



Development Done Differently: Advancing Innovation in Localization

USAID'S
PARTNERSHIPS
INCUBATOR

FINAL ANNUAL (FY 2024)
AND PROJECT REPORT



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FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

As the Partnerships Incubator concludes the final year of our contract, I have taken time to reflect on the remarkable journey of our project and the key elements driving our innovative, lasting impact. The story of the Incubator is truly notable; it stands as a testament to the resilience and vision of the change leaders at USAID and our team. Facing opportunities and challenges head-on, they have been steadfast champions of innovation.

Executing transformative ideas requires strong implementers. The recurring theme in our narrative is the Incubator's entrepreneurial spirit, embodied by every team member, subcontractor, and our valued clients. This spirit is the cornerstone of our achievements and enduring impact.

The capacity to pivot and adapt to achieve results has been a defining characteristic of the Incubator since its inception, and it continues to be a key feature of the project. At our initial team retreat, we adopted “pivot” and “results” as our guiding principles, and they have steered implementation through Year 5. Our project scopes of work—dynamic documents that allowed us to adjust as necessary—are a striking example of these principles in action.

During the early tenure of the project, we tailored our vision to meet the needs of the Agency, conducted research, asked questions about the challenges, and uncovered valuable insights to inform our innovations. We carried out extensive due diligence to explore and understand stakeholders' pain points in the USAID ecosystem. This effort included conversations with executives inside the Agency and high-profile implementing partners. Some of these organizations had never worked with USAID and other local partners were at various stages of their relationship with the Agency. The project implementation approach we co-created with our USAID colleagues on the basis of this research allowed us to deliver tailored, informed, high-quality services and results.

Many of the initiatives we accomplished in Year 5 will become enduring, legacy products for USAID, driving long-lasting change in how the Agency engages with partners in the future. These include:

- WorkwithUSAID.gov transition, enhancements, and website support
- Translations
- Unsolicited proposals and applications submission portal
- CAPTALO! Training Program
- Kickstart Training Program
- Local partner capacity strengthening
- Partner Landscape Assessments



FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

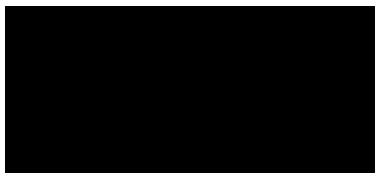
The Partnerships Incubator's success during the past five years was made possible by assembling the right people. The Incubator thrived because of our cohesive team, strong internal relationships, and dedication to delivering meaningful results that support the Agency's mission to localize development efforts. With the right people and strong relationships within the team and with our clients, we created an environment where bold initiatives and innovation with lasting impact could take root and flourish.

From the beginning, our Agency partners challenged us to be thought leaders, pushing us to find creative solutions to their complex business problems. Open lines of communication with the Agency facilitated this collaboration and fostered a free flow of ideas and innovation.

Our clients harnessed the dynamic spirit of the Incubator by providing flexible and non-prescriptive task orders, allowing our team freedom to devise creative, out-of-the-box solutions to challenges. I am grateful to USAID for granting the Incubator the space and liberty to innovate—it was an opportunity our team seized. We cultivated a culture that valued feedback and used it as a basis for decisive action. Each individual on our team is a strategic thinker and a dedicated learner with a strong client focus.

The ongoing support of our leadership and project management teams at Kaizen is another critical factor in the Incubator's success. They were true partners in our progress, enabling us to innovate effectively within a government context. Their collaboration was instrumental in our ability to drive meaningful change.

The impressive legacy of our project is fundamentally shaped by how we conducted ourselves, interacted with each other, and engaged with our clients and partners. Although capturing the full breadth and depth of five years of project activities in a report such as this is challenging, the Partnerships Incubator has been an extraordinary journey marked by remarkable achievements and lasting contributions to USAID's ability to engage with local and nontraditional partners.



Donna Vincent Roa, PhD, ABC, CDPM®
Project Director
USAID's Partnerships Incubator



PARTNERSHIPS INCUBATOR

USAID's [New Partnerships Initiative \(NPI\)](#), launched in 2019, aimed to diversify the Agency's partner base by eliminating barriers to engagement and creating opportunities for new, local, and nontraditional organizations to collaborate with the Agency. To support this mission, the Partnerships Incubator—[REDACTED]—served as a global service hub established by NPI.

Through buy-ins from Missions, Bureaus, and central Operating Units (M/B/OU), the Incubator enhanced USAID's external communication efforts; improved engagement with new, local, and nontraditional partners; expanded the Agency's capacity to collaborate; and supported organizations to work with USAID.

The Incubator collaborated with USAID headquarters and Missions to identify and engage new and local partners. It provided training and capacity strengthening assistance and developed tools, resources, and models to advance NPI goals. The Incubator supported organizations in assessing their readiness to compete for and manage USAID awards, delivered training to strengthen their readiness, and improved Agency-based resources and tools. We categorized services into five areas: research, technical assistance (TA), tools and resources, training and mentoring, and communications.



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

The Partnerships Incubator's success is due to its unique and innovative approach to international development. We prioritized organic collaboration, within our team and with USAID clients and partners, to amplify the efficiency and impact of our services. Our entrepreneurial mindset—which allowed us to experiment, reflect, and adapt quickly—drove our achievements.

Although this report highlights key aspects of the Incubator's success, it cannot encompass the full story of our efforts to overcome multifaceted, year-to-year challenges and our achievements. For a more comprehensive understanding of the innovations we delivered, please refer to our annual reports from the past four years.^{1,2,3,4}

FOSTERING A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

As a learning organization, the Incubator worked closely with local partners and USAID to co-create solutions and service delivery. This collaborative process empowered mutual learning and growth opportunities among the Incubator, organizations, and the Agency. We customized training packages to meet partners' needs, and their insights and perspectives were critical in developing relevant services. The Incubator considered these needs, as expressed by the partners, in balance with the needs as experienced by the USAID Missions and Bureaus that sought to work with them. By tailoring our training packages, the Incubator addressed the operational and strategic capacities necessary for effective Agency partnership and more substantial development impact. This learning orientation toward Agency and partner perspectives helped us refine our services to meet the highest-priority needs and objectives.

In supporting USAID, the Incubator adopted technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and translation tools to encourage a forward-thinking approach to government initiatives. In April 2023, the Incubator delivered a series of four internal webinars for USAID staff, sharing lessons learned from our activities during the previous four years. Drawing on our extensive experience reducing barriers to partnership with the Agency, the series provided insights into best practices in institutional transformation, including responsive service provision, flexible management, and adaptive project implementation. As the hub in this organic learning loop, the Incubator created a robust learning ecosystem that enabled our services to expand quickly.

¹ [USAID's New Partnerships Initiative Incubator: Annual Report FY 2020](#)

² [USAID's New Partnerships Initiative Incubator: Annual Report FY 2021](#)

³ [USAID's New Partnerships Initiative Incubator: Annual Report FY 2022](#)

⁴ [USAID's New Partnerships Initiative Incubator: Annual Report FY 2023](#)



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

REDEFINING PARTNER ENGAGEMENTS

We have prioritized understanding and incorporating on-the-ground realities in service delivery. Our design, communication, and delivery efforts considered pain points experienced by partners seeking to work with the Agency. We conducted in-depth partner interviews at the beginning of each buy-in engagement to identify organizations' challenges and make our services more relevant and meaningful. One of our five-year journey milestones was translating [WorkwithUSAID.org](https://www.workwithusa.org) (now [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusa.gov)) into three languages. Translating USAID's messaging and the Incubator's training materials into non-English languages ensured accessibility and relevance.

This partner-focused process empowered partners for long-term development and lasting impact. Through the past five years, we have observed that engaging partners within their context, often face to face on the ground, enables them to solidify learning, strengthen capacities, and forge partnerships with other organizations, expanding and amplifying our impact.

CREATING VALUE THROUGH AGILITY

A core driver of our success—in addition to signature tools and close collaboration with stakeholders—was the entrepreneurial culture we cultivated at the Incubator. We thrived by balancing efficiency with adaptability. For example, we streamlined our hiring process with innovative candidate vetting techniques such as voicemail interviews and dynamic evaluation panels to facilitate timely and efficient screening; developed a rapid assessment tool and standardized templates for staff training to scale up quickly; and expanded the full-time team from 11 individuals in Year 1 to 23 in Year 5 to support continuously growing demand for our services.

Additionally, we implemented a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) to streamline the process of securing specialized support. As our services quickly expanded, it became essential to promptly source consultants and service providers. Our BPA efficiently prequalified vendors within service categories to quickly tap into a wider and deeper pool of consultants and providers. This pre-established agreement significantly reduced administrative burdens and expedited the procurement process, allowing us to acquire services in as little as two weeks.

Our ability to adapt as circumstances changed complemented an efficient operational base. We approached client service scopes of work as “living documents,” providing flexibility to meet constraints and opportunities. Given the nature of our services and the context of local partners, changes were inevitable; embedding the ability to pivot during implementation was critical.



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Above all, our success was driven by our people. We organized service delivery teams in an agile “pod” structure that allowed us to identify synergies and share knowledge and resources across activities. With an all-hands-on-deck mindset, our team members worked as utility players, providing surge support when necessary to get the job done. We could adjust quickly to meet partners’ needs, expand or contract teams based on changing scopes, and generally accelerate our capacity to respond within fast-changing operational contexts.

With these unique strategies embedded in the DNA of the Incubator, our team delivered more than 50 distinct activities in more than 45 countries across the last five years. As a culmination of our journey, this report highlights how our innovative approach and dedication to achieving results have created an impact that will matter long into the Agency’s future.

 >40
NUMBER OF BUY-INS

 >35
M/B/OU_s SUPPORTED

 >45
COUNTRIES SUPPORTED
(not counting global activities)

 >102
NEW, LOCAL, AND
NONTRADITIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
DIRECTLY SUPPORTED
(partners and potential partners)

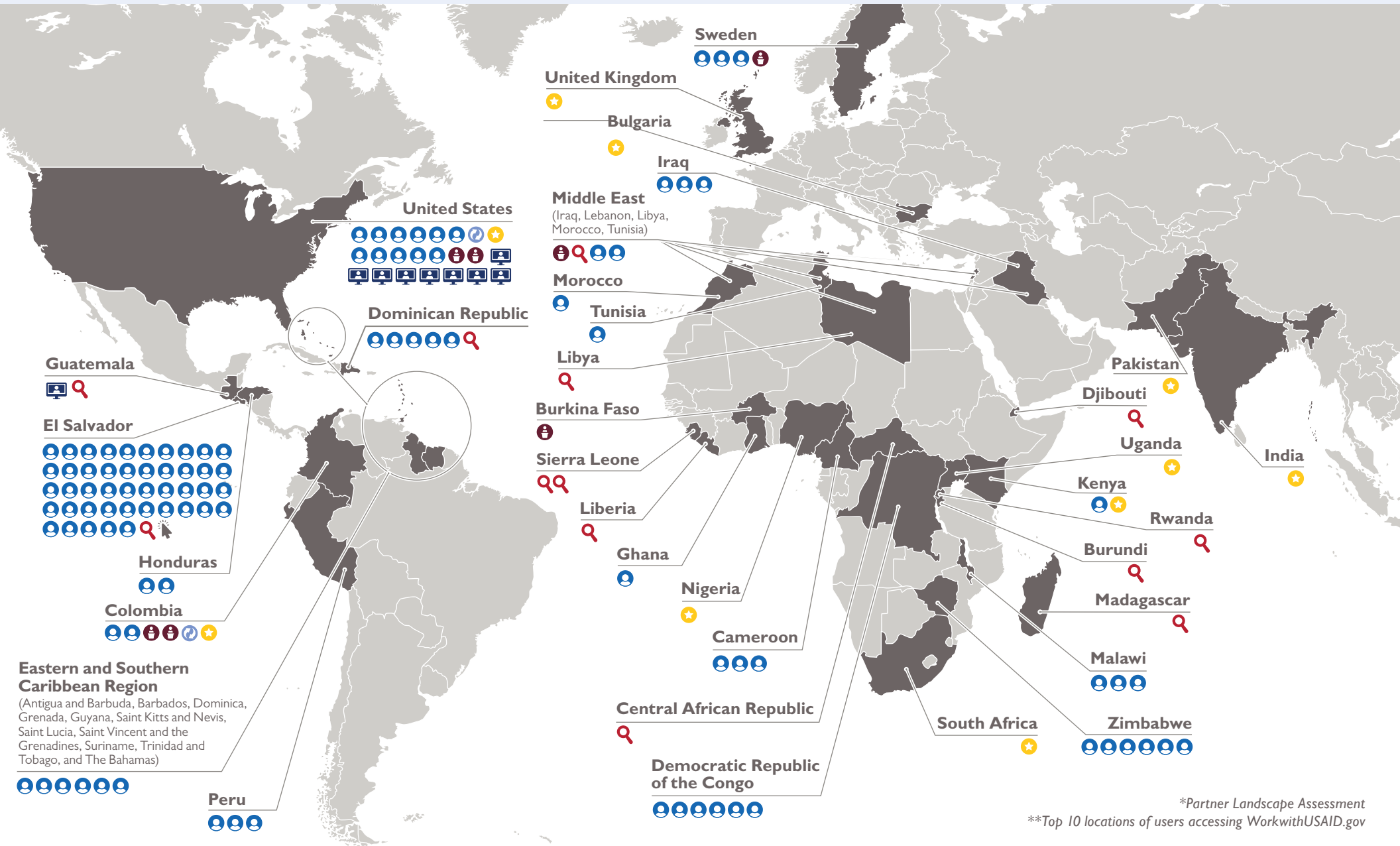
 14
PARTNER LANDSCAPES
COMPLETED



INCUBATOR INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD

TYPE

Direct Partner Capacity Strengthening
 PLA*
 Webinar/Training
 Co-creation Workshop/Conference
 Exchange Program
 E-learning Program
 Top 10 User**



*Partner Landscape Assessment

**Top 10 locations of users accessing WorkwithUSAID.gov

OBJECTIVE I:

Amplify USAID's External Communication Efforts

From the beginning, storytelling has been central to the Partnerships Incubator's strategy to empower thousands of organizations aspiring to collaborate with USAID. The Incubator has captured and shared partnership stories to amplify USAID's mission and values through these partnerships. These include success stories on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusaid.gov), local partner videos on USAID's social media channels, Agency webinars, events, and translated training resources. During the five years of the Incubator's journey, our storytelling efforts in various promotional and training materials carried the momentum from year to year and signaled a continually expanding and enhanced USAID partner base.



OBJECTIVE I

EVOLUTION OF STORYTELLING THROUGH WORKWITHUSAID.ORG⁵

During the past three years, WorkwithUSAID's News & Insights blog has evolved into a rich repository of valuable guidance from the Agency and local partners. The Incubator's storytelling initiative began in 2019 with animated explainer videos offering practical information and tips for working with USAID. Topic-specific content such as "Acronym Soup" and Quick Reference Guides helped partners navigate the various ways to collaborate with the Agency. In the second year, the Incubator expanded efforts to share partner success stories and provided a series of blogs with practical tips and guidance on how to cultivate partnerships with USAID, specifically covering topics such as [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) registration, how to write a USAID proposal, and how to develop a cost proposal. The storylines we developed helped the Agency reach a wider audience and inspired and strengthened local, nontraditional organizations.

From its inception in 2019, the Incubator aimed to develop purposeful narratives to guide organizations at every stage of their partnership journey. This effort culminated in the launch of WorkwithUSAID.org on November 4, 2021; it was subsequently adopted by the Agency and transitioned to WorkwithUSAID.gov.

During the highly publicized website launch, USAID Administrator Samantha Power—in a speech titled "A New Vision for Global Development" given at Georgetown University in Washington, DC—recognized the Incubator's core strategy to build partnerships by sharing knowledge and creating dialogue: "To make it easier for America's vibrant small businesses, NGOs, faith-based organizations, minority-serving institutions, diaspora groups, and foundations to partner with USAID, today we're launching WorkwithUSAID.org. That site is our new welcome mat—a one-stop shop that lets any organization know exactly how to pursue USAID partnerships, including, for example, online courses that will help you bid for our awards. It is crucial that we engage more frequently, intensely, and sustainably with the broader range of partners that I mentioned, as they offer a scale that no single development agency can truly reach. So, we have to lower barriers for these kinds of organizations and institutions to join our mission."

Our storytelling mission was to create a partner-centric narrative. We achieved this by sharing success stories in partners' voices. The highlight of the Incubator's effort to spotlight the needs and realities of local organizations around the world was the "Voices of Local Partners" video series. The Incubator traveled to El Salvador and Zimbabwe to capture partners' tips and lessons learned from their experiences navigating challenges, finding solutions, and striving for sustainability. The interviews in El Salvador and Zimbabwe, which yielded publicly

⁵ In early 2023, USAID began efforts to transition WorkwithUSAID.org to a .gov domain by year-end, highlighting the value of the site as a secure, enduring government resource.

"WorkwithUSAID.org ... is our new welcome mat—a one-stop shop that lets any organization know exactly how to pursue USAID partnerships."

~USAID ADMINISTRATOR SAMANTHA POWER



“

OBJECTIVE I

shared videos as well as blogs, also outlined valuable guidance for local organizations catalyzing change in their communities. Providing local partners a platform through the “Voices of Local Partners” series has driven knowledge exchange that benefits current, new, and potential partners and USAID. To continue sharing partners’ perspectives, the Incubator toward the end of Year 5 initiated a series of virtual interviews with leaders of organizations across its projects in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, and Malawi, among others. These conversations yielded a fresh set of insights for the website’s audience.

