



**MARYLAND
VACCINE EQUITY
TASK FORCE
OPERATIONS PLAN**

ISSUED MARCH 4, 2021

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Vaccine Equity Task Force COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

I. Introduction

Governor Larry Hogan charged the Vaccine Equity Task Force (VETF) to break down barriers to expand access and save lives in underserved, vulnerable, and hard-to-reach areas. VETF will partner with a wide range of public and private partners who share our goal of halting the spread of COVID-19 throughout the State.

This plan lays out a roadmap to achieve VETF’s goals. VETF’s practices and actions will deliver outcomes to ensure a diverse population benefits from these efforts. This roadmap has been developed to recognize and understand the value of cultural differences, which exist in beliefs, practices, and language.

The roadmap is designed to be flexible, iterative, data-driven, and reliant on a team approach. The plan allows for the types of innovative approaches and efforts that can adapt and evolve to address changing circumstances to accomplish VETF’s overarching objective: getting Marylanders vaccinated.

II. Mission

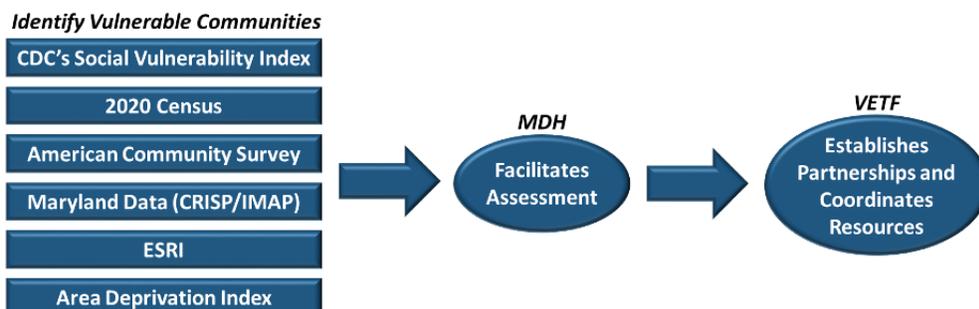
At the direction of the Governor, consistent with applicable law, the Vaccine Equity Task Force partners with local health departments and community stakeholders to bridge the health outcome divide throughout the State and to increase Marylanders’ access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

III. Vision

VETF will leverage federal, state, local, community, and private partnerships to identify, educate, and vaccinate vulnerable, underserved, hesitant, and hard-to-reach areas across Maryland.

IV. Methodology

VETF, in partnership with MDH, will use the following steps to promote the equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine:



Maryland’s data-and-outcomes-driven methodology takes into account the following variables to best deploy VETF’s resources to help Marylanders:

- A. Population over 65 years old
- B. Population with an annual income below \$49,000
- C. Unemployment rate
- D. Population older than 25 years old without a high school diploma
- E. Single parent households
- F. Housing with more than one person per room
- G. Households without access to a vehicle
- H. Total COVID cases
- I. Minority composition of community
- J. Amount of population receiving at least one dose

Data, science, and observation shows that each of these variables are important identifiers for determining where VETF’s efforts are most needed. Combining them in a Maryland-specific model, the VETF will bring its resources to bear in an immediate and impactful way.

V. Framework for Community-Driven COVID-19 Vaccination Sites: from Community Proposal to Operational Support

- A. **Community Requests** – (See Appendix 1) each community interested in sponsoring a COVID-19 vaccine site will submit a brief proposal to the VETF including:
 - a. People — profile of the community or groups identified for the program.
 - b. Place — location and description of proposed facilities.
 - c. Support — list participating public and private partners and the capabilities they bring (if applicable).
 - d. Team — number and types of community personnel available to support the event.
 - e. Outcome — what a successful event will look like.

