



The Pandemic Fund

Evaluation of the Pandemic Fund's Technical Advisory Panel

Final Report

December 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Executive summary	1
2	Overview of project context, objectives, and methodology	2
3	Introduction.....	4
4	Summary of findings	5
4.1	Design and governance	5
4.1.1	What worked well.....	5
4.1.2	Opportunities for refinement	5
4.1.3	Key insights from benchmarks.....	6
4.2	Operationalization.....	7
4.2.1	What worked well.....	7
4.2.2	Opportunities for refinement	7
4.2.3	Key insights from benchmarks.....	8
4.3	Results and outputs	9
4.3.1	What worked well.....	9
4.3.2	Opportunities for refinement	9
4.3.3	Key insights from benchmarks.....	10
5	Forward-looking recommendations for consideration	11
5.1	Key areas of recommendation	11
5.2	Detailed set of recommendations.....	12
5.2.1	Quick wins.....	12
5.2.2	Moderate changes	14
5.2.3	High effort, high impact changes	15
6	Conclusion.....	19
	Appendix: List of interviews and documents reviewed	20

Context & Background to the Pandemic Fund's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)



In June 2021, the G20's High Level Independent Panel reported that the international funding gap for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPPR) for low and middle-income countries (LMICs) is on the order of ~US\$10B per year. In response, the Pandemic Fund was established in September 2022 as a Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) hosted at the World Bank. The Governing Board assembled a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to advise on needs and prioritization for FIF funding, help shape the Calls for Proposals by providing recommendations to the Governing Board on priorities and requirements, and assess and make recommendations to the Governing Board on the technical merits of proposals, as described in the Governance Framework. Dr. Mike Ryan (WHO) and Dr. Joy St. John (CARPHA) were appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, and 21 members were selected based on geography, technical expertise, and gender representation; 2 members subsequently resigned.

Objectives and Methodology of the TAP Evaluation

Following the Pandemic Fund's first year and its first Call for Proposals, an external, third-party evaluation of the TAP was commissioned to provide an assessment of the TAP and highlight what worked well and what did not work well, identify lessons learned, and develop a set of recommendations for consideration by the Governing Board, complementing existing efforts, namely the 2023 Stocktaking Review and the TAP's self evaluation. The TAP Evaluation was conducted over 8 weeks in October - December 2023 by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and was informed by over 20 interviews and focus groups with more than 60 interviewees and a benchmarking of 5 FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities (Gavi; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the US National Institutes of Health; the Global Environment Facility; and the Global Agriculture & Food Security Program).

Key figures of the TAP

317

applications for
TAP membership

19

current members,
1 Chair, 1 Vice-Chair

All 7

World Bank
regions covered

19

different countries
represented

10 of 21

initial appointees
were female

15

key areas of
expertise

11

experts on average
per key area

135

funding proposals
reviewed

2

reviewers assigned per
proposal

14

proposals on average
per reviewer

3

weeks for independent
review of proposals

4

days to discuss
proposals in retreat

49

recommended
proposals for funding

Summary of the TAP Evaluation

In its first year, the Pandemic Fund's TAP successfully performed its technical advisory role by advising on the design of the First Call for Proposals, evaluating all 135 proposals despite a short timeline, and providing useful recommendations to enable funding decisions by the Governing Board. The evaluation presents the findings from interviews and benchmarks into three areas:

Design and Governance

- TAP has strong leadership and broad expertise, but could use more time for review and resources to fill gaps in expertise, as done in other funds
- TAP's responsibilities in technical review were clear, but its advisory role on broader topics and how TAP should interact with the Secretariat and the Board needs to be clarified
- Despite following conflict of interest (COI) rules, there is a persistent perception of COI in the TAP's design

Operationalization

- TAP accomplished everything it was tasked to do, despite the short timeline and limited headcount
- The proposal template, scoring process, and evaluation framework need revision and Board input to capture information on key criteria and be able to fully assess them
- SOPs were not fully comprehensive and retreat logistics and planning were not complete in time to guide independent proposal review

Results and Outputs

- TAP's recommendations were useful to enable decisions by the Board, but scoring lacked normalization and commentary lacked consistency in depth of detail across subjects
- TAP's role in providing feedback was unclear, leading to delayed feedback for applicants
- TAP expertise has not yet been fully leveraged to inform Pandemic Fund's direction and priorities as described in TAP's Terms of Reference

The full TAP Evaluation report provides a series of recommendations for consideration by the Pandemic Fund partnership, informed by opportunities for improvements as well as learnings from benchmarks. Key areas addressed include managing perceptions of conflict of interest, matching the resourcing (information, expertise) and capacity (headcount, time, ability to provide input) of the TAP to the task, considering how the TAP can be engaged in its broader advisory role, and improving the functioning of the TAP and review process. Ultimately, the TAP's mandate, makeup, and resourcing should be fit-for-purpose and informed by the broader strategic choices of the Pandemic Fund (including funding model, topic priorities, and geographic scope).

2 Overview of project context, objectives, and methodology

Project context

As mandated by the Terms of Reference, the Secretariat commissioned an evaluation of the Pandemic Fund's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). Boston Consulting Group (BCG) was selected through a competitive process to undertake this TAP Evaluation.