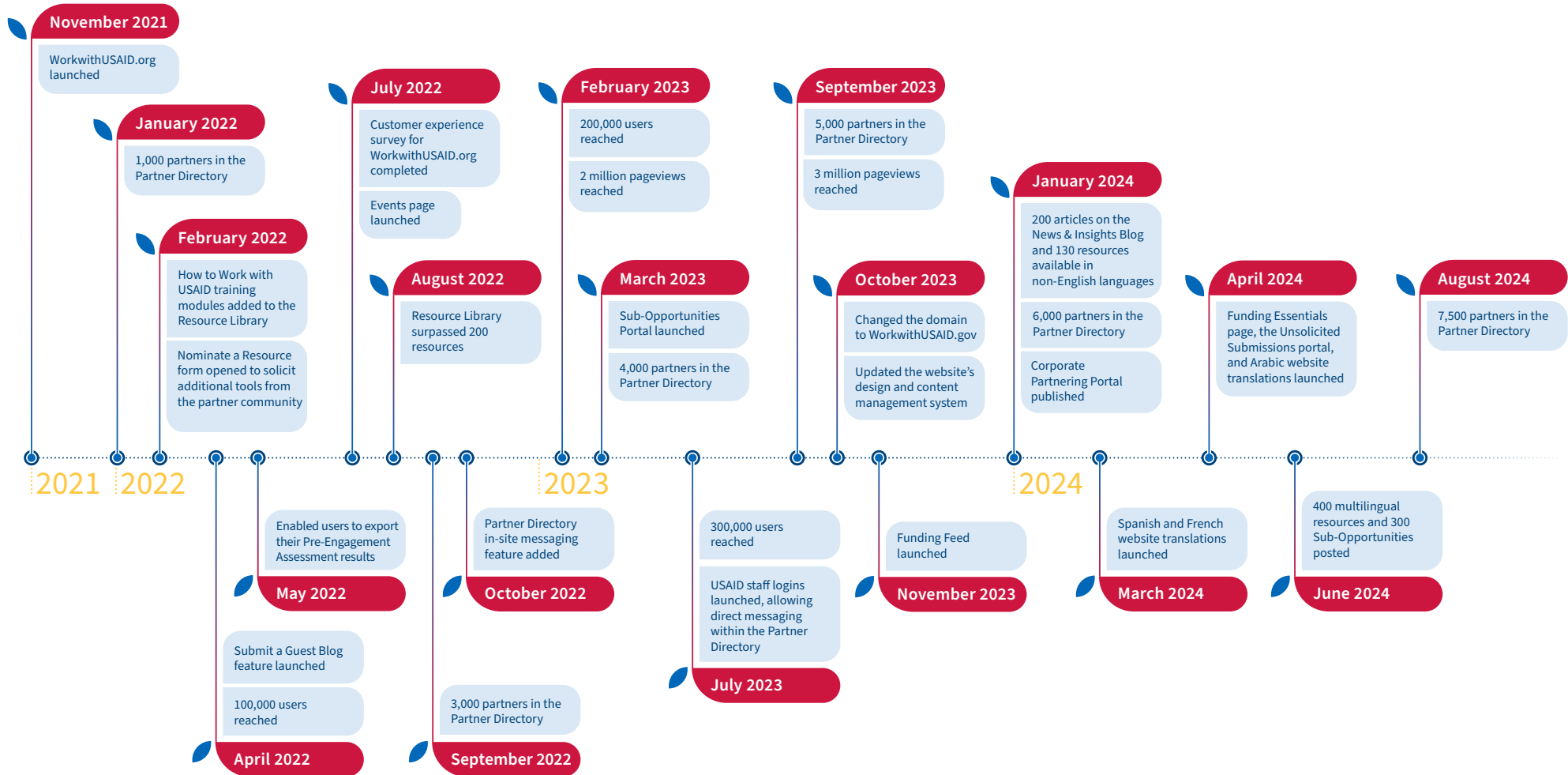
The [USAID Care Economy video](#) centered around a woman named Portia Ntlebi in Soweto, South Africa. Portia is one of 600 entrepreneurs that USAID, in partnership with Grow ECD and Kaizenvest, has trained to improve early childhood education in South Africa while building a financially sustainable business. After the training, Portia was able to start her own early childhood development center and now has more than 60 children that benefit from her services. In coordination with a local videographer, we followed Portia for two days gathering drone footage, interviews, and clips from her work and home life. This story showcases the personal impact that creating jobs for care workers, improving early childhood outcomes, and freeing up parents—particularly mothers—to work can have on a community.

The Incubator tailored the message to the audience to expand service delivery impact.



WORKWITHUSAID.GOV TIMELINE

WORKWITHUSAID.GOV TIMELINE GRAPH WITH MAJOR MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS



OBJECTIVE 1

DRIVING USER TRAFFIC WITH ENGAGING CONTENT

Since launching WorkwithUSAID.org (now .gov) in 2021, the site has received nearly 4 million pageviews from more than 395,000 users. Through the years, the Incubator has increased user interaction through strategic promotion and translations of the platform. Serving as a hub for more than 200 multi-language and varying partner resources, WorkwithUSAID.gov in Year 5 engaged users in almost 4 million events, such as scrolls, clicks, access to the “Start Here” checklist, and file downloads—nearly four times the activity of its first year.

WorkwithUSAID.gov’s News & Insights blog provides valuable and enduring partner-focused content while attracting users to explore the site. The Incubator has published more than 240 content pieces on the blog since its launch in 2021—including interviews with Agency experts, public announcements on upcoming events, and updates to USAID policies, success stories, current funding opportunities, and how-to tips and guidance for new partners—to serve the needs of our diverse partner community. In the Incubator’s fifth year, News & Insights became a steady entry point for users visiting the site, with more than 221,200 views of the blog and its subpages, up from approximately 10,300 during the website’s first year. Each blog contains a call to action that directs readers to the next steps in advancing their understanding and readiness for a USAID partnership.

Through the years, WorkwithUSAID.gov audiences have shown strong interest in practical tips and guidance on the partnership process and terminology, such as the “How to Write a USAID Proposal” blog series, USAID’s localization agenda and geographic codes, and details on registering at SAM.gov and obtaining a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Since the launch of translated blog content in Arabic, French, and Spanish, multilingual versions explaining the partnership process and USAID terms have garnered significant views. For the first time, a [Spanish blog](#) was the third most-viewed post on the entire site; this June 2024 post on the Agency’s efforts to cultivate language accessibility came just a couple of months after introducing content in this language. This data provided the Incubator and USAID with valuable insights into the partners’ knowledge gaps and their evolving needs and interests. USAID is using this information to plan and guide future blog posts, available resources, and other content decisions.

WORKWITHUSAID.GOV BY THE NUMBERS

November 2021–September 2024



OBJECTIVE 1

PARTNER-FOCUSED DELIVERY THROUGH TRANSLATION

The Partnerships Incubator prioritized creation of a seamless user experience on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) through various external communication avenues. A significant 2024 milestone involved launching the website's French, Spanish, and Arabic versions. This success came from the combined efforts of the Incubator's web developer, Miew, the USAID Bureau for Management's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA) communications team, the Incubator staff, and translators.

The team used artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation, adhering to the Agency's [AI Action Plan](#). This plan, which refers to recommendations by the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development and carries the endorsement of the U.S. Government, promotes a human-centric approach to trustworthy AI. AI and the translation memory processed millions of words from English into multiple languages, then a team of human linguists reviewed and refined the translations to ensure clarity and authority.⁶ Within a few months, the importance of this initiative became evident: The site received more than 30,500 views in Spanish, more than 33,300 in French, and more than 29,500 in Arabic (graph on next page).

We have learned that organizations in countries where USAID operates frequently use the Facebook platform to build in-country networks, identify resources, and receive Agency-related updates. In 2021, the first year of [WorkwithUSAID.org](#), we observed nearly 77,000 pageviews originating from Facebook. In response, the Incubator devised a strategy to promote translated animations and infographics for the USAID/El Salvador and USAID/Nepal Facebook pages in Year 4. For broader global use, these materials were translated into Arabic, French, Spanish, and Nepali. These assets highlighted the value of the [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) platform and included focused calls to action to engage with the site. As a result of this Facebook strategy with USAID/Nepal, users from the country have become one of the top 20 visiting countries on the site.

Recognizing the Agency's updated Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) strategy, which highlighted the prevalence of English-only materials as a barrier to partnership, the Incubator put in place the workflow and staff to support the M/OAA buy-in to translate a set of high-priority documents starting late in Year 4. The team used translation subcontractors for first-level translations and a team of proofreaders to validate the translations.

We added additional resources for translation in Year 5, bringing the total of translated documents to 53. Guided by the A&A strategy, the Incubator launched the USAID Translation Program in October 2023 to provide translation services to OUs seeking to overcome the language barrier to make direct assistance awards to local partners. The program has received 46 requests from 17 OUs to date, resulting in the translation to 552,555 target words.

⁶ See the "[Delivering a Digital-First Public Experience](#)" memorandum from the Executive Office of the President.

“It’s great to hear that USAID has created a multilingual platform to enable new, local, and nontraditional partners to learn how to #WorkWithUSAID. The availability of this resource hub in Spanish and French is a wonderful initiative, as it allows for broader accessibility and engagement. It’s important to break down language barriers and provide valuable information to a wider audience. Thank you for sharing this valuable resource!”

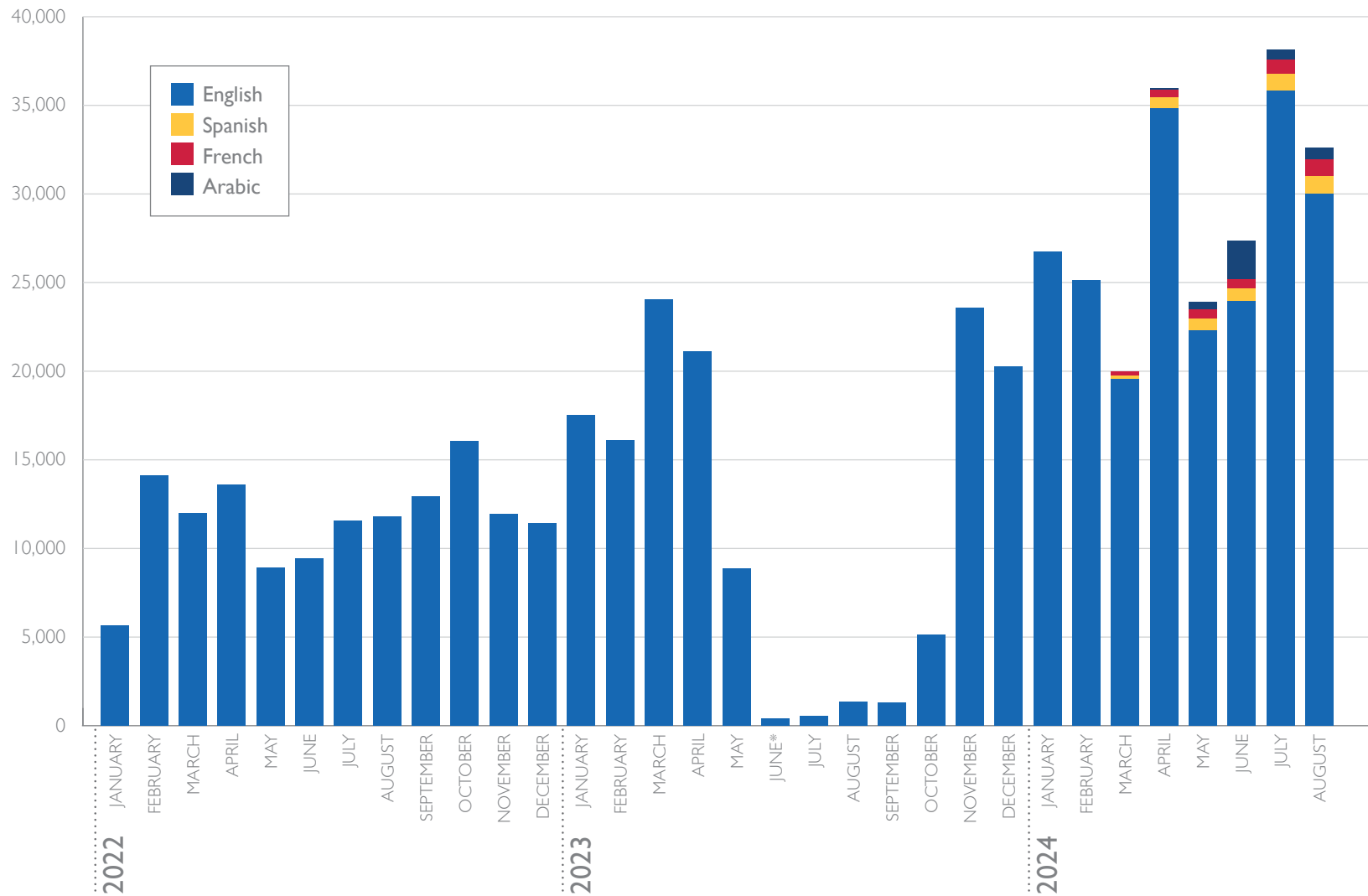
~POST ON LINKEDIN
WORKWITHUSAID.GOV PAGE

“

OBJECTIVE I

The Incubator fostered deeper connections and empowered local communities with tailored and translated resources that resonate in local contexts and cultures. Through inspiring storytelling and ongoing efforts to localize the messaging, the Incubator's strategy delivered a purposeful narrative that enhances the Agency's ability to diversify and strengthen its partnerships.

WORKWITHUSAID.GOV USAGE BY LANGUAGE



*When Google moved from Universal Analytics to GA4, the baseline for reporting number of users changed because GA4 tracks users more accurately. Universal Analytics could count the same person multiple times if they used different devices, while GA4 avoids this by combining data from various sources, often resulting in a lower but more precise user count.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Expand USAID's Capacity for Partnerships

The Partnerships Incubator supported M/B/OUTs with a comprehensive range of services to expand the Agency's reach to a broader pool of new, local, and nontraditional partners. Since the Incubator's inception in 2019, we have continuously refined our services to ensure each engagement is tailored and meaningful. Every project started with a robust co-creation process with the M/B/OUT to ensure alignment and achieve the best outcomes. This process allowed the Agency to shape and refine the engagement while enabling the Incubator to adjust as needed during implementation. Thanks to this approach, the Incubator was able to assist M/B/OUTs in identifying, engaging, and supporting nontraditional and local partners in innovative ways.



OBJECTIVE 2

PARTNER DIRECTORY: INCREASING VISIBILITY

The [Partner Directory](#) is USAID's initiative to identify new, local, and nontraditional organizations and connect them with viable partnership opportunities. This easy-to-search listing allows organizations to showcase their mission, vision, geographical reach, and impact in various sectors. For partners, especially those without an established online presence, the directory offers an unprecedented platform to gain visibility and credibility. Listed organizations' profiles are more discoverable to USAID staff and potential collaborators within the development sector. In October 2022, the addition of a secure, anonymous in-site messaging feature enhanced partner-to-partner networking for listed organizations, fostering new relationships and amplifying the potential for productive partnerships.

WorkwithUSAID.gov spotlighted about 7,500 current, new, and potential partners in its third year of operation. More than 5,000 (or 68 percent) are locally led organizations, while 612 are U.S.-owned small businesses. Of the total submitted profiles that have been reviewed, vetted, and approved for the Partner Directory, more than 83 percent self-identify as "new partners" or organizations that have not worked with USAID. Of these new partners, more than 2,200 identify as minority-owned or -serving institutions, nearly 830 identify as Indigenous-led, and more than 350 identify as veteran-owned or service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

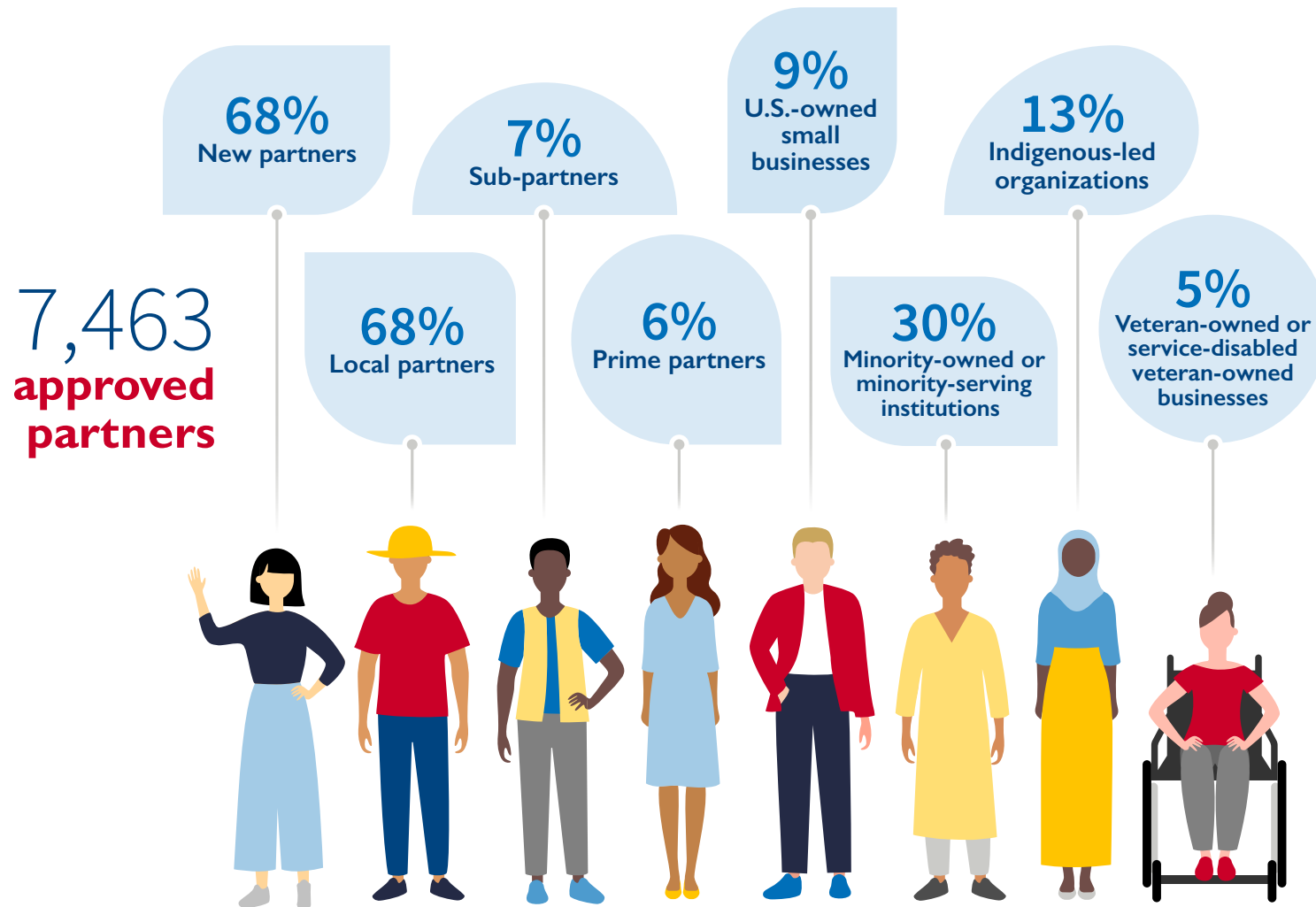
The ongoing impacts of the Partner Directory—a listing in constant expansion—are twofold. For partners, the directory increases visibility and credibility, opening the doors to new opportunities and enhanced networking within international development. For USAID, the Partner Directory enables discovery and engagement with diverse organizations, fostering more inclusive and impactful collaborations.



