

COVID-19 VACCINE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION WEEKLY REPORT

Week ending:	11 September 2020	Priority:	Routine
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2021-0854

	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		


Peter Crabtree
General Manager Science, Innovation and International
11 / 09 / 2020

Minister's comments:

IN CONFIDENCE

COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Implementation

Weekly Report

Week beginning 11 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

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Indemnity

MBIE and the Ministry of Health are preparing business cases for the Treasury setting out the benefits and risks of giving indemnities as part of both the COVAX Facility and bilateral Advance Purchase Agreements. The Treasury will take the business cases into account in providing advice to the Minister of Finance on whether the public interest test in the Public Finance Act is met.”

Advance Purchase Agreements

Contact: Poppy Haynes

Phone: 9(2)(a)

This week the Advance Purchase Agreement (APA) team has been progressing engagements with five pharmaceutical companies. Following initial calls last week, the APA team has set up three scientific briefings between our scientific review panel and the pharmaceutical companies. These briefings are an opportunity for our scientific advisors to receive the latest clinical data and trial results directly from the vaccine developers and ask any questions they may have regarding a potential vaccine. Following these briefings, scientific advisors will undertake an independent analysis, before providing advice on the vaccine candidate, which will be reflected in the advice to Ministers on whether to sign an APA.

This week we also met with our external commercial advisers to review our approach to negotiating advance purchase agreements.

We have been developing a general set of negotiating priorities to ensure any APAs entered into reflect New Zealand’s best interests. These priorities will give effect to the purchasing strategy agreed by Ministers. Developed in cooperation with MoH, MFAT and PHARMAC the negotiating priorities outline our preferred position on areas such as indemnities, supply agreements, and ability to donate to our Pacific neighbours.

As we advised last week, we have been negotiating the Heads of Terms with a pharmaceutical company for a vaccine that may start be available in early 2021. We are also working through logistical matters with the company, include cold-chain requirements and other handling details. We have received a Heads of Terms for another candidate this week, and will work with MoH, MFAT, PHARMAC and our external advisors to negotiate our preferred position to ensure New Zealand’s priorities are met in the agreement. We expect to receive two further draft agreements in the coming week.

Once due diligence and sufficient scientific advice has been received, the Task Force will assess the suitability of the offer, and we will brief joint ministers with a recommendation on whether we should sign any APAs.

Immunisation Strategy

Contact: Allison Bennett

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The COVID-19 Health System Response directorate within the Ministry of Health has now been stood up.

A COVID-19 Immunisation Programme has been established, and resourcing, planning and governance is in place.

An Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group (IIAG) has now been established and will meet in the week of 14 September 2020. The IIAG will be responsible for providing independent, clinical and implementation advice. Membership covers a diverse range of skills and includes Māori health expertise and significant Māori representation. The first substantive agenda item of the IIAG will be to consider criteria for a prioritisation framework.

Policy work is underway to ensure there is a shared understanding of the definition and size of certain population cohorts of interest. This will help us to understand the likely impact of prioritisation decisions.

Scenario planning is being progressed iteratively. The scenarios are providing the basis on which to consider variables and, as the level of certainty increases, form a basis for implementation decisions to be made from which to deliver the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme. They will be refined as further information and evidence emerges.

The Ministry of Health will update the Minister of Health on progress with the COVID-19 Immunisation Programme on 11 September 2020. The update includes the working assumptions and sample variables for the scenario planning.

COVAX

Contact: Glenys Karran

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We are working with other agencies to further progress the communications strategy and are in the early stages of connecting with the COVID-19 Health System Response directorate to ensure our approach and messaging is aligned, and that MoH are well placed to lead communications during the immunisation roll-out phase.

New Zealand has submitted a non-binding Confirmation of Intent (COI) to Participate in the COVAX Facility, signed by the Director-General of Health and with approval of Joint Ministers (Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, Minister of Health, and Minister of Finance). The letter signalled our interest in procuring enough doses for 50 percent of the population of the Realm of New Zealand using the Optional Purchase (as opposed to Committed Purchase) financing model. We understand a total of 80 economies have submitted COIs so far. This, combined with the 92 developing countries eligible for the ODA-funded COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), means that 172 economies in total intend to participate in the COVAX Facility. Binding Commitment Agreements are due on 18 September, and initial payments are due on 9 October. Officials are drafting advice to Joint Ministers on these decisions, accompanied by a business case on associated indemnities for consideration by the Minister of Finance.

New Zealand is exchanging views with partners on the COVAX Facility Terms and Commitment Agreement in the Friends of the (COVAX) Facility (FOF) context and in bilateral discussions, including with Republic of Korea and Canada (3 September), Australia (4 September), and Singapore and Japan (9 September). New Zealand has drafted of a non-paper with Australian counterparts on the COVAX Facility governance structure and decision-making process, and a fifth capital-based FOF meeting is scheduled for 11 September to discuss governance, allocation and other key issues. MFAT is leading consultation with Gavi this week on a set of key questions regarding the Terms and Commitment Agreement, including to determine how Realm populations can be factored into any associated liability/indemnity obligations. Officials are also exploring how New Zealand can support access to vaccines for Polynesia further to our NZ\$7 million contribution to the COVAX AMC, including, possibly, by building additional doses for Polynesian countries into our Advance Purchasing Agreements with suppliers.

