

## Operating Principles And Procedures for the VectorBiTE Network

### 1. OBJECTIVES

The Vector Behavior in Transmission Ecology Network (VectorBiTE) is an international research network aimed at **increasing interaction between researchers in the diverse fields studying vector-borne diseases to encourage collection and consolidation of key data, and to encourage development of analytical tools to better understand the role of vector behavior in transmission ecology**. VectorBiTE facilitates the development of new transmission models and their integration with empirical data using cutting edge quantitative methods to better understand the processes that drive transmission patterns in vector-borne diseases. We act as a grassroots organization that brings together specialists in vector biology, behavioral ecology, epidemiology, theoretical ecology, mathematics, and statistics to promote open exchange of ideas, data, and tools to tackle this problem. Network participants will include a diverse group of researchers working on vector-borne disease working in systems across human, animal, and plant systems, ranging from relatively simple single host/vector/pathogen systems to complex systems with multiple hosts/vectors/pathogens, and varying in transmission environment (agricultural, rural, fragmented, and urban).

Vision: Together we collect better data, build better models, and have greater impact on vector-borne diseases.

Mission: Facilitate interactions across a diverse community to produce diverse solutions for understanding and predicting vector-borne diseases

This document outlines the Operating Principles and Procedures (OPP) underlying VectorBiTE's governance. This first iteration of the OPP represents the perspectives of the Founding Steering Committee (Appendix A), and is presented for ratification with the acknowledgement that, as a living document summarizing our collective aims and experiences, it will change over time. It acknowledges that the continued growth and success of this consortium relies both on sound organizational principles and a willingness to continue to experiment and learn as a community of interest and practice. At the least, future revisions -- under this or future Steering Committees -- will need to formalize other components, including but not limited to:

- Working Groups, Committees, Chapters, and other organizational structures;
- Producing a VectorBiTE Code of Conduct in consultation with VectorBiTE membership
- The need for and purpose of meetings, workshops, and conferences;
- Intellectual property;
- Legal status;
- How VectorBiTE interfaces with other organizations and initiatives including VectorByte;
- Policies and practices related to endorsement of member projects and proposals;
- Governance and conflict resolution; and
- Sustained funding and fiscal management.

### 2. SHARED VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

VectorBiTE and its members support, and are committed to working toward, the following shared values and principles:

- Vector behavior and heterogeneity in vector behavior and life history traits are important aspects of vector-borne disease dynamics.
- We value interdisciplinary approaches to understand vector-borne disease dynamics and welcome researchers investigating these systems from the molecular to the global scale.
- We promote community-led data collection and statistical method development that enables vector-borne disease models to be confronted with data
- Datasets used to parameterize and validate models and the details of modelling approaches should be freely available to allow testing of methods and comparison between proposed models in transparent fashion
- The training of young researchers from a diversity of backgrounds to apply these tools and models is a key component of field development.

In the spirit of the development of a robust community of practice for understanding vector-borne diseases dynamics, VectorBiTE does not require that members have put all of these shared values and principles into practice, but rather it seeks members who are actively working towards them.

We recognize that our diverse community brings different expertise and experience towards these aspirational elements. We see such diversity as a benefit, and it is necessary to the development of a diverse and inclusive community of interest and practice. Thus, we welcome all participants, and encourage patience, tolerance among all, and the holding of curiosity and respect as cornerstones of personal and professional growth.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

#### 3.1 Joining VectorBiTE

Individuals may join VectorBiTE by affirming their commitment to the shared values, principles, and procedures described in this document. To maintain a record of active members and partners, Individual and Partner members are asked to complete a registration form that includes:

- a. Name
- b. Contact information (affiliation, email, website)
- c. Primary discipline
- e. A 1-2 sentence synopsis of research or application area
- f. A 1-2 sentence on what you hope to get out of participating in VectorBiTE

The term of membership is three years, with membership renewable upon mutual agreement (the VectorBiTE Steering Committee will approve renewal by default unless an issue is raised, see Section 3.3). Members should update their membership information upon renewal or when a substantive change occurs. Items a-c will be appear publicly, while items e-f will be kept private. Membership information will be retained to allow us to understand the needs and trends of our community. Members who completed any registration form prior to the initial ratification of this document will be asked to reaffirm membership.