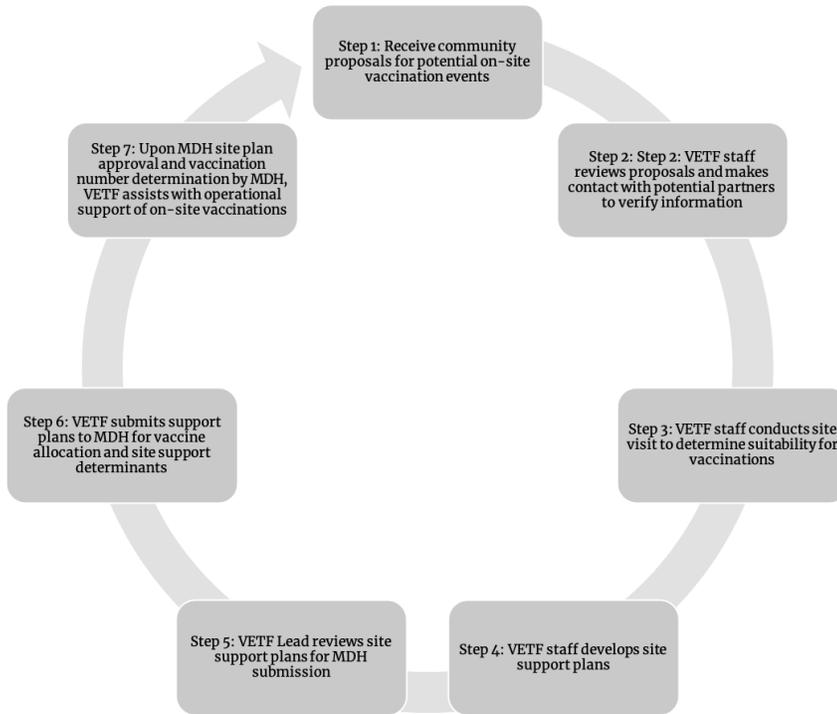
Local Health Departments (LHDs) are encouraged to nominate communities that might support a community-driven vaccination site, as well as any public and private sector partners willing and able to support.

- B. **Support Staff Review of Requests** – VETF Support Staff will conduct an initial review of the proposals for supportability, assessing each on multiple criteria. The review will take into consideration at a minimum:
 - a. Review the plan in the context of the methodology laid out in Section V, including:
 - i. Disparities in vaccine distribution in that location.

- ii. Capabilities and capacities of the community as outlined in their proposal.
 - iii. Capabilities and capacities of the suggested public and private partners.
 - b. VETF Support Staff will consult with the LHDs, whenever possible.
- C. **Support Assessment** – VETF Support Staff will forward the community proposals, along with the Support Staff’s review, to the VETF Leadership. Supporting documents will include items within Appendix 3 and 4:
 - a. Name and location of site.
 - b. Application of the methodology review.
 - c. Strengths of each site and the communities they support.
 - d. Local Health Department evaluation (if available).
 - e. Number of vaccines requested for each site.
 - f. Number and type of support personnel required for each site.
 - g. Anticipated number of events and duration of support.
 - h. Recommended education and communication campaign support.
 - i. Other resources that may be needed by the community.
- D. **Resource Allocation** – VETF Leadership will consider staff recommendations and balance them with other pending requests/active programs. The VETF Lead will facilitate discussion on vaccine allocation, ensure VETF Support Staff consensus is documented, and subsequently submit the proposals to MDH for review and vaccine distribution.
- E. **Operational Support** – After a site has been selected, VETF’s Operations and Logistics Team will offer:
 - a. Onsite analysis prior to initial vaccination event.
 - b. Training for community members to fill select vaccination site positions.
 - c. Help in identifying additional local public and private sector partners.
 - d. Onsite consultation and support during initial operations.
 - e. Facilitation of community after-action review of the initial event.

The Operations and Logistics Team will submit reports on their site visits, operational outcomes, and after-action reviews for each supported site.

