

Final Report Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee



IRC evaluation report outline

- I Executive summary (Pages 3-6)**
- II Background (Pages 7-10)**
Includes (i) the need for an IRC evaluation, (ii) what is the IRC, (iii) structure and roles within the IRC, (iv) IRC interfaces with the wider organization, (v) the IRC's role in the Gavi application-to-disbursement process
- III Objectives and methodology (Pages 11-15)**
Includes (i) objectives of this evaluation, (ii) key principles, (iii) scope and timelines, (iv) methodology, (v) risks and mitigations, and (vi) how to read this report
- 1 Focus area 1: Mandate of the IRC (Pages 16-21)**
Includes (i) evolution of Gavi and the role of the IRC, (ii) clarity of the IRC's mandate, (iii) Gavi's risk appetite in the proposal review process, and (iv) recommendations
- 2 Focus area 2: Gavi application-to-disbursement process design (Pages 22-27)**
Includes (i) place of the IRC review in the E2E process, (ii) differentiation of IRC review process pathways, and (iii) recommendations
- 3 Focus area 3: Process operationalization (Pages 28-32)**
Includes (i) E2E application-to-disbursement process baseline, (ii) digital tools and enablers, (iii) recommendations
- 4 Focus area 4: IRC meetings & tools (Pages 33-40)**
Includes (i) review protocol, (ii) review differentiation, (iii) review country engagement, (iv) review guidance, (v) review consistency, and (v) recommendations
- 5 Focus area 5: IRC membership (Pages 41-46)**
Includes (i) IRC composition and staffing, (ii) IRC training curriculum, (iii) IRC leadership, and (iv) recommendations
- 6 Focus area 6: Results & impact (Pages 47-52)**
Includes (i) IRC compensation, feedback and performance management, (ii) closed loop impact updates to the IRC, (iii) IRC lessons sharing, and (iv) recommendations
- IV Conclusion (Pages 53-54)**
Includes (i) prioritization, (ii) timelines, and (iii) change management principles
- V Annex**
Includes (i) glossary, (ii) stakeholder interviews, and (iii) differentiation logic

Why?

Why was an external evaluation of the IRC carried out?

The Independent Review Committee (IRC) was established shortly after Gavi's inception in 2000 to independently review all applications for new Gavi support based on a system of peer review by technical experts. IRC reviewers typically meet four times a year for review rounds in Geneva (plus additional country-specific in-country or virtual proposal reviews) and reviewed more than 300 proposals, totaling \$2.5 billion in cash and vaccine grants, between 2020 and 2022. In 2017, an internal audit recommended a thorough review of the IRC and its functioning. In parallel, Gavi's operating model continued to evolve with the adoption of a new five-year strategy for 2021-2025 (Gavi 5.0/5.1). The combination of these two elements prompted the launch of this external evaluation to assess the appropriateness of the IRC's strategic design, provide an objective review of the IRC's functioning, and use this review to co-construct solutions with the involved team. This evaluation took place between November 2022 and March 2023, and involved three main steps:

- Interviewing approximately 100 key informants to diagnose the main strengths and weaknesses of the IRC review process
- Clustering and codifying these findings through quantitative and qualitative analysis based on public and Gavi-internal data
- Co-constructing actionable solutions to address the identified issues through a series of workshops with over 30 participants representing all key stakeholder groups.

What?

What are the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations?

The main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the IRC evaluation are grouped into six key focus areas and a high-level summary is provided below.

Mandate

Findings and conclusions: The IRC has existed since Gavi's inception and its functioning has remained relatively stable, while Gavi's business context has changed massively. In only about 20 years, Gavi has grown its disbursements from less than \$1 billion in Gavi 1.0 to over \$20 billion in the first two years of Gavi 5.0 (including COVAX), while also significantly expanding its portfolio of support. Despite all the contextual changes, key informants clearly recognize the critical role that the IRC continues to play in the grant management lifecycle to ensure the integrity and technical soundness of the Gavi Secretariat's funding decisions. However, in order to adapt to Gavi's rapidly changing business environment and maximize its value to countries, its mandate, role, and operations need to be further refined. The IRC's mandate is broadly defined in its Terms of Reference, which allows for incremental changes without complex approval processes, but also leads to heterogeneous interpretations of the specifics of the IRC's role by different stakeholders. In addition, the lack of a clear translation of Gavi's risk appetite into differentiated guidelines for reviewing different types of proposals tends to lead IRC members to take a conservative approach when reviewing applications, often leading them to be perceived as proposal auditors rather than strategic, technical advisors to countries.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes two key recommendations.

- Role and mandate of the IRC: Maintain the IRC as an independent review body to ensure the integrity and technical soundness of Gavi's (material) grant funding decisions but adapt its role to the evolving business context and ensure a clear understanding of the IRC's mandate among key stakeholders.
- Operationalization of Gavi's risk appetite: Provide clear guidance to the IRC and all involved stakeholders on Gavi's differentiated risk appetite in line with Board guidance.

What?

What are the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations?

Process design

Findings and conclusions: The proposal review process includes several subsequent steps, with the IRC conducting a final, holistic programmatic and budget review prior to CEO approval. Compared to peer organizations in the field of global health financing, (e.g., the Global Fund, Unitaaid, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), Gavi's end-to-end process from application to disbursement takes significantly longer (i.e., 12-20 months compared to an average of 10-12 months), and the IRC review comes relatively late in the E2E process. Another key difference to peer organizations is that, apart from the time-sensitive process for urgent applications (3% of reviews), there is no differentiation in the process paths leading to the IRC review despite Gavi's explicit focus on further differentiation in its 5.0/5.1 strategy. This results in a largely standardized proposal review process that is highly resource-intensive for the majority of low-risk, low-complexity applications, and does not adapt to the need for more iterative, closer IRC engagement for high-value applications with significant programmatic complexity (e.g., High Impact FPP applications) to avoid late and costly strategic course corrections.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes two key recommendations.

- Application goalposts: Develop clear and contextualized application goalposts for proposals (including must-haves and nice-to-haves for different types of applications or countries) and, where appropriate, conduct an application briefing meeting between the country and selected IRC members to agree on priorities and strategic guardrails.
- Differentiated review process: Follow a differentiated application review process by support type and country segment, including the scenario of waiving the IRC review for applications with low programmatic and financial materiality.

Process operationalization

Findings and conclusions: The application-to-disbursement process consists of five key stages: proposal preparation (approx. 3-10 months), pre-screening (approx. 1-2 months), IRC review including pre- and post-review work (approx. 1 month), issue resolution (approx. 2-3 months), and approval to disbursement (approx. 4-6 months). Despite a number of incremental efforts to improve efficiency (e.g., following the 2017 internal audit), there is significant scope for simplification and streamlining across the process chain, with a particular focus in this evaluation on the pre-screening, IRC review, and issue resolution steps. Overall, the key informants for the IRC evaluation agree with the main pain points identified by the parallel EVOLVE project: at times unclear roles and responsibilities between the different involved parties, resource-intensive processes overall, and a prevailing culture of non-compliance with internal deadlines. In addition, data and workflow management is highly fragmented and the use of modern digital tools is limited.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes two key recommendations, which fall within the scope of the EVOLVE project.

- Process efficiency: Streamline the overall process by simplifying and differentiating the pre-screening, IRC review and issue resolution steps with clear roles and responsibilities for all parties and standardized process timelines.
- Digital tools: Develop a comprehensive approach to data and workflow management along the E2E application-to-disbursement process to improve operational efficiency and enable data-driven, cross-cutting performance management.

What?

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IRC protocols and tools

Findings and conclusions: While effective changes have been made in recent years to the way IRC meetings are conducted (e.g., the introduction of in-country reviews for FPP proposals from High Impact countries), several additional areas for improvement have been identified. First, while the peer review format of the IRC meeting ensures unbiased decision-making, there are challenges in conducting focused and efficient meetings, resulting in overrunning meetings and sometimes non-actionable recommendations. Second, most IRC reviews (80+%) follow the standard Geneva-based format with limited differentiation in process and scope. Third, while country engagement is seen as beneficial, the IRC only interacts directly with countries in about 20% of reviews. Finally, the current IRC review guidelines are not specific, leading to sometimes inconsistent reviews over time and across applications.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes five key recommendations.

- Focused IRC review meetings: Strengthen the IRC meeting protocol to allow for effective discussion among reviewers, with a focus on resolving open issues during the plenary.
- Differentiated IRC: Apply different IRC review formats and scopes to the context of each application, based on a predefined differentiation logic.
- Country engagement: Improve the quality and the feasibility of IRC recommendations by increasing engagement with countries, technical partners, and the IRC.
- IRC review guidance: Ensure focused and consistent IRC reviews by providing reviewers with clear methodological guidance, review criteria, and scoring sheets.
- IRC consistency checks: Ensure consistency of IRC reports and recommendations over time by introducing post-IRC quality reviews by IRC thematic leads.

IRC membership

Findings and conclusions: IRC members collectively have the relevant technical expertise and experience to conduct effective proposal reviews. However, the IRC membership would benefit from more recent field experience, as most members' field experience dates back 10-20 years. In addition, IRC members do not always have a sufficient understanding of Gavi's strategic priorities, access to the latest epidemiological trends, and a high level of reviewing soft skills such as report writing, leading to sometimes controversial IRC decisions and unclear action points for countries during issue resolution. Finally, the absence of a formally appointed IRC Chair for about three years created a gap in strong and consistent leadership for focused and well-moderated IRC reviews, consistent IRC decision-making, and the sharing of key cross-cutting insights with key stakeholders, including the Gavi Board and PPC, the Gavi Secretariat, technical partners, and countries.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes three key recommendations.

- IRC capability mapping: Improve and maintain a detailed IRC capability map, highlighting relevant country field experience and functional/pathogen specific expertise.
- IRC trainings: Further develop the skills of IRC reviewers through training focused on culture, soft skills, and country context.
- IRC leadership: Empower IRC leadership to lead high-quality reviews, communicate impactful recommendations to countries, and facilitate learning through cross-cutting lessons.

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Results and impact

Findings and conclusions: The IRC review process provides a valuable opportunity to codify cross-cutting lessons from multiple applications and facilitate learning among key stakeholders, including the Gavi Board and PPC, the Gavi Secretariat, technical partners, countries, and the IRC itself. To fulfill this responsibility, the IRC produces a 20-page consolidated report after each review cycle. However, its key messages are not always disseminated in a way that is tailored to the needs and interests of key audiences (e.g., the annual update to the Board has been discontinued). In addition, communication is primarily one-way from the IRC to stakeholders, with limited reciprocal feedback. For example, IRC members do not receive formal updates on the impact of their recommendations for the further development and implementation of proposals (e.g., after the issue resolution process or during implementation) and do not benefit from regular performance feedback beyond an initial assessment after their first review.

Recommendations: To address the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation team makes three key recommendations.

- Lessons learned: Regularly share and discuss key cross-cutting lessons from the IRC reviews with relevant Alliance stakeholders to facilitate learning and focus efforts.
- Closed-loop feedback: Provide the IRC with greater visibility into a country's progress in (1) resolving IRC points of action and (2) implementing cash and vaccine grants.
- 360-degree feedback: Implement a 360-degree feedback process for IRC reviewers to monitor reviewer quality, facilitate learning, and promote a high-performance culture.

How?

How can these recommendations be implemented?

This evaluation suggests that three key criteria should be applied to prioritize and sequence the implementation of the recommendations. First, structural enablers that are critical to the implementation of other recommendations should be addressed first. Second, high-impact standalone initiatives with limited additional capacity needs should be launched in parallel to maintain positive momentum and achieve initial milestones quickly. Third and finally, time-sensitive recommendations should be addressed within their respective windows of opportunity to maximize impact. Based on these criteria, a high-level implementation roadmap and change management plan has been developed in collaboration with the FD&R team and other relevant stakeholders within the Gavi Secretariat, covering a timeframe of two to three years prior to the launch of Gavi 6.0. The initial priorities for the rest of 2023 will be (i) to implement, through close cross-functional collaboration, a clear differentiation logic for IRC review processes and formats that will set the baseline for subsequent process streamlining efforts under the EVOLVE project, and (ii) to launch a series of targeted actions under the FD&R team to improve the quality of IRC reviews, develop IRC membership and culture, and strengthen IRC learning and mandate.

Successful execution of the implementation roadmap depends on a number of critical success factors, including (i) strong leadership buy-in to ensure timely strategic decision-making, (ii) adequate (surge) resources and change management capabilities in the FD&R team to drive and coordinate the implementation of initiatives, (iii) strong cross-functional collaboration to collectively improve IRC input and output, and (iv) an openness to experimentation and innovation in line with Gavi's differentiated risk appetite.

I. Background

I.1 The need for an IRC evaluation

The Independent Review Committee (IRC) was established in 2000 to review each application for all types of new Gavi support in an open, transparent, and independent manner [1]. An internal audit of the IRC in 2017 resulted in selected suggestions for process changes, as well as a recommendation to conduct a more holistic review of the IRC [2]. In 2020, Gavi embarked on a new five-year strategy ("Gavi 5.0") with a vision to "leave no one behind with immunization" and an increased focus on reaching "zero dose" children and missed communities. In 2022, this strategy was refined in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which Gavi played a prominent role through COVAX ("Gavi 5.1") [3].

Both the 2017 audit report and the launch of Gavi 5.1 provided the impetus for a holistic review of the IRC, with the aim of revisiting the independent review process and ensuring that it is fit for purpose in the current context. This led the Secretariat to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) on August 8, 2022, which closed on September 16, 2022 [4].

This evaluation runs in parallel with the "EVOLVE" project, which aims to redesign the grant management cycle consisting of five key processes: (1) Plan & Design; (2) Review, Approval & Disbursement; (3) Monitoring, Reporting & Performance Management; (4) Ongoing Management of Cash & Vaccine Grants; (5) Audit & Closure. Insights from this project were continuously fed into this evaluation and vice versa [5].

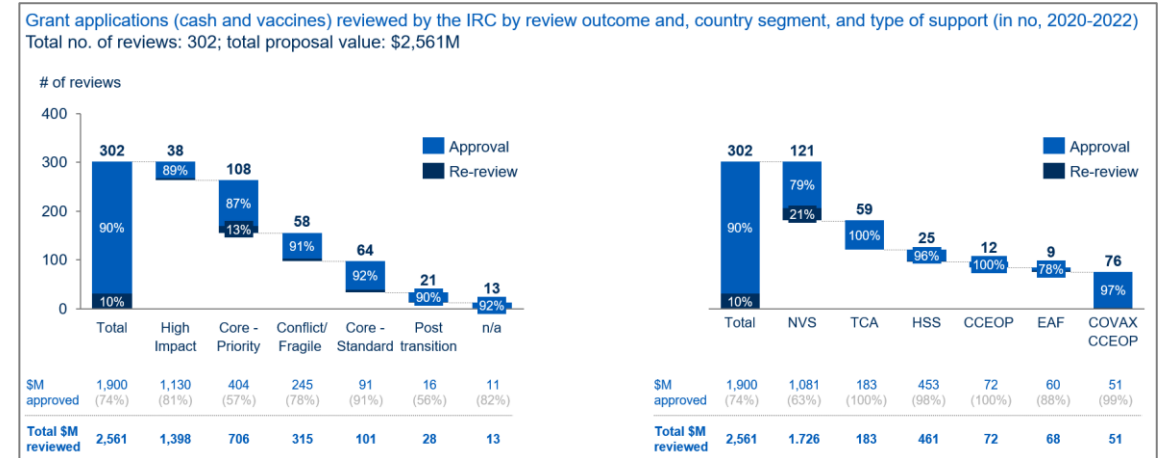
I.2 What is the Gavi IRC?

The IRC was established by the Gavi Alliance in its early stages because the Secretariat at the time did not have the technical expertise to adequately assess the technical feasibility of country proposals for Gavi support. It also played an important role in strengthening the credibility and legitimacy of the organization's governance, especially since it did not yet have a proven track record. Further, the IRC is also in line with Gavi's "three lines of defense" model, where expertise and independence are critical components of effective risk management.

The primary function of the IRC is to make recommendations to the CEO on the approval of funds for new programmes, reviewing them for adherence to the Gavi Programme Funding Policy. These include cash and vaccine grants for New and Underused Vaccine Support (NVS), Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) support, Targeted Country Assistance (TCA), the Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform (CCEOP), and Equity Accelerator Funding (EAF) to reach zero-dose children and missed communities. The proposal review is carried out by a pool of 100 active members with different areas of expertise and from different regions [8]. They meet at least four times a year as part of their standard cycle, with additional, ad hoc meetings as required. Meetings are conducted using a peer review system. This approach allows two independent reviewers to produce separate reports, which are then presented in a plenary meetings for discussion [6].

In the previous strategic period (2020-2022), the IRC reviewed 302 applications (as shown in Figure I.A), of which 271 (90%) were approved and 31 (10%) were selected for re-review. This represents a total reviewed value of \$2.6 billion, of which \$1.9 billion (74%) was approved and \$0.5 billion was selected for re-review.

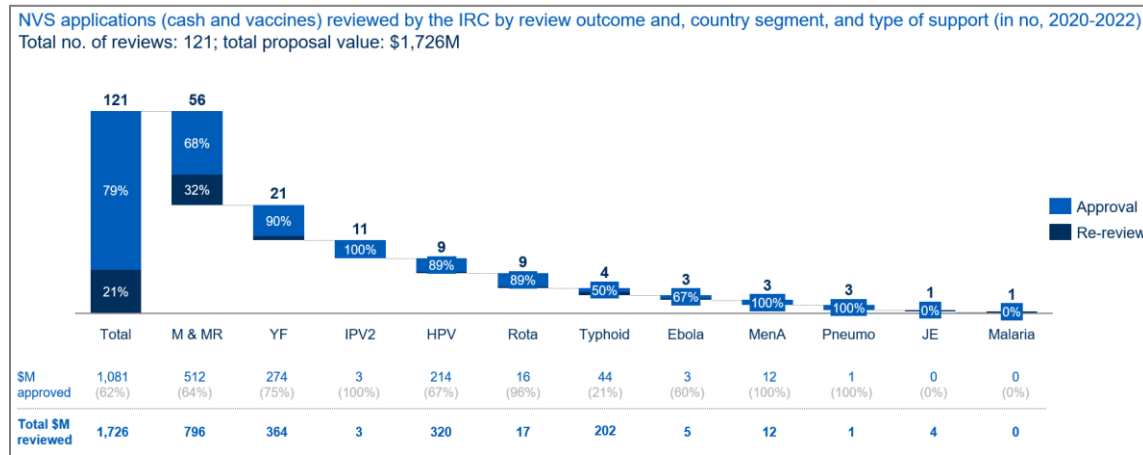
FIG I.A Overview of grant proposals reviewed by the IRC [7]



Most of the value (55%) is attributed to High Impact countries, but they account for only about 12% of the number of proposals. NVS and HSS are the two largest categories of grants, accounting for about 57% and 24% of the total value, respectively. The remaining value comes from TCA, CCEOP, EAF, and COVAX CCEOP grants.

The majority of the number of re-reviews is concentrated in the NVS portfolio, which is primarily driven by two major vaccine types (see Figure I.B). First, measles and measles-rubella account for 46% of the portfolio's reviewed NVS grants and have a re-review rate (by number of applications) of 32%. Second, YF accounts for approximately 17% of the total number of NVS grants and has a re-review rate of 10% (by number of applications).

FIG I.B Overview of NVS proposals reviewed by the IRC [7]



I.3 Structure: Roles within the IRC

Chair and Vice-Chair: The CEO, in consultation with the PPC Chair, selects an IRC Chair for a two-year term, renewable for two additional years. They also appoint two IRC Vice-Chairs for two-year terms, with the option of an additional two-year term, so that the terms of the Vice-Chairs do not expire in the same year as that of the IRC Chair. The responsibilities of the IRC Chair and, in his/her absence, the Vice-Chair include chairing plenary sessions, facilitating consensus among reviewers, consolidating issues raised, and participating in the High-Level Review Panel [6].

Primary and secondary reviewers: The FD&R team selects two reviewers from a group of 100 members on the basis of their expertise to review assigned applications (see Figure I.C). Each reviewer prepares their report independently and presents their recommendations at the IRC meeting where consensus is reached. The primary reviewer is responsible for leading the report writing process. A reviewer may be assigned to review more than one proposal during an IRC review round.

Cross-cutting reviewers: In some IRC reviews, there are financial and logistical experts, called cross-cutters, who examine and review these specific parts of the applications. They then share their recommendations with the primary and secondary reviewers, who incorporate their input into the report.

Editors: An IRC member with strong editing skills is assigned by the FD&R team to edit and proofread the final documents.

I.4 IRC interfaces with the wider organization

Board: According to the TOR, the Board appoints the IRC members, and the IRC members make recommendations to the Secretariat. In practice, the IRC reviewers make a funding recommendation to the CEO, who has overruled the IRC findings only once in the past two decades (Ghana, 2022 Malaria) [1].

PPC: As per the TOR, the PPC Chair and the CEO appoint the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the IRC. The consolidated report of the IRC with cross-cutting insights is sent to the PPC, which meets every six months.

Country: As the applicant for Gavi funding, the country is responsible for preparing the application. At selected IRC reviews, the country EPI manager is also part of the review process to present and answer questions (e.g., presentation for Measles application, in-country reviews).

Gavi Secretariat: The FD&R team is responsible for organizing the IRC review process, as well as coordinating the processes that feed directly into and out of the IRC review (such as pre-screening, IRC member recruitment, etc.). SCMs are the Secretariat's point of contact for country teams, helping the country to understand Gavi's expectations, sometimes influencing the development of the proposal, and representing the country's case at the IRC meeting. The wider Secretariat is involved in the pre-screening and proposal development from a thematic perspective (e.g., VP for Measles) and is partially present at the IRC meeting (or briefing sessions) to share their perspective.

Alliance and technical partners: They (particularly WHO and UNICEF) are tasked with assisting in the development of the proposal and are usually present at the IRC meeting to represent the proposal and answer specific technical questions (e.g., WHO on normative guidance).

FIG I.C: Structure and roles within the IRC [1,8,9]

Structure & set-up of the IRC		Mode of operation		
		Action	Who does it	Duration
Leadership	1 Chair & 2 Vice-Chairs	1 Invite 2 reviewers and 2 cross-cutters	FD&R	1-2 weeks pre-IRC
		2 Conduct briefings	Secretariat & Alliance partners	2 days pre-IRC
Membership	~ 100 active members (35 women/65 men) representing all regions of the world	3 Send out country proposal	FD&R & IRC	10 days pre-IRC
		4 Write reports independently	Reviewer 1/2 and crosscutters	10 days pre-IRC
Competencies and skills	Primary & secondary reviewers with ~55% generalist skills (i.e., HSS) and 45% with technical expertise (i.e., disease/vaccine).	5 Present findings to the plenary	Reviewer 1	25min
	Cross-cutting reviewers with ~55% finance/budget skills and ~45% cold chain logistics capabilities	6 Present budget and CCEOP	Cross-cutters	15 min
		7 Present additional points	Reviewer 2	15min
		8 Share additional comments	Gavi Secretariat and partners	15 min
		9 Discuss in plenary and final decision	All – led by Chair	45 min
		10 Write final report	First reviewer	24h
		11 Apply consistency check	IRC editor	24h
		12 Check facts and recommendations	FD&R team	24/48h
		13 Review comments	Reviewer 1	24h
		14 Finalize and clear report	IRC Chair	24h
		15 Translate and send report to the country	FD&R	24/48h

1.5 The IRC's role in the Gavi application-to-disbursement process

In Gavi's E2E application-to-disbursement process, the IRC review is a critical but only small step that takes about one week to complete out of a total duration of approximately 12-20 months [10]. Nevertheless, the IRC review has a significant impact on both the upstream proposal preparation and submission process and the downstream issue resolution processes. While the focus of this evaluation is on the direct impact of the IRC review, the evaluation also includes perspectives on related upstream and downstream processes.

