Acquisition & Assistance Strategy Implementation Plan

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Executive Summary

This implementation plan describes the actions USAID will undertake to execute the USAID Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Strategy which recognizes the current context of the Agency and the world following the global COVID-19 pandemic. The A&A Strategy also reflects the priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration. Successful implementation of the A&A Strategy relies on a whole-of-Agency effort; from the Bureau for Management's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA) as the home of the Agency's A&A staff and policy, to the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) which is responsible for the Agency's program policy and the home of the COR/AOR Hub which strengthens Contracting and Agreement Officer Representatives' (COR/AORs) skills and overall award management, to every USAID Mission providing development and humanitarian aid around the world. This plan also outlines how USAID will monitor the implementation of the A&A Strategy, including high-level indicators, and how we will adapt to ensure its success.

This plan is focused on the work to be done during the first year of the A&A Strategy. M/OAA will review the monitoring data and hold pause and reflect sessions with key stakeholders at the one year mark to determine what actions have been taken, barriers to those that have not, and whether the actions are having the intended impact on the culture and business processes of USAID related to A&A, the staffing levels of the A&A workforce, streamlining of systems, and the ultimate goal of sustainable lasting development. USAID will develop an updated implementation plan of actions to be taken in subsequent years based on the monitoring data and this reflection.

The first objective of the A&A Strategy focuses on addressing the staffing needs of the Agency's A&A workforce, inclusive of Contracting and Agreement Officers (CO/AOs), A&A Specialists, and COR/AORs. To keep up with the Agency's growing budgets and programs we must have an appropriately sized and trained A&A workforce to design, award, and implement our programs. As of fiscal year (FY) 2022, the average USAID warranted CO/AO obligated $77.6 million in programs, compared to the average Department of Defense CO, who obligated approximately $12 million.[1] USAID's current business model with the expected future number of actions and dollars to be obligated is not sustainable with current staffing levels without significant fiduciary and reputational risk to the Agency. Hiring and retaining the A&A workforce that represent the diversity of the United States and the people we serve is our priority, and we outline the actions we will take to achieve this goal. The updated A&A Strategy acknowledges the important role of USAID's foreign service national/cooperating country national (FSN/CCN) staff in leading as A&A experts in Missions. With this implementation plan we spell out actions we will take to empower our FSN/CCN A&A staff. Analyzing the workload of the Agency's COR/AORs in order to rightsize workloads is another action USAID will take in support of the A&A Strategy. The plan also describes steps we will take to increase the A&A knowledge and skills of the collective A&A workforce.
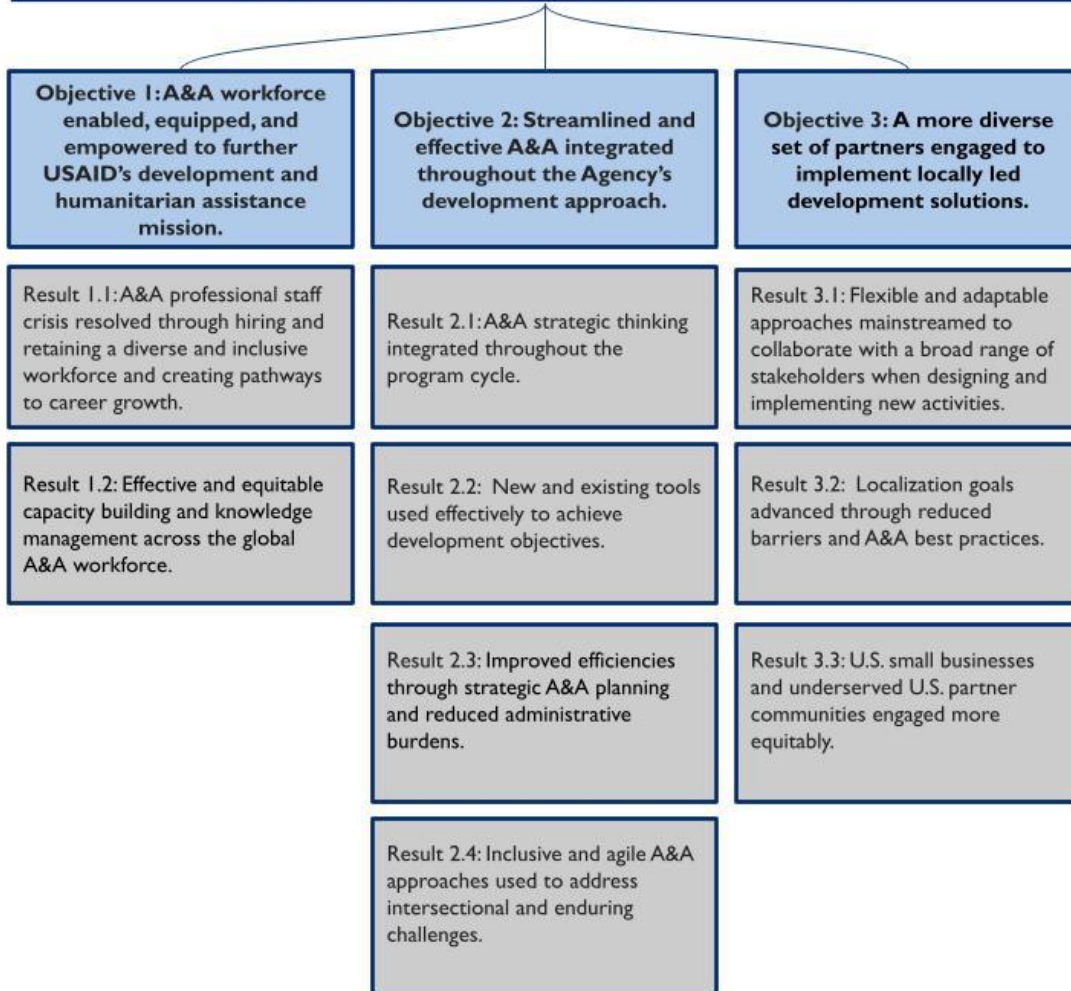
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[1] Based on the five-year period of FY 2017 through 2022. Source: USAID's Global Acquisition and Assistance System, October 2022.

