**Strategic Review response:**

**CCSG Issues – membership and committees**

**Document prepared by:** Nick Royle, CEO, The Cochrane Collaboration

**Submitted to Steering Group:** 22 February 2010

**Purpose**

This paper is a response to the Strategic review, and follows on from the interim paper on CCSG issues presented to the CCSG in Singapore 2009. It provides options for changing the CCSG membership, and for a revised committee structure.

The paper does not go into background and rationale for the various proposals where these have been provided previously (through Alessandro Liberati’s 2005-06 review of the Steering Group, through Jeremy Grimshaw’s 2007-08 review of the Collaboration, and in the paper on this subject submitted to the Singapore 2009 CCSG meeting).

**Urgency** Low

**Access** Open

**Proposals and discussion**

**Options for changing the CCSG membership structure**

Alessandro Liberati’s 2005-06 Steering Group review, and Jeremy Grimshaw’s 2007-08 review of the Collaboration, appear to suggest that a majority of people are broadly content with the CCSG’s current representative structure, but that there is some appetite both amongst the Collaboration, and amongst CCSG members, to make sensible changes. There was some enthusiasm expressed by CCSG members for taking on an oversight role for specific portfolios of work. There seems to be little appetite at this time to move to a fully elected functional model.

This paper therefore makes two recommendations regarding CCSG membership:

* Recommendation 1: To focus and clarify the roles, by reducing the number of seats on the CCSG, particularly reducing the number of duplicate seats; and
* Recommendation 2: To further focus and clarify the roles, and improve alignment with the Collaboration’s purposes, by identifying members’ ‘portfolios’ (as already being piloted). The portfolio system identifies specific CCSG members to have oversight of the following areas:
  + Organisation and Administration
  + Finance and Sustainability
  + Products
  + External Partnerships
  + Knowledge Infrastructure

These are further described in Annex A, but the intention is to both streamline CCSG business by increasing accountability, and to improve communication by identifying to those outside the CCSG whom to contact about specific issues.

For recommendation 1, three options are presented for changing the current representation: two options for gradual change, and the third, more radical suggestion that provides the possibility of other more radical – but potentially beneficial – changes. The changes are summarised in Table 1.

Options 1 and 2 could be described as reflecting the shift, since the Collaboration was founded, from a range of entities with primarily geographical responsibilities, to a predominance of editorial groups (principally CRGs).

Option 1: slight change

This option sees a reduction in the number of Centre representatives from four to two. It maintains the relatively recent addition of two named CRG posts (ME and TSC representatives) but sees the loss of the imperfectly understood CRG ‘At Large’ positions. The overall change to CCSG numbers is a fall from 17 to 13.

* Option 1 risks and benefits:
  + - * Centre representatives tend to be in paid positions undertaking Cochrane work. The risk is that reducing the number of Centre representatives potentially reduces the pool of available people to take forward CCSG decisions.
      * A reduction in Centre numbers risks reducing opportunities for geographic and linguistic representation, as Centres tend to be more representative of these issues than CRGs.
      * Thirteen is still a large group for effective decision making.
      * Thirteen provides many hands to share the work.

Option 2: ‘slight change plus’

This option is similar to the first, but in addition sees the reduction of a further Centre representative, and the loss of one of the two Consumer representatives. A further change could see the loss of the TSC position, now that this role is being given an operational locus within the Cochrane Editorial Unit. The overall change to CCSG numbers is a reduction to 10 or 9.

* Option 2 risks and benefits:
* Further reducing the number of Centre representatives risks further reducing the pool of available people. It also potentially restricts our options for improving regional and linguistic representation.
* Centres represent diverse populations and regions, with wide-ranging priorities that benefit from a diversity of perspectives.
* Given the current significant investment in studies registers, losing the TSC position may be a premature move.
* Consideration of the second consumer position should await the strategic discussion in Auckland.
* The proposed number of members is a more manageable number for effective group dynamics.

