

GRI Materiality Assessment Process

Since 2009 Biogen has conducted biennial GRI materiality assessments to identify and prioritize the topics and issues most important to the company and its stakeholders. As in the past, our 2016 GRI materiality assessment, which we are using for the 2017 Corporate Citizenship Report, was informed by the GRI Principles for Defining Report Content. The process in 2016 involved external stakeholder interviews; desk research to establish the broader sustainability context; an internal visioning workshop to prioritize and validate the issues; and external stakeholder meetings to review the findings and gather their feedback.

Desk Research and Stakeholder Interviews

We reviewed a wide range of internal and external materials, including company financial reports; external corporate communications; internal business and strategic plans; media reports; stockholder inquiries and proposals; industry positions; influencer white papers and communications; investor and reputational indices, such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index; industry and corporate peer sustainability reports; reporting guidelines, including the GRI and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB); and the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals; as well as a variety of other sources. Interviews were conducted with internal subject matter experts and 10 external stakeholders.



Issue Identification and GRI Material Aspects

The insights and input gathered from the stakeholder interviews and desk research revealed a range of potential material topics from a GRI perspective. To determine which of these topics are actually material from a corporate responsibility perspective in accordance with GRI principles, we analyzed each one against a set of clarifying questions, such as:

- Is this topic an existing priority for Biogen, or was it considered material from a corporate responsibility perspective in accordance with the GRI principles in the past?
- Does this issue have a significant impact on people, society or the environment?
- Does the topic present a business risk or impact that could affect performance or harm the company's reputation?
- Does the issue present an opportunity, such as a new product or service, increased revenues, cost savings, reputational benefits or enhanced relationships with stakeholders?
- Is there existing or pending regulation related to the topic?
- Does the company have control or influence over this topic?
- Is this topic frequently raised by stakeholders through various feedback and media channels?
- Is the topic considered material by rating, ranking and/or reporting agencies?
- Is the topic material to industry peers and do they report these topics in their corporate responsibility reports?

Our analysis resulted in the identification of 18 specific issues that fell into six groups: patients, products, environment, workplace, community and governance and ethics. The issues were then mapped to their corresponding GRI material aspects and for each aspect, the specific stakeholder groups impacted by or involved with each issue were also identified. This information is presented in our GRI Index.

Prioritization and Validation

After all corporate responsibility material issues were identified in accordance with the GRI principles, an internal visioning workshop was held at Biogen. More than 100 employees from our global operations participated in the workshop. The session was facilitated by an external sustainability expert who utilized survey technology to capture instantaneous feedback from participants on the relevance and importance of each issue – and to also determine how much of an opportunity and/or a risk each issue poses to Biogen and our stakeholders.

Because the feedback was instantaneous, the participants could see how the issues were being prioritized. This enabled them to adjust, as needed, and essentially validate that the issues were appropriately prioritized by the time the workshop ended.

Review

In 2017 Biogen established a Stakeholder Advisory Council. The members represent a spectrum of interests and backgrounds – from academia to trade associations to nonprofit organizations to our own suppliers and customers. The results of the GRI materiality assessment were shared with the Council to ensure our findings were aligned with their expectations and reflective of their concerns.

Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback we heard from both internal and external stakeholders affirmed our perspective that

patients are at the center of everything we do. This includes working to ensure patient access to the life-changing therapies developed by Biogen, as well as engaging with patients and partnering with their caregivers. Stakeholders also validated Biogen’s commitment to serve all patients, including diverse and underserved populations. Biogen takes an inclusive approach to patients through a multitude of initiatives aimed at increasing engagement, providing assistance and investing in the type of research and development efforts that lead to breakthrough therapies. Our ultimate goal is to continually improve outcomes for patients, with the aim of allowing them to live longer, healthier lives.

Our leadership on climate was also acknowledged by several stakeholders. Biogen has been a strong advocate for climate action and continues to maintain carbon neutrality. We had previously been encouraged to establish a science-based carbon reduction goal, which we completed in the first half of 2017.

GRI Material Issues

The 18 issues that were identified in the most recent GRI materiality assessment are presented in the matrix below. Access to treatments, investments in R&D to ensure a robust pipeline and improving patient outcomes are Biogen’s highest priorities. But we consider everything in this matrix to be material and important from a corporate responsibility perspective. Throughout this report, we explain how Biogen is addressing these issues and measuring performance.