Reducing bureaucratic burdens and streamlining A&A processes to increase their effectiveness and efficiency is at the core of Objective 2. This also means ensuring A&A expertise is included in the development of Agency policies and programs. Below we describe the actions that will help systems and processes meet U.S government procurement and assistance requirements while advancing adaptive program development and implementation. Because we will need to iteratively adapt and test to reach the highest levels of efficiency, this plan sometimes notes topics we will explore further for change rather than detail the exact path to be taken.

This plan also outlines the actions needed to achieve Objective 3 of the A&A Strategy by engaging a more diverse set of partners to implement locally led development solutions. Administrator Power has committed USAID to better orient our organizational culture, policies, and tools to be more responsive to the needs and priorities of local actors and communities. This A&A Strategy implementation plan focuses on providing the necessary tools for increased engagement with local organizations around the world. In addition, we spell out specific actions in support of U.S. small businesses and underserved U.S. partner communities.

As new opportunities for improving processes and systems were identified in the refresh of the 2018 A&A Strategy, USAID took early action. Annex 1 includes nearly 30 actions already taken to empower the A&A workforce, improve efficiencies in our A&A processes, and open doors to new implementing partners. Examples include the COR/AOR Hub's launch of the new COR/AOR Toolkit to provide easy-to-access information to COR/AORs on how to manage awards and the reduction in the number of reviews required for large value contracts, saving more than 200 hours of staff time per contract, as well as simple actions like opening access to knowledge resources to all USAID staff.

VISION: USAID and its partners enable sustainable, inclusive, and locally led development results through acquisition and assistance.

Objective 1: A&A workforce enabled, equipped, and empowered to further USAID's development and humanitarian assistance mission.

Objective 2: Streamlined and effective A&A integrated throughout the Agency's development approach.

Objective 3: A more diverse set of partners engaged to implement locally led development solutions.

Result 1.1: A&A professional staff crisis resolved through hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce and creating pathways to career growth.

Result 2.1: A&A strategic thinking integrated throughout the program cycle.

Result 3.1: Flexible and adaptable approaches mainstreamed to collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders when designing and implementing new activities.

Result 1.2: Effective and equitable capacity building and knowledge management across the global A&A workforce.

Result 2.2: New and existing tools used effectively to achieve development objectives.

Result 3.2: Localization goals advanced through reduced barriers and A&A best practices.

Result 2.3: Improved efficiencies through strategic A&A planning and reduced administrative burdens.

Result 3.3: U.S. small businesses and underserved U.S. partner communities engaged more equitably.

Result 2.4: Inclusive and agile A&A approaches used to address intersectional and enduring challenges.

Objective 1: A&A workforce enabled, equipped, and empowered to advance USAID's development and humanitarian mission.

1.1 A&A professional staff crisis resolved through hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce, and creating pathways to career growth.

- **Undertake Workforce and Workload Analysis:** We know from preliminary analysis that the Agency's A&A staff are stretched thin and on average obligate four times the amount of funding obligated by CO/AO staff at the Department of Defense. To fill the immediate staffing gap, USAID is already taking action to hire more A&A staff.
  - To better understand the Agency's staffing needs and how to best utilize their unique skill sets, USAID will undertake a comprehensive review of A&A workloads (e.g., number of active awards, actions made, annual obligations, and complexity of portfolio using weighted factors) and benchmark against historical Agency trends and other U.S. government departments and agencies with similar portfolios. It will also analyze tasks completed by all hiring and contracting mechanisms (foreign service (FS), civil service (CS), FSN/CCN, U.S. personal service contractor (USPSC), third country national personal services contractor (TCNPSC), institutional support contractor (ISC)), overlapping roles (CO/AO, COR/AOR, EXO), and authorities (warrants) to inform hiring. To increase retention of USAID A&A staff -- and benefit from their knowledge and the expensive training investments made by USAID -- the analysis will also further explore why valuable A&A staff leave the backstop or the Agency for other employment, and the tools needed for retaining them. M/OAA will use the outcomes of the workforce analysis to inform other actions initiated as part of Objective 1.

> **Monitoring Indicators:**
> - Number of warranted A&A staff (foreign service, civil service, and Personal Services Contractors)
> - Number of administrative warranted FSN/CCN A&A specialists
> - Average number of actions per warranted A&A staff member
> - Average value of obligations per warranted A&A staff member
> - Average number of awards managed per active COR/AOR

- **Hire Right Mix and Number of A&A Staff:** Given the current shortages of A&A staff as indicated by open vacancies and preliminary analysis, the Agency is moving forward with hiring of new staff.
  - USAID currently has 182 FS CO/AOs worldwide, of which, approximately 132 are warranted. Hire and train warranted FS CO/AOs (BS-93) towards a goal of 195 by 2026.
    - Work with Agency leadership, regional bureaus, Mission leadership, and EXOs to preserve seats for CO/AOs in Missions, with emphasis on junior A&A FSOs (C3s) to ensure staff can gain the experience and training they need to rebuild the backstop.
  - USAID currently has 109 A&A Civil Service personnel in its M/OAA Washington Operations Division, of which 59 are warranted (i.e., CO/AOs). Hire Civil Service A&A staff (known as 1102s within the U.S. government) towards a goal of 198 by 2026.

