



An Implementing Partner's Guide to **THE ROLE OF THE AOR**

The AOR serves as USAID's technical expert for grants and cooperative agreements, functioning under a designation from the Agreement Officer (AO). While the AO is the government official vested with the authority to award assistance instruments and obligate funds therein, an AOR will be appointed to administratively manage a specific grant or cooperative agreement. The AOR is a USAID employee who possesses a high degree of knowledge of the technical and program area for which USAID provides support through the assistance instrument.

USAID policy, in ADS 303, defines the role of the AOR as:

“An individual, as designated in writing by the Agreement Officer, who provides programmatic and administrative oversight of the assistance instrument. The AOR ensures that USAID exercises prudent management over the award and monitors the recipient's progress in achieving the objectives of the program description.”

USAID policy also provides procedures for AOs to designate personnel in writing to exercise routine administration and oversight of grant and cooperative agreement recipient performance. The AO cannot finalize the award until the AOR designation letter has been issued and acknowledgement by the AOR has been received. The AOR name and contact information will usually be included in the award document.

Awarding a grant or cooperative agreement is a complex team effort, involving many USAID officials. The AOR, like all USAID officials engaged in the award of an assistance instrument, must exercise sound judgment in his or her efforts to support the Development Objective(s) of the assistance instrument at every stage of the award cycle.

What is the AOR's role during award administration and management?

During award management, the AOR acts as the AO's eyes and ears, monitoring the recipient's work toward established goals and objectives. The AOR's efforts are critical to ensuring that the award's results align with USAID Development Objective(s) and that the recipient achieves results

in a timely manner and within the total estimated amount of the agreement.

Each AOR designation letter will identify the AOR's specific delegated duties as appropriate to the award. The USAID AOR designation letter clearly states that the overall role of the AOR is to “work as part of a team to ensure that USAID exercises prudent management over its assistance funds.”

The AOR's award administration responsibilities include:

- Review and analyze reports and monitor reporting requirements;
- Verify timely performance;
- Monitor progress on fulfilling specific conditions included in the award;
- Ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the award;
- Carry out all responsibilities in the schedule of the award as delegated by the AO and as noted under the “Substantial Involvement” section of a Cooperative Agreement;
- Conduct site visits as appropriate;
- Monitor the recipient's financial reports to ensure that the recipient makes progress toward meeting the required cost sharing, when applicable;
- Notify the AO promptly of any developments that could have a significant impact on the recipient's performance;
- Prepare internal documents to support amendments to the award;
- Assist the AO in the review of the proposed Branding Strategy and Marking Plan and monitor the execution of the approved Branding Strategy and Marking Plan;
- Ensure all mitigating environmental measures and conditions in the award are implemented throughout the life of the award and that timely amendments are undertaken as needed with the relevant Bureau environmental officer approval in writing;
- Monitor classified recipients' compliance with the security specifications included in their grants and cooperative agreements, and notify the AO and the Office of Security of any problems or suspected noncompliance with those requirements;
- Evaluate the recipient's program effectiveness at the end of the program, and produce a final report on the award for the AO and the Activity Manager; and
- Perform other duties, as requested or delegated by the AO, to ensure prudent management of assistance funds.

What are the AOR's limitations?

AOR authority does not include communicating with the recipient, either in writing or verbally, or otherwise committing to changes that affect the program, cost, period of performance, or other terms and conditions of the award. Only an AO has the authority to take such actions.

The standard AOR designation letter further states the specific limitations of the AOR designation. The AOR remains accountable for the delegated responsibilities and is the only person authorized to carry out the functions described in the AOR designation letter. Additionally, the AOR may not delegate his/her authority to others. It is also important to note that only the AO can change the AOR designation, and he or she must communicate any new designation to the recipient.

Each AOR designation letter will identify the AOR's specific delegated duties as appropriate to the award as well as identify the limitations on the AOR's authority. The USAID AOR designation letter clearly states that the overall role of the AOR is to "work as part of a team to ensure that USAID exercises prudent management over its assistance funds." The AOR, like the AO, must act in an impartial manner and avoid any conflict of interests in order to "preserve the public confidence in the U.S. Government (USG) employee's conduct of business."

What is the AOR's role when things go wrong during the life of an award?

When the recipient's performance is below desired standards or disagreements arise between the AOR and the recipient, it is the responsibility of the AOR to identify issues, create and maintain documentation, communicate with the AO, and suggest possible solutions. 2 CFR 700.15 states that the USAID AO will make the final decision regarding a dispute(s) that may arise under a grant or cooperative agreement.

Key Takeaways

- The AOR is not officially designated by the AO until award issuance.
- The AOR's duties, responsibilities, and limitations are designated in writing by the AO for each award.
- The AOR serves as the eyes and ears of the AO and ensures that the award's results align with USAID Development Objective(s), and that the recipient achieves results in a timely manner and within the total estimated amount of the agreement.

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