

TDR'S PORTFOLIO PRIORITIZATION MODEL

Introduction and Scope

This document explains how TDR conducts the review, prioritization and selection of proposed projects in line with TDR's Strategic Plan 2012-2017 and TDR's core values¹. This helps achieve the highest impact and value-for-money.

The prioritization model is part of a broader framework of portfolio development, budget planning and monitoring and scientific review processes as described in TDR's Performance Assessment Framework and as illustrated in Figure 1. The model is coherent with TDR's Memorandum of Understanding. Other complementary aspects are described in standard operating procedures or terms of reference for the Programme's governing and advisory bodies.

TDR's Performance Assessment Framework² is used not only by TDR staff but also by a broad range of stakeholders to assess the Programme's strategic and technical relevance and contribution towards its vision and mission. The Framework includes reference to various inputs into the prioritization and selection process.

Objectives

The main objectives of TDR's prioritization and selection model and standard operating procedures are to:

1. facilitate the development of a competitive, innovative, strategically oriented and balanced portfolio
2. foster accountability in the prioritization of projects
3. ensure coherence and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including WHO regional offices and disease control programmes
4. support a consistent, credible and transparent process of prioritization

Principles for portfolio prioritization

As a matter of principle, members of TDR's advisory groups and all external reviewers must not have any conflict of interest in conducting their review and providing recommendations for prioritization and selection of projects and their related expected results. According to TDR's strategy, the principles below guide the way TDR builds its portfolio and decides on which expected results to pursue. They are grouped under three major areas.

¹ TDR's core values referred to are: equity, quality, sustainability and effective partnerships.

² See http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/year/2013/TDR_Framework_2013_final2_web.pdf?ua=1

Impact

- Impacting upon public health through research and knowledge dissemination
- Fostering regional, national, institutional and individual capacity strengthening
- Facilitating knowledge sharing and networking
- Addressing strategic knowledge gaps in the control of infectious diseases of poverty
- Harnessing innovation to improve health in low- and middle-income countries
- Integrating research aims and capacity development goals to achieve broad impact

Quality

- Maintaining excellence in training and research outputs
- Promoting standards of good practice and ethical conduct in research
- Efficiently and transparently managing resources to ensure health returns for investment in research
- Acting with respect and open communication in all endeavours

Inclusiveness

- Promoting equity, supporting research and capacity development for the benefit of all
- Building on the strengths and resources within disease endemic countries
- Increasing the voice of disease endemic countries in setting the research agenda
- Adding value by working in true partnership

Prioritization criteria

When reviewing the various proposed expected results to make recommendations on prioritization (ranking) and selection, the set of criteria below is taken into account by internal (to TDR) and external reviewers and decision-makers (individuals or committees).

Relevance

- A positive impact can be made in the prevention, control and treatment of infectious diseases of poverty
- Responds to regional and country needs and is coherent to global efforts
- TDR has specific advantages in implementing this expected result
- Level of value for money is acceptable
- Promotes geographic, social and gender equity, reaches the most disadvantaged and respects the environment

Scientific/technical merit

- Fills a critical knowledge gap
- Responds to a need for capacity strengthening
- Brings novelty and innovation
- Encourages a transdisciplinary, multi-sectoral approach
- Methodology is scientifically sound
- Maximizes the link between research and capacity building

Feasibility

- Has a strategic, long-term benefit and demonstrates good potential for sustainability
- Engages with control programmes and communities
- Level of resources required is within TDR's limits
- Timeframe is realistic

Structures supporting portfolio prioritization in TDR

As TDR's governing bodies, the Joint Coordinating Board (JCB), Standing Committee (SC) and Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) function according to TDR's Memorandum of Understanding, as well as in line with their own established procedures and terms of reference.

