ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE

2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Returning to USAID in December 2023 to become the Agency's Chief Acquisition Officer, Senior Procurement Executive, and the Director of the Management Bureau's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA), I was impressed by the willingness of staff and leaders across the globe to speak openly about long-standing issues within the acquisition and assistance (A&A) function, and more importantly, how to fix them.

These conversations were the impetus that led to the March 2023 release of the Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Strategy and Implementation Plan, efforts that build upon the 2018 A&A Strategy. The A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan are the foundation for a whole-of-Agency response to reduce burdens and infuse more efficiency into A&A processes, strengthen and grow our A&A staff, and expand connections with local partners, while making it easier for implementing partners to work with USAID.

Since March 2023, the Agency has made tremendous strides in seeking to fully realize the three core objectives of the 2023 A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan:

- **Objective 1:** An A&A workforce enabled, equipped, and empowered to advance USAID's development and humanitarian mission;

- **Objective 2:** A&A that is streamlined and effectively integrated throughout the Agency's development approach; and

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

From January 2022 to April 2024, USAID has completed nearly 100 actions with more than 60 additional actions underway. I acknowledge our A&A staff for the work they have done under difficult circumstances. Their ability to manage a heavy workload and record-breaking obligations year after year is not only appreciated—it is why we seek to deliver on this plan.

Under Objective 1, we are seeking approval to authorize a retention incentive program for our Civil Service (GS-1102) and Foreign Service (BS-93) A&A professionals to remain with the Agency. In addition, we are expanding the Foreign Service National (FSN)/Cooperating Country National (CCN) administrative warrant program; have issued a Class Justification and Approval (J&A) authorizing more staffing flexibilities and opportunities for our locally-hired colleagues; and launched a leadership development program for our FSN/CCN A&A professionals. Addressing these hiring, retention, and professional development issues for our valued A&A personnel is crucial to USAID making progress on localization.

The launch of A&A Accelerate in March 2024 speaks to the Agency's determination to uplift and reinvigorate the A&A function and workforce with a specific emphasis on:

1. Rebuilding our A&A workforce;

2. Enhancing our surge capacity to be adaptive in responding to global crises;

3. Increasing Mission contracting office capacity through targeted investment in our valued FSN/CCN colleagues; and

4. Ensuring our A&A staff can build their skills and expand into leadership with robust professional development opportunities.

We remain equally focused on identifying and using technology and process improvements to eliminate redundant, manual, and time-consuming tasks for A&A professionals and our partners. Our staff and partners now work more effectively and efficiently to design, implement, and manage awards that change lives and communities, allowing people to live in safe, secure, healthy environments with dignity and respect.

Our efforts to support partners are evident in the evolution of WorkwithUSAID.gov, which now has more than 500,000 users, more than 200 multilingual resources, and a partner directory that boasts more than 7,000 organizations from 163 countries. This platform is now available in Arabic, French, and Spanish. The November 2023 creation of the USAID Translation Program is also providing key resources to our partners, with ever-growing, free translations—currently in nine languages—of assistance documents such as Requests for Information (RFIs), Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), amendments, and successful applicants' technical and budget applications.

All of these actions reflect the powerful collaboration across USAID in tackling long-standing and complex challenges. No individual Office, Bureau, or Mission could generate this energy, innovation, and creativity alone. We celebrate these successes, while also acknowledging there is much more work to be done. I am excited to see this collective effort to make things better for all involved: our staff, our partners—particularly new, local, and underrepresented ones—and ultimately those who benefit from impactful development outcomes worldwide.

Onward and upward,

Jami J. Rodgers, CPCM
USAID Chief Acquisition Officer
Senior Procurement Executive and
Director of the Bureau for Management Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, USAID sought to move away from traditional procurement approaches by embracing innovation and greater partner transparency through the creation of the Agency's first Acquisition and Assistance Strategy.

In the years between that inaugural A&A Strategy and the most recent A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan released in March 2023, the Agency has experienced a large increase in private sector development investment and efforts to boost local partner engagement, while a global pandemic and federal hiring freezes combined to shrink the A&A workforce. The staffing reductions occurred at a time in USAID's history when growing humanitarian and political crises have required increasingly complex development solutions and greater numbers of A&A professionals to obligate and manage more programs.

The 2023 A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan did not shy away from these challenging realities. Instead, it outlined priorities and the steps needed to address them to strengthen staff support, expand partner equities and opportunities, and encourage and monitor Agency-wide activities to improve and develop new tools and processes to reduce burdens and enhance efficiency for our workforce and the partner community.

This update to the Implementation Plan of the March 2023 A&A Strategy outlines the work USAID has achieved since the launch of the A&A Strategy, as well as ongoing efforts to meet the Strategy's objectives and sub-objectives. Throughout this document, you will find A&A Strategy actions described under these sections:

- The Implementation Plan Summary, which covers trends and designated "key" actions for Year 1 (running from April 2023 to April 2024) and Year 2 (running from May 2024 to May 2025);

- A summary of completed actions in Year 1 (Annex 1) and actions in progress for Year 2 (Annex 2), which go beyond the most immediate, high-impact actions detailed in the Implementation Plan Summary; and

- The Implementation Plan spreadsheet (Annex 3), which incorporates all initiated, completed, and ongoing actions from January 2022 to the present. This spreadsheet will be regularly updated as new actions are initiated and finished.

- Key indicators are found in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (Annex 4).

Culture and leadership are key elements for creating innovative, meaningful change and making that change sustainable over an extended period of time. The A&A Strategy Implementation Plan's actions are more achievable within a leadership-driven culture motivated to improve processes, enhance customer experiences, and help people work better and smarter. A supportive culture includes cultivating an environment where Contracting Officers (COs) and Agreement Officers (AOs) are comfortable in examining their risk posture and making appropriate business decisions based on relevant information, while remaining flexible and adaptable.

Reaching USAID's vision for achieving impactful development outcomes that save time, money, and staff labor requires a whole-of-Agency effort, with multiple actors across USAID developing creative and solution-oriented responses to modern challenges designed to generate impactful development outcomes. M/OAA is proud to be an integral part of the Agency's effort towards successfully delivering progress beyond programs by carrying out the A&A Strategy Implementation Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARY

Embracing innovation and adopting new and cutting-edge approaches to help our partners, support Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) staff, and enhance development outcomes have always existed at USAID.

However, the rise of a global pandemic in early 2020 combined with a need to expand and diversify USAID's partner base to address complex development issues has put pressure on an A&A workforce that for too long has been tasked with designing, implementing, and managing a growing number of awards with fewer staff.

The Foreign Service Contracting Officer (FSCO) and Civil Service Contracting Officer (CSCO) workforces at USAID are hampered in their ability to accomplish expected A&A work requirements. The need to generate more complex awards designed to address overlapping humanitarian and development challenges has vastly outpaced increases in the A&A workforce. Meanwhile, USAID is also seeking to expand partnerships with new and local partners, which increases the number of individual awards A&A staff manage. While expanding our partner base is important for effective programming, new partners sometimes require more guidance and staff time on how to work with USAID compared to long-standing partners.

> **USAID CO/AO OBLIGATION RESPONSIBILITIES CONTINUE TO BREAK RECORDS ANNUALLY**
>
> **In FY23,** a Contracting Officer or Agreement Officer (CO/AO) at USAID on average obligated **$106.2 million**, while a CO at the Department of Defense (DOD) on average obligated **$16.9 million**. This means some USAID CO/AOs obligated more than six times the amount of their DOD counterparts—a gap that has increased over the years as USAID's obligations have grown.

USAID's A&A workforce is essential to the Agency's ability to design, award, and implement its programs to maximize the impact of localization, burden reduction, and other key initiatives. The relentless high workload contributes to burnout and attrition.

Without sufficiently increasing the number of A&A professionals, USAID will continue to be challenged in ensuring that contract and assistance instruments are awarded on time; provide adequate oversight for existing awards, including the management of ongoing Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) audits; and expedite the closeout for expired awards in order to de-obligate critically needed funds for reprogramming.

The most recent Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Strategy and Implementation Plan released in March 2023, outlined key steps to be taken to address these immediate and interconnected challenges, placing responses under the three Strategy core objectives.

