

## GAVI ALLIANCE GUIDANCE ON COUNTRY COORDINATION FORUMS

Recognising the critical role of Coordination Forums (ICC/HSCC or equivalent), Gavi has developed the following guidance to help countries strengthen Coordination Forums functioning to better support national immunisation and health sector goals. Coordination Forums should bring together governments and other relevant key immunisation stakeholders in a **participatory and transparent manner** and with the **objectives** (relating to all programmes, not just Gavi support) to:

- Provide strategic direction, oversight and transparency on the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and related health sector programmes to ensure sustainable coverage and equity of immunisation;
- Ensure a coherent view on strategy, planning, funding and performance of the EPI programme within the context of the broader health system
- Promote complementarity and harmonization of activities and investments among stakeholders
- Promote linkages of EPI with the broader health system
- Ensure that the EPI and the coordination of the programme remains government-owned and government-led

The design and functions of Coordination Forums vary widely across countries, and it should be the **responsibility of each country's government** to decide what design and functions are best suited to national needs. Typically, however, coordination should **reside at a level in the health ministry with the authority to link to the broader national health planning and financing system, and authority relative to immunisation**. At a high level the **common responsibilities of Coordination Forums** should include ensuring strategic direction and oversight on key strategic topics. These **strategic topics** generally fall into **five categories**:

1. Strategic planning of the programme (e.g. review and approve comprehensive strategic planning)
2. Programme financing (e.g. create long term visibility on resources and facilitate resource mobilization)
3. Coordination (e.g. create transparency and promote coordination amongst stakeholders, ensure critical issues rise up from the operational/technical level to be addressed)
4. Operational planning and performance oversight (e.g. input into operational work plan, oversee progress of the overall EPI program)
5. Information dissemination (e.g. share relevant information for the EPI programme, key stakeholders, and Gavi)

Beyond these categories, countries often have coordinating bodies at a more operational and technical level. The guidance in this document is intended to apply to coordination forums that perform the high-level strategic functions mentioned above, rather than the more detailed operational and technical coordinating functions.

The **objective of this Coordination Forum guidance** is designed to enable countries to build on existing coordination structures and achieve the objectives of the Coordination Forums while ensuring government ownership and leadership. It is part of a broader ‘**support package**’ for countries to help ensure functionality of their Coordination Forums. This guidance document includes **requirements** and **recommendations** with regard to:

- **Coordination Forum membership:** Guidance on the types of members to be represented, with descriptions and examples.
- **Coordination Forum mandates:** Guidance on the key strategic mandate.
- **Coordination Forum governance:** Guidance on governance best practices and supporting activities for the Coordination Forum to function effectively.

In many countries, both an ICC and HSCC exist, in which case these requirements and recommendations would only apply to one body. Gavi recommends the ICC is best positioned for this and recommends creating strong linkages between the ICC and HSCC to ensure alignment, such as structuring the ICC as a sub-committee of the HSCC, holding joint meetings or exploring other means of cooperation.

To be **eligible for NVS, CCE Optimisation Platform and HSIS support**, Gavi asks countries to ensure a **basic functionality** of their Coordination Forum. Countries can demonstrate this by adhering to the **requirements** as these are seen most critical to the functioning of the Coordination Forum. A set of documents submitted along with the grant application will help the Independent Review Committee (IRC) or an equivalent review body to assess adherence. Gavi recognises that improving the functionality of Coordination Forums is an ongoing effort for countries that may take some time. Therefore, there will be a degree of flexibility in approving NVS and CCE Optimisation Platform support if the Coordination Forum does not have a basic functionality yet but the application coherently points out the requirements not met, and the approach to address these.

In the future, some suggestions may be gradually added as further requirements.



Additional elements of the ‘support package’ available to countries include a number of tools (e.g. templates for ToR and meeting minutes) and trainings/ technical assistance for Coordination Forums. Details are available at: [www.gavi.org/support/coordination/](http://www.gavi.org/support/coordination/)

## Coordination Forum Membership

Coordination Forums bring together governments and other relevant key immunisation stakeholders together in a participatory and inclusive manner. While countries will determine the actual members of the Coordination Forum, these guidelines describe potential member profiles that can bring expertise, insight and authority to help the Coordination Forum perform their strategic mandates. Membership should include senior-level leaders who can make decisions on behalf of their organisations, represent the full range of voices needed to coordinate on high-level, strategic issues of the EPI programme, and whenever possible, strive for gender balance, equity and inclusiveness in participation amongst the stakeholder groups.

