Organizational Effectiveness Reviews

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 527

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I. OVERVIEW

The purpose of this Mandatory Reference is to provide operational guidance on how to conduct an Organizational Effectiveness Review (OER). OERs review the internal structures and processes of Missions, Bureaus and/or Independent Offices (B/IOs) (hereinafter referred to as “OUs under Review” or “Reviewed OUs”). OERs also identify recommendations to support operational optimization and improve a particular OU’s ability to achieve its organizational development objectives. OERs are useful for collecting evidence of what works and what does not in different contexts, sharing effective and innovative management solutions, advancing organizational cohesion, and enhancing corporate policy.

II. BACKGROUND

Development is dynamic and USAID as a learning organization continuously seeks opportunities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its management operations and programs. To promote introspection, USAID uses an organizational development tool called an “Organizational Effectiveness Review.”

The purpose of an OER is to analyze what promotes or inhibits the effectiveness of an Operating Unit (OU), including the effectiveness of an OU’s internal structures and processes, and identify recommendations to support operational optimizations that improve the OU’s ability to achieve its organizational development objectives. An effective OER maintains *confidentiality* of key issues; is *objective* in drawing conclusions; uses a *rapid method* to provide timely recommendations; and is *context-specific* in its recommendations.

Effective OERs also foster trust and boost organizational cohesion among staff, leaders, Missions and Bureaus, and other Agency-wide stakeholders. OUs can use OERs to identify actionable recommendations to improve Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA); to confidentially collect the experiences of staff across hiring mechanisms; and to develop widely accepted recommendations for operational improvement.

Additionally, OERs help the Agency achieve its corporate goals by reviewing and improving upon the use of organizational resources to address some of its most significant challenges. OERs collect evidence of what works and what does not in different contexts, share effective and innovative management solutions, and inform corporate policy to enhance USAID’s overall effectiveness.

III. APPLICATION OF THE POLICY TO AGENCY OPERATING UNITS

OERs can apply to any B/IO or Mission in the Agency. Throughout this document, Missions and B/IOs under review are referred to as “OUs under Review” or “Reviewed OUs.” Where there are references to collaborative relationships between an OU under Review and other types of OUs, the text distinguishes which entity is the OU under

Review and which is the Collaborating OU. Collaborating OU(s) can be any B/IO that has equities in the OU and has the capacity to make decisions about its funding and direction.[1] When Collaborating OU(s) make final intra-group decisions (such as at kick-off meetings or when finalizing the OER's funding sources), they should ensure that such determinations reflect the centrality of the OU under Review in decision-making and any imperatives from Regional Bureau/Agency leadership.

IV. WHEN TO PERFORM AN OER

a. OER Justification Criteria

Generally, OUs that undergo an OER should meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The OU's budget has expanded or contracted substantially;

2. The OU's staffing level has expanded or contracted substantially;

3. The OU's service provision (e.g., to current or prospective implementing partners and/or other OUs) has changed substantially; and/or

4. The OU has experienced substantial changes in programmatic strategy or policy direction.

In addition to the justification criteria above, an OER may also be appropriate if an OU has experienced a significant change at the management level. However, this criterion alone does not automatically justify an OER.[2] OUs should contact the OER Secretariat, (an administrative body staffed by the Management Bureau), at **OERSecretariat@usaid.gov** for further guidance on determining the necessity of an OER under this scenario.

The decision to request an OER, based upon an OU meeting one or more of the above criteria, can originate from the OU seeking review or from a Collaborating OU with the capacity to make decisions about the funding and direction of the OER (e.g., in the case of Mission OERs, this could be a Regional Bureau). To generate buy-in from all stakeholders and establish a partnership to undertake the OER, all relevant stakeholders (e.g. the Mission, Regional Bureau, relevant Pillar Bureau[s]) must discuss the plausibility and funding of the OER, regardless of who initiated the conversation.[3]

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[1] Missions that are not the OU under Review may also make significant contributions to an OER (i.e., the responsible Regional Mission in the case of an OER for a Bilateral Mission), but for the purposes of clarity throughout this document, the term "Collaborating OU" refers to Washington B/IOs that have financial and/or operational influence over the OU under Review.

[2] Incoming or outgoing leaders may prefer a "business process review" in lieu of an OER. For more information on this option, see the **Bureau for Management, Office of Management Policy, Budget and Performance, Performance Division's intranet page**.

[3] If sub-OUs (e.g., Washington-based offices within Bureaus) are interested in reviewing their operations for learning and continuous improvement, they should collaborate with their OU and identify a process that is not as labor and resource-intensive as an OER.

See **Section V** for additional guidance on the annual OER request and clearance process, and **Section VI** for additional guidance on OER funding.

Note: The entity that originates the decision to request an OER should use its discretion as to what constitutes a substantial change in budget, staffing, service provision, and strategy, as each OU within the Agency has different determinants of what is fundamentally necessary for their operations. As part of this process, OUs should examine the impact of new directives or priorities on a unit's structure, systems, or processes (e.g., Presidential Initiatives, regional or country strategies, implementation of reforms and/or the requirements of Executive Orders), as well as their effect on staff efficiency and effectiveness.

b. OER Alternatives for Personnel Performance and Misconduct

OERs are a capital-intensive tool focused on system and process analysis aimed at supporting organizational learning. Therefore, OUs may not initiate an OER to address personnel issues. Where OUs face management problems related to conduct, the impacted OU should seek out the appropriate form of remediation. This may include consulting the resources and offices listed in the following paragraphs for guidance or initiating an investigation.

OUs should address internal personnel performance issues by contacting the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management's Office of Employee and Labor Relations (HCTM/ELR) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR); utilizing the resources in the **Employee and Labor Relations Supervisor's Toolkit**; and/or tailoring appropriate interventions with staff at the management level. Performance management guidance is also cited in the following ADS chapters:

- **ADS 462, Employee Evaluation Program, Civil Service**
- **ADS 461, Foreign Service and Senior Foreign Service Performance Management and Development Programs**
- **ADS 464, Foreign Service Performance-Based Actions**

For information regarding the Agency's anti-harassment program, see **ADS 114, Anti-Harassment Policy**, as well as USAID's internal website on **Anti-Harassment**. Staff members may also report harassment by contacting OCR at **ocrharassment@usaid.gov**.