The objective of the evaluation was to provide an external, third-party assessment of the TAP following the Pandemic Fund's first year, to highlight what worked well and what did not work well, as well as to gather lessons learned. As part of this evaluation, we considered the TAP's roles and responsibilities as described in paragraph 21 of the Pandemic Fund's governance framework:

1. Advise on needs and prioritization for Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) funding, including:
 - Providing summaries to the Governing Board on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR) status, priorities and gaps based on existing landscape analyses and studies, such as reports on the implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR; 2005) and other internationally endorsed legal frameworks.
 - Providing complementary studies as requested by the Board, including updates of landscape analyses and studies as priorities and gaps can change over time.
2. Help shape the Calls for Proposals by providing recommendations to the Governing Board on priorities and requirements for Calls for Proposals.
3. Assess and make recommendations to the Governing Board on the technical merits of funding proposals submitted for FIF-financing.

This evaluation builds on the insights collected through the Stocktaking Review as well as the TAP's self-evaluation and the Board's written feedback on the first Call for Proposals, received over the summer of 2023.

This report details findings from the 8 weeks of the effort in October-December 2023, provides a set of recommendations, and is intended for Pandemic Fund partnership use only.

Project objectives

The objectives of the TAP Evaluation were threefold: first, to provide an external, third-party assessment of the TAP following the Pandemic Fund's first year to highlight what worked well and what did not work well, as well as to gather lessons learned. Second, to complement existing efforts (namely the Stocktaking Review and the TAP's self-evaluation). Finally, to develop a set of recommendations for improvement for consideration by the Pandemic Fund partnership.

Project approach and methodology

The TAP Evaluation rapidly gathered insights from different stakeholders (Figure 1) through three methodologies (Table 1), in addition to leveraging existing stakeholder perspectives gathered through the Stocktaking Review performed in September-October 2023.



All TAP members

Objective:

Understand views of the TAP's internal performance and interactions with other administrative and governing bodies



Governing Board and Secretariat

Objective:

Understand views of whether the TAP met its expectations and objectives, of interactions with the TAP, and of the technical evaluation and scoring process



Applicants who received feedback

Objective:

Understand what type of feedback would be useful moving forward

Figure 1: Nuances captured across 3 key stakeholder groups

Table 1: Methodologies of the TAP Evaluation

Methodology	Focus	Objective(s)	Perspectives gathered
Interviews and focus groups	- All TAP members - Governing Board - Secretariat - Representative group of applicants	TAP, Governing Board, Secretariat: Evaluate the TAP's internal performance and whether the TAP met their expectations and objectives, and assess perceptions of the technical evaluation and scoring process Applicants: Understand what feedback would be useful moving forward	Over 20 interviews and focus groups with over 60 participants
Benchmarking	5 FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities	- Identify learnings from other technical advisory bodies or panels across design & governance, operationalization, and results - Benchmark with the TAP and identify opportunities for improvement	Gavi, Global Fund, US National Institutes of Health (NIH), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)

Methodology	Focus	Objective(s)	Perspectives gathered
Desk research	Existing public and internal documents¹	- Identify what changes might be needed to the current governing documents (e.g., Governance Framework, Operations Manual, the TAP's Terms of Reference) - Assess the TAP's standard operating procedures to facilitate internal workings of the TAP and interactions between the TAP and other administrative and governing bodies in the Pandemic Fund - Validate perspectives heard during interviews	5 FIFs or similar grantmaking facilities benchmarked 5 anonymized datasets (e.g., proposal scores and TAP commentary) used to perform data analyses

1. Including the Stocktaking Review, the TAP's self-evaluation, and the Board's written feedback on the First Call for Proposals over the summer

3 Introduction

The TAP has been universally recognized to have delivered on its role providing input into the design of the Pandemic Fund's First Call for Proposals and performing technical assessment of a large number of proposals in a very short period. Stakeholders brought up the strong leadership and breadth and depth of expertise on the TAP, their collegial and cohesive approach to accomplishing their task, and the usefulness of their outputs.

As a pilot, the First Call for Proposals offered many learnings, and there is an opportunity to identify areas to improve going into the next Call for Proposals and beyond. The TAP has expressed enthusiasm to grow into their broader advisory role as described in the governing documents, using their considerable expertise to review the pandemic PPR landscape, potential priority areas and geographies, and other advisory outputs as requested by the Board.

This evaluation centered around improving the TAP going forward, drawing from what went well, opportunities for refinement, and key insights from benchmarks. Based on these findings, we provide recommendations for the path forward, with a focus on matching resources and capacity of the TAP with the tasks set for them, managing perceptions of conflict of interest in the design of the TAP, engaging the TAP in its broader advisory role, and refining documents and processes to improve the functioning of the TAP and review process based on learnings from the First Call for Proposals. The underlying detailed recommendations are categorized as quick wins, moderate changes, and high effort, high impact changes based on the relative effort to implement, and resourcing required. Ultimately, the form of the TAP should follow its intended function; as the Pandemic Fund reflects on its strategy, the TAP's structure, operations, and resources will need to evolve in line with broader strategic choices made by the Pandemic Fund (including funding model, topic priorities, and geographic scope).