Proposal preparation and submission: At the beginning of the process, the applicant country (e.g., EPI manager, Ministry of Health), decides to apply for a specific type of Gavi support. The country team then works with technical partners (e.g., UNICEF and WHO), and usually consultants to develop the proposal. In selected cases, a pre-review is conducted where the regional or global offices of the technical partners conduct a full review of the proposal. The proposal is then submitted to Gavi approximately two months before the scheduled IRC review [11].

Pre-screening: Once a proposal has been submitted, Gavi Secretariat staff conduct a pre-screening with input from various stakeholders to improve the quality of the proposal and to assess whether the proposal is broadly consistent with Gavi's Programme Funding Guidelines and application requirements. The FD&R team manages the pre-screening process and conducts a completeness check to ensure that all signatures and documents are present. The SCM reviews the entire proposal and provides overall feedback, while the technical teams in the Secretariat provide technical feedback, such as the VP team in the case of a measles application. Proposals are then returned to the countries to incorporate the feedback before final submission to the IRC. Before a proposal can be considered by the IRC, it must receive final approval from the SCM, PFM, SFP Director, Finance MD, and CP MD [10].

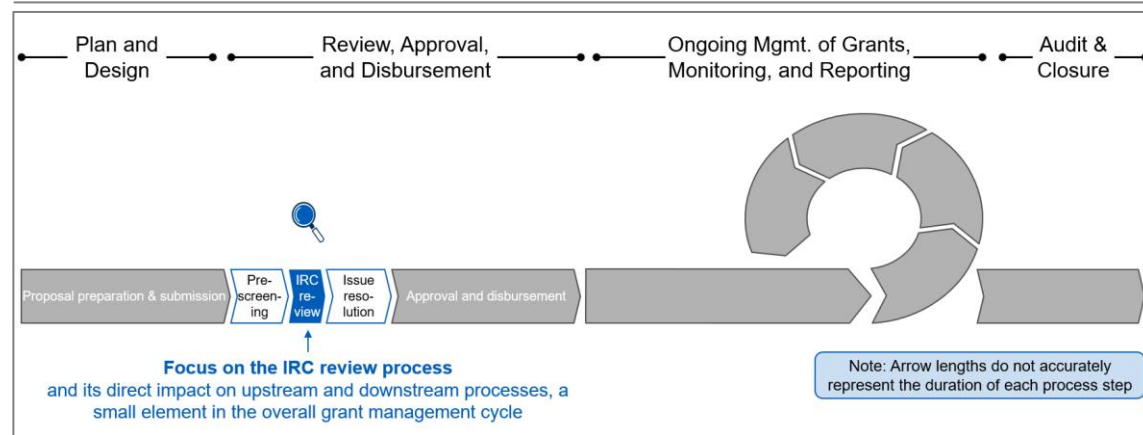
IRC reviews: There are three types of IRC reviews: in-country for High Impact countries, remote for Fragile and Conflict countries, time-sensitive reviews, and standard Geneva-based review rounds. The IRC recommends to the CEO whether Gavi should fund or re-review a selected proposal, and with the exception of one recent review in 2022/2023, the CEO has always followed the IRC's recommendation. The IRC makes three main types of recommendation:

- **Approval:** If a proposal is technically sound and financially consistent, the IRC may approve the application and make recommendations/points of action that need to be addressed before funds are released.
- **Re-review:** If the IRC members do not consider an application to be feasible or complete, they will recommend a re-review. Typically, a country will need to revise its application and resubmit it in the next application window.
- **Partial approval:** There are two types of partial approval: (1) Under the FPP, a country may request multiple types of support, but one or more of the types may not be approved. (2) A portion of the funds may be approved, and that portion will follow the approval process described above. The remaining funds will be subject to a re-review process as described above.

Issue resolution: The FD&R team uploads the points of action from the IRC report into the Issue Resolution Tool (IRT). The SCM works with countries to respond to these points; and then the most appropriate member of the Secretariat signs off on whether the response is sufficient, and the issue can be considered closed.

Approval to disbursement: Once all issues have been resolved, the SCM writes an approval memo to obtain approval for all funding sources (e.g., Vx, CCEOP, HSS). Next, a decision letter is drafted that includes a detailed budget, monitoring and learning plan, and disbursement schedule for all funding sources (excluding unanticipated support such as outbreak response). Finalizing these deliverables is the most time-consuming step in the process. Grant agreements with core partners and service agreements with extended partners are then established. Purchase orders are created in SAP, and finally funds are disbursed to countries and partners, with the help of technical teams as needed. This process step was not included in the IRC evaluation as it is not directly impacted by the IRC review [12].

FIG I.D: The IRC review as part of the E2E application-to-grant process [10]



Sources

Assumptions

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>[1] Key informant interviews, 2022/2023</p> <hr/> <p>[2] Gavi Internal Audit Report, Cash Grant Application, Approval and Disbursement, 2017</p> <hr/> <p>[3] Gavi 5.1 Strategy, One-pager, 2022</p> <hr/> <p>[4] RFP, Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee, August 2022</p> <hr/> <p>[5] EVOLVE, project explainer, 2023</p> <hr/> <p>[6] IRC TOR, 2020</p> <hr/> <p>[7] IRC Outcome Database 2020-2022</p> <hr/> <p>[8] IRC membership database, 2023</p> <hr/> <p>[9] Gavi IRC guide, October 2019</p> <hr/> <p>[10] EVOLVE project, Macroprocess 2 Review, Approval and Disbursement, 2022
Gavi Internal Audit Report, Cash Grant Application, Approval and Disbursement, 2017</p> <hr/> <p>[11] Gavi, IRC information</p> <hr/> <p>[12] EVOLVE process details 2.4-2.8, 2022</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excluding Vaccine Value of 2020 as no data was available • Excluding Sahel Region and Horn of Africa region EAF application of December 2021, as the scope of these evaluations was atypical as it was a mix of an IRC review and a procurement RFP |
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II. Objectives and methodology

II.1 Objectives of this evaluation

As set out in the Request for Proposal (RFP) and confirmed during the evaluation kick-off meeting between the FD&R team and the evaluators, three main objectives existed for this evaluation [1]: (1) to assess the suitability of IRC's strategic design in the context of Gavi 5.0/5.1, (2) to conduct an impartial assessment of IRC's proposal review process, and (3) to utilize the assessment to collaboratively develop solutions with the concerned teams.

II.2 Key principles of this evaluation

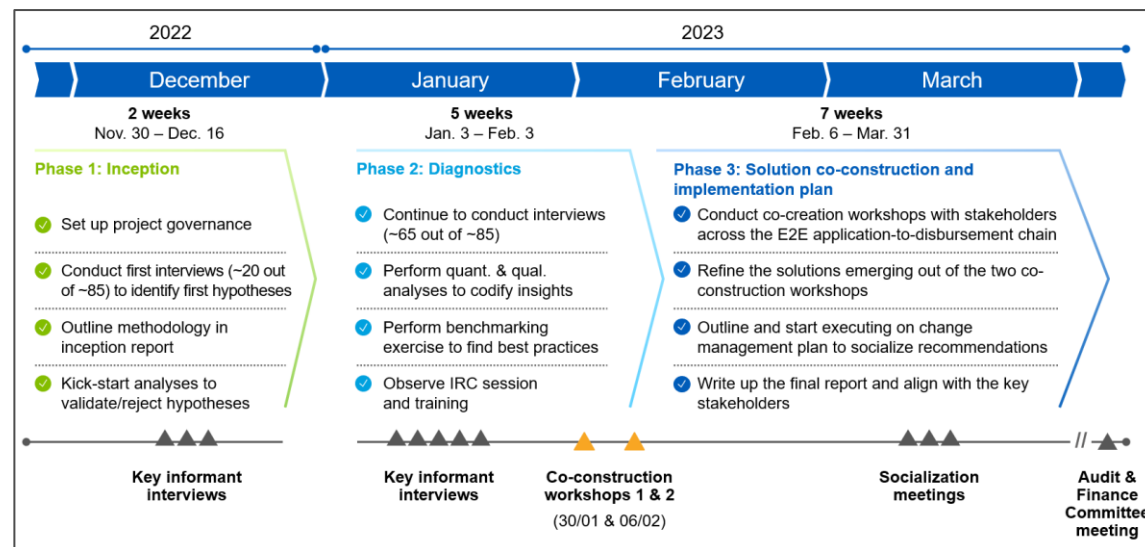
To ensure that this evaluation meets all quality standards, is supported by relevant stakeholders, and leads to concrete and measurable impact, the evaluation will follow four key principles: (1) Independence and impartiality by having the evaluation conducted by an independent third party (Boston Consulting Group was selected through an open RFP process), (2) data-driven and evidence-based by balancing quantitative and qualitative analysis based primarily on Gavi-internal data, public information, and key informant interviews, (3) stakeholder engagement and co-construction by conducting approximately 100 interviews for the diagnostic phase and two co-construction workshops with approximately 30 diverse participants during the recommendation phase, and (4) transparency in terms of data sources, analyses conducted, interview lists, questions asked during interviews, and at every step of the way.

II.3 Scope and timelines of this evaluation

The evaluation took approximately four months and consisted of three phases, as shown in Figure II.A. The Inception Phase (Phase 1) involved establishing the project governance, defining the evaluation methodology in the inception report, and conducting initial key informant interviews. The Diagnostic Phase (Phase 2) involved conducting 85 interviews with approximately 100 key informants to identify pain points in the E2E IRC review process, cluster them into key themes and, codify them through analysis. The Recommendation Phase (Phase 3) involved generating recommendations through two co-construction workshops and creating a high-level change narrative and implementation plan.

The main output of this assessment is the evaluation report. However, active stakeholder engagement is one of the key evaluation principles and objectives as mentioned in II.2. Therefore, this evaluation team produced additional deliverables beyond the scope of the report to facilitate this outcome: (1) A high-level change story in PowerPoint that summarizes the key findings (case for change) and recommendations to facilitate decision-making and socialization among key stakeholders [2]; (2) a more detailed change management roadmap for the FD&R team to implement the recommendations, and (3) communication and change management materials for key stakeholders in the IRC process to gain buy-in and support for the findings and recommendations, such as the IRC Chair, Board members, and key alliance partners.

FIG II.A: High-level timeline of the IRC evaluation



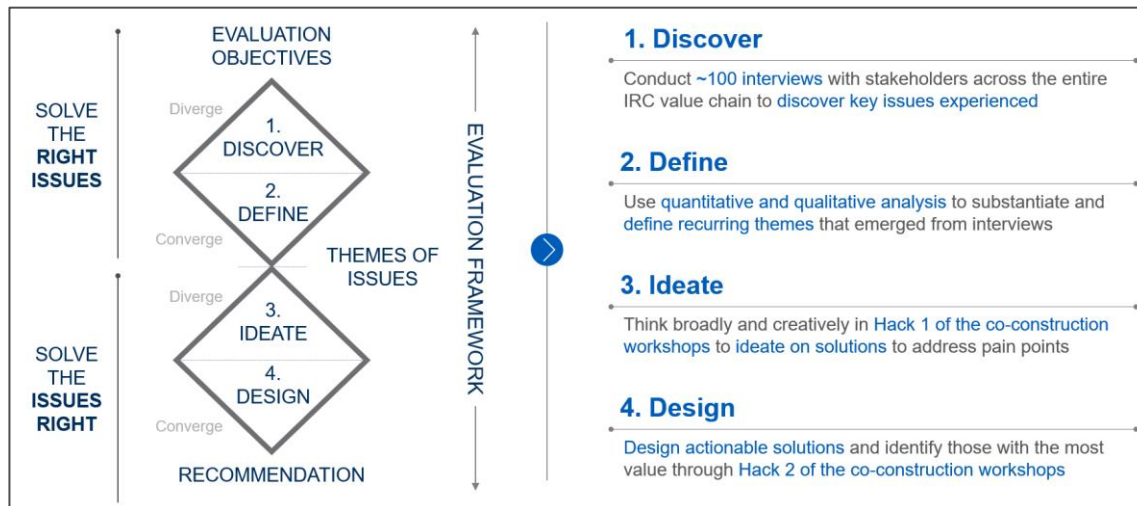
II.4 Methodology

The methodology of this evaluation is described in detail in the Inception Report, which has been discussed with and validated by the Gavi Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning team (MEL) [3]. This section provides a summary of the key methodological components; but for more detailed information, we recommend that you contact the FD&R team or the evaluation team to access the Inception Report.

In order to answer the guiding questions outlined in the RFP, this evaluation follows a four-step process outlined in Figure II.B, which is inspired by the design thinking methodology. The four steps are: (1) **Discover**, which involves conducting numerous stakeholder interviews to identify pain points across the value chain; (2) **Define**, which clusters and codifies the pain points through analysis; (3) **Ideate**, which generates solutions through a co-construction workshop with Gavi-internal and external stakeholders across the entire value chain; and (4) **Design**, which prioritizes and distills key recommendations through a second co-construction workshop and prioritization sessions with the FD&R team.

What follows is an in-depth overview of four key methodological components of this evaluation: (1) the evaluation framework, (2) key informant interviews, (3) quantitative and qualitative analyses, and (4) co-construction workshops.

FIG II.B: Four-step evaluation process



II.4.1 The evaluation framework

The evaluation framework shown in Figure II.C consists of seven key components and helps to structure the evaluation to ensure that its scope is comprehensive.

I. **Design** refers to the strategic and structural design of the IRC:

- **Mandate**: includes the role of the IRC within the broader Gavi operating model and the specifics of its mandate and TOR.
- **Process design**: focuses on how the IRC review fits into the E2E process from application to disbursement, and how the design choices of the IRC affect the quality and efficiency of the process.

II. **Operationalization** refers to how the strategic and structural design works in practice:

- **Process operationalization**: covers the process from the moment a country applies for a grant to the moment Gavi disburses a grant, in terms of speed, quality of input and output and technology leveraged.
- **IRC protocols and tools**: zooms from the E2E application-to-disbursement process to the specifics of the IRC review process. It focuses on the meeting formats, their protocol, and outcomes, including the overall efficiency and quality of work products.
- **IRC membership**: covers the background and skills of the IRC members and their leadership, and the enabling processes (e.g., recruitment, training, and onboarding).

III. **Results** includes the recommendations made by the IRC to the Gavi CEO, Board, and the impact of the IRC's decisions in the recipient countries:

- **Impact and cross-cutting insights**: covers both the impact the IRC has on Gavi's final investment decision and on the subsequent success of the country's immunization programme and the impact of the IRC on the policy decisions of the secretariat and the operations of the alliance partners.
- **Feedback loops**: refers to the feedback loops from/to the IRC (e.g., from the IRC to the Gavi Board or from country representatives to the IRC).

The evaluation framework has undergone some minor adjustments during the early stages of the evaluation process in comparison to the framework outlined in the Inception Report to ensure better alignment with the interview results and to help structure the evaluation more effectively.

FIG II.C: Evaluation framework



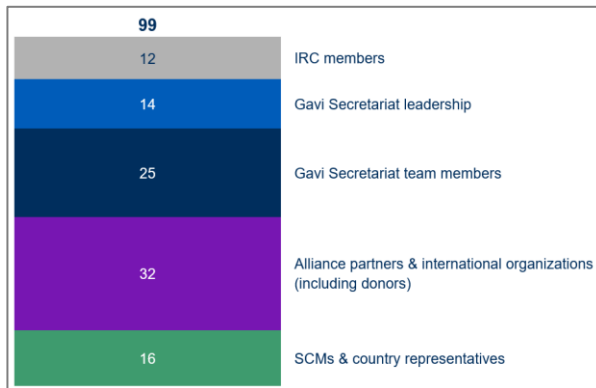
II.4.2 Interviews

Key informant interviews are a cornerstone of the evaluation approach for two main reasons. First, they allow for the development of a broad evidence base of current pain points and key learnings that can be used to inform recommendations. Second, they help to build transparency, organizational buy-in, and credibility for the evaluation's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The use of interviews as a valuable tool for this evaluation depended on two success factors: (1) having a diverse and relevant group of interviewees, and (2) facilitating the interviews with a predefined but flexible interview guide.

The interviewee group should be able to provide a holistic perspective of the IRC's E2E value chain of the IRC and should consist of interviewees who are part of the core (e.g., IRC itself) as well as stakeholders who interact with the core (e.g., countries, Secretariat). Interviewees from institutions similar to Gavi, such as the Global Fund and Unitaid, were also included to ensure that best practices from outside Gavi were captured. In addition, each interviewee was able to nominate others to be interviewed (i.e., snowball technique) to ensure that a wide range of perspectives were captured.

FIG II.D: Key informants interviewed



The principles above result in five key stakeholder groups that were interviewed: (i) new and experienced IRC members, (ii) Gavi Secretariat leadership, (iii) Gavi Secretariat team members, (iv) Alliance partners and other international organizations (including donors), and (v) Gavi SCMs and country representatives. In total, the evaluation team conducted interviews with 99 key informants.

The interview guide, which can be found in the Inception Report, is derived from the different pillars of the evaluation framework. The topics covered varied between each group of interviewees in order to draw on their respective areas of expertise and maximize insights.

II.4.3 Quantitative and qualitative analyses

A key principle of the evaluation is to draw evidence-based conclusions, which involves using quantitative and qualitative analyses to confirm or reject selected hypotheses that emerged from the interviews. For quantitative analyses, the following four sources are the main foundations of all quantitative analyses we conducted: (1) the IRC membership database from 2022 and 2023, (2) the IRC outcomes database, (3) disbursement data from the ERP, (4) and the expenditure datasheet per IRC review. Qualitative analyses are primarily based on (1) process baselines from the EVOLVE project, (2) TORs and benchmarking interviews with other global health organizations, (3) BCG best practices, (4) IRC onboarding, training, and briefing documents, and (5) IRC reports.

II.4.4 Co-construction workshops

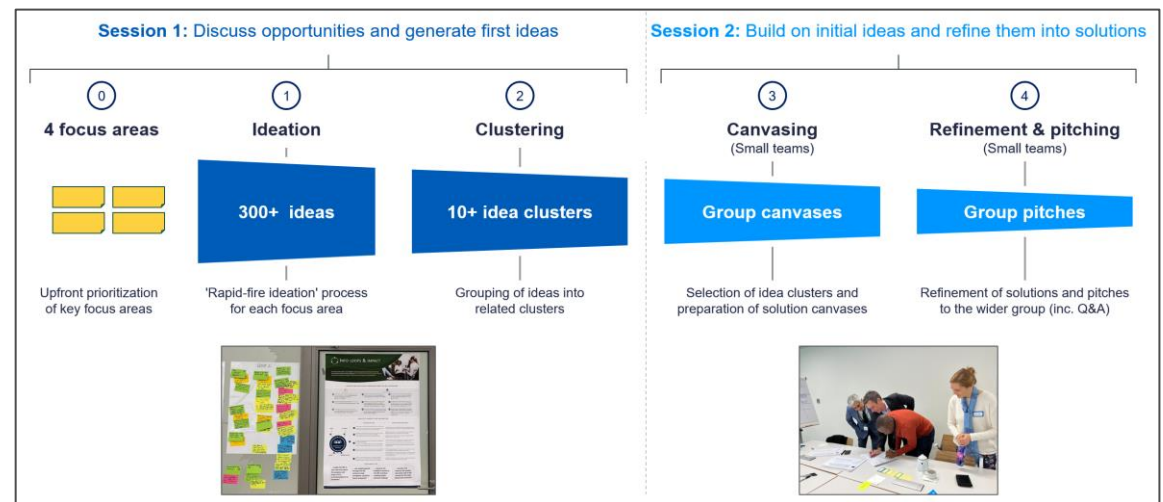
The aim of the co-construction workshop is to brainstorm and detail solutions that address the key themes of pain points identified in the diagnostic phase and that can be implemented in both the short and medium term. The evaluation team conducted two co-construction ("hack") workshops, as shown in Figure II.E.

The first "hack" took place on January 30, 2023, with a multi-functional group of stakeholders from across the full value chain, including country representatives (Pakistan and Sierra Leone), the IRC (four experienced IRC members), Alliance partners (WHO, UNICEF), Secretariat leadership, and members of the Gavi Secretariat team with representatives from the following teams: SCMs, HSIS Team, EVOLVE Team, PFM Team, VP Team, and the FD&R Team.

The goal of the workshop was to generate a comprehensive list of potential solutions to the pain points identified during the diagnostic phase. Participants generated over 300 ideas, which were later grouped into 12 key "idea clusters."

In the second "hack" on February 6, 2023, participants detailed six of these idea clusters and turned them into concrete solutions/recommendations using an idea/solution canvas, a tool often used in the start-up scene to quickly test and validate ideas. These solutions formed the basis of the recommendations presented in this report.

FIG II.E: Co-construction workshop approach



II.5 Risks and mitigations

Please note (1) that the scope of this report is limited to the data sources provided to the evaluation team and the analytical methods used in the research, and (2) that certain assumptions were made in the analysis. Therefore, the findings and conclusions presented in this report may be subject to limitations and uncertainties and should not be relied upon as definitive or exhaustive. The assumptions and sources of each analysis are listed at the end of each chapter for reference. While the report is based on research and analysis, its purpose is to provide practical insights and recommendations for Gavi. As a result, the content, structure, style, and methods of verification may differ from those of a traditional evaluation report. The evaluators have made every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented in this report, but it should not be relied upon as an authoritative or comprehensive source on the subject matter.

In addition, it is important to note that the evaluators have identified a potential risk that the recommended changes may not have a sustainable impact due to limited organizational commitment or resources. Therefore, the evaluators have prioritized change management efforts in tandem with report writing, such as conducting co-construction workshops and socializing the recommendations within the organization.

II.6 How to read this report

This IRC evaluation report is organized around six key focus areas that can be linked to the evaluation framework: (1) mandate, (2) process design, (3) process operationalization, (4) IRC protocols and tools, (5) IRC membership, and (6) results and impact.