- ○ Update and disseminate Benchmark Guide for GS-1102 to help staff to understand the requirements for promotion in ladder positions.
- ○ As appropriate, facilitate opportunities for A&A professionals in the M/OAA Washington Operations Division to work on upcoming awards for other branches and divisions to gain experience on the variety of A&A actions needed to meet the promotion benchmarks.
- ○ Expand use of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA)-sensitive hiring tools in M/OAA to maintain a diverse and representative A&A professional staff.
- Retain and Make Effective Use of Staff:
  - ○ Increase opportunities for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists by creating positions with higher salary and responsibility levels. Actions include providing example position descriptions at the FSN 12 and 13 grades for A&A staff to Missions and working with Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM), the Agency Foreign Service National Advocacy Council, the OAA FSN/CCN Management Council, and EXOs to understand and address barriers.
  - ○ Update the FSN/CCN administrative warrant program to streamline the process and expand FSN/CCN Administrative CO/AOs' responsibilities in line with the new USAID [Risk Appetite Statement](). Updates include, *but are not limited to,* documenting the removal of the cap on two warranted FSN/CCN A&A staff per Mission, expanding the responsibilities authorized, including the authority to approve grants under contracts and subawards under assistance instruments. In addition, instead of a separate biannual assessment of the FSN/CCN Administrative CO/AOs' performance related to the warrant, the assessment will be included in the FSN/CCN ACO/AAOs annual performance evaluation.
  - ○ Increase the number of FSN/CCNs with administrative warrants from the FY 2022 starting point of 19 to a goal of 38 by the end of FY 2023.
  - ○ Develop a program in coordination with the OAA FSN/CCN Management Council that facilitates temporary duty travel (known as TDY) exchange opportunities, specific to the FSN/CCN A&A workforce.
  - ○ Initiate series of Federal Executive Institute Leadership Program courses for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists.
  - ○ Explore administrative pay incentives, pay flexibilities, and other incentives for retention and recruitment of A&A staff in operational roles. **Short term:** Use existing USAID authorities to provide incentives to our A&A staff. **Long term:** Seek any new authorities needed to complement the existing authorities in hiring and retaining A&A staff.
  - ○ Facilitate M/OAA Washington Operations staff taking details in other offices/bureaus, TDYs, and interoffice details and equitable implementation. The intent of the details and TDYs is to help A&A professionals increase their skills, expand their knowledge of USAID, and strengthen connections within the office and with other bureaus and Missions increasing staff effectiveness. In addition, staff within Washington Operations identified the ability to take details and TDYs as key to their desire to continue to serve as a CO/AO.

- Advocate for M/OAA Washington Operations to be allocated Operating Expense funds to carry out staff TDY site visits and inspections of programs as part of effective monitoring and evaluation of program performance and as required by federal regulations. This effort has been successful for FY23 and is intended to continue at the same or increased funding levels in future fiscal years.
    - Update and disseminate USAID's permanent warrant program in line with the Agency's revised Risk Appetite Statement.
    - Strongly encourage all M/OAA staff to take training courses in soft skills, communication, and anti-racism to improve their effectiveness and advance their own professional development (examples include the Respectful, Inclusive, and Safe Environments – RISE – seminars and Harvard Business Series).
- **Prepare Staff for A&A Work**: The A&A workforce expressed frustration around expectations not being aligned between and among staff. This includes the need for staff to fully understand, be trained, and embrace their responsibilities in designing and procuring/awarding new awards and completing administration requirements like annual Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) reports.
    - To streamline award-making operations, raise awareness of existing authorities to Mission Directors, EXOs, and other authorized staff. Examples of existing authorities include the award of agreements to Public International Organizations, which can be performed by Mission Directors, Assistant Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators, or Office Directors.

1.2 Effective and equitable capacity building and knowledge management across the global A&A workforce.

- **Develop A&A Workforce Skills and Knowledge:** Continue and expand ongoing training for CO/AOs and COR/AORs. Federal Acquisition Institute's (FAI) CSOD, the U.S. government-wide platform for the federal acquisition workforce, coordinates and provides more than 375 training courses including those required for CO/AO, COR/AOR, and Program/Project Management (P/PM) certifications. The M/OAA/Professional Development and Training (PDT) Division's Center for Continuous Learning (the established Teaching School for USAID staff within FAI) develops curricula and establishes specific training programs for the CO/AO, COR/AOR and P/PM staff such as the Fundamentals and Innovators Programs as well as more advanced subject matter such as the Co-creation Facilitation Cohort program. PDT also includes assistance-related training in this government-wide platform. In addition, USAID has Agency-specific courses that focus on everything from co-creation to private sector engagement, to localization, to detection of fraud. PDT also helps to increase A&A staff skills through:

> Regarding the A&A Labs: "It's a lot of work to get people together just for one small session. There should be one dedicated person (75% of their job to manage Lab) to drive it in a more methodical way."
> - A&A field staff member

- *Spotlight on Innovation* webinars during which A&A professionals present examples and lessons learned on streamlining and innovative techniques to reduce costs and time associated with procurement and assistance actions.
- *Wednesdays with PDT* is an office hour session in which PDT provides information on general PDT information, certification, training, FAI CSOD, as well as specific sessions on co-creation and other relevant topics.
- Provide coaching, training and mentoring services for A&A processes such as co-creation, co-creation facilitation, consulting on adaptive management techniques and approaches to shock response.
- Maintain communication with the A&A workforce through regular PDT newsletters, announcements, Agency Notices and PDT intranet pages. Information includes updates regarding professional development, training, certification, consultation resources, FAI CSOD and training courses and other resources.
- Maintain and establish relationships with domestic and regional training centers. This allows PDT to conduct gap analyses throughout the A&A workforce and provide customized training packages for USAID Missions, bureaus, and independent offices.
  - PDT is also reviewing and enhancing the P/PM certification program to align with USAID focused work in the COR/AOR and P/PM area.
  - Implement the Office of Federal Procurement Policy and the FAI's new U.S. government-wide policy for the Agency's A&A workforce in attaining and maintaining certification and continuous learning under the new Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Professional Certification requirements effective February 2023. Establish new continuous learning opportunities and professional development paths within the new FAC-C Professional Certification program for A&A staff.
- The PPL **COR/AOR Hub,** as the institutional home for COR/AORs, leads the capacity building efforts of USAID's award monitoring and administration professionals, which includes developing a comprehensive training curriculum and developing new training for CORs/AORs with a focus on the specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities required at USAID. The COR/AOR Hub will deliver relevant and practical resources and training for COR/AORs on emerging trends and Agency priorities:
  - Initiate a new COR/AOR Mentoring program hosted by the COR/AOR Hub to provide 25 new COR/AORs (those with less than 2 years of COR/AOR experience) regular mentoring for 6 months with a seasoned COR/AOR mentor. The criteria for COR/AOR mentors are that they are Level II COR certified, have at least five years COR/AOR experience, are actively serving as a COR or AOR on at least one award, and are vetted by HCTM and their CO/AO in order to participate in the mentoring program.
    - Continue facilitation of the **COR/AOR Community of Practice,** which boasts more than 1,500 subscribers and is a virtual community across various A&A functions through peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. The Community of Practice also facilitates the Hub's quarterly event series, COR/AOR Mythbusters, an interactive series tailored towards community needs with an

average regular attendance of ~700 participants. The COR/AOR Hub is strengthening the COR/AOR Help Desk and Community of Practice moderator function so that when a question related to policy is raised, the individual with the question is referred to the Help Desk, which answers policy-related questions for COR/AORs.

