

2014 – 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

ALLIANCE OF BLOOD OPERATORS



We will leverage knowledge exchange and horizon scanning to identify long term shifts in our industry, which will enable members to inform strategic direction, and respond to operational challenges.

Jennifer Williams
Chair, Alliance of Blood Operators



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Alliance of Blood Operators – ABO – was established in 2002 by a small group of blood operator leaders who sought to improve their local blood establishments through the exchange of strategically useful information. Since that time, ABO has grown to represent over 90 blood operator members, collecting 35.5 million units of blood for a total population of 815 million people across three continents: North America, Europe, and Australia.

ABO has remained true to its focus on strategic issues, information sharing, and operator performance improvement. In this strategic plan, ABO is determined to build on the strong foundations it has created by enhancing the use of knowledge exchange, benchmarking, and working group expertise to realise organisational performance improvement across multiple domains. We will leverage knowledge exchange and horizon scanning to identify long term shifts in our industry, which will enable members to inform strategic direction, and respond to operational challenges. We will also use our collective value to address complex, long term industry issues.

A tangible example of the benefits of global focus and collective action is ABO's commitment to develop an integrated, internationally applicable risk-based decision-making framework for blood safety. The key objective of the framework is to optimise blood safety through the proportional allocation of finite resources to the most serious risks, recognising that eliminating all risk is not possible. The framework will provide blood operators with a tool that will help them consider all relevant factors, including stakeholder, economic, and other contextual elements, that affect decision-making in the management of blood risks. ABO's goal in developing the framework is to help operators navigate the complex decision-making waters of blood safety.

ABO will continue to focus on performance improvement for members as well as target complex issues where our combined voice, expertise and resources can achieve what is difficult to achieve individually. Through shared experience and problem solving, we will improve our organisations and our service to customers.

ABO is about Global sharing. Local results.

Jennifer Williams
Chair, Alliance of Blood Operators

WHAT IS ABO?

The Alliance of Blood Operators (ABO) is a network of not for profit blood service providers with voluntary non-remunerated blood donor bases. ABO membership includes:

- America's Blood Centers, consisting of more than 60 independent blood operators,
- American Red Cross,
- Australian Red Cross Blood Service,
- Blood Systems Inc.,
- Canadian Blood Services,
- European Blood Alliance, comprising blood operators from 25 European countries,
- National Health Service Blood and Transplant which provides blood services for England and Northern Wales.

ABO provides its members with a range of opportunities and benefits including:

- Involvement with an international network of Chief Executives from large well-developed blood service providers or their affiliated organisations.
- Engagement in the development of international positions on key blood sector policy issues, for example, development of a Risk-Based Decision-Making Framework for blood operators.
- Access to key strategic ABO resources such as the annual Horizon Scanning report.
- Access to contextualised, timely and accurate information on emerging issues, allowing members to inform their domestic response with international intelligence.
- Access to benchmarking and knowledge exchange activities that support individual member performance improvement and strategic planning.
- Collaboration on disaster preparedness and management, facilitated through joint exchange of country experiences and responses.
- Facilitation of joint projects, training opportunities and staff visits/exchanges.
- Opportunities for staff engagement in international professional working groups on critical and strategic issues in their respective operational areas
- Increased international visibility for ABO member organisations.

ABO'S PURPOSE

ABO seeks to be a high performing international collaboration of blood operators who drive member performance improvement, knowledge exchange, and resolution of strategic issues for the benefit of patients and the health systems we serve.

ABO'S STRUCTURE

ABO's work programme is led by the Chief Executives, and supported by the ABO Secretariat and Points of Contact. The Points of Contact provide a country or network level of contact to coordinate communications and activities for ABO knowledge exchanges, working groups and projects. The Points of Contact also support engagement of their organisations at all levels in ABO activities, and the effective utilisation of ABO materials and outputs within their organisations.