Option 3: Radical option

Under the radical option, the size of the Steering Group is reduced to just seven positions. By doing this, a range of further advantageous options become possible:

* Option 3 risks and benefits:
* The size of the group makes it feasible to conduct business by teleconference …
* … but how practical are teleconferences regarding work/life balance and time zone issues with such a diverse international group?
* Removing the requirement for major items of business to wait until face-to-face Steering Group meetings enables them to be dealt with more frequently.
* Having Steering Group meetings more frequently gives the Collaboration greater flexibility, makes it more nimble, and should enable projects to be taken forward more quickly than previously possible.
* The need for additional committees such as the proposed Business and Finance Committee is largely removed, as teleconference meetings will, de facto, be a meeting of the full Steering Group.
* Dealing with Collaboration business on a more frequent basis takes the pressure out of the current biennial meetings, reduces the administrative burden imposed by deadlines, and frees up the time taken by the mid-year meeting for other purposes.
* When a few years ago it was decided to have two Co-chairs, this reflected the increased workload of having to chair both Executive and PPG meetings, with an ever increasing agenda. Since then, most of the PPG agenda has been subsumed by the Editor in Chief’s office, and an increasing amount can be handled by the Secretariat. The load on the Co-Chairs is therefore much less than previously, particularly if the PPG is disbanded, and therefore it may be time to reconsider the need for two Co-Chairs. Most organisations seem to manage with a single Chair.

There are however several risks:

* Given the pace of change elsewhere in the Collaboration, this may be too fast a move at the current time.
* A compact Steering Group risks concentrating ‘power’ in a small number of hands, and could reduce the number of opinions aired.
* An increased CCSG workload would descend on individual members.
* It would be important to get the right alignment between members and portfolios.
* Maintaining the right governance balance between elected and ex-officio positions would have to be considered.

What could replace the mid-year meeting? This paper proposes that, building on the concept of the Strategic Sessions run for the last few years, the current mid-year meeting be changed into an annual Cochrane Leadership Summit, where leaders from across the Collaboration can come together to discuss matters of import and arrive at consensus-driven solutions. It is suggested that the summit draw its attendees from the entity Executives. There financial, opportunity and environmental costs to such a proposal, but resources have already been identified to allow Executives to attend mid-year strategic sessions. As such, the proposal is likely to be cost-neutral.

Alternatively, and conscious of our desire to be environmentally sustainable, the mid-year meeting could be cancelled altogether.

For recommendation 2 a portfolio system is already being piloted, as described in Annex A.

**Table 1: Future options for CCSG membership**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current structure** | **Current incumbent** | **Current term** | **Future role** | **Future role** | **Future role** |
|  |  |  | (Option 1) | (Option 2) | (Option 3) |
| Co-Chair | Jonathan Craig | December 2011 | Co-Chair | Co-Chair | Co-Chair |
| Co-Chair | Lorne Becker | December 2010 | Co-Chair | Co-Chair |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Centre | Lisa Bero | October 2010 | Centre | Centre Director | Centre Director |
| Centre | Rob Scholten | October 2010 | Centre |  |  |
| Centre | Steve McDonald | October 2011 |  |  |  |
| Centre Staff | Mary Ellen Schaafsma | October 2012 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consumer Network | Liz Whamond | October 2010 | Consumer Network | Consumer Network | Consumer Network |
| Consumer Network | Mingming Zhang | October 2012 | Consumer Network |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CRG ‘at large’ | Hans van der Wouden | October 2011 |  |  |  |
| CRG ‘at large’ | Zbys Fedorowicz | October 2010 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CRG Author | Donna Gillies | October 2011 | CRG Author | CRG Author |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CRG Co-ordinating Editor | Roger Soll | October 2011 | CRG Co-ordinating Editor | CRG Co-ordinating Editor | CRG Co-ordinating Editor |
| CRG Co-ordinating Editor | Sophie Hill | October 2012 | CRG Co-ordinating Editor |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CRG Managing Editor | Sonja Henderson | October 2011 | CRG Managing Editor | CRG Managing Editor | CRG Managing Editor |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Field | Katrina Williams | October 2010 | Field | Field | Field |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Methods Group | Julian Higgins | October 2011 | Methods Group | Methods Group | Methods Group |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Trials Search Co-ordinator | Gail Higgins | October 2012 | Trials Search Co-ordinator | Trials Search Co-ordinator\* |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Number = 17** |  |  | **13** | **10/9\*** | **7** |