#### 3.2 Benefits and Obligations

Membership in VectorBiTE provides individuals with voting rights on VectorBiTE-wide decisions, eligibility to run for leadership positions within VectorBiTE (Steering committee, etc.), and eligibility to compete for VectorBiTE internal awards and scholarships (e.g. student travel support to meetings) when available. In addition, members are listed on the VectorBiTE website, are able to submit content to the blog and Twitter feed, and are able to propose changes to this document (OPP).

By joining VectorBiTE, individual members agree to follow the community standards, values, and principles made explicit in this document, and to participate to the extent possible as an active member in the community.

### 3.3 Revocation and non-renewal of membership

Membership in VectorBiTE can be revoked at any time for violation of community values, principles, or code of conduct. Similarly, the Steering Committee will review lists of members coming up for renewal on a quarterly basis. In both cases, a proposal to either revoke or not renew membership needs to be raised by a member of the Steering Committee and then seconded by another Steering Committee member (Section 4). Following discussion, a vote to revoke has to pass by simple majority (Section 4.5). Members have the right to appeal by submitting a written appeal no less than 48 hrs before a committee meeting, at which time the appeal would be discussed and voted on.

## 4. STEERING COMMITTEE

The VectorBiTE Steering Committee provides the primary means for representatives elected by VectorBiTE members to make collective decisions on matters related to VectorBiTE.

### 4.1 Steering Committee composition

The VectorBiTE Steering Committee consists of seven voting individuals. Four committee members are elected by the general membership. The two Co-Chairs are elected by the general membership in a separate vote. One member of the steering committee should be a trainee (graduate student or postdoctoral researcher) elected by the general membership in a separate vote.

The VectorBiTE Steering Committee values and promotes diversity of all kinds, including but not limited to: race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, geography, discipline, study system, job sector (academic [MSI/PUI/R1], agency, NGO, industry, etc.), and other under-represented groups (e.g. first-generation college students, people with disabilities, military veterans). At any time the Steering Committee can (but does not have to) appoint additional non-voting members for terms up to one year to represent VectorBiTE-supported initiatives (e.g. training grants, conference organization) that are not already represented on the committee. Non-voting memberships can be renewed annually by the committee.

### 4.2 Terms and Elections

In order to maintain some consistency in leadership and ensure knowledge transfer we will stagger elections for Steering Committee Members. Members of the VectorBiTE Steering Committee (including Co-Chairs) are elected or appointed to three year terms. Student/trainees are elected every two years. After their term Steering Committee members will serve for three years on the Advisory Committee (Section 5) and will only be eligible for

re-election to the Steering Committee after this period. Nominations to the Steering Committee will be solicited four months prior to the end of term, with elections occurring two months before the end of term. Individuals must be VectorBiTE members to nominate committee members or to be nominated. Self-nominations are permitted and members may nominate multiple committee members. For the first year (2021) the nomination and election process will be undertaken by the current Steering Committee. In subsequent years, members of the Steering Committee will appoint an individual or subcommittee to be in charge of the election. No one on the election subcommittee may be seeking election or re-election. The subcommittee will coordinate the solicitation, receipt, and vetting of nominations. Nominated individuals will be verified to ensure they are willing to serve and are asked to provide a short (<1 pg) statement about their goals for VectorBiTE and professional qualifications, which the election subcommittee will distribute. They will conduct the election using a ranked voting systems and notify the Steering Committee of results in a timely manner.

