



Gavi Alliance Evaluation Policy Version 4.0

DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION

VERSION NUMBER	APPROVAL PROCESS	DATE
1.0	Prepared by:	
	Reviewed by:	
	Reviewed by:	
	Policy options reviewed by:	
	Reviewed and recommended by:	
	Approved by: Joint GAVI Alliance & Fund Board	Effective from: 27 June 2008
2.0	Reviewed and recommended by: Gavi Evaluation Advisory Committee	
	Approved by: Gavi Alliance Board	Effective from: 1 July 2012
	Next review:	In 2014 or as and when required
	Reviewed and recommended by: Gavi Evaluation Advisory Committee	10-11 April 2019
3.0	Approved by: Gavi Alliance Board	Effective from: 1 July 2019
	Next review:	Prior to next Gavi strategic period (2025), or as and when required

1. Policy Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. The purpose of this Evaluation policy is to establish and inform stakeholders of the Gavi Secretariat evaluation function's purpose, principles and standards.
- 1.2. Gavi's Evaluation Policy and evaluation work programme is intended to support the eight principles set out in the Gavi Strategy¹, which define the characteristics, business model and aspirations of the Vaccine Alliance: country-led, community-owned, globally engaged, catalytic and sustainable, integrated, innovative, collaborative and accountable.
- 1.3. This Policy applies to the Gavi evaluation function, including both centralised and decentralised evaluations. It does not apply to complementary oversight activities, including monitoring, reviews, audits or research.

2. Purpose, Definition and Use of Evaluations

2.1. Purpose of evaluation

- 2.1.1. The two overall objectives of Gavi's evaluation activities are to: 1) generate learning to support improvements in the performance of Gavi's programmes and policies; and 2) to improve the overall functioning of Gavi and its ability to deliver on its mission. While evaluation also provides a basis for accountability and the achievement of improved outcomes, the main focus of Gavi evaluation activities is learning. This means that evaluations should be utilisation focused, with intended use and audience for each evaluation considered at all stages of the evaluation process from selection of topics for evaluation through to dissemination of evaluation reports.
- 2.1.2. Gavi's evaluation activities aim to contribute to the following types of learning: operational and strategic decision-making in the Gavi Secretariat and the broader Vaccine Alliance and information for the public good and Alliance partners². The former is prioritised to ensure there is demonstrable value in evaluation, and the Evaluation Policy, EAC (Evaluation Advisory Committee) Terms of Reference and the Evaluation Operational Guidelines (EOG) are structured to advance the use and application of evaluation findings.

2.2. Definition of Evaluation

- 2.2.1. Gavi subscribes to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) definition of evaluation³: Evaluation is a systematic and objective effort to determine the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of development efforts, based on agreed criteria and benchmarks among key partners and stakeholders. It involves a rigorous, systematic and objective process in the design, analysis and interpretation of information to answer specific questions. It provides assessments of what works and why, highlights intended and unintended results, and provides strategic lessons to guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders.

¹ The current Gavi Strategy (2016-2020), however these may be revised for Gavi 5.0 (2021-2015).

² <https://www.gavi.org/about/gavis-partnership-model/>

³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>

2.2.2. Gavi evaluations must include clear evaluation questions, including on equity, and/or or hypotheses that reflect the most relevant OECD DAC criteria with regards to the purpose and intended use of the evaluation.

2.2.3. The evaluation objective must be clearly defined, including a description of the intervention logic or theory. At Gavi, in order for a strategy, programme, policy or project to be properly evaluated there must be a clear design, articulated objectives and outcomes, a theory of change and associated results framework.

2.3. Gavi evaluation typology

2.3.1. Gavi undertakes centralised and decentralised evaluations. Centralised evaluations are planned, commissioned and managed by Gavi's Evaluation Unit (EvU) and are assessed by the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) while decentralised evaluations are planned, commissioned and managed outside the EvU and these are not assessed by the EAC.

2.3.2. The decision as to whether an evaluation is centralised or decentralised is determined through the development of the evaluation work programme, in consultation with Secretariat teams, the EO and final approval by the EAC.

