




COVID-19 VACCINE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION WEEKLY REPORT

Week ending:	25 September 2020	Priority:	Routine
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2021-0955

	Action sought	Deadline
Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern Prime Minister	Note the contents of this Weekly Report	N/A
Hon Grant Robertson Minister of Finance		
Hon Dr Megan Woods Minister of Research, Science and Innovation		
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister of Health		
Rt Hon Winston Peters Minister of Foreign Affairs		


Dr Peter Crabtree
General Manager Science, Innovation and International
25 / 09 / 2020


Maree Roberts
Deputy Director-General, Systems Strategy
and Policy
25 / 09 / 2020

Minister's comments:



IN CONFIDENCE

COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Implementation

Weekly Report

Week ending 25 September 2020

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Purpose

This weekly joint report updates Ministers on key developments of the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

Workstreams

Strategy and Policy

Contact: Simon Rae

Phone: 9(2)(a)

The Strategy and Policy team is developing advice on the makeup of our overall vaccine portfolio. This advice will provide an assessment of our probable vaccine portfolio and identify options to resolve potential issues in its current composition (such as through beginning negotiations for a specified additional vaccine candidate). We will provide you with our overall portfolio assessment in October. We will also provide you with a summary of the existing portfolio in each advance purchase agreement decision briefing, including an update on our recommended next steps for the portfolio.

We are concurrently evaluating how the vaccines offered by the COVAX Facility will fit into our portfolio. As we are participating in COVAX through its optional purchase model, there are a variety of ways in which it could complement our existing APAs. For example, it could provide additional quantities of priority vaccines that we have also secured through APAs and/or enable us to access otherwise unavailable vaccines.

We are also exploring the development of a model to inform decision-making through estimating the social and economic impacts of a variety of vaccine scenarios. As vaccine doses will arrive in several tranches from 2021, a key use of the model will be in evaluating how safe it would be to alter public health controls as greater proportions of the population become immunised.

Advance Purchase Agreements

Contact: Poppy Haynes

Phone: 9(2)(a)

The APA team has been continuing to work on securing advance purchase agreements (APAs) with 5 priority vaccine candidates. The team has also begun engaging with 2 additional pharmaceutical companies, taking the total of live discussions to 7.

Overall progress summary

Science reviews:

- 4 science reviews completed:
- 1 science review next week.

Provision of Heads of Terms/supply agreements:

- 4 drafts provided by suppliers
- 1 likely to be provided next week.

Negotiations with vaccine suppliers:

- 1 negotiation on a Heads of Terms concluded. We plan to have advice on this APA to joint Ministers by the end of next week.
- 3 where we have been engaging across Ministries and with our legal and commercial advisors ahead of meeting with the pharmaceutical companies next week.

- 1 where we have indicated interest and will progress negotiations when we receive a Heads of Terms.

Progress this week

This week we effectively concluded negotiations on a binding Heads of Terms with one of our priority candidates. We are preparing a briefing to joint Ministers recommending that they agree for the Director General of Health to sign the Heads of Terms.

We have been working through Heads of Terms/draft supply agreements from three other suppliers. We will be meeting with two of these suppliers early next week to discuss their offers. We also had an initial meeting with a sixth candidate.

We have been working with MFAT to better understand the requirements for supporting the acquisition and delivery of vaccines to Realm countries and Polynesia, and how this may influence what we negotiate regarding dose volumes and the ability to on-sell and donate doses.

Immunisation Strategy and Programme

Contact: Mathew Parr

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The Minister of Health received advice from the Ministry of Health on the use of the 2021 influenza immunisation programme to inform the COVID-19 immunisation programme. The Ministry advised that the 2021 influenza programme should be leveraged to inform planning for the COVID-19 immunisation programme and increase public trust and confidence in the immunisation system overall.

Given the pressure on the global supply chain for all critical medical supplies, the Ministry of Health is exploring the purchase of required consumables to deliver vaccines (including needles and syringes). This will be progressed via the Ministry of Health's Supply Chain Team who have had considerable success in landing critical medical supplies over the course of the pandemic.

The Ministry of Health is also preparing advice on the investment options for consumables to support either Ultra Low Temperature (ULT) and normal cold chain capability, and supplies to support the ULT cold chain if required. Advice is also being prepared for a track and trace solution to effectively implement an immunisation programme.

The chairs (who are leaders in New Zealand's Public Health system) of the Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group (IIAG) met on 18 September and agreed to the Terms of Reference and the forward agenda. The full group is planned to meet in the week beginning 28 September to discuss the developing prioritisation framework. The Ministry of Health is also establishing a stakeholder reference group, which will include members from outside the health sector (business, social sectors, industry etc) to ensure a wide range of views are taken into account during immunisation programme planning. This process will help build a wide base of support and agreement for a successful immunisation programme.

COVAX

Contact: Glenys Karran

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COVAX

On 18 September, New Zealand signed a binding Commitment Agreement with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to participate in the COVAX Facility. Under the terms of the Agreement, New Zealand will have the option to purchase COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility for up to 50 percent of the population of New Zealand and the Realm (including Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue). We are required to provide an upfront payment of approximately NZ\$23.64 million and procure a risk-sharing guarantee of approximately NZ\$3.04 million by 9 October. The Prime Minister announced New Zealand's participation at the post-Cabinet press conference and the Minister of Foreign Affairs provided a press release. Press coverage has been generally favourable.

