



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS (IFHIMA)

Guidelines for Establishing a New National Association

These guidelines have been produced by IFHIMA to help those countries without a national health information management/health records association to establish a democratic and financially sound organization which is accountable to its members.

- i. The association will require a name.
- ii. The association's goals and objectives should be clearly identified. It would be prudent to check if national legislation in the association's home country requires such an organization to be 'incorporated' or if there are other legal requirements for establishing a professional association and follow available guidance to achieve this where appropriate.
- iii. The association will require a managing body (an executive board or committee) see Annex A and a constitution by which the organization will be governed. The managing body will be responsible for the following:
 - Managing the organization's finances (through the financial officer or director);
 - Appointing committees (e.g. education committee, editorial committee etc);
 - Constituting local branches of the organization and dissolving them when appropriate;
 - Appointing members as delegates or representatives of the organization;
 - Establishing an Examination Board, appointing examiners and making arrangements for the award of the organization's qualifications if appropriate.
- iv. Membership of the managing body usually comprises officers or directors who will serve for a pre-determined period (usually between one and three years). There are different models for the managing body (see Annex A) and national associations should use the structure and terminology for the managing body with which they are most comfortable. Officers will take up office on the date of Annual General Meetings of the association. It is advisable to ensure that changes of officers are staggered to ensure that the entire board or committee does not change at the same time. This will ensure stability of the organization and continuity in the managing body. A quorum for meetings should be 60% of members of the managing body.
- v. The officers serving on the managing body should be elected by the membership once the association is established but they may be appointed in the first instance for a pre-determined (time-limited) term of office. These officers will be eligible for election at the end of their appointed term of office. Nominations for the posts should be sought from the membership and in the event of more than one nomination for a post a ballot of members will need to

be held. The National IFHIMA Director should be **appointed** rather than elected as their term of office should be co-terminus with IFHIMA's triennial General Assembly rather than the dates of election of the association's managing body as is the case for other members. IFHIMA's constitution makes provision for a Deputy IFHIMA Director who should also be appointed if the association chooses to establish this post.

- vi. A constitution will need to be drawn up and adopted at a general meeting of the association (see vii below). The constitution should cover the following areas as a minimum:
 - The name of the association, it's goals and objectives;
 - Categories of membership and the associated criteria for each category and how membership may be terminated by the member or the association;
 - Subscriptions/Member Dues;
 - Terms of reference for the managing body (i.e. executive board or committee);
 - Terms of office for national and local (branch) officers;
 - The rules and procedures for the Annual General Meeting including a quorum for the meeting;
 - Requirements and procedures (including deadlines) for other General Meetings (see viii below);
 - The requirements for local branches;
 - Requirements and procedures for the dissolution of the association;
 - The regulations governing changes to the constitution itself.
- vii. The organization should hold a general meeting annually (the Annual General Meeting), which should be quorate. At this meeting the audited accounts for the organization should be presented. This meeting will also ratify the appointment of financial auditors, the election of officers for the forthcoming year and approve any changes to the constitution. Minutes of the meeting should be taken contemporaneously and sent out to members or published in the association's journal in advance of the next scheduled AGM when they will be proposed and accepted as a true and accurate record. The Chairman/President should sign the minutes to confirm acceptance and they should then be filed in the minute book.
- viii. Other general meetings (e.g. Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), which should also be quorate - to deal with urgent business or a new situation may be held by decision of the managing body or by written request to the Chief Executive/Secretary by a pre-determined number of voting members (which should be written into the constitution) who will have a deadline for arranging the meeting (as defined in the constitution).
- ix. The new executive board or committee will need to agree categories of membership and the membership subscriptions/member dues for each of the categories. Subscriptions/member dues will need to be set at a level of affordability for potential members but one that covers the actual cost of membership (e.g. costs of badges, costs of a journal if one is to be produced, costs of meetings of the executive board/committee and other committees). Subscription rates/member dues should be reviewed annually by the managing body to ensure that they continue to cover costs.
- x. A bank account will need to be opened for the association and a chequebook obtained. Two members of the managing body, usually the financial officer and the Chief Executive/Secretary should sign cheques. This, together with annual auditing of the organization's accounts by a appropriately qualified