■ Maintain the **COR/AOR Hub's ProgramNet page** as a curated space for additional peer-to-peer knowledge exchange between COR/AORs and as a knowledge management database of tools, guidance, news, and updates for the COR/AOR community.

○ Ensure that the training needs of the COR/AOR community are met in alignment with the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act (PMIAA). Toward this end, in FY22 the Hub is conducting a COR/AOR inventory exercise and a gap analysis to better understand COR/AOR training needs utilizing the government-wide COR/AOR competencies and the PMIAA standards for program implementation. Simultaneously, the COR/AOR Hub is re-purposing and developing new training on topics related to award administration and monitoring.

● Set up Staff for Success:

○ Update relevant position descriptions to include COR/AOR competencies. Agency stakeholders (M/OAA, HCTM, and the PPL COR/AOR Hub) will collaborate to incorporate competencies and COR/AOR responsibilities in position descriptions for CS staff as guided by the forthcoming Office of Personnel Management job series study.

○ Pilot an M/OAA onboarding program for new staff. The onboarding program will serve M/OAA staff in Washington, with an option to be piloted in one to two Missions. Given the remote work of many A&A staff, new employees are having an even greater challenge learning their roles and integrating into their teams. We will review the program after one year to determine how to improve and whether to expand to A&A staff in more USAID Missions.

○ Initiate series of A&A Task Specific Trainings: short, concise presentations on A&A documents that will give a clear orientation to the document, why it is needed, and details into specific sections that are often poorly understood. This will be a form of on-the-job training where staff will learn skills on a specific subject, and be able to immediately use the information provided in their daily work.

○ Address gaps in knowledge and expectations for Activity Planners and Design Teams. PDT and PPL will work together to align and update existing guidance and training and disseminate broadly.

○ Seek additional funding to operationalize the A&A Labs to promote innovation and knowledge sharing amongst A&A staff. The regional A&A Labs are a critical resource to A&A Mission-based staff as they promote intra-regional sharing of lessons learned and are a key information-sharing conduit between Washington and the field.

○ Expand use of existing A&A Lab-facilitated coaching program whereby experienced CO/AOs coach design teams on specific innovative A&A processes and mechanisms including Highest Technically Rated Offeror with Reasonable Price, Phased Acquisition, Renewal Grants, and other new and innovative techniques. See FAI's Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations for additional examples.

Objective 2: Streamlined and effective A&A integrated throughout the Agency's development approach.

2.1 A&A strategic thinking integrated throughout the program cycle.

- **Align Agency policies** related to planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming (ADS 201) and A&A policy (ADS 300 series).
    - Review and better integrate USAID's A&A and development theory processes to eliminate confusion among staff regarding roles resulting in better development outcomes with our partners. This includes M/OAA's active engagement in drafting and clearance of ADS 201 revision and associated training courses.
    - Share Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) best practices to promote A&A professionals joining COR/AORs on site visits. A team approach to implementation and monitoring reinforces the Agency's commitment to Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting. Promote and distribute examples of existing Mission Orders that explicitly call for OAA inclusion in site visits, and promote this practice among field-based A&A staff and Program Offices.

> **Monitoring Indicators:**
> - Percentage of USAID staff that indicate OAA is a strategic partner in the Agency's internal annual Customer Service Survey (CSS)
> - Number of staff hours saved through automation, streamlining, and reduced burdens

2.2 New and existing tools used effectively to achieve development objectives.

- **Align and Organize existing A&A tools:** Harmonize, align, and fill gaps in tools, guides, templates, and samples as needed, and store all resources in a single, shared, and searchable location. Coordinate with PPL's COR/AOR Hub to align guidance for A&A professionals and COR/AORs
- Use technology to streamline our A&A processes:
    - Create automated solutions for repetitive administrative tasks to save time for the A&A workforce. Explore processes for automations that already show promise across other USG Agencies that can be adopted by USAID, including mass modifications.
        - We have already piloted the automated creation of Negotiation Memos at a small scale. Once rolled out, this automation could save the Agency $1.5 million in staff time annually to focus on other higher-value work.
    - M/OAA is currently partnering with the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation and the Management Bureau's Chief Information Office (M/CIO) on an enterprise system for Customer Relationship Management that will include a feature for the intake and management of concept papers. In the interim, M/OAA will also explore using existing digital tools to assist in concept paper management.

○ Continue updates to A&A systems such as the Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System (ASIST), the A&A Plan, and the Global Acquisition and Assistance System (GLAAS) to ensure the technology is as effective and efficient as possible. Survey the A&A Plan (Development Information System) and GLAAS user communities to solicit feedback on A&A systems' functionality (e.g. what works well, pain points, etc.) and to collect suggestions regarding desired improvements, and use survey findings to make the tools as robust as possible for the A&A workforce.

○ Provide operational ADS documents in writable format (e.g., Google or Word) to USAID staff for ease of use. Examples include but are not limited to: AOR/COR Designation Letters, Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS), Fixed Amount Award Entity Checklist.

Shifting the Mindset:

For successful implementation, the A&A Strategy will require a culture change within USAID. A&A professionals will need to change the way they see themselves as well as how the rest of the Agency perceives them. Fostering collaborative and trusting relationships between all USAID staff and ensuring that technical and A&A staff recognize each other as critical partners in the Agency's development and humanitarian mission will be key. To shift current biases and behaviors and to increase A&A literacy throughout the Agency, USAID will take the following actions:

- Review language used in new official Agency documents regarding A&A processes and staff and remove negative terms including any inferences that A&A policy is a burden.
- Encourage A&A professionals to collaborate with technical staff to develop innovative solutions, when faced with roadblocks.
- Hold A&A sessions during every New Employee Orientation to ensure new USAID staff are introduced to basic A&A concepts and know where to find more information when needed.
- Work with other bureaus and independent offices to explicitly indicate in position descriptions of new staff that may fill COR/AOR roles, what those roles entail.
- Communications campaign with staff testimonials of positive collaboration between A&A professionals and other staff.
- Initiate an onboarding program for M/OAA staff that sets the culture of the organization and orients staff to A&A resources.
- Encourage A&A professionals to embrace the Agency's new Risk Appetite Statement.

