Discussion paper – SfAM Selection Sub-committee and voting

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# Context

These ToRs are for a permanent Selection Committee, which will cover *all* trustee elections and appointments.

Intended outcomes are:

* SfAM gets the best candidates for trustee roles, making good use of its talent pool
* Identifying candidates is transparent, and takes into account principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

# Draft Terms of reference for the Selection Committee (Discussion)

## Background

It is good governance practice that appointments to a board (in SfAM’s case, the Executive Committee) should be subject to a formal, rigorous and transparent procedure. This is usually achieved by having a Selection Committee to lead the process for appointments, and to ensure that there is a succession plan for members of the EC.

It can also help to develop a diverse pipeline of new people ready to come through.

## Members of the Selection Committee

It is standard practice that there should be at least three people on a Selection Committee, and that a majority of these people should not be employees of the company. In addition, it is necessary to maintain a sense of proportion: SfAM is not having to sift through thousands of applications, and then justifying the shortlist and proving that there has been no favouritism. A pragmatic way forwards is:

### Suggestion for SfAM:

The Selection Committee could comprise:

1. The President (so this person will change every two years). The President should chair the Selection Committee, except when it is looking for the President Elect. In this situation, the EC will choose a chair from the Selection Committee.
2. Two other members of the EC, for as long as their current term lasts
3. In four-year cycles, one non-Trustee member of each sub-Committee
4. The CEO
5. Secretariat function provided by another member of SfAM staff

## Frequency of meetings

If the Committee’s main function is “search and shortlist” then it could meet virtually:

* Four months before elections (to discuss person specifications and advert texts)
* Two months before elections (to shortlist)

If the Committee will also be responsible for any pipeline development, it will need to meet more often.

## Duties (details are provided in the next section)

1. The Selection Committee will keep minutes of all meetings, including reasons for including or not including people on shortlists. The Selection Committee will be mindful of GDPR, and aware that candidates may be entitled to see any notes made about their candidacy.
2. The Selection Committee will write a brief report to be included in the Microbiologist, reviewing its activities that year.
   * This article will invite feedback from the Membership. The Selection Committee will present this feedback to the EC, and propose how it plans to improve the next cycle.
3. The Selection Committee will lead the “Preparation and Search” phase of identifying new EC members
4. The Selection Committee will create a short-list of candidates for each role.
   1. In the case of the Officers, this will be presented to the EC, who will choose the candidate. This candidate will then be presented to the Membership as a yes/no decision in an online ballot.
   2. In the case of trustees who are not officers, this short-list will be presented to the Membership in an online ballot
   3. In the case of a trustee to be appointed by the EC in accordance with Article 10.6.1 (c), this will be presented to the EC, who will choose the trustee. This person will not be presented to the Membership for election.

# Recommended timeline and details of process

NB: some of these steps will not apply for the case where EC is planning to appoint a single trustee to meet a particular need, according to Article 10.6.1 (c).

## Identify vacancies due at least a year before

1. Agree what qualities are needed for the role, updating the role description of necessary
2. Agree eligibility criteria
3. Consider how SfAM will recruit following principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. This could include:
   1. Agreeing the level of anonymisation possible and sensible for the process
   2. Agreeing text to be included in the advertisement, stating SfAM’s commitment to diversity
   3. Agreeing if any extra support can be offered to candidates who are usually under-represented on the EC. This could be encouragement for candidates who might have otherwise chosen not to apply because they don’t think they have the right profile, or mentoring and help with the application for candidates who have suffered disadvantage. For example, the advert might include something like “Diversity on the board is known to improve decision-making. SfAM wants the Executive Committee to be a diverse group of people who will think creatively and challenge each other. In previous years, XYZ people have been under-represented. If XYZ describes you, and you would like some support, please contact us. This could be just a conversation helping you to make decision about whether this is the right time for you to apply, or more active support with your application”

## Advertise and search

1. Draft advertisement
2. It is very important that the advert, or any approaches to people, make it clear what the expectations are in terms of time and independent thought.
   1. The advert should also make it clear what the role of a trustee involves – eg it is not just being a very senior scientist who wishes to opine solely on matters of microbiology. This should cover the skill needs identified earlier in the process, and any eligibility criteria.
   2. The advert should also make it clear, if relevant, if there are any special categories of person sought – for example, an Early Career trustee.
3. “How to apply” instructions should request:
   1. a statement of suitability for why the candidate would be a good member of the EC – not just a list of publications and honours.
   2. Advertise vacancies through social media, the SfAM website, Member newsletters, and the Microbiologist
   3. The Selection Committee can also start to look for people, to encourage them to apply.
   4. The Committee should ask the Exec Committee for suggestions. They can also consult their own networks, and advertise openly.

## Nurture and Support

Offer conversations and/or support with application to potential candidates who request this. The Selection Committee should co-ordinate this support, but the actual work should be shared with members of the EC.

## Assess and shortlist applications

1. Check eligibility of each candidate
2. Prepare a shortlist for each role, taking diversity, skills and experience into account.   
   NB: if only one person has applied, then obviously there can only be one person on the shortlist. But the Selection Committee and the EC should encourage people to apply.
3. Give helpful and encouraging feedback to candidates who have not made it to the shortlist.
4. Note who these people are, to approach them for other roles in the future.

## Publish applications

1. Display the short-list, with candidate statements, on the SfAM website
2. Alert the Membership through the website, social media, and the newsletter
3. Include text explaining how voting will work