2.3.3. Both centralised and decentralised evaluations are subject to this Evaluation Policy and can be any of, but not limited to, the following types of evaluations, which correspond to Gavi functions and programmes:

- **Strategic evaluations:** Assess the quality of design, extent of implementation, results and sustainability of specific strategies, policies, processes, frameworks and models adopted by Gavi. Strategic evaluations are in most cases centralised.
- **Thematic evaluations:** Evaluation of a selection of interventions, all of which address a specific priority that cuts across countries, regions, and sectors. Thematic evaluations are in most cases centralised.
- **Country and Programme evaluations:** Evaluation to assess design, programmatic results and sustainability of Gavi supported programmes in specific countries. Country and Programme evaluations are in most cases decentralised.

2.3.4. Gavi is one of many sources of support to countries. The results of Gavi are the joint product of global, regional and country level activities and investments by donors, governments and civil society. This means that it is, in most cases, not possible to attribute outcomes and impact to Gavi interventions alone. All Gavi's evaluations, regardless of type, recognise the model of joint contribution and assess Gavi's contribution to outcomes and end results.

2.3.5. However, if and when appropriate, impact evaluations may be used in Gavi to answer cause-and-effect questions concerning whether changes in observed outcomes, intended or unintended, can be attributed to a specific intervention. These evaluations use recognised scientific methods to establish a credible counterfactual that describes what the outcomes would have been in the absence of the intervention being evaluated. Impact evaluations can be incorporated as part

of a wider evaluation design or be undertaken as the main component of an evaluation.

- 2.3.6. Gavi will use the best available, most appropriate and internationally recognised methods for all of its evaluation types. Gavi also encourages innovation in evaluation methods to support timely learning and decision-making.

2.4. Complementary oversight activities in Gavi

- 2.4.1. Gavi supports a spectrum of oversight and research activities, with the most appropriate type and approach selected depending on the purpose and intended use. The oversight and research activities listed in Table 1 below are not considered evaluations and are not within the scope of the Evaluation Policy or the EAC. These other activities complement the evaluations conducted by Gavi but are not subject to the quality standards and/or requirements outlined in this Policy.

- 2.4.2. In addition, routine monitoring and independent evaluations are linked through the use of a standard set of core indicators based on the results chain presented, and the synthesis of information, with each component informing and contributing to learning integrated into the business functions.

Table 1. Complementary oversight and research activities

- **Monitoring:** A continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators across business functions and types of support to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. Routine monitoring identifies gaps and signals areas requiring further exploration that are addressed in evaluations or through research.
- **Review:** Review is normally an assessment of performance of an intervention and may use less rigorous methods and/or be undertaken periodically or ad hoc. Secretariat staff may participate, and conduct the exercise together, if needed, with external consultants. While reviews may be of high quality, they do not need to meet Gavi's evaluation standards. For example, Gavi may conduct meta-reviews of previous evaluations or reviews in order to identify common findings and to learn across programmes, projects and regions.
- **Audit:** An independent, objective assurance activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to assess and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.
- **Research:** Normally longer-term systematic data collection and analysis activity that can be linked to a programme, or purely focused on key knowledge gaps that are useful to fill. The line between research and evaluation can be sometimes difficult to discern (for example, evaluative research), but in general research is normally less specific to operational questions.

3. Gavi Evaluation Principles

Gavi evaluations and Gavi's evaluation function are governed by the three principles of independence, credibility and utility, reflecting international evaluation norms and guidance. The principles are applied to all Gavi evaluations and are implemented through specific mechanisms detailed in the Evaluation Operational Guidelines (EOG). The principles are intended to enhance quality, accountability and learning at all stages of the evaluation process, resulting in high quality and useful evaluation evidence that can be used to enhance Gavi's work and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. Gavi is also committed to the Paris declaration⁴ and other international aid effectiveness norms, including application of the DAC principles for evaluation of development assistance.⁵

3.1. Independence

Behavioural Independence

3.1.1. Behavioural independence implies freedom from political influence and organisational pressure. It is characterised by full access to information and by full autonomy in carrying out investigations and reporting. This principle is adhered to by all.

