



COVID-19 Supply Chain System: Requesting and Receiving Supplies

Purpose of this document

The global COVID-19 outbreak is leading to an acute and drastic shortage of essential supplies, including personal protective equipment, diagnostics and clinical management.

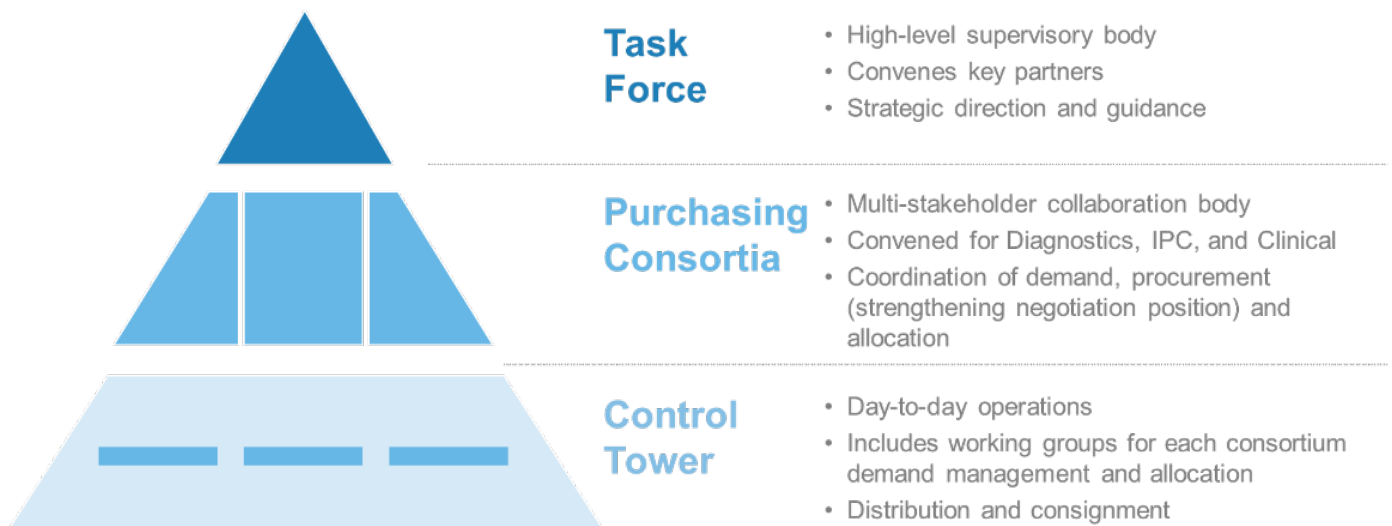
At the request of the UN Secretary-General and in support of the UN Crisis Management Team, a Supply Chain Task Force has been convened to establish the COVID-19 Supply Chain System (CSCS).

This document aims to bring clarity on the process of requesting and receiving globally sourced COVID-19 critical supplies that are currently facing constrained market conditions, through the UN COVID-19 Supply Chain System (CSCS).

Background

Supply Chain Task Force

The Task Force oversees a concerted and coordinated approach that both leverages the well-established and proven systems, process, and mechanisms that participating partners have in place while reflecting the need to build on respective strengths and generate synergies for enhanced collaboration in these exceptional circumstances. The Supply Chain Task Force, co-chaired by WHO and WFP, includes representation from each participating organization (WHO, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, World Bank, The Global Fund, UNOPS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, NGOs, Red Cross and Federation and other cluster partners) who are accountable to deliver on their agency's commitment to this critical operation and who are fully empowered to act flexibly and expediently.



The day-to-day operational activities under the Task Force are performed by the Supply Chain Inter-Agency Coordination Cell (SCICC) which provides 'line of sight' to supply chain requirements, ensuring COVID-19 needs are prioritized within the wider humanitarian response.



The SCICC is responsible for information management and operational activities, including coordination of the Purchasing Consortia and the management of the Control Tower.

The Task Force will ensure the effective functioning of a COVID-19 Supply Chain System (CSCS). The principles that underpin the functioning of this system are:

- Demand requests for essential supplies are coordinated at country level based on the National Action Plans for COVID-19 preparedness and response
- Procurement of supplies is coordinated through “purchasing consortia” of the major purchasers in each product area to ensure maximum market access while *leveraging existing procurement capacity and building on established mechanisms and systems*
- Allocations of essential supplies are agreed within the purchasing consortia and based on country needs, data on national absorption capacity and gap in unmet supply need
- Distribution and transport of supplies are streamlined and supported to ensure efficient delivery.