To address concerns about discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and sexual orientation), age, physical or mental handicap, contact OCR. Also consult the following resources:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity Questions and Complaints**

- **ADS 110, Equal Employment Opportunity Program**
- **The Misconduct Reporting Portal**
- **ADS 113, Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct**

To address concerns related to ethics and possible ethics violations, review the following:

- **ADS 109, Ethics and Standards of Conduct**
- **Ethics Violation Complaints**

If, during the process of conducting an OER, OU staff make the OER Team aware of misconduct or a performance problem within the OU's front office leadership, the OER Team Lead must contact the OER Leadership Group to provide such information. The OER Leadership Group must then work with the appropriate offices in Washington to report the issue for further action.

V. ANNUAL OER REQUEST AND CLEARANCE PROCESS

a. Annual Request Process

B/IOs and/or Missions that seek an OER must submit OER requests by either December 15th or June 15th of each year. (If December 15 or June 15 falls on a weekend, the deadline is automatically extended to the next business day.) Each OER request only requires one submission by either deadline and must be made by sending the **OER Request Form** to the OER Secretariat. B/IOs may submit requests for OERs for their own unit, or as a Collaborating OU.

When submitting the OER request, requesting OUs must also submit an estimated budget. In defining the budget for each requested OER, requesting OUs should assume that each OER Team will require a total of 8 to 12 weeks for desk research, data collection, analysis, and report development, assuming a part-time level of effort. Of that 8 to 12 week timeframe, the OER Team will spend five to ten days in-office or working remotely with the OU under Review. This budget allows the requesting OUs to reasonably estimate the projected costs of OERs by the time of their request; however, neither the OER Leadership Group nor OER Secretariat will act as a source of funding (see **Section VI** in this Mandatory Reference for additional information on OER funding).

b. Clearance Process

Shortly after the December 15th and June 15th submission deadlines, the OER Leadership Group and OER Secretariat must review all of the OER requests for the coming calendar or fiscal year. In most cases, the OER Leadership Group should clear the OER request. In limited cases, the OER Leadership Group may inform an OU that another Agency process may be a better fit for their interests. If the OER Leadership Group provides clearance, the OU under Review, any Collaborating OU(s), and other stakeholders must follow the process described in this Mandatory Reference.

Once the OER Leadership Group clears the OER request, the OER Secretariat must contact requesting OU(s) to provide them with information on appropriate next steps. This may include an orientation to the process or education about available resources. The OER Secretariat may also organize a meeting with the OER Leadership Group to discuss overall parameters for the Scope of Work (SOW).

VI. OER FUNDING

OUs under Review are responsible for funding their OERs. While the OU under Review bears this responsibility, other OUs providing subject matter experts should consider cost-sharing to cover some of the funding needed for the OER, including international temporary duty (TDY) travel expenses. Collaborating OU(s) and the OU under Review must jointly consider how best to budget for and fund the costs of OERs during annual resourcing exercises. OER funds may come from a given OU's Operating Expense Operating Year Budget or, as necessary, other applicable appropriations in adherence to the guidance in ADS 601, Funding Source Policy.

VII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Key Roles

The information below provides a general overview of key roles in the OER process. Specific roles and responsibilities will depend on the triggers for the review and the key questions the OER intends to address.

Key OER stakeholders and roles on the OER Team include:

Responsible OUs:

- *OU under Review* = The subject Mission or B/IO that is undergoing review. OUs under review engage appropriate stakeholders in planning and executing the review, as well as implementing subsequent recommendations.

- *Collaborating OU(s)* = A B/IO that has equities in the OU under Review and has the capacity to make decisions about its funding and direction. Collaborating OU(s) help define the OER effort and identify the OER Team.

- *OER Team Lead* = A senior-level U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) or U.S. Personal Services Contractor (USPSC) who is responsible for the overall OER effort and management of deliverables.

- *Logistics and Report Coordinator* = An individual who coordinates the Team's schedule and manages all forms of version control, document back-up, and filing of the final report.

- *Strategic Management Advisor* = An individual who helps the Team select the best method(s) and business analysis tool(s) for qualitative data management.

- *OER Coordinator* = An individual from the OU under Review or a Collaborating OU with experience comparable to a Washington B/IO Team Lead or Country Desk Officer (CDO). This individual acts as the OER's liaison coordinator for the OU under Review. This role is administratively focused on communications and project management, as well as supporting and informing the POC for the OU under Review regarding key information.

- *OER Leadership Group* = Representatives from the Bureau for Management (M Bureau), HCTM, and the Counselor's Office who provide advice, guidance, and clearance for OER SOWs and associated deliverables.

- *OER Secretariat* = Staff from M Bureau's Office of Management Policy, Budget and Performance (M/MPBP) who support the OER Leadership Group, offer consultative support to all OER stakeholders, and maintain the guidance in this Mandatory Reference.

- *OU Point of Contact (POC) for OU under Review* = The primary Point of Contact (POC) for the OER Team who represents the OU under Review. This individual should be the head of the OU (e.g., Mission Director or Assistant Administrator) or their deputy.

- *OU Task Force* = A group that is composed of representatives from each internal office in the OER under Review. This group represents the needs of Cooperating Country Nationals (CCNPSCs), USDHs, USPSCs, and any other U.S. contractor staff.

b. OER Team Staffing/ Recruitment

Once the OER Leadership Group clears an OER request (see **Section V[b]**), the OU under Review and any Collaborating OU(s) (collectively referred to as "Responsible OU[s]" within this section) must recruit an OER Team. At a minimum, the Team should include each of the roles outlined in Subsection A above. Once Responsible OU(s) identify a proposed team, they must clear the teaming arrangement through the OER Leadership Group (via the OER Secretariat). In some cases, the OER Leadership may provide feedback on the proposed teaming arrangement that may necessitate modifications. Once all of the necessary standards are met, the OER Leadership Group should provide final clearance.