Organisational Independence

3.1.2. While the Gavi EvU is not positioned independently from management functions, independence is exercised through several approaches detailed in Table 2.

3.1.3. Independence begins with the commissioning process through the selection of the independent team of evaluators to implement the evaluation.

3.1.4. The EAC also has an important role in supporting evaluation independence within Gavi, for example, providing guidance on how to mitigate the potential risk in the commissioning and management of the evaluation where lack of organizational independence is a perceived risk for an evaluation and overseeing the centralized evaluations of high strategic value⁶ to the Board.

3.1.5. Impartiality is complementary to independence and is ensured by minimising bias and optimising objectivity with respect to all stages of the evaluation process, including planning an evaluation, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations. This implies that those involved in the processes (selection of the evaluation studies, definition of the scope and methodology, quality assurance or w of products) should have no undeclared conflict of interest. The commissioned evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>

⁶ Centralised evaluations of high strategic value are identified during the work programme planning, in consultation with the Gavi Executive Office and EAC. This is detailed in the Evaluation Operational Guidelines (EOG).

Table 2. Measures that safeguard evaluation independence and impartiality in Gavi

- **Independence in commissioning of evaluations**
 - The Evaluation Unit (EvU) develops an evaluation work programme to be reviewed and approved by the EAC.
 - All evaluations are conducted by external independent firms or consultants.
 - Potential conflicts of interest are assessed prior to hiring of evaluation teams.
 - All evaluators sign the Company Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form as part of the proposal submission process.
 - The selection of the evaluators and evaluation teams is undertaken by an Adjudication Committee, and if necessary, composed of the Steering Committee (refer to section 9.2) and other members as needed, and an independent Chair is elected.
- **Independence in management of evaluations**
 - When there is a Steering Committee, it is regularly updated on evaluation progress and provide recommendations to the EvU as needed.
 - The EAC is regularly updated on evaluation progress and provide recommendations to the EvU as needed.
- **Publication of evaluations**
 - All final Gavi evaluations reports and management responses are published on the Gavi website and shared with relevant stakeholders
- **Independence of the evaluation function**
 - The EAC is a key pillar supporting independence of Gavi's evaluations. It advises on Gavi's evaluation work programme, ensures evaluation quality assurance, must approve all reports from centralised evaluations of high strategic value to the Board and also provides updates to the Board. The EAC also guides mitigation actions in cases of perceived potential risks related to organisational independence.

3.2. Credibility

3.2.1. Credibility of Gavi evaluations and the evaluation system means ensuring that the analysis and findings of Gavi evaluations are impartial, appropriate and complete. For each evaluation this means ensuring competent application of appropriate, scientifically rigorous methodologies, and that findings and conclusions are drawn from the analysis. The credibility of the evaluation system rests on ensuring that appropriate mechanisms are in place to declare and manage conflicts of interests, assess quality of evaluation products, and the selection of evaluation topics is free from bias.

3.2.2. Transparency is an important component of credibility and independence and must be ensured during all steps of the evaluation process important for credibility and confidence in the findings and recommendations. Findings from evaluations will be widely shared, with a commitment to full and active disclosure. A summary assessment of the quality and usefulness of evaluation reports by the EAC will be posted publicly on the Gavi website, along with evaluation reports and evaluation management response.

3.2.3. Gavi's evaluation activities should ensure appropriate gender and geographic representation in the coverage and conduct of evaluation activities.

3.3. Utility

3.3.1. Evaluations must be designed and delivered to maximise their utility in generating learning and informing decision-making. The Gavi Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2017)⁷ aims to drive learning and improvement through an enhanced approach to integration of monitoring and evaluation with the Gavi business functions. Evaluation questions must be relevant, the design and methods suitable to the questions, and the delivery and dissemination of reports must be timely and tailored to the intended audience.