2.3 Improved efficiencies through strategic A&A planning and reduced administrative burdens.

- **Burden reduction for USAID staff** to allow A&A workforce to spend more time engaging strategically throughout the Program Cycle:

○ Explore revision of ADS 302 to streamline the Grants Under Contract approval process so that awards at or below a certain threshold can be approved at the CO level with General Counsel or Resident Legal Officer

review, and awards above the threshold would come to the Head of the Contracting Activity at the Missions or USAID Headquarters, as appropriate.

- Issue and share widely with CO/AOs updated guidance and best practices for limiting requests for financial documentation to what is strictly required and avoiding unnecessary cost analysis. New or updated guidance, templates, or training may cover topics such as proposal cost estimates, financial documentation requirements and reviews, budget negotiation, audit support, and price and cost analysis.
- Establish Regional Indirect Cost and Closeout Support Units that will specialize in full-cost recovery and will be housed in regional missions. The Regional Units will comprise FSN/CCNs who are talented and interested in all aspects of cost recovery and closeout. An ISC will train and mentor the FSN/CCNs in close collaboration with M/OAA's Overhead, Special Cost and Closeout branch. This effort will significantly advance both localization and FSN/CCN empowerment by providing much needed services to the Missions on a timely basis.
- Engage the Office of the General Counsel regarding a review and streamlining of the approval process for use of code 935 (See ADS 310 Source and Nationality Requirements for Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID).
- Engage M/CFO to clarify and streamline forward funding requirements and potentially link to the [Connecting Design to Procurement and Implementation](#)'s Forward Funding Checklist in the ADS 602 chapter.
- Encourage the use of General Services Administration's OASIS mechanisms for ISC staffing and MEL contracts, given the benefits this provides in terms of taxpayer savings, easing the workload on the A&A workforce, and providing opportunities to U.S. small businesses.

2.4 Inclusive and agile A&A approaches used to address intersectional and enduring challenges.

- **Develop A&A resources to address enduring challenges within awards:** USAID's recently released Policy Framework sets out complex and overlapping challenges that have generational impacts.
  - Create and publish adaptive management guidance for both A&A on M/OAA's Business Process Improvement page. USAID must be able to adapt often because it's a matter of when, not if, a disaster strikes. We need to be prepared with tools and resources so that USAID is equipped with adaptive tools like pause and reflect, refine and implement, the adaptive contract types outlined in Procurement Executive Bulletin 2014-01, and available Expedited Procurement Packages; especially in contexts with greater instability to allow ongoing awards to quickly pivot if and where there is a disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other crises.
  - Encourage A&A staff to use environmentally friendly solutions and sustainable acquisition methods contained in FAR Part 23 and complete accurate GLAAS and Federal Procurement Data System reporting. See [PEB 2021-01](#) for further guidance.
  - Update guidance on 22 CFR 216 Environmental Compliance language for solicitations and awards, and review the feasibility of incorporating climate resiliency as part of the environmental compliance process.

○ Explore the incorporation of green procurement tools into the Agency's business process, such as the green procurement compilation managed by the General Services Administration.

Objective 3: A more diverse set of partners engaged to implement locally led development solutions.

- **Expand WorkwithUSAID platform:**
  - ○ Create a live feed of USAID funding opportunities from SAM.gov and Grants.gov on the WorkwithUSAID platform. This technology enhancement will allow organizations seeking funding from USAID to see the full inventory of solicitations in one place.
  - ○ Create a forum for opportunities where USAID's prime partners can post subaward and subcontract opportunities. While some USAID Missions already do this, we are implementing an Agency-wide solution.
  - ○ Launch a partnerships pathway tool that directs partners to additional resources based on their responses to a few simple questions about who they are. For example, if a U.S. small business takes the short quiz, they will be directed to USAID's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) resources. This tool will help to better connect new organizations to Agency resources.
  - ○ Automate the USAID's Unsolicited Proposal/Application Process. This will significantly improve the Agency's ability to manage unsolicited proposals and applications by providing an automated approach to what is currently a decentralized and time-intensive process.
  - ○ Create a Private Sector Engagement (PSE) digital front door to integrate resources focused on private sector partners traditionally not working in the international development market into the WorkWithUSAID platform.

3.1 Flexible and adaptable approaches mainstreamed to collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders when designing and implementing new activities.

- **Revise ADS 303**, including but not limited to the following actions:
  - ○ **Update the Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS)** to align with the new Risk Appetite Statement and the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy, clarifying that the NUPAS should not be used as a pass/fail test, but as a tool to help AOs make informed decisions about partnership and enhance the ability of the partner to implement the activity. Provide clear guidance to Missions about what offices should be involved in the NUPAS. In the meantime, clarify to AOs that the NUPAS is non-mandatory and AOs may conduct a similar analysis that achieves the same objectives as the NUPAS.
  - ○ Explore simplifying or clarifying the **renewal award process** (e.g., "risk assessment requirements" waived for the renewal years).
  - ○ **Reduce pre-award risk assessment requirements for Simplified Grants** (up to $250,000) to be similar to the process for Fixed Amount Awards.
    - Burden reduction for partners:

- Adapt training and remind staff of actions that can be taken to reduce burdensome requirements. Examples include using Phased Assistance/Acquisition and requiring only concept papers upfront to reduce the time and effort required from partners during initial stages of an application/proposal; simplifying or reducing the number of evaluation or merit review criteria to make it easier for partners to address all criteria; and designing engagements with partners in ways that minimize costs.

  > **Monitoring Indicators**
  > - Percentage of obligations to local partners as a share of USAID total obligations
  > - Number of new partners
  > - Percentage of awards that are fixed price contracts and fixed amount awards as a share of USAID total awards
  > - Percentage of obligations through fixed price contracts and fixed amount awards as a share of total obligations

  - Coordinate with USAID operating units to co-design implementing mechanisms that provide organizational capacity strengthening for new and local organizations (e.g. financial management, administrative, and MEL) that can be easily accessed by USAID operating units.
- Develop staff PSE knowledge:
  - Identify a cadre of A&A staff, who will receive training in the PSE competencies, to serve as resources to other A&A staff. The PSE cadre is not intended to supplant the CO/AO working on a particular PSE award or contract, but instead serve as a resource to answer questions related to A&A PSE.
  - The Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation's PSE Hub will set up a PSE Consultation Desk to answer PSE related questions, including A&A related, from USAID staff.
  - Clarify the type of communication that is possible with all firms and organizations by developing new guidance that would update USAID Procurement Executive's Bulletin 16-03, and reference the associated "Myth-Busters" issued by the U.S. Office of Federal Procurement Policy. It will inform the A&A workforce on the types of communication recommended throughout the acquisition design, solicitation, and award process, including communication to unsuccessful offerors, all while ensuring appropriate care is taken to not provide an unfair competitive advantage to any entity.