Responsible OU(s) must recruit a cross-Agency team that, taken together, can:

1. Contribute relevant and strategic high-level experience and knowledge that responds to the SOW;

2. Help ensure appropriate USAID senior-level buy-in from Washington and globally for the OER's findings and recommendations; and

3. Act as technical experts to ensure that the OER Team has the necessary expertise needed to generate actionable recommendations.

In addition, the identified OER Team must be:

1. Led by a senior-level USDH or USPSC, as these are the only two hiring categories that can fully administer inherently governmental functions;

2. Staffed primarily by the USAID workforce; and

3. Supplemented by contractors or technically qualified employees of other US Government Agencies with subject matter expertise that OERs cannot readily find within the Agency.

Consistent with the Agency's core value of inclusion and the law on prohibited practices, the OER Team, and any supplementary advisors, should reflect the demographic diversity of the Agency and communities it serves. Furthermore, an OU should not singularly staff an OER Team with any one particular type of hiring mechanism. These principles ensure that team members have contemporary and broad knowledge of current Agency operations, priorities, and guiding principles. Without this insight, OERs may yield suboptimal, if not inaccurate, findings and recommendations.

To recruit team members, Responsible OU(s) may leverage a diverse range of recruitment mechanisms, for example:

1. *An Agency Notice:* Responsible OU(s) may send out an Agency Notice to recruit team members. If Responsible OU(s) utilize this option, they should reach out to the OER Secretariat for recommended language.

2. *Contacting the Washington coordinators for various Foreign Service Officer (FSO) backstops:* Responsible OU(s) may ask coordinators to disseminate information using backstop-specific listservs. This may be particularly useful for Responsible OU(s) that are looking for specific kinds of experience.

3. *Contacting the Bureau for Management's Office of Support Operations (M/OSO) platform to recruit Team Members:* Responsible OU(s) may work with the M/OSO to identify a senior Controller, Contracting/Agreement Officer (CO/AO), or Executive Officer who is available.

4. *Contacting the Administrative Management Services (AMS) Officers Council.* Responsible OU(s) may work with the AMS Council to recruit volunteers with administrative management services experience.

5. *Utilizing the Universal Technical Request And Mission Support (UTRAMS) system*: Responsible OU(s) may use the **UTRAMs website** to request technical assistance from Agency staff with specific expertise relevant to the OER SOW. For additional guidance, see these **Frequently Asked Questions**.

Note: The OER Team may need to contract short-term technical assistance (STTA) from a subject matter expert (e.g., a retired Controller or CO/AO) to fill a key gap; provide the Team with professional facilitation and assistance in report completion; and/or help with follow-up and change management associated with OER recommendations, among other examples. However, since OERs examine many inherently governmental functions, the OER Team Lead is responsible for ensuring that appropriate Team members handle these tasks. If the OER Team opts to utilize STTA to supplement OER Team Members, it must complete an Inherently Governmental and Critical Functions Template as part of the procurement package to ensure that all roles are appropriately assigned. For additional guidance, see **ADS 300.3.5.2** and **ADS 300mak, Inherently Governmental and Critical Functions Template**.

VIII. PHASE 1: PRE-DEPARTURE/ PRE-VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT PREPARATION

The purpose of Phase One is to design and prepare for the OER. During this period, the OER Team identifies key questions, determines its review methodology, and drafts and clears an initial SOW, the single most important document in the rollout of a good review. The Team also conducts desk research and prepares for meetings and consultations with relevant staff, among other tasks.

Phase One typically lasts between six to ten weeks. Depending on the SOW, the OER Team will typically spend anywhere from two to six weeks, at 10 to 20 hours per week, developing the SOW and conducting other pre-departure tasks. The Team should also aim to have the SOW cleared by the OER Leadership Group at least four weeks before the initiation of Phase Two.

a. Identification of Focus Areas/Key Questions

As a first step, the OER Team must identify key focus areas and associated questions to assess as part of the OER. Focus areas commonly assessed in OERs include, but are not limited to:

- Administrative Management (including International Cooperative Administrative Support Services [ICASS] and security);
    - Program Management (including structures and use of internal teams);
    - Internal Mission communications and information flow;

- Performance Management (program and operations);
- Operational Resources and Program Budget Management;
- Human Resources Management;
- Role of CCNPSCs;
- Role of Leadership (at any/all levels of the Mission);
- Acquisitions and Assistance (A&A) Management;
- Financial and Audit Management;
- Information Resources Management;
- Information Technology Management;
- Regional Program Support and Management;
- Other Agency Support and Management (i.e., through technical assistance); and
- Interagency and External Relationship Management and Coordination.

b. Development of Analytical Methods

The OER Team must identify data collection and analytical methods[4] to answer the questions that it identifies (see Subsection A above). The Team should refer to **Section XV(b)** in this Mandatory Reference for a data analysis template that can help it think through the data it will collect, what it will use it for, and how it will analyze it. This Data Analysis Plan should ultimately be integrated into Section 5 in the SOW (see Subsection C below).

The designated Strategic Management Advisor must guide the team in this process. The OER Secretariat can also help guide the OER Team, upon request. To promote informed and responsive decision making, the OER Team should consult with the OU under Review regarding its preferences.

c. Development and Approval of Scope of Work

The OER Team Lead must develop an initial SOW that provides a roadmap for all of the elements of a well-crafted review. The SOW must define the OER's purpose and outline

[4] In cases where the OER was triggered by a crisis, appreciative inquiry is often the recommended type of business analysis. In addition, assistance from HCTM, particularly from the Staff Care unit, may be critical.

the key questions; summarize OER Team members’ roles and responsibilities; proposed analytical methods; describe the schedule and timing for key tasks; and attach any checklists or survey instruments to complement interviews and consultations. For additional guidance on these and other required elements in the SOW, see **Section XIII(a)**.

