

PARTNER ADVISORY SERVICES IN COMPLEX OPERATING ENVIRONMENTS

ORGANIZATION'S MISSION

Serve vulnerable communities in Latin America in the area of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Non-profit

“Our local partner is more confident and comfortable managing the award. Incubator support has enabled them to implement quickly in the most cost-effective and low-risk way. The Incubator has really helped the partner strengthen its risk mitigation processes and mechanisms, ensuring it reaches its objectives and meets USAID expectations while being agile and adapting to its operating context.”

—USAID COUNTERPART

THE PROBLEM

A partner organization that provides humanitarian assistance in a complex operating environment in Latin America received a USAID award to deliver water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to vulnerable communities. The organization has vast experience working in these communities and was selected for a USAID partnership because of their on-the-ground presence, but they had limited experience managing U.S. government funds.

Knowledge gaps were identified in the following areas of USAID award management: monitoring and evaluation (M&E), financial management, and organizational policy development. The Incubator was tasked to address these knowledge gaps. The team faced a unique challenge: providing support in a more complex and sensitive operating environment than the norm, where attention to discretion was required.

THE SOLUTION

The Incubator worked with USAID and partner counterparts to identify which specific expertise the organization would need to help address the identified gaps. To protect and preserve partner safety and security, the Incubator team took precautions when sharing information and engaging the partner. Precautions included engaging only partner representatives located outside the country of concern. The team regularly coordinated with USAID counterparts on best practices and recommendations to protect partner information and leveraged in-house Incubator team members when possible to limit the number of people engaged in the activity. The Incubator carefully managed and protected documents by denying anyone outside of the small team of collaborators access to Google Drive shared documents.

OUTCOMES

Throughout the engagement, the partner had a trusted resource in the Incubator to work alongside them in a manner that showed discretion and attention to privacy concerns. The attentive Incubator team members encouraged frequent communications with the partner and provided rapid responses to questions, which enabled an accelerated and more efficient startup period. Through the process of working with the Incubator to produce tangible deliverables, such as a work plan, an M&E plan, a calendar of project deliverables, an organizational chart, and a human resources (HR) manual, the partner increased its knowledge of USAID project management. Additionally, the partner is now better positioned to proactively meet USAID client expectations for financial reporting and compliance-related documentation.