

Covid-19 Vaccine Strategy
Science and Technical Advisory Group

Minutes – Wednesday 18 November 2020
(Confidential)

Date & time	10:00 to 11:00AM, Wednesday 18 November	
Attendees	Ian Town (Chair) David Murdoch (Deputy Chair) Sue Crengle Ian Frazer Graeme Jarvis Peter McIntyre Nikki Moreland Helen Petousis-Harris John Taylor Nikki Turner James Ussher	Justine Daw (MBIE) Jonathan Lane (MBIE) Emily Robinson (MBIE) Chriselle Braganza (MBIE) Glenys Karran (MFAT), Item 6 Fran Priddy (VAANZ), Item 7
Apologies	Matire Harwood	

Item for discussion	Led by
Administration	
1. Apologies Matire Harwood	Ian Town
2. STAG Conflicts of Interest The current COI register was noted, with no new conflicts declared.	Ian Town
3. Review of minutes from last STAG meeting The minutes from the STAG meeting on 4 November 2020 were approved.	Ian Town
4. Matters arising Justine Daw provided updates on matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVAX Project Lead Glenys Karran (MFAT) is providing an update on the Facility at today's meeting (Item 6) • Information on how to invoice MBIE for preparation and attendance at STAG meetings has been sent around. Please send the signed Contract for Services and invoices to Emily Robinson. 	Justine Daw

<p>5. Review of rolling monthly planner</p> <p>Justine Daw noted that we have nearly completed the Science and Clinical Review Panel documentation to support the bilateral APA negotiations. While there may be further work in relation to potential COVAX vaccine candidates, we expect bilateral activity to largely be completed before Christmas.</p> <p>There may be periodic requests for advice into 2021, as we monitor purchased vaccine candidates over time (in respect of delivery schedules, logistics and performance) and support COVAX decision-making. In preparation, A3 Science Overviews have been developed to support this.</p> <p>Action: MBIE to circulate the current suite of A3 Science Overviews to the Science and Clinical Review Panel members and consider options for an electronic repository (e.g. a Dropbox) for this information.</p>	<p>Justine Daw</p>
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Updates	
<p>6. COVAX candidate assessment process</p> <p>Glenys Karran (COVAX Project Lead) provided an update on the COVAX Facility, including the organisational developments, the purchase pathways and expect</p> <p>Discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at 13 Nov 2020, COVAX has 186 participating economies, 94 of which are self-financing and 92 in the Advance Market Commitment. This is an encouraging collaboration of governments in support of COVID-19 vaccine development and equitable distribution. • COVAX is now significantly larger than originally envisioned, and this presents challenges in the standing-up of governance and accountability mechanisms. The establishment of a smaller working body to support the Secretariat is under discussion. • In terms of timeframes, New Zealand has selected the 'optional purchase' pathway which offers a higher degree of choice, as opposed to a committed pathway. There are two decision-making windows when vaccine candidates are presented, the first being whether to 'opt out' of a purchase opportunity. If you do not opt out, further information (including doses and pricing) will be presented for a second (final) decision on whether to purchase. The decision-making windows are likely to be small (1-2 weeks). • The first three candidate purchase opportunities have been presented, and New Zealand has retained the option to purchase them. • There has been some concern from WHO that bilateral APAs may undermine supply through COVAX. Glenys confirmed that Taskforce is very aware of this concern, and that work to enable the donation of surplus doses will need to be carried out (including indemnity/liability issues). • There was a question to participating economies as to whether mRNA vaccines would be included in COVAX. New Zealand signalled interest in small quantities of mRNA, conscious that countries on the committed pathway would have views on this. A final decision has yet to be conveyed. <p>Action: MFAT to update the STAG when a decision on the inclusion of mRNA in the COVAX facility is known.</p>	<p>Glenys Karran</p>

<p>Action: MBIE to discuss with Karl Ferguson (Communications and Engagement Project lead) on responding to public/media enquiries on COVAX.</p>	
<p>Discussion</p>	
<p>7. Surveillance, post-marketing and associated research needs for NZ and Polynesia</p> <p>Drs Helen Petousis-Harris and Fran Priddy (VAANZ Clinical Director), supported by Prof David Murdoch, presented a draft paper identifying opportunities and priorities for national surveillance and monitoring. It also noted specific draft recommendations, including the urgency in respect of agreeing overall leadership and coordination of a national safety monitoring programme.</p> <p>Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial COVID-19 vaccines will require substantial additional immunogenicity, safety, effectiveness and acceptability data collection in the post-licensure environment, and New Zealand is well-positioned to effectively monitor vaccine safety for NZ and Polynesia. • New Zealand urgently needs a coherent programme to identify the high-level priorities and connect the groups already engaged in these areas (and who may be ready with expertise to undertake aspects of the work). • Operational research, hypothesis testing research and programme evaluation research should all be incorporated into the overall design. • Both MFAT and MOH had provided some initial feedback to the authors, and this would need to be factored into the final paper. <p>Discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The STAG agreed that a framework for this work and coordination of effort was urgently needed. There are several groups already engaged in these areas, and consultation is needed to minimise duplication of efforts and ensure that existing resources are most effectively engaged. • The safety and immunogenicity studies would be particularly important and it was stressed that decisions on funding need to be made to support these efforts, including those where work is already underway. • The overarching priority and policy questions need to be agreed to guide the approach – while some (e.g. the safety questions) may be fairly straightforward, others will be much more complex and would need to be framed carefully. Updates to New Zealand’s border strategy will help determine the priorities and who needs to be in the studies. • There was a need to ensure that Māori communities are a focus in the studies to demonstrate immunogenicity, and that those who will be going out into those communities have strong evidence of this to increase uptake and acceptance of the vaccines. • The STAG agreed that further consultation on the proposal, including with PHARMAC and Medsafe, was needed, and welcomed the suggestion of a dedicated workshop to further discuss and refine the proposed approach. It was agreed that time is of the essence as both real-world planning and budget processes are moving at pace. <p>Action: MBIE to convene a workshop to discuss and aid finalisation of the paper (2 December was proposed, ahead of the scheduled STAG meeting).</p>	<p>Helen Petousis-Harris Fran Priddy David Murdoch</p>

<p>8. Questions for the STAG</p> <p>Q Do Phase III results for the Pfizer and Moderna candidates infer that the mRNA platform is likely to be effective and/or that candidates targeting the spike protein are likely to be effective? Or too early to say?</p> <p>A The results bode very well for the platform, and targeting the spike protein is likely to be effective in general. However, it's too early at this stage to draw any definitive conclusions.</p> <p>Q What is the STAG's view on the recent media stories concerning Danish mink? Is there any potential impact on New Zealand's vaccine strategy, and what can we do to prepare?</p> <p>A There have been multiple questions on this, including queries about other domestic animals. MoH has commissioned a report, and initial risk assessments suggest that it's unlikely to be an immediate issue.</p>	Justine Daw
<p>9. Other matters</p> <p>No other matters were raised.</p>	Justine Daw
<p>10. Meeting close</p>	Ian Town