The focus areas in this evaluation have a consistent structure, starting with an overview page that links the focus area to the evaluation framework and RFP questions (please note that while some RFP questions are not discussed in this evaluation, other topics have been added based on insights gained from interviews, regular meetings with the FD&R team, and the co-construction workshops). In addition, the overview page includes a sample of key quotes from the key informant interviews that highlight "keepers" (i.e., positive elements) and "pain points" (i.e., negative elements) related to each focus area, and a count of how often the overall themes explored in that focus area were raised by key informants. The bulk of the section is then structured as follows: (1) the findings are presented in a factual manner using interview notes and analysis, (2) the conclusion explains the implications of these findings, and (3) at the end of each focus area, recommendations are made to address these conclusions. The recommendations can be linked 1:1 to the conclusions presented in the report and are categorized in 2x2 matrices based on their estimated impact to effectively address the key findings and conclusions of this evaluation and the estimated FD&R team effort and broader organizational commitment required.

Sources

- [1] Request for Proposal, August 2022
Kick off meeting, November 30, 2022

- [2] IRC evaluation, Unified story, March 2023

- [3] Tuesday, December 20, and Wednesday, January 4, meeting with MEL

Assumptions

Focus area 1

Mandate

1.1 Brief summary

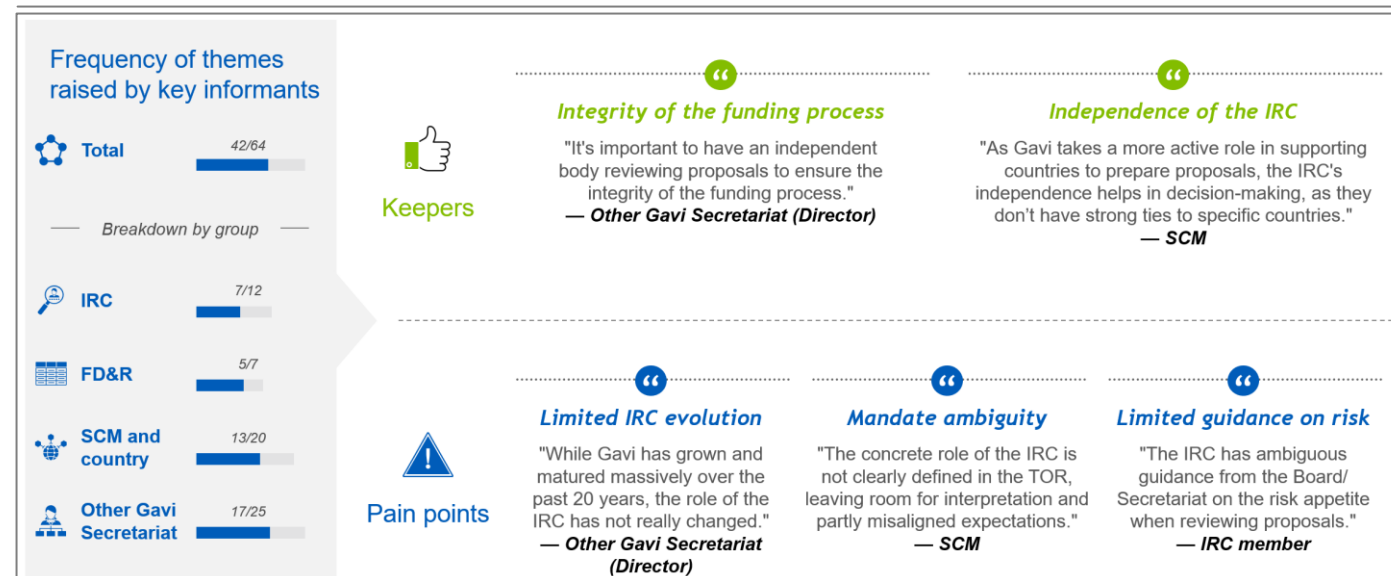
1.1.1 Scope of this chapter



This chapter covers the "mandate" component of the evaluation framework. Although the RFP did not include any explicit questions on this subject, the mandate theme was frequently raised during the key informant interviews and workshops. Therefore, the decision was made to devote a full chapter to it.

1.1.2 Strengths and pain points

Figure 1.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



1.2 Diagnostics

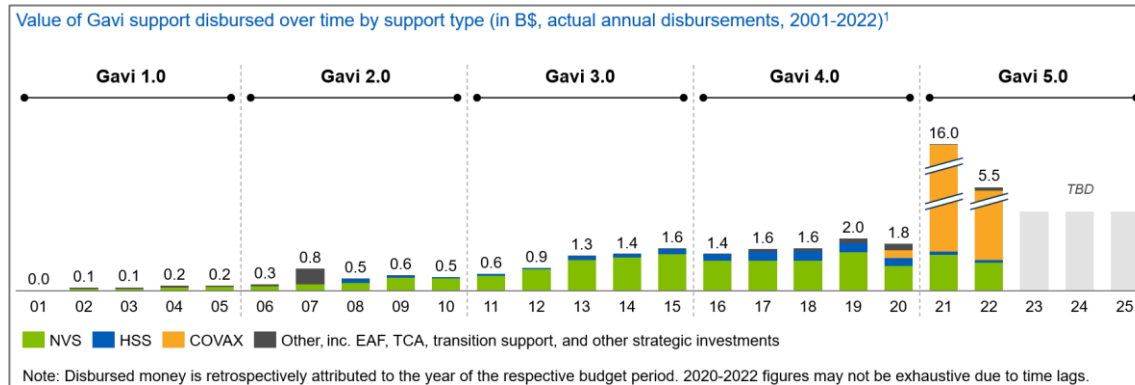
This diagnostic chapter covers three main areas: (1) the evolution of Gavi and the role of the IRC, (2) the clarity of the IRC's mandate, and (3) Gavi's risk appetite in the proposal review process.

1.2.1 Evolution of Gavi and the role of the IRC

1.2.1.1 Evolution of Gavi

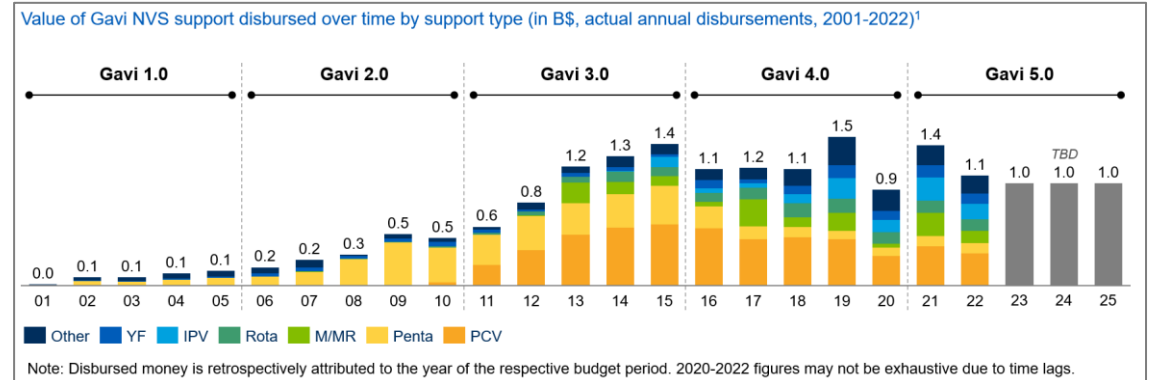
The Gavi Alliance was established in 2000 as a global health partnership to increase access to immunization in the world's poorest countries. Its core partners include the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) [2].

FIG 1.B: Evolution of Gavi support [3]



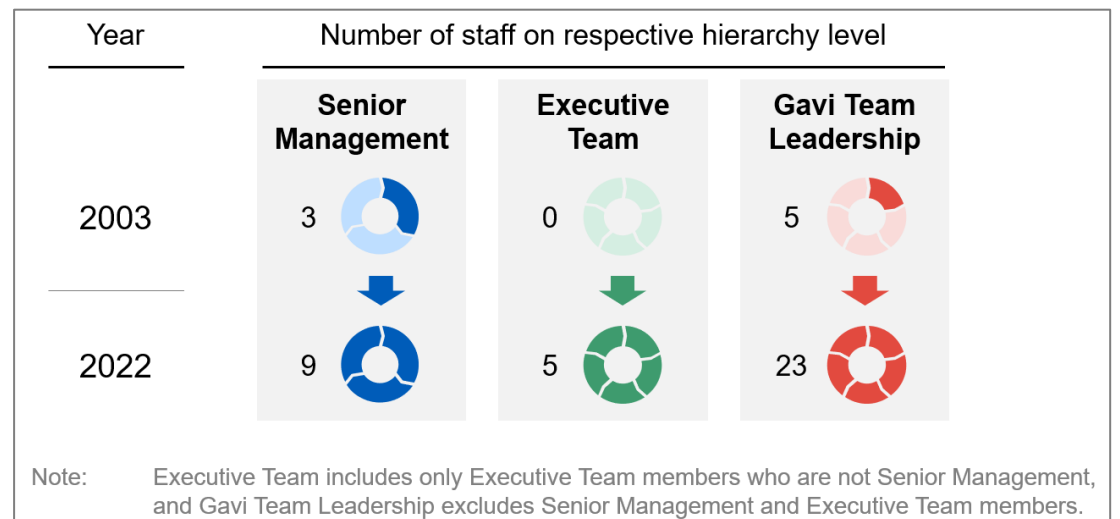
Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has grown significantly, as shown in Figures 1.B and 1.C. During **Gavi 1.0**, the organization disbursed a total of \$675 million and focused primarily on increasing access to underused vaccines such as Penta, YF, and HepB. **Gavi 2.0** introduced Health Systems Strengthening (HSS), along with the Rota, PCV and measles vaccine support. **Gavi 3.0** further expanded the vaccine portfolio to include MR and IPV vaccines, in addition to MenA, HPV, Cholera, Ebola and JEV (see Figure 1.C), and initiated the first country tailoring efforts. In **Gavi 4.0**, the strategy moved to prioritizing vaccine coverage and equity at the country level, with the overall expansion of the New Vaccine Support (NVS) portfolio stagnating. In **Gavi 5.0/5.1**, Gavi shifted its focus further to equity at the community level, with a strong emphasis on reaching zero-dose children. In addition, Gavi played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic through several channels, most notably the COVAX initiative. Over the past 20 years, Gavi has increased its disbursements of cash and vaccine grants \$0.7 billion over the entire period of Gavi 1.0 to over \$2.5 billion in the first two years of Gavi 5.0/5.1 alone, excluding the additional \$19 billion for COVAX [3] [4].

FIG 1.C: Evolution of Gavi's NVS support [3]



In parallel, Gavi has expanded its Secretariat to manage the growing complexity of its mandate. In 2003, three years after Gavi's creation, the Secretariat had only two core departments with a limited number of staff, and their focus was on coordinating activities. By 2023, however, Gavi had grown to around 700 staff, organized into seven departments (as shown in Figure 1.D, excluding the Executive Office), and had acquired a growing level of technical expertise [1][5].

FIG 1.D: Evolution of the Gavi Secretariat [5]

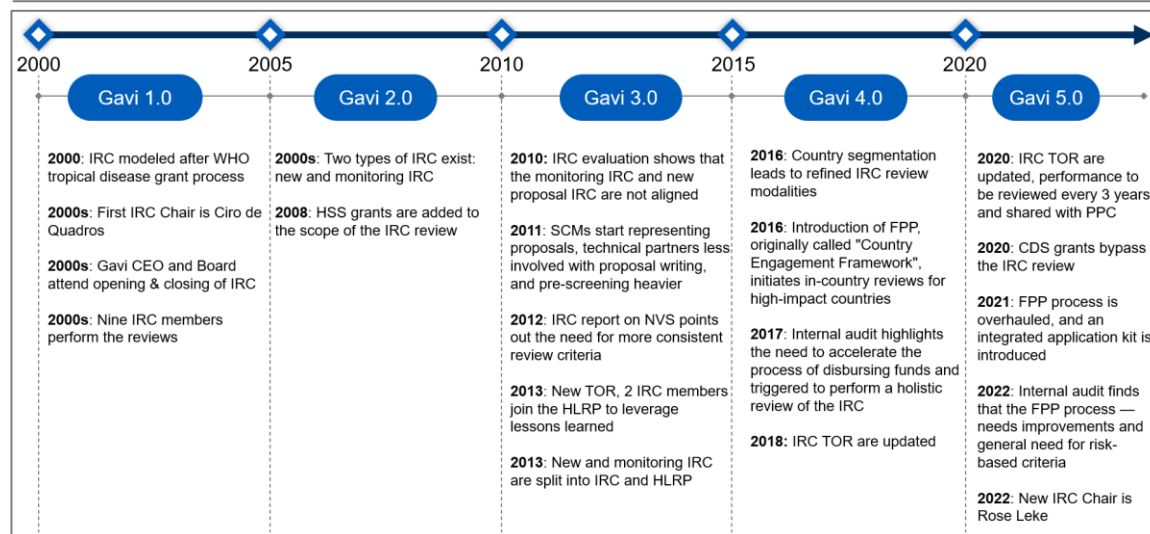


1.2.1.2 Evolution of IRC

The Gavi Alliance established the IRC in the early days of its existence for two primary reasons. First, the Secretariat at the time lacked the technical capacity to thoroughly review the technical soundness of country proposals for Gavi support. Second, it also helped to strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of its governance vis-à-vis the Board and donors, especially as the organization did not yet have a proven track record [1]. Although Gavi has since increased its technical expertise through the expansion of its Secretariat [5] and built strong legitimacy through 20 years of implementation experience, the vast majority of key informants during this evaluation argue that the IRC continues to add value to Gavi by independently reviewing proposals, thereby protecting the integrity of Gavi's funding decisions and reducing programmatic and fiduciary risks of programme implementation. While the IRC's initial role was to provide the Secretariat with relevant technical expertise in the field of immunization and to reassure donors through a sound programmatic and fiduciary governance structure, it now increasingly serves as a critical independent perspective with the appropriate authority to challenge countries, technical partners, and the Gavi Secretariat itself on the soundness of individual applications [1].

Over the past 23 years, the number of IRC members has grown from 9 to a pool of 100 reviewers with diverse skills as Gavi's portfolio and scope have expanded (see focus area 5 for more details) [6]. Despite this growth, the core responsibilities of the IRC have remained largely the same, with the Terms of Reference having changed only three times in the past 20 years (2013, 2018, and 2020) [1].

FIG 1.E: Evolution of the IRC [7]



Overall, since its inception, the IRC's responsibilities have included assessing the strategic fit of country plans, reviewing programmatic feasibility, and assessing financial viability. The IRC's peer review process, primarily through face-to-face review meetings in Geneva, has been a constant [1].

Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, Gavi has evolved massively, and so has the context for the IRC. While Gavi has built its technical capacity and legitimacy through a 20-year track record of programme implementation, there is still value in the IRC to ensure strong programmatic and fiduciary governance for Gavi. The IRC continues to add value to Gavi by independently reviewing proposals, particularly those with high programmatic or fiduciary risk, and its authority and independence to strengthen country proposals cannot be easily replaced by internal processes. Nevertheless, the IRC needs to continue to adapt to the evolving changes in Gavi's business context (as outlined in the following focus areas).

➤ [See recommendation: 1.3.1](#)

1.2.2 Clarity of the IRC mandate

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Gavi IRC can be found on the Gavi website and are divided into six sections: Purpose, Membership, Authority, Responsibilities, Mode of Operation, and Performance and Review, which are summarized at a relatively high level in just six pages (see Figure 1.F). Secretariat informants emphasize that the main advantage of the conciseness of the TOR is that it allows for continuous improvement of the IRC without the need to seek approval from the Board (e.g., the TOR has only been formally updated three times in the last 20 years [1]). This encourages a more innovative approach, with a significant number of proof of concepts having been launched in the past to test new IRC formats (e.g., in-country reviews). At the same time, key informants highlighted that the TOR leave considerable room for interpretation and that perceptions of the exact role of the IRC vary significantly by stakeholder group. In comparison, the Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP) and Unitaid Proposal Review Committee (PRC) TOR are much more detailed and prescriptive about review modalities, meeting procedures, IRC membership requirements, and the relationship between the TRP and other stakeholders. Finally, the IRC TOR are currently not fully in line with the activities of the IRC. For example, the TOR mentions that the IRC is responsible for evaluating programme extensions, whereas this had become the responsibility of the High-Level Review Panel (HLRP) and was later replaced by the introduction of multi-year approvals in 2021 [8].

FIG 1.F: Length of peer bodies' TOR[8]

6 pages	20 pages	10 pages
Gavi - IRC TOR	Global Fund - TRP TOR	Unitaid - PRC TOR

Conclusion

The IRC's TOR are deliberately broad to allow for incremental changes in its functioning without the need for PPC approval. However, this level of abstraction can create ambiguity about its mandate, as interviewees noted. In addition, the TOR have not been fully updated to reflect the IRC's current work and will likely need a revision before the next strategic period. Updating and sharpening the TOR, particularly in relation to the IRC's mandate, review modalities, and interfaces with key stakeholders, appears valuable to strike the right balance between providing sufficient clarity on the mandate to key stakeholders and maintaining sufficient flexibility to support ongoing operational developments.

1.2.3 Risk appetite in the proposal review process

Gavi's overall risk appetite is clearly defined in its official risk policy and various more granular, risk appetite frameworks [9]. The Board regularly reviews and revisits these documents as a standing item on the agenda of all Gavi Board meetings to ensure that the organization's overall risk appetite is aligned with its mission and strategy. In addition, since 2016, an annual risk assurance report has been produced, highlighting the most significant risks that could impact Gavi's ability to achieve its mission [9].

The Secretariat uses these documents to translate strategy, policy and risk appetite into the Programme Funding Guidelines and application materials, which then serve as the basis for the IRC review, as codified in the IRC Review Guidelines [1]. However, some interviewees expressed concern that Gavi's risk policy is not clearly translated into practical review guidelines, resulting in a lack of clear guidance for the IRC on the appropriate level of risk that Gavi can take for a given proposal during the review process. This, according to interviewees, has led to an overly risk-averse culture within the IRC review process.


Conclusion

At a strategic level, Gavi has formal guidance on its risk appetite from the Board, but the translation of Gavi's overall risk appetite into operational practices, including IRC review processes and review guidelines, is not always clear. This results in some participants in the IRC review process being overly cautious and not using appropriate situational judgment to adjust the level of review focus and rigor for a particular proposal, leading to a more scrutinized review process.


➤ [See recommendation: 1.3.2](#)

1.3 Recommendations


1.3.1 IRC role: Continuation of the IRC and adaptation to new context


Objective


Maintain the IRC as an independent review body to ensure the integrity of Gavi's (material) funding decisions, adapt its role to the evolving business context, and ensure a clear understanding of the IRC's mandate among key stakeholders.


Rationale

The IRC continues to add value to Gavi by providing independent technical advice and ensuring the integrity of funding decisions. However, the role and functioning of the IRC needs to be updated to reflect the changing context and to avoid misinterpretation of the IRC's mandate in the proposal review process.


High-level recommendations

- Codify the refined mandate and role of the IRC in the proposal review process in the context of Gavi 5.1 and the recommendations of this evaluation
- Propose an update of the IRC's Terms of Reference, in particular "Section 4. Responsibilities" and "5. Mode of Operation," for approval by the Gavi Board
- Clearly articulate the right balance between the IRC's advisory role to Gavi (primarily fiduciary) and to countries (primarily technical)
- Publish and disseminate the IRC's updated Terms of Reference to key stakeholders and conduct specific training sessions as appropriate


Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low hanging fruit	


FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of the review process through codified roles and responsibilities


FD&R effort: Need to update the IRC TORs and manage the Board approval process

Org. commitment: Need for Board approval to change the IRC's TOR


1.3.2 Risk appetite: Operationalization of Gavi's risk appetite


Objective


Provide clear guidance to the IRC and all stakeholders involved in the IRC review process on Gavi's differentiated risk appetite in line with Gavi Board guidance.


Rationale

Key informants report inconsistent interpretations of how Gavi's overall risk appetite translates into a clear differentiation logic and concrete application review guidelines.


High-level recommendations

- Translate Gavi's Risk Appetite Statement into concrete risk management guidelines to be applied to the review of all applications for Gavi support
- De-average between mitigating measures pre-approval (to be tackled in issue resolution) and mitigating measures post-approval (e.g., support for stronger planning)
- Develop an overarching logic for differentiating applications according to the desired risk appetite, e.g., based on time sensitivity, country segment and track record, type of support, and financial/strategic materiality
- Group all application types into distinct clusters with appropriate review requirements and define appropriate review processes and the respective role of the IRC in reviewing each application


Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Acceleration of IRC review timelines and reduction of overall resource needs

FD&R effort: Need to define differentiation logic and manage its implementation

Org. commitment: Need for cross-functional support and change management effort

Sources

Assumptions

[1] Key informant interviews, 2022/23

[2] [Gavi](#) and [WHO](#) website

[3] Gavi SAP disbursement data 2001-2022

1. Disbursements are assigned to the year of the respective budget period; 2. Some payments are retroactively assigned to a specific year, >99% of payments are made with less than 3 years delay, therefore 2001-2019 is considered complete; 3. Including EAF, TCA, transition support and other strategic investments 4. Rounding differences apply 5. Systems support for health systems, prior to the formal launch of HSS in 2008

[4] [Gavi progress report 2004-2021](#)

Gavi-internal meeting document on the evolution of Gavi, 2022

[5] Gavi organizational chart June 2003 ; Gavi organizational chart November 2022 ; Gavi HR database, 2023

[6] ['Who is Gavi presentation', 2001](#); IRC membership 2022 database

[7] Internal audit, 2022; key informant interviews, 2022/2023; introduction to the HLRP August 2022; IRC TOR 2013 and 2020; ['Who is Gavi presentation', 2001](#)

[8] IRC Terms of Reference (TOR), 2020; TRP Global Fund TOR, 2022; Proposal Review Committee Terms of Reference – Unitaids; key informants interviews, 2022/2023

[9] Gavi Risk Policy 2014; Gavi risk policy results framework; Gavi risk policy operational framework; Gavi risk appetite statement; [Gavi risk assurance reports](#)

Focus area 2

Process Design

2.1 Brief summary

2.1.1 Scope of this chapter

Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee (IRC)

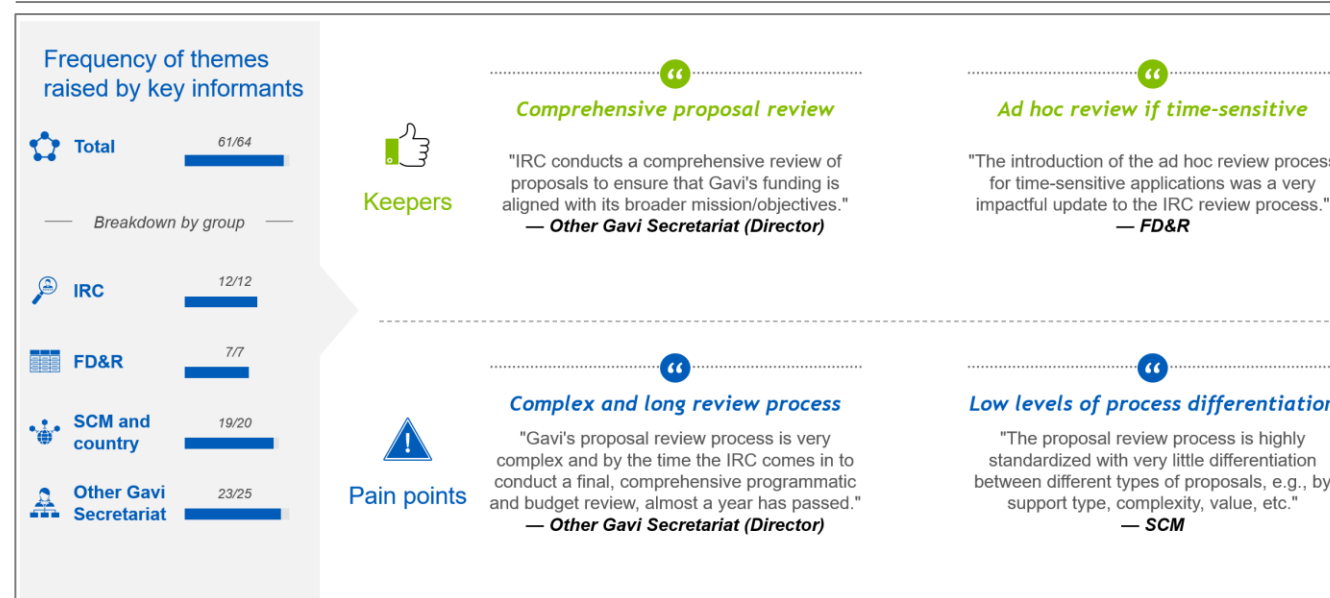


This chapter covers the "process design" element from the evaluation framework. It further aims to answer the following questions outlined in the RFP:

- To what extent are the current strategic design and operating model and related processes well-defined and properly responding to current Gavi needs and challenges?
- To what extent do the strategic design and operating model of the IRC align with those of similar organizations in global public health? What models could be relevant to consider for Gavi?