The OER Team Lead or OER Coordinator must submit the SOW to the OER Leadership Group (via the OER Secretariat) for input and clearance. The OER Team should aim to submit the SOW as early as possible, particularly if it seeks to contract supplementary OER Team Members.

d. Other Preparatory Tasks

After the OER Leadership Group clears the SOW, the OER Team should complete other preparatory tasks, such as:

- *Preparing and presenting an initial briefing to the leadership of the OU under Review and any Collaborating OU(s)*. The presentation should introduce leadership to the OER concept, reinforce a common understanding of the SOW, detail how the OER Team plans to engage with OU and Agency data systems to collect qualitative and quantitative data, and explain what the recommendation implementation process will entail. The OER Team should also explain why it chose the analysis method(s) outlined in the SOW. The OER Team may deliver this presentation remotely.

- *Reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing data from desk research.*

- *Carefully defining who the OER Team needs to interview and how the interviews will inform a high-priority question or focus area contained in the SOW.* This is particularly important since the amount of time an OER Team has in-office, or designates to manage a virtual review, tends to be limited, often no longer than five to ten days. As part of this process, the OER Team should consider the following:

    - The OER Team should identify interviewees who can: 1) provide an understanding of workflows and business processes; 2) identify or confirm problems or areas of concern; 3) recommend possible solutions to address weaknesses; and 4) identify successes for replication across the Agency.

    - If the OU under Review is a bilateral or Regional Mission, potential interviewees typically include OU staff (USDHs, CCNPSCs, USPSCs, and Third Country National Personal Services Contractors (TCNPSCs), U.S. Embassy staff and other members of the country team, partner government officials, other donors, and significant United States (U.S.) and local implementing partners (e.g., grantees and contractors), among other examples. If the OU is a Regional Mission, additional interviewees may include leaders and staff from their client Missions. In addition to local stakeholders, the OER Team must also conduct interviews with key Washington stakeholders, such as: 1) technical experts who regularly interact with the OU under Review; 2) executive leadership (e.g. the Agency Counselor, Chief Human Capital Officer, and/or Performance Improvement Officer); and/or 3) staff from other relevant U.S. Government agencies, such as Department of State Desk Officers or Mission POCs in the Department of State's Office of Foreign Assistance or Millennium Challenge Corporation.

  - The OER Team should determine which interviewees to involve in key informant interviews (KIIs) and which to include in a group interview like a focus group. The OER Team should also meet with CCNPSCs, TCNPSCs, and Institutional Support Contractors (ISCs) separately from USDHs and USPSCs, and meet with management separately from frontline staff and in settings that promote confidence and confidentiality.

  - If the OER Team is leading an on-site review and time is compressed, it should determine if it should conduct some interviews via video teleconference, particularly those that are less sensitive.

- *Preparing an in-office or remote review schedule for meetings and consultations with relevant OU staff.* The OER Team should ensure that this schedule is designed to yield adequate feedback from CCNPSCs.

- *Developing guides for interviews and consultations based on the focus area questions identified in Section 3 of the SOW.* See **Section XIII(a)** in this Mandatory Reference for SOW guidance.

- *Engaging the Bureau for Management's Office of Management Services, Information and Records Division (M/MS/IRD) and Office of the Chief Information Officer, Information Assurance division (M/CIO/IA) to ensure that surveys for collecting information from stakeholders are appropriate.*

IX. PHASE 2: IN-OFFICE AND/OR REMOTE REVIEW

Phase Two is the cornerstone of the OER. The primary purpose of this phase is to implement the SOW that was developed during Phase One. This phase typically consists of a site visit to the OU under Review (which can be in-office or remote) and interviews with internal and external OU stakeholders to gather insights and perceptions from multiple perspectives. During this period, the OER Team also organizes, analyzes and triangulates the data amassed to identify key findings and recommendations. Phase Two culminates in the early stages of a draft OER report.

a. Entrance Briefings

At the beginning of Phase Two – while the OER Team is in-office or initiating the remote review — the OER Team must conduct an entrance briefing with leadership of the OU under Review to introduce them to the SOW, feedback process, timetables, and other logistics. This briefing should build upon the initial briefing with leadership that took place during Phase One while or shortly after it finalized the SOW.

In the case of Missions, the OER Team may also brief the Ambassador and other key U.S. Mission staff on the reasons for and scope of the OER. The focus areas for the OER and the country of the OU under Review should determine the level of interaction with the Ambassador and Embassy. In some cases, the Ambassador and/or other Embassy leadership may be key figures in citing successes and resolving problems. They may also require updates about major developments.

Additionally, the OER Team and OU leadership must hold a kick-off session with the OU under Review's staff to share the purpose of the OER, and process plan, and the current state of the OER Team's pre-kickoff desk research. The OER Team and OU under Review may consider conducting this session in the form of a retreat. Some OER Teams have also used electronic surveys prior to their arrival to surface key issues. Ahead of the meeting, OU leadership should inform staff of the kick-off session and set a constructive and transparent tone for the OER process to follow.

During the kick-off session with OU staff, the OER Team should do the following:

- The OER Team should acknowledge that it values Respectful, Inclusive and Safe Environment (RISE) principles and the Agency's **Inclusive Leadership Philosophy** in its approach to data collection and analysis. If there are concerns about bias in any OER process, any OER stakeholder (including any OER Team Member) may contact the OER Secretariat at **OERSecretariat@usaid.gov**, who should then work with HCTM, the Counselor's office, and other colleagues in the M Bureau to review concerns and recommend appropriate follow-up.

- The OER Team should also convey that all participants are safe and entitled to report bias and/or discrimination in OU operations through the **Misconduct Reporting Portal**.

- The OER Team should convey that its conversations with staff are intended to be confidential and without attribution of information to any one individual. If participants convey that they have personnel-related concerns that are impacting OU operations, the OER Team has an obligation to report highly consequential and management-level personnel issues to the OER Leadership Group (per the guidance in ADS 114.3.2 and listed in Section IV[b]) in a manner that protects individuals from retaliation. Likewise, OER Team members are obligated to meet mandatory reporting requirements when instances of misconduct, harassment, discrimination, or other indications of harm are conveyed through the OER process.