Table 1. Allocation Process Concept



VI. Strategy

A. Goals

- a. Immediate Goal - Halt the spread of COVID-19 through health education and equitable vaccine availability and access within vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities.
- b. Enabling Goal – Promote and develop existing relationships between LHD equity officers, nonprofits, faith-based entities, and trusted leaders within vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities to save lives and limit the spread of COVID-19.
- c. Enabling Goal – Facilitate proposals from community organizations working to assist communities under the VETF’s lens, ultimately leading to an equity plan for the jurisdiction.
- d. Enabling Goal – Work with LHD equity officers and community partners to reduce physical or informational barriers that limit access to the COVID-19 vaccination, including electronic registration, transportation, limited literacy, English as a second

language, social isolation, and isolation due to physical and behavioral disability challenges.

- e. Enduring Goal – Foster lasting and trusted relationships between LHD equity officers, local leaders, and vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities to mitigate COVID-19 infection through education and vaccine accessibility.

B. Objectives

- a. Leverage resources with close ties to key communities, including the State’s Vaccine Advisory Group, the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives, the State’s network of Medicaid providers, and additional public sector, community, and county partners.
- b. Evaluate county plans and assist in targeting resources at equity-focused vaccination efforts.
- c. Serve as an informal channel for distributing information or assistance for proposals and requests from nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations seeking to assist underserved and vulnerable populations.
- d. Work with the state’s 24 LHDs to focus COVID-19 vaccination and vaccine hesitancy efforts on vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities to ensure the appropriate distribution of vaccines.

C. End State

- a. The VETF, through coordination with state, local, and community-based organizations, has created more access to the COVID-19 vaccination in vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities throughout Maryland, while strengthening partnerships to produce sustainable initiatives addressing health disparities.

VII. Evaluation

The VETF, in conjunction with LHD and the community, will endeavor to constantly evaluate the processes and outcomes of this effort. The VETF will improve cultural awareness, strengthen partnerships, and support the practices by bolstering strengths and improving weaknesses as this effort continues.

VIII. Communications Plan

See Appendix 2 for VETF’s Communication Strategy.

Appendix 1 | Community Request

Request for Community-Sponsored COVID-19 Vaccine Events

Communities requesting vaccine supply and other resources for COVID-19 vaccination events should complete the form below and submit to ng.md.mdarng.list.vet.distro@mail.mil.

1) Requesting Organization:

2) Proposed Site for Vaccination Event:

3) Site Type (e.g. parking lot, auditorium, gymnasium, etc.):

4) Site Point of Contact

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

5) Desired Start Date:

6) Projected Finish Date:

7) Number of individuals projected to be vaccinated:

8) Demographics of the individuals intended to be vaccinated:

9) What are the barriers to vaccine access and how will you address them?

Messaging:

Transportation:

Physical (mobility, hearing, vision, etc.):

Computer Access:

Hesitancy:

10) Existing Public and Private Partnerships (if any)

Local Health Department (POC name and phone number):

Pharmacy Support (POC name and phone number):

Medical Support (POC name and phone number):

11) Number of community personnel that can support the vaccination event:

12) Number of supporting community members with medical expertise (e.g. nurses, EMTs, etc.):

13) How will you identify and register individuals for vaccination?

14) Is interpreter support needed?

15) If so, what language (s)?

16) Will the community provide interpreter services?

17) What is the community's overall goal in supporting the vaccination event?

Appendix 2 | Communication Strategy, Methods of Delivery, and Key Messages

Purpose: The Vaccine Equity Task Force (VETF) will synchronize communications plans with the MDGoVax campaign, in partnership with local health care institutions, community organizations, and other trusted sources, to promote increased COVID-19 vaccination awareness and confidence.

Background: In January 2021, Governor Hogan launched VETF to coordinate with partners across the state to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence, especially among Marylanders in vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities. [Find more information on the launch here.](#)

PA Posture: ACTIVE (Engage directly through all applicable PA vehicles)

Research/Situation Analysis: Historic data shows that vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities face both structural and informational barriers to vaccine access. Growing vaccine uptake disparities in these communities make it necessary to take immediate and concrete steps to mitigate these problems.

Problem: The uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations in vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities with historically poor health outcomes has lagged behind other groups. These populations, in many cases, have suffered significantly higher rates of COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 mortality in the past year. It is critical for these populations to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, improve community health outcomes, and stop the spread of the virus.