This update to the 2023 A&A Implementation Plan covers prior accomplishments and ongoing efforts of the most recent A&A Strategy, including what actions have been initiated and completed and the work that remains to be done throughout 2024 into next year.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARY

Overall Trends/Highlights

Between January 2022 and April 2024, nearly 100 actions encompassing a wide range of A&A Strategy implementation efforts tied to multiple Agency initiatives were completed.

To see pre-A&A Strategy release (January 2022 - March 2023) actions, go to *Annex 3 - Detailed Implementation Plan Actions spreadsheet, Tab 1* (USAID internal link).

Highlights of Year 1 (April 2023 - April 2024) include:

- A full revision of ADS 303sam, Non-U.S. Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS) Guidelines, a process that was initiated in September 2023.
    - Crafted by M/OAA Policy, the NUPAS is an optional tool that was updated to align with USAID's new Risk Appetite Statement, the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy and Burden Reduction efforts.
    - Updates redefined the NUPAS to emphasize its use as a tool to help Agreement Officers (AOs) make informed decisions about partnership risk and enhance the ability of a potential partner to implement the activity. Key changes include:
        - › Emphasizing AO's discretion to tailor the criteria relevant to a specific award;
        - › Redefining the tool so it is not pass/fail but a means of identifying and mitigating potential risk to the Agency;
        - › Removing the numerical rating system; and
        - › Incorporating more guidance on the structure, role, and responsibilities of the survey team.

- Targeted efforts resulting in increases in new hires for Foreign Service CO/AOs (BS-93s) and Civil Service Contracting Specialists (GS-1102s) as part of the Agency's long-term goals to hire 215 Foreign Service CO/AOs by 2026 and 198 Civil Service Contracting Specialists (GS-1102s) by 2026.
    - M/OAA has made progress in working to restore the A&A professional staff among all employment mechanisms, although the ability to advance key Agency development initiatives remains at risk due to continuing levels of burnout and attrition.

- Increases in warranted staff across all A&A employment mechanisms between January and April 2024.

- Creation of the USAID Translation Program in November 2023, which strengthens support for local partners and streamlines award development and implementation. The program has helped reduce the language barrier between USAID and local partners by translating nearly 200 assistance award-related documents into Amharic, Arabic, Chichewa, French, Hausa, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili.

- The launch of the Acquisition Workforce Certification Fellows Program (AWCFP), in conjunction with Fayetteville State University, to attract a more diverse pool of applicants to join USAID's A&A workforce.

- Modernization of the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Course Program to update the attainment and maintenance of certification and continuous learning under new FAC-C Professional Certification requirements.

- USAID's contribution to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) revisions to several chapters of Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR). The final revisions, announced in April 2024, clarify and

simplify requirements for federal assistance, reduce burdens on Agency staff and partners, and provide exciting new award flexibilities to USAID as it continues its localization efforts.

- Creation of the Technical and Budget Support (TABS) Pilot Program in M/OAA to support technical and contracting teams at the Pre-Solicitation and Evaluation stages of their procurement to develop high-quality solicitation sections and other documentation.

Year 2 of the A&A Strategy Implementation, from May 2024 to May 2025, currently has more than **60 A&A Strategy implementation actions** in progress, with more actions regularly being added. Some highlights during Year 2 include:

- Continued support and mentoring for nine Fayetteville State University students selected under the newly created AWCFP to diversify the A&A professional staff by helping the students successfully pass the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Professional exam by December 2024.

- Active engagement to implement the Senior Procurement Executive Skills Development Retention Program (SDRP) to strengthen Civil Service (CS) and Foreign Service (FS) retention for GS-1102 and BS-93 employees through retention incentive payments.

- The March 2024 launch of A&A Accelerate, an M/OAA-based initiative designed to promote, celebrate, and provide substantial support to our Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) workforce.

- Continued momentum from Year 1 to create more automated solutions to eliminate repetitive administrative tasks and save time for the A&A workforce.

- Establishing two separate A&A leadership development programs - one for FSNs/CCNs and the other for employees at the GS 9-13 level.

Photo Credit: Manoj Sahoo, Aman Raj

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARY

- Launch of the Unsolicited Submissions Portal on WorkwithUSAID.org to automate/simplify the process through which the Agency receives, reviews, and responds to unsolicited proposals and applications.

- The Translation Program's plans to double translation offerings in FY25 from nine to 18 languages, including more translation in Asian languages, while continuing to lower the language barrier for local partners across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The program will continue to focus on translating assistance award documents but with flexibility to respond to opportunities to support local partnerships.

- Completing the process of fully implementing OMB's revisions to 2 CFR by fully revising the supplemental USAID regulation (2 CFR 700), updating ADS 303 and its many mandatory references and help documents to correspond to the revisions, and continuing to socialize the changes and new flexibilities with A&A staff across the Agency.

- Continued momentum from Year 1 to create more automated solutions to eliminate repetitive administrative tasks and save time for the A&A workforce.

  - These automation efforts build off the fall 2023 release of Acquisition Modification Negotiation Memorandums for contracts and Assistance Award Memorandums, which are now pre-populated with certain GLAAS data fields, reducing the number of manual entry fields A&A staff must enter to create a Negotiation Memorandum.

Photo Credit: Ashish Magar/IFES Kathmandu

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARY

The broad nature of the A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan allows for M/OAA leadership and other Agency decision makers to track and promote numerous actions beyond those exclusively developed within M/OAA, which is home to USAID's A&A professional staff across the globe. Actions in the A&A Strategy are part of other Agency initiatives with specific focus areas. This Implementation Plan update references some initiatives — namely the Foreign Service National (FSN) Empowerment Plan (USAID internal link), the USAID Translation Program, and the A&A Accelerate Initiative — that significantly advance Agency priorities such as Localization, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA), and Burden Reduction. Actions within this A&A Strategy Implementation Plan are carefully selected for completion as each action either directly or indirectly corresponds to at least one or more Agency initiatives seen below:

Agency Initiatives Aligned with the A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan

A&A ACCELERATE	DEIA (USAID internal link) AND THE EQUITY ACTION PLAN	USAID TRANSLATION PROGRAM	LOCALIZATION
FSN/CCN EMPOWERMENT (USAID internal link)	BURDEN REDUCTION PROGRAM (USAID internal link)	PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT	USAID RISK APPETITE STATEMENT
LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING (LCS)	NEW PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE (NPI)	HIGH IMPACT SERVICE PROVIDER/CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (HISP/CX)	CLIMATE STRATEGY 2022-2030
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING (KMOL) POLICY	BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT (BPI) (USAID internal link)	GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (GDPI)	CONNECTING DESIGN TO AWARD (D2A) (USAID internal link)

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Key A&A Strategy Implementation Actions Year 1: April 2023 to April 2024

During Year 1 (April 2023 - April 2024) of the A&A Strategy Implementation Plan, a total of 59 actions were completed across the Agency representing significant advances being made under the three A&A Strategy Objectives and nine Sub-Objectives:

FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES OF THE A&A STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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.

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

Sub-Objective 2.1: A&A strategic hinking integrated throughout the program cycle.

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

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

Sub-Objective 2.2: New and existing tools used effectively to achieve development objectives.

Sub-Objective 3.2: Localization goals advanced through reduced barriers and A&A best practices.

Sub-Objective 2.3: Improved efficiencies through strategic A&A planning and reduced administrative burdens.

Sub-Objective 3.3: U.S. small businesses and underserved U.S. partner communities engaged more equitably.

Sub-Objective 2.4: Inclusive and agile A&A approaches used to address intersectional and enduring challenges.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

This section represents actions and associated activities considered to be high-impact (key) both in terms of their priority among Agency leadership and urgency to alleviate stakeholder burdens and support personnel and partner opportunities for continual growth. To see the complete list of all A&A Strategy actions, please refer to the *Annex 3 - Detailed Implementation Plan Actions spreadsheet* (USAID internal link).

Because of the pressing need to recruit and hire more A&A staff to ease workloads and retain the most qualified and experienced professionals, there are several high-impact actions under Objective 1 and its associated Sub-Objectives.

