

## News Release

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### Report Analyzes Lessons Learned From COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

**Washington, DC, April 6, 2021...**Developing a set of COVID-19 vaccines in record time and then starting to distribute them nationally was an important achievement, but it uncovered obstacles at all levels. Today, the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) issued a [new report](#)—the latest in a series of Solutions Briefs—analyzing the effectiveness of the vaccine development, production, and distribution effort. It also provides policy recommendations to improve this critical effort, for both the current pandemic and the next.

As [Vaccinating America](#) notes, the United States is expected to have enough vaccine supply for its entire population by the end of May—but that is a milestone, not the finish line. The public and private sectors will still need to collaborate carefully and effectively to ensure that the shots are distributed and administered quickly, efficiently, and fairly, in order to defeat this pandemic. Failure to learn from the lessons we can already glean from the past few months of experience could be catastrophic.

“We should think of our COVID-19 experience as an urgent warning and opportunity to fix our public health response system to continue the fight against this pandemic and prepare for the next pandemic, which could well be deadlier and more easily transmitted,” said Lori Esposito Murray, President, CED. “Just as we created and maintain a national security capacity at considerable expense in the hope that it will not be needed, we must be prepared to supply sufficient vaccines, once developed, much more rapidly than has occurred in this episode. This is a necessary national security expense—which we should all hope will prove unnecessary.”

In its new report, CED offers five policy proposals that business leaders and policymakers should implement. They include:

- **Keep vaccine-manufacturing supply chains intact.** Both the public and private sectors must continue to monitor the availability of key vaccine-manufacturing supplies, such as pharmaceutical-quality glass, stoppers and “low-dead-space” syringes, both now and in the future. Supply-chain issues have been a hurdle to this point and should be prevented going forward. It may require government intervention.
- **Data management is crucial.** Efficient delivery of vaccinations requires knowledge of where they are needed, when they will flow, and in what quantities they will be available. States initially took the lead in vaccine distribution, but some passed the responsibility on to localities. The result has been uneven data collection and dissemination across the entire country. Comparable data, especially by county, race and gender, is critical for improving the distribution program, ensuring fairness, and reassuring the public. Getting complete and comparable data everywhere in the country must be a federal function.
- **Different delivery mechanisms are suited to different populations.** No single approach to getting shots into arms is universally effective. Existing private health care provider networks can quickly reach their existing populations through their ongoing logistical channels and should be leveraged to a great extent, but they do not cover the entire population. Mass vaccination sites can reach large numbers of willing and mobile people quickly and efficiently, but they are



hard to establish and inaccessible to many vulnerable and underserved populations. Trusted institutions such as pharmacies and churches can reach and counsel the reluctant. The required level of differentiation puts state governments front and center in the organization and coordination of delivery systems—and indeed, the most successful states have used those systems that connected best with major segments of their populations. But there are downsides to having multiple and seemingly competing sign-up systems: They can be inefficient, ineffective, and demoralizing, and can be mistaken as evidence of randomness and unfairness. Faulty sign-up systems must be improved—perhaps with federal investment.

- **Evaluate the trade-off between targeting and speed.** In this pandemic, targeting has competed against speed. Delivering limited supplies of vaccines to vulnerable groups saves lives directly, while vaccinating the general population more effectively slows the spread of the virus, which also saves lives. Both approaches have been employed in different states during this pandemic, so leaders ought to closely evaluate their relative effectiveness to inform future choices.
- **Prepare for the next pandemic.** The Strategic National Stockpile must be rebuilt promptly in preparation for future pandemics. The nation also needs to be prepared to ensure that supply chains remain unbroken and to be able to more quickly surge production capacity—not only for things like PPE but also for a vaccine—when a new pandemic breaks out. Pharmaceutical science developed COVID vaccines in record time, but we must bring manufacturing to scale far faster if the next coronavirus is more lethal and more transmissible than this one. The United States should build standby vaccine production capacity as a matter of national security, and keep it prepared.

The report also highlights what went wrong and what went right in individual states in terms of rapidly deploying the vaccine. Early preparation of appointment systems for the public helped. Inclusion of strong private and public health care systems helped to vaccinate large groups quickly and efficiently. Vulnerable populations, which include many of the vaccine-hesitant, were too often missed. Devolution of responsibility to localities without resources or information slowed the process and frustrated the population.

The new report, *Vaccinating America*, can be accessed [here](#).

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#### About CED

The Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy center that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions in the nation's interest. CED Trustees are chief executive officers and key executives of leading US companies who bring their unique experience to address today's pressing policy issues. Collectively they represent 30+ industries, over a trillion dollars in revenue, and over 4 million employees. [www.ced.org](http://www.ced.org)

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