- The OER Team must also provide contact information for staff to reach an OER Team member identified as a liaison to the OER Team.

b. Interviews and Consultations

The OER Team should conduct interviews or consultations with identified stakeholders, as determined during Phase One (see **Section VIII[d]**). The OER Team should structure these interviews with questions and discussion guides to maximize time, get the necessary facts and data, and avoid relying on anecdotal reporting. After each interview, the OER Team must document the substantive findings and/or recommendations that emerged.

The OER Team's Logistics and Report Coordinator should coordinate with the POC for the OU under Review on scheduling issues. To improve transparency and communication in the OER process, the Coordinator must also provide the POC with a general overview of the scope of each interview along with illustrative questions.

During the course of conducting the review, the interview list and topics will likely evolve. The OER Team must provide updates to the POC for the OU under Review on any substantive modifications to the initial plan.

c. Data Collection and Analysis

The OER Team should collect and analyze interview data and other forms of data based on the analytical methodology that it identified in Section 5 of its SOW (see **Section XIII[a]** in this Mandatory Reference). It is critical that the OER Team use appropriate analytical tools to interpret the data it collects in order to substantiate its findings and recommendations.

During the course of conducting the review, the OER Team may need to iterate or adapt the analytical approach identified in the SOW. For additional guidance on identifying analytical methods, see **Section VIII(b)**.

d. Synthesis and Validation of Findings

To ensure timely delivery of the OER report, the OER Team should devote a portion of each day in-office, or during the remote review phase, to synthesizing and documenting findings and recommendations. The Strategic Management Advisor should facilitate these debriefings and ensure that the OER Team captures accurate overall perspectives and agreed-upon priorities.

During this period, the OER Team must also provide iterative feedback to the OU under Review and other stakeholders to validate and refine findings and recommendations. This is particularly important when potential recommendations require action by OUs outside of the OER Team's core membership. The Logistics and Report Coordinator should coordinate scheduling and ensure that the OER Team meets the feedback milestones established in the SOW (or adjusting milestones at the direction of the OER Team Lead and in consultation with the OU's POC).

The OER Team should use its final team debrief to ensure that it agrees on the recommendations and actions the OU under Review (and/or other Washington-based stakeholders) should take to satisfy the recommendations.

e. Development of Draft OER Report

As the OER Team identifies key findings and recommendations, it should begin to sketch out a draft report. The OER Team Lead must guide OER Team members during this process to ensure that recommendations are concise, understandable, and viable. In order to maintain version control of the report, the Logistics and Report Coordinator should be the gatekeeper, managing all iterations of the document.

f. Exit Briefing

The OER Team must meet with leadership from the OU under Review, and if applicable and possible, hold a separate meeting with the Ambassador or Deputy Chief of Mission before departing a Mission. During these meetings, the OER Team must provide preliminary feedback on key findings and draft recommendations. Preliminary debriefings with senior staff from the OU under Review may also be appropriate.

X. PHASE 3: REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF FINAL DELIVERABLES

The purpose of Phase Three is to develop and finalize the full OER Report and disseminate key findings and recommendations to inform continuous improvement in the Agency. During this time, the OU under Review must also work with stakeholders to develop a subsidiary Recommendation Implementation Project Plan to put the review's recommendations into practice.

Major milestones and associated timeframes during Phase Three are as follows:

Deliverable	Timeframe
Draft OER Report Finalized and Submitted to Stakeholders	Within one to four weeks after the end of Phase One
Feedback on the Draft Report Provided by the Reviewed OU and Other Stakeholders	Within five business days after receipt of the draft OER report
Final OER Report Submitted to Stakeholders	Within two weeks after the Reviewed OU and other stakeholders provide feedback on the draft OER report
Final Recommendations for Implementation Determined	Within 30 days after receipt of the final OER report
Initial Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and Associated Tracking Tool Developed	Within 60 days after receipt of the final OER report
Briefing to Management Operations Council Conducted	Within 60-90 days after receipt of the final OER report
Technical Assistance for Implementing Recommendations Secured	Within 90 days after receipt of the final OER report
If Applicable, Final Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and Associated Tracking Tool Submitted to Stakeholders	Within 90 days after receipt of the final OER report

Note: For the reader's convenience, this section introduces bylines under each section title that indicate which OER stakeholders are involved in each step (e.g., the Reviewed OU, any Collaborating OU(s), OER Secretariat, etc.).

a. Finalization of Draft OER Report

Stakeholders: OER Team

Shortly after the team concludes in-office or remote data collection, the OER Team, under the oversight of the OER Team Lead, should develop and/or finalize a draft OER report. The timeframe for developing this report can be as short as one to two weeks, or as long as four weeks. Often, OERs are commissioned to respond to time-sensitive interests. Therefore, the OER Team must make every effort to complete its report on schedule. In most cases, the OER Team should complete most of the report prior to leaving the country or closing the remote review phase.

Generally, the OER report must not exceed 30 pages, excluding attachments. The OER Team must ensure that content clearly conveys major findings on strengths and weaknesses, with a highly focused number of prioritized recommendations and suggested timelines for completing actions. The OER Team must take particular care to establish recommendations that:

- Are specific to the criteria that triggered the OER (see **Section IV** on OER justification criteria);
- Are evidence-based and supported with citations to the data sources or methods used;
- Are achievable for the OU with an attainable amount of resources (human and/or financial) over a realistic period of time;
- Indicate which Functional Bureaus can assist in implementing recommendations, where relevant;
- Result in measurable outcomes, when implemented, that address the identified problems; and
- Are relevant to the OU's priorities (e.g., its Country Development Cooperation Strategy [CDCS] or essential functions).