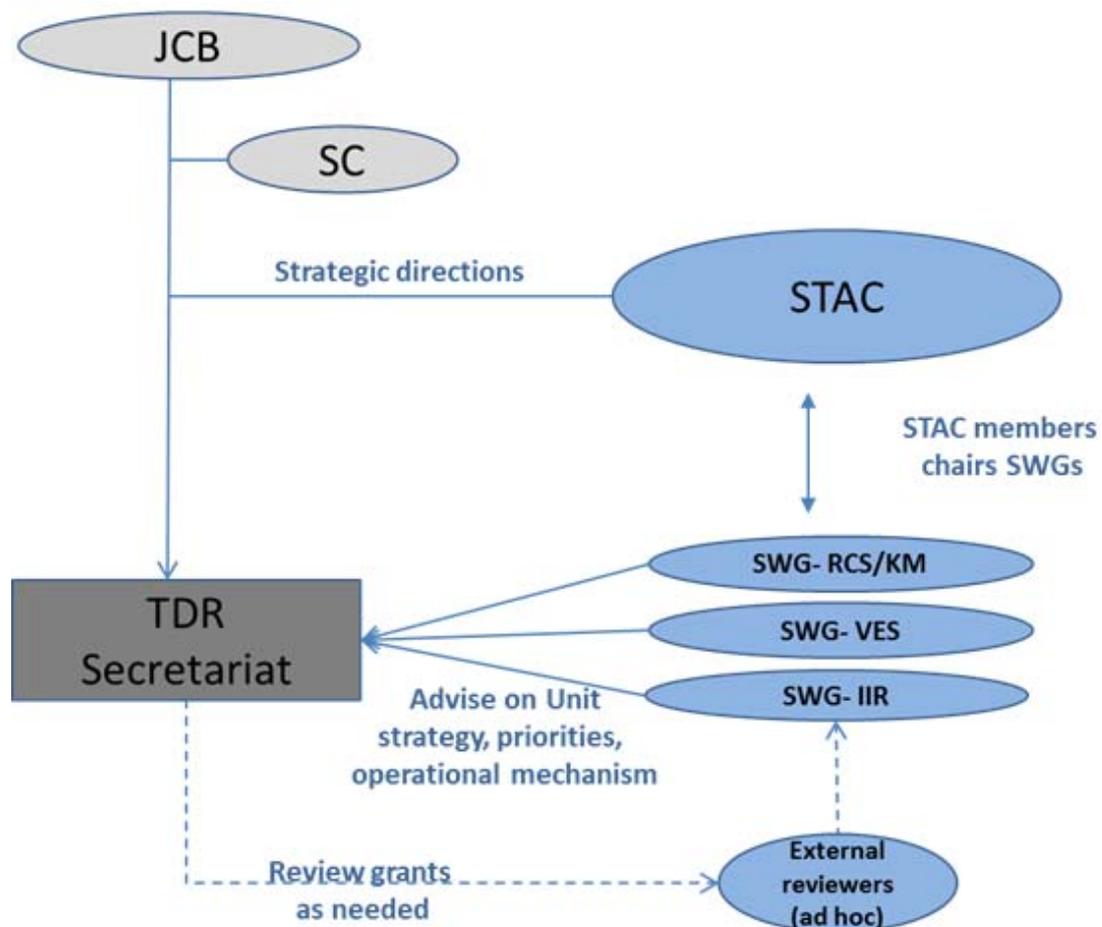


Figure 1 – Structures supporting portfolio prioritization in TDR

Processes and mechanisms

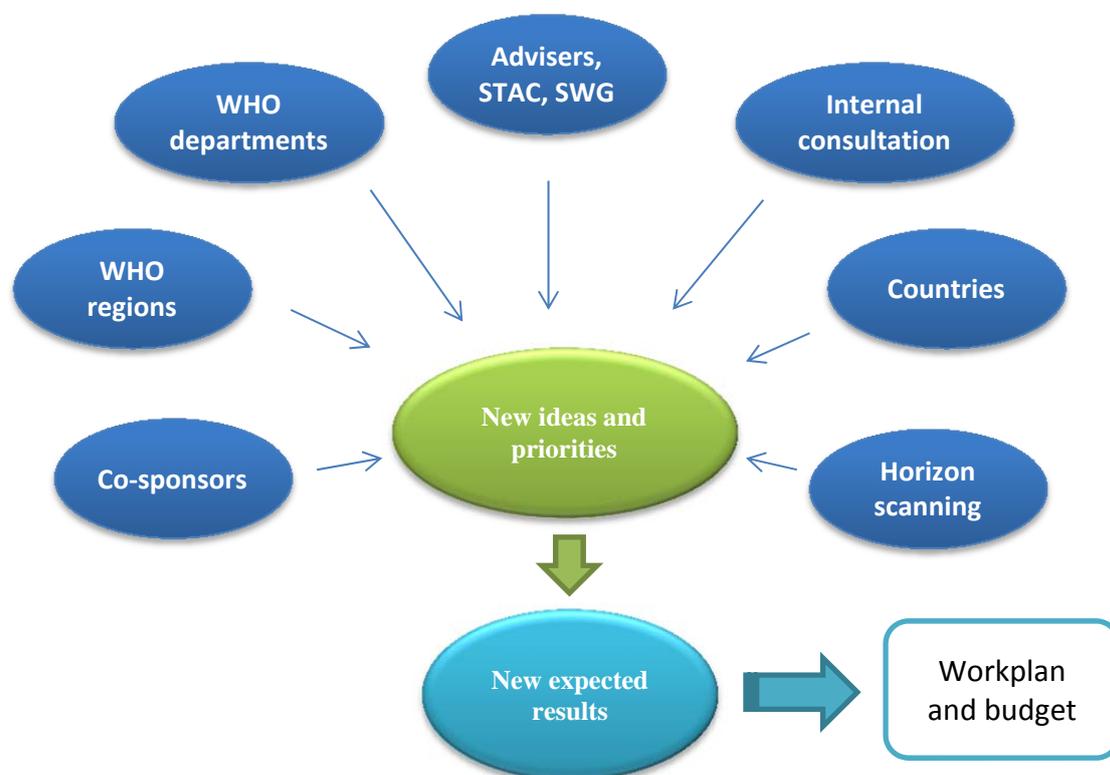
TDR portfolio development and prioritization processes are carried out in line with the Strategic Plan and within the approved budget ceiling (or planned cost).