3.2 Localization goals advanced through reduced barriers and A&A best practices.

- "Pay-for-results" awards (such as firm fixed price contracts or fixed amount awards) can substantially reduce burdens on CO/AOs, COR/AORs, and financial management (OFM) staff as well as open doors for technically strong local partners unable to meet U.S. government financial standards.
  - Strengthen the Agency's capacity to make pay-for-results awards, including educating all USAID staff, not just the A&A workforce, on when a "pay-for-results" model is appropriate and how to create flexible awards with appropriate milestones.

- Provide tools to A&A staff and Activity Planners to operationalize the 50 percent local voices metric. Examples may include contributions to the Localization Playbook, guidance on issuing requests for information (RFIs) and holding Industry Days, co-designing with local partners, and guidance on inviting local actors to sit on the Technical Evaluation Committee as non-voting members.
- Expand exceptions to delay or adjust requirements and/or provide assistance to prospective partners to register on SAM.gov. Many local organizations find registering to receive a Unique Entity Identity (UEI) on the U.S. government site a major barrier, due to recent system changes and new requirements, such as the need to translate certain business documents into English. USAID will continue to engage in inter-agency dialogue to explore additional operational, regulatory, and/or statutory changes that would allow further exceptions and flexibilities for both assistance and acquisition related to obtaining UEIs and SAM registration.
- Improve local partners' ability to recover their full costs of implementing awards by expanding existing and introducing new indirect cost recovery options. For the vast majority of small, new, and local partners a formal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) is not a practical mechanism for recovering indirect costs given the amount of time and effort needed to establish and maintain NICRAs. To address this challenge, the Agency has developed and is pursuing recommendations to expand the CO/AO financial negotiation toolkit, including:
    - Pursue an increase to the current "de minimis" rate for assistance awards in order to better meet local partners' cost recovery requirements.
    - Introduce a "de minimis" rate for acquisition awards similar to the existing 10 percent rate authorized for assistance.
    - Expand the use of advance agreements to negotiate fixed amounts for indirect costs under cost-reimbursement acquisition mechanisms (and in alignment with the existing flexibility available under assistance).
- Address English language as a barrier:
    - Expand Mission efforts to translate assistance solicitations into local languages (as a courtesy with English versions controlling). Explore options to assist local partners in translating applications from local languages to English.
    - Provide courtesy versions of assistance Mandatory and Required as Applicable Standard Provisions in Arabic, French, and Spanish on WorkwithUSAID.
    - Translate more of the WorkwithUSAID website and resources to local languages to engage new local partners.
- Improve the Agency's ability to track subawards and subcontracts and increase fulfillment of prime partner applications and proposals related to their commitments to prospective subrecipients and subcontractors.
    - Remind USAID prime partners of the requirement to report subawards and subcontracts in the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS)[2] and provide training and tools on how to use the system.

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[2] Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2002 requirement

- ○ Remind Agency staff the importance of tracking subaward and subcontract data. Promote best practices for USAID to internally track subawards and subcontracts data accurately in order to meet localization targets.
  - ○ Develop and disseminate a best practices guide for prime partners on how to engage equitably and transparently with organizations with which they may partner through subawards and subcontracts.
- ● Communicate Accurate Procurement Timelines for engaging local organizations:
  - ○ Develop new procurement action lead time (PALT) metrics for awards targeting local organizations, and broadly communicate the revised metrics across the Agency. This shift is necessary because efforts to increase local voices in the award process take time in order to increase the durability of development outcomes and involve local actors. Operating units should plan for this reality, and extended PALT timelines will give them the flexibility to do so.

3.3 U.S. small businesses and underserved U.S. partner communities engaged more equitably.

- ○ Develop and promulgate an outreach toolbox with common documents and procedures for marketing to small businesses. This toolbox would be marketed to Activity planners. For example, develop Industry Day templates for agendas, registration in-take and tracking, run of show guidance, standardized talking points, sample SAM.gov announcements, and survey templates. These proposed templates will be stored in a central repository accessible to USAID staff worldwide. Other market research tools may include RFIs, sources sought notices, and other business opportunity announcement templates.
- ○ Create and promulgate job aids that collate the expedited procedures to award a contract to small businesses under various socioeconomic programs/categories, such as historically underutilized business zone, small and disadvantaged business, and women-owned small business. For example, there could be an 8(a) Sole Source job aid that includes instructions on how to plan, prepare, solicit, evaluate and award a contract through the streamlined 8(a) sole source process.
- ○ Clarify to the A&A workforce when and where subcontracting plans are and are not required. Highlight the opportunities for contracting U.S. small businesses overseas through an M/OAA At a Glance (internal USAID newsletter) article, Spotlight on Innovation, etc.
- ○ Remind CO and COR staff of the importance of accurately evaluating contractors' good faith efforts in CPARS related to their subcontracting with small businesses in accordance with their subcontracting plans.

Annex 1: Completed Actions

Objective 1: A&A workforce enabled, equipped, and empowered to advance USAID's development mission.