OBJECTIVE 2

WORKWITHUSAID.GOV PARTNER DIRECTORY CHARACTERISTICS

November 2021–September 2024



OBJECTIVE 2

THE PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE: EVALUATING READINESS

The partner landscape was a core Incubator service offered to USAID Missions. Partner landscapes typically involved an analysis and an optional follow-up assessment. The analysis used criteria provided by USAID to identify the key potential partners in a field, sector, or geography and classify them by relevant characteristics (e.g., type of organization, target beneficiary). This information helped USAID understand the broader operational context while enabling the Mission to design its strategy to maximize impact. The assessment took an analysis one step further, offering an expert opinion on one or more aspects of the organizations—for example, ranking them according to readiness to partner with USAID, identifying which are best suited to address a particular Mission objective, or supporting long-term strategic planning.

We followed a consistent process in partner landscapes. Each typically began with the Incubator team building a broad list of partners through desk research, the networks of our local consultants, and names provided by the Mission. Depending on factors such as local literacy rates and internet connectivity, the team used a public outreach campaign through social media, radio, or newspaper channels to identify more partners. The team collected fundamental indicators of organizational capacities and demographic information with surveys. We then conducted key informant interviews with promising partners to collect additional information, such as readiness to partner with the Agency. Finally, we reported our findings and detailed information on partners recommended based on fit with the Mission's predefined criteria.

The following partner landscapes demonstrate the variety of cases the Incubator assessed to help Missions and Bureaus better understand the local organizations active within their regions. These examples include analyses to evaluate the readiness to partner with USAID, identify organizations previously unknown to the Agency, expand the pool of Indigenous organizations for partnership, and determine local leaders with community influence.



OBJECTIVE 2

CASE STUDY: ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

USAID/RWANDA

USAID/Rwanda engaged the Partnerships Incubator to carry out a partner landscape to help the Mission understand the challenges and opportunities in increasing its engagement with and funding to local and nontraditional organizations. This included identifying organizations with sufficient operational capacity to manage USAID funds and those driving development impact in priority areas aligned to the Mission and the U.S. Embassy's [Integrated Country Strategy](#).

The Incubator team filtered an initial field of 313 organizations to a shortlist of 16 high-potential organizations that met predefined criteria for partnership readiness and other considerations, including presence in Rwanda, market value, and focus across four sectors: democracy and governance, economic growth, health, and education. Partnership readiness considered experience with USAID or similar funding sources; finance, budget, and compliance capabilities; talent and workforce management capabilities; and project management and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approaches.

Among the key findings, the Incubator team identified organizations' reasons for not partnering with USAID, including limited exposure to funding opportunities and not meeting solicitation requirements. When asked about challenges they face when working with international donors, respondents mentioned limited funding allocations to cover organizational expenses (overhead), instability of funding, and inability to meet reporting requirements. Respondents identified support in organizational strengthening, particularly fundraising and networking, as their primary need to overcome these challenges.

Based on these and other insights from the study, the Incubator team recommended steps USAID/Rwanda could take as it seeks to realize its localization objectives.



OBJECTIVE 2

CASE STUDY: IDENTIFYING ORGANIZATIONS

USAID/DJIBOUTI

USAID/Djibouti sought to identify civil society organizations (CSOs) and local and international private-sector partners that could participate in co-creation with USAID and other donor-funded programs targeting youth employment. The Incubator and local consultants interviewed 29 CSOs, four private-sector actors, six donors and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), seven government offices, and one regional entity during the partner landscape process.

The Incubator team identified 34 potential partners. The partner landscape detailed partners' experience in project and donor funds management, highlighting their strengths, challenges, and willingness to collaborate with USAID. In addition to identifying organizations previously unknown to the Mission, the Incubator team outlined the level of support each organization would need to successfully work with USAID. The Incubator developed a comprehensive database the Mission can use to make strategic decisions and select the best partners based on project objectives and scope.

With the information and insights from the partner landscape, the Mission designed capacity-strengthening programs to empower partners to become primes or subawardees. The Mission also engaged with more than 20 local partners, several of whom were identified in our partner landscape, through public solicitations. These programs significantly enhanced the capabilities of local partners, fostering sustainable development and stronger community engagement.



OBJECTIVE 2

CASE STUDY: EXPANDING INDIGENOUS OUTREACH

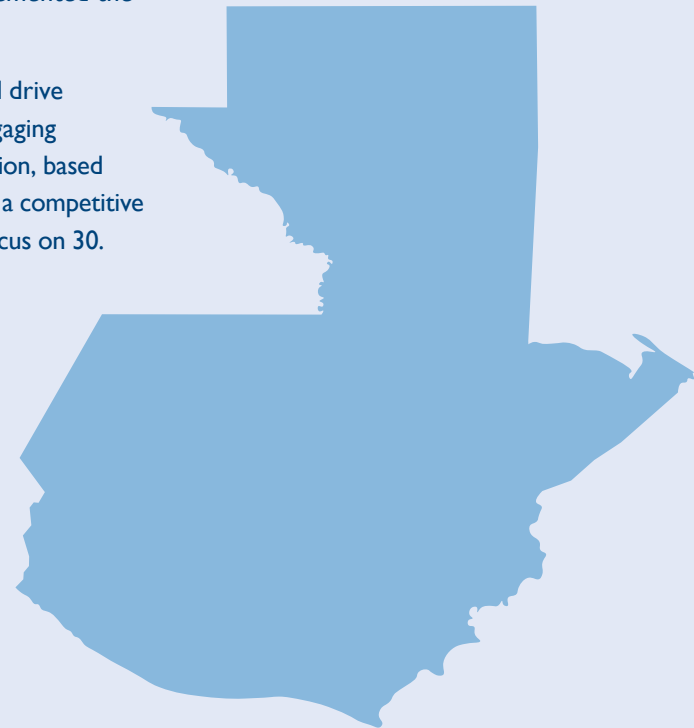
USAID/GUATEMALA

In Guatemala, the Incubator conducted a partner landscape to help the Mission increase engagement with and funding to local partners, particularly Indigenous-led organizations. Nearly half of Guatemala's population identifies as Indigenous Peoples across a diverse range of ethno-linguistic groups, yet they experience unequal access to health care, educational opportunities, nutritious food, and jobs. Organizations led by and serving Indigenous Peoples are best equipped to address development challenges in these communities but were underrepresented in the Mission's networks of potential partners. To address these challenges, USAID/Guatemala implemented the Agency's first country-specific Indigenous People's Engagement Strategy.

The Incubator identified organizations with the operational capacity to manage Agency funds and drive development impact in the Mission's priority areas, including reducing irregular migration and engaging Indigenous Peoples. The Incubator team used a definition of USAID readiness, affirmed by the Mission, based on organizational sustainability beyond donor-funded programming and unique value proposition in a competitive marketplace. The Incubator narrowed a broad partner ecosystem of nearly 500 organizations to focus on 30.

Nearly two-thirds of all organizations surveyed had an Indigenous founder or leader, while 50 percent were founded and led by someone from an Indigenous background. USAID/Guatemala has since used the contact list to engage with local partners.

As a follow-up, the Incubator hosted a webinar in Spanish to address partnership readiness gaps identified in the partner landscape activity and share best practices on working with USAID, including topics such as pre-award planning and proposal writing. A Guatemalan nonprofit organization, El Refugio de la Niñez, shared its inspiring story about partnering with the Agency. This organization was later featured in the Local, Faith, and Transformative (LFT) Partnerships Hub's localization newsletter. The Mission noted it continues to repurpose the webinar materials for new audiences.



OBJECTIVE 2

CASE STUDY: IDENTIFYING IMPACTFUL LEADERS

USAID/LIBERIA

USAID/Liberia aims to use existing and emerging evidence and local voices to develop a responsive localization strategy to define how the Mission will institutionalize USAID's broader localization vision.

With this goal in mind, the Mission commissioned the Partnerships Incubator to conduct a partner landscape of local organizations in Liberia. The Incubator team sought to identify local organizations that demonstrate leadership and impact in areas aligned with the Mission's technical focus areas, operate in systems relevant to the Mission's 2019–2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), and offer a unique value proposition, or product or service not otherwise available in the community, geography, or sector. The partner landscape also provided an overview of the capacities and needs of local organizations related to their USAID readiness and mapped Liberian systems to determine how the government, local authorities, community-based organizations, private-sector entities, foundations, and other donors work with one another in the local context.

The Incubator team filtered 596 organizations identified through desk research and an outreach campaign to 25 organizations selected for key informant interviews. The team distilled organizations operating in the Mission's target geographies and demonstrating influence and convening potential within the priority sectors of economic growth, agriculture, democracy and governance, health, and education. Partners were also vetted based on the uniqueness and value propositions of their products or services.

An outreach campaign encouraging organizations to participate in the self-assessment was a unique aspect of this partner landscape process. Given the country's low literacy rate, the Incubator adopted a multi-pronged outreach approach via radio, social media, and a call-in line to capture a wide range of potential local leaders.

The team produced a radio jingle disseminated through prominent networks TruthFM and OKFM. It aired five times daily, seven days a week, for two weeks. The jingle was then picked up by USAID's community radio network and aired for another week, for a total of three weeks on the air.

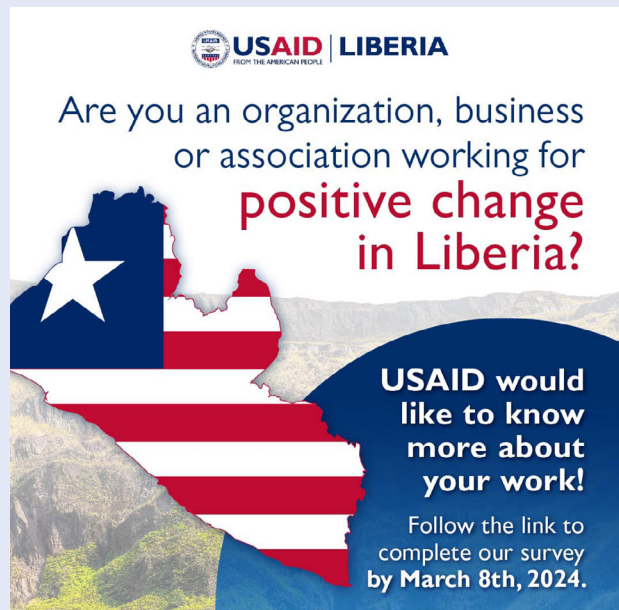


OBJECTIVE 2

CASE STUDY: IDENTIFYING IMPACTFUL LEADERS (cont.)

The Incubator identified several local organizations led by well-known and respected leaders, that are highly valued by their communities, and have missions and programs strongly aligned with USAID/Liberia's priority areas. The team found the majority of organizations mentor, partner, and collaborate well within their sectors but tend to function in silos. Finally, although several organizations possess the experience, technical qualifications, and community presence to implement Agency awards, most reported these opportunities feel out of reach due to a lack of knowledge about how to apply and a lack of confidence and capacity to meet all standards and requirements. These obstacles can now be addressed by USAID/Liberia as it seeks to engage these respected and technically proficient local organizations.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT FOR OUTREACH CAMPAIGN IN LIBERIA



OBJECTIVE 2

PARTNER PORTALS: STREAMLINING ACCESS

The Partnerships Incubator enhanced the efficiency and transparency of various USAID processes by developing innovative platforms that connect the Agency to partners. The Incubator designed and implemented partner portals that simplified the process for submitting unsolicited innovative ideas, enabled real-time tracking of funding opportunities, provided an entry point to private-sector partners, and supported critical humanitarian responses—while reducing the burden on USAID staff. These platforms quickly made Agency operations more accessible and facilitated new partnerships.

Unsolicited Submissions Portal

The Incubator streamlined USAID's [unsolicited submissions](#) process to make it more transparent for applicants while lessening the review and selection burden for Agency staff. The Incubator collaborated with subcontractor Miew on a pilot for a standardized, centralized platform for receiving and evaluating unsolicited proposals and applications. Following research on the existing process and interviews with dozens of staff and awardees following unsolicited proposals, the team outlined the challenges and requirements for the pilot. This activity simplified the process, automated it to the extent possible, and standardized it across all M/B/ OUs. The platform launched April 15, 2024, on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#).

The unsolicited submissions platform introduced a shift from the outdated email and hard copy-based system to a centralized, online portal. The new, step-by-step process improves USAID's ability to efficiently handle proposals while allowing applicants to track submissions, a significant improvement from what they said often felt like a black hole. The portal also contains a “Funding Essentials” page that explains differences between acquisition and assistance awards and emphasizes USAID CDCSs, which are critical to crafting responsive proposals and applications.

The Agency continues to improve the process, platform, and user interface as it learns from the pilot launch. A change management team within the Agency, composed of stakeholders across different M/B/OUs, is building awareness of the new processes and functionality and seeking broad adoption. M/OAA is engaging these champions through regular updates and feedback sessions to acclimate all USAID users to the new platform and tracking system. As a result of Incubator efforts, the supporting platform and process to receive, evaluate, and select awardees is more transparent, straightforward, and efficient.

The screenshot displays the 'Organization Information' step of the USAID Unsolicited Submissions Portal registration process. The form is part of a multi-step wizard, with 'Organization Information' being the first step. The header includes the USAID logo and navigation links: Prepare, Learn, Connect, Find Funding, For Corporate Partners, and a 'Join the Directory' button. A banner for the '2024 USAID Partnering Experience Survey' is visible at the top right. The form itself is titled 'Organization Information' and includes a sub-header: 'Please provide information about your organization and the individual who is submitting this information.' A placeholder image of a man is shown on the left. The form fields include: 'Organization name' (text input), 'Organization description' (text area), 'Headquarters country' (dropdown), 'Headquarters city' (dropdown), 'Countries of operation' (dropdown), 'Type of organization' (dropdown), 'Organization socio-economic factors' (dropdown), 'Sectors' (dropdown), 'First name' and 'Last name' (text inputs), 'Work email' (text input), and 'Phone number' (dropdown). A 'Back' button and a 'Next' button are at the bottom right. A footer section contains links for 'Sign up for the Work with USAID newsletter', 'Work with USAID' (Home, Pre-Engagement Assessment, Download the assessment questions), 'Partner Directory' (Is my organization listed?, List your organization, Search the directory), and 'About USAID'. A 'Connect' button is also present.

OBJECTIVE 2

Sub-Opportunities Portal

For many newer organizations, subcontracts and subawards are a great way to connect with the USAID partnership process. Locating sub-opportunities proved to be an onerous task for potential partners, however, as they had to search dozens of individual company websites for relevant solicitations. To facilitate better engagements, the Incubator launched the [Sub-Opportunities Portal](#) in March 2023. This portal centralizes USAID-related funding opportunities, which prime implementing partners can share through an online form. Potential partners looking to compete for a sub-opportunity can search the portal by country and sector to find ways to involve their organization. Since its launch, more than 140 opportunities have been shared. The new portal has been called a “game changer for how partners operate,” with one partner noting that the portal felt like “hacking the system.”

Corporate Partnering Portal

Less than three months after the launch of WorkwithUSAID.org in November 2021, the Incubator and USAID’s Private-Sector Engagement Hub (PSE) began discussing how to integrate its content with the platform. The PSE audience comprises organizations seeking to collaborate with USAID in alternative ways, such as resource or skill sharing. Their involvement with the Agency is essential to achieve sustainable development goals, but businesses found it challenging to navigate USAID’s processes and identify appropriate points of contact.

To address this challenge, the PSE Hub, in collaboration with the Incubator’s Web & Communications team, launched the [Corporate Partnering Portal](#) on WorkwithUSAID.gov in January 2024. The portal is a streamlined digital front door designed to facilitate effective collaboration. It clarifies whether a partnership with USAID is feasible, directs inquiries to the correct contacts within the Agency, and addresses common pain points such as understanding USAID terminology and receiving timely responses. The impact was immediate, and the portal yielded its first collaboration with USAID in February, just a couple of weeks after launch. The Corporate Partnering Portal has received more than 52,300 views and 10,500 total users in its short existence.

This initiative significantly improved the user experience for private-sector entities, enhancing their ability to contribute to development outcomes. The Corporate Partnering Portal’s impact aligns with Agency goals to improve accessibility and advance customer experience principles.



OBJECTIVE 2

Humanitarian Response Portal

A common challenge during humanitarian responses is a lack of effective coordination between diaspora and local organizations, which diminishes the overall impact and efficiency of interventions. This shortfall hinders decision-making, restricts access to vital resources, and increases the workload on the humanitarian system, leading to longer response times and potential cost overruns. To address the issue, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and Bureau of Management Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO) Client Services sought assistance from the M/OAA Industry Liaison team to create a secure portal for humanitarian responses on WorkwithUSAID.gov.

The goal was to enhance coordination among USAID, diaspora, and local organizations. The Incubator and subcontractor Miew developed a wireframe and prototype that enabled organizations to showcase previous achievements, facilitate timely collaboration, and build networks that would be more responsive and effective during humanitarian crises. They handed off the portal to M/CIO's development team to integrate with the Agency's internal AIDNet and deploy on WorkwithUSAID.gov.



OBJECTIVE 2

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT WITH UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The Partnerships Incubator advocates for greater diversity within USAID partnerships and has supported efforts to enhance opportunities for underserved communities and populations to collaborate with the Agency. The following activities with USAID's Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (USAID/DEIA) are examples of Incubator successes.

MSI Capacity Strengthening

The Partnerships Incubator worked with USAID/DEIA to strengthen the Agency's engagement with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). These higher education institutions—including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Asian American and Pacific Islander Institutions (AAPIs)—are leaders in social and economic development in their communities but are historically underrepresented in USAID partnership. Partnership with MSIs also supports USAID's efforts to diversify its employee composition: The Agency engages underserved populations to inspire them to consider working in the international humanitarian and development field, possibly by joining USAID.

The Incubator provided TA for MSIs, fostering linkages with USAID and preparing strategies to develop partnerships and opportunities post-activity. First, the Incubator facilitated two rounds of an open competition for tailored TA to identify MSIs outside USAID/DEIA's networks. After individual rapid needs assessments, the Incubator delivered 13 capacity-strengthening services—ranging from implementation support to cohort workshops on business development—to the first four MSIs. TA included customized matchmaking between the four MSIs and USAID and industry partners.

In Year 5, the Incubator delivered TA to three finalists from the previous competition plus three U.S. territories-based schools selected through a second competition. This second cohort of six MSIs received TA in business development and strategic planning, including a group workshop and tailored coaching in topics such as building an opportunity pipeline, developing a strategic plan, and designing capability statements. The Incubator also connected the new cohort with USAID counterparts. At the same time, the Incubator offered an on-call “partnership help desk”—including support in program management and sustained Agency matchmaking—to four MSIs from the initial cohort.