4 Summary of findings

Perspectives were gathered across key stakeholder groups and categorized into three topic areas, covered in detail in following sections across what worked well, opportunities for refinement, and key insights from benchmarked FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities:

1. Design and governance – assess the strategic and structural makeup of the TAP
2. Operationalization – evaluate how the TAP works in practice
3. Results and outputs – assess the recommendations the TAP makes to the Board

Full summarized and anonymized interview insights and quotes, and detailed insights from benchmarking are included in separate appendices circulated to the Board, Secretariat, and TAP.

4.1 Design and governance

In this section, stakeholders were asked about the strategic and structural makeup of the TAP. Questions focused on the TAP's roles and responsibilities, the TAP's structure, size, and skillset, and how the Pandemic Fund's key governing documents support the TAP's mandate, its functioning, and how it interacts with other administrative and governing bodies in the Pandemic Fund. We also investigated benchmarked the technical panels of technical of other FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities across mandate; structure, size, and skillset; roles and responsibilities; engagement with other parties; processes to guard against conflict of interest; and confidentiality of discussions. Additionally, where relevant, we captured lessons learned in the benchmarks as their funding model and/or technical panels evolved over time.

Here, we present strengths and opportunities for refinement within the governance documents and report insights from approaches taken by other FIFs and grantmaking facilities to the governance of their technical panels to support their funding models.

4.1.1 What worked well

Stakeholders were highly complimentary of the expertise represented on the TAP, noting that the TAP Chair and Vice-Chair are highly respected, deeply knowledgeable experts, and that the TAP includes veterans of review processes – involved in many technical review panels (e.g., NIH, Global Fund) and over many years. Furthermore, the TAP is comprised of true known experts in their areas of expertise, well-renowned academics, researchers, doctors, and health professionals, and the TAP's members represent a diverse array of subject and geographical expertise. Finally, the TAP's roles and responsibilities in evaluating proposals were clear in governing documents.

4.1.2 Opportunities for refinement

Stakeholders noted a few key topics to consider going forward, including the design of the TAP and the resources and capacity available to it. First, the design of Pandemic Fund, with the World Health Organization chairing the TAP and speaking to the Board in that role gives the perception of an unlevel playing field for Implementing Entities, despite following the conflict-of-interest framework. As well, there is a lack of clarity around how the TAP should interact with the Secretariat, including the level of access to documents and meetings that the Secretariat should have. Stakeholders also noted that there is a lack of alignment on ownership of areas at the intersection of the Board and the TAP's mandate, so governing documents lack clarity on responsibilities for specific inputs to support Board decisions. Additionally, the TAP's role in the feedback process was not well defined, leading to an inefficient retroactive process, and the TAP's

advisory (non-decision-making) role was not clear externally, causing misunderstandings by applicants who believed that the TAP was responsible for funding decisions.

Considering the resources and capacity available to the TAP, stakeholders felt their mix of expertise was lacking in certain areas for the First Call for Proposals (e.g., health finance, in-country project implementation, technical expertise beyond human health), and the TAP had limited access to external expertise and materials to fill gaps. This perception was validated by a detailed analysis of expertise present on the TAP. Furthermore, the timeline was too short and TAP headcount was insufficient for the volume of proposals in the First Call for Proposals. This was compounded with a lack of clarity on the process to select and replace missing TAP members from alternates.

4.1.3 Key insights from benchmarks

We reviewed how other FIFs and grantmaking facilities set up their technical panels to support their funding activities and noted key insights in the design and governance of those benchmarks (Table 2) to consider when making recommendations to improve the TAP.

Table 2: Insights around design and governance from 5 benchmarks²

Lesson learned from benchmarks	Details
Technical panels often seek outside support on specialized issues	Acknowledging that reviewers cannot be experts in every country and issue, benchmarked funders provide support through access to experts (e.g., Secretariat teams or external experts)
Benchmarked funders have large reviewer pools and add expertise in core areas as needed	Some benchmarked funders have >100 reviewers and select a subset for a review based on topics covered; when gaps in expertise or new key areas are identified, benchmarked funders add experts to their pools
Technical partner employees tend to be ineligible to be part of or lead technical panels	Due to their role in overseeing the proposal evaluation process, and having privileged access to governing boards in their role, employees of technical partners like Implementing Entities are often barred from holding a leadership role to avoid creating an unlevel playing field for technical partners
Technical panels are often the key funding decisionmakers	In several of the benchmarked funders, the recommendations of the technical panels are the main determinant of approval for funding
Benchmarked funders evolve to meet their needs	Benchmarked entities are designed in diverse ways to be fit-for-purpose, and drastically update their model when needed

Lesson learned from benchmarks	Details
Technical panels expand beyond quality control to an advisory role	In formula allocation funding models, the technical panel role has expanded to provide strategic advice, and lessons learned from each funding round, sometimes partnering with technical partners or their Secretariat to lessen their involvement in project quality control

2. *Benchmarked FIFs and grantmaking facilities include Gavi, Global Fund, NIH, GAFSP, and GEF. Applicability of benchmark insights to Pandemic Fund can vary due to differences in funding model, maturity, and size of funds.*

4.2 Operationalization

In this section, stakeholders were asked about how the TAP worked in practice during the Pandemic Fund's first year. Questions focused on interactions between the TAP and other administrative and governing bodies in the Pandemic Fund, support provided to the TAP, the process to determine final scoring and recommendations, and the applicant feedback process. We also investigated benchmarked FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities' end-to-end application process, funding allocation model and framework, and their technical panels' application evaluation and feedback processes.

