

Polio Oversight Board (POB)

Terms of Reference

Updated March 2026

Purpose

The Polio Oversight Board (POB) is the highest decision-making body in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). It brings together senior leadership of the six GPEI partner agencies—the Gates Foundation (GF), U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Gavi, Rotary International, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO)—a member representing each donor contributing an average of U.S. \$100 million or more annually, along with a representative of the GPEI’s broader donor community. The POB exists to:

1. Set the strategic direction of the partnership;
2. Approve the allocation of adequate resources to execute the strategy;
3. Provide strategic and programmatic oversight, ensuring high-level accountability across the GPEI partnership; and
4. Use its voice and authority to support GPEI success internally and externally.

Responsibilities

By virtue of these Terms of Reference, the POB is empowered and expected to do the following:

- 1. To set the strategic direction of the partnership, the POB shall:**
 - Provide guidance for the partnership on key issues, challenging the program to be bolder or more innovative where helpful in accelerating progress toward polio eradication;
 - Ensure that all relevant stakeholder perspectives are appropriately addressed and factored into GPEI decision-making; and
 - Resolve strategic and operational conflicts under the exceptional circumstances that they cannot be adequately addressed by the Strategy Committee (SC).
- 2. To approve the allocation of adequate resources to execute the strategy, the POB shall:**
 - Question overall GPEI budget envelopes and estimates of financial resource requirements and approve budgets when satisfied that they are appropriate.
- 3. To provide strategic and programmatic oversight and ensure high-level accountability across the GPEI partnership, the POB shall:**
 - Hold the SC accountable for overseeing successful execution of the GPEI strategy;
 - Ensure that financial and organizational resources are adequately, efficiently, and transparently deployed to achieve and sustain polio eradication;
 - Assess programmatic progress based on regular and consistent reporting mechanisms that are managed and coordinated by the SC;
 - Ensure that each POB Member’s respective agency is held accountable for its performance in executing its portion of the GPEI strategy; and
 - Ensure that the partnership is appropriately identifying programmatic, financial, political, and reputational risks and developing proactive mitigation plans.

- Ensure that performance reporting includes clear metrics, timelines, and accountability by agency and country, with agreed upon corrective actions.
- The POB shall ensure that government leadership in endemic and outbreak countries are driving decision-making and execution of national polio programs, with partners fully aligned.

4. In using its voice and authority to support GPEI success, the POB shall:

- Advocate for (and where possible, enforce) change management efforts within partner agencies to achieve and preserve institutional commitment to the partnership;
- Ensure internal institutional barriers to effective implementation of the polio eradication strategy are removed; required resources are provided; and systems are streamlined such that the GPEI strategy can be optimally executed;
- Engage in external advocacy with donors, governments, and other stakeholders whose support is essential to the success of polio eradication activities;
- Discuss and resolve inter-agency barriers to partnership success when they arise; and
- As appropriate and necessary, resolve agency-specific staff performance issues that significantly hinder eradication progress.

Composition & Secretariat

The POB will consist of seven (7) or more Members representing the six (6) partner agencies, one (1) donor representing the broader donor community, and members representing each donor contributing on average U.S. \$100 million or more annually. Recommended membership is as follows:

- **Gates Foundation:** President of Global Development
- **Gavi:** Chief Executive Officer
- **Rotary International:** Chair, International PolioPlus Committee
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control:** Director
- **UNICEF:** Executive Director
- **World Health Organization:** Director-General
- **Donor Community Seat:** Rotating
- **Donor Seat(s) for any donor contributing on average U.S. \$100 million or more annually.**

Donor Representative Selection

The donor community seat shall be filled by a representative selected by the donor community, provided the following:

- The donor representative must possess the stature, knowledge, and authority to allow effective engagement with partner agency heads as peers.
- The donor representative must commit to full participation in POB meetings for the duration of their term and may designate an alternate representative, with appropriate authority and context, to attend meetings on their behalf when necessary.
- The U.S. Government is not permitted to hold the donor seat as its interests are already represented on the POB by the CDC.

The donor representative shall serve a twelve (12) month term, renewable or rotating without restriction at the discretion of the broader donor community.

In October 2024, the POB took the decision to grant a board seat to any donor contributing an average of U.S. \$100 million or more annually over the duration of a signed agreement to the GPEI.

