

GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPING VACCINE INTRODUCTION OPERATIONAL PLANS

Guidance is provided here on completing new vaccine introduction (NVI) operational plans and a Plan of Action.

1. Cold Chain

Where new cold chain equipment is required to store the new vaccine, a plan should be put in place to ensure that new equipment is installed at all appropriate levels prior to vaccine distribution, at least 6–8 weeks before launch. A budget of at least 10 months should be provided for the full process of assessing cold chain capacity to installation of new equipment.

If the cold chain equipment cannot be procured in time, coping mechanisms such as increased frequency of distribution to reduce strain on stores with low cold chain capacity should be in place 6-8 weeks before launch. In this case, the NVI operational plan should include a concrete post-launch date by which coping mechanism will be replaced by sustainable solutions (e.g. installation of cold chain equipment at the relevant levels).

If the country has developed a cold chain plan, include the relevant activities which are necessary to execute the plan into the NVI work plan so that the NVI planning body can monitor progress regularly and ensure readiness before launch.

2. Plan for greater than normal demand early in launch

There is often greater demand for the new vaccine than that expected during routine immunisations, which can lead to stock outs. As Gavi does not normally fund catch-up campaigns, the buffer stock (25% of the expected demand) should be sufficient to handle these unexpected variations and to meet high demand in the first year. It is recommended that approximately four times the routine amount is planned for in the first quarter, and an additional 60-70% of routinely forecasted doses for the first year. Alternatively, different eligibility criteria may need to be implemented in order to control the backlog of demand.

3. Financing

Plan realistically for the timing of key activities that rely on VIG funding (which may include, for example, Health Care Worker trainings or printing of training materials) keeping in mind that the transfer of VIG funds might take at least six months from receiving the Decision Letter.

4. Preparing materials

It is recommended that carefully planning is carried out for items that can cause delays in subsequent activities, and in particular, begin printing materials (e.g. social mobilisation materials, training guides, data tools) well in advance of planned distribution as the procurement process and printing time for the large quantities required can make this a lengthy process.

5. Pre-positioning Vaccine, Supplies, and Materials

Begin pre-positioning supplies at the regional level (e.g. vaccine, syringes, training guides, social mobilisation material, and data tools) 4-6 weeks prior to launch date so that they are in place at least 2 weeks ahead of launch at health facility level.

6. Rapid Post-Launch Follow-up

Plan to conduct a rapid assessment within 1-2 months after launch to quickly detect and take rapid corrective action on issues that affect the new vaccine's uptake, and monitor coverage closely in the first six months of introduction. Calls to 100+ health facilities with a standardised questionnaire are a cost-effective solution.