3.3.2. Utility requires that evaluations are planned, designed and managed with the purpose of targeted use in mind. Primary users of Gavi evaluations are the Board (including relevant Committees), countries and the Gavi Secretariat. It is imperative to identify all targeted users and thoroughly engage them as appropriate throughout the evaluation process. It is also necessary to ensure that evaluations are conducted in accordance to timelines of decision-making processes. While Gavi's evaluations also serve the purpose of accountability, they are increasingly intended to stimulate and foster learning and influence operational decisions. This means an utilisation-focused design from the beginning, with clear owners and users identified before the evaluation is commissioned.

3.3.3. To enhance utility, Gavi's evaluations should involve a range of stakeholders. Gavi is committed to involving stakeholders early in the process and ensuring that they are given the chance to contribute to evaluation design. Evaluation activities (including the selection of evaluation questions, methods, the data collection and the dissemination of evaluations) should reflect the points of view of varied stakeholders in order to ensure appropriate ownership of the evaluation process and findings and their subsequent utilisation.

3.3.4. All Gavi's evaluations require a management response, which will be published alongside the final evaluation report. The EAC is regularly informed about how the learning from centralised evaluations are used at Gavi.

3.3.5. Gavi places emphasis on ensuring its evaluation products are well communicated and disseminated to all key stakeholders. All evaluations must include a communication and dissemination strategy, to be facilitated by the Evaluation Team, Gavi's EvU, Commissioning Unit and other relevant key stakeholders as relevant to the specific evaluation.

4. Quality and Standards of Gavi Evaluations

4.1. Evaluations in Gavi are designed and managed to meet the quality standards and requirements of the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation.⁸ Gavi's evaluation quality standards are aligned with the international evaluation principles of independence, credibility and utility, and require that the best available internationally recognised methods are used. Gavi also places

⁷ <https://www.gavi.org/library/gavi-documents/strategy/gavi-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-and-strategy-2016-2020/>

⁸ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

emphasis on ethics and stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation cycle and aligns its practice with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2008).⁹

- 4.2. Quality Assurance is an ongoing activity that takes place throughout the evaluation from planning, commissioning and through the management of evaluations, by the Commissioning Unit, the Steering Committee (if necessary) and the EAC.
- 4.3. At the Commissioning Unit level: quality assurance for RFPs, inception and draft reports is managed by the Gavi EvU (centralised) or the Commissioning Unit (decentralised), with support by external quality assurance experts, as needed.
- 4.4. At the Steering Committee level: quality support and advice are provided for RFPs, inception and draft reports as well as other evaluation products and deliverables.
- 4.5. At the EAC level: The EAC is responsible for informing the evaluation scope and questions and assessing final reports for Gavi centralised evaluations of high strategic value to the Gavi Board. During the approval of the evaluation work programme, the EAC may also decide to have a more active quality assurance role for select evaluations to assess the quality of the draft final reports. The EAC may decide for select evaluations to delegate this task to independent external quality assurance experts.
- 4.6. A quality assurance tool which sets out the key dimensions of quality for Gavi evaluations and includes a checklist of requirements to meet minimum quality standards is used for both centralised and decentralised evaluations. The purpose of the quality assurance tool is to ensure all Gavi stakeholders have a shared understanding of quality and that improvements to draft evaluation products can be made before they are finalised. The quality assurance recommendations are not published but are shared with service providers and the evaluation Steering Committee (if necessary) and used by the Commissioning Unit to improve the quality of the evaluations. A summary of the EAC's final quality assessment is published on Gavi site along with the final report and the Alliance evaluation management response.

5. Gavi Evaluation Criteria and Ethical Principles

- 5.1. In addition to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the criteria around which evaluation questions are structured depend on the specific learning needs in relation to each evaluation, but each evaluation must choose the most relevant criteria and justify the selection.
- 5.2. The evaluation criteria will be applied differently depending on the needs of the evaluation, and specific evaluation questions will be tailored under these, or other bespoke criteria. Additional criteria may be added where appropriate, including but not limited to policy coherence, quality standards, social return on investment, value for money, transferability/scalability, equity, impact on poverty and financial viability.

⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

6. Ethical principles for Gavi evaluation

- 6.1. All Gavi evaluations must meet high ethical standards and conform to ethics principles. All parties commissioning and managing evaluations on behalf of Gavi are responsible for safeguarding and managing ethics in the commissioning, management and communication of evaluations. Independent evaluation consultants, institutions, firms and evaluation teams implementing evaluations are responsible for ensuring ethics at all stages of evaluation, including inception, data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination.
- 6.2. All Gavi evaluations will need to be conducted in accordance with applicable laws, including seeking ethical approvals where appropriate and required. This includes seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and is the responsibility of the selected evaluation team. Gavi evaluations are also subject to the following general ethical principles when collecting or analysing data from human subjects:
- 6.2.1. **Informed Consent** must be obtained from all participants (those providing data directly), and the process of obtaining consent and its nature must be recorded in the evaluation report. Participants should be made aware that participation is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any point without negative consequences. When working with children or vulnerable individuals (who cannot themselves provide consent), their assent must be obtained as well as consent from their parents or caregivers.
- 6.2.2. **Confidentiality and privacy** should be maintained for all individuals, with clear procedures of how data is collected, analysed and stored in a way that prevents the identification of individuals (or groups). If there is an intention to collect attributable statements from respondents, this should be made clear from the outset and an opportunity be provided to provide consent (or withdraw it). Respondents must be provided an opportunity to verify any statements that are attributed to them.
- 6.2.3. **Do no harm and seek to do good** means avoiding harm to participants or their communities as a result of participating in the evaluation, while ensuring that the benefits of the evaluation outweigh the costs. This includes trying to ensure that participation in the evaluation will not result in negative consequences to individuals or their communities, and autonomy from political interference, to the extent possible. The benefits of undertaking the evaluation should be identified and articulated, and participants should be provided with opportunities to learn about the findings of the evaluation.
- 6.2.4. **Respect** and rights must be upheld for institutions and individuals participating in an evaluation. This means recognising and respecting individual's autonomy, their values, beliefs and ability to make judgments and provide opinions.
- 6.2.5. **Cultural sensitivity** requires taking into account the local cultural context in which the evaluation takes place and being sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local communities. This requires the use of methods, approaches and evaluation questions that respect local customs and beliefs.
- 6.2.6. The universally recognized values and principles of **gender equality** should be integrated into all stages of an evaluation.

6.3. Focus on Gavi countries

- 6.3.1. Gavi engages country and regional level stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, from design and input into the Request for Proposal (RFP), review of key deliverables, dissemination of evaluation results and, as relevant, in the development and implementation of management responses.
- 6.3.2. When selecting evaluators, Gavi encourages and gives precedence to consortia that involve or are led by institutions from Gavi partner countries, as appropriate and consistent with Gavi's procurement policy. There is also a criterion for scoring the proposed partnership with local/regional institutions as part of the Adjudication Committee technical scoresheet.
- 6.3.3. Through its evaluations, Gavi also encourages capacity building and transfer of skills and knowledge, to enable local institutions to better respond to, implement and undertake evaluations as well as enhance long-term, sustainable evaluation functions in-country and regionally. Gavi also encourages dissemination of final reports (or deliverables as relevant) at country level to be led by country evaluation teams as a priority to enhance ownership, utility and credibility.
- 6.3.4. The composition of the Evaluation Steering Committees should consider country expertise and representation where appropriate.

6.4. Joint evaluations

- 6.4.1. Gavi supports joint evaluations with partners where possible. Joint evaluations are evaluations that are commissioned together with an Alliance partner or other implementing partners or stakeholders with some shared funding and evaluation questions. Joint evaluations draw on and contribute to collaboration and joint action within the global health arena. Joint evaluations must meet Gavi's Evaluation Policy requirements but can be managed using the evaluation system of the partner.

