



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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**2022/SOM1/HWG-LSIF/010**

Agenda Item: 12.1

## **Health Working Group Terms of Reference 2022-2025**

Purpose: Information  
Submitted by: APEC Secretariat



**Health Working Group and Life Sciences  
Innovation Forum Joint Meeting  
15 February 2022**

**Terms of Reference**  
**APEC Health Working Group (HWG)**  
**2022-2025**

**1. Mandate**

The mandate of the Health Working Group is to work together to improve people's health and well-being, aiming to promote trade, security, inclusive growth and development in the APEC region to support the implementation of the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, including through the implementation of the Aotearoa Plan of Action.

**2. Goal**

The goal of the Health Working Group is to reduce the impact of health-related threats to the economy, trade and security of member economies. The Health Working Group aims to strengthen health systems to increase their efficiency, responsiveness, resilience and partnership to achieve and maintain Universal Health Coverage.

**3. Objectives**

In line with the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 of building an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community, the Health Working Group will aim to ensure the health systems in the Asia-Pacific region are resilient to shocks, crises, pandemics and other health-related threats and emergencies. It will also foster quality growth that brings palpable benefits and greater health and well-being to all.

To achieve that objective, the Health Working Group will strive to:

- Enhance **preparedness, response and recovery systems** for public health emergencies and disasters, including prevention and control of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases;
- Strengthen **health systems** to support Universal Health Coverage, providing the whole population with access to safe, effective, quality, affordable, and sustainable primary health care as well as improve the resiliency, accessibility, sustainability, quality of health systems;
- Support **healthy populations across the life-course**, including the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, including mental health and healthy aging, and improved maternal, newborn and child health;
- Encourage and facilitate **collaboration** between health and other sectors within and outside APEC, including other international and regional organizations, as appropriate.

**4. Membership**

- Economies will designate their own members. Each economy would have at least one lead member from the health sector who can invite delegates from other relevant sectors as appropriate, especially for the discussion of cross-cutting issues, to enhance collaboration

between health and other relevant sectors. Participation of the delegates from non-government sectors will be guided by the APEC Guidelines on Managing Cooperation with Non-Members.

- According to the topics of the Health Working Group's discussion, each economy may wish to invite "advisors" to attend the Health Working Group's meeting and activities. This invitation and representation will be decided on a consensus basis by Health Working Groups members and will be in accordance with APEC Guidelines on this matter.
- The Health Working Group will invite as observers, representatives from relevant international organizations and other APEC fora, with linkages with the identified priorities of the Health Working Group to participate in its meetings and activities. This invitation and representation will be decided on a consensus basis by Health Working Group members and will be in accordance with APEC Guidelines on this matter.
- The Health Working Group will invite ASEAN counterparts to its meetings, as observers, as directed in the APEC-ASEAN Closer Cooperation Initiative Plan of Action (August 2007). Official ASEAN observership to APEC has already been granted.

## **5. Chairing and Internal Organization Arrangements**

The duties of the Chair and assistance of the APEC Secretariat will follow the Revised Guidelines for Lead Shepherd/Chair and Deputy Lead Shepherd/Chair of APEC Working Groups and SOM Taskforces (2012/SOM1/SCE-COW/004) Chairing responsibilities for the Health Work Group may be undertaken by a designated government representative from one economy. The Chair is supported by a Vice Chair from another economy different than the Chair. The Vice Chair is a designated government representative who supports the Chair by working closely with him/her and sharing delegated responsibilities, as well as deputize for the Chair in his/her absence.

- The Chair and the Vice Chair will be selected and endorsed by Health Working Group members by consensus, taking geographic and gender balance into account. Any exception will require the approval of Health Working Group members.
- The term of the Chair will be for two years. The Chair can seek one additional term, with a maximum of two consecutive two-year terms, upon endorsement of the Health Working Group members.
- The Vice Chair will also hold a two-year term, which may be staggered with the Chair's term to ensure some continuity of leadership for the Health Working Group. Any exception will require the approval of Health Working Group members by consensus.
- If the Chair or Vice Chair is unable to continue his/her duties, a new Chair or a Vice Chair will be selected, preferably from the same economy.
- Ad hoc non-decision-making working groups may be established if/as needed on specific objectives, subject to Health Working Group's discussion on additional resource requirements and consensus on the establishment and/or renewal. These ad hoc working groups will have a timeframe and Terms of Reference to achieve its objective. Each ad hoc working group will be led by one economy by consensus.