2.1.2 Strengths and pain points

FIG 2.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



2.2 Diagnostics

This diagnostic chapter covers two main areas: **(1) The place of the IRC review in the E2E process**, and **(2) the differentiation of IRC review process pathways**.

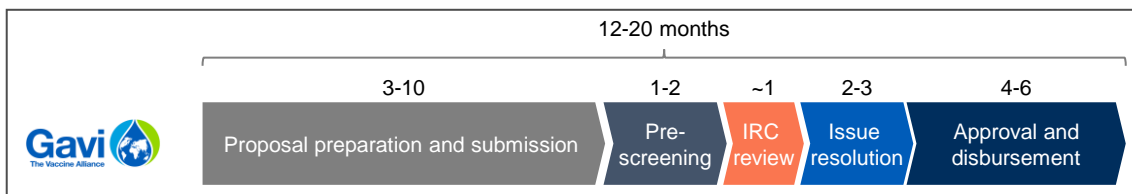
2.2.1 The place of the IRC review in the E2E process

As described in the "Background" section of this report, the IRC review takes place after the proposal preparation and submission phase and the subsequent pre-screening process. At this stage, the IRC conducts a final, holistic programmatic and budgetary review before making its recommendation to the Gavi CEO [2]. If the IRC recommends an approval, the issue resolution process begins, followed by the final approval and disbursement process. If the IRC recommends that an application be re-reviewed, the proposal is returned to the proposal preparation and submission phase and will be re-reviewed at a later IRC meeting once the key issues have been addressed.

Overall, the application-to-disbursement process follows a staged format with subsequent decision gates. As a result, the IRC typically reviews a country's application after approximately three to ten months of proposal preparation by the country, with support from technical partners, consultants, and Gavi SCMs, and a further one to two months of pre-screening by the Gavi Secretariat (including an iteration with the country). After the IRC review, it typically takes another two to three months to complete the issue resolution process, and approximately four to six months for the formal CEO decision letter and disbursement of funds. Overall, this gives a total process time of 12 to 20 months to prepare and review an application for new Gavi support prior to implementing the first disbursements, with wide variation depending on the complexity of the proposals by type of support and country, as well as the quality and capacity of technical support provided to countries throughout the process [3].

The IRC review is a process step that adds complexity and time to the overall review process, but contrary to the criticism of some stakeholders, it is not the only cause of long timelines. For example, recent experience with the review of COVID-related grants has shown that review processes that bypass the IRC can also lead to operational complexity and long timelines if procedures are not clearly defined and followed [1].

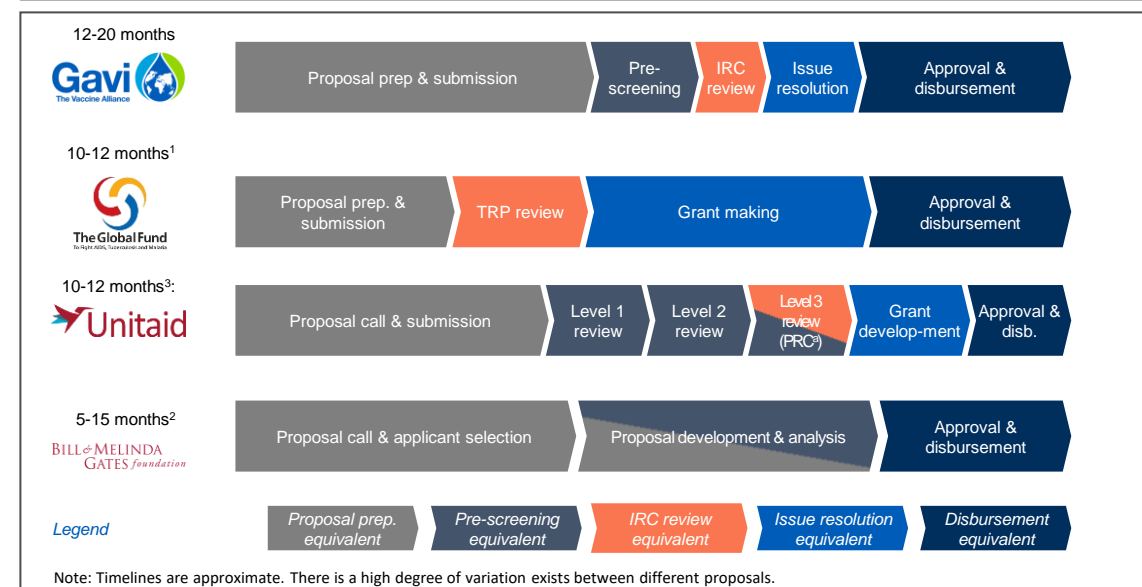
FIG 2.B: High-level timeline of the Gavi application-to-disbursement process [3]



Compared to other international organizations involved in global health financing, such as the Global Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and Unitaid, Gavi's application-to-disbursement process takes several months longer and is more resource-intensive for countries, technical partners, and the Secretariat.

The Global Fund follows a fairly similar process from application to disbursement but uses its Technical Review Panel (TRP), the equivalent of the IRC for the Global Fund, in a markedly different way. Most importantly, the TRP review takes place earlier in the process, with a greater focus on key strategic and technical issues, and without a detailed budget review. Only when the TRP recommends that an application proceed to the grant-making stage does the detailed development of the implementation plan and budget begin. In addition, in specific cases that warrant more in-depth TRP engagement, the review process may include an earlier TRP engagement with the Secretariat Country Team, focusing on a high-level concept note describing the proposed strategies and interventions (typically one to three pages). This allows the TRP to intervene earlier and more strategically and reduces the potential costs associated with a recommendation for iteration, as fewer resources have already been invested in the process. In addition, if there are major concerns about elements of the proposal, the TRP may request to be involved in the clearance of specific TRP action items, despite recommending the proposal to proceed to the grant-making process (analogous to Gavi's issue resolution process led by the Secretariat) [4].

FIG 2.C: Benchmarking of Gavi processes against selected peers [4], [5], [6]



Unitaid follows a very different application-to-disbursement process in line with its different operating model. Unlike Gavi and the Global Fund, Unitaid uses a more funneled approach to filter the majority of proposals received in response to an RFP and to agree on the two to five proposals that will ultimately receive Unitaid grant funding. As such, Unitaid conducts two Secretariat-led rounds of review (Levels 1 and 2) and shortlists the top five to ten proposals for Level 3 review, typically from a pool of 30-80 proposals. In the Level 3 review, the Proposal Review Committee (PRC), which is Unitaid's equivalent body to Gavi's IRC, and the Secretariat's review team first independently score each application against predefined evaluation criteria and then meet in the Joint Review Committee (JRC) to make a consensus recommendation to the Executive Board. This is followed by the grant development, approval, and disbursement processes. Overall, despite Unitaid's very different funding model, the role of the PRC is similar to that of the IRC. However, a key difference is the existence of the JRC, which ensures a consensus-based recommendation from the Secretariat and the PRC to the Unitaid Executive Board [5].

BMGF follows a distinctly different process, with no independent review body in the application-to-disbursement process. Due to BMGF's higher risk appetite, an independent review body is not considered as adding value and decisions of high materiality are escalated internally to the relevant governance bodies (e.g., the Board). Nevertheless, the overall application-to-disbursement process of BMGF has parallels to that of Gavi. The process starts with a call for proposals and selection of applicants by the Secretariat. This is followed by a proposal development and analysis stage, in which the applicant and BMGF jointly develop the proposal before a final funding decision is made and disbursement takes place [6].

Overall, this benchmarking exercise highlights the important differences in each organization's operating model and risk appetite and the need for tailored proposal review processes. In addition, this analysis reveals some key findings regarding the role of Gavi's IRC in the E2E application-to-disbursement process. First, the IRC review takes place relatively late in the process, resulting in a more detailed and comprehensive independent review of application documents and higher costs associated with a fundamental critique of the strategic or technical direction of a proposal (e.g., compared to the Global Fund). Second, the IRC review provides the Gavi CEO with an independent recommendation without ensuring consensus with the Gavi Secretariat (e.g., compared to Unitaid). Finally, the IRC review is a one-off assessment (unless there is a need for a re-review), with no additional involvement of the IRC either early in the process to agree on the overall strategic direction of a proposal and/or later to formally sign off on cleared action points after the issue resolution process (e.g., as practiced by the Global Fund for "major concerns").

Conclusion

Gavi's application-to-disbursement process is more complex and lengthy than that of its peers. While the comparatively late IRC review ensures an independent assessment of a country's full proposal, it also has some negative effects. First, the proposal preparation and submission process takes many months for most proposals and requires a significant financial investment in consulting support and technical assistance for countries and Gavi, with the risk that the strategic and technical objectives of an application may not be fully aligned with the IRC's expectations. Second, the pre-screening becomes an important but logistically complex step in the process to technically improve proposals that do not yet meet critical quality standards for a full IRC review, and to ensure that all key documents and signatures are in place prior to a full IRC review. While pre-screening helps to build consensus between the Gavi Secretariat and the IRC in most cases, the IRC's subsequent independent recommendations for approval or re-review may not always be fully aligned. Third, there is a risk that the IRC review itself will not focus on the key strategic and technical issues, but will delve into more detailed issues, such as individual budget assumptions, which could also be resolved later in the process between the country and the Gavi Secretariat. Fourth and finally, if the IRC concludes that a re-review is necessary, significant time and resources are lost that could potentially have been saved by earlier IRC feedback. Partial approvals have been introduced to mitigate this risk, but cannot eliminate it completely.

➤ [See recommendation: 2.3.1](#)

2.2.2 The differentiation of IRC review process pathways

The Gavi 5.1 strategy highlights differentiation as one of nine key principles for achieving Gavi's 2025 mission. As defined in the Gavi 5.1 strategy, a differentiated approach should target and tailor support to national and sub-national needs, including in fragile contexts [7]. The following paragraphs will therefore analyze the extent to which the IRC review process follows a differentiated approach and explore further opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the Gavi 5.1 strategy through a more differentiated IRC review process.

As outlined in the previous focus area on the IRC mandate, Gavi's support model has become increasingly diverse over the past two decades. In 2023, Gavi-supported countries will be able to apply for eight different types of Gavi support, including (i) health systems strengthening (HSS) support, (ii) vaccine applications to introduce a new vaccine or a campaign, (iii) equity accelerator funding (EAF) to reach zero-dose children and missed communities, (iv) CCEOP funding, (v) targeted country assistance (TCA), (vi) innovation top-ups, and (vii) vaccine switches [8]. Applications for different types of support can be combined through Full Portfolio Plans (FPP), or (viii) diagnostics procurement support funding (currently for YF but might be expanded to Cholera in the near future). In addition, there is a separate process to apply for COVAX or COVID-19 delivery support, which Gavi has been offering since 2020, but largely outside of the IRC process.

In addition, since Gavi 4.0, Gavi has introduced a country segmentation logic that groups all countries into five different country segments, including (i) High Impact, (ii) Fragile and Conflict, (iii) Core-Priority, (iv) Core-Standard, and (v) Post Transition. Supplemented by standard metrics such as grant value and/or past IRC performance indicators, this means that Gavi already has a set of frameworks and criteria to provide targeted and tailored support to countries, not only in the implementation of grants, but also during the proposal preparation and review phases.

However, as Figure 2.D shows, the current level of differentiation in terms of review processes and application guidelines is still low. With the exception of time-sensitive applications (see Figure 2.E-only about 3% of all applications), which follow a highly accelerated ad hoc IRC review process, every application for new Gavi support from any country follows a standardized overall grant review process with a final holistic programmatic and budget review by the IRC, regardless of country segment, grant type, grant value, or a country's grant implementation performance. Especially for low-risk and low-complexity applications, this results in avoidably long timelines and high resource requirements to complete the proposal review [9]. The only major differences in the IRC review process exist in terms of tailored application guidelines by grant type or country segment, e.g., a Theory of Change section is not required for Fragile and Conflict countries, as well as different IRC review formats by country segment/grant type, e.g., in-country reviews for High Impact FPP proposals, which will be further explored in focus area 4.

FIG 2.D: Level of review process and application guideline differentiation [6],[9]

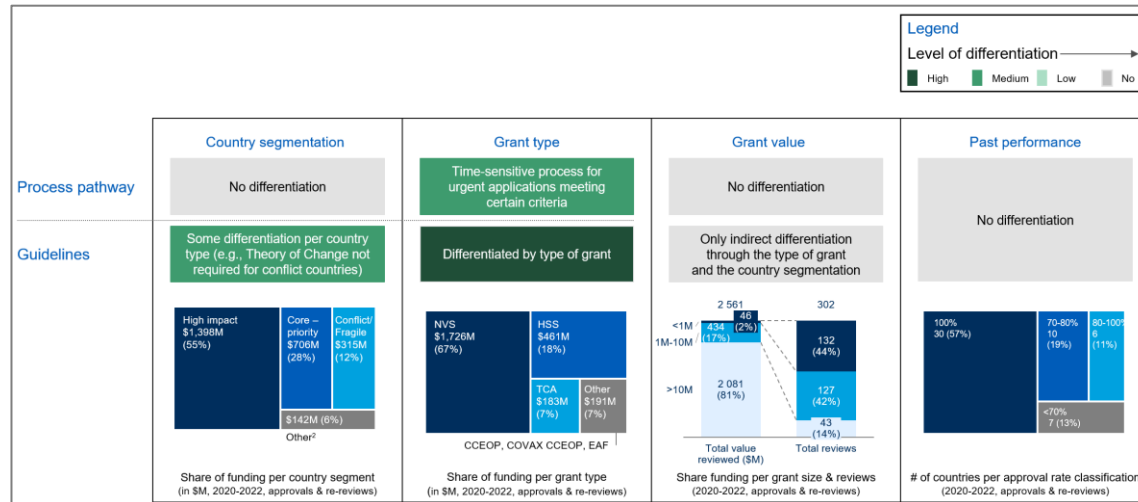
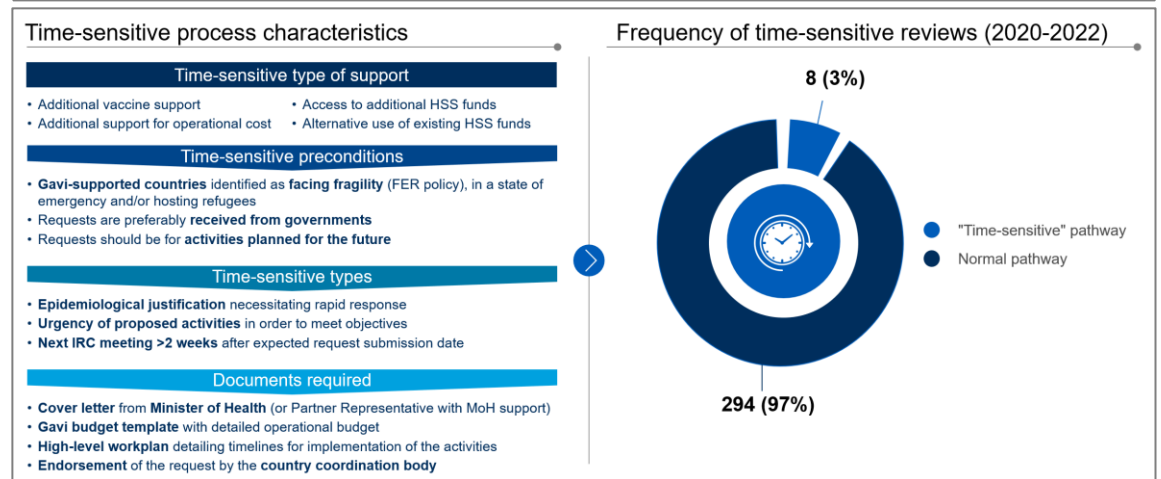


FIG 2.E: Conditions for and frequency of time-sensitive reviews [10]



Conclusion

Although differentiation is one of the key strategic principles of Gavi 5.1, Gavi's application-to-disbursement process, including the role of the IRC, is still highly standardized. Given the wide variation in application types (e.g., different country segments, support types, grant values, and past performance), the high degree of process standardization leads to avoidable complexity and delays, especially for a large number of low-risk, low-complexity applications (e.g., TCA or Switch grants, applications for established antigens from Standard-Core and Post Transition countries, etc.), for which a higher-level, streamlined review process would likely be sufficient from a risk management perspective. Meanwhile, the current process does not allow for a more in-depth, iterative review of highly complex, high materiality applications (e.g., FPP proposals in the High Impact segment) beyond differentiated review formats, i.e., in-country reviews (see focus area 4). Therefore, a clear and consistent differentiation logic, in line with Gavi's risk appetite, is needed that allows the IRC review process to be tailored to the specific needs of different countries and types of proposals. This would enable Gavi to reap the benefits of targeted and tailored grant cycle management, not only during programme implementation but also in the upstream processes leading up to grant disbursement. Although beyond the scope of this evaluation, these changes would also require further efforts to streamline post-issue resolution grant making processes.

➤ **See recommendation: 2.3.2**

2.3 Recommendations

2.3.1 Goalposts: Contextualized application goalposts and IRC pre-brief

Objective

Develop clear and contextualized application goalposts for proposals (including must-haves and nice-to-haves) and, if considered valuable, conduct an application briefing meeting between the country and the IRC at the beginning of the process.

Rationale

Key success factors and the distinction between must-haves and nice-to-haves in application materials are not always understood by countries at the beginning of the application preparation process, often leading to late and costly course corrections.

High-level recommendations

- Develop contextualized application briefing materials for countries, defining the must-haves and nice-to-haves early on for a successful IRC review (following the differentiation logic – see next recommendations)
- Ensure that application dossiers build on National Immunization Strategy (NIS) portfolios to ensure strategic fit and avoid duplication of effort
- Where appropriate, conduct a country pre-briefing by selected IRC reviewers to communicate application goalposts directly from the reviewers' perspective
- Avoid any changes in application priorities during the review process

Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Major project
FD&R effort and org. commitment required	

Impact: Improvement of country proposals and acceleration of review timelines

FD&R effort: Need to develop "goalposts" and manage IRC/country pre-briefings

Org. commitment: Need for CP & VP to drive the "goalpost" content development

See Appendix 3 for suggested differentiation logic

2.3.2 Differentiated review process: "Opt-in" logic for low-risk applications

Objective

Follow a differentiated application review process depending on support type and country, including the scenario of waiving IRC reviews for applications with low programmatic or financial risk, while including the option to "opt-in" to a full IRC review.

Rationale

Despite the recent introduction of more differentiated review processes (e.g., ad hoc reviews for time-sensitive applications), the overall design of the IRC review process is still largely standardized, with a long proposal preparation phase, followed by pre-screening and a holistic, programmatic review by the IRC.