The Incubator also hosted two rounds of a public webinar series on topics relevant to USAID partnership, such as proposal development and activity operations, to reach a wider audience of MSIs. After each session, the Incubator built on webinar content by sharing a resource list of related materials and links.

“There are many ways in which the Partnerships Incubator has provided the support and knowledge to improve our strategies and performance, from reviewing and providing feedback to our processes, marketing, MEL reports, financial reports, and business development. The knowledge shared in every area will continue influencing change and improvement where our institution needs it. ... We have used many areas of the program, especially in proposal writing.”

~CARLA CARDENAS, SR. PROJECT
MANAGER, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT
SAN ANTONIO CENTER FOR GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE 2

At the culmination of two years of TA and broad-based support, the Incubator hosted an Opportunities Fair that convened Agency leadership (including several Mission Directors and Senior Deputy Assistant Administrators) and industry stakeholders (including more than 15 implementing partners) to connect with MSIs across both cohorts. The two-day virtual event, attended by more than 200 participants, included high-profile panel discussions facilitated by MSI faculty and administrators. MSI representatives connected with Agency and industry colleagues through innovative digital networking spaces, resulting in ongoing engagement after the event.

Building on two years of close collaboration with MSIs, the Incubator developed a Community of Practice Playbook and scholarship outline to inform USAID's further engagement with the higher education ecosystem. As a result of Incubator support, colleges and universities have attended international education conferences, submitted compelling grant proposals, and implemented robust systems to expand their partnerships with USAID.

Nation Builders

In Year 5, USAID/DEIA approached the Incubator to facilitate a proven student exchange program called Nation Builders, which matches American high school students with peers around the world to co-design innovative solutions to development challenges. These students receive support from a network of development practitioners and partner organizations.

USAID/DEIA sought to establish the program in Buenaventura, Colombia, with the Incubator's support to administer funds to sub-partner Nation Builders. The Incubator worked with counterparts at Nation Builders to process payments, meet Agency compliance requirements, and ensure timely delivery.

Program participants included 50 Colombian and 20 American high school students. They were divided into seven teams of six to seven students; each was led by a student from Oakwood University (an HBCU). The teams were coached by 10 USAID/BHA staff. Nation Builders facilitated an in-person training conference in Colombia complemented by virtual training of the students. Nation Builders helped a high school in Buenaventura establish a maker space, a technology facility where the seven teams co-designed "prototype proposals"—that included background research, market analyses, and business plans—to address local development challenges. The teams then presented their proposals to a panel of program partners, such as Microsoft. Nation Builders has since secured USAID funding to continue its student exchange program and anticipates onboarding two MSIs from the Incubator's TA program, demonstrating the valuable connections made through Incubator support.

As highlighted in our Partner Landscape Assessment (PLA) portfolio, the Incubator's strategy has succeeded in diversifying USAID's partner base. We have provided a supportive platform and resources that enable the Agency to reach a broader population and strengthen the capacity of underserved organizations and communities.



OBJECTIVE 3:

Help Partners Work with USAID

Anticipating that valuable insights from local and nontraditional partners will heighten development impact, USAID's leadership committed to allocating 25 percent of funding to local partners by 2025. These partners, while technically strong and often highly regarded in their communities, may lack the organizational structures, staff, and processes to successfully compete for Agency awards and meet requirements for compliance and financial management. To address these gaps, the Incubator, at the direction of USAID, provided guidance, mentoring, resources, and tools to more than 100 local organizations across five years. Our support enhanced their operational readiness to partner with the Agency and improved their long-term business viability and impact as development actors.



OBJECTIVE 3

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING AND TA

Virtual Learning Course for Local Partners

In 2024, at the request of USAID/El Salvador, we assembled a team of seasoned experts to conceptualize, launch, and pilot an innovative virtual learning course. The Incubator developed Curso de Capacitación para el Avance y la Creación de Alianzas para Organizaciones Locales (Course for Capacity Building and Partnership Development for Local Organizations, or CAPTALO!), to empower local and nontraditional organizations with limited exposure to USAID and the broader international development landscape. The pilot run of the course addressed 90 individuals representing 32 organizations.

CAPTALO! equipped local organizations with skills and knowledge about USAID and other global donors' funding mechanisms. Missions could use this course to lower barriers to entry and enhance opportunities for partnership with the Agency and other donors. The nine-module course is delivered in Spanish and covers international cooperation, theory of change, logical framework, MEL, financial management and management of cooperation funds, comprehensive approaches for positive impact, partnerships and agreements, proposal development, and agreements management. CAPTALO! revolutionizes the way local partners are introduced to international development and working with USAID.



Focus on Results

Participants reported the following after participating in CAPTALO!'s pilot program:

100% felt empowered to apply for funding opportunities

86% rated CAPTALO! "highly effective"

11% rated the course "effective"

94% felt capable of submitting concept notes to funders

88% applied new knowledge during the course



OBJECTIVE 3

CAPTALO! exemplifies a successful strategic partnership between the Incubator and USAID/EI Salvador. Combining self-paced online modules with weekly live sessions, the course's structure fostered ongoing engagement and practical learning. The methodology and course co-creation efforts were pivotal in achieving the project's objectives.

Feedback such as Cecilia Velásquez Solís's illustrates the project's impact. Asociación Manos Amigas supports vulnerable families in San Luis Talpa through initiatives including economic opportunities for single mothers, a community clinic, and infrastructure projects. Using knowledge gained from CAPTALO!, the organization secured funding for its entrepreneurial project from a private company.

The course's impact extends beyond participants. An impressive 91 percent shared the information with others, broadening the program's reach. Examples include university professors incorporating CAPTALO! modules into their curriculum and participants organizing training sessions within their organizations. The course is now available more broadly at [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusa.gov).

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“The contents will help us offer better proposals and interventions for the people we serve in the communities where we work. Day-to-day activities absorb us, but executives must encourage teams to invest time in this educational space. [The course is] excellent! Hopefully, there will be new editions because I have shared it with colleagues who are very interested.”

~CECILIA VELÁSQUEZ SOLÍS,
ASOCIACIÓN MANOS AMIGAS

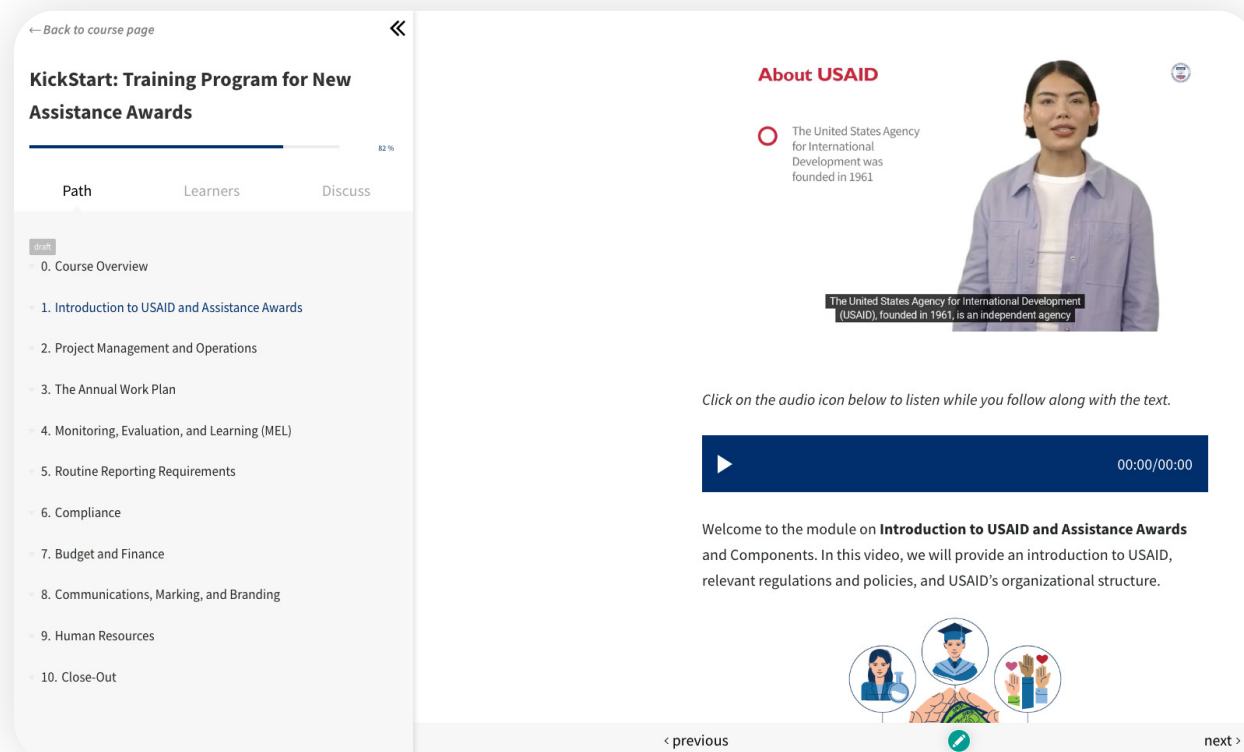


OBJECTIVE 3

KickStart: Training New Assistance Awardees

KickStart is a self-paced, online training program to support newly awarded partners with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement a USAID assistance award. Previously, the absence of a centralized, standardized process often hindered partners' success in post-award activities. Onboarding support was typically limited to a single kickoff call, which proved insufficient in helping partners navigate the complex and ever-changing landscape of USAID regulations and terminology.

USAID's Bureau for Inclusive Growth Partnerships and Innovation (IPI) engaged the Incubator through the LFT Hub to develop KickStart to address these challenges with comprehensive and accessible training to ensure partners are well prepared to manage their awards. The Incubator will deliver the program to USAID at the very conclusion of our efforts. Once the program is rolled out Agency-wide, we anticipate the course will transform the onboarding process and significantly reduce the level of effort required by Agreement Officer's Representatives to guide new partners.



OBJECTIVE 3

SUPPORTING LOCAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PARTNERS

USAID/BHA/Office of Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (ALAC)

Since 2021, the Partnerships Incubator has provided pre- and post-award support to a local NGO implementing a water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) project in Latin America. BHA awarded the partner a non-competitive cooperative agreement. The Incubator provided capacity-strengthening support in three technical areas: monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; organizational policy development; and financial management. In the final three months of services, we also provided executive coaching to two of the organization's leaders.

Following its original award in 2021, the local partner secured two cost modifications from BHA and extended its engagement with USAID to five years. This would not have been possible without intensive effort by the NGO's leadership and staff to learn about USAID systems and ensure compliance with its rules and regulations. The partner has become a strong regional implementer thanks to its internal efforts and the support and guidance of BHA and the Incubator. At the conclusion of its project, the partner will have delivered a [REDACTED] five-year humanitarian WASH program to vulnerable populations in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The partner delivered significant impact by providing hygiene kits, emergency supplies, and water storage and purification systems to communities and eldercare facilities and installing water tanks and handwashing stations at schools and health centers. Additionally, it supplied hygiene promotion kits to communities and nursing homes, distributed dignity kits to women nationwide, conducted infection prevention and control workshops, and offered humanitarian coordination, information management, and evaluation support to 40 local NGOs.

The partner has garnered attention from organizations within the broader LAC region seeking to emulate its capacity to implement humanitarian projects at a significant scale. When the project concludes in 2026, it will have reached more than 2 million people and hundreds of schools, health centers, eldercare facilities, and local communities outside urban centers.



OBJECTIVE 3

USAID/BHA/Zimbabwe

The USAID/BHA/Zimbabwe team engaged the Incubator across Years 4 and 5 to strengthen the capacities of six local organizations. The Mission sought to increase direct funding to local humanitarian organizations, strengthen local capacity, enhance intermediary organizations' roles, and advance local leadership. In Year 4, the Incubator provided capacity strengthening to a new prime awardee, Mwenezi Development Training Center (MDTC). We also provided resource-filled roadmaps for self-led implementation of our capacity-strengthening recommendations to local subawardees Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ), Bulawayo Projects Centre (BPC), and Linkages for the Economic Advancement of the Disadvantaged Trust (LEAD). In Year 5, the Incubator provided capacity-strengthening support, similar to the assistance delivered to MDTC, to local subawardees Musasa and Dabane Trust.

The Incubator's TA to MDTC culminated in an organizational capacity-strengthening workshop in Harare, Zimbabwe. Twelve MDTC staff attended the workshop, which focused on best practices in business model viability, new business development, partnerships, and finance. The Incubator facilitated a learner-led approach to help MDTC identify organizational strengths to harness and prioritize critical action steps for the following year.

Ultimately, the capacity-strengthening project enhanced MDTC's business model, increased donor and client engagement, improved financial management systems, elevated organizational vision, and improved staff confidence. During the workshop, the Incubator piloted the "Voices of Local Partners" video series to highlight the partner's work with USAID and the Partnerships Incubator. As the first local organization in Zimbabwe to directly receive BHA funding, MDTC serves as a model and mentor for other organizations. For example, following our project in Year 4, BHA held a workshop with 16 local organizations to share information on its application procedures. MDTC presented its experience as a prime awardee to help demystify the process of working with USAID.

In Year 5, the Incubator worked with Musasa and Dabane Trust to support their efforts to build sustainable nonprofit businesses with diverse, resilient revenue streams. Our training and coaching delivered prioritized templates, tools, and resources each partner could leverage for sustained growth and success. These included a business development toolkit with worksheets, scoring systems, Excel formats, a long-term human resources roadmap, and a partnership tracker.

Leveraging skills learned through its work with the Incubator, Musasa developed and submitted three proposals, including a USAID/BHA proposal. One proposal was successful, and the organization is awaiting the results of the other two. Musasa also partnered with a farm in Zimbabwe to provide gender-related training to staff members. The Incubator's capacity-strengthening efforts across Years 4 and 5 achieved tangible results for these partners and prepared them to make even more meaningful impacts in their communities and beyond.

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“[The Incubator] provided practical solutions, helping our management team to align on the vision that will best serve our organization.”

~FUNGAI MUPOSHI, PROGRAMS
MANAGER, MWENEZI DEVELOPMENT
TRAINING CENTRE

OBJECTIVE 3

USAID/BHA/Iraq

The USAID/BHA/Iraq team engaged the Incubator to build the organizational capacity of three strategic local partners in Northern Iraq. USAID sought to prepare these organizations to fill the gap left by a broader transition from humanitarian aid to development activities. TA support was intended to enhance the partners' organizational and strategic capacities for long-term sustainability and positive impact.

The Incubator applied a business lens to drive partner growth, assessing the partners' needs, developing a customized training program, and delivering TA services across Years 4 and 5. The Incubator collaborated with USAID/BHA/Iraq and the partners to establish business development processes for pursuing new opportunities while optimizing their operational framework. As a result, the three partners enhanced their systems and adopted new methodologies for business development and partnership activities, ultimately strengthening their business models. Additionally, the Incubator provided finance and budget management training, including implementing cloud-based accounting system QuickBooks.

The Incubator also trained the partners in marketing and communications best practices to build market awareness and attract new donors. One of the organizations, Hariwan, expressed interest in partnership training, so our team reviewed how to create a balanced partner pipeline and compelling messages to pursue alliances and drive growth. Applying these best practices, Hariwan secured funding from a Dutch organization to implement an empowerment project supporting the UN's Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Anbar, Iraq.

At the request of BHA/Iraq, we continued to provide technical services to the three partners for a second year. Following a co-creation process, we developed a comprehensive training program to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities and workforce management. The Incubator outlined best practices to establish monitoring activities and provided an M&E framework partners could implement within their organizations. They are using the framework and skills gained to enhance data collection, analysis, and reporting processes to assess program effectiveness, measure impact, and inform decision-making

We also implemented a business development help desk to assist partners as they applied tools and resources acquired during the first year of support services. Partners shared they learned new fundraising techniques and methods for contacting donors and have seen an increase in the success rates of concept notes and proposals. The organizations have leveraged Incubator resources to strengthen their business development strategies and incorporated new market research methodologies and partnership-building techniques into their approach.



OBJECTIVE 3

ADDRESSING PROJECT AND PARTNER CHALLENGES

USAID/Kenya and East Africa (KEA)

Technical assistance and capacity strengthening cannot be effective when relationships among stakeholders are strained due to poor communication, inadequate procedures, and mistrust. This was the situation facing the USAID Boresha Jamii (UBJ) project after a year and a half. The prime—a new local partner, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST)—received an award to carry out life-saving work to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health; nutrition; WASH; and HIV/AIDS care and treatment for key populations in western Kenya. The project demonstrated strong technical implementation and impact but experienced various administrative and management challenges, leading to several modifications to the award.

Although the USAID/Kenya and East Africa (USAID/KEA) team showed a deep commitment to localization through its extensive support for JOOUST, the Mission's bandwidth was limited. The Mission requested Incubator support to diagnose the project's challenges and offer solutions to correct course.

The Incubator team conducted comprehensive interviews with stakeholders to understand the key issues, which included processes and procedures, communication, roles and responsibilities, leadership, project morale, and training. The team sought to balance the project's need for clear decision-making with stakeholders' need for information sharing. To do this, the Incubator team used a RACI—or responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed—matrix. Corporate boardrooms worldwide use this tool to determine roles and responsibilities. The Incubator provided several in-person orientations on the tool and met with project leadership to determine the highest-level tasks. We then delivered training to enable individual units in the project to carry out RACI exercises so the tool would flow down to all levels.

The UBJ project team and JOOUST leadership expressed appreciation for the RACI process and eagerness to continue to use it to determine “ownership” of decision-making and accountability for individual tasks. What was once considered an at-risk project for USAID/KEA has become an example of a successful first-time local implementer. The impact of JOOUST/UBJ's work is felt by hundreds of families in western Kenya, where the project seeks to prevent deaths, support pregnant women and newborns, and ensure women, babies, children, and adolescents survive, thrive, and reach their full potential.

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“We want to be a model institution by utilizing collaborations such as our partnership with USAID to drive positive change in Kisumu and Kakamega counties and nationwide. We believe in giving back to our communities by improving them.”

~PROFESSOR EMILY ACHIENG' AKUNO,
VICE CHANCELLOR OF JOOUST



OBJECTIVE 3

CASE STUDY: LOCAL PARTNERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

USAID/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Partnerships Incubator facilitated introductions between local organizations that have led to rich, beneficial relationships with long-lasting potential. This was the case in the Dominican Republic, where the Incubator leveraged the skills and experience of a local partner to benefit other local partners—in effect localizing localization.