Table 1: Gavi requirements and recommendations for Coordination Forum membership

Coordination Forum membership	Examples
<b>Required members<sup>1</sup></b>	
1. Coordination Forum Chair is a senior leader from the Ministry of Health (MoH) with decision making authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minister</li> <li>• Permanent Secretary</li> </ul>
2. Members include at least one senior-level leader with decision-making authority from each of the following categories:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPI programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct leadership of EPI manager (if any)</li> <li>• EPI manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministries related to budget, financial plans and other topics related to EPI financing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Finance and/or Budget</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoH planning departments/ divisions and other directorates related to HSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning department of MoH</li> <li>• HSS coordinating unit in MoH</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministries (other than MoH) with high relevance to EPI programme implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Social Services</li> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Ministry of Devolution</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil society most active in immunisation and representing voice of constituencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy groups</li> <li>• Parent associations</li> <li>• Religious groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key donors most active in immunisation, maternal/neonatal/ child health, and/or health system strengthening in the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few bilateral donors or representatives of a functioning donor coordination body</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key (implementing) partners most active in immunisation and health system strengthening in the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of Gavi Alliance representatives from WHO and UNICEF with technical fluency in EPI and HSS <u>and</u> representatives of other implementers.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommended members</b>	
<p>Members may also include individuals/ representatives who bring key areas of expertise and knowledge on immunisation and country realities, and/or ensure that the Coordination Forum remains connected to technical advisory groups. This could include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immunisation experts (e.g. academics/ researchers), including experts on equity</li> <li>• Chairman of the immunisation technical advisory group (e.g. National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (NITAG))</li> <li>• Representative of the National Regulatory Authority (NRA)</li> <li>• Private sector representatives involved in service delivery</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommended selection process and membership rules</b>	
<p>The Coordination Forum should define a rigorous member selection process and membership rules (including criteria and processes for members to be identified, selected, and removed; attendance and participation expectations; and term limit), and outline these in the Terms of Reference (TOR).</p>	

<sup>1</sup> The requirements for membership come into effect for May 2017 and later applications to give countries sufficient time to prepare for the change. Until then countries can submit the existing ToR.

## Coordination Forum mandate

As listed in Table A.2 below, Gavi provides a set of requirements and/or recommendations on the strategic mandate of Coordination Forums across five categories: (i) strategic planning of the programme; (ii) programme financing; (iii) coordination; (iv) operational planning and performance oversight; and (v) information dissemination. While the scope of functions of the Coordination Forum will vary from country to country, the mandates listed below represent critical responsibilities focused on the overall EPI programme, with a few which are specific to Gavi support, as noted.

Table 2: Gavi requirements and recommendations for Coordination Forum mandate

Coordination Forum mandate
<p><b>Strategic planning of the programme</b></p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the development of comprehensive strategic plan<sup>2</sup>, including setting and aligning on specific goals and targets (where relevant)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Programme financing</b></p> <p><i>Requirement (specific to Gavi support):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and approve Gavi grant applications (includes HSIS support), renewals<sup>3</sup> and Partners' Engagement Framework (PEF) submissions of partners for 2018 and ensure their alignment with national strategic and operational plans and a focus on sustainable coverage and equity</li> <li>Ensure a broad and participatory process in grant application development also on the operational and technical level, involving the relevant institutions described in table A.1</li> </ul> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create long-term visibility on funding for EPI across domestic and donor sources in support of the national strategic plan, and near-term visibility on government budget and donor grant disbursements</li> <li>Advocate to government and partners to mobilize greater resources for EPI and facilitate dialogue among them to shape a resource mobilization plan</li> <li>Participate in development of grant proposals and renewals (for non-Gavi stakeholders) in alignment with national strategic and operational plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination</b></p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create transparency on programmatic coordination among key stakeholders</li> <li>Define structure/organisation of operational/technical Coordination Forum (not including NITAG) and ensure processes exist for major bottlenecks to surface to strategic Coordination Forum</li> <li>Create transparency and linkages with coordination bodies for the broader health sector (incl. HSS) and those related to EPI (e.g. NITAG)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Operational planning and performance oversight</b></p> <p><i>Requirement (specific to Gavi support):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and endorse operational plans and budgets for HSIS support</li> <li>Oversee progress of Gavi investments based on discussion and approval of Joint Appraisal and if possible based on insights from the EPI team and operational/ technical Coordination Forums</li> </ul> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and input into annual EPI work plan aligned with strategic goals</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive strategic plan refers to high-level plans for immunisation (e.g., Costed Multi-Year Plans, CMYPs) and immunisation-related aspects of health systems that are most relevant for the country.