Purchasing Consortia

Three purchasing consortia have been established at global level for each of the key product areas: Personal protective equipment (PPE), Diagnostics and Clinical Management to coordinate and leverage exiting mechanisms, systems, expertise, and capacity of the participating partners. Membership in each of the purchasing consortia varies, but includes among others WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNOPS, the Global Fund, World Bank, Unitaid, PAHO, Africa CDC, BMGF, FIND, CHAI, DFID and PATH. The purchasing consortia for each product area will:

- Agree on technical specifications that meet country implementation strategies and that will guide the consortia’s procurement decisions
- Aggregate demand forecasts and share with allocation working groups
- Leverage their well-established and proven mechanisms, processes, and systems in a coordinated manner to source supplies to meet forecasted needs, engage with industry and negotiate price and volume agreements (or agreements for services, where applicable) to maximize market access
- Work with the Control Tower to guide allocations based on principles established by the Task Force
- Provide guidance to procurement working groups on purchasing divisions and consolidate available supply pipelines for allocation

Control Tower

The Control Tower is the central interface where country demand, partner procurement mechanisms, and logistics/distribution come together. The Control Tower manages execution of allocation against the principles and strategy provided by the Task Force / Consortia. This includes reviewing requests, mapping available supplies, allocating available supplies to requests, and identifying a supplying agency to fulfil allocation. The Control Tower is composed of staff from WHO, WFP and UNICEF and other key partners.

The Control Tower will make sure that the committed requests trigger the delivery and a hub-and-spoke distribution chain that will be operated and optimized for each category. This system includes:

- Strategic international consolidation hubs as well as regional staging areas located along primary corridors serving priority countries identified by WHO and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan



- Strategic airlifts, for prioritized cargo to ensure movement of goods between international and regional hubs and onward to countries (if required). Where required, shipping services will ensure delivery for slow moving cargo, and road and rail services will be used where appropriate

Assets of Task Force members as well as their public and private sector partners may be brought in to complement services.

COVID-19 Supply Portal

The COVID-19 Supply Portal is a purpose-built tool to facilitate national authorities and all implementing partners supporting COVID-19 National Action Plans to request critical supplies. Those requests will then be assigned to purchasing agencies of the Consortia that can execute the order and process it, utilizing their existing ordering systems. A catalogue of items that can be requested is available [online](#) and is broadly divided into three categories: Personal protective equipment (PPE), Diagnostics and Clinical Management. It is accessed via the COVID-19 Partners Platform.

Accessing the COVID-19 Supply Portal

- If not already registered, sign up to the [COVID-19 Partners Platform](#)
- Applications must be approved by the platform’s Country Administrator/s
- Once approved, log in and follow the link to the COVID-19 Supply Portal
- Register to become a user of the COVID-19 Supply Portal

Every approved stakeholder who has an active role in the COVID-19 preparedness and response action plan can sign up for the Supply Portal. This includes Government agencies, UN agencies, and NGOs. All requestors must be legally permitted to import supplies.

Once registered, implementing partners can request essential supplies in a streamlined three-step process as outlined in the table below.





Step 1: Coordinated Demand – How to Request Critical Supplies

- a) Coordinate supply needs under National Action Plans and identify requestors:** National authorities together with Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, WHO, Health Clusters, and responding partners (together the “Local Response”) should align on supply needs for the next three months under their National Action Plan. Requestors must be identified and designated to submit their request against an agreed portion of required supplies. Every approved stakeholder who has an active role in the COVID-19 preparedness and response action plan can be a requestor. This includes Government agencies, UN agencies, and NGOs. Non-government requestors must be registered at country level with the UNRC/HC office and legally permitted to import supplies.
- Establish supply chain working group (if not already existent) among response partners
 - Align national authorities and the local response on required supplies for the next three months (rolling) under the National Actions Plan and prioritize most urgent needs. Online tools such as the [Essential Supplies Forecasting Tool](#) among others will be made available to facilitates quantification of needs, as necessary.
 - Designate which authorities/organizations will submit requests against approved scope (items and quantities) and use (public health pillar) and act as focal point for the request (the “requestor”).
 - Authorities/organizations will need to confirm the scope (items), quantity and priority of requests as well as availability of funding before being designated as the requestor. Once supply requests have been submitted, the requestor will coordinate logistics with purchasing agency and shipment provider, and ensure together with partners and programs in-country distribution and use.
 - Overall demand requests will be validated using COVID-19 emergency coordination mechanisms or existing country procurement mechanisms as appropriate.
- b) Requestor submits requests:** Based on the identified country needs under the National Action Plan, the assigned requestor must submit request for supplies through the COVID-19 Supply Portal directly or with the support of existing procurement channels such as the WHO, UNICEF or Global Fund representatives. To submit request through the COVID-19 Supply Portal:
- Log into the COVID-19 Supply Portal
 - Start a new supplies request
 - Select items from catalogue and indicate quantity requested
 - Enter high-level shipping and contact information
 - Indicate funding source
 - Submit request

Submitted requests will only be confirmed once they are reviewed by the control tower and available quantity, prices are confirmed by the supplying agency to the requestor.



- c) Validate and prioritize submitted requests:** Once a requestor submits a supply request into the Supply Portal, requests must be validated by the Supply Chain Coordinator in accordance with agreements for requestors made in Step 1a. Through the COVID-19 Supply Portal and the Supply Chain Coordinator, national authorities and the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator will have visibility of all requests submitted in their country. Requestors will be able to view the status of their request as it progresses through the system.