Four Dominican organizations—Asociación Dominicana de Planificación Familiar (ADOPLAFAM), Diversidad Dominicana, Dominican Network of Persons Living with AIDS (REDOVIH), and Grupo de Apoyo Este Amor—were well positioned to deliver services within their communities; however, they required support to address gaps in readiness to partner with USAID. Preparing to launch TA services for these partners, the Incubator turned to contacts made earlier during a Partner Landscape Assessment (PLA). The Incubator selected Entrena, one of the stronger local partners identified by the PLA, to deliver the TA program as a subcontractor.

Entrena supported the four organizations in improving capacities related to finance and budget, workforce and talent management, technical report writing, and business development. What set Entrena's approach apart was shared experience in the local context: Its staff and consultants had firsthand understanding of the cohort members' challenges, which Entrena itself had overcome during the early years of its partnership with the local USAID Mission. Entrena team members drew on their experiences navigating government ministries and tapped into the local market to engage private-sector actors, such as in the tourism sector, to strengthen partners' capacities.

Positive outcomes and prospective impact manifest on several levels. First, a satisfaction survey the Incubator sent to the four recipient organizations, asking them to rate their likelihood of recommending Entrena's services to colleagues on a scale of 1 to 10, returned a cohort average of 9.6. Second, the Incubator mentored Entrena throughout service delivery and has since engaged the organization in TA activities for a range of Agency offices, including a project in El Salvador, providing Entrena an opportunity to demonstrate its ability to work regionally. Third, following the Incubator's TA program, Entrena brought one of the local partners into its consortium as a subawardee in a successful bid for another USAID activity.



OBJECTIVE 3

CASE STUDY: LOCAL PARTNERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

USAID/BHA/CAMEROON

In Year 4, at the request of the USAID/BHA/Cameroon team, the Incubator launched an organizational capacity assessment activity with three partners engaged through a prime partner, the World Food Programme (WFP). The Agency recognized these organizations had the potential to partner with USAID but would need capacity development.

The Incubator delivered TA to these three partners as roadmaps for self-guided advances. Plans for each partner outlined organizational, operational, and strategic areas for improvement—identified through our needs assessment process—as well as guidance and links to information as they addressed gaps at their own pace. Roadmaps provided resources on financial management and budget monitoring, resource mobilization and business development, talent management, M&E, and technical reporting.

In Year 5, USAID engaged the Incubator to continue working with these three organizations in a direct TA capacity. The Incubator strengthened capacity in four areas: financial management, M&E, talent management, and business development. As a result of our support, the partners reported enhanced efficiency in financial reporting, ability to pursue new business and proactively submit quality proposals, management of staff turnover, and budgeting practices. The three organizations also developed organization-level theories of change to guide strategic decision-making and began incorporating overhead recovery strategies into new budgets.

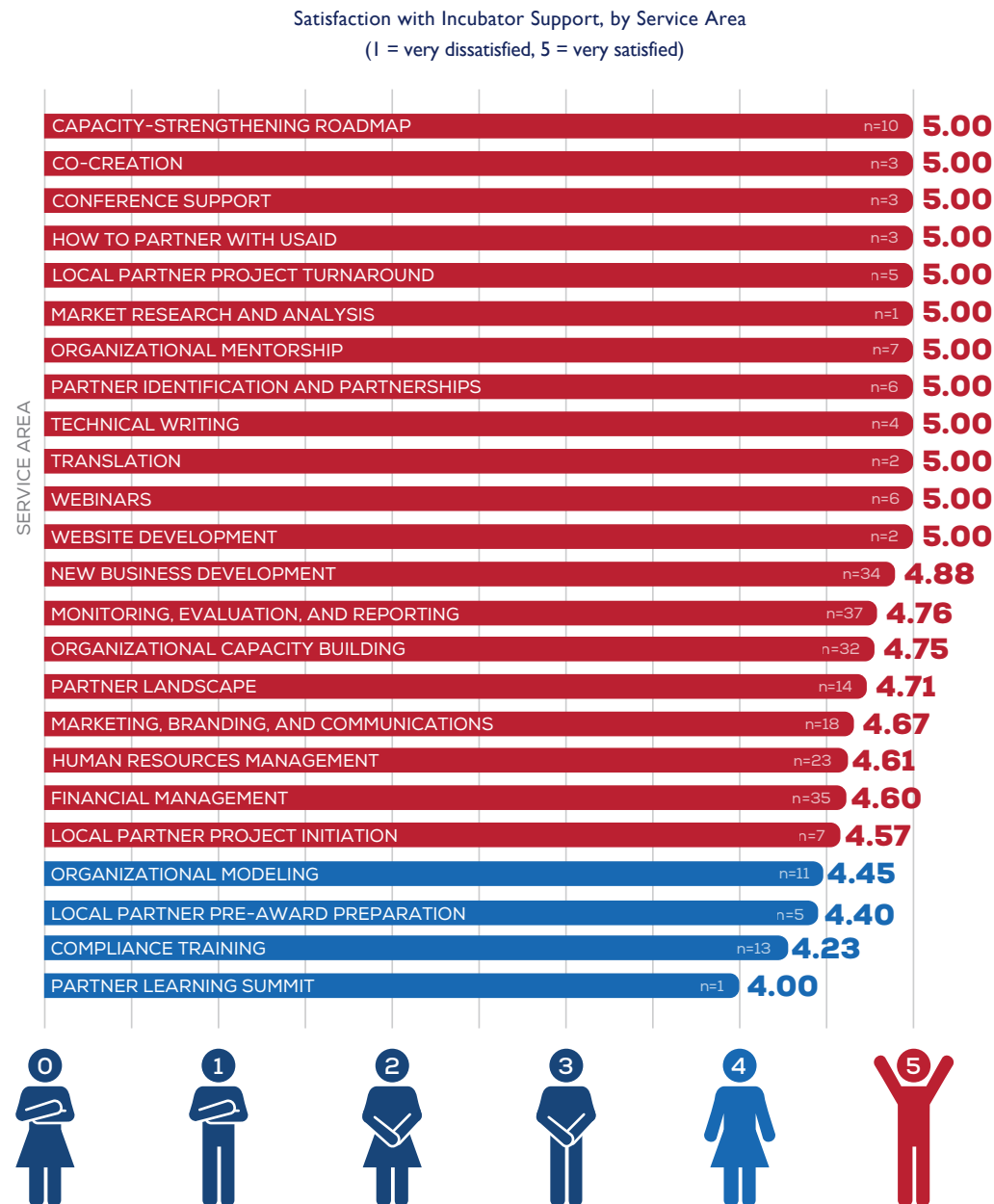
The Incubator's support is having a lasting impact. One of the partners, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF), has used its roadmap and the knowledge and skills gained through the TA to develop its accelerator program, fostering skills and aptitudes among other Cameroonian NGOs. Using the lessons from the Incubator support, LUKMEF plans to reach more than 250 local organizations through its civil society development center program. In the words of the CEO, “We have proudly shared the Incubator report with the UN Humanitarian Coordination team [to highlight our capacity for service delivery in conflict areas] and strongly feel the Incubator approach will help build localization capacity in all communities.”



OBJECTIVE 3

MEASURING CLIENT SATISFACTION

As previously mentioned, the Incubator operated on the guiding principles of achieving “results” and “pivoting” when necessary. Once we completed service(s) for a client, we requested feedback on each activity we delivered to measure results and inform strategic and operational pivots to improve our client engagements. We asked our clients for several points of feedback, including their overall satisfaction with the support delivered. The figure to the right shows the average satisfaction of the support delivered within each of the Incubator service types from 2019 to 2024.



n = number of survey respondents
Source: Post-service surveys

INCUBATOR OPERATIONS

The Finance & Operations Unit is responsible for the financial and operational stewardship of the project, including financial reporting, budgeting, payment processing, personnel recruitment, task order issuance, and procurement actions. The team enables the smooth functioning of the Incubator as a whole, providing support for the resourcing and compliance framework of all our activities.



ACCELERATING IMPACT THROUGH OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Year 5 has been a year of achievements and transformative endeavors. The total obligated amount for Year 5 activities reached an impressive [REDACTED] contributing to the cumulative obligated amount of [REDACTED] for the entire five-year project. The project's total estimated cost is [REDACTED] no additional obligation is expected.

The culmination of Year 5 for the Incubator has been a symphony of remarkable progress and strategic advancements. This final year has seen our collective efforts blossom into tangible successes, fortifying our mission and broadening our horizons in international development. With each quarter, new talents, significant milestones, and collaborative triumphs have enriched our journey and set a standard for future endeavors.

Quarter 1: Foundations of Success

The first quarter of 2024 was a period of planning and laying strategic groundwork. The Partnerships Incubator embarked on a process to identify consultants and internal staff pivotal for our service delivery, preparing a robust foundation for the year ahead. Our recruitment and procurement activities were in full swing, supporting numerous buy-in initiatives and onboarding 43 consultants. The release of six task orders facilitated the induction of 18 additional consultants through our trusted vendors.

The collaborative synergy between the Kaizen Home Office and the Incubator's Finance & Operations Unit ensured we met our financial requirements. This partnership fortified our budgetary and financial projections, setting the stage for successful project implementation.

Boostlingo's simultaneous translation services continued to be a cornerstone of our language support, aiding partners facing communication barriers. Our commitment to technological advancement was evident as we began planning for the web retreat in Portugal, aimed at enhancing WorkwithUSAID.gov and transitioning the website to AIDNet.

Quarter 2: Expansion and Engagement

The second quarter was one of growth and engagement. The Readiness team engaged consultants and Incubator staff to extend services to partners across multiple USAID Bureaus and countries, including Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Honduras, Iraq, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe. Our recruitment and procurement activities remained steadfast, ensuring ongoing support and tracking the project's budgetary status.

The collaboration between the Kaizen Home Office and the Incubator's Finance & Operations Unit continued to thrive, accommodating the escalation of project activities and confirming budgetary needs for Year 5 buy-ins. This synergy was pivotal as we onboarded 18 consultants, issued seven task orders, and recruited 26 more consultants through our



OPERATIONS

vendor network. Significant travels spanned Cameroon, DRC, Honduras, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Washington, DC, showcasing our global reach and dedication.

The Incubator also held a web retreat in Portugal to foster development of the unsolicited submissions portal. The stage was set for the closeout retreat in Prague, Czech Republic, promising a comprehensive review of our achievements and lessons learned.

Quarter 3: Strategic Advancements

The third quarter comprised ongoing operational advancements and strategic initiatives. Key team members joined our ranks, bringing expertise and enhancing operational capabilities. Julia Bressler's and Jacob Arnstein's inductions as senior program manager and program management associate in the Kaizen Home Office, respectively, marked a significant milestone. The Incubator team onboarded 67 other consultants for various buy-in activities through our vendor network. Critical approval requests—including for IT applications, contract modifications, and pre-payment approvals for Squarespace and LearnWorlds—demonstrated our administrative diligence.

Conferences and workshops were pivotal this quarter. The Incubator Final Year Retreat in Prague and the Website Handover Retreat in Washington, DC, were essential to our efforts to review our progress and plan for the future. The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Internet Conference in Bogota and the Humanitarian Response Portal Web Retreat in Copenhagen were also key to furthering our mission.

We solidified our contractual foundations with extensions and new scopes of work, including the Humanitarian Response Portal and translation technology integration for [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusa.gov). The Indy Interpreting CCI Group's Translations Support Agreement and Boostlingo's extended services demonstrated our determination to expand communications.

Quarter 4: Finishing Strong

As many activities drew to a close in Quarter 3, the Incubator formed a close-out team led by the Home Office Project Management Unit. The team held biweekly meetings to review and update the close-out checklist, ensuring a thorough and proper conclusion of all project activities.



THE TEAM

During Year 5, the Partnerships Incubator team comprised 22 full-time staff and 172 short-term TA consultants, including locally based experts. This year has witnessed a remarkable expansion of our project's scope with 24 buy-in activities, which prompted a significant increase in short-term hires. Compared to the 94 consultants engaged in Year 4, the Incubator saw the consultant roster grow to 172 in Year 5.

The Partnerships Incubator continued to partner with The Washington Center to provide opportunities for young professionals through our associate program, now in its fifth year. During Year 5, three associates participated in research projects, outreach initiatives, writing assignments, and more as core Incubator team members. Associates worked directly with local partners and USAID clients, expanding their professional networks. By combining direct work on Incubator projects with mentorship opportunities, the associates developed critical skills and knowledge that will inform their careers in the field of international development.

As we conclude this final year, the Incubator is a testament to innovation, collaboration, and strategic excellence. Our journey has been marked by significant progress in recruitment, operational approvals, and contractual management. Upcoming conferences and continued operational enhancements will further our mission to support global development initiatives and ensure a thorough and proper conclusion of all project activities.



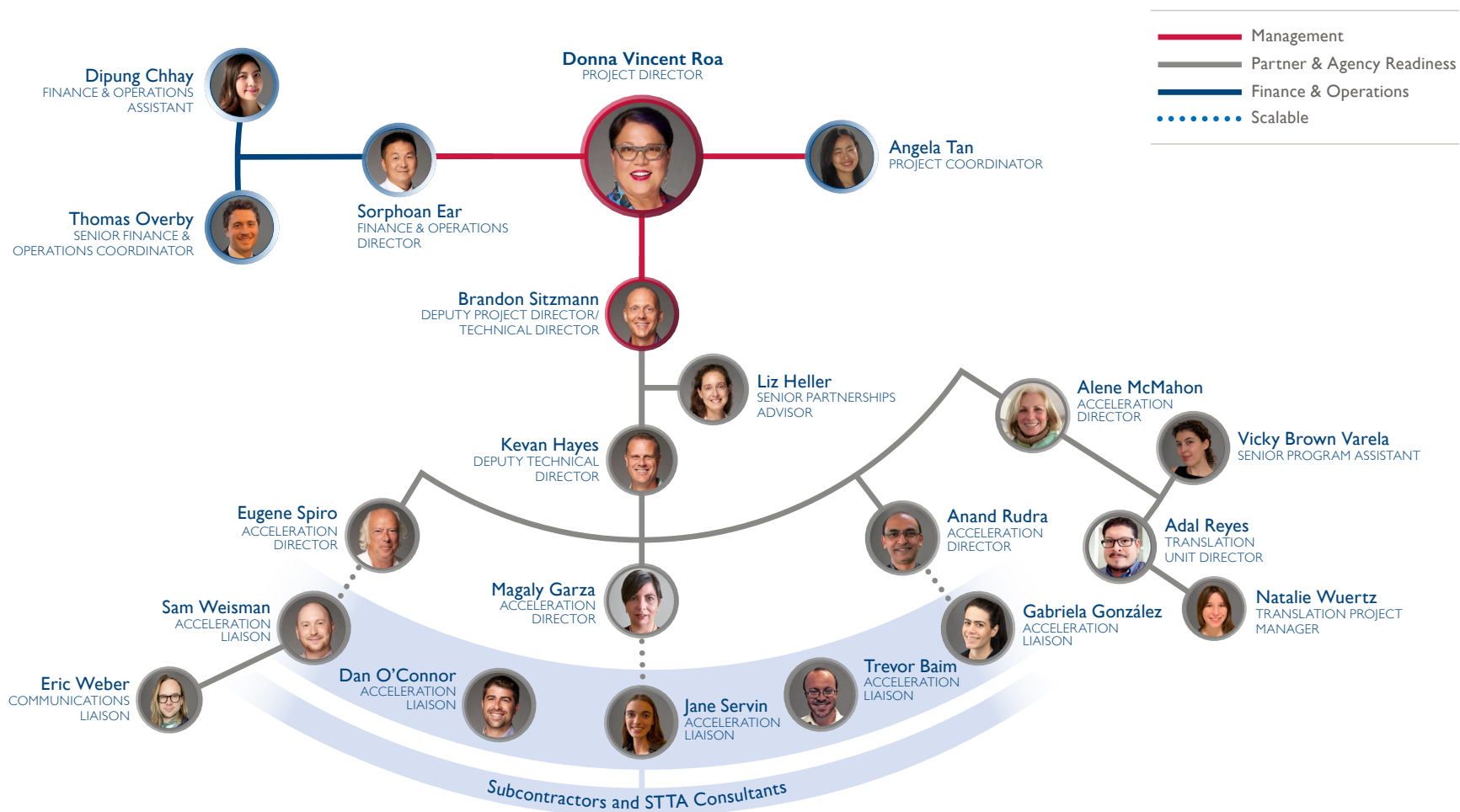
OPERATIONS

Year 5 has been another remarkable chapter in the Incubator's legacy, a year of transformative achievements that have set the stage for a future replete with promise and potential.

Year 5 Activities Under Each Buy-in

| NO. | FUNDING SOURCE | BUY-IN |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 1 | USAID/A/DEIA | Partner Technical Assistance (MSIs) |
| 2 | USAID/BHA/ALAC | Partner Technical Assistance |
| 3 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Technical Assistance (Cameroon) |
| 4 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Technical Assistance (DRC) |
| 5 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Technical Assistance (Iraq) |
| 6 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Landscape Assessment (Madagascar) |
| 7 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Technical Assistance (Malawi) |
| 8 | USAID/BHA/G3PC | Partner Technical Assistance (Zimbabwe) |
| 9 | USAID/DRG | Global Internet Freedom Design (Civic DEFENDERS) |
| 10 | USAID/DRG | Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity |
| 11 | USAID/DRG | Promoting Information Integrity and Resilience (PRO-INFO) Initiative |
| 12 | USAID/Honduras | Partner Technical Assistance |
| 13 | USAID/IPI/GenDev | Communications Support |
| 14 | USAID/IPI/LFT | Post-Award Training Program for Partners (USAID KickStart) |
| 15 | USAID/IPI/PSE | Private-Sector Front Door Website on WorkwithUSAID.org |
| 16 | USAID/Liberia | Partner Landscape Assessment |
| 17 | USAID/M/CIO | WorkwithUSAID.gov Website Support |
| 18 | USAID/M/OAA | A&A Lab Guides and Training Materials |
| 19 | USAID/M/OAA | First- and Last-Mile Translation Services |
| 20 | USAID/M/OAA | Humanitarian Response Portal |
| 21 | USAID/M/OAA | Unsolicited Proposals Portal |
| 22 | USAID/M/OAA | WorkwithUSAID.gov Website & Communications Support |
| 23 | USAID/RFS | Advancing Localization Within Feed the Future Roadmap |
| 24 | USAID/Rwanda | Partner Landscape Assessment |

PARTNERSHIPS INCUBATOR STAFF



Last updated 9/11/2024

ADMINISTRATION

In Year 4 and 5, USAID issued seven contract modifications to the Partnerships Incubator project that provided for additional buy-ins and funding for Year 5. The modifications reflect a refined approach to project implementation and address new priorities.

