

World War II mobilization provided groundwork for successful COVID vaccine development through Operation Warp Speed

To date, [Operation Warp Speed] has managed to produce and deliver about 50 million vaccine doses—all made in the U.S.—with hundreds of millions more on the way. It also had 97,000 certified receivers distributing the vaccine across the U.S.

It is the most remarkable achievement in modern medicine, made possible by following the model of the World War II mobilization effort. That model rests on three principles.

First, set a clear target and a firm deadline. Operation Warp Speed's goal was 20 million vaccine doses by December 2020.

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Second, mobilize the best pharmaceutical and drug manufacturing companies to hit the target, so that private industry invests its energy and productivity in the plan. During World War II, the big automotive and electrical companies became the driving engine of the mobilization effort.

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Third, maintain government oversight from start to finish. The Commerce, Defense, and Health and Human Services departments invoked the Defense Production Act 18 times to prioritize materials and supplies for Operation Warp Speed, and get government contracts for vaccine development and manufacturing to the head of the line. The use of federal authority to guide but not micromanage the private economy's efforts was key to producing victory in World War II and to creating the Covid vaccine in record time.

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