We present here strengths and opportunities for refinement within governing documents, standard operating procedures, and proposal templates, scorecards, and evaluation frameworks, and report insights from the operations of other funding models in assessing proposals.

4.2.1 What worked well

Stakeholders noted the impressive accomplishments of the TAP in reviewing over 130 applications in the short period of the First Call for Proposals, with a process that was designed to ensure high integrity and scientific soundness. This success was attributed in part to the strong leadership provided by the TAP Chair and Vice-Chair, which led to consensus in decisions. The TAP also came together quickly and developed strong collegial relationships, enabled in part by the small group size, leading to the group's ability to work cohesively. The TAP retreat was similarly successful in facilitating discussion and eventual consensus on incongruent scores. Despite the initial lack of clarity over ownership of the feedback process, TAP feedback is now circulating to applicants to provide meaningful areas to improve. Finally, stakeholders agreed that the TAP followed the Conflict-of-Interest framework in technical review and discussion of proposals.

4.2.2 Opportunities for refinement

Stakeholders identified a few key opportunities to refine future operations of the TAP across proposals and scoring, and logistics and procedures. First, considering proposals and scoring, many stakeholders commented that the proposal template was too long, redundant, and missed out on some information the TAP and the Board could use to evaluate proposals. As well, the evaluation framework did not account for Fund priorities, e.g., high-risk/vulnerable areas, low-resource settings, context-specific needs. Furthermore, the TAP and the Board felt that mutual understanding of roles and desired outputs could be improved to support their respective responsibilities. Stakeholders noted that the TAP's communication with applicants was minimal

during the review process, which limited clarification of concepts in proposals. Finally, the TAP's standard operating procedures were not fully comprehensive until the retreat, and reviewers were uncertain how scores would be combined.

Considering logistics and procedures, the TAP's review and the TAP retreat suffered from the short timeline and under-resourcing (including only having two rather than the intended three reviewers), complicating meeting logistics and limiting the depth of plenary discussion for each proposal. The TAP's role in the Expression-of-Interest process in the First Call was unclear, and some felt that this was a missed opportunity to leverage their expertise in providing technical feedback on submitted Expressions of Interest. Finally, the TAP suggested that the recommendation categories laid out in the TAP's Terms of Reference (Reject, Recommend for re-review) were not suitable for the First Call and should be revised.

4.2.3 Key insights from benchmarks

We reviewed how other FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities approached operational considerations, such as scoring models, getting broader input from technical experts on proposal review, and how feedback is produced for applicants, and captured key insights as part of this evaluation (Table 3).

Table 3: Insights around design and governance from 5 benchmarks³

Lesson learned from benchmarks	Details
Technical review meeting plenary discussion increases the breadth of expertise input	Regardless of how many reviewers conduct an initial review (commonly 2-3), proposals are discussed in depth and at length by a larger group with a wider range of expertise
Scoring approach depends on funding model	For funding models that do not depend on ranking proposals, selected reviewers score the proposals, whereas all reviewers score proposals for funding models that do depend on rankings
Project review forms are provided directly to applicants	Individual and summarized reviews are often provided (in whole or in part) to applicants rather than writing separate feedback; technical feedback is often received before funding decision
Review group size influences how they operate	Larger groups tend to work as individuals under the umbrella of the benchmark, whereas smaller groups tend to be more collegial and come to a group conclusion
Governing boards have made their funding decisions mechanical	Funding amounts are set through formula-allocated envelopes, or by following the technical panels' scoring and funding recommendations

Lesson learned from benchmarks	Details
Some technical panels assess strategic fit, leveraging applying Implementing Entities to assess tactical details	GAFSP's Technical Advisory Committees assess overall proposed program strategy, letting the Implementing Entities manage projects within the proposal; GEF's Scientific Technical Advisory Panel partners closely with Implementing Entities to access their pre-determined funding envelope, providing broad strategic guidance and re-reviewing projects as needed

3. *Benchmarked FIFs and grantmaking facilities include Gavi, Global Fund, NIH, GAFSP, and GEF. Applicability of benchmark insights to Pandemic Fund can vary due to differences in funding model, maturity, and size of funds.*

4.3 Results and outputs

The TAP's Terms of Reference state that the TAP provides “*independent advice to the Board on critical gaps in pandemic PPR, funding priorities and calls for proposals, as well review of funding proposals submitted to the Financial Intermediary Fund.*” In this section, stakeholders were asked about the results produced by the TAP during its first year. Questions focused on satisfaction with the TAP's outputs; fairness and consistency of technical review, scoring, and feedback; other areas where the TAP could provide specific recommendations; and additional materials, analysis, or insights the TAP could produce for the Board to facilitate decision-making. We also investigated benchmarked FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities' technical panels' processes to ensure fairness and consistency of scoring, and the materials, analysis, and/or insights they provide.

We present here strengths and opportunities for refinement among the content and types of outputs the TAP has provided and could provide going forward, and report insights from the outputs other technical panels produce for their governing bodies.