STATUS OF FUNDS

| CLIN | BUDGET | JUL. 2024 | AUG. 2024 | SEP. 2024* | OCT. 2019–JUN. 2024 | CUMULATIVE AMOUNT | BALANCE | BALANCE % |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------|
| CLIN 1 LABOR | | | | | | | | |
| CLIN 2 TRAVEL | | | | | | | | |
| CLIN 3 EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES | | | | | | | | |
| CLIN 4 OTHER DIRECT COSTS (ODCs) | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | |

* The numbers represent projected expenditure

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| TOTAL CONTRACT CEILING | | |
| OBLIGATED FUNDS | | |
| FUNDS EXPECTED TO BE USED AS OF 09/30/2024 | | |
| FUNDS AVAILABLE | | |



INDICATORS

The Partnerships Incubator maintains a robust process for tracking and assessing data to ensure the project delivers outstanding results to USAID. Our set of indicators has been refined during our years of implementation, and these indicators help guide our understanding of what we have accomplished and where we can improve. Intently focused on delivering with excellence, we monitor and evaluate our work through these primary indicators.



INDICATORS

Throughout the activity's lifecycle, including its final year, the MEL framework has been pivotal in tracking progress, assessing outcomes, and ensuring alignment with USAID's strategic objectives. The Partnerships Incubator established a robust system to monitor and evaluate performance across 11 key indicators, each designed to measure critical aspects of activity impact and effectiveness.

For detailed information on the Incubator's progress against each performance indicator for the period from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024, please refer to the first table on page 53, which provides a comprehensive overview of the Year 5 achievements and performance outcomes. Also included in this section, on page 54, is a life of activity (LOA) indicator achievements table, detailing the progress against each performance indicator across all five years of the activity.

Indicator Performance Overview – Year 5

In Year 5, the Incubator maintained the same set of indicators that were updated in Year 3, and the definitions for these indicators remained unchanged. The overall performance against the set targets for Year 5 has been strong, with achievements exceeding targets for 10 of the 11 indicators. This success reflects the Incubator's ability to adapt, innovate, and implement strategies that meet and surpass expected outcomes. The overachievement on these indicators in Year 5, in some cases by significant margins, highlights the effectiveness of the Incubator's interventions and the dedication of all stakeholders involved.

Indicators with Exceeded Targets – LOA

The indicators where targets were exceeded demonstrate the Incubator's capacity to deliver results that had a meaningful impact on the ground. The areas of overachievement span various domains, indicating broad-based success in enhancing partner engagement, strengthening capacity, and bolstering readiness to work with USAID.

Indicators with Slight Underachievement – LOA

Of the 11 indicators, two fell slightly short of their LOA targets:

- **Indicator 2.b**, “Number of potential new, local, or nontraditional partners identified through landscape or similar analyses upon request by M/B/OUs,” achieved 313 identified partners against a five-year target of 375. This indicator's performance is closely tied to the specific requests and needs of USAID's M/B/OUs. Although the Incubator team considered 313 partners identified and assessed according to the definition used with this indicator, many more organizations were identified, but not assessed, across multiple countries and regions. As noted in the graphic on [page 21](#), the Incubator helped USAID identify more than 5,200 potential new, local, and nontraditional partners across 15 countries; only



INDICATORS

313 organizations were assessed for their readiness and capacity to work with USAID. The databases and extended lists of 5,200 potential partners were shared with our M/B/OU counterparts as part of the 14 PLAs completed during the life of the Partnerships Incubator activity.

- **Indicator 3.c**, “Percent of users who have completed the Pre-Engagement Assessment,” had a target of 55 percent, but the achievement was 34 percent. Since 2023, the percentage of users completing the Pre-Engagement Assessment steadily increased. The initial target was exceeded for multiple consecutive quarters, and as a result, the Incubator chose to increase the target from 40 percent to 55 percent. However, in Quarter 3 of this year, the total percentage dipped while the website transition was taking place and the Pre-Engagement Assessment page could not be updated in real-time. This dip impacted the final total reported.

Despite these shortfalls, the Incubator’s role in identifying partners and completing assessments was of significant relevance and value, ensuring quality over quantity and alignment with the Incubator’s overarching goals.

The overall positive performance across the indicators throughout the final year and the life of the activity speaks to the Incubator’s success in achieving its objectives and contributing to USAID’s mission. The MEL framework has not only provided a clear picture of the activity’s impact, it has also facilitated learning and continuous improvement. The insights gained through this process will be invaluable for informing future initiatives and ensuring the momentum of success is carried forward.



INDICATORS

The table below shows progress against each performance indicator for the period October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024 (Year 5).

| INDICATOR | TYPE OF INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE(S) | FREQUENCY | BASELINE OCTOBER 1, 2021 | TARGET FOR YEAR 5 | ACTUAL PROGRESS FOR YEAR 5 |
|---|-------------------|---|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| OBJECTIVE 1: Amplify USAID's external communication efforts to help diversify and strengthen its partner base | | | | | | |
| 1.a. Number of Incubator-produced storytelling and news items posted by the Incubator to public content platforms | Output | Communications Unit products tracking sheet, websites (.gov and .org) | Monthly | 0 | 24 | 25 |
| OBJECTIVE 2: Expand USAID's capacity for partnerships | | | | | | |
| 2.a. Number of work products completed for M/B/OUTs | Output | Readiness Unit services tracking sheet | Quarterly | 0 | 65 | 111 |
| 2.b. Number of potential new and underutilized partners (NUPs) identified through landscape or similar analyses upon request by M/B/OUTs | Output | Readiness Unit services tracking sheet | Annually | 0 | 45 | 61 |
| OBJECTIVE 3: Help partner organizations work with USAID | | | | | | |
| 3.a. Number of visitors to all WorkwithUSAID.org ⁷ sites | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 30,000 | 274,110 |
| 3.b. Number of partners with approved profiles on WorkwithUSAID.org | Output | Web analytics, profile validation, and approval log | Quarterly | 0 | 6,000 ⁸ | 7,484 |
| 3.c. Percent of registered partners that completed the Pre-Engagement Assessment | Output | Completed pre-engagement organizational assessments | Quarterly | 0 | 55% | 34% |
| 3.d. Number of users that accessed training modules (on USAID.gov and WorkwithUSAID.org) | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 300 | 23,388 |
| 3.e. Number of partners that accessed library (Incubator-curated) resources on WorkwithUSAID.org | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 500 | 24,020 |
| 3.f. Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance (per M/B/OU request) ⁹ | Outcome | Survey | Annually | 0 | 90% | 90% |
| 3.g. Number of target words translated through USAID Translation Program | Output | Documents review | Quarterly | 0 | NA ¹⁰ | 552,555 |

⁷ WorkwithUSAID.org transitioned to WorkwithUSAID.gov in October 2023.

⁸ Cumulative total, including partners that have approved profiles in previous years.

⁹ Data for this indicator is reported annually after final delivery of TA to organizations. This is an activity custom indicator for NPI and is different from the Agency's standard F-indicator CBLD-9. It is informed by a self-reported Capacity and Performance Improvement Survey (CAPIS) to organizations supported by the Partnerships Incubator.

¹⁰ The Incubator did not have a specific target assigned for this indicator.

INDICATORS

The table below shows progress against each performance indicator for the period October 1, 2019, to September 30, 2024 (LOA).

| INDICATOR ¹¹ | TYPE OF INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE(S) | FREQUENCY | BASELINE OCTOBER 1, 2021 | LOA TARGET ¹² | LOA ACHIEVEMENT |
|---|-------------------|---|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| OBJECTIVE 1: Amplify USAID's external communication efforts to help diversify and strengthen its partner base | | | | | | |
| 1.a. Number of Incubator-produced storytelling and news items posted by the Incubator to public content platforms | Output | Communications Unit products tracking sheet, websites (.gov and .org) | Monthly | 0 | 372 | 1,183 |
| OBJECTIVE 2: Expand USAID's capacity for partnerships | | | | | | |
| 2.a. Number of work products completed for M/B/OU's | Output | Readiness Unit services tracking sheet | Quarterly | 0 | 160 | 314 |
| 2.b. Number of potential new and underutilized partners (NUPs) identified through landscape or similar analyses upon request by M/B/OU's | Output | Readiness Unit services tracking sheet | Annually | 0 | 375 | 313 ¹³ |
| OBJECTIVE 3: Help partner organizations work with USAID | | | | | | |
| 3.a. Number of visitors to all WorkwithUSAID.org ¹⁴ sites | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 191,500 | 656,377 |
| 3.b. Number of partners with approved profiles on WorkwithUSAID.org | Output | Web analytics, profile validation, and approval log | Quarterly | 0 | 6,000 | 7,484 |
| 3.c. Percent of registered partners that completed the Pre-Engagement Assessment | Output | Completed pre-engagement organizational assessments | Quarterly | 0 | 55% | 34% |
| 3.d. Number of users that accessed training modules (on USAID.gov and WorkwithUSAID.org) | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 2,900 | 48,430 |
| 3.e. Number of partners that accessed library (Incubator-curated) resources on WorkwithUSAID.org | Output | Web analytics | Monthly | 0 | 8,300 | 92,212 |
| 3.f. Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance (per M/B/OU request) | Outcome | Survey | Annually | 0 | 90% | 90% |
| 3.g. Number of target words translated through USAID Translation Program | Output | Documents review | Quarterly | 0 | N/A ¹⁵ | 525,555 |
| Number of training and performance support resources identified or created in response to partners and Mission needs ¹⁶ | Output | Program records | Quarterly | 0 | 20 | 39 |

¹¹ Titles and definitions of certain indicators have evolved over the years, as recorded in the Activity MEL Plan and the corresponding PIRS. For detailed information on these changes, refer to the Annual Reports and the Activity MEL Plan.

¹² Some indicators had specific annual targets, while others did not have defined hard targets for certain years during the LOA. For more details, please refer to the Annual Reports and the Activity MEL Plan.

¹³ In Year 4, we missed counting 35 new partners identified in August 2023, which are corrected and now counted in LOA achievement.

¹⁴ WorkwithUSAID.org transitioned to WorkwithUSAID.gov in October 2023.

¹⁵ The Incubator did not have a target assigned for this indicator.

¹⁶ This indicator was applicable only for Year 1 and Year 2.

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ANNEX: OBJECTIVE I

INTRODUCTION

The Partnerships Incubator delivered more than 50 distinct activities in more than 45 countries across the last five years. These activities were quite varied, including identification of new and local partners, assessments of their readiness to work with USAID, tailored technical assistance, topical webinars intended for large audiences, co-creation facilitation, website design and development, language translation services, and Agency communications support, among many others. This Annex provides a brief summary of each of these activities and the impacts achieved. The activities are organized by the project's three primary objectives: 1) amplify USAID's external communications efforts; 2) expand USAID's capacity for partnerships; and 3) help partners work with USAID.

OBJECTIVE I: Amplify USAID's External Communication Efforts

WORKWITHUSAID.GOV: WEBSITE, COMMUNICATIONS, AND TRANSLATION

Bureau for Management's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA)

Vendors:

- Miew
- Big Blue
- TM Design
- CCI Group

Activity Summary: WorkwithUSAID.org, launched in November 2021 and transitioned to WorkwithUSAID.gov in October 2023, was created by the Partnerships Incubator to facilitate partnerships with USAID. Initially conceived to consolidate resources and streamline processes for diverse organizations, the platform features tools such as the Partner Directory, Pre-Engagement Assessment, Resource Library, Funding Feed, Sub-Opportunities Portal, Unsolicited Submissions Portal, and News & Insights blog. It aimed to introduce new organizations to USAID, help prepare them for partnership, and foster collaboration in addressing global development challenges. Key milestones included surpassing 7,000 partners (and climbing) in July 2024, offering multilingual support, and integrating features such as in-site messaging and event listings. The transition to .gov signaled the website's institutionalization within USAID, ensuring sustainability and enhanced functionality under strict security protocols.

Impact: The brainchild of the Partnerships Incubator, WorkwithUSAID.gov was launched to meet the unique needs of diverse organizations, with a focus on helping them evaluate their readiness to become USAID partners and strengthen organizational capacity. In its first year, the Incubator reviewed the existing partner support ecosystem extensively, identifying a gap for user-friendly, technology-focused products and services that aligned with the Agency's business needs. This review led to the conceptualization of the WorkwithUSAID.gov platform, designed to offer organizations opportunities to learn, connect, collaborate, and innovate in addressing development challenges.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE I

In Year 2, the platform's development advanced significantly. The team created five main elements: the Partner Directory, the Pre-Engagement Assessment, the Resource Library, the News & Insights blog, and AskZara. The Partner Directory allows organizations to create profiles and connect with others. The Pre-Engagement Assessment helps potential partners gauge their readiness to work with USAID by identifying organizational capacity gaps and linking organizations to resources. Recognizing the absence of a central location for quality resources about working with USAID, the Incubator also initiated the development of the WorkwithUSAID.gov Resource Library. This repository of free tools and resources was meticulously curated and designed to help partners improve their organizational capabilities.

In Year 3, WorkwithUSAID.gov introduced key updates, including an in-site email feature for approved organizations to contact others in the directory, an "Events" page highlighting upcoming events, and an improved directory registration process with clearer directions and required fields. Additionally, the Incubator finalized the "How to Work with USAID" training module series on USAID.gov, providing accessible resources to help organizations prepare for partnerships. To reach a broader audience, the Incubator also began to expand language resources on the site, making the "Start Here" document available in seven additional languages (Arabic, Burmese, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese) and collaborating with the M/OAA to translate the Pre-Engagement Assessment.

In the fourth year of WorkwithUSAID.gov, the platform significantly advanced in supporting global development partnerships. USAID's decision to transition the site from an .org to a .gov domain underscored its importance as a lasting resource. Building on the success of its initial launch, the Incubator streamlined the website's navigation, refreshed the homepage, and added comprehensive explanations about USAID in "FAQs" to clarify its role. New features, such as a Sub-Opportunities Portal and improved event functionalities, were introduced. These enhancements have transformed how partnerships are formed, making it easier for local and nontraditional organizations to engage with USAID.

The Incubator also published the "Voices of Local Partners" video series to highlight the experiences and insights of local organizations. This initiative took the Incubator to El Salvador and Zimbabwe, where local partners shared their strategies for overcoming challenges and achieving sustainability. The series has facilitated knowledge exchange, benefiting both new and existing partners. These efforts have enriched the user experience on WorkwithUSAID.gov, making it a crucial tool for fostering inclusive development partnerships.

In its fifth year, WorkwithUSAID.gov achieved remarkable progress in enhancing its multilingual accessibility and user experience. In March 2024, the Partnerships Incubator launched the French and Spanish versions of the website, a milestone accomplished through collaboration with Miew, USAID/M/OAA, and a team of translators. This effort involved creating a back-end system that uses artificial intelligence (AI) for initial translations, followed by meticulous review and post-editing by language professionals. The Arabic version of the site launched shortly after, in April 2024, and the new multilingual versions of the site drew notable user engagement within a few months. These translations made the platform more accessible to a global audience, ensuring wider reach and engagement.

Moreover, following the previous year's transition of WorkwithUSAID from a .org to a .gov domain, the Incubator collaborated with USAID's Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to integrate the site into AIDNet. In-person meetings in Porto, Portugal, and Washington, DC, facilitated detailed discussions on translation, unsolicited submissions processes, and overall site enhancement. This period also saw the development and testing of a new centralized platform for unsolicited proposals and applications, the launch of the "Funding Essentials" page, a funding-focused landing page, and ongoing efforts to improve the site's user experience. These accomplishments underscored the platform's commitment to fostering global partnerships and streamlining engagement with USAID.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE I

COMMUNICATION SUPPORT: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT HUB (GENDEV)

Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI)/GenDev

Vendors:

- Big Blue
- TM Design

Activity Summary: The Partnerships Incubator provided broad, on-demand communications support to USAID's GenDev Hub. This support initially included the production of two videos, the design and development of several one-pagers, and a social media campaign. The final support was expanded to include a total of three videos, one large social media campaign, five smaller campaigns, three one-pagers, multiple communications for Administrator Samantha Power, and 100-plus pages of talking points for the Gender Equality and Equity Action Fund (GEEA) and GenDev. All work products were completed in six months with the support of a dedicated Communications Liaison and vendors Big Blue and TM Design.

Impact: The Incubator served as a full-service support team for this office to expand GenDev's communications. To achieve this impact, the Incubator produced a video filmed on site in South Africa that showcased USAID's investment in women's empowerment and early childhood education. The Partnerships Incubator also developed an animated video to educate the public about the care economy and a B-roll production that highlighted the global impact of USAID and the State Department's joint GEEA Fund. The Incubator improved the visibility of the GEEA Fund by designing its snapshot report, which was approved by a White House team and used at the United Nations General Assembly in creating a launch campaign around International Women's Day.

The Partnerships Incubator elevated the impact of USAID's agricultural and women's empowerment work by designing an informative fact sheet. Finally, the Incubator developed 100-plus pages of talking points for the GenDev office to better coordinate communications, an initiative with wider impact throughout the Agency. Through its work with GenDev, the Incubator showcased USAID's steadfast focus on incorporating gender into all its work.

FIRST/LAST MILE – USAID'S TRANSLATION PROGRAM

M/OAA/Strategy

Activity Summary: USAID's Translation Program, launched in November 2023, is part of the Agency's localization initiative and aims to reduce burdens and address the English language barrier for local partners seeking USAID funding. Through the Translation Program, USAID Operating Units (OUs) have submitted final versions of Requests for Information (RFIs), Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), final applications, SAM.gov unique entity identifier (UEI) registration documents, partner vetting documents, and Agency policy documents for translation. Documents outside this scope were also considered for translation on an ad hoc basis. Documents were translated from English to French, Spanish, and Arabic or from these three local languages to English. M/OAA strategy promoted this activity through a series of meetings throughout the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024, receiving the first request on January 19, 2024.

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Impact: USAID had operated exclusively in English without any centralized translation service, limiting the access of local partners with English language skills to assistance awards from start to finish. Skilled local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other local partners without English language skills were excluded from these opportunities unless Missions and local staff stepped in and bridged the language gap. The introduction of USAID's Translation Program greatly reduced this barrier to entry for non-English speaking partners and Agency staff by creating a centralized system for translation requests.

The Translation Program has received 46 requests from more than 15 Missions¹⁷ to date¹⁸ resulting in the translation of more than 400,000 words, saving USAID staff time and resources. In addition, the Incubator Translation Unit has translated standard provisions and other pre-award documents and uploaded them to [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://workwithusaid.gov) to help local organizations understand the requirements of working with USAID in their own language. Fifteen of these standard provision and pre-award documents have been translated and by our calculations save each individual implementing partner more than \$40,000 and 120 days of work.¹⁹ This activity runs through the end of August 2024 and continues to receive five to ten requests per month.