Objective 1 - Completed Key Actions for Year 1 (April 2023 to April 2024)

- Focused on hiring and training warranted Foreign Service Contracting Officers/Agreement Officers (BS-93s) towards a goal of 215 CO/AOs by 2026. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - Between FY 2020 and FY 2023, M/OAA hired 58 new FS Career Candidate Corps (C3) officers.

- Prioritized the hiring of Civil Service Contracting Specialists (GS-1102s) toward a goal of 198 by 2026. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - In FY 2023, M/OAA onboarded 27 new OE-funded Civil Service Contract Specialists for the Washington Operations unit, internally promoted 10 Civil Service Contract Specialists, and onboarded five new Civil Service Procurement Analysts.

    - So far in FY 2024, M/OAA has onboarded 24 new OE-funded Civil Service Contract Specialists while also losing 13 OE-funded Civil Service Contract Specialists.

- Increased warranted staff across all A&A employment mechanisms between January and April 2024 (Sub-Objective 1.1) including:

    - Twenty five more warranted contracting officers, (i.e., EXOs, ACOs/AOs and M/CIO) for a total of 388

    - Three more warranted executive officers for a total of 102

    - Fifteen more warranted contracting and agreement officers for a total of 226, and

    - Eight more warranted administrative contracting and agreement officers (FSNs/CCNs) for a total of 53.

- Attained compliance in the modernization of Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Course Program activities. (Sub-Objective 1.2)

    - Facilitated by USAID and led by the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) and the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), the modernization process started in January 2023 and ran through the fall of 2023.

    - The modernized FAC-C framework includes a refreshed contracting competency model, a single-level certification, updated certification requirements, and the introduction of credentials that are mission-focused training packages. The new single-level FAC-C (Professional) requirements include completion of foundational training, one year of experience, a professional certification exam, and an updated continuous learning requirement.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

"

As the Agency's budgets and programs have grown, our A&A professional staffing levels have not kept up, leaving too few staff for the work that they bear. … To expand our partnerships—and be better partners to the organizations we already work with—we have to staff up.

— Administrator Samantha Power upon the release of the 2023 Acquisition and Assistance Strategy

"

SHIFTING THE MINDSET THROUGH LEADERSHIP TO ELEVATE A&A AT USAID

Implementation of the A&A Strategy requires an ongoing cultural change within USAID. Guided by leadership across the Agency, the way A&A professionals are perceived must be expanded and elevated. Fostering collaborative and trusting relationships between all USAID staff, and ensuring that technical and A&A professional staff recognize each other as critical and equal partners in the Agency's development and humanitarian mission is key to effective development programming. To shift from current biases and behaviors and increase understanding of the A&A role throughout the Agency, USAID will continue to pursue the following actions:

- Review language used in new official Agency documents regarding A&A processes and staff and remove negative terms, including inferences that A&A policy is burdensome or that A&A professionals "support" development programming. A&A is a critical element of programming.

- Encourage A&A professionals to actively engage with technical staff to develop innovative solutions when faced with roadblocks.

- Continue A&A sessions during every New Entrant Orientation (NEO) to ensure incoming USAID staff are introduced to basic A&A concepts and know who to consult for more information.

- Work with other bureaus and independent offices to educate staff about the scope of the COR/AOR role as duties are delegated from the CO/AO.

- Communicate the important work A&A professionals do through staff testimonials of productive collaboration between A&A professionals and other Agency colleagues.

- Encourage A&A workforce professionals to embrace the Agency's new Risk Appetite Statement.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

- Launched the Acquisition Workforce Certification Fellows Program (AWCFP) with a student cohort from Fayetteville State University (FSU), a historically black college. (Crosscutting-Sub-Objectives 1.2 and 1.1) Subcategory: DEIA-Sensitive Outreach Approaches.

  - Created by M/OAA and the USAID Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Office, the AWCFP recruited nine fellows from Fayetteville State University who were selected for the first cohort that began in January 2024.

  - This program is just one of the steps USAID is taking to strengthen the pipeline and expand the number of A&A staff at the Agency. The goal is to strengthen partnerships with external organizations including educational institutions and associations like the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) to develop future A&A professionals.

- Initiated a series of <u>Federal Executive Institute (FEI) Leadership Program</u> (USAID internal link) courses for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

  - Under M/OAA's leadership, USAID created the FEI program to expand leadership training opportunities for the FSN/CCN workforce. The program was piloted in March 2023.

  - During FY 2023, a total of 80 candidates from across the globe participated in weeklong training in Charlottesville, VA through four courses.

Objective 2 - Completed Key Actions for Year 1

- Released the Agency's first automated Pre-Action, Pre-Obligation and Statutory Activity-Level Checklists Template in March 2024. (Sub-Objective 2.2)

  - The Design to Award (D2A) team, made up of staff from the Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management Office of Strategic and Program Planning (PLR/SPP), the Office of the General Counsel (GC), and M/OAA further streamlined the Pre-Action and Pre-Obligation Checklist first released in 2020 and incorporated a Statutory Activity-Level Checklist through staff feedback.

  - The template that was developed simplifies the process and documentation for users to:

    › Filter requirements by the type of instrument (e.g., acquisition and assistance awards and Public International Organization (PIO) and Government-to-Government agreements), and

    › Filter the requirements by the type of action (e.g., new award, incremental funding).

- Reduction of 22 fields as well as edits in the existing fields made to the public Agency Business Forecast dataset to provide clarity and ease of use by partners.

  - Led by M/OAA, the public Agency Business Forecast dataset, which contains advance information about USAID funding opportunities, was significantly streamlined. Automations have been produced that remind staff when data has not been updated after eight weeks. (Sub-Objective 2.2)

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

> ### PARTNERS BENEFIT FROM STREAMLINED AND AUTOMATED SERVICES ON WORKWITHUSAID.GOV
>
> In May 2024, M/OAA launched the Unsolicited Submissions portal and the Funding Essentials page on WorkwithUSAID.gov to reduce partner barriers in responding to unsolicited proposals and applications, consolidate important partner information, and ensure that no prospective and current partners fall through the cracks. The team also provided internal resources (USAID internal link) about the new Unsolicited Submissions process to support staff in transitioning to the new system.

- Strengthening of professional development, coordination, and resources for Agency Contracting Officer's Representatives/Agreement Officer's Representatives (CORs/AORs) through the PLR Bureau's COR/AOR Hub. (Sub-Objective 2.2)

  - The COR/AOR mentoring program was launched in FY2023 to facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

  - The COR/AOR Toolkit was created in October 2022 to curate the experience of CORs/AORs, COs/AOs, and other experts with substantive contract and assistance award experience. Monthly updates reflect revised legal, and statutory regulations and policies that apply to award management.

    - › In FY2023, the Toolkit was accessed more than 5,000 times and served as the foundation for on-the-job training and course development. A downloadable version of the COR/AOR Toolkit as a Google document was released in April 2024.

  - Following the successful delivery of four pilot customized training modules co-delivered with a USAID Mission in FY2023, the COR/AOR Hub has developed eight additional modules aimed at strengthening COR/AOR skills in award and activity management through hands-on training and practical job aids.

    - › The COR/AOR Hub is actively developing a 40-hour training course that focuses on both Acquisition and Assistance awards and guides CORs/AORs through their roles and responsibilities, building essential competencies through hands-on activities and critical thinking exercises.

- Provided updated guidance and best practices to COs/AOs on limiting requests for financial documentation from partners. (Sub-Objective 2.3)

  - The guidance and best practices developed and issued by M/OAA on behalf of the Agency include: limiting requests to what is strictly required and avoiding overly detailed and burdensome cost analyses when not required (e.g., for fixed price contracts when there is adequate price competition).

Objective 3 - Completed Key Actions for Year 1

- USAID created a forum for partnership opportunities where USAID's prime partners can post subaward and subcontract opportunities on WorkwithUSAID.gov. (Objective 3)

  - Developed and launched by M/OAA's Communications and Industry Liaison team in March 2023, the Sub-Opportunities portal shares opportunities being offered by USAID's active prime implementing partners, who may need subcontractors or sub-awardees to provide specialized expertise or on-the-ground support. The page provides yet another avenue for small, nascent, and local organizations to support USAID projects.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

- The Agency updated the Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS) to align with the new Risk Appetite Statement and the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy. (Sub-Objective 3.1)

  - Finalized by M/OAA's Policy team in September 2023, the revised NUPAS is an optional tool updated to align with USAID's new Risk Appetite Statement, the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy, and Burden Reduction efforts.