ABO's regular schedule of in-person and teleconference meetings support the development of a close international network, provide opportunities for exchange of information and ensure delivery of the ABO's ongoing work programme. ABO members pay an annual membership fee that supports the Secretariat and administrative costs. All members sign a legally binding confidentiality agreement that covers the exchange of material and facilitates open dialogue.

ABO has a number of working groups across the key operational areas, and membership is comprised of senior staff from each participating organisation. The ABO working groups propose a work plan linked to the ABO goals and these plans are reviewed annually by the ABO Chief Executive group. The ABO Chief Executives may also assign specific tasks to the working groups, for example the development of a donor recruitment and retention segmentation paper, a review of opportunities for blood services in the field of cellular therapies, clinical governance guidelines for blood service consideration, a White Paper focusing on blood donor health and safety and a brief to better identify the blood donor of the future. Participating organisations have access to the outputs of their working groups.

ABO WORKING GROUPS

ABO working groups are self-funded and members of each group have regular teleconferences and meet in person as required. An ABO Point of Contact liaison supports each ABO working group to facilitate knowledge sharing and integration of activities across the wider ABO work programme.

ABO working groups currently include:

- **Donor Engagement and Relationship:** sharing strategies to recruit and retain blood donors and developing opportunities to access and inform donors globally.
- **Benchmarking:** facilitating the identification and development of best practice, encouraging organisational learning and performance improvement. The group collects performance data from participating members on an annual basis to produce the ABO benchmarking report.
- **Medical:** Medical Officers (or delegate) exchanging information relevant to current and emerging donor and patient health and safety issues and assist in developing possible solutions.
- **Medical Directors:** Chief Medical Officers ensure tools and materials exist to enable sustainable and effective clinical leadership and management across the blood sector in member organisations.
- **Cost Model:** comparing the financial considerations of blood at an operational level to understand variations in cost.
- **Risk Based Decision-Making:** developing an integrated risk-based decision-making framework, encompassing donor safety and patient outcomes, which has the potential to guide major policy and operational change.
- **Harmonisation of Regulation:** accelerating harmonisation of international medical device regulation applicable to the blood sector, with an initial pilot project focussed on standardised apheresis connectors.
- **Supplier Engagement:** seeking to improve the relationships between blood services and suppliers of blood industry devices and consumables.
- **Blood Establishment Software:** reviewing the software systems used across the whole organisation to identify potential synergies and facilitate discussion.
- **Research and Development:** exchanging strategies on improving the impact and effectiveness of ABO member research and development (R&D) programs by examining the managerial, administrative and leadership issues affecting R&D.

Members opt in to some groups to participate in the group activities. Confidentiality of data is closely maintained and the groups are very sensitive to issues of competition that may affect specific members and limit participation.

2014-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

ABO has long recognised the value of the global network and, since its formation in 2002, has strived to deliver benefit to its members through global sharing, horizontal learning, and by providing a united blood operator voice on policy issues that cross international boundaries. Globalisation across all industries has made the world a little smaller since 2002, but the principles established by the ABO Chief Executives more than a decade ago are still the solid foundations for the 2014-2019 strategic plan. This plan builds upon the strengths that ABO has developed and it aims to “take ABO to the next level”.

The Chief Executives have set a clear path for ABO that will emphasize managing relationships on a global scale in order to:

- foster the transfer of knowledge that can be adapted and employed by large and small operators;
- advance cooperation on blood related matters, while appreciating that members operate in different domestic contexts; and,
- leverage the insights and innovation of members to anticipate future shifts in the industry through a cooperative approach.

The Chief Executives have selected four strategic objectives, designed to achieve ABO’s goal to be **a high performing international collaboration of blood operators who drive member performance improvement, knowledge exchange, and resolution of strategic issues for the benefit of patients and the health systems we serve.**

Objective 1: IMPROVE ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Objective 2: IDENTIFY, ANALYSE, AND MONITOR EMERGING TRENDS AND STRATEGIC SHIFTS

Objective 3: TRANSFORM THE DECISION-MAKING PARADIGM

Objective 4: PROVIDE HIGH VALUE TO MEMBERS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: IMPROVE ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Position members to achieve higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency through a blood operator focused performance improvement program.