4.3.1 What worked well

Stakeholders were satisfied overall with the outputs the TAP assembled despite the limited time of the First Call for Proposals, noting that the TAP's output was useful to enable Board decision making by sorting proposals into clear categories, e.g., highly recommended for funding, and that the TAP Chair and Vice-Chair provided the report of TAP recommendations for each proposal for the Secretariat and Board by the agreed deadline. Similarly, the TAP was recognized to be deeply committed to providing fair and knowledgeable technical scoring of proposals, and it was noted that meta-analysis of scores showed over 85% of 135 proposals were congruent with no outliers, and all but one had the final score agreed by both reviewers. Finally, the TAP has communicated and repeatedly reiterated its enthusiasm for improving the end-to-end process, and has been willing to share best practices from members' experiences.

4.3.2 Opportunities for refinement

Stakeholders commented on three opportunities for refinement of TAP outputs going forward: the consistency of outputs provided, other areas the TAP can evaluate as part of their proposal review, and other advisory outputs the TAP can provide to the Board. Considering the outputs that were provided, there was a lack of a normalization process to enable consistency in scoring and

increase the Board’s confidence in the process, and the level of detail of comments and feedback provided to the Board by the TAP was inconsistent.

In the First Call for Proposals, the TAP’s expertise was used to score technical merit, but there was a missed opportunity to have these experts consistently and explicitly write commentary for the Board on broader factors, e.g., the amount of funding requested and the potential to provide partial funding, the country and regional background and how the project fits within that background, and how realistic implementation would be.

Finally, the TAP’s expertise has not yet been fully leveraged by the Board for their advisory roles described in the governance framework to inform the direction and priorities of the Pandemic Fund, e.g., reviewing the pandemic PPR landscape and identifying funding gaps, and providing input and analysis of potential priority topics or geographies identified by the Board.

4.3.3 Key insights from benchmarks

We reviewed how benchmarked FIFs and similar grantmaking facilities managed consistency in their technical panel reviews and what types of outputs technical panels produce, reporting two key insights (Table 4).

Table 4: Insights around design and governance from 5 benchmarks⁴

Lesson learned from benchmarks	Details
Inter-reviewer variability is addressed differently across benchmarked funders	• Rounds-based funding models limit variability by having all reviewers score each proposal before or during plenary • Formula allocation funding models provide normative guidance, calibration is not prioritized as the process is not competitive / does not depend on a ranking of proposals
Technical panels can advise on a wide breadth of areas	Except for NIH (where the rest of the organization is also heavily technical), all technical panels provide some combination of • Internal advisory: lessons learned, process changes, funding gaps in the portfolio • Strategic advisory: broad landscape reviews, fund strategy, scientific reviews, collaborations with other funds

4. Benchmarked FIFs and grantmaking facilities include Gavi, Global Fund, NIH, GAFSP, and GEF. Applicability of benchmark insights to Pandemic Fund can vary due to differences in funding model, maturity, and size of funds.

5 Forward-looking recommendations for consideration

Drawing on what worked well, opportunities for refinement, and key insights from benchmarks, we developed a series of recommendations for consideration by the Board to improve the TAP going forward.

There are four key areas of recommendation: matching resources and capacity of the TAP with the task set for it, managing perception of conflict of interest in the TAP, engaging the TAP in its broader advisory role, and refining documents and processes to improve the functioning of the TAP and review process based on learnings from the First Call for Proposals.

5.1 Key areas of recommendation

Matching resources and capacity with the task

In order to carry out their task effectively, the Board must clearly define the task, and then provide the TAP with resources and capacity to perform it. Defining the task includes laying out what types of information and evaluations the Board would like to receive from the TAP, and how to incorporate those criteria into the end-to-end proposal evaluation process.

This TAP evaluation identifies gaps in expertise such as health financing, implementation and project management experience, deep in-country knowledge, One Health, gender and equity, and Civil Society Organization engagement. To address these, the Pandemic Fund can improve access to both internal and external expertise. Internally, this involves increasing the number of reviewers per proposal and extending plenary session discussions for cross-cutting topics. Externally, it can include access to external experts for in-depth country insights. Enhancing the application template to require details on how proposals address gender and equity, One Health, and Civil Society Organization engagement, along with detailed country and financial contexts and relevant documents like National Action Plans for Health Security, can improve information access. Additionally, accessing external sources for more country and financial context regarding applicant countries can be beneficial.

Capacity considerations encompass headcount, review time, and the ability to gather input from the entire TAP for each proposal, utilizing its expertise through in-depth plenary discussions. Our recommendations aim to enable these capacities, but the specific resources and capacity required should be tailored to the task's context.

Managing perception of conflict of interest

There was near-universal commentary on the unlevel playing field for Implementing Entities due to the World Health Organization's role in chairing the TAP, which was implemented by design to capture synergies and make use of their technical expertise. Part of this design relied on the TAP's role as an advisory panel, not a decision-making body, unlike many benchmarked and similar entities. Going forward, there is a need to address these perceptions due to how commonly they are held, either by changing the role of the World Health Organization in the TAP, or by better communicating the guardrails already set and potentially creating new ones.

Enabling the TAP's broader advisory role

Due to the limited time in the Pandemic Fund's first year, the TAP has not yet been engaged on its broader advisory roles as laid out in the governance framework. The TAP is a collection of highly renowned experts with decades of experience and have shown an enthusiasm to put that expertise to use in engaging and providing input on the direction and priorities of the Pandemic Fund going forward.