\* Optional change: Remove Trials Search Co-ordinator position

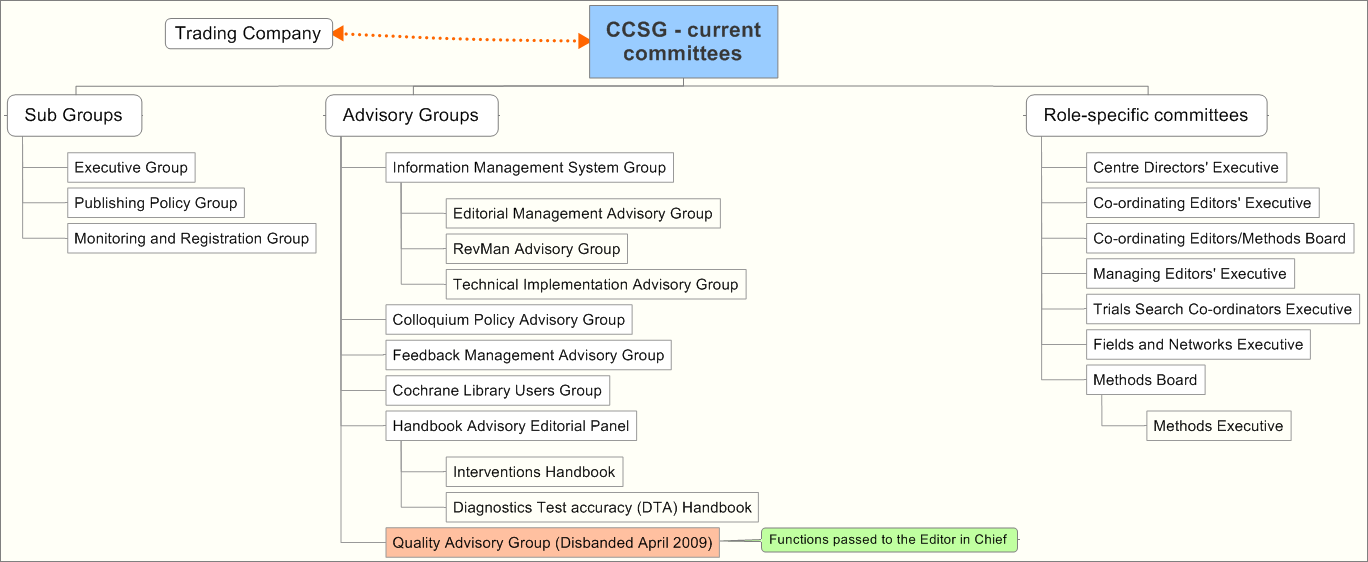
Note: Ex-officio posts (CEO, EiC, Company Secretary) and attendees (Project Support and Communications Officer) remain unchanged

**Options for changing the CCSG committee structure**

The CCSG’s current Sub- and Advisory Groups are mapped in Diagram 1. This structure has lasted for some time, but now needs to change to reflect recent organisational changes. The main change has been the establishment of the role and office of Editor in Chief, which has subsumed most of the former role of the Publishing Policy Group (PPG).

One aspect of ‘the way we do things’ noted by the review was that within the Collaboration we sometimes use terminology that, whilst familiar to ‘insiders’, can make us seem exclusive and ‘clubby’ to outsiders. An example of this is the use of the word ‘group’ where ‘committee’ is more commonly understood, and therefore:

* Recommendation 3: that the Collaboration use the word ‘committee’ to describe its committees, rather than the word ‘group’.



**Diagram 1: Current CCSG committee structure**

The following changes are proposed (changes mapped in Diagram 2, new structure in Diagram 3):

* Recommendation 4. In order to better describe what it does, and to avoid confusion with the plethora of additional ‘executives’ now operating, that the Executive Group be renamed the Operations and Finance Committee (OFC), and be responsible for all organisational policy-level decision making between Steering Group meetings. Its remit remains much as the Executive Group, with the addition of residual PPG policy decisions that cannot be made by the Editor in Chief.
* Recommendation 5. That the PPG be disbanded, now that the majority of its functions have been taken on by the Editor in Chief.
* Recommendation 6. That the Cochrane Library Users Group (CLUG) be retained, but as a discussion forum that can inform the Cochrane Editorial Unit, rather than as an advisory committee to the Steering Group.
* Recommendation 7. That the functions of the Feedback Management Advisory Group (FMAG) be subsumed by the Cochrane Editorial Unit, and that FMAG be disbanded.
* Recommendation 8. That the Monitoring and Registration Group be retained as the Monitoring and Registration Committee (MRC), that the Colloquium Policy Advisory Group be retained as the Colloquium Policy Advisory Committee (COAC), and that both Committees report to the BFC. (A separate paper from the Co-Convenors of the MRG on its future role and structure will be considered at the Auckland meeting.)
* Recommendation 9. The Strategic Review identified a number of thematic areas that need to be better co-ordinated in future, and it is proposed that a flexible committee structure operate, with committees formed as and when required, to handle these needs. These committees should report to the BFC, and may include advocacy, capacity building, and partnerships.

