

# **CHS ALLIANCE VERIFICATION ADVISORY PANEL**

## **Terms of Reference**

**The CHS Alliance** is a global alliance of humanitarian and development organisations committed to making aid work better for people. We believe organisations deliver higher quality, more effective aid when they are accountable to the people they serve. Together, we are a movement to strengthen accountability and to put people affected by crisis at the heart of what we do by implementing the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). The Alliance was formed in 2015 by bringing together the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International, which focused on accountability to affected people, and People in Aid, which focused on people management in the humanitarian aid and development sectors. We are headquartered in Geneva and maintain a presence in London. Together, we have more than two decades of experience in supporting the sector in applying standards and good practices.

**The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)** was designed so that its application can be measured. Measuring the performance of an organisation through the CHS verification scheme helps to learn the extent to which accountability standards have been incorporated into your work and highlights which areas you might consider improving.

**The CHS Alliance Verification Scheme** offers different approaches to verification, recognising the many types of organisations working in humanitarian and development aid. We want to ensure CHS verification is relevant, feasible and fair for all who participate. Verification is a structured, systematic process to assess the degree to which an organisation is working to achieve the CHS. The Verification Scheme is managed by the CHS Alliance. It sets out the framework of the verification process to ensure it is conducted in a fair and consistent manner for all participating organisations. The Scheme offers three verification options with different degrees of rigour and confidence in the results. Although each option is stand alone, the indicators used in the self-assessment are common to all four options.

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## 1. Purpose

The CHS Verification Advisory Panel provides expert advice and oversight on the CHS Alliance Verification Scheme to ensure it is kept relevant and fit for purpose to enable aid organisations to apply, measure and improve the CHS.

The CHS Alliance Verification Scheme defines the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders within the scheme. This Terms of Reference lays out the roles and expectations of the Verification Advisory Panel.

## 2. Functions of the CHS Verification Advisory Panel

The CHS Verification Advisory Panel provides oversight, technical advice and quality control on the application of the Scheme on behalf of the CHS Alliance Governing Board. The key functions of the Panel are:

- Ensures processes are in place to regularly review the Scheme and its verification options to ensure it meets the needs of its users and stakeholders and is aligned to internationally-accepted good practices for standards verification
- Review questions and make decisions on interpretation of the CHS indicators where ambiguity is identified during a verification process.
- Review and make recommendations to the CHS Alliance Secretariat on the self-assessment methodology and process
- Review and make recommendation to the CHS Alliance Governing Board on acceptance and approval of third party conformity assessment bodies providing CHS independent verification and/or certification
- Considers requests and provides advice on ad hoc verification processes.
- Provides inputs and advice to the CHS Alliance, and if appropriate, approved CABs, on feedback and concerns by users of the Scheme
- Provides reports to each Board meeting on its activities for Board input.

## 3. Panel Composition

The composition of Verification Advisory Panel will comprise of

- An independent Chair
- At least one and maximum three nominated representatives from the CHS Alliance Board
- Up to four Independent experts, with knowledge of standard setting and verification schemes
- One representative from the Conformity Assessment Body (up to a maximum of 3 people)

The composition must take gender and geographical diversity into account.

The Verification Advisory Panel will be supported by the CHS Alliance secretariat, who will participate in a meeting in a secretariat function.

### 3.1. Appointment and term of office

1. VAP members shall be selected based on a call for interest made by the CHS Alliance, expression of interest by interested parties and a recruitment procedure including interviews by a panel composed of board members and CHSA staff. Selected members are appointed by the Board of the CHS Alliance.
2. VAP Members shall serve for a period of three years, and their terms may be renewed once.
3. In the event a VAP Member is appointed to replace an VAP Member that has resigned, been removed from office or is otherwise incapable of discharging their duties, the replacement VAP Member shall serve out the unexpired portion of the former VAP Member's term of office.

### 3.2. Resignation or removal of VAP members

Removal of a VAP member will only be with due cause, and the reason for removal shall be communicated to the VAP member in question.

1. If a Panel member is no longer able to fulfil their duties and wishes to resign they should, with a notice period of two months, inform the CHS Alliance Secretariat, which will bring the matter to the attention of the Board.
2. A VAP member may also be removed by the CHS Alliance board if the Secretariat feels they are no longer able to work effectively. This might include repeated unresponsiveness to communications from the Secretariat, being late in providing written feedback prior to review calls (or failing to do so entirely), not providing reasonably comprehensive feedback on reports, or missing more than two consecutive meetings (either online or in person) per year without reasonable cause. In this case the Secretariat will issue warnings to the Panel member in question, and if the matter is not resolved after the second warning, the Secretariat will refer the matter to the Board.

### 3.3. Conflicts of interest

Where a VAP member has an association with any of the Members, that gives rise to, or might be conceived as giving rise to, a conflict of interest he or she must declare this to the Secretariat who would record this and consult the VAP Chair in deciding whether the member should be exempted from VAP business regarding that Member.

To avoid any conflict of interest, the VAP shall ensure that any of its members that represent Conformity Assessment Bodies shall be excluded from any proceedings, papers, proposals and minutes of meeting involving the selection of Conformity Assessment Bodies.

### 3.4. VAP Chair

1. The position of the VAP chair will be independent honorary position. They will be appointed based on selection by the committee from Board nominations. They should be independent of any of the CHS Alliance members.
2. The specific roles are:
  1. To liaise regularly with the Chair of the CHS Alliance Board and Executive Director of the Secretariat, in particular to ensure:
    1. good communications between the two bodies,
    2. mutual expectations and needs are adequately met,
    3. communality in addressing specific problems (e.g. non-performing TAG members),
    4. agreement on the skill-sets to be sought as the Board selects new Panel members
  2. To chair VAP meetings and the respective agendas.
  3. To join one Board meeting per year to discuss the effectiveness of the CHS Alliance's verification system, the review process, and matters arising from the VAP's work.
  4. To liaise with the Secretariat in preparing meeting agendas and planning the necessary preparatory processes, in particular to ensure the CHS Alliance Board's concerns are discussed.
  5. To mediate agreement within the VAP in the event of differing opinions
  6. To investigate any allegations of conflict of interests or misconduct on the part of any VAP member.
  7. To plan an appropriate evaluation of the VAP every 3 years, in dialogue with the CHS Alliance Board and Secretariat.
3. The Chair can be re- appointed to a second term.

## 4. Meetings of the Panel

Ordinary meeting of the VAP will be two (2) times a year. One of these will be face to face, one will be by videoconference

Other meetings maybe called, based on the views of the chair and with agreement of 40 % of the members.

A quorum for the meetings will be 40% of the members. No business shall be transacted at a meeting unless a quorum is achieved.

Decisions will be made on a majority basis, with the chair having a casting vote in case of a tie.

## **5. Secretariat Support**

CHS Alliance will provide secretariat facilitates for the VAP.

The Executive Director of the CHS Alliance and/ or their nominee shall attend ordinary meetings of the VAP to provide secretariat services and shall not be entitled to vote.

## **6. Terms of Reference Update**

The ToR shall be regularly updated as required, and will be approved by the CHS Alliance Governing Board.