Step 2: Coordinated Purchasing – Matching Needs with Available Supplies

- a) Review requests against availability and identify supplying agencies:** The Control Tower aims to facilitate enhanced fulfillment of country needs by coordinating and leveraging the procurement capacity, mechanisms, and systems of the Consortia partners. It does so by reviewing country requests and matching them to supplies that are available through the consolidated pipelines of participating agencies. These pipelines are shared by Consortia supplying agencies regularly with the Supply Chain System via the Supply Portal and encompass both confirmed available supplies and visibility on upcoming committed supplies. The allocation of available supplies is performed based on a) the established principles of allocation defined by the Task Force and elaborated by the Consortia, b) prioritization indicated for the validated requests in Step 1c, and c) logistical considerations. The output of this step is an allocation of supplies specifying the particular products, quantities, and corresponding supplying agencies. Based on availability, the allocation might differ from requests. This includes different prices, quantities, or the allocation of substitute products. Orders can also be split up among different supplying agencies on a line-item basis based on availability and logistical consideration.
- b) Confirm order and funding source with requestor:** The assigned supplying agency confirms allocation details with requestor, including the proposed modifications, if applicable. The supplying agency also issues a cost estimate and/or verifies the funding source with the requestor and funder and adjusts the order, if necessary. Supplying agencies should leverage their respective established processes and systems of finance/payment, reporting, control, accountability and risk management to ensure seamless transactions and sufficient safeguards.
- Supplying agency to get in contact with requestor
 - Supplying agency to issue conditional offer/cost estimate/pro-forma invoice to requestor detailing list of items, quantity, and prices (incl. overhead and shipping fees, as applicable) and asking for proof/transfer of funding
 - Requestor to accept (in part or in full) offer and provide (proof of) funding
 - Supplying agency to accept or reject order



c) Commit supplies for distribution: The supplying agency informs requestor and logistics providers of upcoming delivery. The process for this step largely depends on the specific pipeline of the supplying agency (e.g., whether the supplying agency serves the request from a warehouse/stockpile, existing purchasing orders, or committed supplies), in addition to the purchasing and financing policies and procedures of the supplying agency:

- Supplying agency to release supplies (if from supplier agency stockpile, instruct warehouse or if directly from supplier, issue or confirm purchasing order)
- Supplying agency to issue dispatch request to the shipping agent
- Payments to be executed as per agreement of supplying agency, requestor, and supplier using the finance/payment, reporting, control, accountability and risk management systems of the supplying agency

Step 3: Streamlined Distribution

a) Schedule shipments and move supplies to consolidation hubs: WFP will act as default logistics provider, but supplying agencies are free to make alternative arrangements. Where WFP offers logistics, supplies need to be moved by the supplying agency to one of WFP's international consolidation hubs at their own risk and cost.

- Supplying agency provides detailed order information to WFP (or alternative, as needed) appointed focal point, who will be responsible for the order and schedule receipt at consolidation hub
- Supplying agency is responsible for adhering to the Standard Operating Procedures for the movements of supplies
- WFP (or alternative) liaises directly with identified purchasing agency to ensure swift delivery to the strategic consolidation hubs, where goods will be in transit
- Estimated timeframe for transit is determined according to delivery schedules

b) Arrange transport to port of entry and inform requestor: WFP will consolidate the supplies received per country/requestor and arrange transport, depending on volumes per destination, to the regional staging areas for subsequent delivery to the last port of entry or directly to port of entry. WFP will feed information to the Control Tower, supplying agency and requestor as the shipment is confirmed and provide updates on the status of the cargo.

- WFP provides instructions to the requesting partner to the Consolidation Hub and arranges for subsequent delivery to final destination or to regional staging areas for consolidation and onward delivery
- WFP to confirm delivery at destination by issuing a goods received note to the requesting partner



c) Receive and clear supplies for in-country implementation: In-country logistics should be considered as part of the National Action Plan for COVID-19 preparedness. They will be coordinated by the requestor together with the in-country government led logistics coordination mechanism and the broader Local Response (national authorities together with Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, WHO, Health Clusters, and responding partners) and Supply Chain Coordinator. Countries must plan for increased volumes in supply chains, including distribution and warehousing, by working with local public and private partners currently contracted to move health supplies in country.

Tactics such as utilizing existing UN, bi-lateral and government LTAs; assessing storage and distribution capacities; and training new workforce as they become impacted by COVID-19, should be planned for by the requestor and will be supported by the Local Response.

- Requestor to liaise with Local Response and plan for incoming shipments and logistics
- Requestor to receive and clear supplies at the point of entry
- Requestor Local Response to distribute in country including warehousing, prioritization and last-mile transport
- Requestor with Local Response and WHO to ensure link with programs to provide sufficient capabilities for effective use (including training, use of equipment, support of healthcare workers, trouble shooting)