- finance professional, will help to ensure the financial probity of the organization.
- xi. The Director of Education/Education Officer may wish to convene an education committee to work on educational issues such as examinations, certification, training programmes, study material etc. If the association decides to offer professional examinations an Examination Board will need to be established to oversee them and to provide assurance of the integrity of the examination process.
 - xii. The managing body may wish to appoint an Editor if a journal/magazine is to be produced for members either as a web-based publication or in traditional paper format. The Editor may, in turn, wish to convene a small Editorial Committee or Board to assist them.
 - xiii. If the association plans to have a website then there should be an appointed Webmaster with designated responsibility to manage and maintain the website.
 - xiv. Where local branches are to be established, dependent on the size of the country, there should be a minimum of two elected branch officers covering the secretarial and financial areas together with a Chairman to form the branch committee. Branch members should elect all branch officers.
 - xv. Most national associations hold an annual educational conference or seminars and a small committee of members should be formed to organize the conference. It is recommended that organising committees start their work well in advance to devise a topical and interesting programme, get the most appropriate speakers and secure a good and affordable venue. Sponsorship helps to keep the costs low for delegates and profits from these events can be used to further develop the association.
 - xvi. Suppliers of Health Information Management/ Health Records Services and products may be willing to provide financial sponsorship in return for acknowledgement of their sponsorship. Associations should be clear about the difference between “sponsorship” and “endorsement” of products. Sponsorship need not be financial e.g. provision of conference folders, delegate badges etc.
 - xvii. National Membership of IFHIMA is reserved for one national organization in each country which is representative of the national activities within the field of health information management/health records and the purposes of the organization must be compatible with those of IFHIMA. Only representatives of national member associations (i.e. National IFHIMA Directors, Deputy Directors or other representatives appointed by the national member association if the national director or deputy are unable to be present), whose annual member dues are fully paid are entitled to vote at the triennial General Assembly of the Federation or in necessary ballots in between General Assemblies. The world is getting smaller every day and health information management (HIM) no longer has national boundaries. Joining IFHIMA as a “national” member makes a national member association part of a dynamic global network of countries devoted to improving health care through health information.
 - xviii. If further help or support is needed please contact IFHIMA. Contact details for the Executive Board can be found at <http://www.ifhima.org/executive.aspx> Please also visit the IFHIMA website at <http://www.ifhima.org>

8th March 2012/Lorraine Nicholson

The assistance of Carol A. Lewis, USA, in the production of these guidelines is gratefully acknowledged

THE MANAGING BODY OF THE ASSOCIATION

Here are two models for the structure of the managing body of a national association but there are more. These are just two options and national associations are encouraged to use a structure and terminology for the positions in the structure of the managing body of their organization with which they are comfortable and which will resonate with members.

As the organization matures; growing in size and complexity and becoming financially more secure and stable it may be judged to be appropriate by the managing body that some of the roles in the models should be held by staff in paid positions.

Model 1 – “Executive Committee”

- President/Chair;
- President/Chair Elect;
- Past President/Chair;
- Chief Executive Officer;
- Chief Financial Officer;
- Director of Education;
- National IFHIMA Director (this officer will usually serve a three year term of office to coincide with the triennial meetings of the General Assembly of IFHIMA).

Model 2 – “Executive Board”

- Chairman;
- Chairman Elect (who will serve for a pre-determined period before taking office usually one year);
- Past Chairman (who will serve for a pre-determined period before leaving office usually one year);
- Chief Executive or Secretary or Business Manager;
- Director of Finance or Treasurer;
- Director of Education or Education Officer (if education is one of the association’s stated objectives);
- National IFHIMA Director if the association is to become a national member association of IFHIMA (this officer will usually serve a three year term of office to bring it into line with the triennial meetings of the IFHIMA General Assembly).

If an association decides to adopt Model 2 for the structure of its managing body it may wish to appoint a non-executive (ex-officio) President for a pre-determined period of office (suggested – 1 to 3 years). The term of office for each post within the structure will need to be specified together with the rules regarding eligibility for re-election (suggested - may be eligible for re-election for no more than three consecutive terms of office). A President who has a high profile and is well-known in-country or internationally can provide practical help and support and assist a new association to raise its profile both nationally and internationally. New associations may wish to wait until they are more mature before electing a non-executive President.

The National IFHIMA Director should be appointed rather than elected as their term of office is co-terminus with IFHIMA’s triennial General Assembly rather than the date

of election as is the case for other members of the association's managing body. IFHIMA's constitution makes provision for a Deputy IFHIMA Director who should also be appointed if the association chooses to establish and support this post.