Refining documents and processes to improve the functioning of the TAP and review process based on learnings from the First Call for Proposals

It is widely acknowledged that the TAP did an outstanding job in the First Call for Proposals. In parallel, through interviews, benchmarking, and other feedback, we have identified a number of areas on the margin where refinements to the functioning of the TAP and review process will further improve efficiency, quality, consistency, and impact of process and outputs.

5.2 Detailed set of recommendations

The detailed recommendations are sorted into quick wins, moderate changes, and high effort, high impact changes according to the inputs and effort required to implement the changes, and considering the recurring resources required to support these changes.

In addition to the changes listed below, it was universally acknowledged that more time is required for review and technical assessment, regardless of other changes made.

5.2.1 Quick wins

Quick wins are straightforward changes that require minimal stakeholder input and do not require a significant change in resources, and focus on three areas: the TAP's operations, guidance to applicants, and the TAP's role in providing feedback (Table 5).

Table 5: Quick win recommendations for consideration

Quick wins	Factors to consider (non-exhaustive)
<i>1. The TAP's operations</i>	
Clarify the approach to and details of the TAP's confidentiality in the Pandemic Fund's governing documents	• Clarify non-TAP access to the TAP's documents and meetings • Balance internal transparency for operational reasons with the need for confidentiality • Balance external transparency for accountability with the need for confidentiality
Create a straightforward procedure to fill vacancies on the TAP according to the selection principles in Pandemic Fund governing documents – <i>This process is already underway as of Dec 2023</i>	• Reiterate the specific TAP selection principles • Define a process to leverage the alternate list

Quick wins	Factors to consider (non-exhaustive)
Finalize standard operating procedures and meeting logistics well in advance of the TAP retreat, e.g., finalize procedures for scoring, and prepare materials to facilitate discussion during TAP retreat	• Circulate scoring standard operating procedures before reviewers receive proposals to score • Assign responsibility for preparing the meeting agenda and slides to support discussion in the TAP retreat • Designate ownership and timeline for tech access • Clarify rules around system access by reviewers before all reviews are complete
<i>2. Applicant guidance</i>	
Improve external understanding of the TAP's advisory role with comprehensive communication during application to avoid misunderstandings	• Consider adding language in Call for Proposals documents explaining the end-to-end process to applicants, e.g., "Funding decisions will be made by the Governing Board, with advisory on technical matters provided by the TAP"
Decide and communicate the Pandemic Fund's approach to limiting internal double funding risk (i.e., avoiding double funding the same country) to set applicant expectations	• Decide on double funding rules (for example, the Board has discussed limiting applications to one single-country and one multi-country/regional application per country) and then include them in Call for Proposals documents to limit multiple submissions
<i>3. The TAP's role in providing feedback</i>	
Clarify the TAP's role in providing feedback to applicants and enable timely feedback	• Consider how the TAP can leverage parts of the scorecard commentary when providing feedback, and otherwise standardize feedback to be consistent and actionable • Consider how the significant expertise on the TAP could be used to provide broader input on building country pandemic PPR capabilities in addition to listing proposal strengths and weaknesses in feedback
Consider expanding the feedback loop process to enable anonymous Q&A from the TAP to applicants on their proposals	• Consider how to seek clarification and additional information from applicants to address issues raised during the TAP retreat, before the final TAP report is given to the Board • Design the process to be fair to all applicants and to maintain the confidentiality of TAP members

5.2.2 Moderate changes

Moderate changes require more stakeholder discussion to implement, and more resources allocated to the TAP, and focus on four areas: the proposal template, proposal evaluation, consistency of scoring and reporting, and the TAP's role (if any) in the Expression-of-Interest process (Table 6).

Table 6: Moderate change recommendations for consideration

Moderate changes	Factors to consider (non-exhaustive)
<i>1. Proposal template</i>	
Edit the proposal template to capture information useful to the TAP and the Board, while limiting redundancy and clarifying language – <i>This process is already underway as of Dec 2023</i>	- Streamline the proposal template by reducing repetition and clarifying language - Expand opportunities for applicants to describe how subjects like engagement with Civil Society Organizations, gender & equity, and One Health were addressed, e.g., which stakeholders were engaged and when, to allow for a more comprehensive assessment - Add space for countries to explain the country and financial context of their proposals - Make the proposal template and requirements more flexible for multi-country/regional applicants - Allow N/A responses and incorporate the change into the scoring system to avoid accidentally penalizing N/A responses - Require the inclusion of referenced documents (e.g., National Action Plans for Health Security) to allow reviewers to assess claims made about them
<i>2. Proposal evaluation</i>	
Enable a deeper review of each proposal by expanding input from TAP members	- Enable in-depth plenary discussion by providing adequate time, either through extending the retreat or by pre-wiring the congruency resolution process by having reviewers resolve most incongruency before the meeting - Reflect the plenary discussion in the quantitative score for all proposals, e.g., have reviewers adjust their scores or come to a summary score through discussion, or by having the entire plenary score the proposal - Consider adding a third reviewer per proposal

3. Scoring and reporting consistency

Add an explicit process to limit the impact of inter-reviewer variability and calibrate review scores