Performance Measures

- % of members reporting value derived from the ABO performance improvement program
- Target: 80%
- Number of good practice case studies developed per annum
- Target: 3

The global economic environment is driving major change in the blood industry: demand for fresh components has declined significantly and indications are that this trend will continue. Downward pressure on health care budgets is causing a flow-on effect to blood operators whose customers (hospitals or governments) are either cutting back on product orders or demanding substantial reduction in costs, or both. Virtually all members of ABO are looking at ways to reduce their costs while maintaining and even improving service to customers. Benchmarking is a valuable way to establish baselines, define best practice, and identify improvement opportunities that can result in efficiency (reducing waste) and improving effectiveness (delivering quality products and services). The value in benchmarking is to collect data that will establish what can be achieved and provide awareness of how better performance can be achieved.

The ABO benchmarking process has, for the most part, focused on the “what can be achieved”. The process for scorecard data collection and report generation is well-established, the data is reliable and comparable and most, although not all, members have been comparing their performance on a range of metrics for several years. Reliability and comparability of data is the first step in any benchmarking process. The next, and arguably more important, steps involve understanding, evaluating and prioritising improvement opportunities for member benefit.

Optimising member benefit is the intent behind this strategic objective. The goal is to provide ABO members with a blood operator-focused performance improvement program that will enable them to not only identify areas of best practice, but to understand why and how those best practices can be realised in their own organisations. By leveraging the strength that exists with the benchmarking data collection and comparison process, we will build a comprehensive program that allows members to achieve improved performance through benchmarking.

Priorities for 2014-2019

- Develop a blood operator-focused benchmarking performance improvement program.
- Incorporate the commoditised ABO Cost Model tool into the performance improvement program offerings.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 2: IDENTIFY, ANALYSE, AND MONITOR EMERGING TRENDS & STRATEGIC SHIFTS

Leverage horizon scanning and member knowledge exchanges, with a deliberate future focus, to identify and address strategic issues at a member blood service and collective level.

Performance Measures

- Knowledge Exchange Satisfaction Index
- Target: 100% members with 100% satisfaction

The transparency of knowledge exchange within ABO has enabled the development of a robust, far-reaching annual blood industry horizon scan report. The report focuses on emerging issues and trends, and highlights areas worthy of consideration by blood operators individually and as a sector. The impact of an emerging issue may vary for individual blood services but there are some major issues that reach a point of “critical mass” and could provide the opportunity for a global collective response; for example, risk-based decision-making for blood safety interventions.

In this strategic plan, the ABO Chief Executives aim to enhance the potential of the ABO horizon scan by identifying long term shifts in our industry. The goal here is to enable members to use the information to inform their own strategic direction. The scale and scope of change requires resilience in blood service operations and diversity in responses to common issues, reflecting different operating environments. This diversity is one of the strengths of ABO, as members can learn from each other and benefit at an individual blood service level.

By leveraging our diverse perspectives to increase the quality of knowledge, we can create a valuable forum for best practice exchange and organisational improvement. And, by using the annual horizon scan as a springboard for engaging in deeper discussion about individual and collective impact of emerging trends, ABO can develop proactive initiatives to address identified emerging issues. In this way, ABO members have the opportunity to be involved in issue responses at a global policy level through joint representation on relevant shared issues.

Priorities for 2014-2019

- Identify emerging issues that have collective impact on blood operators, and an accompanying program of initiatives to respond.
- Prioritise knowledge exchanges to ensure optimal use of resources and value to members.
- Lead and collaborate internationally to enhance the reach and application of international R&D activities from individual ABO member programs and align these to ABO member strategy and policy interests.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 3: TRANSFORM THE DECISION-MAKING PARADIGM

Drive the uptake of risk-based decision-making by blood operators and key stakeholders to improve blood safety decision making for the health sector.