1. Hired an additional 37 unwarranted new foreign service and civil service A&A professionals in FY 2022.
2. Approved an additional 34 civil service positions, including positions funded through the Ukraine Supplemental and Disaster Surge Authority to direct staff to the areas of greatest programmatic need.
3. Launched a program to hire spouses (or other eligible family members of foreign service officers) as unwarranted A&A Specialists in coordination with the Department of State, with 10 staff currently in the program.
4. Piloted a program to waive the waiting period required for newly-immigrated A&A staff to receive facility access clearance to hire them in Washington more quickly. Have brought on board six experienced former FSN/CCN A&A specialists to support Washington-based A&A functions.
5. Developed and implemented a methodology for prioritizing Backstop 93 (foreign service CO) bid positions according to portfolio profiles. Factors used for analysis include portfolio value, average annual obligations, active award count and other weighted factors such as whether the Mission/country has a PEPFAR program or a Development Objective Agreement, and whether the Mission provides A&A support to other countries in the region.
6. Provided access to the "Ask M/OAA Policy" Google group to non-warranted A&A staff. This important resource on Agency A&A issues is now available to all A&A staff to view questions and answers on various A&A topics.
7. Eliminated the elective course requirements for staff to obtain their level 1 warrant, the authority for A&A staff to make awards. This saves an average of 64 hours per CO/AO, amounting to about 2,880 hours saved per year for the staff to focus on other important work.
8. M/OAA's Professional Development and Training Division's Center for Continuous Learning developed new courses for staff to learn about the latest best practices in A&A. As of January 2023, there were more than 100 training courses on USAID-specific topics.
9. Developed interactive Phased Acquisition and Co-creation toolkits for A&A workforce.

Objective 2: Streamlined and effective A&A integrated throughout the Agency's development approach.

10. Began holding A&A intro sessions during New Employee Orientations to introduce USAID staff to A&A concepts. Holding these sessions helps new staff begin with an appreciation for the role of A&A and award management within USAID's development and humanitarian mission.
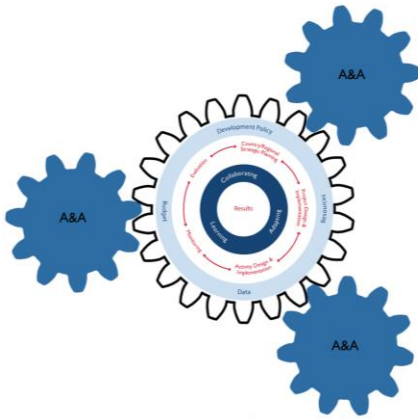
11. The COR/AOR Hub launched a new user-friendly COR/AOR Toolkit to provide easy-to-access useful information to COR/AORs on administering and monitoring awards. The Toolkit provides links to official guidance and resources, examples, and tips for COR/AORs to navigate their roles. The Toolkit is meant to supplement the COR/AOR certification requirements and be a one-stop reference resource for all COR/AORs and will not substitute for Federal regulations or Agency policy.

12. Launched the COR/AOR Help Desk which provides "just in time" support to Agency COR/AORs who submit questions for expert and researched responses within 48 hours.

13. Streamlined the review process for high-value (>$25 million) contracts reducing the number of required reviews from three to two, saving more than 200 hours of staff time per contract and reducing the award process by a minimum of 10 days.

14. Clarified to USAID partner base and staff that organizations do NOT need to be registered in SAM.gov to submit concept notes.

15. Clarified to USAID staff that local entities CAN submit concept notes in their local language.

16. Created and disseminated a new Standard Provision to apply the Modified Foreign Assistance waiver relating to Section 889 to assistance awards. AOs no longer need to include a Special Award Requirement as it has been replaced with this new standard provision.

17. Issued guidance reminding Agency staff that PSC contracts can be awarded for up to five years as appropriate, thereby eliminating the need for competing new contracts annually or for contract modifications to exercise the options years.

18. Issued revised ADS 309man, providing guidance for telework/remote work specifically for PSCs.

19. Developed a consolidated hub of A&A resources on the Business Processes Improvement (BPI) intranet page.

20. New guidance released through Procurement Executive Bulletin (PEB) 20-02 on Advisory Phased Acquisition Processes, which is shown to be 97% effective to reduce the offeror pool to the most competitive offerors for Phase II.

21. Released AAPD 22-01, to simplify issues related to the Defense Base Act (DBA) Insurance and to eliminate the need for multiple contract modifications to address any changes. USAID was also able to significantly reduce the cost of obtaining DBA insurance.

22. To implement USAID's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) Agency Priority Goal, USAID made tools available to the USAID A&A workforce, which can be found on the DEIA Resources intranet page under "Streamlining the Proposal Application and Evaluation Process - training, tools, and resources."

23. Adapted systems to provide a fully paperless acquisition process. Since launching in May 2021, E-Sign has been used to sign more than $3.2 billion in Total Estimated Cost of awards, and by more than 150 unique partners. By using E-Sign, M/OAA estimates it has reduced USAID's environmental impact by 8,000 pounds of wood, 24,000 gallons of water, and 19,000 pounds of carbon that would have been associated with printing and scanning in previous document transactions.

Objective 3: A more diverse set of partners engaged to implement locally led development solutions.

24. Updated ADS 303 to conform to other ADS chapters or Agency policy; align with statutory requirements; and reduce burdens. Key changes include:
    a. Revised the Agreement Officer's Representative designation policies and procedures, reflecting changes to the FAI CSOD system clarifying eligibility criteria.
    b. Reminded Agreement Officers they must not require programmatic progress reports that exceed reporting requirements in 2 CFR 200.329, e.g. daily, weekly, or monthly reports.
    c. Removed the previous $5 million cap to award values under ADS 303.3.6.5 under restricted eligibility based on pre-approved conditions.

35 percent
increase in new USAID awards using co-creation in FY 2022.

    d. Clarified that reviewers from outside the U.S. government may also participate in the review of applications, though a majority of committee members must be USAID direct-hire or Personal Services Contractor staff.

25. Launched WorkwithUSAID.org to address the current information asymmetry between existing and potential new and non-traditional partners and provide clear and accessible information on how to navigate the USAID partnership process.
    a. The "Learn More" checklist has been translated into eight foreign languages: Arabic, Burmese, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese, to help local partners better understand the step-by-step partnership process.
26. USAID's Business Forecast, named the best in all of the U.S. government for the third year in a row, provides an advanced look at all up-comining funding opportunities around the world, helping to level the playing field for new and local partners.
27. Held bi-monthly WorkwithUSAID webinars to explain Agency processes and respond to current and potential partner questions.
28. Provided robust communication regarding new USAID funding opportunities including daily posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.
29. Provided SAM.gov support and registration flexibilities:
    a. For both A&A, increased awareness of existing exceptions and when they can be utilized. See **AAPD 22-03** ("UEI/SAM Registration Exception for Acquisition Awards") and **AAPD 22-04** ("UEI/SAM Registration Exception for Assistance Awards: 2 CFR 25.110(c)(2)(iii)").
    b. Initiated assistance for USAID staff working with prospective partners to receive their Unique Entity Identifier via SAM.gov, the U.S. government System for Award Management, and issued guidance to USAID CO/AOs and COR/AORs on how to request time sensitive or urgent entity validation assistance.
30. Lowered barriers to using fixed amount awards by creating a process to renew the fixed amount awards period of performance beyond the previous three-year limit, therefore giving new partners a longer time frame to achieve results and strengthen their capacities.