In order to ensure that the leadership maintains diversity and represents the core values of the VectorBiTE network the procedure will vary slightly for the first years of the transition. The Table below outlines how the board will be replaced with all Founding Steering Committee members rotating off by 2023 and an established pattern of 2 new members being elected each year.

Year	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5	Member 6	Trainee	Election
2021	FC (LRJ)	FC (LJC)	FSC	FSC	<b>NM-1</b>	<b>NM-2</b>	<b>T-1</b>	1 T, 2 NM
2022	<b>NC-1</b>	FC (LJC)	<b>NM-3</b>	FSC	NM-1	NM-2	T-1	1 NC, 1 NM
2023	NC-1	<b>NC-2</b>	NM-3	<b>NM-4</b>	NM-1	NM-2	<b>T-2</b>	1 T, 1 NC, 1 NM
2024	NC-1	NC-2	NM-3	NM-4	<b>NM-5</b>	<b>NM-6</b>	T-2	2 NM
2025	<b>NC-3</b>	NC-2	<b>NM-7</b>	NM-4	NM-5	NM-6	<b>T-3</b>	1 NC, 1 T, 1 NM
2026	NC-3	<b>NC-4</b>	NM-7	<b>NM-8</b>	NM-5	NM-6	T-3	1 NC, 1 NM

FC- Founding Chair, FSC- Founding Steering Committee Member, NM-New Member, NC-New Co-Chair, T-Trainee Representative

#### 4.3 Meetings

The Steering Committee will hold regular remote/virtual meetings over the course of the year (e.g. monthly). Individual meetings should aim to be no more than one hour in length. The Advisory Committee (Section 5) should be updated at least quarterly on the content of these meetings.

The Steering Committee will also hold at least one extended meeting annually (1/2 day, face-to-face when possible). As available, VectorBiTE, through externally raised funds or philanthropic gifts, aims to create some funding, available upon request, to facilitate diverse need-based participation in this meeting. If this is not possible, accommodations should be made for remote participation by individuals unable to fund attendance. Likewise, the Steering Committee is encouraged to leverage attendance at other events (e.g. conferences) to reduce the burden of meeting attendance.

#### 4.4 Responsibilities and Authority of the Steering Committee as a body

The Steering Committee is vested with the authority and responsibility to:

- a. Set policies pertaining to the operation of VectorBiTE and its committees

- b. Organize Steering Committee meetings and conduct the business of the VectorBiTE
- c. Organize a regular members meeting
- d. Regularly organize or promote participation in conferences and social events.
- e. Interface with other organizations
- f. Continue to set a forward-looking agenda, and launch initiatives, that support the growth of the VectorBiTE community
- g. Work towards the sustainability of VectorBiTE, including but not limited to pursuing grants, philanthropic donations, outreach, and partnerships
- h. Create standing or ad hoc committees to which the Steering Committee can delegate authority, for example to manage events (meetings, calls, conferences, workshops), develop proposals, and launch initiatives
- i. Respond to the needs of the membership (including, for example, providing letters of support)
- j. Maintain and update the Operating Principles and Procedures (section 6)

#### 4.5 Co-Chairs

In addition to the five elected steering committee members. The two Co-Chairs are elected by the general membership to serve a three year term. Nominations for Co-Chairs will be solicited four months prior to the end of term, with elections occurring two months before the end of term. Nomination process will follow the procedure for the Steering Committee (Section 4.2). Nominated individuals will be verified to ensure they are willing to serve and are asked to provide a short (<1 pg) statement about their motivation for being Chair, goals for VectorBiTE and professional qualifications, which the election subcommittee will distribute. They will conduct the election using a ranked voting systems and notify the Steering Committee of results in a timely manner.