High-level recommendations

- Maintain the ad hoc review process for time-sensitive applications
- Conduct Secretariat-internal reviews for Switch or standalone TCA grants and launch a pilot to test Secretariat-internal reviews for low programmatic or financial risk applications (e.g., proposals for established antigens, except for Fragile & Conflict countries)
- Use differentiated IRC formats (e.g., virtual rounds for low-risk reviews and in-country reviews for high-risk applications) to maximize the added value of the IRC (see recommendation 4.3.2)
- Adapt review criteria to the type of application and review format (see recommendation 4.3.4)
- Always offer the option for countries, technical partners or Gavi to "opt-in" to an IRC review

Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Major project
FD&R effort and org. commitment required	

Impact: Maximized impact of IRC capacities, and acceleration of overall proposal review timelines

FD&R effort: Need to initiate and project manage the review process transformation

Org. commitment: Need to execute EVOLVE to embed changes in broader process flows

Sources

Assumptions

[1]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[2]	Gavi, IRC Terms of Reference	
[3]	'EVOLVE macroprocess 2 – Review, Approval and Disbursement' plus key informant interviews, 2022/23 Internal Audit Report Cash Grant Application, Approval and Disbursement, February 2017	
[4]	The Global Fund, TRP Terms of Reference & TRP Review Approaches Manual plus key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[5]	Unitaid, PRC Terms of Reference plus key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[6]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[7]	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance 2021-2025 (updated version for 2023-2025)	
[8]	Gavi Process Guidelines, Link accessed on March 1 st , 2023	
[9]	IRC Outcome Database 2020-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In "Past Performance" only countries with >3 applications considered
[10]	Internal guidance note on the process for review of time-sensitive funding requests under FER Policy, IRC Outcome Database 2020-202	

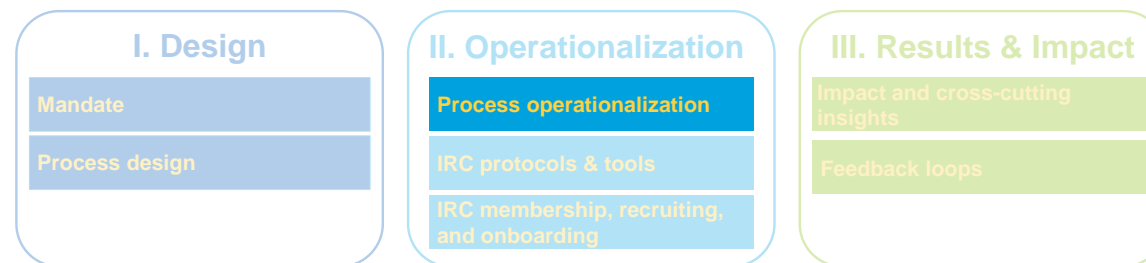
Focus area 3

Process operationalization

3.1 Brief summary

3.1.1 Scope of this chapter

Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee (IRC)

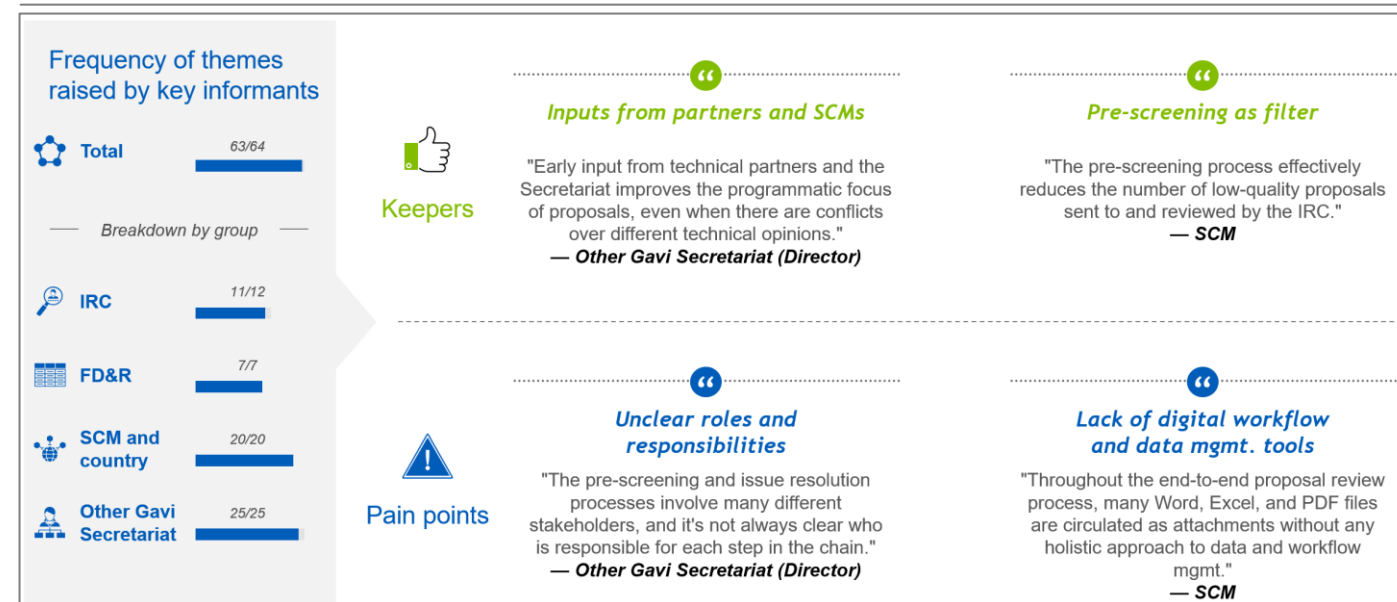


This chapter covers the process operationalization component of the evaluation framework. Further it aims to answer the following questions outlined in the RFP:

- To what extent is the engagement of the Secretariat and other stakeholders (Gavi technical teams, country support team, partners and country representatives) useful and appropriate in the review process?
- To what extent has the pre-screening of applications by the Secretariat and partners been appropriate and effective?

3.1.2 Strengths and pain points

FIG 3.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



3.2 Diagnostics

This diagnostic chapter covers two main areas: (1) **The E2E application-to-disbursement process baseline**, and (2) **digital tools and enablers**

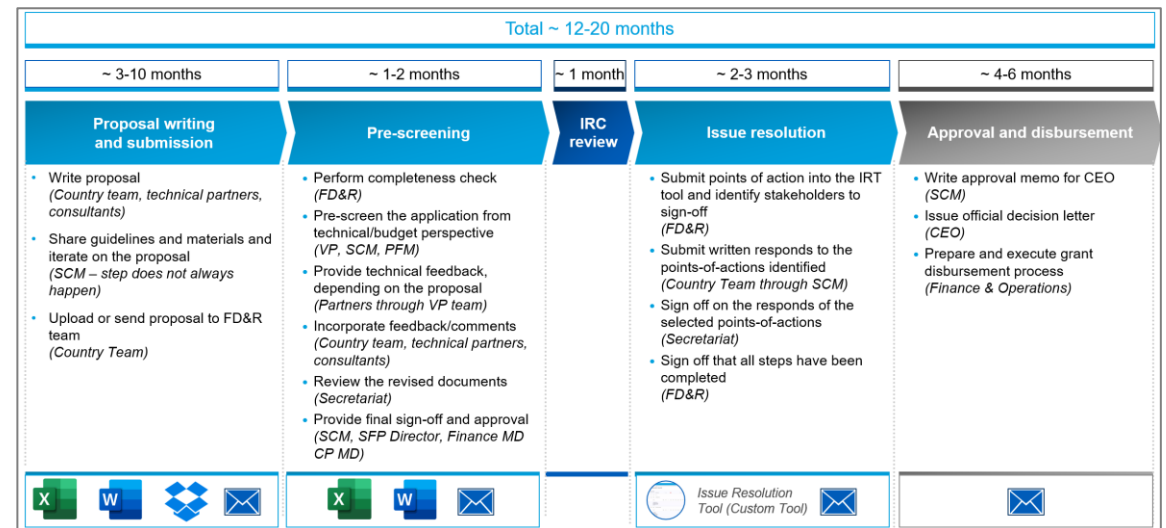
3.2.1 E2E application-to-disbursement process baseline

As outlined in the Process Design focus area (2.2.1), the E2E application-to-disbursement process takes approximately 12-20 months, substantially longer than that of peer organizations such as the Global Fund, BMGF, and Unitaaid [1]. Figure 3.B provides a detailed overview of the actors and process steps involved in the different phases. This chapter focuses on the key elements that are going well, as well as the pain points experienced by different stakeholders. The pain points are based on the feedback gathered from key informant interviews and the first results of the "Launch and Understand (AS IS)" phase of the EVOLVE project [2]. Although the primary focus of this evaluation is on the IRC review and its direct impact on upstream and downstream processes (i.e., pre-screening and issue resolution), for the sake of completeness this chapter will also cover the proposal preparation and submission phase at a high level.

The **proposal preparation and submission** phase typically takes 3-10 months [1]. During this process, the capacity and quality of support that a country can access from partner agencies and consultants varies widely across countries and proposal types. Key informants note that the level of technical partner involvement in this process (including through a pre-review) positively correlates with proposal quality and IRC review outcomes. This has become particularly relevant as the overall depth and complexity of required proposal materials has increased over the past 20 years (while acknowledging effective streamlining efforts in recent years), leading country teams to increasingly rely on specialized consultant support to prepare and submit Gavi grant applications [3]. One experienced Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) manager at the country-level estimated that proposal development time had more than doubled over the past 10 years as a result [3]. In addition, some interviewees suggested that there is currently a lack of systematic performance management on the part of Alliance partners to ensure the right capacity and quality of support to countries in the proposal process, and that proposal guidelines are not always strictly followed (partly due to the high frequency of changes in recent years).

The **pre-screening** step was introduced in 2016 in response to declining proposal quality, with the aim of increasing the likelihood of IRC approval by leveraging the growing technical capacity of the Gavi Secretariat. During the 2018-2022 period, approximately 12% of all proposals did not pass the pre-screening step due to insufficient quality or missing signatures, and of the remaining 88% recommended for submission to the IRC, approximately two-thirds received comments [4]. Overall, the pre-screening process is valued by most stakeholders as it helps to strengthen the technical aspects of proposals, ensures the completeness of all documents, and allows the SCM to review the proposal in its entirety, enabling them to represent it more effectively during the IRC review. Despite these benefits, interviewees pointed out that the whole process is resource-intensive due to the large number of stakeholders involved, sometimes unclear roles and responsibilities, and some stakeholders not reliably completing their respective process steps on time. The resulting delays can then put countries under time pressure to incorporate the Secretariat's comments before the IRC review. In addition, key informants noted that there is no standard workflow tool to support this process, which is discussed in more detail in section 3.2.2.

FIG 3.B: End-to-end application-to-disbursement process chain [8]



The IRC review process itself is discussed in detail in focus area 4 "IRC Protocol and Tools" and its deeper assessment will not be covered in focus area 3 "Process Operationalization".

Following the IRC review, the **Issue Resolution Step** aims to respond to the points-of-action raised by the IRC. Key informants were uniformly supportive of the existence of this step, but criticisms were raised about its operationalization. In 2017, an audit identified significant potential for streamlining and improving the efficiency of this step.

From 2016 to 2022, the time taken for this step has decreased from an average of 102 working days to 52 working days, which is a significant improvement. However, it is still 30 working days away from the target set in the 2017 audit (target of 22 working days) [5]. Interviewees highlighted that, in several cases, the IRC's points of action and corresponding responsibilities are unclear. This issue will be further explored in focus area 4. Finally, interviewees indicated that the need for responses to go through the SCM, rather than being submitted directly by partners or country teams, reduces their sense of ownership and adds to the complexity of this process.

The **approval and disbursement** phase is outside the scope of this review. However, interviewees highlighted its functioning and efficiency as a critical factor in the speed of disbursement of funds to countries. Multiple handover points, a low interpretation of Gavi's risk appetite in some Secretariat functions, and several decision gates (e.g., starting supply chain operations only after the decision letter has been signed) were identified as key issues resulting in delayed access to vaccines and/or grant funding for countries.

The EVOLVE project identified 47 different pain points in the E2E application-to-disbursement process, which are broadly consistent with those identified in the key informant interviews for this evaluation. In addition, EVOLVE identified two main themes: first, roles and responsibilities are not clearly assigned, leading to inefficiencies and hindering the proper onboarding and training of staff. Second, processes are frequently misaligned at the strategic, planning, and operational levels [6].

Conclusion

The E2E application-to-disbursement process involves a wide range of stakeholders and is typically a lengthy process, often taking more than a year to complete. However, there is significant room for improvement by formalizing and simplifying the process, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, and ensuring adherence to established timelines for each step. To address these challenges, Gavi launched the EVOLVE project to analyze and improve the E2E process. The EVOLVE project team is currently working on several recommendations for improvement to create a more effective and efficient process that meets the needs of stakeholders.

➤ [See recommendation: 3.3.1](#)

3.2.2 Digital tools and enablers

As shown in Figure 3.B, Gavi uses only two automated workflow tools (i.e., the Issue Resolution Tool, Gavi Country Portal) during the IRC review process, while most of the other processes are carried out using email, Excel, PowerPoint, and Word files. Dropbox is frequently used to share large files, but this can raise privacy issues as files are not password-protected. At the time of writing, Dropbox is being phased out and will be replaced by another tool yet to be defined. The lack of dynamic workflow tools can lead to uncertainty about where processes are stuck, particularly during pre-screening, leading to inefficiencies and delays.

The Issue Resolution Tool is a custom software designed to facilitate the issue resolution Step, but key informants reported that it is not very user-friendly and requires considerable manual work. For example, if a country submits a proposal by email, IT support staff need to create a ticket to add the application to the Issue Resolution Tool. The tool also struggles with exceptions to standard procedures, such as partial approvals, and it is not linked to the Gavi ERP (SAP S/4 Hana) [3]. The Gavi Country Portal is a platform that allows countries to submit their standalone NVS application in a pre-defined way; the country can provide and submit information in forms (e.g., targets, co-financing rates) and upload documents in a structured way, allowing for automatic calculations in the back-end. Further, it also allows stakeholders to see the status of a proposal submission (e.g., started, open, submitted). Although the tool allows for more advanced functionality than email, interviewees highlight areas for improvement, such as making the tool more stable, conducting follow-up through the platform, and expanding the scope to include all types of support.

FIG 3.C: IRC-linked databases and key reports

	Name	Tool	Information
Database	IRC outcome database	X	Year, country, IRC outcome, application type, grant size, comments type
	Pre-screening database		Year, country, application type, pre-screening outcome, pre-screening comments, type of pre-screening issues
	IRC membership database		Nationality, region, gender, term, experience
	IRC expenditure database		Cost of travel, per diems, cost of consultancy
Reports / Insights	HLRP Annex analysis	W	Overview of key applications, overview of key reviews
	Measles analysis 2018-2022	P	Pre-screening outcomes and IRC outcomes (including type of comments)
	IRC recommendation update		IRC review outcomes, plan for the remaining of the year, status update on the cross-cutting consolidation

To manage data and generate cross-cutting insights, Gavi's FD&R team uses selected databases and produces regular reports (as shown in Figure 3.C). While the databases contain the information needed to generate selected key insights across applications, they are scattered, manually curated, and sometimes contain conflicting information [3]. For example, there are several versions tracking the outcomes of IRC reviews and corresponding grant value, with slightly different reviews in scope and corresponding entries. At the time of writing, efforts are underway to create a centralized Excel database of key IRC review findings [3]. In addition, there are selected standalone efforts to generate additional insights for specific vaccine programmes (e.g., the 2018-2022 measles IRC analysis). However, beyond the information regularly provided in the HLRP annexes and the IRC recommendation updates, there is no standardized, analytical process, e.g., to regularly monitor decision outcomes and not enough time taken for each step of the process (i.e., pre-screening, IRC review, etc.) by type of application.

Conclusion

The current E2E process only uses two digital workflow tool for a separate process step, and unfortunately, these customized tools are inadequate to fully realize the potential efficiencies gains. As a result of the limited use of workflow tools and the underperforming IRT tool, the FD&R team must invest significant manual effort to oversee the E2E IRC review process and associated data. While basic information is recorded in manual databases by the FD&R team, it is scattered and sometimes inconsistent across sources, making it difficult to analyze for cross-cutting insights. The EVOLVE project is currently in the process of addressing these issues by simplifying and digitizing the E2E process and designing a digital infrastructure to support cross-cutting analysis.

➤ [See recommendation: 3.3.2](#)

3.3 Recommendations

3.3.1 Process efficiency: Workflow, timelines, and responsibilities



Objective

Streamline the application-to-disbursement process by simplifying and differentiating the pre-screening, IRC review, and issue resolution steps with clear roles and responsibilities for all parties and standardized process timelines.



Rationale

The end-to-end process from application to disbursement still takes an average of 12-20 months, with significant scope for simplification and streamlining of the pre-screening, IRC review, and issue resolution steps, despite a number of incremental efforts to improve efficiency (e.g., following the 2017 internal audit).



High-level recommendations

- Execute the ongoing EVOLVE project to clearly define responsibilities, timelines, and key priorities across the E2E process and eliminate redundancies
- Maintain a cross-functional working team to execute the EVOLVE change management agenda throughout the E2E application-to-disbursement process
- Continuously monitor the time and effort required by process step and by stakeholder to track progress against targets and identify persistent roadblocks
- This recommendation falls within the scope of EVOLVE's work, so its implementation will be fully driven by EVOLVE. This recommendation is included in the evaluation to emphasize the importance of the EVOLVE project; however, short-term Improvements can already be expected by implementing the differentiation recommendation in process design



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Acceleration of pre-screening to issue resolution timelines and reduce of resource needs

FD&R effort: Need to shape, orchestrate, and monitor the proposal review process

Org. commitment: Need to execute the EVOLVE project and long-term change mgmt. plan

3.3.2 Digital tools: Comprehensive data and workflow management



Objective

Develop a comprehensive approach to data and workflow management along the E2E application-to-disbursement process to improve operational efficiency and enable data-driven, cross-cutting performance management.



Rationale

The data architecture along the E2E application-to-disbursement process is fragmented and relies on manual data management and workflows. Individual bespoke tools (e.g. IRT) exist but lack user-centricity and seamless workflow integration.



High-level recommendations

- Build on the EVOLVE process maps and benchmark the existing data and workflow management architecture against user requirements
- Outline opportunities to leverage Gavi's existing tools versus off-the-shelf available/customized IT solutions and prioritize additional investments
- Launch initial pilots and integrate efforts into Gavi's wider IT strategic priorities
- Integrate into the broader EVOLVE change management agenda to ensure seamless adoption of new solutions by key stakeholders
- This recommendation falls within the scope of EVOLVE's work, so its implementation will be fully driven by EVOLVE. This recommendation is included in the evaluation to emphasize the importance of the EVOLVE project.



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Acceleration of IRC review timelines, reduction of resource needs, and better data

FD&R effort: Need to digitally transform existing data and workflow management systems

Org. commitment: Need to execute EVOLVE project and long-term (IT) change mgmt. plan

Sources

Assumptions

[1] The Global Fund, TRP Terms of Reference and TRP Review Approaches Manual plus key informant interviews, 2022/23

[2] 'EVOLVE macroprocess 2 – Review, Approval, and Disbursement' plus key informant interviews, 2022/23

[3] Key informant interviews, 2022/23

[4] Pre-screening database, 2018-2022, considering 219 records

[5] 'EVOLVE macroprocess 2 – Review, Approval, and Disbursement'
Internal Audit Report, Cash Grant Application, Approval and Disbursement, February 2017

[6] As-is Pain Points Master File, 2022

[7] The Global Fund website, [The Global Fund speeds grant approvals with Adobe Sign](#), 2023:
Key informant interviews, 2022/23

[8] Key informant interviews 2022/23
Timeline and steps for application pre-screening
'EVOLVE macroprocess 2 – Review, Approval and Disbursement' plus key informant interviews, 2022/23

Focus area 4

IRC Protocol and Tools

4.1 Brief summary

4.1.1 Scope of this chapter

Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee (IRC)

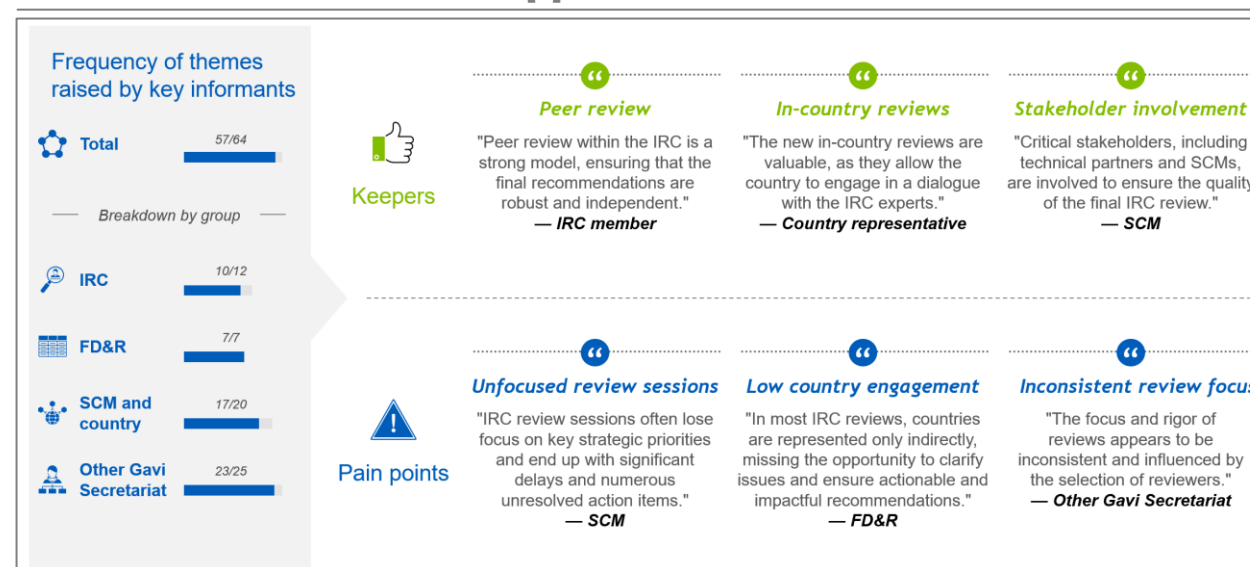


This chapter covers the "IRC protocols and tools" component of the evaluation framework. It further aims to answer the following questions outlined in the RFP:

- To what extent are IRC reviews driven by Gavi's segmented approach?
- What are the advantages and challenges of different application and review methods?
- Was the IRC review process efficient and effective?
- Were the IRC review sessions suitable for their intended purpose in terms of engagement level, efficiency, interactivity, clarity, and brevity of discussion?

4.1.2 Strengths and pain points

FIG 4.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



4.2 Diagnostics

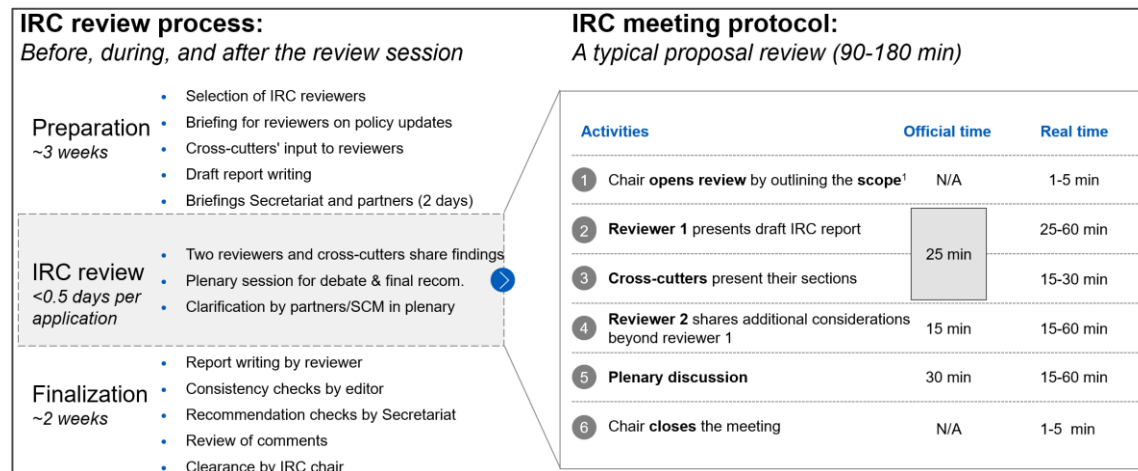
The diagnostics chapter covers five main areas: (1) **IRC review protocol**, (2) **IRC review differentiation**, (3) **country engagement in IRC reviews**, (4) **IRC review guidance**, and (5) **IRC consistency**

4.2.1 IRC review protocol

The entire process of preparing for and conducting a typical Geneva-based IRC review takes around four weeks and consists of three main parts: IRC preparation, the IRC meeting itself, and finalization of the IRC report. Of the four weeks, approximately three weeks are spent on preparation.

During preparation, the FD&R team usually selects the IRC reviewers about three weeks before the IRC review and sends the proposal to the IRC reviewers about 7-10 days before the review. This allows time for the first IRC reviewer, the second IRC reviewer, and the cross-cutters to write a draft report [2].

FIG 4.B: IRC review process and protocol [2]



As part of the preparation for the IRC review, a dialogue session between the IRC, Alliance partners, and the applicant country can be held at the request of a country or IRC members, or as standard procedure for measles and FPP applications [1]. This meeting allows Alliance partners and the country team to share their perspective and additional country context and allows the IRC to ask clarifying questions before the IRC review takes place. Interviewees emphasized that these dialogue sessions are helpful in providing more information about the country and that it may be helpful to extend them to other application types in addition to measles and FPP.

