**Vaccine Safety Net**

**evaluation form for websites**

Revised April 2022

***General information***

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| **Basic information** |
| 1 | Website URL |  |
| 2 | Name of organization |  |
| 3 | Name of website (if different from name of organization) |  |
| 4 | Type of organization (e.g. government agency, academic institution, professional association) |  |
| 5 | How was this website brought to the attention of the VSN Secretariat? | [ ]  Identified during targeted search for potential VSN candidates[ ]  Recommended by WHO staff or external partner (please provide details)[ ]  Direct request from website owner/manager[ ]  Other (please provide details)[ ]  Already a VSN member |
| 6 | Type of evaluation | [ ]  Preliminary assessment[ ]  Evaluation[ ]  Re-evaluation[ ]  Special request for evaluation by VSN member (e.g. due to website relaunch or addition of significant amount of new vaccine safety content) |
| 7 | Date(s) of evaluation |  |
| 8 | Assessor’s name |  |

***Preliminary assessment***

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| **Screening criteria[[1]](#footnote-1)** |
| **Inclusion criteria**The website:[ ]  Has a public health focus[ ]  Contains information on vaccine safety[ ]  If member registration is required, registration and information are free of charge[ ]  Website adopts the VSN logo[[2]](#footnote-2)**Exclusion criteria**The following websites are not eligible to join VSN:[ ]  Websites owned by institutions considered to be “nonstate actors”[[3]](#footnote-3) must disclose all relevant information[[4]](#footnote-4) about themselves regarding their engagement with tobacco and arms industry. WHO does not engage with the tobacco industry or non-State actors that work to further the interests of the tobacco industry. WHO also does not engage with the arms industry. [ ]  Corporate websites |

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| **Results and comments of preliminary assessment** |
| 1 | Based on VSN standard operating procedures, does this website require peer review by GACVS? | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No |
| 2 | Based on your preliminary assessment of this website, do you recommend proceeding with formal evaluation? | [ ]  Yes (please indicate why)[ ]  No (please indicate why) |
| 3 | Other comments (if any) |  |

***Formal assessment***

***All mandatory criteria should be met to renew, or to qualify for, VSN membership***

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| Credibility (mandatory) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence |
| Websites that contain content presenting a conflict of interest that could have a negative impact on WHO integrity, independence, credibility or reputation are not eligible for membership. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 1. Mission of website |
| 1.1 | Purpose of website or institution behind website is stated | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 1.2 | Intended audience(s) is defined | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 1.3 | If mission statement is provided, mission and content match | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2. Disclosure of ownership/source |
| 2.1 | Organization name or logo appears on every page | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2.2 | Contact information (email or postal address) is easily accessible from all pages but need not be posted on every pageMultiple methods of contacting website owner (generic email address, electronic form, postal address) are provided but need not be posted on every page | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2.3 | Users can easily access homepage or contact page from any pageFor modern sites, clicking on the logo takes users to homepage | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2.4 | Qualifications of organization or individual website owner are obvious, including type of organization | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2.5 | Website discloses individuals’ affiliations and alliances and relationships that might influence content of website | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 2.6 | Website lists names and affiliations of each member of the editorial board, advisory board, and board of directorsIf organization does not have a board, this criterion will be considered addressed if information regarding site content policy or editorial policy is included | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 3. Transparency of sponsorship |
| 3.1 | Website uses one or more of the methods listed below to describe the manner in which the organization or website addresses sponsorship or funding:3.1.1 Disclosure of all sources of funding for the organization, website or people involved in development or review of website content; describe role of funding source3.1.2 Disclosure of relevant individual or financial associations that might be considered a potential conflict of interest3.1.3 If advertising is a source of funding, this is clearly stated and a brief description of the website advertising policy is included | [ ]  If yes, which method(s) does the website use?[ ]  3.1.1[ ]  3.1.2[ ]  3.1.3[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 3.2 | If website includes third-party content or advertising, website indicates whether it has control over this material; website includes a disclaimer stating that displaying this extra content does not imply endorsement | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 3.3 | If advertising space is sold, website specifies how it uses funds from these marketing activities | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 3.4 | Website may sell materials if they align with the website mission; content intended to promote or sell products or services is clearly distinguished from educational and scientific content | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 4. Accountability to users |
| 4.1 | Users can contact website owner to report technical issues such as broken links or to provide feedback | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 4.2 | To evaluate website responsiveness, the assessor should send a test question; responsiveness is assessed after seven calendar days (or as per the website’s policy) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 4.3 | The language used to respond matches the literacy level of the website audience | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 4.4 | Interactive exchanges between the website manager and the website audience include information about the moderators’ and clinicians’ expertise and affiliations; alternatively, the website displays the policy used to address users’ queries | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 4.5 | If website includes a comments section, it discloses how comments are moderated | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 5. Data protection and privacy |
| 5.1 | Website displays privacy statement or confidentiality policy that describes how organization treats private or semi-private information if collectedWebsite does not collect, use or share personal data without user’s consentWebsite informs users of use of cookies and any data they provide | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 5.2 | If registration is required to access the website or a section of it, the privacy policy explains how personal account information will be protected, and under what circumstances it will be shared or not shared with third partiesPolicy for sharing information is disclosed to registering users | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 5.3 | Website has a valid SSL certificate and uses https encryption for web traffic as part of its digital resilience[[5]](#footnote-5) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 6. Responsible partnering |
| 6.1 | VSN members are encouraged to partner with or link to other websites with the same high standards[[6]](#footnote-6)Within the content, hypertext links to other resources are selected carefully, and their content is accurate, current and credibleAny broken links are fixed within six weeks | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 6.2 | Website indicates when users are leaving the home site by using an external link icon or a disclaimer statement, by opening a new window, or by some other means (e.g. colour change) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |

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| Content (quality and quantity) (mandatory) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence |
| 7.0 | Website has at least five vaccine safety-related information items (e.g. articles, vaccine safety profiles, videos) |  |
| 7.1 | Website provides clear statement of source for scientific, medical and health information, including author’s name, affiliations and any potential conflicts of interest related to content | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 7.2 | Date when page was last reviewed or updated is clearly indicated; at a minimum, the year when the website was last reviewed or updated is mentioned in the homepage footerContent is updated as new information becomes available | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 7.3 | Website includes statement of procedure used for selection of site content, including guarantee of independence of editorial process, names and affiliations of people on the editorial board, and any review processes | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 7.4 | Writing style is professional, with correct grammar, spelling and compositionLanguage is clear, easy to read, and adapted to literacy levels of website audience | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 7.5 | Website promotes good immunization practicesBenefits and risks of vaccines are explained transparently, and any uncertainties are acknowledged | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 7.6 | Most materials are available for use in the public domain, with only limited copyrighted content (e.g. materials that require purchase)Information on legality of further use or distribution of materials (e.g. use of Creative Commons licence) is clearly indicated | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |

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| Content (quality and quantity) (desired) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence | G |
| 7.7 | Website has three or more pages containing vaccine safety-related information in text format | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |

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| Accessibility (mandatory) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence |
| 8.1 | Website is consistently available[[7]](#footnote-7) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 8.2 | Size of files available for download is displayedFiles are optimized for low-bandwidth connections | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |

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| Accessibility (desired) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence | G |
| i. | Total number of visitors to website for past six months is providedNote: request this information from website focal point when sending results of evaluation |  | N/A |
| ii. | Total number of visits to vaccine safety page(s) for past six months is providedNote: request this information from website focal point when sending results of evaluation |  | N/A |
| 8.3 | Website owner possesses standard operating procedures that include user access levels, content management, login credentials, and other essential hosting information needed to operate websiteNote: request this information from website focal point | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |
| 8.4 | Website incorporates mobile-friendly web design | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |
| 8.5 | Site loads within two secondsImages or files available for download from the website are optimized for high speed (2–5 MB) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |
| 8.6 | Website displays correctly on Edge, Chrome and Firefox at mobile and desktop resolutions | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |

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| Design – user experience and web design (mandatory) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence |
| 9.1 | Back button is functional, or each page has a link or logo to homepage | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |
| 9.2 | Website offers aids to finding information (e.g. site map, internal search engine, index) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  |

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| Design – web editorial (desired) |
|  |  | Supporting evidence | G |
| 9.3 | Website considers accessibility issues of many potential users (e.g., people with visual impairment) | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |
| 9.4 | Streaming format for audio and video files is embedded in page | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |
| 9.5 | Share buttons are included to encourage readers to disseminate content via emails and social media channels  | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  N/A |  | /1 |

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| **Results and comments** |
| 1 | Summary of website strengths |  |
| 2 | Summary of website weaknesses |  |
| 3 | Website complies with GACVS criteria for good information practices | [ ]  Yes[ ]  Yes, but some items should be corrected (see below)[ ]  No |
| 4 | List recommendations to be addressed to comply with GACVS criteria |  |
| 5 | Next steps, person responsible and deadline |  |

1. WHO conducts a preliminary assessment of all VSN candidates. If the candidate meets the screening criteria and as per the assessor’s recommendation, a formal assessment is conducted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If embedding a script is an issue, provide link to VSN portal. The VSN Secretariat will contact the focal points of the sites that are not allowed to include external links (e.g. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, Public Health England, NHS Scotland). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nonstate actors as defined by WHO (name the resolution or any other policy document) include nongovernmental organizations, private-sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Arms-Tobacco Disclosure Statement to be completed before official welcome of the website/institution. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See https://www.ssllabs.com/ssltest/ for SSL setup and https://geekflare.com/online-scan-website-security-vulnerabilities/ for technical security concerns. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Assessor will do a cursory review of website partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Using an uptime monitor, availability over a year should be above 90% (see https://www.uptrends.com/free-website-monitoring). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)