  - Updates redefined the NUPAS to emphasize it as a tool to help Agreement Officers make informed decisions about partnership risk and enhance the ability of a potential partner to implement the activity, rather than as an absolute pass-fail test of partner qualifications.

- USAID launched and expanded the USAID Translation Program [USAID internal link]. (Sub-Objective 3.2)

  - The USAID Translation Program was launched in November 2023 by M/OAA's Strategy team to help partners translate assistance award solicitations and applications during the start of the award process (First Mile translations) for documents such as RFIs, RFAs, and NOFOS. The Translation Program also provides translation at the end of the award process, specifically in translating final applications from other languages into English (Last Mile translations). The translation working group identified these points as the weakest links in the award making process.

  - The Translation Program began in 2023 with Arabic, French, and Spanish and has expanded to offer translations in Portuguese, Somali, Swahili, Amharic, Chichewa, and Hausa.

  - The Translation Program translated the following ADS 303 documents: 303mab, 303mat, 303mav, 303mba, 303mai, 312sac, 303sal, and 591maa.

  - As of April 2024, the Translation Program has served 15 Missions, Bureaus and Independent Offices (M/BIOs) in Africa, Latin America, and Washington.
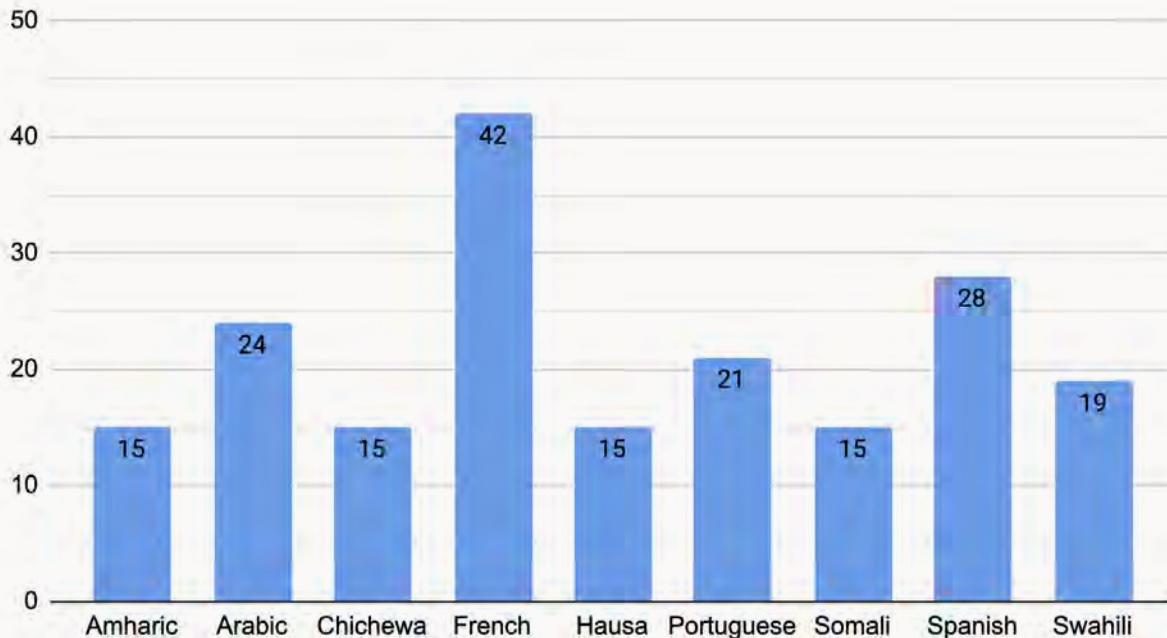

Photo Credit: Laura Luna | IOM Costa Rica

Documents Translated into Specific Languages under the USAID Translation Program

In November 2023, M/OAA started a Translation Program that now serves 15 operating units across the globe in translating 30 assistance award documents and 15 standard provisions documents

Documents Translated

Language	Documents Translated
Amharic	15
Arabic	24
Chichewa	15
French	42
Hausa	15
Portuguese	21
Somali	15
Spanish	28
Swahili	19

Document numbers include 15 essential ADS documents for each language

- USAID launched translated versions of the Work with USAID website in Arabic, French, and Spanish. (Sub-Objective 3.2)

  - M/OAA's Communications and Industry Liaison team launched the French and Spanish versions of WorkwithUSAID.gov in March 2024, followed by an Arabic version a month later. Providing access to WorkwithUSAID.gov vast resources in Spanish, French, and Arabic is central to breaking down barriers to partnering with more local organizations.

- USAID under the direction of M/OAA leadership, reminded CO and COR staff and prime contractors of the importance of and responsibility to accurately evaluate contractors in the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and to report contracting activities in the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS.gov). (Sub-Objective 3.3)

  - The accurate and timely reporting in CPARS is vital for USAID to monitor the utilization of small businesses and track progress against the Agency's small business subcontracting goals as well as the President's focus on Advancing Equity in Federal Procurement.

- The Agency created a live funding feed of USAID opportunities from SAM.gov and Grants.gov on the WorkwithUSAID.gov platform. (Sub-Objective 3)

  - Launched by M/OAA's Communications and Industry Liaison team and announced November 30, 2023, this technology enhancement allows organizations seeking funding from USAID to see the full inventory of solicitations in a centralized location.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

- USAID adapted training and communicated to staff about actions that can be taken to reduce burdensome requirements for partners. (Sub-Objective 3.1)

  - Initiated by M/OAA's Professional Development and Training (PDT) and Policy teams, in coordination with the USAID Burden Reduction Program (BRP), this action involved calling on all Agency staff to reduce the time partners spend on meeting requirements for non-mandatory reports.

  - Non-mandatory report examples include: daily, weekly, biweekly, and monthly reports on program activity implementation by objective or intermediate results, press review updates, and other ad hoc reporting.

- In April 2024, OMB announced revisions to several chapters of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), which guide U.S. assistance such as grants and cooperative agreements. These updates clarify and simplify requirements for federal assistance, reducing burdens on staff and partners and providing exciting new tools to USAID as it continues its localization efforts. The changes are the culmination of a lengthy process to collect input from government agencies and the public, including USAID's partner community. While OMB's revisions have a government-wide effective date of October 1, 2024, USAID implemented these revisions earlier in August 2024. M/OAA Policy led USAID's efforts to contribute to and implement the 2 CFR revisions.

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2 CFR REVISIONS BENEFIT USAID PARTNERS BY ENHANCING LOCALIZATION

- ***SAM.gov registration flexibility:*** A new exception in the revised guidance allows agencies to exempt a foreign entity from full registration in SAM.gov when an award is less than $500,000 and will be performed outside the United States (2 CFR 25.110). As SAM.gov registration has been a barrier for many non-U.S. organizations in the past, the new flexibility is expected to facilitate the Agency's work with new local partners.

- ***De minimis rate increase:*** The revised guidance increases the de minimis rate from 10 percent to 15 percent to allow for greater cost recovery for partners that do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) (2 CFR 200.414). This change will allow USAID partners to achieve a more reasonable, sustainable, and realistic recovery of indirect costs, particularly for new or inexperienced partners that may lack the capacity to undergo a formal rate negotiation required to obtain a NICRA, but still deserve to be fully compensated for their overhead costs.

- ***Language accessibility:*** Under the revised guidance, agencies are explicitly permitted to translate Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) and award documents into non-English languages and to receive applications, reports, and other award documentation in languages other than English (2 CFR 200.111). Previous language requirements presented challenges for partner organizations without English language capabilities.

- ***Allowable closeout costs:*** The revised guidance explicitly permits organizations to treat closeout costs incurred after the end of the period of performance as allowable (2 CFR 200.472), providing greater flexibility to organizations in recovering costs.