The IRC meeting itself then typically consists of six steps, as shown on the right-hand side of Figure 4.B. **(Step 1)** The meeting begins with the Chair providing a brief overview of the proposal, which typically takes about 1-5 minutes. Interviewees argued that the Chair could take a more prominent role to outline the scope of the review and share strategic considerations prior to kick off, allowing for a more focused IRC meeting [3].

(Steps 2,3,4) Following the Chair's introduction, the primary reviewer presents his or her draft report and the cross-cutters share their recommendations for their respective sections, i.e., budget and cold chain. The secondary reviewer then adds any relevant information not mentioned by the primary reviewers or outlines where they disagree. Currently, the reviewers often exceed the 40-minute time limit, and in some extreme cases the discussion can extend to 150 minutes when the IRC is divided on whether to fund a proposal. These overruns often occur because the IRC reviewers go through the written report chronologically and in great detail, rather than starting with their key recommendations and highlighting the key factors that support them [3].

(Step 5) A plenary discussion is then held to discuss the proposal and the final recommendation. All IRC members attending the review session (approximately 10-20), whether in person or online, can share their comments on the proposal and ask questions of the SCM, technical partners, or other Secretariat members. During this discussion, the SCM and technical partners may also provide input and answer selected questions. However, there is often a lack of strong moderation to facilitate the plenary discussion, resulting in comments from IRC reviewers that vary widely in scope and magnitude, ranging from recommendations for re-review to comments on specific budget lines, without direct responses from partners or the SCMs [3].

(Step 6) At the end of the review, the Chair gives a one-to-five minute summary of the discussion and the final review. However, there is not always a clear recap of which action items have been resolved through partner or SCM responses in the plenary and which will be taken forward in the final report.

After an IRC review, there are several steps involved in producing the final report. First, the primary reviewer sends the report to the IRC editor for editing. Then, the Secretariat checks the report for accuracy. Next, the primary reviewer incorporates any comments. Finally, the report is approved by the IRC Chair. Once approved, the FD&R team shares the report with country stakeholders. The escalation path for disagreements with the IRC is currently limited to a direct escalation to the Gavi CEO (as happened in the case of the Ghana's malaria application, which was reviewed by the IRC in November 2022), with no formal or less stringent appeal mechanism available [1] [2].

Conclusion

In terms of the preparatory work for the IRC, holding a pre-IRC meeting is generally seen as beneficial, despite the additional logistical effort required, and could add value beyond the review of FPP and measles applications. Regarding the IRC meeting itself, the peer review format and subsequent plenary discussion ensures robust, independent decision-making and avoids potential reviewer bias. However, (i) the delivery of a set of strategic and actionable IRC recommendations is compromised by the challenges of managing effective review meetings, and (ii) efficient and effective resolution of disagreements with IRC recommendations is hampered by a lack of delegation of responsibility within the current approach.

➤ [See recommendation: 4.3.1](#)

4.2.2 IRC review differentiation

As shown in Figure 4.C, there are currently three different modalities for IRC reviews. The predominant modality is the traditional Geneva-based review, which accounts for about ~90% of all reviews, followed by in-country FPP reviews for high-impact countries introduced in 2016, virtual reviews, and regional reviews (planned for Fragile and Conflict countries) [5]. The main difference between the Geneva-based and virtual reviews and the in-country and regional reviews is that the latter modalities provide more opportunities for interaction between country stakeholders and the IRC, and ensure a deeper contextual awareness in the IRC's decision-making process. According to respondents, this aspect is considered very valuable and outweighs the additional logistical effort required for technically complex proposals and those with high strategic or financial materiality [1].

Despite the different IRC formats outlined above, there are currently no formal guidelines for differentiating the IRC review in terms of review criteria and rigor, except for the more pragmatic review of applications from Fragile and Conflict countries.

FIG 4.C: IRC review modalities [4]

	Geneva-based	Virtual	In-country
Description	• Standard IRC review rounds conducted 4x/year	• Individual review of FPP for Conflict/Fragile • Individual time-sensitive/ad hoc reviews	• Seven-day in-country review for FPP of high-impact countries
Location	• Geneva	• Zoom	• In the respective country • Regional hub (e.g., Dubai) in case of a conflict
Avg. cost	• ~CHF15K	• ~CHF 5-10K	• ~CHF50K
Process	<p>Consulting fees of IRC members and travel costs for all actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, there is a briefing call before the IRC review involving IRC members, partners, and secretariat • IRC members write draft report prior to the IRC review • Draft report is shared in the IRC meeting by primary and secondary reviewer • Plenary discussion is held to make the final decision • Final report is written and submitted by first reviewer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRC members collaborate to write the IRC report • IRC key recommendations are shared in Zoom call to the Secretariat, enabling the Secretariat to give comments • IRC members write out the final report <p><i>Not yet codified, every case has been slightly different</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRC reviewers receive country documentation prior to travelling to country • IRC reviewers share key questions with country upfront • IRC reviewers conduct meetings with various stakeholders: partners, ministry of health, EPI manager to align on the approach • IRC reviewers share their final recommendation to the Ministry of Health at end of the week • Final report is then submitted after the review, even though the country knows the outcome already

This means that all proposals (except for those from Fragile and Conflict countries), regardless of complexity or strategic and financial materiality, are treated with almost the same lens, including a detailed technical and budget review, and mostly the same time allotments on a review day.

Conclusion

Recent efforts to differentiate IRC review formats show good progress (e.g., the introduction of in-country reviews for High Impact FPP proposals). However, the typical Geneva-based IRC review still lacks further adaptation to adequately address the specific needs of different proposal types and countries, for example in terms of scope (i.e., detailed budget review yes/no), rigor (i.e., strategic versus detailed technical review), and timing (i.e., early, iterative, or final review). This additional differentiation would be beneficial to further focus the IRC review on high materiality proposals, particularly by streamlining the review of low-risk and low-complexity applications. Yet it is important to ensure that additional differentiation overall does not result in additional process complexity, particularly with respect to the capacity requirements of the FD&R team. Therefore, a workload estimate should be performed prior to implementation to assess the impact and compare it against the benefits the measure will bring. Further, the proposed process design differentiation reduces the FD&R workload by reducing the number of IRC reviews, which in turn could create capacity for other measures such as the IRC review differentiation.

➤ [See recommendation: 4.3.2](#)

4.2.3 Country engagement in IRC reviews

IRC reviews typically involve both Alliance partners who have supported a proposal and SCMs who represent the country's proposal. SCMs usually act as the main point of contact for answering any questions raised by the IRC. However, SCMs have noted that this is not always ideal, as they were not responsible for writing the proposal, may not have the necessary information to answer certain questions or, may even disagree with certain elements of the proposal themselves [1].

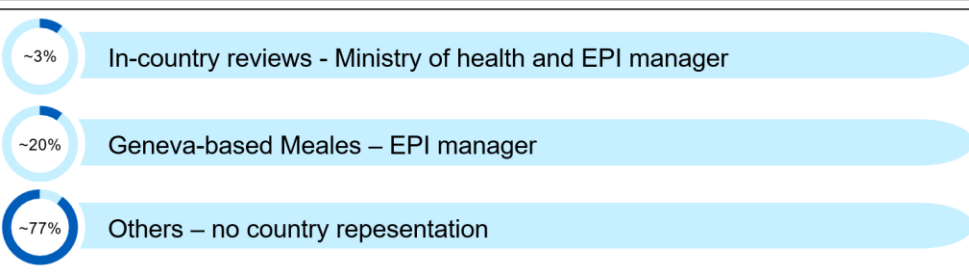
In about a quarter of the reviews, and increasing as more countries move to the FPP approach, there is direct country representation at the IRC review, either in person for in-country reviews or dialed-in for measles applications, where the EPI manager presents the proposal to the IRC [5]. Key informants indicated that country representation adds value for several reasons. First, the team that wrote the proposal understands it best and can provide relevant country context to the IRC. Second, it prevents the SCM from having to advocate for a proposal he or she may not fully support. Third, it promotes country ownership of the proposal and its subsequent implementation, leading to better results. Finally, it allows countries to ask clarifying questions on action items (only during the in-country FPP review), which can speed up their response in the IRT or even lead to action items being closed in plenary [1]. This is particularly important as several key informants noted that IRC recommendations are often too academic and lack practical considerations relevant to successful implementation. For these reasons, most respondents argued that country representation, especially in the read-out of IRC recommendations and points of action, is valuable not only for the ~ 25% of in-country reviews and measles reviews, but should also be considered for the remaining ~ 75% of reviews.

Conclusion

Country representation in the introductory and Q&A sessions of IRC meetings, as well as in the final read-out of IRC recommendations, is valuable because it improves IRC decision-making based on the country context, increases the feasibility of IRC points-of-actions and promotes greater country ownership. Currently, this practice occurs in only about a quarter of all reviews, but is expected to increase as the FPP process becomes more widely adopted by High Impact countries. However, increased country representation would also benefit single grant reviews beyond measles, and FPP reviews beyond High Impact countries.

➤ [See recommendation: 4.3.3](#)

FIG 4.D: Presence of country representatives in IRC reviews [5]



4.2.4 IRC review guidance

The IRC uses three key public documents to review country applications: the Gavi Vaccine Funding Guidelines, the Programme Funding Guidelines, and the Gavi Budget Eligibility Guidelines. In addition, reviewers are provided with high-level IRC review criteria (i.e., the questions in the IRC report) as internal guidance. Together, these materials provide detailed information on the requirements an application must meet, including required documents, thresholds, and checklist questions. The guidelines are also aligned with WHO standards. However, there are four key aspects of the current guidelines that were identified by key informants as problematic and for which benchmarking to peers suggests improvements. First, while Appendix 1 of the Programme Funding Guidelines provides some level of differentiation, it is not directly linked to the country segments and lacks clarity on how it will affect the IRC review process. In addition, IRC reviewers do not currently use these differentiation guidelines in their reviews [8]. Second, there is no prioritization between requirements that are essential and those that are nice to have. Third, there is no weighting or quantitative scoring mechanism that outlines the minimum set of requirements a country must meet to comply with the guidelines and provides an overall score for the entire application, as in the Unitaids model [1]. Finally, the guidelines are not presented to countries in a cohesive manner. Although they are housed in a single section on the Gavi website, they are scattered among numerous documents, making them difficult to navigate. In contrast, the Global Fund provides a single public document containing all review guidelines and considerations [8]. These pain points contribute to the perception of some stakeholders that IRC review scrutiny is not always consistent and has increased.

Conclusion

Although the IRC review guidelines are detailed, rigorous, and technically sound, they currently have some shortcomings. For example, they are not sufficiently tailored to different types of proposals or country segments, and do not explicitly distinguish between must-have and nice-to-have requirements. In addition, the review criteria are not translated into clear scoring sheets that would allow the calculation of a final IRC review score. The resulting lack of transparency on how the IRC arrives at its final decision creates uncertainty among stakeholders and undermines the reputation of the IRC review and decision-making process.

➤ [See recommendation: 4.3.4](#)

4.2.5 IRC review consistency

According to interviewees, IRC decisions are not always consistent with previous reviews, and the outcome of an IRC review may be partly influenced by the choice of IRC reviewers to review a particular proposal [1]. Anecdotally, some IRC members are perceived as being more rigorous than others, and statistically, some reviewers are indeed 1.5 to 2 times more likely than the overall average to send an application for re-review[6]. Although this correlation could be misleading due to some reviewers repeatedly reviewing poor-quality proposals, the combination of this finding with the experiences shared during the interview process supports concerns about suboptimal consistency in IRC reviews.

In addition, key respondents indicated that they perceived IRC review scrutiny to have increased over time. For example, when looking at the measles applications, the average number of IRC points of action increased by 35% from 10 points in 2018 to 14 points in 2022 [7]. This trend suggests that IRC members are applying a higher level of rigor and scrutiny. However, there is currently no formal process in place to better monitor and assess the consistency of reviews [1].

Conclusion

IRC decisions are not always fully consistent across reviews, and some reviewers appear to be more stringent than others. This contributes to the perception among country teams that the IRC can sometimes feel arbitrary. Clear review guidelines and scoring sheets would help make review results more transparent and overcome reviewer bias. In addition, quality and consistency checks by thematic experts following IRC reviews could further strengthen quality management.

➤ [See recommendation: 4.3.5](#)

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 IRC review protocol: Focused IRC review sessions

Objective

Strengthen the standard, Geneva-based IRC meeting protocol to enable effective and time-efficient discussions among reviewers, with a focus on resolving as many open issues as possible during the plenary session.

Rationale

IRC meetings frequently exceed their allotted time, with overly detailed presentations and limited facilitation during the plenary session, resulting in discussions going off in multiple directions and new issues being added to the backlog instead of being resolved.

High-level recommendations

- Begin each IRC meeting with a ~15-minute introduction to frame the country context, relevant previous reviews, and broader strategic considerations
- Focus contributions during the IRC review on key insights and underlying rationale, rather than detailed comments on specific proposal items
- Actively facilitate the whole meeting through the Chair and intervene if the allotted is exceeded or if discussions get off track
- Focus the plenary session on resolving identified action items/issues rather than adding new action items to the backlog

Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low-hanging fruit	

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through focused and timely sessions

FD&R effort: Need to refine review protocol and train IRC leadership in facilitation

Org. commitment: n/a

See Appendix 3 for suggested differentiation logic

4.3.2 Differentiated IRC: Differentiation of the IRC format and review scopes

Objective

Apply different IRC review formats (e.g., in-country, virtual, Geneva-based) and scopes (e.g., high-level strategic review versus detailed technical review) to the context of each application based on the predefined differentiation logic.

Rationale

Recent efforts to differentiate IRC reviews have proven valuable (e.g., the introduction of in-country reviews), but over 80% of IRC reviews still follow the standard format of the Geneva-based review rounds with limited differentiation in process and scope.

High-level recommendations

- Continue to conduct ad hoc IRC reviews for time-sensitive reviews
- Do not conduct IRC reviews for switch or TCA grants or applications with low materiality (see Annex 3)
- Continue to conduct IRC peer reviews for medium-risk or medium-complexity applications in the Geneva-based format or virtually, but consider earlier IRC engagement and more high-level reviews (e.g., excluding detailed budgets)
- Use full-week, in-country reviews for high-risk applications to ensure country dialogue and contextualized IRC decision-making (ideally following up on previous IRC-country exchanges)

Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low-hanging fruit	


FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality and lower cost through differentiation

FD&R effort: Need to design, change, and coordinate differentiated processes


Org. commitment: Need for cross-functional cooperation to institutionalize changes

4.3.3 Country dialogue: Enhanced country dialogue during the IRC review




Objective

Improve the quality of IRC decisions and the feasibility of action points for issue resolution by enhancing and formalizing the dialogue between countries, technical partners, and the IRC during IRC sessions.




Rationale

Outside of in-country, FPP, and measles Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIA) reviews, there is no direct interaction between countries and the IRC, which creates the risk that IRC discussions lack sufficient context and that action points are not sufficiently actionable for countries.



High-level recommendations

- Depending on the materiality of a proposal, invite country representatives to attend the proposal presentation and Q&A session in person/virtually
- Request a list of key questions from the IRC to share with the country representatives, technical partners, and SCM prior to the IRC review
- Allow EPI managers and technical partners to respond directly to IRC questions, within clearly defined time limits, to ensure efficient conduct of the meeting
- Institutionalize feedback sessions between country representatives, partners, SCMs, and the IRC to ensure clarity on next steps to address action points



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low hanging fruit	


FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through better country context awareness

FD&R effort: Need to organize additional logistics to have country presence in reviews


Org. commitment: Need for close cooperation with Gavi country teams

4.3.4 IRC review guidance: Definition of IRC review guidance and criteria




Objective

Ensure focused and consistent IRC reviews by providing reviewers with clear methodological guidance, review criteria, and scoring sheets for each type of application, including output templates for the final report and recommendations.




Rationale

Although standard output templates exist, IRC reviews do not follow a clear and consistent methodological framework with predefined review criteria and scoring guidance, creating a risk of inconsistent and untransparent decision making.



High-level recommendations

- Define clear and public review guidance, criteria, and scorecards for each type of proposal, in line with the differentiation logic; please note that the evaluation team does not have the subject matter expertise to make a proposal for differentiation of the IRC review guidelines.
- Develop a scoring mechanism to enable transparent, data-driven, and consistent IRC decision-making across applications and over time
- Consider differentiation within the recommended differentiation logic highlighting the standards a review needs to reach to be ready to launch; communicate updated IRC review guidance to country stakeholders, partners, and the Gavi Secretariat to increase transparency and build trust
- Monitor compliance with the guidance and continuously improve frameworks



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through differentiated review guidance

FD&R effort: Need to develop robust IRC review guidance for each type of support

Org. commitment: Need for cross-functional cooperation to agree on priorities and criteria

4.3.5 IRC consistency checks: Introduction of post-IRC quality reviews



Objective

Ensure high quality and consistency of IRC reports and recommendations across applications and over time by introducing post-IRC quality reviews by IRC thematic leads (plus a potential formal appeal mechanism by countries)



Rationale

The IRC's recommendations are not always fully consistent across applications and over time, resulting in controversial IRC decisions and sometimes unworkable points of action for countries to strengthen a proposal.



High-level recommendations

- IRC thematic experts should conduct regular quality and consistency checks of IRC outputs and results in collaboration with the Secretariat
- Establish a mechanism for reviewers to flag deviations and request further refinement of IRC outputs by the primary and secondary reviewers
- Transparently share evaluation results with key stakeholders, including IRC members, countries, technical partners, and the Gavi Secretariat.
- Establish a formal appeal mechanism for countries to challenge an IRC recommendation



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low hanging fruit	

*FD&R effort and org.
commitment required*

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through formal quality and consistency checks

FD&R effort: Need to scope, initiate, and coordinate the post-IRC quality checks

Org. commitment: n/a

Sources

Assumptions

[1]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[2]	Gavi IRC guide, October 2019 Key informant interviews, 2022/23 Observation IRC review Nigeria 03/02/23 and IRC review Zambia 06/02/23	
[3]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23 Observation IRC review Nigeria 03/02/23 and IRC review Zambia 06/02/23	
[4]	Key stakeholder interviews, 2022/2023 IRC Expenditure 2017 and 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-country: Average expenditure for Togo, Malawi, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Comoros based on 2017 expenditure data • Remote: Average expenditure for Togo, Malawi, Liberia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh based on 2017 expenditure data (not available for subsequent years); expenses exceeded CHF 10K only for Nigeria and Bangladesh • Geneva-based: Average expenditure for November 2022 Geneva based review
[5]	IRC outcomes database 2018-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume country presentation in FPP for High Impact and for measles
[6]	IRC outcome database 2018-2022 IRC membership database 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 20 most frequent reviewers are considered for the period 2018-2022 • Dataset only for which IRC membership data was available (approx. 337)
[7]	IRC reports 2017-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only looked at measles applications between 2017 and 2022; total of 26 applications in scope
[8]	Gavi Programme Funding Guidelines Key informant interviews, 2022/2023	

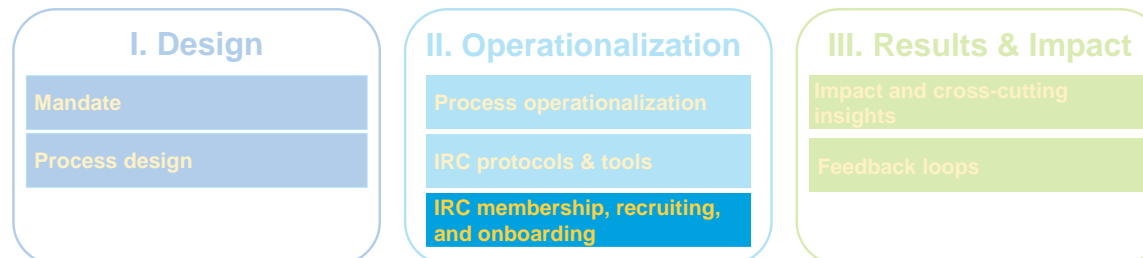
Focus area 5

IRC membership

5.1 Brief summary

Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee (IRC)

5.1.1 Scope of this chapter

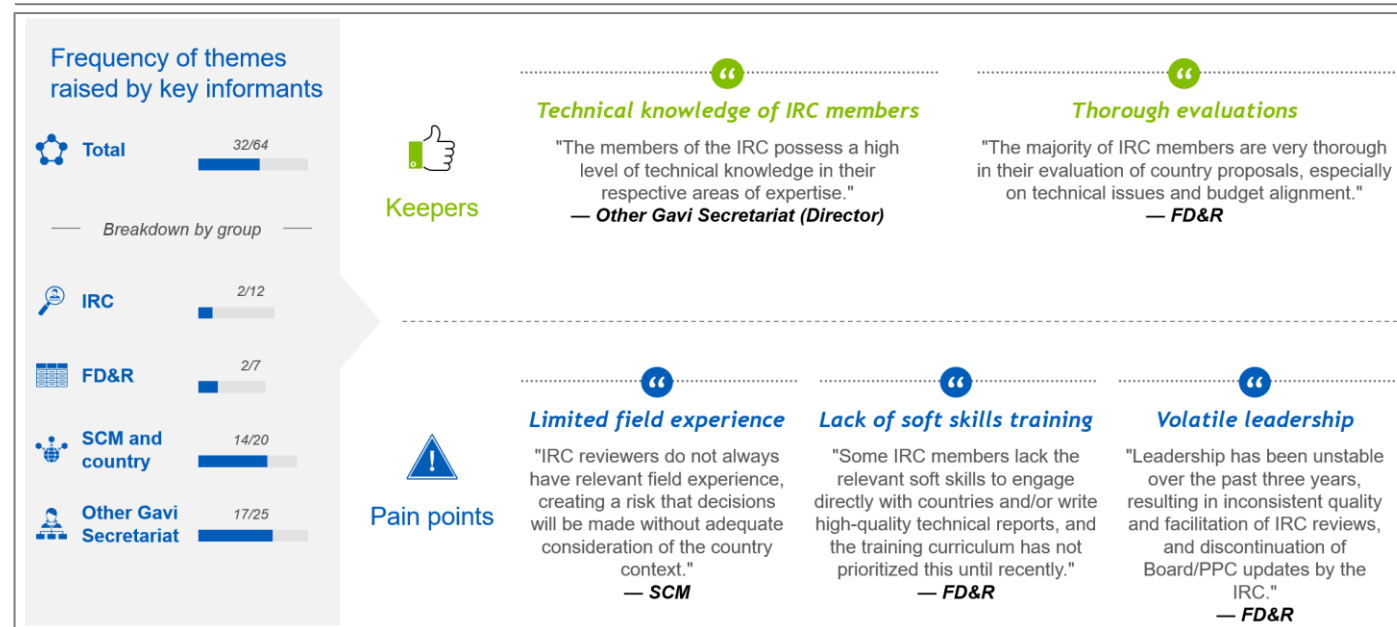


This chapter covers the "IRC membership, recruiting and onboarding" component of the evaluation framework. It further aims to answer the following questions outlined in the RFP:

- To what extent is the IRC skill set and composition fit for purpose?
- How were IRC members onboarded?