Annex 2: Detailed Implementation Plan

To coordinate and track the robust implementation of the A&A Strategy, USAID will use a detailed implementation plan that will provide a quick overview on the status of actions, budget (if any), how the action is being messaged both internally and publicly, deliverables regarding individual actions, and expected timelines for completion.

Annex 3: Monitoring and Learning Plan

USAID will monitor the implementation of the A&A Strategy through 12 high-level indicators linked to the three objectives, USAID will publicly report on the following high-level indicators:

- Objective 1: A&A workforce enabled, equipped, and empowered to advance USAID's development mission.
  - Number of warranted A&A staff (FS, CS, and PSC)
    - *Why this indicator?* USAID is currently in the process of rebuilding the warranted CO/AO workforce. Having an adequate number of CO/AOs, as outlined in Objective 1, is the most important condition that must be met for the A&A workforce to be enabled, equipped, and empowered.
  - Number of administrative warranted FSN/CCN A&A specialists
    - *Why this indicator?* USAID is seeking to empower local FSN/CCN A&A specialists to lead in the A&A process. This indicator will monitor our progress toward giving more FSN/CCN A&A specialists the authority to independently manage A&A actions and build relationships with local implementing partners.
  - Average number of actions per warranted A&A staff member
    - *Why this indicator?* As part of making and managing awards, there are many actions that contribute to the workload of a warranted A&A professional, such as incremental funding actions, award modifications, and post-award approvals. This indicator helps provide a more complete picture of the demands on the A&A workforce.
  - Average value of obligations per warranted A&A staff member
    - *Why this indicator?* Value of obligations is another important measure of the workload of a warranted A&A staff member, and this indicator helps us track and rightsize workloads.
  - Average number of awards managed per active COR/AOR
    - *Why this indicator?* COR/AORs play a critical role in managing USAID awards on behalf of the CO/AO, and a major goal of A&A Strategy implementation is to rightsize the workload of USAID COR/AORs.
- Objective 2: Streamlined and effective A&A integrated throughout the Agency's development approach.
  - Percentage of USAID staff that indicate OAA is a strategic partner in the annual customer service survey (CSS)
    - *Why this indicator?* USAID's existing CSS tracks how USAID staff rate the service provided by offices such as OAA. Ratings on the CSS will help capture whether colleagues across the Agency notice improvement in terms of A&A staff members' contributions to USAID's strategic goals.
  - Number of staff hours saved through automation, streamlining, and reduced burdens
    - *Why this indicator?* Through the Agency's burden reduction initiative, there is a methodology to calculate hours saved through reduced burdens, and we will use this same methodology to track time saved for the A&A workforce. Reducing

burdens in the A&A process will save time for USAID staff and partners to focus on advancing development goals.
- Objective 3: A more diverse set of partners engaged to implement locally led development solutions.
    - Percentage of obligations to local partners as a share of USAID total obligations
        - *Why this indicator?* This indicator tracks USAID's progress toward meeting our goal of 25% of funds going directly to local partners by 2025. As our A&A processes have an important role to play in achieving this goal, it is tracked as an indicator of the A&A Strategy.
    - Number of new partners
        - *Why this indicator?* This indicator measures how many new organizations USAID partners with each year. This seeks to measure the extent to which we are opening doors to USAID for ALL partners.
    - Percentage of awards that are fixed price contracts and fixed amount awards as a share of USAID total awards
        - *Why this indicator?* Fixed price contracts and fixed amount awards (pay-for-results mechanisms) are a useful tool to make awards to new and local partners with less experience managing USG funds. This indicator tracks USAID's progress toward increasing our use of pay-for-results mechanisms.
    - Percentage of obligations through fixed price contracts and fixed amount awards as a share of USAID obligations
        - *Why this indicator?* This indicator is similar to the previous indicator, but rather than tracking number of awards, measures the obligation value, helping provide more information on how USAID is shifting its award mechanisms to those better suited to new, small, and local partners.

In addition, USAID will monitor additional indicators to help assess successful implementation of the Strategy. Only USAID staff may view these indicators here. The core team responsible for implementing the A&A Strategy will monitor most indicators quarterly, and will report publicly on the high-level indicators annually. The M/OAA Strategy Team will be primarily responsible for collecting indicator data, but will collaborate with other stakeholders, such as the M/OAA Systems Support and GLAAS team to pull quantitative data on USAID awards and partners from our official systems, the COR/AOR Hub and M/OAA/PDT team to monitor indicators related to the COR/AOR workforce, and the Agency burden reduction team to calculate hours saved.

The assumptions underlying the A&A Strategy and its implementation include:
- USAID will continue to invest approximately 85 percent of its annual program budget through contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements requiring a robust A&A workforce to award and oversee these awards.
- Constant crises around the world will continue increasing the demand for A&A services, and sometimes increasing funding levels and thereby increasing demand for A&A services.
- USAID's commitment to localization, as described by the 25 percent and 50 percent localization metrics, will continue and therefore, the number of actions, activities, and related work will increase significantly under USAID's current business model. This is because awards to local

partners tend to be smaller amounts to avoid overwhelming the absorptive capacity of local organizations. Therefore USAID needs to make more awards and provide more hands-on support to partners to spend the same amount of money, resulting in higher workloads for A&A professionals and COR/AORs.

- Agency efforts to increase the number of warranted CO/AOs will help to rebuild the backstop.
- Burden reduction efforts could lead to changes in processes that may save substantial amounts of time for the A&A workforce.

USAID will hold pause and reflect sessions with key stakeholders at the one year mark to assess the progress of the high-level and additional indicators, whether the assumptions above hold true, as well as qualitative perceptions of A&A Strategy implementation to inform implementation actions for year 2 and outyears.