In addition to the responsibilities and authority assigned to the overall Steering Committee, the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee are vested with the authority and responsibility to:

- a. Lead the organization of the Steering Committee
- b. Call and conduct Steering Committee meetings on a regular basis
- c. Set the Steering Committee meeting agenda
- d. Ensure that the Steering Committee and subcommittees are populated
- e. Supply members with regular updates and communication
- f. Ensure the production of an annual report to the VectorBiTE membership
- g. Organize and delegate the tasks, activities, and initiatives of VectorBiTE.

#### 4.5 Voting

For items voted upon by the Steering Committee to be adopted organization-wide requires a simple majority (for example, 4 votes of a possible 7), after accounting for conflicts of interest (COI). Conflicts of interest occurs in any vote that materially benefits a committee member themselves, their advisees/advisors, or family members. Due to the close knit nature of this community, it is unrealistic to also exclude co-authors, collaborators, and primary institutions on all decisions, but committee members are encouraged to avoid voting on decisions that could reasonably be perceived as favoritism or special treatment.

#### 4.6 Initiation of the Steering Committee

The initial adoption of the OPP, and the initial formation of the Steering Committee, is based on ratification by the Founding Steering Committee (Appendix B). Nominations (see 4.2) for Steering Committee members will be open immediately upon ratification until May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

with elections to occur on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Subsequent election dates will occur annually on this date.

## 5. FORMATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### 5.1 Composition of the Advisory Committee

Upon completion of their three year term, Steering Committee members and co-chairs will join the advisory committee. The standing advisory committee members will be retired after a three year term and at this time Advisory Committee members are eligible to run for the Steering Committee. The initial Advisory Committee will be composed of the members of the Founding Steering Committee that no longer sit on the Steering Committee and the Founding Advisory Committee (Appendix B).

### 5.2 Terms

Each Advisory Committee will support the existing Steering Committee for a three year period.

### 5.3 Meetings

Advisory Committee will meet once a year at the extended meeting organized by the Steering Committee

### 5.4 Responsibilities and Authority of the Advisory Committee as a body

The Advisory Committee is vested with the authority and responsibility to:

- a. Provide advice to the Steering committee about VectorBiTE initiatives, policies, and events.
- b. In the event of a deadlock of the Steering Committee (for example due to conflict of interest) the Advisory Committee can be asked to vote on any initiative and together break the tie. Together their vote will constitute one vote on the Steering Committee.

## 6. OPP REVISIONS & RATIFICATION

The VectorBiTE Operating Principles And Procedures (OPP) is a living document that changes in accordance with the knowledge, experience, and interests of its members. VectorBiTE itself is an experiment, which will only be successful if we try new things and learn based on the evidence and experience. To allow this document to evolve we will be seeking input from the membership each year. All suggestions for additions, deletions, or modifications by members should be submitted in writing to the VectorBiTE Steering Committee by July 15 of each year. These proposals will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting after that date and, if the suggestion was not anonymous, responded to promptly (ideally within two weeks of the meeting, but some proposals may require additional research or legal counsel).

Proposed changes to the OPP, based either on community contributions or Steering Committee initiative, will be circulated in writing to VectorBiTE membership, which will be given two weeks to provide written feedback. The Steering Committee has the prerogative to choose to adopt, amend, or reject proposed OPP changes.

Per Steering Committee voting guidelines (Section 4.7), the Steering Committee will then vote on whether to ratify changes to the OPP.

#### Appendix A: VectorBiTE Founding Steering Committee Members

The following were the active members of the VectorBiTE Founding Steering Committee at the time of ratification:

Lauren Cator (Co-Chair), *Imperial College London*

Leah Johnson (Co-Chair), *Virginia Tech*

Samraat Pawar, *Imperial College London*

Erin Mordecai, *Stanford University*

Peter Hudson, *Pennsylvania State University*

#### Appendix B: VectorBiTE Founding Advisory Committee

Matthew Thomas, *University of York*

Alison Power, *Cornell University*

Michael Johansson, *CDC Dengue Branch*

Shannon LaDeau, *Cary Institute*

Mike Boots *University of California Berkeley*