Because of legal restraints, the charity may not indulge in commercial activities that are not core to our charitable purpose, and/or which might constitute a financial risk. Such activities are one of the reasons for having a Trading Company (other key reasons are to do with taxation issues). However, this means that it would be inappropriate for the Collaboration to have a ‘commercial activities’ committee, and consideration of the management and governance arrangements for these activities (which might include paid-for services such as review production, educational products, etc.) needs to take place in the context of discussions about the future of the Trading Company.

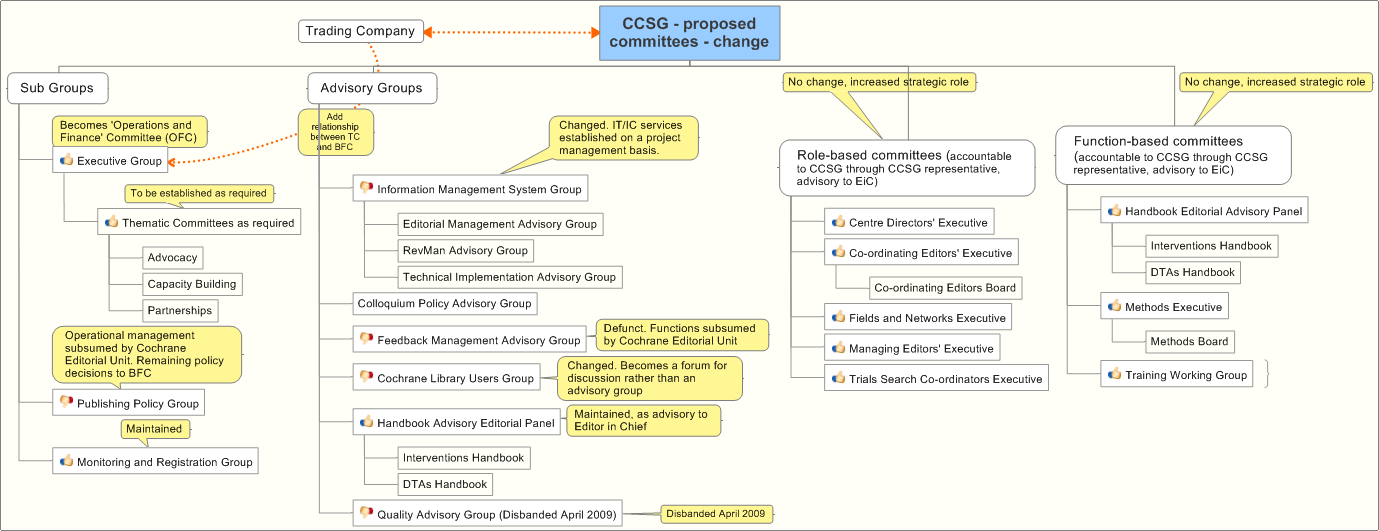
There are currently a number of committees (IMS Group and sub-committees) for Information Systems and Technology (IS/IT) and Software. These have coalesced into a rigid committee structure reflecting our needs over the years, but have been criticised as being too focussed on a single system (the IMS) and not sufficiently focussed on other systems (studies registers, website, other software needs, etc.) and the development of new requirements.

* Recommendation 10. That a more flexible committee structure be established for IS/IT projects based on project management principles, with a high level Information Systems Project Board (ISPB) chaired by the Editor in Chief as Client. The ISPB should take as its role the development of high-level IS/IT requirements for the production and display of Cochrane systematic reviews and related products, and oversight of the delivery of solutions to these requirements. (An example of a functioning Project Board/Advisory Board structure is given in Lucie Jones’ progress paper on the Cochrane Register of Studies project.)
* Recommendation 11. At the next level there should be an Information Systems Advisory Board (ISAB), with wide stakeholder representation. The exact composition of these committees (ISPB and ISAB), and the subdivision of the ISAB into project-specific committees such as the RevMan Advisory Group (RAG) and Editorial Management Advisory Group (EMAG) as required, should be a matter for the Editor in Chief, in discussion with the Project and Advisory Boards, and the key themes should be appropriateness and flexibility.