- Non-founding donor members would need to have a signed agreement committing an average of U.S. \$100 million or more per year over the duration of the agreement.
- If the commitment falls below this level, the donor would no longer retain a dedicated seat on the board and would continue to work through the donor community seat.
The board member nominated must possess the stature, knowledge, and authority to allow effective engagement, and commit to full participation in POB meetings for the duration of their term. This does not alter the status of existing member representation on the POB.

Chair Selection and Role

- The POB shall be chaired by a representative of one of the six partner agencies. The Chair will be selected by a majority vote of POB Members.
- The Chair's term will run for twenty-four (24) months and can be renewed by decision of the POB Members. To maintain impartiality, turnover is encouraged, and additional terms will require formal review by the POB.
- The Chair, working in collaboration with the POB Secretariat, shall be responsible for POB meeting agendas and presiding over meetings, ensuring discussions remain focused on strategic priorities.
- The Chair provides overall leadership to the POB, facilitates alignment across Members, promotes transparency and accountability, and supports appropriate follow-up on Board decisions to ensure that the Board fulfills its strategic oversight responsibilities effectively.
- The Chair may represent the POB in high-level external engagements and communications, consistent with Board decisions and positions.
- The Chair may convene ad hoc discussions between meetings as needed to address emerging issues.

Secretariat Selection and Role

- The POB Secretariat shall follow the POB Chair agency, but another agency or mechanism can be used to provide support to the Chair and board if capacity is not available within the Chair agency. This function will need to be organized and agreed to prior to the start of the Chair term to ensure appropriate capacity is available. One individual shall be designated as the primary point of contact for the Secretariat.
- The POB Secretariat shall work in collaboration with the SC, FAC, and Executive Management Unit (EMU) to compile the agenda.
- The POB Secretariat shall be responsible for distributing any required meeting materials to POB Members and any other meeting participants no fewer than fourteen (14) calendar days in advance of each meeting.
- The POB Secretariat shall also document and circulate meeting minutes to both the POB and SC for approval following the meeting. Approved minutes will be posted to the GPEI website for public review.

Accountability

Reporting

As the most senior body within the partnership, the POB as a group does not report to any other structure. However, while recognizing that POB Members are directly accountable to their individual partner agencies, Members affirm that they will operate within their authority to ensure the success of the partnership and enable their agency staff to do the same.

Decision-Making

- Each POB Member shall have one vote. That vote may be exercised by either the POB Member, or by someone the Member specifically identifies as their designee.
- Quorum shall be defined as the presence of at least the total number of POB Members, minus three. No votes may be taken in the absence of a quorum.
- POB decisions shall be considered final with the affirmative vote of at least five (5) POB Members.
- POB Members shall disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest related to decisions under consideration.

Rhythm of Business

Meeting Scheduling

- POB meetings shall be held at least four (4) times per year, on a schedule to be determined by the Chair (in collaboration with the POB Secretariat).
- Meetings will be set with a minimum of three (3) weeks' notice, and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that scheduling is amenable to all POB Members.

Meeting Participation

- POB Members and the POB Secretariat are expected to attend all POB meetings. If a POB Member is unable to attend, the Member should communicate their absence in advance and provide the name and contact information of a designated replacement representative.
- Additional participation in POB meetings is by invitation only. A standing invitation exists for the following groups, but the POB may decide to revoke that invitation for any meeting:
 - SC Members
 - WHO and UNICEF Regional Directors
 - GPEI donors
 - Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB)
- To inform its deliberations, the POB shall incorporate participation from representatives of polio-endemic and high-risk country contexts, as appropriate. At least two POB meetings per year shall include such participation, with invitations issued on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the relevance of the agenda, consistency with institutional policies, and deliberations with POB and Strategy Committee members.
- Additional invitations may be extended to any participants or observers as the POB deems appropriate, based on the matters to be discussed.
- Invitations notwithstanding, the POB can enter Executive Session at any time as described below.

Executive Session

- The POB Chair has the power to call for the POB to enter an Executive Session in which no guests or observers are permitted to participate without the explicit invitation of the POB.
- Any votes taken in the Executive Session shall be included in public meeting minutes, but no other discussion notes from Executive Sessions shall be made public, unless POB Members participating unanimously determine otherwise.

- Executive Sessions should be reserved for exceptional matters requiring confidentiality, including sensitive personnel, legal, or high-level inter-agency issues.

TOR Ratification

These Terms of Reference are to be reviewed by the POB annually and amended as needed in accordance with standard POB voting procedures.