- ***Increased threshold for fixed amount subawards:*** The revisions increase the ceiling for fixed amount subawards from $250,000 to $500,000 (2 CFR 200.333). As many organizations begin working on USAID programming through subawards, this ceiling increase will allow more impactful work to be carried out through this type of subaward.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

Implementation Actions Year 2: May 2024 to May 2025

There are currently **more than 60** actions underway to realize the A&A Strategy objectives, with more actions being added weekly. Some Year 2 actions have already been completed including: the release of a new Procurement Action Lead Time (PALT) milestone spreadsheet [USAID internal link]. Sub-Objective 2.3 and updates to the USAID Worldwide Purchase Card Program (ADS 331) and USAID Worldwide Purchase Card Program Manual (ADS 331maa) [Sub-Objective 2.4].

Below are the highest-impact (key) actions we are tackling in Year 2. To see the complete list of all actions please refer to *Annex 3 - Detailed Implementation Plan Actions spreadsheet* (USAID internal link).

Objective 1 - Key Actions Completed and In Progress for Year 2

- Led by M/OAA, the Agency will continue its hiring and training efforts for Foreign Service (FS) Contracting Officers/Agreement Officers (BS-93s) towards a goal of 215 CO/AOs by 2026. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - With the addition of 66 new Career Candidate Corps (C3) officers since 2020, the number of new Foreign Service COs/AOs in M/OAA now totals 175.

    - As of late July 2024, a total of nine new FS C3s have been onboarded. C3 classes through the summer/ fall of 2024 will add another seven BS-93 officers to the 175 FS COs in total before the end of FY24.

- Led by M/OAA, the Agency will continue its focus on hiring Civil Service Contracting Specialists toward a goal of 198 by 2026. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - M/OAA has as of late August 2024 onboarded 24 new Civil Service Contract Specialists, with five in- coming pending security clearance. As of late August 2024, the Agency has 118 OE-funded Civil Service Contract Specialists, with 12 in recruitment.

- Implement and operationalize the Skills Development and Retention Program (SDRP). (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - The SDRP is designed to rebuild the A&A workforce by using authorities the Agency already has to provide financial incentives to retain and sustain target civil service and foreign service A&A professional (GS-1102/BS-93) staffing levels over time.

- Seek authority to establish an Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Working Capital Fund. USAID seeks authority to create a fee-for-service model of up to a 1-percent charge on estimated annual A&A obligations worldwide to support the A&A workforce and operations. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

    - Agency Operating Expense (OE) account resources are significantly behind those for programming, which results in fewer warranted contracting and agreement officers to manage more awards.

    - The authorization and creation of a Working Capital Fund would potentially allow USAID to address this gap by collecting up to 1 percent of A&A obligations to support the A&A workforce and operational costs that otherwise would come from the limited existing OE account.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

- USAID continues to increase the number of warranted A&A officers across all employment mechanisms through the end of FY24 and beyond. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

  - Increases in warranted staff across hiring mechanisms as *of August 20, 2024*:

    i. A total of 407 warranted contracting officers (i.e., EXOs, ACOs/AOs and M/CIO),

    ii. A total of 106 warranted executive officers,

    iii. A total of 234 warranted contracting and agreement officers and,

    iv. A total of 60 warranted administrative contracting and agreement officers (FSNs/CCNs).

  - For previous efforts, see *What We've Accomplished - Key Implementation Plan Actions Year 1: April 2023-April 2024*.

GROWING THE NUMBER OF FSNS/CCNS WITH ADMINISTRATIVE WARRANTS

M/OAA has steadily increased the number of FSN/CCNs with administrative warrants, going from 19 in FY22 to 40 in FY23. By April 2024, the number of FSNs/CCNs with administrative warrants totaled 53, and by August 2024 that number had increased to 60. This growth is significant as having more warranted FSNs/CCNs alleviates work for Contracting Officers in the Missions and creates career growth opportunities for FSN/CCNs.

- The A&A Accelerate initiative was launched to empower, equip, and elevate A&A staff at USAID. (Sub-Objective 1.2)

  - Released by M/OAA in March 2024, A&A Accelerate is an initiative aimed at widely promoting, celebrating, and providing concrete support to USAID's A&A workforce through four lines of effort: 1. Rebuilding the A&A Workforce 2, Increasing Mission Capacity 3, Enhancing Surge Capacity, and 4. Expanding Professional Development.

  - The A&A Strategy and Implementation Plan is the basis for all A&A Accelerate actions, and it is the source from which these actions are monitored for progress.

- The Agency will continue Federal Executive Institute (FEI) Leadership Program courses started in Year 1 for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists to cultivate their leadership skills. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

  - Additional FEI courses have been scheduled in FY 2024. More courses covering intentional, collaborative, adaptive, strategic leadership along with cultivation of leadership are scheduled throughout FY25 (USAID internal link).

- The Agency will continue efforts to support nine Fayetteville State University students through the Acquisition Workforce Certification Fellows Program (AWCFP) to successfully pass the FAC-C Professional exam by December 2024. (Sub-Objectives 1.1 and 1.2)

  - M/OAA and the USAID Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Office will coordinate to support the nine participants (representing traditional and non-traditional; graduate and undergraduate students) from the university throughout the year-long AWCFP program (January 2024-December 2024), which includes a full curriculum of courses needed to prepare and successfully pass the FAC-C Professional exam by December 2024. Students also receive mentoring and training as part of the program, and in July 2024 had a chance to meet OAA professionals during a scheduled trip to the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) World Congress in Seattle.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

- USAID will update and disseminate the Benchmark Guide for GS-1102s to help staff to understand the requirements for promotion in ladder positions. (Sub-Objective 1.1)

  - Updating the guidance document will standardize benchmarks for GS-1102s to clarify and streamline promotion criteria.

- The Agency will seek and obtain complete and continuous funding to operationalize the A&A Lab to promote innovation and knowledge sharing among A&A staff. (Sub-Objective 1.2)

  - Created by M/OAA in June 2016, the A&A Lab is an interconnected network of A&A staff helping to advance the Agency's mission through workforce development and the testing and scaling of A&A innovations within Washington and across several regional mission locations. A&A Lab analyses prompted USAID to place more emphasis on empowering and improving the A&A workforce.

Objective 2 - Key Actions Completed and In Progress for Year 2

- Led by M/OAA, the Agency launched a portal on WorkwithUSAID.gov in May 2024 to automate and simplify the process for submitting and responding to unsolicited submissions. (Sub-Objective 2.2 and Sub-Objective 3)

  - The new portal enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of how the Agency receives, reviews, and responds to unsolicited proposals and applications.

  - The M/OAA Communications and Industry Liaison team worked to streamline the existing process, in collaboration with senior Agency leaders, Washington and Mission staff, and USAID partners.

- M/OAA's active engagement with the PLR bureau in drafting and clearing ADS 201 revisions and associated training courses. These efforts better integrate A&A and development theory processes into the Program Cycle to reduce confusion among all USAID staff regarding roles leading to improved development outcomes with partners. (Sub-Objective 2.1)

- The Bureau for Planning, Learning and Resource Management (PLR) is developing a series of Discussion Notes/White Papers to enhance program/project (including activity) management practices across the Agency's workforce, including a Discussion Note on Program/Project/Activity Management, a white paper on managing programs using federal assistance, and on reducing burdens for COR/AORs in activity and award management. These actions are designed to meet requirements under the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act (PMIAA). (Sub-Objective 2.1)

- The Agency will continue to create automated solutions for repetitive administrative tasks to save time for the A&A workforce via Robotics Process Automation (RPA) or other technologies. (Sub-Objective. 2.2)

  - Guided by M/OAA, activities under this action include supporting staff in testing and adopting innovations outlined in the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations (PTAI), sponsored by the Chief Acquisition Officers (CAO) Council and federal agencies. In addition, the A&A workforce will be encouraged to engage in training on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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TIME-SAVING PROCESS REDUCE STAFF BURDENS AND ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

M/OAA continues to identify and create automated solutions to save time for the A&A workforce. In 2023, M/OAA streamlined two documents – the Negotiation Memorandum for Modifications, and the Assistance Award Memorandum for ADS 303 – by pre-populating the documents with certain GLAAS (procurement system) data fields.