Identifying health research needs

Continuous consultations and scanning the horizon of health research needs at global level are at the base of the development and renewal of TDR's portfolio to keep it relevant and innovative. Valuable input that feeds new and innovative ideas comes from consultations that take place at various levels, both internally and externally (see Figure 2):

- internally in TDR: periodic reviews (at least twice a year), science forums (quarterly), lunchtime seminars (twice a month), informal brainstorming sessions, learning platform
- with external advisers: STAC meetings, scientific working group (SWG) meetings, other ad hoc committee meetings, discussions, TDR alumni network
- with TDR co-sponsors
- with the Standing Committee and the JCB
- with WHO disease control programmes: joint meetings, presentations, workshops, lunchtime seminars
- with other WHO departments: attending meetings, informal discussions, workshops, review synthesis reports / WHO research priorities
- with WHO regional offices: regular teleconferences, an annual meeting, sharing draft workplans, joint projects (e.g. small grants)
- with countries: input from grant applications analysed, feedback from projects, collaboration with regional training centres, interns, stakeholder survey, attending meetings on priorities

Figure 2 - Consultations leading to establishing new initiatives



Once initiated, the life-cycle of an expected result is described in the next section, while the process of review as part of the workplan and budget is illustrated in Figure 3.

Establishing priorities

Ideas gathered via consultations and other means are reviewed and prioritized internally and externally to gather input on their relevance, value and feasibility, to enable selection of those that are most desirable and to decide on their suitability and implementation priority.

Internally:

- From consultations and discussions result ideas that are captured in a database. The ideas are then screened, based on the set of criteria above and expected results are developed by team leaders and project managers.

Externally:

- Scientific working groups review and prioritize proposed expected results and make recommendations to STAC and to the TDR Secretariat.
- STAC reviews them as part of the proposed workplan and provides direction and recommendations to Director TDR for presentation to the JCB.
- Further review and prioritization by scientific working groups, STAC and ad hoc committees of internationally renowned experts may take place as the expected results are being implemented.

Integrating expected results into TDR's workplan and budget

Expected results that are proposed are included in TDR's workplan and budget, and as such are part of the cycle in Figure 3. TDR's budget cycle covers periods of two years with the process being aligned with the TDR governing bodies' cycle of review, ensuring their full engagement in the budget development, approval and review/revision process. The process is iterative, each year representing an opportunity to review and make improvements to the expected results and workplan and to integrate new expected results.

