



## Executive Q&A

# Lottery's Public Service Mission



Lotteries around the world have advanced and supported public policy initiatives and good causes in local communities since their inception. Today, governors in the U.S. and elsewhere turned to lotteries for help in offering the public incentives to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

**IGT's Scott Gunn, Senior Vice President of Corporate Public Affairs,** discusses lottery's role in galvanizing public action, and how IGT was entrusted to apply its expertise in support of the recent "Vax Nevada Days" health initiative.

### What's your perspective on how vaccination lotteries fit into the history and the wider tradition of lottery?

It's completely consistent with the mission of lotteries. That's what lotteries stand for – public-policy initiatives and good causes within the community. In the U.S., lotteries have been funding important public programs since the Revolutionary War, so it's in our common thread. We're all familiar with the current good causes that lottery proceeds support, whether it's education, healthcare, parks and trails, pension funds, or other government programs. And it's amazing to me, as someone who operates in the public policy and government space, that as we are confronted as a nation with matters of life and death, many states are utilizing the mechanism of lottery, which people find fun and engaging. This appeal was highlighted dramatically by the popularity of lotteries as an entertainment vehicle during the pandemic, when other entertainments were unavailable.

Governments needed to find creative ways to get people vaccinated, so they looked to the always-popular giveaways, sweepstakes, raffles and lotteries. To implement programs quickly, they used the existing

infrastructure in their states, and lotteries went from serving the ongoing priorities of policy makers to also serving an immediate life-and-death crisis that continues today. Lotteries have never claimed to be a solution, but every little bit helps, and this is another powerful example of how lotteries support the public good.

### What kicked off the COVID-19 vaccination lottery trend and how did it develop from there?

Ohio was the first state to do it, but I think it started with giveaways. I remember seeing the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, eating a cheeseburger during a press conference, promoting a giveaway as incentive to get vaccinated. Then in Washington State there were "joints for jabs," which was amazingly creative, and it continued from there.

The real catalyst was when states realized that the dollars from the federal Covid Relief funds could be used to fund the prizes for vaccine incentive programs, which led to widespread and rapid adoption. The governor's office in most states turned to their lottery and said, essentially, "Your organization successfully runs games. Can you do this for us?" and off they went.

Most states already had lotteries with their own draw equipment and infrastructure, so they very quickly responded and went ahead and did what they normally do: designed the prize structure, promoted the draws, managed the interagency cooperation – all with the integrity the public expects. They did a really great job with it. The governors were happy, and they've got happy, vaccinated winners.

One state that wanted to implement the program didn't have an existing lottery, so IGT was honored to have the opportunity to support one of our home states – Nevada – in this unique way.

### How did IGT get involved in the vaccine incentive program there in June?

Nevada isn't legislated to offer a lottery but wanted to encourage vaccinations as other states were doing through a raffle program with drawings. Governor Sisolak's office called us on a Wednesday evening, starting a rapid chain of events. By Thursday morning, IGT's senior staff enthusiastically approved our support with donated time, people, equipment and other resources. IGT has a significant history and a large

employee base in Nevada, and we were glad to play our part in enabling a successful campaign to protect the health and well-being of its citizens.

We let the state know on Thursday that we would proceed, and on that Friday morning – less than 48 hours after the initial call – we were on the phone with the core team from IGT: legal, project management and compliance, and representatives from the governor’s office in Nevada as well as their Immunize Nevada organization, which is in charge of immunization. That working group quickly grew to include the Gaming Control Board for independent security and oversight.

Six days later, we had our plan together and I was in Nevada with the governor, Steve Sisolak, and the head of Immunize Nevada, Heidi Parker, announcing this Vax Nevada Days program at the new Allegiant Stadium. Two short weeks after that first call, we were conducting our first draw at the IGT office in Reno. We held the second drawing in Carson City at the Gaming Control Board Office.

From that decision to hit “go,” the IGT heroes were Rob Hochstein and Macaire Moran, the leads from legal, who got all the agreements structured; Matt Whalen; Shannon Streumph, who served as project manager; and Chris Lowrie, who was the lead technologist. They put this program together along with Luke Orchard and Steve Kastner from Compliance, as we implemented the rigorous compliance protocols.

### How did the vaccination promotion in Nevada work?

It was important for IGT never to have any health or personal information, so Nevada created a database of everyone who has been vaccinated to be automatically entered into the drawings. To ensure all vaccinated Nevadans could participate, they had to quickly secure agreements and share information with the state’s Veterans Administration and Tribal governments too, which are running their own vaccination programs. With that information, Nevada created a master database and converted it to an alphanumeric representation of all

individuals. They passed that clean file to IGT with no associated personal information.

We then worked with the state to create the prize structures and draw parameters. In a secure room, we had all those records put into a random number generator (RNG) procured from the vendor Szrek2Solutions, who we work with all over the globe. Along with the RNG system, Szrek also provided its Trusted Audit solution to verify the draw results.

The RNG created a prize file according to all the prize categories available – some cash prizes, some scholarships, and other prizes such as park passes and fishing licenses. We also generated a group of alternates for the state. We turned the winners file back over to the state, and they then associated those alphanumeric records with people’s names and contact information, so they could begin notifying winners.

Within the rules established by Immunize Nevada, they have to be able to contact winners within a certain amount of time, and the people must agree to be identified in some way for winner awareness, because they’ve been entered automatically. If someone doesn’t want to participate or be identified, they move on to the alternate winner of that prize. We conducted the first draw on June 23, and this process continued through eight drawings, culminating with a \$1 million prize winner at the end of August.

It was complicated structuring the parallel tracks, one to figure out the technology and the winner selection, and then the second track to quickly establish the legal relationship of the parties through a services agreement. I’m so proud, because IGT was uniquely qualified to bring this all together for the state in record time. It really was a great public-private partnership, supported by people who came together with a can-do attitude and commitment to succeed.

### Many accept the programs as a pragmatic approach, but what would you say to those who question the “gamification” of the vaccination process?

Everyone has their own opinion about being vaccinated, but the state made the determination that they wanted to do everything they could to encourage their citizens to get vaccinated. Similar to how states use their lottery transfers for healthcare, education or other priorities, that’s up to the policy makers. Once Nevada asked, “Can you help us implement this public policy objective?” we wanted to support them, because that’s what we do. We support governments and their policy objectives in a unique way with our technology, our innovation, our people – and we’re happy to help out. We’re looking at the bigger picture that policy makers are considering – the ultimate benefit is to save human lives. ■