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- The Agency will continue to harmonize, align, and fill gaps in tools, guides, templates, and samples as needed, in addition to storing all resources in a single, searchable location and communicating these resources to users. (Sub-Objective 2.2)

  - M/OAA's Business Process Improvement (BPI) team continues to expand the suite of tools, guides, templates and other support for A&A staff on the BPI page (USAID internal link), which currently has more than **90** acquisition, assistance, and Personal Services Contract (PSC) resources.

    › The resources include an adaptive management guide for both acquisition and assistance instruments, and development of a user-friendly guide and template for the Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) for acquisition instruments.

- M/OAA is working to automate the clearance process within its office to reduce time and effort, and promote burden reduction. (Sub-Objective 2.3)

  - M/OAA's use of the Action Package E-Clearance System (APECS) since April 2024 has resulted in the M Bureau Front Office regularly using APECS to initiate taskers to M/OAA. The Strategy team in M/OAA is working with 14 offices/units within five Washington OUs to integrate APECS as part of those OUs' tasker requests to M/OAA. Training and testing, including working with M/CIO to customize APECS for Washington use, will continue throughout 2024.

  - M/OAA is helping M/CIO understand and customize the mission-designed APECS system to support the more open, complex clearance process used by Washington OUs. At the same time, M/OAA is facilitating the use of APECS across multiple Washington OUs as M/CIO prepares to roll out an updated automated clearance system for Bureaus and Independent Offices (B/IOs) in the future.

Objective 3 - Key Actions Completed and In Progress for Year 2

- Develop a Co-Creation and Co-Design Toolkit to broaden the involvement of local and international stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. (Sub-Objective 3.1)

  - Led by M/OAA's Professional Development and Training (PDT) team, the Co-Creation and Co-Design Toolkit will enhance the Agency's pre-award information collection and early design stages, all the way through implementation of an award to include scaling up successes, and dealing with unexpected obstacles.

- Completing the process of fully implementing OMB's revisions to 2 CFR. The 2024 revisions to 2 CFR are sweeping and have the potential to impact hundreds of existing USAID assistance awards, as well as all future grants and cooperative agreements. M/OAA will counsel Agency staff in implementing the 2024 Revisions through office hours, regular communications, and responding to questions to implement the 2024 Revisions to 2 CFR.USAID (led by M/OAA Policy) will take or has taken the following actions: (Sub-Objective 3.1)
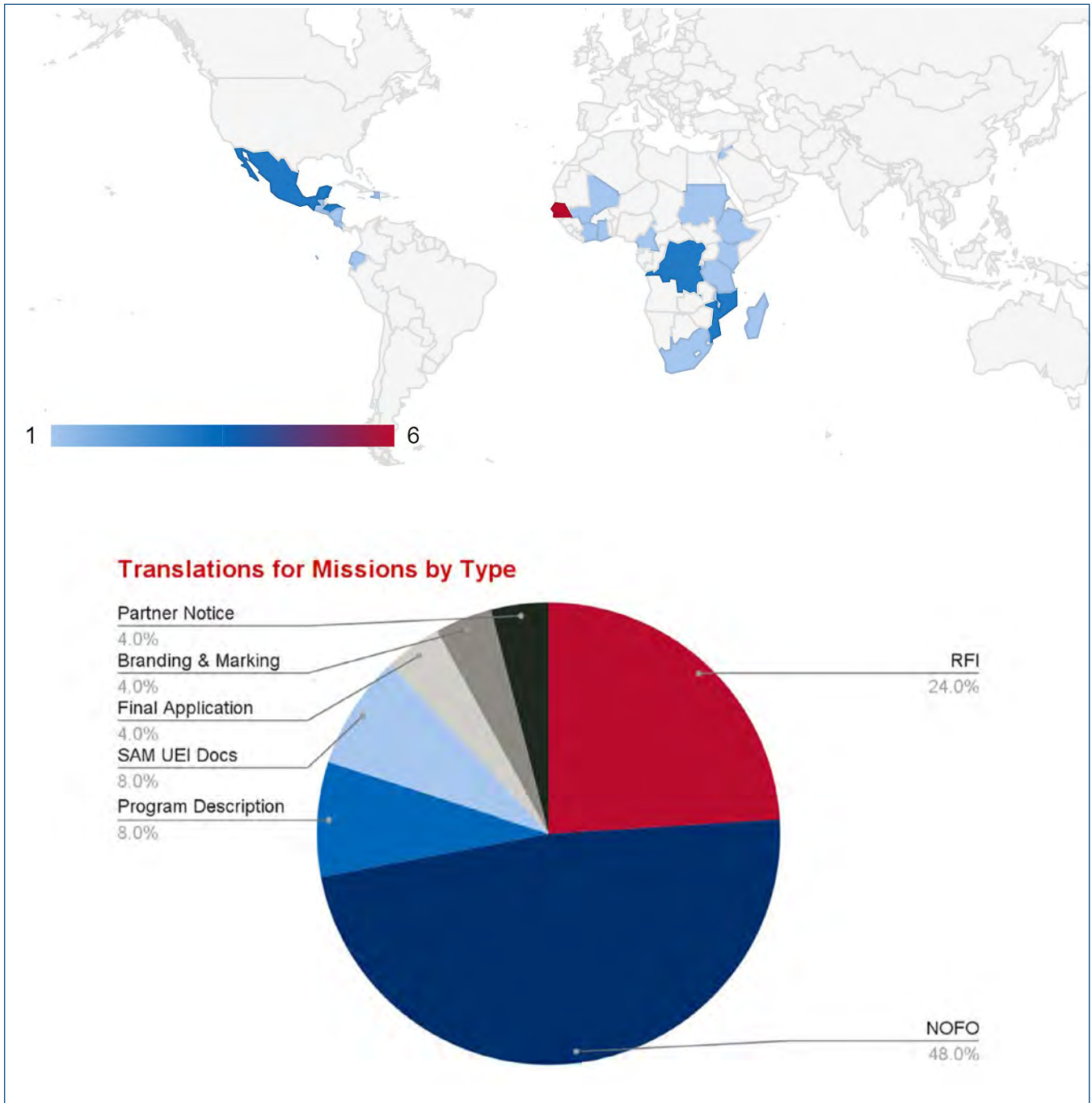
WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

- Significantly revise more than 10 Agency policy and guidance documents, including nearly 100 standard provisions for various organization and award types (i.e. ADS 303maa, mab, and mat) and certifications (ADS 303 mav) to align with the 2 CFR revisions.

- Revise 2 CFR 700, the Agency's supplementary chapter of the CFR governing assistance awards, to ensure complementarity with the 2 CFR revisions by OMB.

- Revised ADS 303 maz (USAID internal link), which provides guidance on SAM.gov registration, Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requirements for assistance awards, reflecting the changes to 2 CFR.

- In support of OMB's request that Federal agencies increase the accessibility, readability, clarity, and design of their NOFOs, USAID will update and pilot use of simplified Notices of Funding Opportunity. These simplified NOFOs are intended to increase partner understanding of potential applicants of USAID's development and humanitarian assistance goals and their ability to apply for and ultimately receive USAID funding.

- Provide continued engagement with potential and current recipients to increase awareness and implementation of the 2 CFR revisions, including the application of the revisions to subawards.

- Evaluate the need for further system, operations, and/or policy changes to support engagement with recipients in languages other than English throughout the Program Cycle.

- Issue a new Acquisition and Assistance and Policy Directive to provide additional flexibilities related to Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements in acquisition. This would allow the option for a Contracting Officer to:

  › Exempt offerors from UEI/SAM requirements at the time an offer or quotation is submitted, and instead require compliance at the time of contract award, and

  › Authorize offerors/contractors to obtain a UEI and be fully registered in SAM within 30 days after contract award.

■ Continued expansion of the USAID Translation Program (Sub-Objective 3.2)

  - Under the leadership of the M/OAA Strategy team, the Translation Program seeks to:

    › Translate ADS documents into more languages, expanding the program from nine languages to 18.

    › 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.

    › Translate M/OAA/PDT's Co-Creation Toolkit into several languages.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

Translation Requests by Country + Translation Document Type Requests for Missions

This map shows the 23 USAID Missions which have requested translation services through the USAID Translation Program.