## **6. Meeting Arrangements**

- The Health Working Group meetings will take place twice a year and will be aligned with the Senior Officials Meetings to ensure maximum cross-sectoral collaboration with other APEC fora. The first meeting will help ensure that the Health Working Group is able to set a strategic focus for the year; and the second meeting will allow it to report on progress made to Ministers and Leaders. The first meeting of the Health Working Group 2022-2023 may include an extra day to focus on a discussion to see what and how to incorporate the workstreams of the Life Sciences Innovation Forum into the future of the Health Working Group.
- Other meetings may be held, based on needs, emergencies, or when issues cannot be solved via electronic communications. Such meetings can also be aligned with other meetings in the region and will be convened based on the consensus of all economies.
- To ensure the Health Working Group's discussions remain topical and responsive to shifts in the regional health landscape, host economies may wish to introduce a special theme of work for their host year complementing the ongoing objectives of the Health Working Group.

### **7. Reporting Requirements**

- The Health Working Group will report directly to the Steering Committee for ECOTECH and will report to Senior Officials on emerging health-related issues of significance, as appropriate, throughout the APEC year.

### **8. Communications and Outreach**

- Official letter or official E-Mail desirable.
- Use of website/s, e.g., APEC Secretariat website, APEC Information Management Portal and Health Working Group website.
- The Health Working Group will work closely with the APEC Secretariat to develop communications materials and/or develop modalities of communication in order to share and disseminate key learnings from the Health Working Group with other organizations or other interested parties.

### **9. Modalities for Cooperation**

- The Health Working Group will operate on the principles of voluntarism, consensus-building and open dialogue.
- Activities would be determined based on a primary goal of improving people's health and welfare, which will eventually contribute to the growth, economic development and security of APEC region. These activities will be in a workplan, agreed to annually, to ensure that the group remains focused and outcome-oriented.

### **10. Collaboration with Other APEC Fora and Relevant International Organizations**

- The Health Working Group will work closely with other APEC fora to develop linkages and a better understanding of the health impacts on other economic sectors.
- The Health Working Group will work with the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy to support the implementation of the La Serena Roadmap, in order to address health-related

- barriers specific to women in the workforce, business, and entrepreneurship, by improving workplace protections, health and safety, as well as increasing health access and awareness
- The Health Working Group will work with Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG) on health emergency issues to ensure health security and mitigate related threats to trade, growth in the APEC region.
  - The Health Working Group will work with any relevant APEC fora to address the health issues of vulnerable and at-risk populations to support their economic participation and enhance their role in the region's economic growth.
  - The Health Working Group will work closely and collaboratively with any relevant APEC fora in recognition of the need address the social determinants of health, including the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes and support human capital development.
  - The Health Working Group will work closely and collaboratively and deepen engagement with relevant international and regional organizations, to ensure better regional planning; sharing of information and lessons learned and ensure non-duplication of efforts.

#### **11. Health Working Group Projects**

- The priority, management and evaluation of projects will be considered by the Health Working Group against Leaders and Ministers directives, and the projects adherence to APEC guidelines and procedures, in line with the HWG Concept Note Operating Protocols, endorsed in 2019.
- To ensure complementarities and to avoid duplication with projects undertaken by the other relevant APEC fora, project proposals will be made available to those fora by the Chair.
- The Health Working Group members, will assess project proposals to ensure appropriate quality control for those proposals submitted for consideration by SCE as per the current APEC guidelines and HWG Concept Note Operating Protocols. Self-funded projects and activities of individual economies that meet the directives and guidelines above are encouraged.

#### **12. Ministerial Meetings**

- The Health Working Group will follow the APEC guidelines on Ministerial meetings.
- The decision to hold a Ministerial Meeting will be based on a recommendation from the Health Working Group that an emerging or ongoing health issue demands Ministerial attention or will help advance strategic interests. The convening of Ministerial meetings is not obligatory.
- The Health Working Group will follow the SCE recommendation and Senior Officials' approval that the Ministerial meetings are well thought out in terms of available resources, format and substance of discussion, and planned well in advance to maximise Ministerial participation and substantive outcomes.

#### **13. Workstreams**

- The Health Working Group will discuss in detail, with a thorough exchange of views among member economies, the possibility of inclusion of relevant workstreams which are currently under the Life Sciences Innovation Forum before sunset of the LSIF (March 2022).

**14. Review Clause**

- The Terms of Reference will be an evergreen document, reviewed as required, ahead of the any SCE meeting. Any changes will be submitted to the SCE for approval.

**15. Sunset Clause**

- The Health Working Group has a term of four years, starting from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2025. Prior to the expiration of this and any subsequent term, the mandate of Health Working Group and its Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation, and a recommendation on renewal shall be put to Senior Officials for approval. The Health Working Group will cease to exist upon the expiration of this Terms of Reference unless renewal is explicitly approved by Senior Officials.

**16. Quorum**

- Quorum for Health Working Group meetings constitutes attendees from 14 economies. Decisions can be made if quorum and consensus are reached. If the quorum is not reached, the meeting may continue, but decisions must be put to the full membership for consideration.
- Should the Health Working Group fail to meet quorum for one meeting, the Health Working Group must notify the SCE. Should the Health Working Group fail to meet quorum for two consecutive meetings it shall be referred to Senior Officials for a decision on whether it should continue to exist.

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