¹⁷ The requests received have come from Ecuador, Haiti, Kenya, Senegal, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mexico, Cameroon, Burundi, Ghana, West Africa Regional Mission (Tanzania and South Africa), Honduras, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Ethiopia, and Jordan.

¹⁸ Breakdown of the 46 translation requests is as follows: 12 NOFOs; 8 RFIs; 3 final application documents; 2 policy documents (outside ADS); 2 Annual Program Statements (APSs). The remaining requests include SAM UEI documents, partner vetting and guidance documents, branding strategies and marking plans, and ad hoc documents.

¹⁹ Please see the Translation Program Saves Partners Time and Money blog [here](#).

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 2

OBJECTIVE 2: Expand USAID's Capacity for Partnerships

PARTNER LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OR ASSESSMENT (PLA)

USAID/Burundi

Activity Summary: The purpose of this PLA was to help the Mission understand the challenges and opportunities for increasing its engagement with and funding of local and nontraditional organizations. This included identifying organizations with operational capacity to manage USAID funds and those driving development impact in Mission priority areas.

Impact: Nearly 800 local organizations in Burundi expressed interest in starting or growing their relationship with USAID/Burundi through a short survey. As a first step, the team conducted a two-week media campaign in French to source and uncover local organizations. This campaign used a balanced mix of radio, newspaper, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The team received 784 completed surveys, triple the number initially anticipated, indicating significant interest from local Burundian organizations.

These responses indicated a wide range of nonprofits, social enterprises, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and cooperatives interested in collaborating with USAID to address complex social, political, cultural, and economic challenges facing the country.

The Incubator applied an investor mindset in carrying out this PLA to find organizations with the strongest potential to grow, generate development impact, and self-sustain operations during the long term using two criteria:

- Business model resilience, or the overall viability to sustain and grow operations; and
- Value proposition, or the market demand and comparative advantage of service or product offerings.

Although the majority of the assessed organizations were nonprofits, we identified the opportunity to collaborate with the private sector through this PLA. The local private sector seemed keen to engage with USAID, a fact that was demonstrated through the receipt of 300-plus survey submissions from for-profit entities.

Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)/Central African Republic (CAR)

Activity Summary: The purpose of this PLA was to assist USAID/BHA/CAR in identifying and assessing local or nontraditional partners for potential collaboration. The PLA was designed to help USAID/BHA/CAR maximize its humanitarian assistance impact by partnering with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with the knowledge and ability to address the severe humanitarian needs in CAR.

Impact: Local NGOs in CAR were uniquely qualified to deliver humanitarian aid. The country's severe and volatile security situation prompted many international NGOs to restrict staff from accessing the high-risk, difficult-to-reach areas that were often home to individuals with the highest level of need. Therefore, our priority was identifying and understanding local organizations that work in these non-permissive environments.

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Through desk research, the team developed a master list of more than 400 local and locally registered international NGOs operating in CAR. Through in-depth organizational self-assessment questionnaires, 77 organizations were identified whose priorities and perceived readiness to partner with USAID were well aligned with the Agency. The Incubator developed a prioritized list of 15 candidate organizations using selection criteria approved by USAID/BHA/CAR and highlighted seven additional local NGOs with the potential to become partners with additional capacity-strengthening support.

The 15 organizations recommended to USAID/BHA/CAR were all legally registered in CAR and led by Central Africans. The organizations on this priority list focused on humanitarian assistance with key intervention areas, including protection, food security, health, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Collectively, the 15 NGOs provided expansive geographic coverage, with at least one organization in each of the 20 prefectures.

Through this PLA, the Incubator provided an actionable report highlighting the best approaches for engaging with the organizations individually and as a cohort. The report noted standout features of several organizations and key challenges consistently identified during in-depth interviews. As a result, USAID/BHA/CAR is now better positioned to advance its localization strategy in CAR.

USAID/Djibouti

Activity Summary: USAID/Djibouti sought to identify local civil society organizations (CSOs) for potential partners. The Mission also aimed to identify potential local and international private-sector partners, particularly those interested in co-creating with USAID and other donor-funded programs focused on youth employment. Finally, the Mission sought to partner with the Government of Djibouti (GoDJ) Ministries to amplify the strategic interests of all collaborating partners. With these efforts, the Mission leveraged CSOs to increase citizen participation, resulting in better service delivery at the local level.

Impact: The Partnerships Incubator conducted a PLA to identify potential partners and understand their challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and interests in working with USAID. The final list of CSOs and private-sector organizations was separated into established local organizations currently capable of strong partnership with the Agency and organizations that could be strong USAID partners with varying levels of additional support. The analysis did not rank the organizations but instead provided insights into the support these organizations needed to successfully collaborate with USAID. By describing each potential organization in this manner qualitatively, the PLA empowered USAID/Djibouti to determine the best way forward for programming.

The report also documented GoDJ Ministries' frustration with the lack of transparency in donor-funded development activities and costs. A lack of collaboration and co-design with Ministries' project management units often resulted in a duplication of efforts among government and donors. Ministries believed the donor community gave priority to intermediary organizations, leaving government representatives in a continuous training cycle with no opportunity to implement projects directly and manage funds. The report addressed how partners and USAID could better collaborate and coordinate with project management units within the government.

As a result of the PLA, the Mission intended to design capacity-strengthening programs for the most appropriate partners in hopes they would become long-term prime or subaward partners as their capacity improved. It is our understanding that the Mission went on to establish such a program with more than 20 local partners, several of which were identified in the PLA.

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USAID/Dominican Republic (DR)

Activity Summary: USAID/Dominican Republic commissioned the Partnerships Incubator to conduct a PLA of local organizations in the DR. The Incubator team used quantitative research methods, including a readiness assessment customized to PLA objectives, and qualitative research methods such as a desk review and key informant interviews with USAID/DR personnel, donor agencies, and other trusted organizations. Among 25 organizations prioritized in the assessment, the PLA team determined nearly all could play more than one role in partnership with USAID, including providing capacity strengthening support and facilitating partnerships with other local organizations.

Impact: The Incubator found a positive environment for potential local partners for USAID and opportunities to strengthen Agency partnerships. There was a critical need to strengthen the capacity of local partners, which faced challenges competing with foreign organizations with stronger track records and significant resources. Many of these non-traditional, small, local organizations felt undervalued by USAID and the international development community, which simultaneously relied on them as key implementing partners. Although the private-sector organizations, especially those focused on manufacturing and service provision, were engaged in solving community-based challenges, they had relatively weak links to the development sector.

Following the PLA, USAID/DR engaged the Incubator to prepare a consortium roadmap to leverage local partners' abilities to provide capacity strengthening to other Dominican organizations working in development. The roadmap called for establishing an Impact Accelerator and Investment Fund to provide capacity development in areas related to working with USAID; facilitate support and partnerships among local organizations, the private sector, local government, and the Agency and other international donors; create an education-to-workforce personnel pipeline; and encourage social impact innovation.

This roadmap provided a feasible plan for USAID to achieve lasting, locally driven social impact in the DR and established a tool to support the Agency's broader NPI and localization efforts.

USAID/El Salvador

Activity Summary: The PLA aimed to provide the Mission with a comprehensive analysis structured around the Mission's CDCS development objectives and use it to recommend organizations capable of working with USAID. The Mission was interested in confirming the range of potential partners in El Salvador—including NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, multilateral organizations, public international organizations, other donors, academic institutions, and local and regional institutions that work in El Salvador—and the resources and capabilities they could bring to any partnership. The Mission was particularly interested in NGOs and CSOs with whom it had not previously collaborated or was unaware of as well as private-sector foundations, philanthropic organizations, and business associations that could bring co-financing capabilities (such as Global Development Alliance, or GDA).

USAID/El Salvador was also interested in engaging potential local partners through two Incubator-hosted webinars, conducted and presented in Spanish, centered around an upcoming APS the Mission anticipated releasing to support its new five-year CDCS.

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Impact: The Partnerships Incubator conducted a social media outreach campaign in the country to identify potential partner organizations.²⁰ The outreach campaign was completed in Spanish using two consultants who were Salvadoran nationals, and included a public survey through USAID’s social media channels and two national newspapers. The survey invited local organizations interested in working with the Agency to share information about their past work, geographic focus, sectors of operation, and donor experience as well as input about what they believed were the pressing development challenges facing their country. By providing data such as this to the Mission, the Incubator facilitated a positive feedback loop between local partners and USAID.

The researchers used a combination of surveys and key informant interviews to ultimately identify 35 new and nontraditional organizations that were ready to partner with the Agency. The report provided a second list of “new and nontraditional organizations on the partnership horizon” that were technically interesting and could be strong partners if provided with organizational development support. A number of the organizations identified through the PLA were later invited to participate in an Incubator training series in a subsequent buy-in with USAID/El Salvador.

The Incubator also developed and delivered a two-part webinar series for partners interested in better understanding the upcoming APS. The webinars—developed in English and Spanish by bilingual experts—aimed to present the requirements necessary for partners to submit concept papers in response to the APS and its addenda. The first webinar, delivered in late May 2021, covered the general APS and expectations; the second webinar, in late June 2021, focused on two active addenda, outlined requirements for submitting concept papers, and helped partners prepare for the co-creation and proposal processes. More than 900 participants attended both webinars.

USAID/Guatemala

Activity Summary: The PLA aimed to help USAID/Guatemala understand the challenges and opportunities facing local organizations to increase its engagement with and funding to local and nontraditional partners, with a focus on Indigenous-led organizations. This included identifying organizations with sufficient operational capacity to manage USAID funds and those driving development impact in Mission priority areas. These potential partners came from a variety of organizations, including private-sector companies, NGOs, CSOs, Indigenous associations and cooperatives, and FBOs. As a result, this PLA assessed the organizations’ USAID readiness as well as their business resilience, programmatic impact value, and alignment with the Mission’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

Impact: USAID/Guatemala implemented one of USAID’s most robust forms of Indigenous engagement. The PLA team combined quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand the partnership ecosystem in USAID/Guatemala with a focus on Indigenous organizations. The Incubator identified nearly 500 organizations that met broad criteria established in the statement of work (SOW). The PLA team then used self-assessment surveys and in-depth interviews to identify 30 potential partners. The PLA team applied four lenses to these 30 to determine USAID readiness, award management capacity, revenue diversity, business model resilience, and value proposition.

The PLA findings yielded a diverse and promising landscape of potential local partners in Guatemala. Nearly two-thirds of the organizations surveyed had an Indigenous founder or leader, while 50 percent were founded and led by a person from an Indigenous background. This PLA demonstrated the Mission’s refined approach to various aspects of Indigenous organizations, including dynamics around ownership, leadership, and community impact.

²⁰ This outreach campaign was such a success that the Partnerships Incubator built this step into a number of future PLAs with USAID Missions.

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[USAID/Liberia](#)

Vendor: DevWorks

Activity Summary: This PLA was designed to identify local organizations in Liberia to help USAID/Liberia understand the challenges and opportunities for increasing its local engagement. Although the Incubator's PLAs typically focused on assessing operational readiness to manage USAID funding, USAID/Liberia focused on qualities of local leadership, with operational readiness and value proposition as secondary criteria.

The Incubator worked with a team of four consultants (two remote, two local) to conduct a two-step PLA. Through the desk research and a public outreach campaign using local radio ads and phone call-in lines, the Incubator identified more than 500 organizations to fill out the self-assessment survey. In consultation with USAID/Liberia, the Incubator shortlisted 25 local organizations to advance to the key informant interview (KII) stage. In the second phase, those 25 organizations participated in in-depth interviews. All but one interview were carried out in person, including a site visit to rural Nimba county.

Impact: The final report and database contained not only actionable information about specific Liberian organizations but also cross-sectoral trends and insights to inform USAID/Liberia's localization strategy. Some important insights included local organizations' capacity gaps around monetizing their products or services or inability to leverage their comparative advantage to drive organizational growth; corruption at the international NGO level; and local partners' lack of awareness about Agency solicitations.

USAID/Liberia is now better positioned to advance its localization strategy. This PLA served to establish the foundation of future distribution lists, guided collaboration with local organizations, and provided insights to inform future localization decisions.

[USAID/Libya](#)

Activity Summary: USAID/Libya (based remotely in Tunis, Tunisia) was one of the first buy-ins to the Partnerships Incubator and our first PLA. The Mission was in the process of developing a new strategic framework²¹ and was primarily interested in partnership opportunities that could provide support for democratic processes such as civic education, political party strengthening, media, elections and electoral strengthening, support for national and municipal government, public financial management, private-sector engagement, youth employment, civil society, health, and education.

Impact: Libya has had little peace since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising overthrew Muammar Gaddafi after 42 years in power. Gaddafi's removal created complex and extremely challenging issues for the country, including weak state institutions, powerful non-state armed groups, unresolved centuries-old intrasocietal conflicts, high numbers of weapons in circulation per capita, and increased meddling of foreign powers. In 2014, the country split into eastern and western factions, with rival administrations governing in each area.

The PLA provided an initial assessment of potential Libyan CSO partners and U.S. and Libyan private-sector businesses that could be contracted to deliver on the Mission's development assistance strategy. Interviews included calls with representatives from USAID/Libya staff and implementing partners, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), and other donors and international organizations. The Incubator contacted and interviewed 54 relevant non-local and local potential partners, including U.S. and Libyan private-sector companies, Libyan NGOs,

²¹ A strategic framework is a more condensed and flexible version of the traditional USAID CDCS and allows for greater flexibility and adaptation through time.

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and international organizations working in Libya. Interviewee selection was based on snowball sampling and responses to an email request by USAID/Libya for information about programming in Libya.

The vast majority of Libyan CSOs were new; many lacked implementation capability and suffered from weak internal management capacity and the absence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices. There was also no legal framework to govern their work and protect them. As the state funding to CSOs was almost nonexistent, strong personal connections were required to secure any funding from the government. As a result, they primarily had only private donations from members and communities or grants from international organizations. Nonetheless, these CSOs were often best placed to address development issues in Libya. They possessed two fundamental aspects that international NGOs usually lack: understanding of the context and access to remote places.

The private sector in Libya suffered from continuous waves of unrest. Small business owners were suffering from unstable conditions and struggled to keep their businesses afloat. Against seemingly impossible odds, Libyan entrepreneurs showed optimism for both the future of the country and their businesses, which aimed to provide support to their people. Our research identified needs and constraints (skills, access to finance, support services, etc.) while exploring strengths and opportunities of the Libyan private sector, with emphasis on the areas with a stronger potential for immediate growth. The U.S.-Libya Business Association (USLBA) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Libya (AmCham) are the only two membership organizations that facilitate commercial dialogue between the United States and Libya. They advocate for, coordinate, and enhance the U.S.-Libya business relationship as well as educate the public about the opportunities for collaboration.

The PLA was an instrumental step in USAID/Libya's process of developing a strategic framework that emphasized the need for deepening the partnership base of USAID and delivering technical assistance through local partners. The Mission eventually released its Country Strategic Framework 2021–2024, which was focused on civil society and private-sector engagement. Unfortunately, ongoing instability within the country continues to limit USAID's ability to expand programs there.

BHA/Madagascar

Activity Summary: USAID/BHA/Madagascar engaged the Partnerships Incubator to identify and assess local organizations in Madagascar operating in resilience, food security, nutrition, and social protection in the regions in which the Bureau is active—notably three regions in the southeast (Vatovavy, Fitovinany, and Atsimo Atsinanana) and four in the south and southwest (Anosy, Androy, Atsimo Andrefana, and Menabe). The assessment sought to identify local NGOs, CSOs, church institutions, service providers, implementers, private-sector companies, parastatals, or Malagasy consulting and research firms that were new to USAID or had limited interaction with the Agency in a sub-partner role.

Impact: The Partnerships Incubator assembled a team of two local consultants with extensive expertise in engaging and assessing local organizations in Madagascar and two international consultants with experience in partnership development and project management. Through extensive desk research and local outreach, the Incubator developed a comprehensive list of 765 local organizations operating in Madagascar. This list was narrowed after the potential partners completed self-assessment surveys and participated in in-depth interviews to assess readiness to collaborate with USAID and alignment with Mission priorities in delivering humanitarian and development impact. At the completion of this PLA, our team developed a robust list of 20 recommended organizations for USAID/BHA to partner with.

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This PLA served as a catalyst for change by providing a robust database of local organizations eager to collaborate with USAID/Madagascar. This comprehensive database not only highlighted the readiness and potential of these organizations but also facilitated targeted interventions and partnerships, ultimately enhancing the Agency's ability to drive impactful change in the community.

[USAID/Rwanda](#)

Vendor: Keylime

Activity Summary: The purpose of this PLA was to identify local organizations in Rwanda and to help USAID/Rwanda understand the challenges and opportunities for increasing its engagement with and funding of local organizations. This PLA focused on assessing operational readiness to manage USAID funding across four technical programs: education; health; economic growth; and democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG).

The Incubator team used a consultant team of three individuals (one remote, two local) to conduct a two-step PLA. Through extensive desk research and outreach, 314 organizations were identified to complete the self-assessment survey. The Incubator team used qualitative and quantitative metrics to score the survey responses. In consultation with USAID/Rwanda, 15 local organizations were shortlisted to advance to the KII stage. In step two, the Incubator's local consultants conducted 15 in-depth interviews in person with these shortlisted organizations. This information, as well as resulting insights and recommendations, formed the basis of the final report.

Impact: The final report and database contained not only actionable information about specific Rwandan organizations but also cross-sectoral trends and insights to inform USAID/Rwanda's localization strategy. Some important insights included local organizations' request for capacity strengthening and mentoring support; the need to diversify the communication channels by which the Agency reaches local partners; and local partners' lack of awareness of USAID solicitations.

USAID/Rwanda is now better positioned to advance its localization strategy. This PLA established the foundation for the future distribution lists, guided collaborations with local organizations, and provided the insights to inform localization decision-making in the future.

The Incubator team delivered an outbrief presentation on April 30, 2024, to USAID/Rwanda that included the Localization Working Group and the Mission Director. The Mission Director complimented the work of the team and remarked that he was excited to share the report with other Missions at an upcoming regional East Africa summit in May 2024.

[USAID/Sierra Leone](#)

Activity Summary: The USAID/Sierra Leone Mission engaged the Partnerships Incubator to prepare a PLA to enhance the Mission's ability to connect with, support, and partner with local organizations working in the democracy and governance (DG) sector and the health sector. While the PLAs were prepared by two teams focused on the sectors, planning and work was coordinated and, where appropriate, combined to realize efficiencies. The PLAs were conducted during election season in Sierra Leone, introducing a degree of sensitivity with regard to the political environment.

