

**To:** AVAC Board of Directors  
**From:** AVAC Management  
**Re:** AVAC Board Engagement Guidance for Staff  
**Date:** March 2024  
**Purpose:** Provide AVAC staff members with information about how to reach out to Board members and Board Advisors to request their expertise and/or counsel in an issue area related to AVAC's work.

**Overview:**

The AVAC Board and Advisors bring valuable experience and expertise to the organization. Staff view the Board as a possible resource for their work where appropriate and have expressed an interest in engaging with Board members around their specific areas of expertise. This engagement would aim at advancing AVAC's mission and would relate to the work Board members are doing themselves.

To ensure staff are engaging the Board in a way that does not overburden members, this SOP was drafted. It aims to ensure engagement is coordinated and appropriate.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- Do the types of engagement seem reasonable and appropriate?
- Do you have any reservations or concerns about the SOP?
- Do your organizations have an SOP for Board and staff engagement that might help inform this one?
- Any other thoughts or considerations that might be missing?

**DRAFT**

# AVAC Board Engagement Guidance for Staff

## Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to provide AVAC staff members with information about how to reach out to Board members and Board Advisors to request their expertise and/or counsel in an issue area related to AVAC's work.

## Board Roles

- **AVAC Board of Directors:** AVAC is led by a diverse Board of volunteers who share a deep commitment to HIV prevention and global health equity. Members bring expertise in science, research, medicine, communications, business, advocacy & activism. The Board governs the work of AVAC; provides fiduciary oversight and sets and reviews organizational strategy. From time to time, Board members provide strategic guidance to the organization and its staff members on issues in which they have expertise.
- **Board Advisors:** In addition to the Board of Directors, AVAC has the benefit of "Board Advisors" whose members help to fill in gaps in knowledge by providing AVAC with current information, expertise, critical thinking and analysis and connections that expand those of the organization's management and Board of Directors.

## Types of engagement

AVAC staff may want to engage Board members and Advisors to:

- Ask them specific questions/for guidance in a specific content or strategic area.
- Ask them to participate in an expert panel, external event, or review process.
- Ask them to provide one-time or ongoing guidance on an issue.

## Considerations for Engaging Board members or Advisors

1. **Be strategic:** Your questions should aim to gather information that is relevant both to AVAC and to the Board member/advisor's area of expertise. Questions should aim to advance the work you are undertaking without being taxing or laborious for the Board member or Advisor. To get a quick response and valuable advice, make sure you're asking the right questions.
2. **Be specific and concise:** Identify yourself and explicitly state what it is you're asking for. Make any background information and your request as easy to understand as possible. Break long paragraphs up into smaller paragraphs. In most cases you can make your request in just a few sentences, rather than several paragraphs.
3. **Select the right audience:** Board members and Advisors are leaders in their respective fields and organizations. As such, they tend to have very busy schedules. When contacting a Board member or Advisor, it is important to keep this in mind and ensure you are connecting with the right person. To do so, please review the biographies of the Board and Advisors to get a sense of who best to contact and discuss with your supervisor. You can also reach out to Mitchell, Erin or Levi for advice on who to contact.

- 4. Consider format:** Offer Board members and advisors to set up a brief call to discuss your questions if easier for them. Consider time zones when scheduling. Use an AVAC-provided zoom line.

#### **Process for Contacting Board Members**

- 1.** Define your need and questions. Speak with your supervisor and have them review a draft and discuss the specific Board member(s) or advisor(s) you want to contact. Agree on your target(s) and reach out to Levi to ensure you have the correct email address for the Board member or Advisor and their assistant, if they have one.
- 2.** Copy Mitchell, Erin and Levi when sending your email.
- 3.** Allow appropriate time (at least 1 week) for a response before following up. Many Board members and Advisors live in different times zones and are busy.
- 4.** Ask for assistance from Mitchell, Erin or Levi for any follow ups.