaders of subcommittees and working groups shall comprise the rest of the Steering Committee. They shall be appointed by the Officers of the Steering Committee.

5. **Subcommittees and Working Groups**

   a. **Nominating Subcommittee:** The Alliance shall have a **Nominating Subcommittee** composed of at least two Steering Committee members. Its charge is to bring forward nominees for Officer positions of the Steering Committee, including itself, on an annual basis. The Nominating Subcommittee is also responsible for nominating individuals to fill vacancies whenever they arise.
   b. **Finance** & **Fundraising Subcommittee:** This subcommittee is composed of the treasurer and other interested Alliance members. It is charged with developing financial procedures,

fundraising plans, fiscal responsibility, and the annual budget with staff and submitting for approval to the full Steering Committee. Financial policies and annual budgets shall be approved by the Steering Committee.

c. **Additional subcommittees:** The Steering Committee may establish additional subcommittees for organizational purposes. Subcommittees have the authority to make decisions within their charge. Other decisions shall be brought to the Steering Committee for consideration and approval.

d. **Working Groups**: The Steering Committee may establish working groups for the purposes of pursuing its work. It also has the authority to change the scope of or dissolve working groups. Working groups have the authority to make decisions within the scope of their charge. The initial working groups are:

    i. Research Priority #1 Midwifery & Other Care Models
    ii. Research Priority #2 Optimizing Childbearing Physiology
    iii. Research Priority #3 Measures & Benchmarks
    iv. Communications
    v. Equity and Inclusion
    vi. Expanding research
    vii. Research investment (will work in collaboration with Finance and Fundraising)
    viii. Maternity Service Users and Advocates

Initially, each working group will propose its charge for Steering Committee approval.

e. **Planning and reporting requirements:** Each subcommittee and working group will submit annual plans with brief quarterly reports to the Steering Committee for review and approval.

6. Staff, Volunteers, and Consultants

The Alliance is based at Yale University, which provides administrative leadership and staff support. The Alliance initially has 1 part-time administrative staff member. All others are volunteers.

Any hiring of staff or consultants requires the prior approval of the Steering Committee. Any increase to staff hours or consultant level of effort requires Steering Committee approval.

7. Country and Regional Collaborations

The Alliance may choose to establish country- or region-specific collaboration. The plan for any such initiative shall be reviewed by the membership and approved by the Steering Committee.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Members of the Steering Committee have a duty to disclose any actual or possible conflict of interest. A conflict of interest may arise when the Alliance is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of a member.

QMNC Research Alliance Quarterly Plan (these groups will be expanded once the alliance is formally launched)

Name of subcommittee or working group	Period for this plan (quarter)	Name of person submitting the report and date submitted
Priority #1 Midwifery & Other Care Models Leaders: A McFadden a.m.mcfadden@dundee.ac.uk Manju Chhugani manjuchhugani@gmail.com Members: A Symon a.g.symon@dundee.ac.uk J Sandall Jane.sandall@kcl.ac.uk		Name: Date:
Research Priority to investigate the impact of quality maternal and newborn care, and in particular the contribution of midwifery, on maternal, newborn, and related outcomes across diverse settings.		
Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•
Priority #2 Optimizing Physiologic Birth Leaders: S Downe SDowne@uclan.ac.uk HP Kennedy holly.kennedy@yale.edu Members: Y Shimpuku shimpuku.yoko.5n@kyoto-u.ac.jp		Name: Date:
Research Priority to identify and describe aspects of care that optimize or disturb physiology for all childbearing women and people, and their fetus/newborn/infant.		
Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•
Priority #3 Measures & Benchmarks Leaders: S Vedam saraswathi.vedam@ubc.ca C Homer caroline.homer@burnet.edu.au Members: E Declercq declercq@bu.edu Allison Cummins Allison.Cummins@uts.edu.au		Name: Date:
Research Priority to determine which indicators, measures, and benchmarks are most valuable in assessing quality maternal and newborn care across settings, including the views of those who bear children, and develop new ones to address identified gaps.		
Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities

Name of subcommittee or working group	Period for this plan (quarter)	Name of person submitting the report and date submitted
•	•	•
Research Capacity Building Leaders: HP Kennedy holly.kennedy@yale.edu M Cheyney Melissa.Cheyney@oregonstate.edu Members:		Name: Date:

Work Group to increase the commitment of organizations and funders to QMNC research, as demonstrated through enhanced investment in relevant research and capacity building.

Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•
Communication (includes Website) Leaders: J Stevens jencnm@gmail.com S Byrom sheenabyrom@mac.com Members: HP Kennedy holly.kennedy@yale.edu A McFadden a.m.mcfadden@dundee.ac.uk C Sakala csakala@nationalpartnership.org		Name: Date:

Work Group to establish and maintain a communication plan, including an online platform to serve those working on collective QMNC research aims and activities.

Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•
Equity & Inclusion Leaders: A Aiyepola doctorabigail@gmail.com T Kabakian-Khasholian tk00@aub.edu.lb Members: M Newburn marynewburn77@gmail.com M Renfrew m.renfrew@dundee.ac.uk		Name: Date:

Work group to apply an equity lens to all Alliance activities, both internally and externally, recognizing that appropriate language and representation will differ according to community and context.

Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•
Expanding Research Leaders: J Sandall jane.sandall@kcl.ac.uk H Zhai		Name: Date:

Name of subcommittee or working group	Period for this plan (quarter)	Name of person submitting the report and date submitted
helenjxzhai@gmail.com Members:		

Work group to catalyze the conduct, translation, and implementation of research that meets the needs and preferences of women, infants, and all families.

Last Quarter's Priorities	Accomplishments/Status	Next Quarter's Priorities
•	•	•

Special Interest Groups to facilitate sharing and information – reports not required

Maternity Service Users & Advocates Leaders: C Sakala csakala@nationalpartnership.org M Newburn marynewburn77@gmail.com		Name: Date:

Provides a place for Maternity Service Providers and Advocates can discuss topics related to their work.

QMNC Educators		Name: Date:

A forum for global educators to discuss strategies for implementing the QMNC Framework into their curriculum

QMNC Policymakers & Administrators		Name: Date:

A forum for global policymakers and to share information and strategies