These Missions include Burundi, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, and Tanzania.

Translations for Missions by Type

- Partner Notice — 4.0%
- Branding & Marking — 4.0%
- Final Application — 4.0%
- SAM UEI Docs — 8.0%
- Program Description — 8.0%
- RFI — 24.0%
- NOFO — 48.0%

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

- Creating and promoting job aids that consolidate expedited procedures to award a contract to small businesses under various socioeconomic programs/categories. (Sub-Objective 3.3)

  - As of late May 2024, the USAID Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) had developed a Contract Officer job aid for use with small businesses. The aid condenses expedited procedures for awarding to businesses under the following categories:

    - › Small Business Set-Aside

    - › 8a Program Small Business Set-Aside

    - › Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Program Set Aside

    - › Hubzone Set Aside

    - › Service-Disabled Veteran-owned Small Business (SDVOSB) Set Aside

- Provide tools to the A&A workforce to operationalize the new Locally Led Programs indicator, which tracks the extent to which USAID programs employ a range of good practices for elevating local leadership across the project lifecycle. The Indicator will be launched in October 2024. (Sub-Objective 3.2)

  - In September 2024 the PLR Bureau released several FY24 primary references for the Locally Led Programs Indicator:

    - › Locally Led Programs Indicator PIRS (USAID internal link)

    - › Locally Led Programs Indicator Guidance (USAID internal link)

    - › Summaries of Locally Led Programs Indicator FY24 Good Practices in Local Leadership (USAID internal link)

    - › Overview of Revisions to the Locally Led Programs Indicator for FY24 Reporting (USAID internal link)

  - In coordination with M/OAA, the PLR Bureau has created tools such as performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS) to help A&A professional staff and Activity planners successfully implement the Locally Led Programs indicator.

    - › These resources will ultimately be available on the internal USAID Localization Measurement page (USAID internal link).

OSDBU OFFERS MORE RESOURCES TO AID SMALL BUSINESSES

As of Summer 2024, The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) is finalizing a job aid for Contracting Officers to apply in using with small businesses. The aid provides expedited procedures to work with different types of small businesses, including those owned by women and service disabled veterans. OSDBU is also expanding its support for large implementing partners to become more knowledgeable of their responsibilities to address and increase subcontracting opportunities for underserved, socio-economic small businesses, efforts that can increase partner diversity and opportunity within the United States and globally.

ANNEX 1 - COMPLETED A&A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS YEAR 1: APRIL 2023 TO APRIL 2024

This section represents Agency actions achieved beyond the key actions identified in the previous sections - *What We've Accomplished - Key Implementation Plan Actions Year 1: April 2023 to April 2024, and What We're Working On - Key Implementation Plan Actions Year 2: May 2024 to May 2025.*

The actions listed in this section provide insight into the depth of multiple stakeholders' efforts to meet evolving partner, personnel, and global development challenges with a commitment to Agency-wide coordination, cooperation, risk-taking and brainstorming under the three A&A Strategy Objectives from April 2023 to April 2024. The actions below reflect Agency efforts to create impactful change, ranging from exploring innovative approaches to recruiting and retaining A&A staff; to creating automation tools and processes to reduce the effort involved in designing and managing awards; to making important A&A information more easily accessible and usable through WorkwithUSAID.gov and the USAID Translation Program.

The complete list of all A&A Strategy implementation actions can be found under *Annex 3 - Detailed Implementation Plan Actions spreadsheet* (USAID internal link).

Objective 1

Sub-Objective 1.1

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

- Completed A&A Workforce and Workload Analysis. Specifically analyzed tasks undertaken by all hiring and contracting mechanisms [Foreign Service (FS), Civil Service (CS), Cooperating Country National (CCN), Personal Service Contractors, Institutional Support Contractors], overlapping roles (CO/AO, COR/AOR, EXO), and authorities (warrants) to inform hiring, including use of the personal services agreement authority (PSA).

  - Explored why valuable A&A staff leave the backstop or the Agency for other employment and the strategies used to retain them.

- Conducted outreach with Agency stakeholders to develop higher-level (12 and 13 FSN/CCN) positions within Missions. Elevate and expand FSN positions in the missions.

- Developed TDY Exchange Opportunities Program - The program was created in coordination with the OAA FSN/CCN Management Council (USAID internal link) that facilitates TDY exchange opportunities for FSN/CCN A&A workforce. Support creation of regional mission exchanges under development.

- Standardized USAID's Implementation of Merit-Based Compensation (MBC) - increased opportunities for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists by creating positions with higher salary and responsibility levels.

- Hired four Eligible Family Members (EFM) in 2023 under the EFM A&A Specialist Pilot program.

- Expanded use of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility DEIA-sensitive hiring tools in M/OAA - Specialized Hiring Fairs and Outreach - for diverse A&A professional staff. (Objectives 1.1 and 1.2)

- Expanded pilot program in 2023 to re-hire former A&A staff from Foreign Service National/Special Immigrant Visa (FSN/SIV) holders. Launched in July 2022, the pilot helped to expedite the hiring of 10 former FSN A&A Specialists. In 2023, the program was expanded to 10 additional slots for M/OAA for a total of 20.

A&A ACCELERATE TACKLES THE A&A STAFFING CRISIS HEAD ON

In April 2024, M/OAA launched A&A Accelerate, a current initiative that encapsulates several activities categorized under four lines of effort:

1. Rebuilding the A&A Workforce
2. Increasing Mission Capacity
3. Enhancing Surge Capacity, and
4. Expanding Professional Development.

The initiative meets Objective 1 of the A&A Strategy - Creating an A&A workforce that is enabled, equipped, and empowered to advance USAID's development and humanitarian mission.

Sub-Objective 1.2

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

- Established new leadership development opportunity for Washington Operation's GS 9-13 Contract Specialists designed in partnership with Management Concepts' Federal Government Leadership Certification Program.

Objective 2

Sub-Objective 2.1

A&A strategic thinking integrated throughout the Program Cycle.

- Created the Technical and Budget Support (TABS) Pilot Program within M/OAA to provide technical office support to understand requirements, write the SOW, PWS, or SOO, and create a matching IGCE.

Sub-Objective 2.2

New and existing tools used effectively to achieve development objectives.

- Created automated solutions for repetitive administrative tasks - specifically developing two auto-populate documents:

  - Acquisition Modification Negotiation Memorandums for contracts, and

  - Assistance Award Memorandums by pre-populating the documents with certain GLAAS data fields.

- Developed 62 templates and guides, and four action trackers to be used by our A&A Staff (available on the Business Process Improvement webpage).

- Continued updates to A&A systems, such as the Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System (ASIST), the A&A Plan, and GLAAS to ensure the technology is as effective and efficient as possible.

IMPROVEMENTS IN DOCUMENT STORAGE AND TRACKING "ASIST" USAID STAFF

In April 2024, M/OAA, working in conjunction with M/CIO, initiated the first phase of integration between Google Drive and the Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System (ASIST) (USAID internal link) to allow users to directly upload multiple Drive documents into ASIST. By Fall 2024, this integration will be further streamlined for Google Drive and Gmail.

Sub-Objective 2.3

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

- Encouraged the use of the General Services Administration's (GSA) OASIS mechanisms for Institutional Support Contract (staffing) and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning 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.

Sub-Objective 2.4

Inclusive and agile A&A approaches used to address intersectional and enduring challenges (i.e., environmental impact, gender inequality, the needs of marginalized groups and underserved communities, and operational challenges in closing civil space).

- Encouraged 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.

Objective 3

- Created a Private Sector Engagement front door (corporate partners page) to integrate resources for private sector partners into the WorkwithUSAID.gov platform.

Sub-Objective 3.1

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

- Simplified and clarified the renewal award process (e.g., "risk assessment requirements" waived for the renewal years).

Sub-Objective 3.2

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

- Provided support in the translation of documentation required during the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)/System for Award Management (SAM) registration process in March 2024 for local partners upon request through the USAID Translation Program, managed by the M/OAA Strategy team.

- Provided numerous tools to A&A staff and Activity planners to implement several good practices included in the new Locally Led Programs indicator.