MBIE is working closely with MFAT and relevant agencies to explore the potential for a press release to announce a binding commitment to the COVAX facility. The legally binding deadline is September 18

Science and Manufacturing

Contact: Justine Daw

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Science advice

We are working closely with the Science and Technical Advisory Group to ensure science advice continues to inform the advance purchasing agreement negotiations. As part of this work, we will be inviting senior MedSafe officials to participate alongside Advisory Group members in the science briefings to officials given by vaccine candidate suppliers.

Manufacturing

You will receive a separate briefing for the visit by the Prime Minister and Hon. Woods to South Pacific Sera (SPS) on the 15th of September. The visit will enable early-stage discussions on the potential for SPS to broaden its current focus on animal vaccine manufacture operations to include human vaccine manufacture.

In the meantime, we continue to develop thinking on future domestic vaccine manufacturing capability and capacity. We have commissioned and are reviewing an initial draft of an independent survey of New Zealand's current vaccine manufacturing capability and its suitability for COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing. This confirms our earlier assessments, and adds to a growing knowledge base of industry requirements for manufacturing, both from individual company engagement (for example, this week we discussed possibilities for NZ-based manufacturing with CSL/Seqirus in Australia), and engagement with pharmaceutical companies more broadly as part of the purchasing strategy. It is now clear that the opportunities for contract manufacturing globally are predominantly for production in the next 6 months. This will likely preclude any short-term opportunities for onshore Covid-19 manufacture. However, from a strategic standpoint, including in terms of managing sovereign risk, we continue to see benefit in developing the foundations for a medium-term onshore manufacturing capability. This is in line with the wider vaccine strategy, which aims to maximise options for New Zealand to manage risk in a highly uncertain operating environment, and provide resilience to future pandemics. We will prepare further advice for Ministers on these issues.

Communications

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Stakeholder engagement

We anticipate a high degree of interest in the Task Force and its efforts to secure a vaccine. Given this, we are working closely with other agencies in the Task Force to identify a comprehensive group of stakeholders and an appropriate approach to managing the needs and interests of these stakeholders. As part of 'Phase 2' of our Communications strategy, we anticipate providing a range of regular stakeholder briefings ahead of a vaccine roll-out. We are also investigating other communications channels, such as a regular email communication or similar, to support our stakeholder approach.

Media management

We are working with the Task Force negotiating team to make arrangements with pharmaceutical companies to ensure a 'no surprises' approach to communications. This should ensure that we receive a heads up on any planned announcements from pharmaceutical suppliers. This will allow us to proactively publicise the signing of APAs, and plan for how we communicate about key milestones as the research and potential for distribution of a successful vaccine progresses.

As part of this no-surprises approach, we are working with MFAT to proactively capture information from posts on announcements which may have an impact on New Zealand, in particular, Australia. This information will allow us to respond proactively, such as developing key messages, briefing stakeholders etc when required.

We have developed and agreed an approach with the Task Force agencies to centralise COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy-related media queries through the MBIE team. This is to ensure consistency of response; have a single point of entry for media; and that media queries are centrally 'triaged' with agencies as required, recognising that queries often require multi-part answers.

Communications planning

A key focus continues to be identifying proactive opportunities to demonstrate to New Zealanders the progress that is being made in implementing the Vaccine strategy. Upcoming opportunities include the signing up to the COVAX Facility, and announcements about the securing of successful APAs. We are working closely with the Task Force negotiating team to agree with pharmaceutical companies how announcements about APAs are planned and implemented. We anticipate the first proactive announcement about APAs to be made in early October, at the earliest. If agreements are reached sooner, we will look to secure agreed publicity at that point.

Communications risks

We have identified a range of scenarios that could potentially undermine trust and confidence in the Government's response to securing a suitable COVID-19 vaccine. We are developing a risk based approach to these scenarios and identifying what policy or communications response might be required, if any.

Recent Briefings

Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
09/09/2020	2021-0845	Proactive release of Cabinet paper – Vaccine Strategy funding envelope	Simon Rae

Upcoming Briefings

Due Date	Briefing Number	Title	Sign Out Manager
TBC (October2020)		Strategic assessment of COVID-19 vaccine portfolio	Simon Rae
TBC	TBC	Approval to sign binding Heads of Agreement for first Advance Purchase Agreement	Poppy Haynes
11/09/2020		COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy – Update on Manufacturing options	Simon Rae
11/09/2020		COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy – COVAX Facility Binding Commitment Agreement and Upfront Payment	Peter Crabtree
11/09/2020		Event Briefing: Visit to South Pacific Sera	Peter Crabtree