5.1.2 Strengths and pain points

FIG 5.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



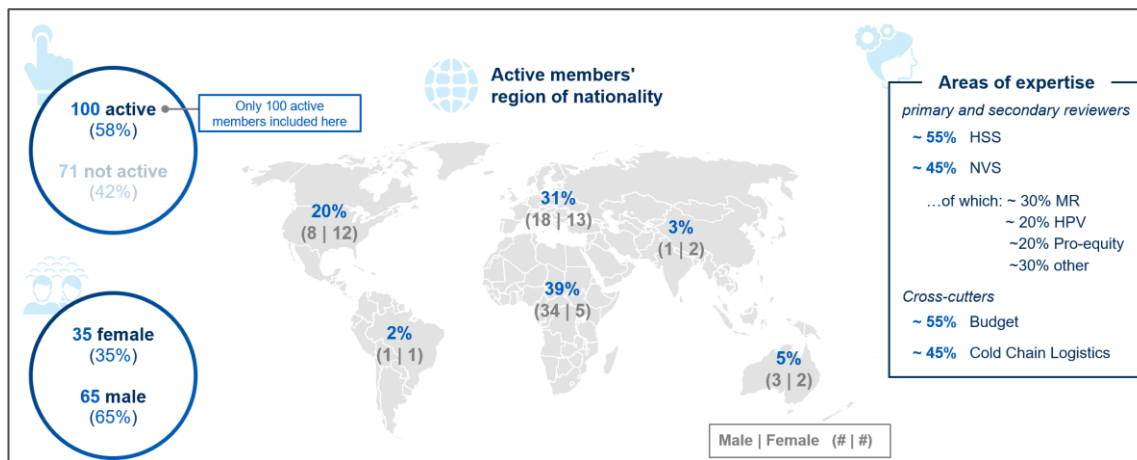
5.2 Diagnostics

This chapter focuses on three main areas: (1) **IRC composition and staffing**, (2) **IRC training curriculum**, and (3) **IRC leadership**.

5.2.1 IRC composition and staffing

When Gavi was first established, there were only nine members of the IRC. However, as Gavi has grown and expanded its portfolio as outlined in focus area 1 "Mandate", the number of IRC members has steadily increased to a pool of 100 active reviewers in 2023 [2]. This pool includes 35 women and 65 men, with 25 members added during the IRC meeting in January 2023, representing a wide range of skills and experience. Most IRC members are generalists with expertise in HSS, or technical experts in NVS (vaccine- or disease-specific), while others have specialized knowledge in cross-cutting issues such as budget and cold chain logistics [2]. Each IRC member serves a three-year term and can serve up to two consecutive terms. After two terms, there is a mandatory one-year break before a member can serve on the IRC again [3].

FIG 5.B: Backgrounds of active IRC reviewers [4]



Interviewees valued the technical expertise of the IRC and its ability to adapt the membership pool to Gavi's changing priorities and needs. However, some interviewees noted that IRC members often lack relevant or recent country field experience. A review of the CVs of the 20 most consulted IRC reviewers, who are responsible for about 80% of reviews, showed that they have an average of around 12 years of field experience and 20 years of academic/technical expertise [4]. Furthermore, the majority of the reviewers' field experience was gained in the early stages of their careers. As most IRC reviewers are highly experienced and tenured, this means their field experience is mainly concentrated in the years 2000-2010. Finally, only one IRC member has more field experience than technical expertise.

These findings support the view of several interviewees that IRC membership is more biased towards technical expertise. As a result, action items may focus more on theoretical best practices than on the practical challenges that a country may face.

In addition, key informants raised concerns about the appropriate geographical representation of IRC members when reviewing country proposals. Analysis shows that in about half of all IRC reviews, the reviews were conducted by reviewers whose nationality was outside the continent in which the reviewed country was located [6]. However, it is important to note that several IRC reviewers have extensive country experience outside their home countries or even hold dual citizenship. The FD&R team conducts a regular assessment of the IRC capability map through the IRC membership database and is well aware of the highlighted pain points, but they highlight the challenge of finding reviewers with the local knowledge and expertise required for IRC reviews. Finally, the current IRC leadership has solid African representation, with two of the three IRC (Vice) Chairs coming from African countries [4].

To address the above issues, 25 new members were added to the IRC in January 2023. The primary objective was to fill gaps in functional/antigen-specific expertise within the IRC membership pool, while increasing overall field experience and country context. The success of these recruitment efforts will be evaluated in future review cycles in which these new members are deployed.

The approach to identifying and selecting specific IRC members to conduct a particular review is not fully transparent and rule-based. Prior to an IRC review, the FD&R team typically assesses the level of expertise required for a given application, the availability of reviewers, the experience of available reviewers - new IRC members are not assigned to in-country reviews - and the FD&R team's subjective perception of the IRC member's past performance, as well as the Chair's evaluation of an IRC member's first review [1]. This process results in approximately 20% of IRC members conducting 80% of the reviews and several reviews being conducted with representation of relevant regional expertise [4].

Conclusion

The IRC membership pool currently has deep and diverse technical expertise but is not equally representative of country-level implementation experience. A better balance of technical expertise and relevant country-level field experience would be beneficial to ensure that recommendations adequately address country-specific implementation challenges in addition to technical, programmatic aspects.

In addition, the process for identifying and selecting specific IRC members for a particular review is not sufficiently rule-based/codified and relies on the FD&R team's subjective judgment of a reviewer's suitability to review a particular proposal. The fact that only about 20% of IRC members conduct 80% of the reviews and some reviews are conducted without representation of relevant regional expertise highlights issues related to relevant reviewer skills available in the IRC membership and transparent, rule-based selection processes for specific proposal reviews.

➤ [See recommendation: 5.3.1](#)

5.2.2 Training curriculum

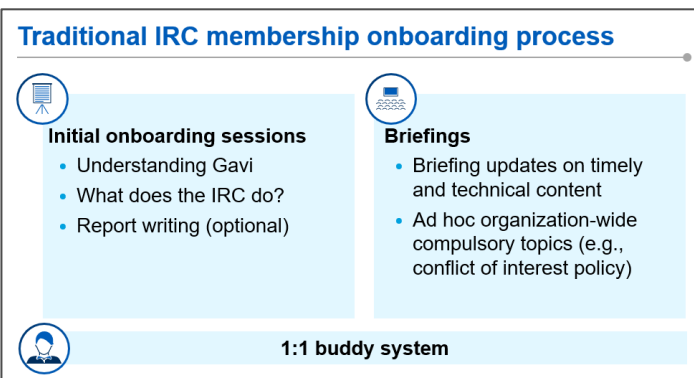
As shown in Figure 5.C, the IRC onboarding and training curriculum has three core components: (1) an onboarding session, (2) regular briefings, and (3) a mentoring/buddy program.

The onboarding session provides an introduction to Gavi's strategy and policies, outlines the IRC's mandate and procedures, and offers optional training in report writing [1]. However, during the January 2023 training, budget was only available to onboard approximately 30% of new members [5]. While the training was previously virtual, in January 2023 it was delivered in person for 25 new IRC members, which was considered a significant improvement by both IRC members and the FD&R team [1].

In addition to the onboarding session, IRC members are trained/briefed on technical content and policy changes prior to each IRC review. This helps ensure alignment on technical and administrative priorities (e.g., conflict of interest policies). Moreover, each new IRC member is paired with a senior IRC member in a buddy program, which has been successful in helping new members understand the IRC review process and creating a safe space for them to ask questions. [1]

While the traditional IRC onboarding and training curriculum helps to ensure that the ground rules for reviews are followed and reinforced, respondents highlighted the lack of explicit focus on building a strong IRC performance culture and conducting relevant soft skills training for IRC reviewers, such as how to write and communicate effectively in formal reports, how to interact with country representatives during in-country reviews, or how to ensure an effective plenary discussion. In addition, some interviewees emphasized that improving soft skills and country expertise through training is a key enabler to further improve the effectiveness of IRC reviews and to further increase the actionability of the points of action. The FD&R team is in the process of addressing this, for example by adding a two-hour training session on IRC conduct, behavior, and work culture and on report writing to the IRC training in January 2023.

FIG 5.C: IRC onboarding and training curriculum



Conclusion

The IRC training curriculum focuses primarily on technical knowledge and skills. However, the curriculum lacks a stronger emphasis on fostering an IRC performance culture, developing relevant soft skills such as effective report writing, and ensuring a deeper understanding of Gavi's strategic priorities and country implementation contexts. As a result, IRC reviews are not always of consistently high quality and recommendations to countries can be difficult to implement.

➤ [See recommendation: 5.3.2](#)

5.2.3 IRC leadership

The role of the IRC Chair is critical in ensuring high-quality and consistent decision-making across applications, facilitating effective IRC meetings, and representing the IRC in Gavi governance bodies (e.g., PPC or Board) to influence policy-making. However, there has been no formally appointed IRC Chair for the past three years, leading to instability in these three key elements [1].

In January 2023, Dr. Rose Leke was appointed as the new IRC Chair for the remainder of the Gavi 5.0/5.1 strategic period. Dr. Rose Leke is a leading African immunologist, parasitologist, and malariologist, with a strong record of field experience as well as academic experience with over 170 academic publications [6]. She is currently undergoing training to take up her new role, including an induction with key leaders of the Gavi Secretariat [1].


Conclusion

The lack of an appointed IRC Chair for the past three years has left the IRC without clear and consistent leadership able to provide a shared organizational vision at a time of global crisis. Moreover, the resulting lack of link between the IRC Chair and the Gavi Board is also a missed opportunity for Gavi to leverage IRC insights into policy-making. However, the appointment of a new IRC Chair provides a new opportunity to address these issues by providing the right mandate and tools to fulfill the critical role of the IRC Chair.

➤ [See recommendation: 5.3.3](#)


5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 IRC capability map: Further detailing of the IRC capability map




Objective

Further improve and maintain a detailed IRC reviewer capability map, highlighting relevant country field experience and functional/pathogen-specific expertise to ensure appropriate assignment of primary/secondary IRC reviewers to a given application.




Rationale

Limited country field experience and/or functional/pathogen-specific expertise of IRC reviewers is a recurring problem. The January 2023 recruitment helped to address this issue, but it could be further improved through targeted recruitment and deployment of IRC reviewers based on specific contexts.



High-level recommendations

- Build on the IRC membership dataset to enable a detailed review of IRC members' areas of expertise and experience, both functionally/pathogenically and geographically
- Cluster IRC members with relevant country-level field experience and assess the level of coverage by country segment against Gavi's support footprint
- Continue to recruit new IRC members with relevant country field experience and/or functional/pathogen-specific expertise for under-resourced capabilities
- Further improve capability-based assignment of IRC members to the appropriate review (with strict adherence to conflict-of-interest rules)



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low hanging fruit	


FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through better reviewer capability mix

FD&R effort: Need to refine reviewer capability mapping and run recruitment


Org. commitment: n/a

5.3.2 IRC trainings: Revision of the curriculum to promote an IRC culture




Objective

Further develop the skills of IRC reviewers and promote a strong performance culture within the IRC through better training on Gavi's strategic priorities, epidemiological trends, and review soft skills to ensure the right focus during reviews and effective recommendations to countries.




Rationale

IRC members do not always have sufficient understanding of Gavi's strategic priorities, access to the latest epidemiological trends, and a high level of reviewing soft skills, such as report writing, leading to sometimes controversial IRC decisions and unclear action points for countries during issue resolution. The IRC also lacks a strong, consistent performance culture.



High-level recommendations

- Develop a mandatory IRC training curriculum with a focus on educating IRC members on Gavi's strategic priorities, epidemiological trends and soft skills
- Supplement virtual training (standard format) with interactive face-to-face trainings, e.g. in the days before in-person IRC reviews to facilitate logistics
- Test different training formats and content, and continuously improve the training curriculum based on feedback from post-training and IRC review surveys
- Invest in the IRC culture, for example by organizing annual in-person retreats to build a performance culture and by running culture-focused group sessions



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		
	Quick fix	

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through better reviewer training

FD&R effort: Need to develop a new IRC training curriculum and manage its execution

Org. commitment: n/a

5.3.3. IRC leadership: Empowered leadership for strong meeting facilitation



Objective

Empower the IRC leadership (especially the Chair) to lead high quality reviews, communicate impactful recommendations to countries, and articulate key insights to relevant stakeholders (e.g., PPC and the Board) to inform policy and future reviews.



Rationale

The absence of a formally appointed IRC Chair for approx. three years created a gap in strong and consistent leadership for focused and well-moderated IRC reviews, consistent IRC decision-making, and the sharing of key cross-cutting insights.



High-level recommendations

- Invest in the induction of the new IRC Chair (and wider leadership) through dedicated training and regular interaction with Gavi Secretariat leaders to ensure effective conduct of IRC reviews and alignment on strategic priorities
- Conduct post-IRC surveys to solicit feedback from all stakeholders on the quality of facilitation of IRC meetings and IRC recommendations
- Invite the IRC Chair to attend Gavi Board meetings to ensure a deep understanding of Gavi's strategic priorities and to give a brief (e.g., 15 minute) presentation of key cross-cutting IRC findings from past reviews



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		
	Quick fix	

*FD&R effort and org.
commitment required*

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through strong IRC leadership

FD&R effort: Need to perform IRC leader-ship onboarding and training sessions

Org. commitment: n/a

Sources

Assumptions

[1]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[2]	IRC membership dataset 2022, 2023 'What is Gavi' presentation , June 2001	
[3]	IRC Term of Reference, 2020	
[4]	IRC Outcomes Database, IRC membership data sheet 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only reviews in scope for which IRC membership data is available • Reviewers are considered to be from the respective region, if their nationality and the reviewed country are on the same continent
[5]	IRC participations for report writing training in January 2023	
[6]	Researchgate "Gavi welcomes Dr. Rose Leke"	

Focus area 6

Results and impact

6.1 Brief summary

6.1.1 Scope of this chapter

Evaluation of the Independent Review Committee (IRC)

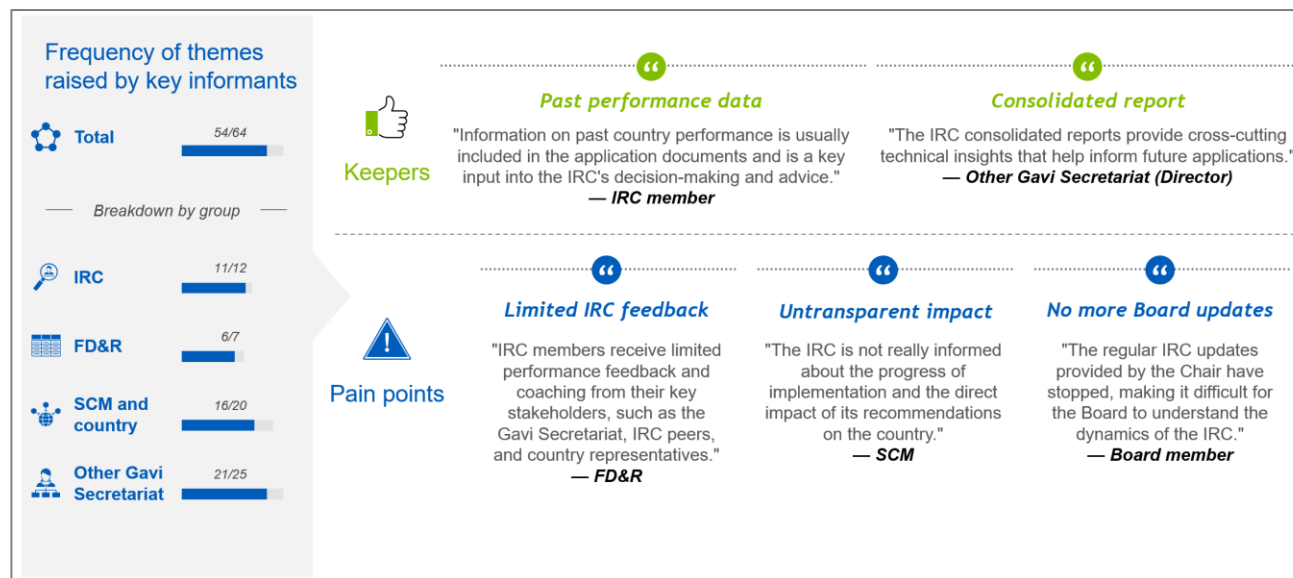


This chapter covers the "results and impact" component of the evaluation framework, including impact, and cross-cutting insights and feedback loops. It further aims to answer the following questions outlined in the RFP:

- To what extent is there an effective dissemination plan and an effective system to monitor the implementation of the various cross-cutting recommendations?
- How well does this plan and system ensure Secretariat, Alliance partnership, country accountability and follow-up?
- To what extent have the modalities of interaction between country stakeholders, IRC, and Secretariat before, during and after reviews been conducive to ensuring ongoing learning and implementation of recommendations?

6.1.2 Strengths and pain points

FIG 6.A: Quotes from the interviews [1]



6.2 Diagnostics

This chapter focuses on the following key elements: **(1) IRC compensation, feedback, and performance management**, **(2) closed loop impact updates to the IRC**, and **(3) IRC lessons sharing**.

6.2.1 IRC compensation, feedback and performance management

Gavi pays IRC members \$800 per day plus additional per diems to cover the cost of review cycles. Typically, a Geneva-based review requires 10 days of an IRC member's time, while an in-country review usually takes 8 days, including preparation and follow-up time, with about 4-5 days typically spent in the country [2]. IRC members are compensated for their services, and their decisions have a significant impact on countries' immunization timelines and on the quality of programme implementation. Therefore, IRC members are expected to perform their duties diligently and ensure that they operate in a framework where they receive regular feedback to improve their performance while maintaining their independence.

Currently, IRC performance management and feedback consist of two key components: (1) IRC members are assigned a senior buddy who is responsible for coaching and teaching them through an informal feedback cycle, and (2) the IRC Chair writes an evaluation for new IRC members after their initial review, which is reviewed with the FD&R team to determine if they should be re-invited. In 2021, 13 new IRC members were evaluated by the IRC Chair, with 11 receiving positive evaluations recommending re-invitation and two not recommended for re-invitation [3, 4]. The evaluation form (as shown in Figure 6.B) focuses primarily on assessing the soft skills and accountability of the IRC member's work.

As expressed in interviews, IRC members value the mentoring programme and their first formal performance appraisal places sufficient emphasis on soft skills. However, selected areas for improvement in feedback and performance management are identified based on key informant interviews and best practices from other organizations: (1) providing peer feedback directly to IRC members to enable them to grow, (2) involving other stakeholders with whom the IRC interacts in the feedback process, and (3) providing feedback and performance management beyond the initial IRC review for all subsequent review cycles [1].

Conclusion

IRC members receive informal feedback from their mentor and are performance management at their first review. Given the significant impact of IRC reviews, there is scope to improve the IRC feedback and performance management process. This can be achieved by providing feedback directly to IRC members, broadening the range of stakeholders involved in the feedback process, and increasing the frequency of feedback.

➤ [See recommendation: 6.3.1](#)

Figure 6.B: Performance evaluation sheet [2]

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK		
1. Have all the goals outlined in the TOR been met? If partly or no, please specify <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
2. List the consultant's strengths:		
3. List the consultant's weaknesses and areas for improvement:		
4. Rating from 1-5 points: (1=low; 5=excellent)		
Specific area of competence:	Rating	Comments
How would you assess consultant's overall quality of works?		
Did consultant assume responsibility for all aspects of his/her work product?		
Oral communication skills: did s/he present and participate effectively in plenary?		
Written communication skills: did s/he produce a well-written report (both content + English)?		
Did s/he take initiative to clarify issues, request additional information, volunteer for tasks?		
How were his/her interpersonal skills with (a) other reviewer; (b) Secretariat staff?		
General attitude: was s/he constructive, engaged, and an active contributor?		
5. Would you recommend inviting the consultant back for another IRC meeting? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
6. Overall performance rating <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory		

6.2.2 Closed loop impact update to the IRC

Currently, IRC members receive limited feedback on the impact of their recommendations. They only receive indirect pointers in two cases: during a re-review, when they see how their feedback has been implemented (unless another group of IRC members is conducting the re-review), and when a country includes performance data from past campaigns in its proposal for a new campaign [1]. In all other cases, IRC members do not receive formal feedback on how their recommendations were implemented during the proposal phase or how they impacted the implementation phase.

In addition, there is no consistent tracking of the duration of the various steps in the E2E proposal-grant process [1]. For example, IRC members have no insight into how long it takes countries to respond to different action items in the issue resolution step.

Interviewees suggest that it would be beneficial for IRC members to receive feedback on their recommendations on three key elements: (1) how their recommendations influenced the proposal, (2) the impact their recommendations had on the implementation phase, and (3) the overall length of the E2E application-to-disbursement process. This would allow IRC members to refine their evaluation methodology by learning from its impact, and allow for decision-making that considers both timelines and impact on the ground.

Conclusion

At present, there is no direct feedback loop to the IRC members on the impact of their recommendations on the final proposal after issue resolution, the overall application-to-disbursement timelines, and the final quality of implementation. Providing this information to IRC members would help them to refine their recommendations based on the expected impact of their decisions.

➤ [See recommendation: 6.3.2](#)

6.2.3 IRC lesson sharing

The IRC conducts in-depth reviews of all new programme considered for Gavi funding. This gives them a unique perspective to identify cross-cutting lessons that can help inform Gavi's operations and policies, as well as the work of country teams and Alliance partners on the ground.

After each review cycle, the IRC publishes a consolidated report with recommendations for Gavi, Alliance partners and, country teams. The report is typically 19-26 pages long and contains approximately 20-40 recommendations. About half to three quarters of the recommendations are addressed to Gavi, about half to technical partners, and about a quarter to countries [5]. Currently, these recommendations are not differentiated by grant type, making it difficult to understand what changes are needed and who should address them [2].

At Gavi's inception, the IRC shared these cross-cutting insights directly with the Board. As Gavi matured, the IRC Chair shared these lessons with the PPC rather than the Board on an annual basis. From 2020, the consolidated report has now been included as an annex to the PPC, and there is no longer a presentation by the IRC Chair [1].

Until 2019, the Gavi Secretariat responded diligently to recommendations through a management response, that tracked the implementation of recommendations. However, due to the additional workload caused by COVID, the management response has been replaced by a response to only those recommendations that are aligned with the Gavi 5.1 strategy [6]. In addition, there are no established, routine interactions between the Gavi Secretariat and the IRC Chair to discuss cross-cutting insights. Furthermore, when Gavi formulates new strategies, policies, or guidelines, there is no formal consultation process with the IRC, leaving an important opportunity to incorporate the valuable insights of the IRC in these areas untapped.

Technical partners receive feedback through the consolidated report and a newsletter distributed by the FD&R team. However, the IRC and technical teams do not have a mechanism to discuss and clarify the recommendations, agree on a plan to implement them, and track their impact over time.