As part of its report, the OER Team should also develop an illustrative recommendation implementation plan to assist the OU under Review in identifying how to complete and track actions to enact recommended changes or reforms.

b. Submission and Review of Draft OER Report

Stakeholders: OER Team, OER Leadership Group, OER Secretariat, OU under Review, Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable)

Within one to four weeks of the close of the in-office or remote review phase, the OER Team must share the OER draft report, including suggestions for the recommendation implementation plan, with any Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable), the OER Leadership Group, the OER Secretariat, and leadership within the Reviewed OU. Before finalizing this draft, the OER Team Lead (and OER Team members, as necessary) must meet with stakeholders to discuss and seek feedback on the draft's major findings and recommendations.

In its review of the draft OER report, the OER Leadership Group must ensure that the recommendations are strategic, link to Agency priorities, and are objective and evidence-based. The OER Leadership Group should reach out to the Reviewed OU during this period for any informal feedback or comments.

Leadership within the Reviewed OU must provide formal feedback on the OER draft report in writing to the OER Team and OER Leadership within five days of receipt. Collaborating OU(s) and the OER Leadership Group may also provide feedback. During this time, the OU should discuss the draft report with staff at multiple levels (including CCNPSCs as applicable). As part of its written response, the OU must:

- Provide any factual edits, which the OER Team should incorporate as relevant.
- Indicate whether it accepts, rejects, or proposes modifications to the OER Team's recommendations. If it rejects any of the recommendations, it must include an explanation as to why. (*Note:* At this stage, the decisions that the Reviewed OU makes with respect to accepted or modified recommendations are preliminary. After the OER Team finalizes its report, the Reviewed OU should work with stakeholders to finalize these recommendations. The Reviewed OU may base its decision, in part, on the resources that it is able to secure to support implementation.)
- Convey whether the OER Team should produce a modified version of the report that extracts sensitive information about personnel management (particularly if negative information could easily point to one individual).

c. Submission of Final OER Report

Stakeholders: OER Team, OER Leadership Group, OER Secretariat, Reviewed OU, Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable)

The OER Team must finalize the report within two weeks after the Reviewed OU provides its response to the draft report. The report must address feedback from the Reviewed OU, any Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable), and the OER Leadership Group, noting any disagreements or exceptions.

For rejected recommendations, the OER Team and OER Leadership Group, as needed, should consider the Reviewed OU's written explanation for rejecting specific recommendations and engage with the OU on how it can modify the recommendations for acceptance, where appropriate.

The OER Team must share a PDF version of the full final OER report with the Reviewed OU, the OER Leadership Group, and OER Secretariat. The OER Team should also share the full report with other key stakeholders, including Collaborating OU(s).

If the OU under Review requested a modified version that excludes sensitive information, the OER Team must provide two copies of the report. The full version must include appropriate classification markings based on its contents, and the modified version must include an addendum that notes that the OER Team made extractions.

The OER Secretariat must post the appropriate version of the final report (defaulting to the modified version if one exists) to the **[Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)]** and ensure that it is only viewable to internal Agency readers.

The OU under Review's leadership must disseminate the final report – either the full version or modified version, if applicable – as widely as possible/appropriate within the OU (to all staff members, including CCNPSCs) to ensure full transparency for staff at all levels regarding the results and recommendations.

d. Adjudication of Final Recommendations for Implementation

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU, Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable), OER Leadership Group, OU Task Force

Within 30 days of receiving the final OER report, the Reviewed OU, under the leadership of the OU Task Force, must hold a recommendation implementation kick-off meeting that includes its stakeholders, including any Collaborating OU(s). Invited parties should use this space to determine, of the final report's recommendations, what is:

- Most financially feasible;
- Immediately actionable;
- A long-term, change management process; and
- Aligned with the strategic plans and objectives of the Reviewed OU.

The Reviewed OU has the final authority for recommendation adjudication. If the Reviewed OU decides to reject any recommendations because they are not viable, are prohibitively resource intensive, and/or do not align with Agency or OU strategy, it should first consult relevant stakeholders and/or the OER Leadership Group on possible alternatives that would address the underlying finding.

e. Development of Initial Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and Associated Tracking Tool

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU, OU Task Force, Collaborating OU(s) (as applicable), OER Leadership Group, OER Secretariat

Within 60 days of receiving the final OER report, the Reviewed OU, under the leadership of the OU Task Force, and any Collaborating OU(s) must commit to an initial Recommendation Implementation Project Plan (also referred to as "recommendation implementation plan") to address accepted or modified recommendations. The Reviewed OU must share this plan with the OER Secretariat and OER Leadership Group.

The plan should include timeframes and sufficient operational detail to facilitate execution. It should also be coupled with a Recommendation Implementation Tracking Tool to monitor progress. The process of developing this plan should be as collaborative and inclusive as possible to ensure buy-in at all levels of the Reviewed OU.

In developing its plan, the Reviewed OU and any Collaborating OU(s) should take into consideration available human and financial resources to ensure implementation feasibility. The Reviewed OU and/or any Collaborating OU(s) may also consult the OER Secretariat and OER Leadership Group for guidance on how to secure additional technical or financial assistance. This could include, for example, strategically leveraging the final briefing to the MOC to solicit support (see **Section X([f]**).

The Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and associated Tracking Tool should include the components below to the greatest extent possible.

Recommendation Implementation Project Plan:

1. Milestones & Meetings
2. Overarching Tasks for Each Recommendation
3. Time-based Assignments
4. Clear Designation of Individuals Responsible for Tasks

Associated Tracking Tool:

1. Plan Phase
2. Task Type
3. OER Report Recommendation (if applicable)
4. Task Description
5. Start Date
6. End Date
7. Responsible Unit
8. Point of Contact
9. Supporting Unit/Technical Assistance Provider(s)
10. Status

11. Other Information

f. Briefing to Management Operations Council (MOC)

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU, Collaborating OU(s) (if applicable), MOC, OER Leadership Group, OER Secretariat

Within 60 to 90 days after the OER Team delivers its final OER report, the Reviewed OU and any Collaborating OU(s) (collectively referred to as "Responsible OU[s]" in this section) must deliver a briefing to the MOC on the final OER report's key findings and prioritized recommendations. The MOC is the Agency's executive governance board for directing management reforms and improvement initiatives. Therefore, Responsible OU(s) must ensure that the presentation places particular emphasis on any recommendations that can inform management decisions across the Agency. In addition, Responsible OU(s) should leverage this briefing as a mechanism to secure any additional needed support to implement the OER report's recommendations. In advance of this briefing, Responsible OU(s) must ensure that the OER Leadership Group is aware of the Reviewed OU's approach to strengthening its technical assistance network.