Gavi has confirmed that 69 self-financing economies have joined the COVAX Facility, including some Friends of the Facility members (Australia, Canada, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore) and “Team Europe” (the European Commission, on behalf of 27 EU member states plus Norway and Iceland). Gavi expects as many as 38 more economies will join in the coming weeks, including the UK and the Republic of Korea.

New Zealand also participated in a joint Friends of the Facility (FOF) statement to support vaccine multilateralism and the goal of ensuring affordable, fair and equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines worldwide. New Zealand continues to work with Australia in the Friends of the Facility grouping on a proposal for COVAX Facility governance, which allows for inclusivity and transparency in decision-making. Gavi will consider governance arrangements at their Board meeting this week.

Pacific

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade prepared advice for the Minister of Foreign Affairs seeking in principle agreement to use Official Development Assistance funding to purchase COVID-19 vaccines for Polynesia as part of New Zealand’s broader approach to supporting the Pacific to access a COVID-19 vaccine. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry of Health are working together to develop an appropriate approach to supporting vaccine access and delivery in Polynesia.

Science and Manufacturing

Contact: Justine Daw

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Manufacturing strategy

As signalled last week, we have commissioned a report from Avalia Immunotherapies that recommended New Zealand consider domestic vaccine manufacture in the medium-term by securing the rights to locally produce promising vaccine(s). Avalia recommended that we invest in New Zealand’s vaccine infrastructure with a view to producing >2.5 million doses by 2022 (scaling to >10 million by 2023) and recommended this investment focus on developing the capability to manufacture commercially significant quantities of viral vector or protein subunit vaccines. The report assesses that while manufacturing for RNA vaccines could be established in New Zealand, limitations in both human and other capabilities mean it could take as long as 5 years to establish a commercial capability.

The Task Force is now considering how New Zealand’s existing manufacturing capabilities and global strengths in life sciences could be leveraged to support future pandemic resilience, as well as develop new, local high-value industries. A likely focus of exploration will be strengthening collaboration with key regional partners such as Australia and Singapore.

Vaccine Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (VAANZ) – Progress report

VAANZ is making good progress in establishing a collaborative vaccine research platform in New Zealand, in line with the contract signed with the Malaghan Institute in August. Governance arrangements are progressing well, with VAANZ shortly to finalise a Vaccine Advisory Group bringing together general vaccinology expertise and specific expertise in pre-clinical models, regulation, commercialisation, virology, clinical studies, vaccine design, development and rollout in indigenous populations, production and Good Manufacturing Practice. Most experts on the Group are from Australia, with one from Korea. VAANZ will also invite onto the Group Professor David Murdoch, Deputy Chair of the Science and Technical Advisory Group to the Covid-19 Vaccine Taskforce.

Other progress in the establishment period include:

- progressing arrangements for access to a PC3 facility (AgResearch, Wallaceville),
- successful breeding of a litter of 7 hACE2 transgenic mice,
- sourcing of an adenovirus for use on complementary mouse models,
- advances in the development of two domestic vaccine candidates and one in collaboration with an Australian partner, and
- engagement with relevant Māori advisory groups.

VAANZ has also engaged with key research partners in New Zealand, Australia, the US and China (Sinopharm).

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Communications

Contact: Karl Fergusson

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Communications planning

We have worked with Task Force agencies to coordinate a weekly update of key messages and Q&As, to reflect the changing global environment and the pace at which work is progressing.

We have identified Assoc Prof Helen Petousis-Harris as a likely spokesperson for our communications materials, which will include a short video about the science and safety of vaccines. Dr Petousis-Harris is a well-known scientist who is part of both the Scientific Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and the Ministry of Health's Covid-19 Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group, and is also Chair of the World Health Organization Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS). Dr Petousis-Harris has fronted a wide-range of media opportunities and is a credible, independent voice to support our communications objectives.

Development of an overarching communication strategy is progressing and will be reviewed by the Task Force the week of 28 September. We are connected with multiple agencies to ensure that our approach and messaging is aligned, and that MoH are well placed to lead communications during the immunisation roll-out phase.

Stakeholder engagement

We are working closely with the Communications Lead for the Immunisation Strategy at the Ministry of Health to ensure a joined-up approach to communications as our respective work programmes progress. The Ministry will provide input to the overall communications and engagement strategy to ensure that joint stakeholder and public information needs are met in relation to our efforts to procure and roll-out a vaccine, regardless of which stage we are at, and which agency is leading.

Media management

In anticipation of the COVAX announcement on 21 September, we worked with MFAT to provide a press release for the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as speaking notes and Q&As for the Prime Minister. The announcement received positive media coverage.

We worked with MFAT to respond to media queries after the announcement and a media summary of queries and responses is attached to this briefing, along with an updated series of Q&As. In addition, we supported a key commentator (Professor Graham Le Gros) with background information and key messages ahead of an interview he undertook with Mike Hosking on NewstalkZB.

The Friends of the COVAX Facility issued a joint media statement on 21 September (UK time). This statement referenced New Zealand's commitment to the COVAX Facility amongst other countries, and included a quote from the Prime Minister.

Upcoming Briefings

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
TBC (Oct 2020)		Building a portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines	Simon Rae (MBIE) Allison Bennett (MOH)
TBC (Oct 2020)		Approval to sign binding Heads of Agreement for first Advance Purchase Agreement	Poppy Haynes
TBC (Nov 2020)		Business Case for Domestically Manufacturing COVID-19 Vaccines	Simon Rae

Cabinet Paper

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
TBC (Nov 2020)		COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy – Nov 2020 Progress Report	Peter Crabtree