GC ADDA EXCOM
Terms of Reference (TOR)

Background:

Grand Challenges African Drug Discovery Accelerator (GC ADDA) is a network of drug discovery researchers. The network originated through two Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) funding calls administered through Grand Challenges Africa: 8 mini-grants were awarded in 2019 and a further 8 mini-grants were awarded in 2021. In 2022/3 the programme managers agreed to put out a call for "Grand Challenges African Drug Discovery Accelerator" flagship projects and LifeArc came on board as a co-funder. In 2023, four 3-year grants and one 5-year grant, collectively valued at $7.2 million were awarded:

1. Discovery of novel antimalarial lead candidates in Africa (PI Dr Richard Amewu, University of Ghana, Ghana, and Co-PI Prof Lyn-Marie Birkholtz, University of Pretoria, South Africa);
2. Pursuing Targeted Protein Degradation as a New Strategy for Antituberculosis Drug Development (PI Prof Erick Strauss, Stellenbosch University, South Africa);
3. African DMPK Research Network (PI Prof Collen Masimirembwa, African Institute for Biomedical Research, Zimbabwe);
4. Building a Natural Product Library (PI Prof Fidele Ntie-Kang, University of Buea, Cameroon) (5-year grant);
5. Supporting the Grand Challenges African Drug Discovery Accelerator (GC ADDA) (PI Dr Susan Winks, H3D Foundation, South Africa).

GC ADDA is a network of drug discovery researchers with a dual strategy: identify and support promising research that advances the global health agenda while supporting a virtual network of drug discovery researchers in Africa, anchored around a glue institution (H3D), connected to each other and linked to regional and global drug discovery ecosystems.

GC ADDA is not a formal legal entity. H3D Foundation is responsible for the administration and formal establishment of the GC ADDA network and for overseeing the network activities. This includes the responsibility for establishing and managing the GC ADDA governing body. As funders and grant managers, BMGF and LifeArc will play an active role in guiding and advising on the development of the network and its activities.

GC ADDA is a new network and requires a functional governance structure that can adapt to its evolution. A key element for the network is transparency and trust, and the governance principles should be collectively developed by the members.

During the March 2024 network workshop in Nairobi, the attendees agreed to establish three different bodies to assist with the smooth operations of the network: an Operational Leadership Team (OLT) to represent the needs of the members, an EXCOM to represent the strategic group that conceptualized the network and provided the seed funding, and an Advisory Board to offer guidance and expert insight to support the long term sustainability of GC ADDA. To prevent conflict of interest, there should be no overlap in membership of EXCOM and membership of the Advisory Board. However, members from the OLT, EXCOM and Advisory Board may be invited to serve on the technical/scientific advisory boards of the various GC ADDA projects.

Purpose of GC ADDA EXCOM:

Historically, EXCOM managed the funding call for the GCA mini-grants and the GC ADDA flagship projects. The main purpose of the new GC ADDA EXCOM is to represent the strategic group that conceptualized the network and provided the seed funding. The EXCOM will oversee the GC ADDA flagship grants, and work with OLT to develop the long-term strategy, champion the network and attract additional investment to grow the network.

Committee structure:

EXCOM will have a standing meeting biannually, with ad hoc meetings scheduled to address any urgent matters. Certain items may be discussed and approved via email. These will be noted in the minutes of the next meeting.

Members of EXCOM will attend the in-person GC ADDA annual convening meetings and support and advise the OLT in terms of planning, management, scope and direction.

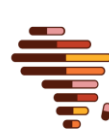The chair will be voted in at the first meeting (August 2024).

EXCOM secretariat duties will be fulfilled by the H3D Foundation Programme Coordinator (currently Nicola Elliott-Wong). The EXCOM secretary is responsible for scheduling the EXCOM meetings, drafting and circulating the agenda and any documents for review 1 week ahead of the meeting and for circulating minutes from the meeting within 1 week. The secretary will maintain a shared folder with all EXCOM documents.

A quorum of at least 60% of members, including the EXCOM chair, is required for a meeting to go ahead.

Mandate, goals and scope:

EXCOM's role is to support the establishment of the GC ADDA network by providing strategic oversight and guidance to the OLT and the GC ADDA network. EXCOM will

- work with OLT to develop the long-term strategy for GC ADDA;
- review and offer advice on plans, programmes, official documents, policies and any further topics raised by the OLT;
- assist the OLT with identifying suitable Advisory Board members;

- advise and give input on the agenda of the GC ADDA annual convening meetings;
- assist in raising the profile of GC ADDA;
- provide financial oversight of the GC ADDA flagship projects and monitor and evaluate progress against the project objectives;
- be responsible for the conceptualization of the next RFP for GC ADDA.

Relationship to other structures/committees

H3D Foundation

H3D Foundation will fulfil the administration and secretariat duties for the GC ADDA network, including managing meetings and communication between the various parties.

GC ADDA OLT

The OLT will be responsible for reviewing, approving, and monitoring policies and activities of the GC ADDA network. The OLT will collectively develop a sustainability plan and work to secure further funding for the network. The OLT will seek guidance and strategic advice from EXCOM, and from the GC ADDA Advisory Board.

GC ADDA Advisory Board

The GC ADDA Advisory Board will be constituted in 2024. The Advisory Board will include leaders in funding, policy development, the pharmaceutical industry and/or academic spheres related to drug discovery and development. The role of the Advisory Board is to bring in wider, global perspectives, connections to industry, government, policy makers and funders; to provide advice and expertise for growing the network, for helping the network to become self-sustaining, to facilitate introductions to relevant stakeholder groups and to support the OLT to maximize the impact of the network. The Advisory Board will also serve as champions of GC ADDA and raise the profile of the network.

EXCOM will be invited to nominate members for the Advisory Board. EXCOM will be invited to attend annual Advisory Board meetings. All formal reports from the Advisory Board will be shared with EXCOM.

Membership

The current Members of EXCOM are representatives from the strategic group that conceptualized the network and provided the seed funding. To support the smooth and meaningful operation of EXCOM, a fixed number of members may be considered in future.

These terms will be reviewed annually.

Current members (6):

> BMGF: Peter Warner, Kedest Tesfagiorgis
>
> LifeArc: Julie Brady, Clive Mason
>
> H3D/ H3D Foundation: Susan Winks, Kelly Chibale