A representative from the Reviewed OU or a Collaborating OU must lead the briefing.[5] If there is no Collaborating OU, a representative from the Reviewed OU should lead the briefing.

The OER Coordinator should contact the OER Secretariat to establish contact with the MOC Secretariat (MOCSecretariat@usaid.gov) to secure a date for the presentation. From there, the OER Coordinator should work with the relevant Collaborating OU to determine the presentation's logistics.

Responsible OU(s) should document the outcomes of the briefing and associated discussion in an information memorandum. In addition to summarizing key findings and recommendations, the memo should also document any agreed-upon follow-up actions discussed at the MOC for knowledge management and future reference.

g. Attainment of Technical Assistance for Recommendation Implementation

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU, Collaborating OU(s), Agency B/IOs, OER Leadership Group

Within 90 days following submission of the final OER report, the Reviewed OU, and any Collaborating OU(s) must work together to identify necessary resources, technical assistance, and support systems to implement recommendations.

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[5] This means that in the case of a Mission in the Africa Bureau undergoing an OER (for example), a representative from the Africa Bureau would likely present to the MOC.

As part of this process, the Responsible OU(s) and (as applicable) other parties must take guidance from the MOC into consideration (see **Section X([f]**). If the MOC recommended that a particular B/IO provide technical assistance and the Reviewed OU is a Mission, a Collaborating OU (i.e., a B/IO-level OU) must broker initial communications on behalf of the Reviewed OU.

h. Finalization of Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and Associated Tracking Tool

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU (via OER Coordinator), Collaborating OU(s), OER Secretariat, OER Leadership Group

If applicable, the Reviewed OU must submit a revised Recommendation Project Plan and associated Tracking Tool to any Collaborating OU(s), the OER Secretariat, and the OER Leadership Group after Agency-wide stakeholders commit resources (see **Section X[e]** for additional guidance on this plan).

XI. PHASE 4: RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of Phase Four is to put the review's recommendations into practice. During this phase, the Reviewed OU monitors and reports on the status of recommendation implementation and works with OER stakeholders to make course corrections as needed. This phase culminates in the formal closeout of the Recommendation Implementation Project Plan.

a. Monitoring and Reporting on Implementation

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU (via OER Coordinator), Collaborating OU(s) (if applicable), OER Secretariat, OER Leadership Group, other Washington-Based Stakeholders

The OER Coordinator, or another designee from the Reviewed OU, must monitor implementation status associated with the recommendations in the OER's Recommendation Implementation Project Plan and associated Tracking Tool. The OER Coordinator must also periodically report to the Regional Bureau Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator (SDAA), or a Washington B/IO equivalent, on progress and any issues that require high-level attention.

If the Reviewed OU (via the OER Coordinator) and/or SDAA is concerned about the pace or demands of recommendation implementation, they must convey their concerns to the OER Leadership Group via the OER Secretariat. The OER Leadership Group must then convene (conferring with others, as necessary) to propose modifications to the recommendation implementation plan that address the underlying finding(s).

b. Mid-Point Check-In Meeting

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU (via OER Coordinator), Collaborating OU(s) (if applicable), OER Secretariat, OER Leadership Group

At the projected mid-point of recommendation implementation, the Reviewed OU must hold a mid-point check-in meeting with the OER Secretariat, the OER Leadership Group, any Collaborating OU(s), and any Washington-based offices that have provided assistance. The OER Coordinator must schedule this meeting during the recommendation implementation planning process, as indicated in its Recommendation Implementation Project Plan (see **Section XV[e]**).

During this meeting, the Reviewed OU must address any challenges associated with outstanding milestones and how it can secure any needed support to complete the final stages of the recommendation implementation plan.

c. Recommendation Closeout

Stakeholders: Reviewed OU (via OER Coordinator), Collaborating OU(s) (if applicable), OER Secretariat, OER Leadership Group

After the Reviewed OU has fully implemented all recommendations, the OER Coordinator must submit the completed Recommendation Implementation Project Plan to the Collaborating OU's senior leadership (if applicable) and OER Leadership Group (via the OER Secretariat).

Senior leadership and/or the OER Leadership Group may request follow-up with the OER Coordinator for clarification or additional information. The OER Coordinator should then engage with the Reviewed OU's POC and other appropriate stakeholders in order to attain and share that information.

XII. ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION OF OER TRENDS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The OER Leadership Group, with assistance from the OER Secretariat, must aggregate larger Agency trends, recommendations and lessons learned from OERs, and bring these to the attention of Agency leadership, including the Administrator. As part of this process, the OER Leadership Group must:

- *Provide an annual presentation to the MOC on OER trends to inform continuous improvement in the Agency.* This presentation must take place after the OER Secretariat receives the OER requests for the upcoming fiscal year from Agency B/IOs (see **Section V**). To maintain the accessibility of the information to Agency-wide stakeholders, the annual presentation may not include confidential findings. The OER Leadership Group should submit relevant findings of a confidential nature to the MOC Secretariat separately, with the caveat that the information is sensitive. This presentation should convey the aggregate progress on implementation reported to the OER Leadership Group according to the guidance in **Section XI**; as appropriate in cases of sensitive information.

- *Share major risks and/or internal control deficiencies with the Agency's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) governance structure to help the Agency manage risk better to achieve its objectives*. These efforts should complement efforts by Reviewed OUs, which must similarly use OER report findings to inform the risks and internal control deficiencies that they identify each year as part of their Risk Profile exercise and/or Financial Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) certification process. For additional information on these processes and the ERM governance structure, see **ADS 596, Management's Responsibility for Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control**.