- Limit processes that change the scores of some but not all proposals, i.e., the incongruency resolution process
- Consider normalization of scores (e.g., fitting scores to a normal distribution or allotting points to reviewers)
- Consider having all reviewers score each proposal at the retreat
- Consider whether the Board continues to desire the ability to rank proposals against each other and design the process accordingly

Update the summary scorecards and scoring/reporting standard operating procedures to ensure consistent reporting

- Provide guidance on level of detail of commentary desired
- Add more structure (e.g., section titles and desired word count) to the summary scorecard to promote consistent commentary across key criteria (e.g., feasibility of project)
- Scale the scoring range to 100 (vs 130 in First Call for Proposals) for ease of understanding
- Propose new categories to be added to Terms of Reference (rather than "Rejected" and "Recommended for re-review")
- Define category thresholds and the method of aggregating individual scores into summary scores in advance of the individual review process

4. The TAP's role in the Expression of Interest process

If Expressions of Interest are solicited in future Calls for Proposals, clarify the role of the TAP (if any) in the Expression of Interest process

- Consider whether the TAP will be engaged to review Expressions of Interest if a technical component is included
- Seek relevant TAP input on Expression of Interest evaluation methodology as needed

5.2.3 High effort, high impact changes

High effort, high impact changes are those that require complex stakeholder input from multiple sources and more resources allocated to the TAP, focused on five areas: perceptions of conflicts of interest, interactions between the TAP and the rest of the Pandemic Fund, the TAP's access to expertise, the TAP's processes and outputs, and the TAP's advisory role (Table 7).

Table 7: High effort, high impact change recommendations for consideration

High effort, high impact changes	Factors to consider (non-exhaustive)
<i>1. Perception of conflicts of interest</i>	
Manage perceptions of conflicts of interest of having the World Health Organization chairing the TAP by setting guardrails to minimize conflicts and maximize synergies • Ensure that all guidelines are clear, well articulated, and thoroughly documented	• Establish and communicate a strong division of responsibilities within the World Health Organization between proposal evaluation and implementing entity representation • Set more guardrails on how Implementing Entities provide input to the Board in the context of the TAP Chair giving input in Board meetings • Lessen the broad influence of any one Implementing Entity on proposal scoring • Rebalance the relative importance of One Health, animal, finance, and implementation/project management in future TAP appointments to avoid overbiasing the TAP to human health expertise • Consider elevating the Vice-Chair to an equal Co-Chair
<i>2. Interactions between the TAP and the Pandemic Fund</i>	
Consider how the TAP should be supported by and interact with other Pandemic Fund bodies, especially the Secretariat • Manage Secretariat member roles and resources, including technical expertise, to support the TAP • Facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation between the TAP and the Board	• Ensure the level of Secretariat support is fit for purpose given the anticipated number of proposals • Consider elevating technical expertise within the Secretariat, e.g., adding a technical Vice-Chair • Clarify the division of responsibilities, access to information, and reporting lines within the Secretariat to support the TAP • Consider how to build mutual understanding and appreciation between the Board and the TAP, e.g., joint working groups or learning sessions, including leveraging TAP expertise to design Calls for Proposals • Consider whether the Secretariat could expand the pre-screening process to support the TAP with transparent, pre-defined criteria, e.g., filtering proposals with multiple exclusionary criteria left blank

3. The TAP's access to expertise

Ensure access to expertise (e.g., health financing, One Health, gender & equity, Civil Society Organization engagement) that is currently underrepresented on the TAP via:

- Internal input, e.g., filling vacancies with needed expertise and increasing TAP-wide discussion on cross-cutting topics
- External input, e.g., access to expert networks, ad-hoc reviewers, and a wider breadth of external advisory inputs
- Target expertise gaps when filling TAP vacancies
- Collect more information from countries and from existing analysis in addition to what was already provided (Georgetown University country reports), e.g., World Bank assessments of health financing
- Consider enabling access to ad-hoc or external expertise (e.g., external expert networks, having a large roster of reviewers, offering access to World Bank experts, or adding a technical team to the Secretariat)
- Enable input to the TAP from cross-cutting experts
 - Add training sessions for reviewers on cross-cutting topics (e.g., gender and equity) before reviews
 - Design plenary sessions to allow input on each proposal by cross-cutting experts

4. Processes and outputs

Define if or how certain applicants' contextual factors (Challenging Operating Environments, Small Island Developing States, Fragile and Conflict States) should be taken into Pandemic Fund's selection process and impact on scoring by the TAP – *This process is already underway as of Dec 2023*

- Determine whether these factors should be part of application eligibility, the TAP's scoring (including as a differentiated scoring track), or the Board's allocation principles
- Make the necessary changes to the proposal template based on the decision made, e.g., create a differentiated template for Small Island Developing States

Identify what information the Board needs from the TAP to prioritize proposals and how the TAP can get access to that information, including:

- How the project fits in the country/regional context
- The project's feasibility of implementation (absorptive capacity of countries and Implementing Entities, local expertise, and speed of implementation)
- Evaluation of the project's requested funding amounts and their value for money, and providing recommendations for partial funding
- Longer-term profiles of country needs and pandemic PPR risk, refined over multiple project cycles
- Identify commentary and/or quantitative scoring inputs from the TAP that would best support the Board in assessing these criteria
- Make changes to the proposal template to collect information to support this goal, e.g., questions around country finances
- Identify which criteria will require access to external expertise compared with available expertise on the TAP, e.g., regional finance experts to comment on feasibility of an activity with a specific budget
- Consider creating a database of country profiles to refine over time and keep track of pandemic PPR status and progress