Key Constituencies:

- Vulnerable, Underserved, and Hard-to-Reach: Identified through data-driven methodology that includes factors such as income level, employment, English language proficiency, and technology and transportation access (Affected Stakeholders)
- Community: Local Organizations (Collaboration)
- Government: Based on Governor's VETF Launch (Enablers)
- Industry/Business: Professional Businesses (Collaboration)

Communication Goals:

- Education: Perform community outreach to break down information barriers and vaccine hesitancy.
- Vaccination: Facilitate partnerships between communities and support organizations to provide vaccine education and enhanced access.

Communication Objectives:

- Increase the awareness and confidence of vaccine acceptance in vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities throughout the state.

Communication Strategy:

- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
- Media Relations (local media)
- Public Engagements (Vaccine site visits, community leader engagements)
- Employee Engagements (Profile stories)
- Third-party Endorsement (Under Armour, etc.)
- Interaction with opinion leaders (Town Halls & Sensing Sessions)

Communication Theory/Model:

- Social Learning: People adopt opinions and behaviors that are modeled and rewarded.
- Social Exchange: Perceived costs and rewards (effort) of an action predict group behavior.
- Social Acceptance: People accept and reject messages to the extent that message content corresponds to each individual's attitudes and beliefs and influences an individual's self-concept.

Themes & Messages:**Equity Matters!**

- VETF coordinates with state agencies, nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations to facilitate access to the COVID-19 vaccine in vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities, while strengthening partnerships to produce sustainable initiatives addressing health disparities in these communities.
- Making a deliberate and concerted effort to ensure vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach communities receive all the facts from reliable sources.

Mass Vaccination Sites:

- Six Flags America, Prince George's County opened February 4, 2021
- M&T Stadium, Baltimore City opened February 25, 2021
- Wicomico Youth and Civic Center, Wicomico County opens March 18, 2021
- Hagerstown Premium Outlets, Washington County opens by end of March
- Regency Furniture Stadium, Charles County opens March 4, 2021

Appendix 2.1 | VETF Public Service Announcements and Partnerships

VETF will work with local organizations to promote awareness and education regarding the COVID-19 vaccination. VETF will coordinate Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in conjunction with the Governor's office and the following individuals/organizations from the GoVAX Ambassador List:

- Governor Hogan and First Lady Yumi Hogan
- Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford
- 20th U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams
- UMBC President Dr. Freeman Hrabowski and Retired Vice President of T. Rowe Price Jacqueline C. Hrabowski
- Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk
- Bishop Walter Scott Thomas of New Psalmist Baptist Church
- Rev. Matthew Watley and Shawna Watley of Kingdom Fellowship AME Church
- Dr. Kathleen Page, Associate Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- Coach Juan Dixon, Coppin State University Men's Basketball Coach

VETF PSA Template:

- State your name and title.
- What's your view of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Maryland?
- Why do you believe the vaccines are safe and effective?
- Why is it important for all Marylanders to get vaccinated?
- What message do you have for community leaders to get them to strongly encourage members of their community to get the vaccine?
- What impact will ending the pandemic have on our lives?
- What's the best way to slow down the spread of COVID-19?
- Is there anything we have not talked about that you feel is important?

Example PSA Script 1

“(Start off with a fact about the vaccine) Hi, I'm ____ and I'm_____. More than ## Marylanders have received the vaccine so far but we still have a long way to go. If you have gotten the vaccine, talk to your friends and family about your experience. If you still have questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist or go to covidlink dot maryland dot gov.”

Example PSA Script 2

“I’m_____. I will get the vaccine when it’s my turn because _____. Why will you get yours? For more information go to covidlink dot maryland dot gov. Keep on, Maryland!”

Example PSA Script 3

“The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all our lives over the past year. When it’s your turn for the vaccine, make your appointment right away. It’s time to get back to normal, Maryland. For more information, talk to your doctor or pharmacist or go to covidlink dot maryland dot gov.”