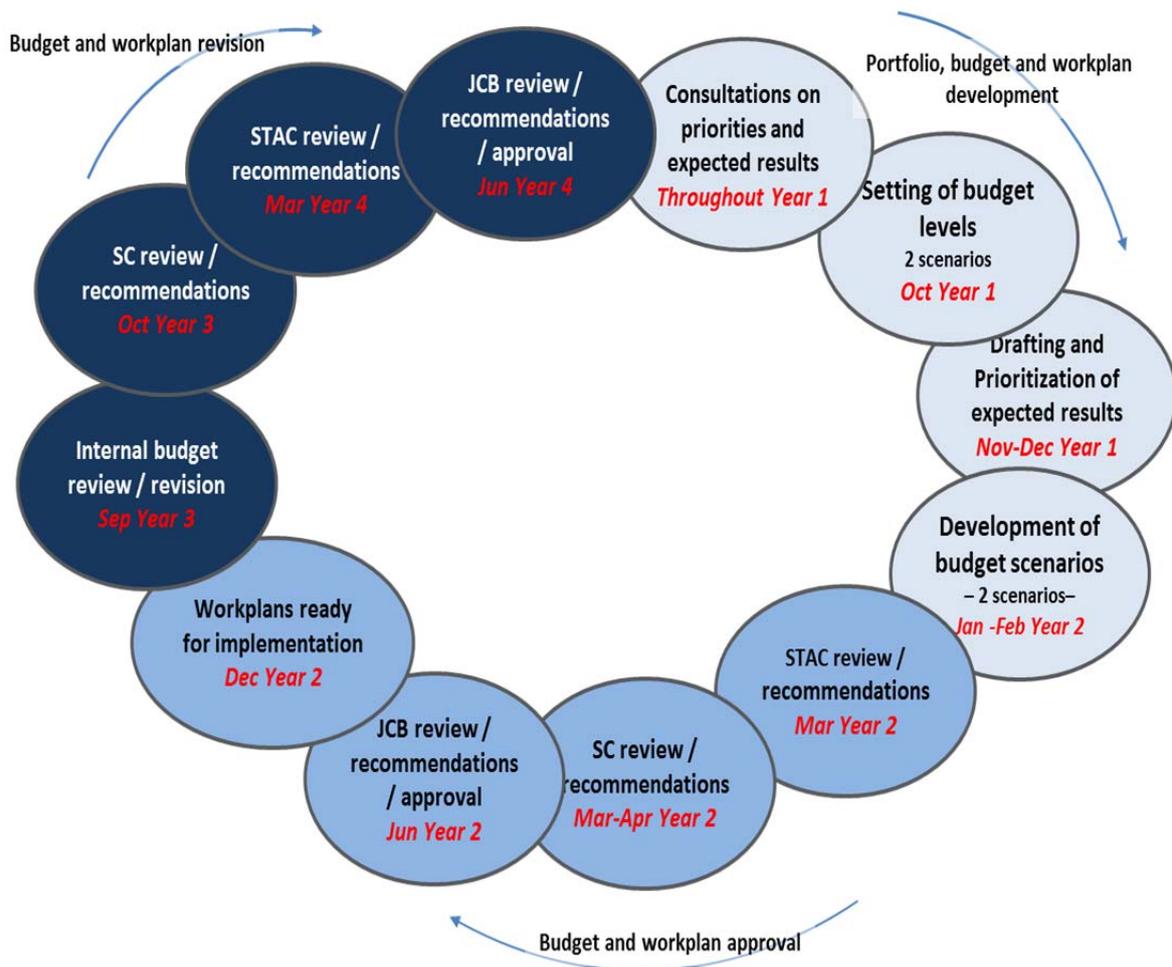
STAC reviews the operations workplan (which contains all of the expected results) and budget and makes recommendations on strategic directions for portfolio development and budget allocation by workstream. The revised version is reviewed and endorsed by the Standing Committee, then reviewed and approved by the JCB. Ad hoc committees of experts provide further input and recommendations for prioritization at workstream and project level.

To account for potential changes in the income level due to unforeseen factors, TDR develops a contingency budget and workplan scenario. Having the projects and their expected results prioritized allows adaptation to the actual level of income.

Any new designated funding needs to support the implementation of TDR's approved budget and workplan. Rising opportunities going beyond the approved budget/workplan are then discussed with STAC and the Standing Committee, both of which need to endorse them before a formal agreement can be signed.

Activities funded through the Strategic Development Fund³ are prioritized by Director TDR when submitted during the biennium. These activities take advantage of opportunities to develop the TDR strategy, raise the profile of TDR and explore new areas for work. They are reviewed in light of the prioritization criteria mentioned above and against specific selection criteria which has been included in the *TDR Strategic Development Fund operationalization* process document. Director TDR reports to STAC at least once a year on the development and implementation of the Strategic Development Fund.

Figure 3 - TDR's overview of prioritization steps as part of TDR's budget and workplan cycle



³ Extract from the JCB36 report, June 2013: "Within the agreed budget, a Strategic Development Fund is proposed to be established to respond to new and arising needs and opportunities during the course of the biennium. This idea has been strongly supported by the Standing Committee and recommended by STAC."

Standard operating procedures for proposed projects and expected results review and prioritization

Figure 4 provides step-by-step guidance on the prioritization of a new project and its expected results in chronological order. Steps are listed in sequential order.

Figure 4 - Portfolio prioritization steps