5. The TAP's advisory role

Consider what other advisory outputs the Board would want to request from the TAP, including:

- Reviews of pandemic PPR landscape and funding gaps
- Advice to inform priorities for future Calls for Proposals
- Identify relevant topics that would gain from an internal perspective not covered elsewhere
- Leverage the TAP's reports to identify potential targets for future Calls for Proposals
- Request and incorporate tools from the TAP (e.g., a multi-sectoral evaluation framework) to improve the detail of proposal assessments
- Define guidelines and guardrails on the TAP's commentary to maintain the TAP's advisory role

6 Conclusion

Overall, the TAP has been a crucial element in the Pandemic Fund's efforts, demonstrating commitment, expertise, and a collaborative spirit. The forward-looking recommendations presented in this report have been provided to the Governing Board members for their review and decision and will be discussed with the TAP in January 2024. We reiterate two points: first, there was universal acknowledgement among stakeholders that more time per proposal is needed for review and technical scoring; and second, ultimately, the TAP's mandate, makeup, and resourcing (e.g., headcount, time, expertise) should be fit-for-purpose and informed by broader strategic choices of the Pandemic Fund (e.g., funding model, topic priorities, geographic scope).

The implementation of these recommendations is at the discretion of the Governing Board, and the TAP has expressed its enthusiasm to continue to provide input to improve the end-to-end review process to maximize the impact of the Pandemic Fund's investments.

END OF REPORT

Appendix: List of interviews and documents reviewed

Appendix Table 1: List of interviews and focus groups performed¹

TAP members	• 3 focus groups for all TAP members – 16 of 19 TAP members attended a session • 2 individual 1:1 interviews – Chair – Vice-Chair
Governing Board and Secretariat	• 3 focus groups for the Governing Board – 12 of 21 Board seats attended a session – Participation across Sovereign and Non-Sovereign Contributors, Sovereign Co-investors, and Civil Society Organization representatives • 1 individual 1:1 interview with a member of the Committee of the Governing Board for Selection of TAP members • 3 focus groups for Secretariat – 2 World Health Organization secondees – 2 World Bank Secretariat members who supported the TAP retreat – 3 World Bank Secretariat members who interacted with the TAP • 1 individual 1:1 interview with the legal consultant who consulted on the Conflict of Interest framework
Applicants	• 6 individual 1:1 interviews with applicants who had received feedback – Participation across regional entities, applying Implementing Entities, and countries

1. In addition to >40 interviews and focus groups performed as part of the Stocktaking Review in Sept-Oct 2023

Appendix Table 2: List of internal and external documents reviewed

Internal documents	1. Governance Framework 2. Operations Manual 3. TAP Terms of Reference 4. Conflict of Interest framework 5. All official documents that pertain to the First Call for Proposals, including 5.1. Documents on Expression of Interest process 5.2. Final version of First Call for Proposals documents 5.3. Training materials 5.4. Standard operating procedures and background 5.5. Proposal and Expression of Interest templates 5.6. All eligible applications (Eligible and not selected, and successful) 5.7. Allocation and scenario analysis documents 6. Existing feedback including 6.1. Existing feedback from Board and Implementing Entities (“Lessons Learned” document circulated ahead of 8th Governing Board Meeting) 6.2. Existing feedback from FCDO 6.3. TAP recommendations report and annex 6.4. TAP Self-Evaluation paper circulated in October 7. Governing Board minutes from seven meetings
Anonymized data sets	1. TAP applicant and TAP member expertise (self-reported scores and CVs) 2. Themes of proposals received 3. Individual and summary scores¹ 4. Country income status and Fragile and Conflict States/Small Island Developing States status with proposal score¹ 5. Summary scorecard commentary and proposal scores¹
External documents	Gavi policy documents 1. Fragility, emergencies, and displaced populations policy (2022) 2. HSIS policy (2023) 3. Framework for Gavi Funding to Countries (2022) 4. Conflict of Interest policy (2020) 5. Evaluation of the IRC (2023) Global Fund policy documents 1. OIG Advisory Report on the TRP (2021)

-
2. TRP Ethics and COI procedures (2022)
 3. TRP Terms of Reference (2022)
 4. TRP Review Approaches Manual (2023)
 5. 2020-2022 Technical Review Panel Observations Report

US National Institutes of Health Center for Scientific Review policy documents

1. 2022 CSR Strategic Plan
2. Various NIH website articles (e.g., FY 2022 By the Numbers: Extramural Grant Investments in Research; Paylines, Percentiles and Success Rates (2011))

GEF policy documents

1. STAP Terms of Reference (2012)
2. Guidelines on the Project Program Cycle (2020)
3. 2023 GEF Introduction Seminar Slides
4. C31.4 Council Minutes Item 10 (Enhancing the Impact of the STAP)

GAFSP policy documents

1. TAC Terms of Reference (2012)
2. Framework Document (2020)
3. Process Guidance (2022)
4. 5th, 6th, and both 7th Calls for Proposal applicant guidelines

-
1. *Country and reviewer names were anonymized*