XIII. ANNEXES

a. Annex A–Scope of Work (SOW) Template

During Phase One (see **Section VIII**), the OER Team must develop an SOW that provides a roadmap for all of the elements of a well-crafted review. The template below describes each of the required elements in the SOW.

For examples of past SOWs, the OER Team should contact the OER Secretariat.

SOW TEMPLATE

[OU Name]
[Date]

1. Background: Provide a brief synopsis of the OU's current profile and situation (e.g., budget and staff size, past and future trend information, major programs and new initiatives, status of Country Development Cooperation Strategy [CDCS)] and Integrated Country Strategy, major management challenges related to program and operations support, perceived opportunities, etc).

2. OER Purpose and Audience: Briefly state the purpose of the OER, highlighting the triggers and any other special considerations that drove the decision to commission it. Clearly indicate who the primary audience is for the review.

3. Key Stakeholders: Identify key stakeholders from whom the OER will seek input and how each stakeholder will inform a high-priority question or issue contained in the SOW. For example, if the OU is a Regional Mission, client Missions would likely be a key stakeholder. If the OU is a Mission that relies on regional support, the Regional Mission would likely be a key stakeholder. If the OU is a B/IO, Missions and other U.S. Government agencies may be stakeholders.

4. Key Questions by Focus Area: List and categorize three to four key focus areas and related questions to be answered by issue or function (e.g., information technology, financial management, facilities and space, and staffing).

5. Analytical Methods: Describe the types of business analysis methods the OER Team will use to collect, analyze, and synthesize data to ensure an empirical basis for its findings and recommendations. See **Section VIII(b)** for additional guidance. Also see **Section XIII(b)** for an illustrative template.

6. Team Participation and Roles: List the proposed Team members by name and subject matter expertise. Specify the Team Lead's role, authorities, and functions. Describe administrative and logistical responsibilities for OER Team members (e.g., collecting and providing background documents, scheduling interviews and consultations remotely and in-office, and administrative and logistical support). Indicate whether there is a need for external expertise to fulfill the needs of the OER (e.g., facilitator or report preparation), and if so, specify the type, source, and funding methods. For additional guidance on OER Team staffing, see **Section VII** in this Mandatory Reference.

7. Schedule: Outline the schedule and major milestones for OER Phases 1, 2 and 3 (see **Section VIII**, **Section IX**, and **Section X**, respectively).

8. Contingency Planning: Outline what the OER Team will do if it uncovers issues outside of the SOW that require immediate attention. This may include uncovering issues associated with staff morale, ethical considerations, and/or an urgent need for technical assistance that is not directly related to the OER. The contingency plan should include: a) a plan for use of applicable resources described in **Section IV(b)** in this Reference; and b) how the Team will generally delegate responsibility for addressing these matters to other stakeholders as needed.

9. Deliverables: Specify the requirements for the OER report. At a minimum, the OER report should: a) state major findings along with recommendations that are feasible, realistic, and effective; b) describe the methods used to review, analyze, and synthesize data; and c) list data sources.

10. Attachments or Special Links, as applicable: Include any checklists, survey instruments, or scorecards to complement qualitative interviews and consultations. Depending on the SOW, the checklists will vary.

b. Annex B—Illustrative OER Data Analysis Plan

Per **Section XIII(a)**, the OER Team must describe the types of business analysis methods it will use to collect, analyze, and synthesize data to ensure an empirical basis for its findings and recommendations. The OER Team should use the following template to help it think through the data it will collect, what it will use it for, and how it will analyze it. Definitions for each column are listed below the table.

<table>
<tr><th>Assessment Questions</th><th>Assessment Sub-Questions</th><th>Background Information</th><th>Sources</th><th>Analytical Methods</th><th>Task Lead</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Example Focus Area 1: Alignment Between Program Scope and Staff Resources</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Is staffing adequate in terms of numbers, distribution across offices, and mix of skills and experience to effectively achieve goals and/or new initiative aims?</td><td>What is the current state of local human resource capacity?</td><td rowspan="3">ADS 400 series; National Security Decision Directive 38; Operational Excellence Agenda priorities</td><td rowspan="3">Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups, Survey, Bureau workforce analysis, Operating Expense requests, Country Development Cooperation Strategy</td><td rowspan="3">Desk review, spreadsheet analysis, structured interviews, root problem analysis, workload analysis, fishbone analysis, basic qualitative data coding</td><td rowspan="3">Haunani Leigh Ortiz: Administrative Management Staff Officer/ Executive Officer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are staff receiving the support they need to perform well?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are program functions adequately provided?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Focus Area 2:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Focus Area 3:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Definitions for each column are as follows:

- **Assessment Questions:** This column provides the high-level questions, organized by focus area, that OER is designed to answer. Having a set of core questions makes it easier to decide what data to collect, how to analyze it, and how to report it. Note that these questions are different from the questions that are asked in an interview or focus group.

- **Assessment Sub-Questions:** This column provides subsidiary questions under each high-level question in the first column.

- **Background Information:** This column provides a list of resources to help the OER Team understand a given focus area. It might include things like Agency policies or guidance, historical context, or current events that affected the OU under Review's work, among other examples. Background information is not a source of evidence, but it is necessary for the OER Team to understand the evidence it collects.

- **Sources:** This column describes the source documents or systems of record that the OER Team will use to answer the questions identified in the first two columns. Potential sources include interviews and focus groups; surveys, checklists, and scorecards; key documents such as strategies, budgets or memos; and analysis of secondary data such as year-on-year Operating Year Budgets (OYBs), performance plan and report (PPR) data, and staffing pattern trends, among other examples.

- **Analytical Methods**: This column provides information on the types of analysis the team will likely utilize to review the sources of evidence in the previous column. Descriptions may include analytical models and/or tools (i.e. software, websites, frameworks, etc) that will be used to analyze data.

- **Task Lead:** This column names the individual(s) on the OER Team member who are responsible for leading data collection and management in a particular focus area. This enables -OER Team members to balance their OER commitments and contribute as equitably as possible.