Operating Principles And Procedures for the VectorBiTE Network

Vision: **An inclusive, innovative, and interdisciplinary community that brings together experts in the vector-borne diseases of humans, animals, and plants to deliver novel insights into their prediction, dynamics, and control.**

Mission: **We create the informatic, theoretical, and predictive tools with complementary training to support an integrated community of practice that:**

(1) coordinates curation and preservation of key vector data together with training that maximizes the utility of the data

(2) develops empirically-driven trait-based approaches that will reveal the underlying mechanisms of vector-borne disease dynamics

(3) fosters interactions between multiple disciplines to promote development and open exchange of ideas, data, and methodologies.

Operating Principles And Procedures

This document outlines the Operating Principles and Procedures (OPP) underlying VectorBiTE's governance. This iteration of the OPP 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.
- Defining the methods and requirements for incorporating VectorBiTE endorsement or resources into a new grant or other projects beyond what would typically be included in network activities.

1. SHARED VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

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

- 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, details of modeling approaches, and analysis code should be freely available to allow testing of methods and comparison between proposed models in a transparent fashion
- The training of researchers from a diversity of backgrounds to apply these tools and models is a key component of field development.
- Vector traits (e.g., life histories, behavior) are important aspects of vector-borne disease dynamics.

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 at any time by affirming their commitment to the shared values, principles, and procedures described in this document. To maintain a record of active members and partners, members are asked to complete a registration form that includes:

A. Name
B. Contact information (e.g., position, affiliation, email, website)
C. Primary discipline
D. A 1-2 sentence synopsis of research or application area

Additional information may be solicited from members via surveys or at the time of registration in order to better serve the membership. Membership renews every three years 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. Information collected at registration may appear on the VectorBiTE website. 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. General information on members who are inactive or decide not to renew for any reason or have an inactive membership will be retained in our archives but not made public.

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.), be a member of a working group, eligibility to attend member-only events, and eligibility to compete for VectorBiTE internal awards and scholarships (e.g. student travel support to meetings or research exchanges) when available. In addition, members are listed on the VectorBiTE website, have full access to restricted member materials, are able to submit content to the blog and Twitter feed, and may 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. Members with concerns about violations of the code of conduct can bring these to the attention of any Steering Committee or Advisory Board member, who will then bring it before the Steering committee. 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, each typically serving a 3 year term. Committee members are elected by the general membership. One member of the steering committee should be a trainee (graduate student or postdoctoral researcher) elected by the general membership in a separate vote.

Within the committee are 3 administrative positions, the Chair, the Chair-elect, and the Secretary. The Chair-elect is chosen annually by the Steering Community members. Committee members must serve at least one year before becoming eligible to be nominated for Chair-elect. This individual will serve one year as Chair-elect, followed by one year as Chair. Thus it is possible for an individual to remain on the steering committee for a maximum of 5 years. A Secretary is also elected within the committee for a one year term, and may serve multiple consecutive terms as Secretary. The committee will determine the precise responsibilities and these descriptions will be added to this document in a future version.

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). Global representation is an aspirational goal for the Vector BiTE Steering committee and nomination or self-nomination of committee members is encouraged. 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), to represent affiliated initiative, or to provide perspectives 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 institutional knowledge transfer, elections for Steering Committee Members will be staggered so that no more than 3 members are being replaced each year. Members of the VectorBiTE Steering Committee are elected or appointed to three year terms (except as noted above for a normal committee member who is elected to Chair-elect). Student/trainees are elected to two year terms. After their terms, former Steering Committee members will only be eligible for re-election to the Steering Committee after 3 years .

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. Terms begin July 1. 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 active year (2022-2023) 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. 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 system and notify the Steering Committee of results in a timely manner.

4.3 Meetings

The Steering Committee will hold regular remote/virtual meetings over the course of the year (e.g. monthly). 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 (at least 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/or 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)
k. Develop a strategic plan and operations to fulfill this plan

4.5 Roles within the Steering Committee: Chair, Chair Elect, and Secretary

In addition to the responsibilities and authority assigned to the overall Steering Committee, the Chair and Chair Elect 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.
H. The Chair will lead Steering Committee meetings. In the absence of the Chair the Chair Elect will lead meetings.
I. The Chair and Chair Elect need to maintain and update the VBiTE Handbook

A member of the Steering Committee will be designated as the Secretary. The secretary's responsibilities will include:

A. Recording minutes of Steering committee meetings
B. Preparing and posting minutes in a timely fashion
C. Assisting the committee in producing or organizing other documents as needed
D. Assisting in maintaining membership information.

Additional responsibilities may be assigned at the discretion of the steering committee.

4.6 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 occur in any vote that materially benefits a committee member themself, 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.

4.7 Initiation of the Steering Committee

After the initial adoption and ratification of the OPP, the initial Steering Committee was formed based on the Founding Steering Committee (Appendix B) with two additional voting members added from the broader membership.

5. FORMATION OF EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

5.1 Composition of the External Advisory Committee

An external advisory committee will be formed to provide additional expertise and advice to the Steering Committee. Initial committee members will consist of the original advisory committee, and former Founding steering committee members with staggered 1-3 year terms. New advisory board members will be nominated by members of the Steering Committee. Nominees must not have been members of the Steering Committee within the previous 3 years. Nominees do not need to be current members of VectorBiTE. The Steering Committee will vote to invite nominees to join, and nominees will be asked if they are willing to serve. If they agree, before joining the board, all prospective Advisory Board members must also ratify the OPP and agree to the Code of Conduct.

5.2 Terms

Each Advisory Committee member will serve for a three year period.

5.3 Meetings

The Advisory Committee will meet once a year at the extended meeting organized by the Steering Committee. They may be invited to attend other meetings at the discretion of the Steering Committee.

5.4 Responsibilities and Authority of the Advisory Committee as a body

The Advisory Board 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.

c. Serve in an advisory capacity as needed for external funding proposals, affiliations with other organizations, or other situations where an advisory committee is needed.

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*