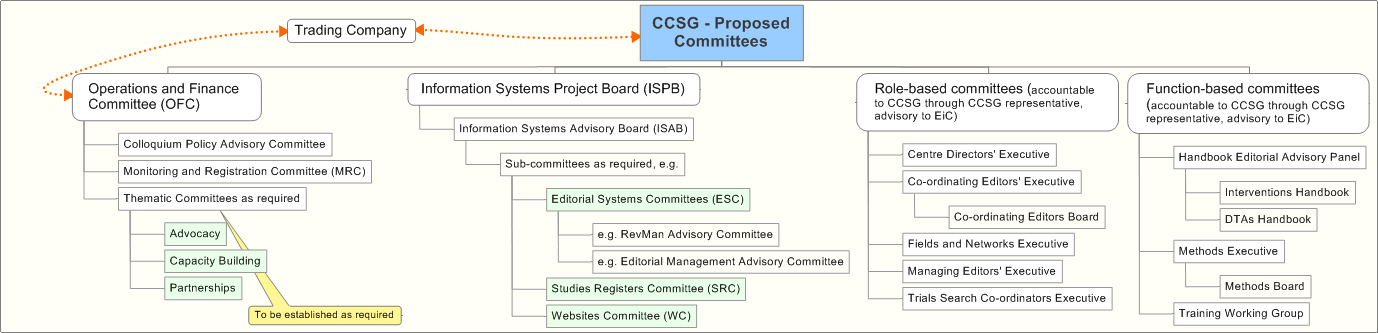
In organising the ISPB and ISAB and necessary sub committees, the EiC should also consider the financial and environmental costs of having these as face-to-face meetings.

The advent of role-specific ‘executives’ is a very positive development. Currently, there is an unwritten expectation that they will communicate to the CCSG through their CCSG member, but this has not been formally adopted. Therefore:

* Recommendation 12 proposes that the executives and related committees (see Diagram 3) be formally established in their relationship to the CCSG as advisory through their CCSG representatives, with Executives related to publishing and editorial processes having a second but more practical role as advisory to the Editor in Chief.

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**Diagram 2: Proposed changes to CCSG committee structure**

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**Diagram 3: Proposed new committee structure.**

**Summary of recommendations**

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**Resource implications**

CCSG membership - Option 1: Reduction of 4/17 of normal cost of travel and subsistence for CCSG members attending Mid-year and Colloquium meetings.

CCSG membership - Option 2: Reduction of up to 8/17 of normal travel and subsistence cost.

CCSG membership - Option 3: Reduction of 10/17 of normal travel and subsistence cost. Removal of the need for a mid-year meeting has the potential to reduce costs further, but replacing this with a Cochrane Leadership Summit will bring the costs up again. As funding has already been identified to support Executives in attending the annual Strategic Session, the actual cost increase of having such a session may be less than anticipated, particularly if an income generating seminar or conference is held (as is common with current mid-year meetings).

**Impact statement** see ICT form.

**Decision required of the Steering Group**

The Steering Group is asked to consider these recommendations carefully, and decide whether to adopt them, as-is or after further discussion.

Nick Royle

CEO, The Cochrane Collaboration

Oxford, UK, 17 Feb 2010

**Annex A. Functional portfolios**

Functional portfolios. The following portfolios have been identified, and are described using a taxonomy based on that developed by the Strategic Review, with portfolios further subdivided as follows:

* Organisation and administration.
  + Administration of the Charity, Limited Company and Trading Company
  + Organisational development, including:
    - Registration of new, and deregistration of end-of-life, entities
    - Monitoring and continuous improvement of existing entities
    - Organisational improvement (developing more efficient and effective structures)
  + Recognition and reward programs (e.g. complementary subscriptions, sponsored Colloquium registrations, prizes, funding awards, etc.)
  + Colloquium organisation
* Finance and sustainability. (Q. Should this be integrated into ‘Organisation and administration?)
  + Financial management and reporting (the role of the Treasurer)
  + Funding (maintaining current and raising future)
* Products.
  + *The Cochrane Library*
    - Including preparation and presentation of Cochrane Systematic Reviews
  + Products developed as products of The Cochrane Collaboration
  + Commercial products and partnerships (note that for legal reasons this portfolio may be the responsibility of the Trading Company)
  + Products developed by entities and individuals of the Collaboration, for which the Collaboration has no direct responsibility
* External partnerships.
  + Marketing and communication
  + Advocacy (geographic and thematic)
  + Partnership activities

* Knowledge infrastructure.
  + Methods development
  + Training and capacity development

**People**. The following have been identified to cover the portfolios described.

* Organisation and administration: Hans, Katrina
* Finance and sustainability: Donna, Zbys
* Products: Gail, Roger, Sonja
* External partnerships: Lisa, Liz, Mary Ellen, Mingming
* Knowledge infrastructure: Julian, Rob, Sophie, Steve