Sub-Objective 3.3

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

- Expanded subcontracting training and communication materials for large implementing partners to increase their knowledge of their responsibilities and Small Business Plan Compliance.
  - The Small Business Conference held in November 2023 involved stakeholders, including USAID and large and small business partners, to discuss U.S. small business achievements and priorities.

ANNEX 2 - IN PROGRESS A&A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS YEAR 2: MAY 2024 TO MAY 2025

These Year 2 actions, which are in development between May 2024 and May 2025, continue to build upon previous Year 1 accomplishments aligned with the A&A Strategy Objectives and Sub-Objectives, as the Agency recognizes what it can achieve and pushes past its boundaries to do more. These actions describe activities beyond the key actions identified in the previous sections - *What We've Accomplished - Key Implementation Plan Actions Year 1: April 2023 to April 2024, and What We're Working On - Key Implementation Plan Actions Year 2: May 2024 to May 2025* (USAID internal links).

To see the complete list of all actions please refer to *Annex 3 - Detailed Implementation Plan Actions spreadsheet* (USAID internal link).

Objective 1

Sub-Objective 1.1

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

- Continue efforts to hire more Foreign Service eligible family members (EFMs) under the EFM pilot based on four EFM staff being hired in 2023.

- Continue Year 1 efforts to expand use of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility DEIA-sensitive hiring tools in M/OAA for diversifying A&A professional staff. (Objectives 1.1 and 1.2)

- Continue Year 1 activities to expand a program in coordination with the OAA FSN/CCN Management Council (USAID internal link) that facilitates TDY exchange opportunities for the FSN/CCN A&A workforce. Support regional mission exchanges under development. (Objectives 1.1 and 1.2)

  - In advancing FSN/CCN issues, M/OAA regularly consults with the OAA FSN/CCN Management Council, an employee-membership group that advocates for A&A FSN/CCN empowerment and professional development. The Council plays a crucial role in advocating for and coordinating these efforts in partnership with the FSN/CCN A&A community.

- Continue Year 1 efforts toward standardization of USAID's Implementation of Merit-Based Compensation (MBC) - Increase opportunities for FSN/CCN A&A Specialists by creating positions with higher salary and responsibility levels. Create standardized career ladders across Missions for FSN/CCN A&A staff.

- Continue efforts to create higher-level (12 and 13 FSN/CCN) positions within Missions. Elevate and expand FSN/CCN positions in the missions.

- Continue Year 1 efforts to re-hire former A&A staff from Foreign Service National/Special Immigrant Visa (FSN/SIV) holders based on expansion of this program in 2023. Since creation of the pilot program in 2022, a total of 20 FSN/SIV spots have been made available, with 13 of the 20 spots filled as of May 2024.

- Continue efforts to update and disseminate USAID's A&A warrant guidelines. The updated warrant guidelines integrate the FSN/CCN warrant program into the regular warrant guidelines that include permanent warrant processes for U.S. direct hire employees. The updated guidelines streamline the warrant process and expand FSN/CCN administrative and CO/AO permanent warrant responsibilities among other changes that include:

- Credit for comparable GS-1102 experience from outside USAID

- Adoption of FAC-C (Professional) certification

- Creation of a new permanent Administrative Warrant

- Creation of a new permanent Unlimited Warrant

- Increased CO/AO Level III Warrant to $150 million

- Extended PSC Administrative Warrant authority.

- Seek extension of Personal Services Agreement (PSA) Authority granted to USAID in FY24 for FY25 to promote career advancement of FSNs without them having to re-compete for their jobs. This builds on the A&A Workforce and Workload Analysis completed in Year 1.

Sub-Objective 1.2

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

- Continue Year 1 efforts to grow pilot program for leadership development opportunity for Washington Operation's GS 9-13 Contract Specialists designed in partnership with Management Concepts' Federal Government Leadership Certification Program.

- Continue COR/AOR Mentoring Program Implementation - third cohort in calendar year 2025 - (led by the PLR Bureau's COR/AOR Hub).

- Continue development of in-person and customized module training to strengthen COR/AOR skills in award and activity management (COR/AOR Hub).

- Develop a professional development/talent management plan to enhance staff capacities across hiring mechanisms, and the program/project management competencies identified in the 2023 Office of Personnel Management Competency Model (COR/AOR Hub).

Objective 2

Sub-Objective 2.1

 A&A strategic thinking integrated throughout the Program Cycle.

- Share Monitoring, Evaluation, Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (MECLA) best practices and training to promote A&A professionals joining CORs/AORs on site visits.

Sub-Objective 2.2

New and existing tools used effectively to achieve Development Objectives.

- Continue updates to A&A systems with the ASIST- Google Integration - 2nd Release/Phase 2.

Sub-Objective 2.3

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

- Automated calculations for desired target award date entry and previous award calculations are now included in the Procurement Action Lead Time (PALT) milestone spreadsheet as of June 2024. The automated calculator includes a recorded step-by-step training available on the Development Information Solution (DIS) A&A Plan site.

Sub-Objective 2.4

Inclusive and agile A&A approaches used to address intersectional and enduring challenges (i.e., environmental impact, gender inequality, the needs of marginalized groups and underserved communities, and operational challenges in closing civil spaces).

- 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.

BPI GENERATES MORE TOOLS AND TEMPLATES TO SUPPORT A&A WORK

So far in 2024, M/OAA's Business Process Improvement (BPI) team has revised or updated at least 20 A&A tools. By Fall 2024, BPI expects to release templates on the BPI page (USAID internal link) for Solicitations Sections L and M, the Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) Template and Guide, the Cost Share Memo (a guide to determine contract types), the Market Research template, and other resources.

Objective 3

Sub-Objective 3.1

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

- Develop a translation guidance document that aims to provide A&A staff information, tools, resources, and good practices when working on A&A awards at all stages in languages other than English.

Sub-Objective 3.2

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

- Continue to translate ADS documents into more languages (several activities). This builds on translations initiated in Year 1 for several ADS 303 assistance award documents in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swahili.

- Translate more of the WorkwithUSAID.gov website and resources to local languages to engage new local partners, building on the Spring 2024 launch of three new Work with USAID websites in Spanish, French and Arabic. Convert to Portuguese, Russian, and other languages as needed by the USAID partner community.

Sub-Objective 3.3

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

- Develop and promote an outreach toolbox with common documents and procedures for marketing to small businesses. This toolbox would be marketed to Activity planners.

- Expand subcontracting training and communication materials for large implementing partners to increase their knowledge of their responsibilities and increase Small Business Plan Compliance.

"

Our A&A Strategy will drive us towards our vision of being a more adaptive, resilient, and efficient organization. By focusing on our people, policies, processes, and partnerships, we can embrace changes to better deliver acquisition and assistance excellence to meet USAID's mission to create a safe, free, peaceful, and prosperous world.

— Jami J. Rodgers, CAO, SPE, and Director of M/OAA

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Photo Credit: Zinyange Auntony Ruzvidzo

All A&A Strategy Actions (January 2022 to Present)

This spreadsheet (USAID internal link) includes all identified actions tied to implementation of the A&A Strategy starting in January 2022 through the present and will be updated as new actions and activities are introduced across the Agency.

Photo Credit: Akram Ali Bangladesh

ANNEX 4 - THE A&A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

USAID will continue the previous year's efforts in monitoring the implementation of the A&A Strategy through eight indicators linked to the three A&A Strategy Objectives. The indicators are as follows:

Objective 1 - Indicators

Indicator 1: Number of permanent 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.

Indicator 2: 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.

Indicator 3: 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.

Indicator 4: Annual A&A staff recruitment targets - By the end of FY25, Senior Procurement Executives (SPEs) shall determine their recruitment needs for early career contracting for the next five years and shall develop annual targets to be shared with OMB.

Why this indicator? Having quantitative measurements of annual and five-year USAID A&A staff recruitment levels will prompt ongoing evaluation of recruitment strategies and approaches.

Objective 2 - Indicators

Indicator 1: Percentage of USAID staff that indicate M/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 M/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 strategic goals.

Indicator 2: 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 established 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 - Indicators

Indicator 1: 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.

Indicator 2: 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 percent 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.

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 PLR 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.

Photo Credit: Jean-Michel Kpakpo/CRS