Appendix 2.2 | Key Messages and Q&A

At the order of Governor Hogan, the Vaccine Equity Task Force (VETF) is supporting the State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic whenever and however needed. Safeguarding the lives and health of Marylanders is our top priority.

VACCINE EQUITY TASK FORCE KEY THEMES:

Theme: GoVAX

- The State already opened mass vaccination sites at Six Flags America in Prince George's County and M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore City. Both sites are prime locations for those under-served communities.
- VETF will use all our tools to keep Marylanders and their families, communities, schools, and workplaces safer and healthier, and get back to normal sooner.

Theme: Reaching Those Who Need Us Most

- VETF will show Marylanders that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and an important tool in preventing more illness, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- VETF partners with existing, trusted networks, including faith-based and other community organizations, to build public confidence in the COVID vaccine.
- Equity means breaking down barriers, whether structural or informational, that stand in the way of some communities gaining sufficient access to the COVID vaccine. These communities are often those hardest hit by COVID, and making them a priority is crucial to beating the virus.

Theme: Partnerships and Interagency Cooperation

- VETF's efforts are aligned with many of the current Maryland National Guard (MDNG) missions in support of the Maryland Department of Health.
- VETF works closely with the 24 local health departments on COVID-19 vaccination efforts for under-served, vulnerable, and hard-to-reach populations.
- VETF engages trusted community voices to help address vaccine-related concerns.
- MDNG worked closely and successfully with state agency partners for years, and well understands their missions and capabilities.
- MDNG closely coordinated with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and other civil authorities to determine what Guard capabilities are needed and respond appropriately.
- MDNG remains committed to working with our interagency partners to provide support to protect the people of Maryland.

Key Message 1: Choosing to get vaccinated against COVID-19 will protect us from the virus and save lives. COVID-19 vaccinations are the safest way to protect our communities.

- Just because you have not been sick does not mean you will not get sick. And even if you don't get sick, you can carry and spread the virus to people who are more susceptible to getting very sick.
- Based on months of medical clinical trials, the FDA granted Emergency Use Authorizations only to those COVID-19 vaccines that met rigorous and scientific standards for safety, quality, and effectiveness.
- Clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people proved that the vaccination is highly effective in preventing COVID-19, reducing serious illness, and causes no significant safety concerns. (The most common side effects are soreness at the injection site, fatigue, headache, and muscle pain, all of which can occur shortly after being vaccinated and go away within a brief period of time, as is typical with vaccinations in general.)
- COVID-19 causes serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know in advance how COVID-19 will affect you. If you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you. Vaccinations are the most effective way at preventing COVID-19.
- The vaccine will not give you COVID-19. None of the COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. use a live COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 vaccines cause an immune response in your body to protect you. COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you the virus.

Key Message 2: Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 protects the health and safety of our communities, and protects our economy and jobs.

- Vaccinations get us closer to normalcy more quickly. Vaccines mean schools, travel, restaurants, festivals, sporting events, etc., can soon return to normal.
- COVID-19 vaccination allows essential workers to safely do their jobs and provide for their families, helps keep kids in school, and protects religious gatherings and our local businesses.
- Getting vaccinated not only protects you, but also helps protect the people around you – particularly those who are older, or those of any age with underlying medical conditions like asthma, cancer, obesity, and more.
- Fewer people are likely to get sick when communities get vaccinated. This ensures the healthcare system can meet our needs and save lives.

Key Message 3: Community immunity begins with each one of us. It is vital we each do our part to prevent the spread of this virus.

- Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available, and vaccination is one of those tools.
- We must use all of our tools to get our families, communities, schools, and workplaces “back to normal” sooner.
- Continue to wear a mask, stay physically distanced, wash your hands frequently, and avoid the three C’s (crowds, closed indoor spaces, and close contacts).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is the Vaccine Equity Task Force Equity (VETF)?

A1. VETF isn’t just one stand-alone entity. VETF is an extension of Maryland’s GoVAX campaign. It is our state’s effort to reach under-served Marylanders with the facts about the vaccine and ensure equitable access to vaccinations. In January 2021 Governor Hogan launched VETF, bringing together leaders and agencies around the state. He charged VETF with a responsibility to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence, especially among Marylanders in historically underserved populations who have been disproportionately affected by the disease.