7. Oversight, Roles and Accountabilities

Evaluation in Gavi is a shared responsibility within the different units and staff.

7.1. The Secretariat

- 7.1.1. For centralised evaluations, the Secretariat staff is expected to engage with the EvU in planning and development of the evaluation, and through providing access to relevant documentation for each evaluation. The Secretariat will also be invited to participate in centralised evaluations as a key stakeholder and support dissemination and use of findings as appropriate.
- 7.1.2. For decentralised evaluations, the Commissioning Unit within the Secretariat take a lead role and must ensure appropriate planning, resourcing and application of Gavi's Evaluation Policy and EOG.
- 7.1.3. The relevant function within the Secretariat is responsible for preparing a timely and substantive management response to centralised and decentralised evaluations within 60 days of the completion of an evaluation. The business owner signs off management responses and ensures they are implemented, providing information on this to the EvU for their reporting to the EAC.

7.2. The Gavi Evaluation Unit

7.2.1. The Gavi Evaluation Unit (EvU), reporting to the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation and led by the Head of Evaluation, is responsible for supporting implementation of the Evaluation Policy and engaging with the EAC as outlined in Section 7.5.

7.2.2. The EvU leads the development and implementation of the evaluation work programme by:

- engaging with other relevant Gavi Secretariat teams, Alliance partners, the Executive Office and the EAC to identify potential activities for centralised and decentralised evaluations¹⁰;
- management of the evaluation work programme;
- commissioning and managing independent centralised evaluations including ensuring the quality and timely delivery of evaluation reports and disseminating the findings;
- ensuring that evaluations contribute in a coherent and systematic way to Gavi's overall monitoring and evaluation systems; and
- informing the EAC about how centralised evaluations are used at Gavi.

7.2.3. The EvU is responsible for supporting decentralised evaluations through:

- preparing and updating the EOG;
- engaging with the commissioning unit appointed evaluation manager who is responsible for the management of the decentralised evaluation as per the Evaluation Policy and the EOG; and
- informing the EAC about planned decentralised evaluations and reporting on the findings to the EAC annually.

7.3. The Executive Office

7.3.1. The Executive Office of the Gavi Secretariat is responsible for fostering a culture of learning and evaluation in the organisation, safeguarding the provisions of this Evaluation Policy and allocating human and financial resources for its implementation. The Executive Office is also responsible for appointing the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, approving the appointment of the Head of Evaluation and reviewing the evaluation work programme on an annual basis, or as required. The Executive Office must ensure that management responses to evaluations are timely and made publicly available.

7.4. The Steering Committee

7.4.1. As deemed necessary and in consultation with the EAC, each evaluation may have a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee plays a key function in terms of providing quality support and expert advice to the evaluation manager and the commissioning unit. The Steering Committee is responsible for providing advice on the RFPs, supporting the selection of the evaluation team, advising on all draft evaluation products before they are finalised. The composition and terms of reference of the Steering Committee will depend on the specific nature and need

¹⁰ Evaluations may be requested by the Board, PPC, Executive Office or Secretariat Teams and requests inform the draft work programme to be discussed with the Evaluation Unit and Executive Office, per Section 7.2.2.

of each evaluation. The Chair of the Steering Committee must be independent from the policy, project or programme that is being evaluated.

7.5. The Gavi Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC)

7.5.1. The EAC is established to support the Board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities in respect to the management of Gavi's evaluation activities. The EAC reports to the Board and informs the Board on the overall status of the evaluation work. Its composition and responsibilities are defined in the Board-approved EAC Terms of Reference. Members of the EAC cannot sit on evaluation Steering Committees.

7.6. The Board

7.6.1. The Board appoints EAC members including the Chair, approves the EAC Terms of Reference and the Evaluation Policy, and receives regular reports on EAC activities.

8. Effective date and review of policy

8.1. This policy comes into effect as of 1 July 2019.

8.2. This policy will be reviewed and updated alongside the new Gavi Strategy (2021-2025) if needed. Any amendments to this policy are subject to Gavi Alliance Board approval.