<sup>3</sup> HSS renewals as of 2017.

### Coordination Forum mandate

- Oversee performance of the EPI programme, including regular review of performance indicators and implementation status of annual work plan, with a focus on tracking and assessing progress against coverage and equity goals
- Raise critical issues impeding progress of the EPI programme to relevant government stakeholders

#### *Recommendation (specific to Gavi support):*

- Review findings and recommendations from EPI review, Programme Capacity Assessments (PCA) and other assessments (including regular review of management capacity of the EPI team) and translate into actions
- Oversee progress of key PEF activities (including discussion and approval of PEF functions and PEF milestones) based on insights from the EPI team and operational/ technical coordination forums

### Information dissemination

#### *Recommendation (specific to Gavi support):*

- Share information highly relevant to the EPI programme, Coordination Forum members, and the Gavi Alliance

## Coordination Forum governance

This section outlines guidance for governing Coordination Forums, and includes a set of norms and best practices for conducting effective meetings. Adhering to best practices can typically improve the joint understanding of the Coordination Forum's role, the inclusiveness of decision making and would ensure a constant flow of information between all Coordination Forum members.

*Table A.3: Gavi requirements and recommendations for Coordination Forum governance*

### Coordination Forum governance<sup>4</sup>

#### Terms of Reference

##### *Requirement:*

The role of the Coordination Forum is defined through a formal TOR, signed and shared with all members, including:

- Objective and mandates of the Coordination Forum
- Membership composition, selection process, and membership rules (e.g., attendance and participation expectations, term limits)
- Meeting rules (frequency and timing of meetings)
- Decision-making procedures (including quorum, presence of chair, voting rules for approving different types of decisions)
- Support functions (including who is responsible)
- Roles and organisational structure of Coordination Forum secretariat (or equivalent)
- Terms of reference for committees and/or working groups (if applicable)

<sup>4</sup> The requirements for Terms of Reference and decision-making procedures come into effect for May 2017 and later applications to give countries sufficient time to prepare for the change. Until then countries can submit the existing ToR.

## Coordination Forum governance<sup>4</sup>

### Meeting rules

#### *Recommendation:*

- Adhere to meeting frequency (suggested to be at least 4 meetings per year) and timing as defined in the TOR
- Schedule meetings in advance (suggested to be at least 2 months, especially if the Minister of Health is the chair)
- Align meeting times with key grant cycle events (e.g., HSIS/NVS grant application, Joint Appraisal)
- Schedule additional ad-hoc meetings when needed (e.g. key approvals)

### Decision-making procedures

#### *Requirement:*

- Follow quorum (presence of at least a certain share of members during Coordination Forum meetings to make any decisions, e.g. 75%) as defined in the TOR

#### *Recommendation:*

Follow other decision-making procedures as defined in the TOR, including:

- Presence of the Chair (or approved alternate) to take any decision
- Voting rules for approving different types of decisions. For example, defined distribution of votes among members to ensure an equitable balance of voices (potentially capping votes of donors and ensuring minimum number of votes for civil society), minimum share of votes to make different types of decisions

### Support function

#### *Requirement:*

- Take minutes for each meeting and share with all Coordination Forum members within a defined time period after a meeting (e.g., 5 working days)<sup>5</sup>, minutes should include list of members attending the meeting and whether quorum was met

#### *Recommendations:*

- Supporting the operations of the Coordination Forum requires significant preparation and follow-up; dedicated staff capacity on the EPI team (including EPI manager's capacity) should be devoted to this. A dedicated Coordination Forum Secretariat is an option for countries to provide this support. The responsibilities would include:
  - "Content" activities, e.g. develop agenda and pre-reads, shape a coherent meeting document, track follow-up on decisions taken (potentially through a Coordination Forum dashboard)
  - Administrative activities, e.g. schedule meetings (place, date, invitation), collect and share pre-reads, share agenda, organize meeting logistics (room, food/drink), create transparency on attendance and key decisions
- The following are suggested best practices for structuring a Coordination Forum Secretariat:
  - EPI manager (or deputy manager) takes the lead on "content" activities (e.g. follow-up on decisions with key stakeholders);
  - Dedicated EPI team member(s) are in charge of administrative activities and supporting execution of "content activities";
- Coordination Forum Secretariat or other group dedicated to supporting the Coordination Forum is funded by the government in most of the cases. Exceptional support could be provided by Coordination Forum members, Gavi, and/or other donors (e.g., through time-bound funding, temporary capacity support, capability building through a secondee).

<sup>5</sup> Minutes can be made available to the public through a website, where possible.