Q2. Why is the Governor concerned with equitable distribution of the vaccine?

A2. Many people, including the Governor, are concerned about this issue. VETF wants to encourage all Marylanders to protect themselves, their families, and their communities by getting vaccinated when they become eligible. VETF will ensure each Marylander has the informed opportunity to receive the vaccine, especially when disparities exist with education, income, healthcare, technology, and more.

Q3. Are under-served communities given a higher priority for receiving the vaccine?

A3. No. Members of all communities will be eligible for vaccination in accordance with the phases of the State’s vaccination plan. Governor Hogan identified a potential equity gap with vaccinations. VETF empowers disadvantaged, under-served, and marginalized communities by getting them reliable vaccine information and an equitable opportunity to be vaccinated.

Q4. Is race a factor in determining which populations are vulnerable?

A4. VETF follows the Governor’s data-driven approach to ensure all Marylanders get vaccinated. Racial demographics are just one of many factors being used in the analysis. The methodology includes a wide

range of factors including: age, income levels, unemployment rates, educational attainment, population density, transportation, previous COVID impact, and existing vaccine infrastructure.

Q5. Is the vaccine safe?

A5. Yes. The vaccines were widely and publicly tested and proven safe and effective before receiving FDA approval. The vaccines are approved and safe for adults. The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. The vaccines are effective at preventing you from becoming seriously ill or dying of COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines cannot alter the body's DNA and cannot cause patients to test positive for COVID-19.

For more COVID-19 vaccination resources, including fact sheets and FAQs, visit covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine.

Appendix 3 | Site Review Checklist

Date of Site Visit: _____

Facility POC Name: _____ POC Number: _____

Facility Name: _____

Address: _____

How Many Events Total (first + second dose): _____

Date of Initial Event: _____ Date of Final Event: _____

Days of Events	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Hours of Events							

Medical Partner: Yes / No POC Name: _____ POC Number: _____

Pharmacy Partner: Yes / No POC Name: _____ POC Number: _____

Type of Site (circle): Walk Thru / Drive Thru

Parking / Ingress / Egress _____

Power / Water _____

IT Infrastructure _____

Prep area for vaccinations _____

Vaccination Area _____

Observation Area _____

Rest Room Facilities _____

Break Area for Staff _____

Approximate Square Footage Available: _____

Attach Site Sketch (copy of site map/schematic if available)

Appendix 3 | Site Review Checklist (continued)

Staffing Matrix

Onsite Tasks	[location]	[provider 1]	[provider 2]	MDNG	LDH
Greeters/Screeners/Check-in					
Site Lead					
Clinical Lead*					
Queueing/Navigation					
Supply Courier					
Pharmacy management*					
CMS Billing Registration *					
Vaccinators*					
Vaccination Assistants					
Observation/check out*					
Safety/Emergency Management*					
Environmental Support Staff (snacks, water, cleaning)					
Traffic Management					
Security Lead					
Total	0	0		0	0

*Position requires special training, certification, or licensure

Appendix 4 | Site Concept Slide

Name of Location

Address:
 XXX Street
 Baltimore, MD 21217
 Point of Contact:
 XXX
 Phone/email:
 XXX-XXX-XXXX
 Email:

Insert Site Picture

Jurisdiction:
 XXX

Expected Volume:

- XX vaccinations by date XXX
- XX vaccinations by date XXX

Method of Registration:

- XXX
- XXX

Vaccines by manufacturer:

- XXX

Coordination for second course vaccination:

- XXX
- XXX

State/Local/Private Sector Partners:

- XXX
- XXX

Requirement:

Resources Required:

- XX vaccine doses
- XX staff
- X interpreters

Provided by Organization:

Requested Resources:

Remaining Resources to be Coordinated:

TIMELINE		
EVENT	DATE	TIME
Site Visit	XXX	XXX
Start	XXX	XXX
End	XXX	XXX