The IRC Chair and a senior member also sit on the HLRP, which allows them to learn from the best practices discussed in that review body and gain insights that cut across multiple areas. However, these additional insights are not typically referenced in the IRC Consolidated Report [1].

Moreover, the Secretariat does not currently consult the IRC for advice on selected learning questions. This is seen as a missed opportunity by some respondents, as the IRC has valuable cross-cutting insights and technical/field experience that could assist in answering these questions.

The IRC Consolidated Report is detailed and rigorous, providing cross-cutting insights and technical recommendations to different partners. However, interviewees suggest that the reduced presence of the IRC on the Board and the PPC has reduced the weight of its recommendations. They suggest that recommendations should be brought back to the board, as is the case at the Global Fund, where the Chair of the TRP attends Board meetings. Interviewees also recommend streamlining the report by clearly identifying to whom the recommendations are addressed, differentiating them by grant type, and prioritizing them. Finally, there is an opportunity to establish a formal process for the IRC to share these cross-cutting recommendations with appropriate parties (e.g., Secretariat, technical partners) and discuss their implementation, and even allow these parties to pose specific learning questions to the IRC.


Conclusion


The IRC is in a unique position to provide valuable insights to all stakeholders in the process. The IRC's consolidated report is a good starting point for this, but to make the recommendations more impactful, respondents suggest that they be presented to the Board and that the report be updated to make its action points more impactful for all stakeholders.


➤ [See recommendation: 6.3.3](#)

6.3 Recommendations


6.3.1 360-degree feedback: Systematic performance management of IRC


Objective
 Implement a 360-degree feedback process for IRC reviewers to monitor reviewer quality, facilitate learning and promote a high-performance culture within the IRC membership.


Rationale
 According to the IRC's TOR, the IRC's performance should be evaluated internally at least every three years and its results should be reported to the PPC; however this is not systematically operationalized.


High-level recommendations

- Implement a post-meeting 360-degree feedback process to gather input, including from the IRC Chair, IRC peers, the FD&R team, SCMs, and EPI managers
- Distribute a digital and fully anonymous ~10-question survey with primarily check box scoring and optional verbatims for qualitative feedback
- Monitor and benchmark the performance of IRC reviewers over time and use the insights to promote high performers and systematically filter out low performers


Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project


FD&R effort and org. commitment required


Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through reviewer performance management


FD&R effort: Need to design, implement and coordinate the 360-degree feedback process

Org. commitment: Need for active support through participation in feedback process


6.3.2 Closed loop: Closed loop information sharing to/from the IRC


Objective
 Provide the IRC with greater visibility of a country's progress in i) resolving IRC points of action and ii) implementing a Gavi grant to facilitate learning and improve future IRC reviews through country-level impact stories.


Rationale
 At present, IRC members are not involved in approving the clearance of post-IRC action points and do not receive formal updates on the performance of a reviewed grant during its implementation phase (beyond HLRP discussions).


High-level recommendations

- Provide a concise formal summary of actions taken by a country to address IRC points of action at the end of the issue resolution process
- Create an additional IRC outcome category, e.g., "Conditional Approval," that requires formal approval of selected, critical action items by a subset of IRC reviewers (e.g., the thematic leader or IRC Chair); clear processes to be defined to ensure no additional delays versus the current Issue Resolution Process
- Provide annual summaries of grant performance/impact reviews to all IRC members (e.g., building on the HLRP process) to codify lessons learned and identify key priorities for future application reviews


Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact	Low hanging fruit	

FD&R effort and org. commitment required

Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through country level impact feedback

FD&R effort: Need to coordinate the process and manage the quality of all work products

Org. commitment: Need for cross-functional cooperation to develop summaries for IRC

6.3.3 Lessons learned: User-centric sharing of cross-cutting IRC insights



Objective

Regularly share and discuss key cross-cutting insights from the IRC reviews with relevant Alliance stakeholders (including the Gavi Board, PPC, Gavi Secretariat, countries, and partners) to facilitate learning and focus collective efforts.



Rationale

Cross-cutting insights from IRC reviews are published in consolidated reports, but not disseminated in a way that is tailored to the needs and interests of key audiences.



High-level recommendations

- Develop a short communiqué to the PPC after each IRC review session to present key issues and/or receive new policy direction for the next round differentiated by grant type
- Reintroduce regular updates from the IRC Chair to the Board on cross-cutting findings and lessons learned from all IRC reviews throughout the year
- Circulate official Gavi communications to countries outlining key success factors for an IRC review, including a typology of common IRC comments
- Conduct annual learning and feedback sessions with partners, application consultants, the Secretariat, and HLRP members, including key considerations for next review cycles and opportunity to ask specific learning questions



Expected impact and effort level assessment

Impact		Major project	Impact: Improvement of IRC review quality through better stakeholder alignment
			FD&R effort: Need to coordinate the process and manage stakeholder needs
	FD&R effort and org. commitment required		Org. commitment: Need for broad commitment to participate IRC lessons sharing

Sources

Assumptions

[1]	IRC expenditures 2021, 2022	
[2]	Key informant interviews, 2022/23	
[3]	IRC outcome database 2018-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-reviewed application of 2018 (11 applications in scope) • 8 out of 11 applications were accepted in the next review cycle
[4]	IRC performance evaluation March, July and December 2021	
[5]	IRC Final Reports : March/July/September/November 2022:	
[6]	IRC management response November 2017–July 2019 IRC Update on key findings November 2020, November 2021	

IV. Conclusion

IV.1 Summary and prioritization of recommendations

In total, this evaluation proposes 17 recommendations to address the key findings and conclusions identified. Two recommendations are considered "quick fixes" with immediate but only incremental impact and the potential to be implemented as part of the regular business activities of the FD&R team. Seven recommendations are described as "low hanging fruits" with significant, long-term impact on the IRC review processes, and limited additional resource requirements for the FD&R team if well sequenced. Finally, eight recommendations fall under the umbrella of "major projects", which will have a transformational impact on the IRC review processes but also require significant capacity investments both in the FD&R team and in wider functions of the Gavi Secretariat.

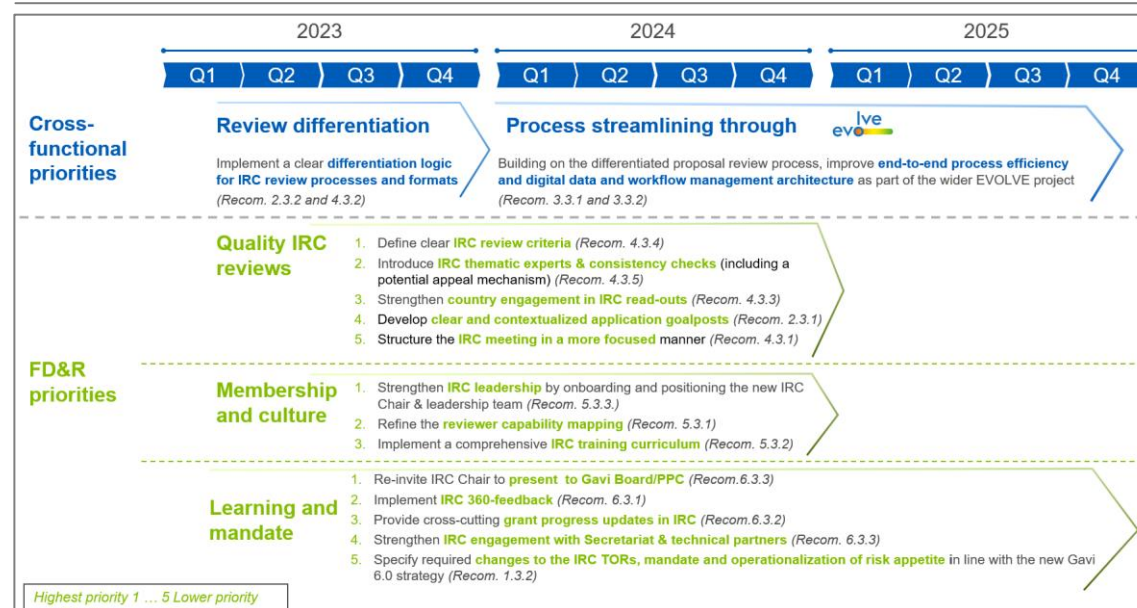
Successful implementation of these recommendations will require strong cross-functional collaboration across teams and (temporarily) increased resources for the FD&R team to coordinate and drive the change management roadmap. Moreover, the FD&R team will need to assess its current capabilities against those required to successfully implement all recommendations and to address potential gaps. Finally, initiatives will need to be strategically prioritized and sequenced to successfully introduce positive change without disrupting core business processes and drawing on too many resources at once.

IV.2 High-level implementation roadmap and change mgmt. plan

In order to identify and define the most urgent initiatives to act on the recommendations, this evaluation suggests following three key criteria. First, structural enablers that are critical to the implementation of other recommendations should be addressed in order to avoid process roadblocks and ensure early alignment with key guardrails (e.g., recommendations 2.3.2 "differentiated review process" and 4.3.4 "IRC review guidance"). Second, high-impact standalone initiatives with limited additional capacity needs should be launched in parallel to maintain positive momentum and achieve a first set of critical milestones (e.g., recommendations 4.3.3 "country dialogue" and 4.3.5 "IRC consistency checks"). Third and finally, time-sensitive recommendations should be addressed within their respective windows of opportunity to maximize impact (e.g., 5.3.3 "IRC leadership").

Applying these criteria, a high-level implementation roadmap and change management plan was developed in collaboration with the FD&R team and other relevant stakeholders within the Gavi Secretariat (see Figure IV.A). Given the scope and complexity of the recommendations, a timeframe of two to three years was agreed, which aligns with the second half of the Gavi 5.1 strategic period and the development of a new Gavi 6.0 strategy for 2026-2030. The first priorities for 2023 will be (i) to define, through close cross-functional collaboration, a clear differentiation logic for IRC review processes and formats, which will set the baseline for subsequent process streamlining efforts under the EVOLVE project, and (ii) to launch a series of targeted actions under the FD&R team to improve the quality of IRC reviews, develop IRC membership and culture, and strengthen IRC learning and mandate.

FIG IV.A High-level implementation roadmap and change mgmt. plan



If there is a need for prioritization (e.g., capacity constraint), the two most effective recommendations to implement would be: (1) to introduce a differentiation logic for the IRC (recommendation 2.3.2./ recommendation 4.3.2.), and (2) to define clear IRC review criteria (recommendation 4.3.4). These recommendations are the most impactful, as the former allows for tailoring the required effort to the country context, grant type, and past performance. While the latter makes IRC reviews more effective, transparent, and consistent.

IV.3 Critical success factors and key performance indicators

The successful execution of the implementation roadmap and change management plan will depend on a number of critical success factors. These include (i) strong leadership buy-in and drive to ensure timely decision making and clear guidance on potential trade-off decisions (especially in relation to Gavi's risk appetite in the proposal review process), (ii) adequate resourcing of the FD&R team in terms of capacity and capability to project manage all initiatives in addition to core business activities, (iii) strong cross-functional collaboration to access relevant technical capacity and to jointly agree on key decisions regarding the IRC review process, and (iv) an openness to experiment and innovate, even at the risk of making controlled mistakes, (v) testing the relevant recommendations with selected countries to ensure they are effective for the end-user (e.g., differentiation logic), (vi) creating the capabilities in the Secretariat to successfully and effectively carry out its expanded responsibilities (e.g., SCM to review the low-risk applications).

Ultimately, the true value of the IRC evaluation recommendations and subsequent change management will lie in the impact they have on the (i) outcomes (i.e., long-term impact of IRC recommendations on country grant performance), (ii) quality (i.e., the scope, rigor, and consistency of IRC reviews), and (iii) efficiency (i.e., the time and resources required by key stakeholders along the application-to-disbursement process, with a particular focus on the IRC review) of the IRC review process. It will therefore be crucial to define clear performance indicators and targets, and to monitor progress to continuously drive change and possibly correct course where necessary.

Appendix

Acronym	Definition
IRC	Indepenent Review Committee
RFP	Request for Proposal
NVS	New and underused Vaccine Support
HSS	Health System Strengthening
TCA	Targeted Country Asssistance
EAF	Equity Funding Accelerator
CCEOP	Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform
PPC	Programme and Policy Committee
FPP	Full Portfolio Planning
IRT	Issue Resolution Tool
PFM	Programme Finance Management
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team
WHO	World Health Organization
FD&R	Funding, Design & Review team

Acronym	Definition
SCM	Senior Country Manager
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
YF	Yellow Fever
HPV	Human Papillomavirus
PRC	Proposal Review Committee
HLRP	High-Level Review Panel
JRV	Joint Review Committee
NIS	National Immunization Strategy
CP	Country Programmes
VP	Vaccine Programme
EPI	Expanded Programme Immunization
TRP	Technical Review Panel
SIA	Supplementary Immunization Activities

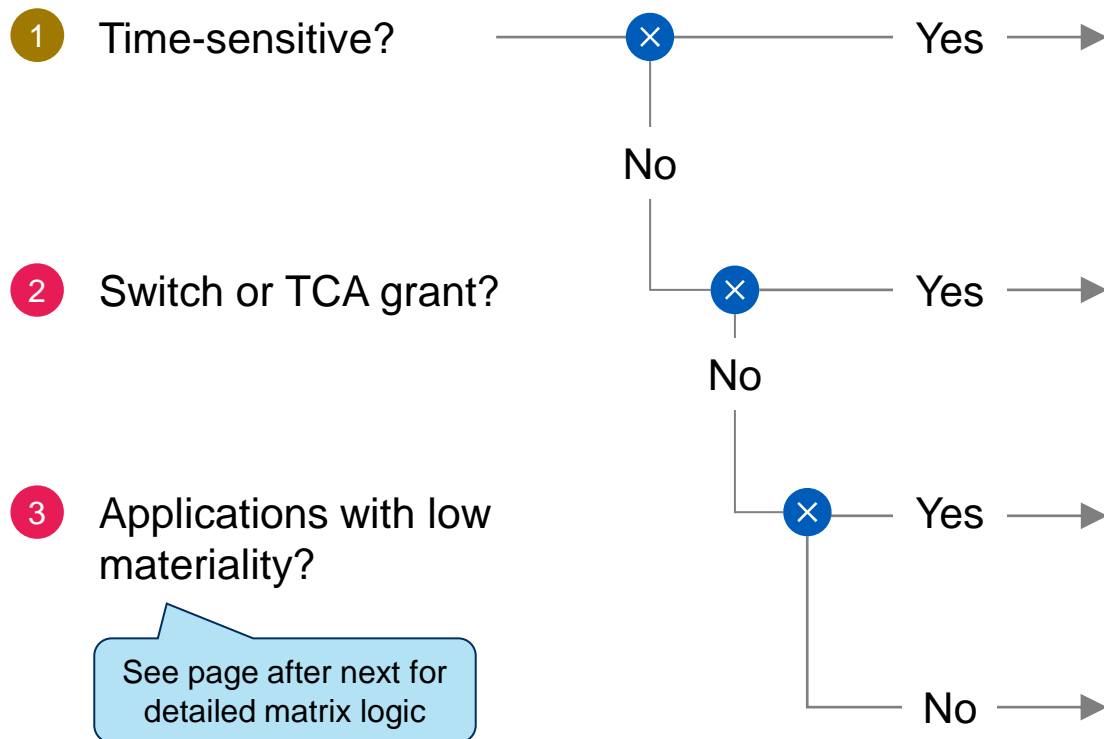
Stakeholder group	Organization / Country	Name
Alliance Partners and International Organizations (incl. Donors)	BMGF	Adrien de Chaisemartin
		Helen Matzger
		Jen Donofrio
		Kendall Krause
		Tanya Shewchuk
	CDC	Violaine Mitchell
		Cyndi Hatcher
		James Goodson
		Mark Papania
		Pratima Raghunathan
	Global Fund	Richard Lose
		Robert Perry
	UNICEF	Silvio Martinelli
		Abu Obeida Eltayeb
		Antoine Ziao
	Unitaid	Mohammad Omer
		Viorica Berdaga
	USAID	Janet Kristen Ginnard
		Martins Pavelsons
	WHO	Carmen Tull
		Pavani Ram
		Ann Lindstrand
		Balcha Girma Masresha
		Emmaculate Jepkorir Lebo
		Fred Osei-Sarpong
		Karen Wilkins
		Patricia Tanifum

Stakeholder group	Organization / Country	Name
Alliance Partners and International Organizations (incl. Donors)	WHO	Patrick O'Connor
		Pradeep Haldar
		Rajendra Bohara
		Vinod Kumar Bura
Country representatives	World Bank	Michael Kent Ranson
	Pakistan	Muhammad Ahmed Kazi
		Syed Akber
	Sierra Leone	Desmond Maada Kangbai
		Michael Jones
	Tanzania	Lyimo Dafrossa
Gavi Secretariat Leadership		Alex de Jonquieres
		Amy LaTrielle
		Assietou Sylla Diouf
		Aurelia Nguyen
		Awinja Wameyo
		Colette Selman
		Edmund Grove
		Hope Johnson
		Jalaa' Abdelwahab
		Johannes Ahrendts
		Sam Muller
		Seth Berkley
		Thabani Maphosa
		Tokunbo Oshin
	Gavi Secretariat	
		Avani Gupta
		Cassandra Quintanilla

Stakeholder group	Organization / Country	Name
Gavi Secretariat		Charlie Whetham
		Chrysantus Nyongesa
		Dave Cagen
		David Powell
		Doreen Faller-Guiziou
		Friederike Deutsch
		Geena Zimble
		Gurleen Hans
		Jessica Hofmans
		Karan Sagar
		Kristine Brusletto
		Lindsey Cole
		Marguerite Cornu
		Marumbo Ngwira
		Negussie Tefera
		Peter Strebel
		Ranjana Kumar
		Rosemary Owino
		Sonia Klabnikova
		Stephanie Phipps
Gavi Secretariat: SCM		Verena Dedekind
		Veronica Denti
		Billie Nieuwenhuys
		Carrie Gheen
		Demba Diack
		Emmanuel Bor

Stakeholder group	Organization / Country	Name
Gavi Secretariat: SCM		Homero Hernandez
		Jessica Crawford
		Jonna Jeurlink
		Marius Keller
		Pietro Di Mattei
		Ricard Lacort Monte
		Veronique Maeva Fages
IRC		Alexsandra Caric
		Beatriz Ayala-Öström
		Benjamin Nkowane
		Blaise Bikandou
		Bolanle Oyeledun
		Gavin Surgey
		Ousmane Tamba Dia
		Pierre Corneille Namahoro
		Sandra Mounier-Jack
		Stefano Lazzari
		Viviana Mangiaterra
		Wassim Khrouf

Proposed differentiation logic



See next page for further differentiation

Impact on reviews

Time-sensitive review "as is"

Established process, as currently used for highly time-sensitive applications

3% of applications¹

1% of value¹

No IRC review unless "opt-in" (note: alternative process TBD)

No IRC review needed due to low programmatic risk (unless opt-in)

20% of applications¹

6% of value¹

Pilot project to test the option of Secretariat-internal reviews (unless opt-in)

19% of applications¹

8% of value¹

Differentiated IRC review formats

IRC review specific to characteristic of applications

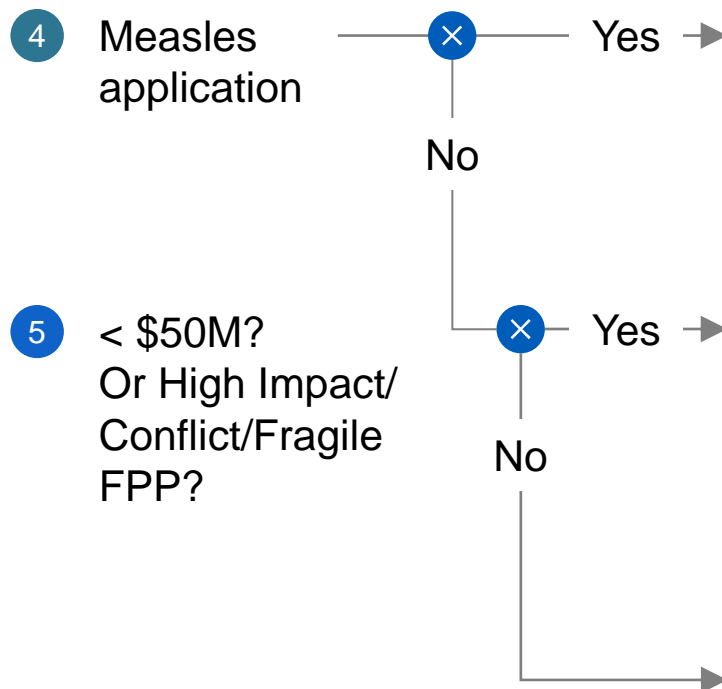
58% of applications¹

85% of value¹

1. Grant and vaccine applications reviewed by the IRC between 2020 and 2022, analysis excludes 21 applications for which the reviewed value is not known, vaccine grant values were not available for 2020 and therefore are not included in analysis
Source: IRC Outcome Database 2020-2022

Outside-in evaluation perspective

Proposed differentiation logic



Impact on reviews

Iterative IRC review for Measles

16% of applications¹
31% of value¹

Standard IRC review (exc. detailed budget)

39% of applications¹
18% of value¹

Close-touch, iterative IRC review process

4% of applications¹
36% of value¹

Review description

- **Focus:** Detailed, customized, and iterative review process focused on the early identification of major roadblocks
- **Format:** Regular pre-IRC check-ins (e.g., through IRC Measles experts) followed by a standard Geneva-based review
- **Focus:** Similar to current IRC, potentially excluding a detailed budget review. Review criteria to be differentiated, esp. for Fragile and Conflict countries
- **Format:** Standard Geneva-based review rounds as per the existing format
- **Focus:** Detailed, customized, and iterative review process focused on the early identification of major roadblocks
- **Format:** Regular pre-IRC check-ins (e.g., through thematic experts) followed by a one-week in-country review

1. Grant and vaccine applications reviewed by the IRC between 2020 and 2022, analysis excludes 21 applications for which the reviewed value is not known, vaccine grant values were not available for 2020 and therefore are not included in analysis
Source: IRC Outcome Database 2020-2022

Outside-in evaluation perspective

Country segment	Proposed immediate changes		Proposed pilots to be tested				
	Switch	TCA standalone	Vaccine support		Cash support		
			Established antigens	New antigens / campaigns	EAF	CCEOP	HSS
Post Transition	x	x	n/a	x	n/a	n/a	x
Core - Standard	x	x	x		x	x	x
Core - Priority	x	x	x				
High Impact	x	x	x				
Fragile & Conflict	x	x					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPV • Penta DTP-HEPB-HIB • Pneumo • Rotavirus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cholera • HPV • JE • Malaria • Measles / MR • Meningitis • Typhoid • Yellow Fever 	<p>Legend:</p> <p>Cell with "X" = No IRC unless opt-in</p> <p>Empty cell = Continued IRC review</p> <p>Cell with "n/a" = Not part of Gavi portfolio</p> <p>Suggestion that approximately <u>five proposals</u> be included in the "no IRC" pilot group in 2023.</p>		