

COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. PURPOSE:

(1) The COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force (“Task Force”) will be responsible for providing advice to the Government of Canada on COVID-19 vaccines, drawing on their expertise on vaccine development, commercialization and manufacturing. This Terms of Reference is comprised of four sections that outline the purpose, mandate, governance structure and procedural items of the Task Force.

2. MANDATE

(2) The Task Force mandate is to provide advice to the Government of Canada on COVID-19 vaccines, which can include the following:

- prioritizing vaccine projects seeking support for activities in Canada;
- non-Canadian vaccine candidates of interest to attract into or partner with Canada;
- optimizing the tools needed for vaccine development (e.g., assays and animal models);
- effective R&D and supply chain coordination for COVID-19 vaccine projects;
- solutions to domestic manufacturing of the most promising COVID vaccines; and,
- opportunities to enhance business connectivity globally to secure access to vaccines with key commercial sponsors.

3. GOVERNANCE

3.1. Structure and composition

(3) The Task Force will have up to 18 members, including two Co-chairs and 4 ex-officio members.

(4) The Task Force will include vaccine and immunology experts and industry leaders who have proven ability in vaccine development and commercialization.

(5) The Task Force will provide advice to the Ministers of Innovation, Science and Industry and Health.

(6) The Deputy Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the Deputy Minister of Health Canada, the President of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Chief Science Advisor will be ex officio members.

(7) Task Force members are appointed as individuals and not as representatives of their organizations.

(8) The Task Force can, at their discretion, consult with additional subject matter experts on an as-needed basis.

3.2. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

(9) Task Force members will sign confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements. Furthermore, if at anytime a member becomes aware of a potential project in which he/she has a personal financial interest, it will be disclosed to the Co-chairs and to the Government of Canada representative who shall have the right to ask the member to formally recuse themselves from participating in discussions related to that project.

(10) The Task Force will ensure that advice received from additional subject matter experts will not result in any conflict of interest, and that there is full disclosure to the Government of Canada representative of any potential real or perceived conflicts of interest, where known.

(11) Documents or information obtained while serving on the Task Force should be used only in the context of fulfilling the duties and mandate of the Task Force. Any documents or information obtained through a meeting of the Task Force will be kept strictly confidential by the member, unless prior approval to disclose is obtained in writing from the Government of Canada representative.

(12) In dealings with the media, public forums, and in inter-personal conversation, members will show sensitivity and discretion in any statement made regarding the activities of the Task Force, and will refrain from disclosing any information shared with or by Task Force members.

3.3. Timing and Deliverables

(13) The Task Force will be in place for a period of at least 12 months, subject to extension at the discretion of the Government of Canada, and will meet on an as-needed basis.

(14) The Task Force will determine its own meeting schedule in order to meet the direction and deadlines provided by the Government of Canada's designated representative.

(15) The advice of the Task Force, and any supporting products provided to the Government of Canada by members, will remain the property of the individual members and held in confidence by the Government of Canada.

(16) Decisions on the advice provided will be made on a consensus basis. Consensus will have been reached when there is agreement to the extent that all participants are willing to support the outcome or use it as a basis for further discussion. The outcome must show how dissenting points of view were accommodated and record what has and has not been agreed upon. Ex-officio members may participate in discussions but will not participate in the decision-making related to the provision of advice from the Task Force.

4. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

4.1. Member Responsibilities

(17) All Participants will:

- agree to act in "good faith" in all aspects of the process;

- commit to fully explore issues, searching for solutions in a problem solving atmosphere; and,
- agree to make a good faith attempt to share information in matters related to the shared decision-making process.

(18) It is the responsibility of the Co-chairs to:

- Approve meeting agendas in advance of meetings, working with the Secretariat;
- Encourage the active participation of all members;
- Monitor progress on action items between meetings;
- Establish and chair sub-working groups, where appropriate; and,
- Chair meetings of the Task Force.

(19) It is the responsibility of each Task Force member to:

- Stay current with information and the progress of discussions;
- Attend each meeting, to the best of their ability.

4.2. Secretariat

(20) Government of Canada officials will be provided for administrative and technical support of the Task Force. The Secretariat will be housed at the National Research Council of Canada. The primary role of the Secretariat will be to coordinate and support the work of the Task Force. This includes:

- Design and delivery of meeting agendas;
- Development and monitoring of the workplan; and,
- Organization and facilitation of meetings.

The Secretariat will make every reasonable effort to gather data and information and draft materials to support the Task Force in fulfilling its mandate.

4.3. Technical and Substantive Information

(21) The Secretariat, provided by the Government, will provide support for the meetings in the form of recording notes and dispersing information.

(22) All efforts will be taken by the Government of Canada to provide all information requested of them except if covered by Cabinet confidentiality or privacy restrictions, within the limits of government budget and staffing power.

(23) Documents for the Task Force will be password-protected and provided to the Secretariat through a secure file sharing site.

(24) Tentative or sensitive data or other information will be respected as such, by both the Task Force and the Government of Canada.

4.4. Meetings

(25) Meetings will be held on an as needed basis, at the discretion of the Co-chairs. Meetings will be held by teleconference to respect physical distancing requirements and avoid non-essential travel.

(26) To ensure the effectiveness of the meetings, the Secretariat will forward to all participants prior to the meeting: an agenda, a record of decision from previous meetings, background information where possible and a clear statement of the objectives for the meeting.

(27) All meetings will be conducted according to the following ground rules:

1. Meetings shall begin promptly at the time indicated on the agenda.
2. The meetings shall be chaired in a manner that:
 - Ensures that time is allotted for discussion of each item on the agenda;
 - A balance of views and discussion takes place on each issue;
 - All participants have an opportunity to participate equally in discussion on a topic.
3. The chairing of the meetings will alternate between the two Co-chairs, according to a schedule to be set out in the work plan.
4. The meeting chair shall ensure that the manner in which each topic on the agenda is dealt with is clearly summarized at the conclusion of that discussion.
5. The meeting chair has the responsibility to facilitate meetings. However, members have the opportunity to make recommendations to the Chair and Secretariat on alternative facilitation.

(28) Meeting summaries shall be prepared and distributed in a timely manner under the direction of the Secretariat.

4.5. Public Communication and the Media

(29) The following procedure will be followed with respect to public communication:

- The Secretariat shall be the government contact for all media inquiries;
- Media releases will be agreed to by consensus prior to release;
- In the event that members wish to respond to media inquiries, they are to speak from their own perspective and not from that of the Task Force; and,
- Audio and visual recording will not be permitted at Task Force meetings.

4.6. Process to Withdraw

(30) Any member considering withdrawing from the Task Force will be asked to notify the Co-chairs and the Secretariat as soon as possible. The member will continue to be bound by the Terms of Reference, particularly with respect to confidentiality of information shared.