Performance Measures

- Establish baseline, then measure movement in stakeholder tolerance for RBDM
 - Target: Number of decisions made by ABO members using framework
- RBDM framework feasibility study published in peer reviewed publication
 - Target: Publication achieved

Blood operators are responsible for providing a sufficient and safe supply of blood for their customers. Since the 1980s HIV epidemic, the blood community has prioritised efforts to reduce transfusion transmitted disease. Although the risk of contracting an infection through transfusion is currently very low, the “precautionary at all costs” approach has been our decision-making lens. The tendency to implement blood safety interventions that exceed generally accepted cost-effectiveness thresholds has come to represent our normative approach to blood safety decision making, even when the improvements gained are marginal. There is significant opportunity cost associated with such an approach.

Consequently, in developed countries, the blood system is very safe, but very expensive, and health care budgets are driving all participants in the health sector to assess their effectiveness. An outcome of the Risk-Based Decision-Making Consensus Conference of 2010 was agreement that a blood safety decision-making process that considered the broader cost of safety to society and the well-being of transfusion recipients was needed. ABO agreed and committed the funds to create such a framework.

The ABO Risk-Based Decision-Making (RBDM) framework provides a structured and systematic process for considering all relevant factors in decisions on blood safety, so that finite health care dollars can be allocated to the most significant blood safety risks. The framework consists of a structured approach to blood safety risk management – a systemic methodology for setting the best course of action under uncertainty by identifying, assessing, acting on and communicating risk—that is tailored to the specific needs of blood service operators.

Widespread acceptance of the framework by blood operators, blood product users, and regulators has the potential to change the decision-making paradigm in the blood sector. For this reason, additional focus on this global issue has been deliberately built into this strategic plan. A third phase of the RBDM project will be proposed that will address facilitating uptake of the framework by blood operators, continuous improvement of the framework, and integrating risk approaches with other sector stakeholders.

Priorities for 2014-2019

- Design and implement Phase 3 of the risk-based decision-making framework, that would address:
 - capacity-building for conducting RBDM in our respective organizations;
 - facilitating uptake / implementation of the framework by blood operators;
 - promoting coordination of RBDM across organizations and risk data sharing;
 - continuous improvement of the framework and tools;
 - monitoring any impact of the framework on decision making;
 - integrating risk approaches with other health sector groups (hospitals, regulators)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 4: PROVIDE HIGH VALUE TO MEMBERS

Deliver membership value and quality service through robust planning and governance.

Performance Measures

- Member Value Satisfaction Index
 - Target: 100% members with 100% satisfaction

The success of ABO has been predicated on the active participation of its members in the work of the alliance. Significant value has been realized through member contributions to expert working groups, targeted projects, good practice sharing, knowledge exchange, and member networking. The network structure of ABO, with the Chief Executives collectively setting the priorities, and the administration of the organisation managed by the Secretariat and Points of Contact in a hub and spoke arrangement, has enabled this predominantly volunteer structure to deliver tangible outcomes that produce significant member value. It is the intention of this strategic plan that the delivery of service to members will continue at the high level we currently enjoy and that ABO will drive even stronger performance through robust governance and accountability frameworks.

This strategic objective focuses the organisation’s attention on the need to continue to drive value through a structured approach to identifying, prioritising and delivering results that meet the needs of the membership. The goal is to ensure that the benefits of ABO membership are material and evident to both individual blood operator and blood alliance members, that ABO understands what is important to its members and can deliver what they need, that members participate fully in ABO activities, and that they have easy access to ABO resources.

As an international collaboration of blood operators, ABO will strive to ensure its structure, processes and activities are designed to deliver high quality outcomes to its members around the world.

Priorities for 2014-2019

- Introduce a performance and accountability framework, including appropriate processes and tools.
- Provide mechanisms to enable members to take full advantage of ABO resources.



Looking for more information about ABO?

If you have questions about the work of ABO,
send us an email at: abosecretariat@redcrossblood.org.au

Or check out our website at: www.allianceofbloodoperators.org