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Through extensive desk research and outreach, the Incubator teams analyzed data from 401 organizations and screened them against Mission criteria. After completing self-assessment surveys, the 33 highest-ranking organizations were invited for interviews across both PLAs. These organizations were then presented to the Mission as potential partners.

The DG PLA identified and assessed local organizations in Sierra Leone working on DG and selected aspects of human rights. Through this process, the team identified five key themes: USAID's localization approach faces multiple obstacles with DG organizations in Sierra Leone; many DG organizations are already deeply engaged with and responding to local priorities; local organizations share many challenges, pointing to the potential of sector-wide support; women are missing from organizational leadership (though youth fare better); and Sierra Leone remains a challenging context for DG organizations. Despite adversity, the Incubator found these organizations demonstrate resilience and creativity.

Findings of the health PLA showed that organizations operating in Sierra Leone are already focused on local ownership. Many defined localization at the community rather than national level, targeting local communities' specific needs, with several organizations serving as a bridge between community-based organizations and donors. Challenges identified by the PLA included a lack of specialization, as organizations had to continually adapt to donor priorities to achieve an adequate level of funding. Health-related organizations also faced staff retention issues and attrition toward international NGOs. Limited capital, ineffective methods for funding overhead, and lack of capacity strengthening made it difficult for local organizations to provide salaries competitive with international organizations. As a result, local NGOs experienced high rates of turnover, which degraded organizational capacity, disincentivized substantial investment in individual employees, and impeded progress in management of programs and donor awards. Organizations also identified an inability to recoup overhead expenses as a key constraint.

Impact: The Sierra Leone PLAs were unique in that, as part of the activities' self-assessment survey, the teams asked organizations to talk about the future; to describe projects they were planning to start in the coming five years and whether they required funding; and the organizations' main goals for the next five years as well as obstacles that could prevent those goals from being realized. The answers to these questions were critical to establishing a baseline assessment on localization.

The teams recommended the Mission follow up on the PLAs with public events after the election; investigate locally focused procurement approaches within the Agency, including ways to socialize procurement opportunities; explore the gender gap in organizational leadership; consider ways to address common institutional capacity needs, including tracking new and expanded cost recovery methods within the Agency's new Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) strategy; explore USAID's approach to philanthropy, private-sector engagement, and diaspora; and pursue joint action with peers.

The teams also identified opportunities for the Agency to enhance localization. These include collaborating with local networks to raise awareness of USAID funding opportunities, connecting local organizations with capacity-strengthening resources, earmarking funds for local capacity strengthening activities, structuring future procurements as transition awards, and providing local organizations with more information on allowable indirect cost-recovery methods.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 2

ADVANCING LOCALIZATION WITHIN THE FEED THE FUTURE PROGRAM

Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security (REFS)

Activity Summary: The REFS Feed the Future Office of Country Implementation Inclusive Development Division (REFS/FTF-OCI/ID) engaged the Partnerships Incubator to conduct a series of interviews and listening sessions with key informants—as well as surveys and desk research—across the FTF program to develop a roadmap to monitor, advance, and tell the story about the ways in which FTF can advance localization.

The Incubator team prepared a report presenting a synthesis of the full range of responses, feedback, and ideas shared through those interviews and listening sessions, plus a set of recommendations for REFS leadership to consider to advance localization within the FTF program. Recurring themes include a lack of consensus around which approaches to localization are most effective; whether the financial and human resource investments localization requires lead to more sustainable and cost-effective development impacts and improved global food security; and the fact that local organizations—especially those in the agriculture and food sectors, from formal cooperatives to informal producer groups—often lack the administrative and financial capacities to partner with USAID.

Recommendations included encouraging local capacity strengthening more explicitly and effectively in FTF awards and measuring capacity development as a contributor to the localization vision; developing a set of FTF-specific localization benchmarks or learning questions to better measure progress, value, and impact of FTF localization; establishing a consortium of local FTF partners to strengthen capacity and offer commercialization services to other local partners; and establishing a USAID/REFS-facilitated Mission support corps to identify, document, and teach best practices in localization. The Incubator team provided briefings on the roadmap to the REFS Localization Working Group and leaders.

Impact: The Incubator interviewed more than 100 individuals, including REFS leadership, staff at 14 of 20 FTF program Missions, other USAID staff involved in localization initiatives, and local partners, including Innovation Labs. The interviews and listening sessions identified new areas that require attention to advance localization and validated challenges that remain to be resolved. The Incubator team addressed all findings with recommendations presented in the roadmap.

The Incubator shared the roadmap with REFS leaders, the Localization Working Group, and other staff for review and consideration to prioritize and implement its recommendations. It is the Incubator's understanding that the REFS team will reflect on top priorities at the Agency level in combination with the roadmap findings and suggested steps to advance localization. The intent was that across the Bureau, centers and offices would take up actions reflecting the roadmap recommendations or related actions as part of a broader strategic initiative.

“The roadmap is timely, having been prepared in the context of ongoing strategic discussions at the Agency amid a political environment characterized by forthcoming elections. Moreover, the roadmap overall, and its recommendations in particular, clarify that much of the work that the Agency is doing around localization needs to be institutionalized.”

—JESSICA BAGDONIS, REFS/FTF-OCI/ID

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“The [Incubator’s] advancing localization roadmap is arguably a pioneering effort as a well-researched, thoughtful, and comprehensive effort to identify, prioritize, and articulate actions that the REFS Bureau may take to advance localization.

Washington-based offices benefit from doing a deep analysis of local contexts and past and current programming, drawing from a range of actors that includes local stakeholders, to inform future actions.”

—KATHRYN HOEFELICH, NEW PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE (NPI) DEPUTY LEAD, LTF HUB,
USAID BUREAU FOR DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY, AND INNOVATION

ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE (A&A) LAB GUIDES

M/OAA

Vendors:

- Keylime
- Emerging Consulting Group (ECG)

Activity Summary: M/OAA advances Agency efforts to establish innovative procurement solutions. The office’s A&A Lab is a forward-leaning group, pushing the boundaries and challenging the status quo when it comes to USAID procurement approaches. The lab introduces new ways of doing work, is committed to co-creation, and maintains a network of like-minded A&A professionals across the Agency with whom it collaborates to generate and distribute A&A guides (i.e., packaged guidelines, samples, or templates) to inform M/B/OU. The guides cover a range of contracting issues with the intention of improving USAID operations. At the request of the A&A Lab, the Partnerships Incubator produced five guidance documents and accompanying training presentations on oral presentations, time and materials contracts, fixed amount awards, key personnel requirements, and simplified acquisition procedures. The Incubator created training presentations for two existing guides on Annual Program Statements (APSs) and cost-plus award fees.

Impact: These guides provided standard instruction that enabled consistent application of key procurement methods and tools across the A&A Specialist community. They broke down complex ADS rules and guidance using language and terms easily understood by a global audience whose English was not always the first language and incorporated practitioner experience and legal reviews and opinions. They also included examples and templates for application. Finally, these guides were evergreen and included a multitude of links to source materials so A&A Specialists could stay up to date as rules and guidance evolved. The supporting training materials broke down the guides into key components and enabled the A&A Lab team to “go to market” with simple and direct instruction.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 2

CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING SUPPORT TO MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS (MSIs)

USAID/Administrator/Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

Local Partners:

- Kean University
- Langston University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
- University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
- University of Texas San Antonio Center for Global Development
- Florida International University
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- California State University San Marcos
- University of Guam
- University of the Virgin Islands

Vendors:

- Keylime
- DevWorks International
- Entrena
- Emerging Consulting Group (ECG)

Activity Summary: The Partnerships Incubator provided two annual rounds of technical assistance to U.S.-based MSIs identified through a competitive opportunity. Rapid needs assessments and technical assistance packages helped to identify diverse, tailored capacity-strengthening plans in services such as cohort business development workshops, strategic planning, matchmaking with USAID and other partners, communications and marketing, and financial management. In parallel, the Incubator hosted two annual webinar series (eight sessions in total) and three on-demand sessions to wider MSI audiences in topics relevant to USAID partnership. At the culmination of this activity, the Incubator convened a high-profile, virtual Opportunities Fair to connect MSIs with USAID representatives (including country and regional Mission Directors and Senior Deputy Assistant Administrators) and implementing partners aligned with the MSIs' strategic and business development priorities. The Incubator also conducted research to prepare two concept notes introducing initiatives that may be undertaken by USAID/DEIA: establishment of an MSI community of practice and an internship/scholarship program to provide students experience working with USAID.

Impact: The Incubator's tailored technical assistance strengthened the capacities of two cohorts of MSIs. All 10 MSIs completed a comprehensive business development workshop that enhanced their understanding of the full proposal cycle. With Incubator support, several participants put in place strategic plans aligned with Agency objectives in their sectors or geographies of interest. Several MSIs developed capability statements to support marketing of their initiatives to USAID audiences. Matchmaking, which the Incubator facilitated through its technical assistance and the Opportunities Fair attended by more than 200 participants, resulted in concrete programming opportunities.

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In Year 4, each webinar session was attended by an average of 80 participants. When asked how helpful the content was in understanding USAID partnership, participants gave an average score of 8.6 out of 10. In Year 5, each webinar session was attended by an average of 123 participants. The five-part series received a score of 9.4 out of 10 in response to the same question.

The Opportunities Fair made a significant impact on the MSI community. Participants gave it an average score of 8.4 out of 10 when asked, “How likely are you to pursue funding or partnership opportunities with USAID as a result of this event?” The Incubator received positive feedback from USAID and implementing partners regarding connections made with MSIs.

Building on the success in Year 4, USAID/DEIA expanded the program in Year 5, engaging the Incubator to work with six MSIs. The two annual cohorts demonstrated improved capacities to work with the Agency, which treated them as an MSI subset to receive additional programming and conference opportunities. These opportunities included funded attendance at an education conference in Pakistan and collaboration through a joint activity with the U.S. Forest Service.

As a direct result of this activity, DEIA is in discussion with the University of California, Berkeley, regarding collaboration in research and development of student recruitment opportunities as well as establishment of a democracy lab in the context of the university’s New Democracy Initiative.

CORPORATE PARTNERING PORTAL

[IPI/Private Sector Engagement Hub \(PSE\)](#)

Vendor: Miew

Activity Summary: Throughout Year 4 and Year 5, the Incubator engaged in the pivotal project of developing the PSE Corporate Partnering Portal on the WorkwithUSAID.gov platform. This initiative aimed to streamline and enhance the digital interface between the Agency and its private-sector collaborators, ensuring a more intuitive and accessible entry point for potential partnerships. Key activities included integrating user feedback to simplify site navigation, designing a modern and engaging interface, and setting up a backend system to efficiently manage inquiries and collaborations. This comprehensive approach was designed to address previous barriers and significantly enhance the partner experience.

Impact: The development and implementation of the PSE Corporate Partnering Portal has marked a transformative step in how USAID interacts with private-sector entities looking to engage in developmental partnerships. By creating a dedicated digital gateway, the project has substantially improved the clarity, accessibility, and responsiveness of the Agency to potential partners. Business leaders can easily learn how a collaboration with USAID can drive business growth, reduce risks, and advance sustainability goals across the globe. The portal provides businesses—including multinational, regional, and large local companies—with information on how collaborations work between USAID and the private sector and identifies what success looks like using examples of past and current engagements.

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Prior to the introduction of the PSE Corporate Partnering Portal, potential partners often found it challenging to navigate the complexities of USAID's offerings and to find the right contacts within the Agency. The redesigned portal now provides these entities a clear, streamlined pathway that is user-friendly and aligns with modern web standards and expectations. The use of a modern design and updated content structure has made information more accessible, reducing the time and effort companies require to engage with USAID.

The Corporate Partnering Portal launched in January 2024 and within less than a month, the Incubator received word it had yielded its first new corporate collaboration. In Year 5, the portal received a total of 1,326,932 views and gained 103,505 users (as of June 5).

BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA) APS SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP

DCHA

Activity Summary: The APS for the NPI: Conflict-Prevention and Recovery Program (CPRP), released by DCHA, was an effort to reach a larger and more diverse partner base in the belief that it would expand the available ideas, capabilities, and networks to address shared development challenges. A goal of the CPRP was to address the long-standing need for the “missing middle” that often exists between USAID's well-established and effective near-term crisis response programs and the long-term development approaches that are the Agency's hallmark. The objective of the CPRP APS Survey and Focus Group project was to determine the effectiveness of the APS and accompanying addenda to date and then iterate to improve future NPI efforts.

Impact: The Partnerships Incubator sought to address several concerns shared by USAID staff. M/OU's did not receive clear guidance on how to approach the larger NPI goals and the CPRP APS or what the Agency wanted them to achieve through the platform. Missions asked for metrics they could use to quantify success, how the APS fit into the project cycle at the Mission level, and what award procedures had to be met. Missions stated they could not fund subsequent awards immediately because their resources had been allocated for previously planned work. They were also concerned about adding awards to current workloads, which would have required managing more partners. From DCHA's perspective, there were questions about whether Missions needed more support in outreach to potential partners (i.e., meetings, newspapers, social media) and how the APS and broader NPI goals could provide more value to Missions.

The Incubator organized a survey to Missions and USAID Washington Operating Units (USAID/W/OU's) involved in the CPRP APS and addenda and used the findings to inform an after action-review (focus group) with key personnel at USAID Headquarters. The Incubator sent the survey to 15 individuals and received 10 responses. The focus group was held shortly after with 10 individuals.

Overall, the NPI CPRP APS was well received by USAID staff. Based on the feedback from those involved in subsequent addenda, it also appears the APS was well received by external audiences. Some of the positive comments received from Agency staff included:

- the tool has strong potential for many USAID countries;
- co-creation workshops continue to be a terrific tool for better project design work;
- the APS opens the opportunity to new, local, and nontraditional partners; and
- the evergreen clause is a huge positive of the APS and should be further refined.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 2

The results of the survey and focus group clarified potential areas of confusion regarding NPI objectives and informed subsequent NPI efforts; however, recommendations for the next iteration of the APS were not extensive. Instead, several points of feedback from the survey and focus group suggested larger issues that went beyond the NPI CPRP APS and accompanying guidance. The Incubator recommended that M/OAA consider creating general, uniform APS guidance. Such uniform guidance would eliminate the need for M/B/OU to rewrite documents each time they want to issue an APS or addendum. It would also educate and reinforce Agency goals through repetition in all documents to USAID and external partners. To our knowledge, this step has not yet been taken by the Agency.

DCHA APS ADDENDUM – RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC FREEDOM AND INCLUSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Bureau for the Middle East (USAID/Middle East)

Activity Summary: DCHA released the NPI CPRP APS in April 2019. USAID/Middle East subsequently released the DCHA APS Addendum – Religious and Ethnic Freedom and Inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa to attract applications from ethnic and religious communities that would support grassroots local initiatives with sustainable and long-term impact. The belief was that a larger and more diverse partner base would expand available ideas, capabilities, and networks to address shared development challenges. USAID tasked the Incubator with creating a public webinar to support potential partners in preparing eligible and competitive submissions.

Impact: To best leverage local knowledge, develop local capacity, and ensure local ownership and sustainability, applicants were required to demonstrate their roles as local partners or how they would engage with local partner organizations, including as sub-partners. Broadly, the criteria for the potential interventions included:

- Addressing government, economic, and health and education constraints on religious or ethnic minorities; and
- Preserving or rehabilitating cultural heritage sites of religious or ethnic minorities.

USAID received feedback from the constituency that many organizations were struggling to understand the process with the APS addendum application. As a result, USAID/Middle East extended the solicitation period by three months to conduct a public webinar and provide additional resources, tools, and guidance to prospective applicants.

The Incubator, along with USAID/Middle East and USAID/M/OAA staff, hosted a 50-minute webinar, “Partnership Guide for Local and Faith-Based Organizations Interested in Promoting Pluralism and International Religious Freedom.” The webinar informed potential applicants about the addendum and the Agency’s expectations for an eligible and competitive submission. The webinar engaged 395 registered participants and primarily covered the submission process, which required applicants to submit concept notes using the online template.

Informally, USAID indicated the additional time and support significantly improved applicants’ understanding of NPI, the DCHA APS, and the Middle East APS addendum. This led to a higher number of high-quality concept notes from applicants and increased the pool of potential partners through the evergreening process by ensuring more submissions met eligibility and competition requirements.

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GLOBAL NETWORK FOR SECURING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY (GNSEI)

DRG/Elections and Political Processes Office (EPP)

Vendor: Boostlingo

Activity Summary: GNSEI is a collective effort among more than 30 leading election-related organizations and networks across the globe. They convene election stakeholders around a shared vision: to inspire and inform action to advance electoral integrity in the face of critical threats to democracy. In June 2023, GNSEI elected and instituted its first steering committee. The Partnerships Incubator was directed to support travel for six individuals to a three-day, in-person convening of the GNSEI Steering Committee in Stockholm, Sweden, hosted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The Incubator provided travel and logistical support—in English and Spanish—for the sponsored participants; booked flights and lodging; and provided per diem to the participants based on applicable U.S. Department of State rates at the time of the meeting.

Impact: The network convened the committee for an inaugural meeting March 6–8, 2024, to refine its role and develop a workplan for the network's first year. The meeting was attended by representatives from each of the committee's five members: Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International IDEA, Red de Observación e Integridad Electoral-Acuerdo de Lima (RedOIE), and USAID.

In the spirit of equity, the Agency sponsored the attendance of six steering committee representatives from ANFREL and RedOIE, which were unable to fund their participation. An Incubator staff member attended the meeting and paid out M&IE, visas, transfers, and other allowable costs to the travelers. Additionally, Incubator staff liaised with the hotel, restaurants, local interpreters, and other meeting points of contact to make sure everything went smoothly during the event.

The Incubator, through vendor Boostlingo, provided two interpreters for two of the Spanish-speaking committee members, which allowed them to fully participate in the three days of discussion. The committee members expressed their appreciation for the support and attested to the valuable performance of the interpreters.

NATION BUILDERS EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

USAID/Administrator/DEIA

Vendor: Mason West Group (Nation Builders Emerging Leaders Program)

Activity Summary: The Partnerships Incubator facilitated implementation of the Nation Builders Emerging Leaders Program. Through this initiative, Colombian and American high school students worked together in ten teams of ten to twelve students each to develop prototypes of technologies to help the Buenaventura community and Colombia broadly overcome development challenges related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Nation Builders program brought together a range of stakeholders, including eight mentors from USAID/BHA, 50 participants from Bahía de Buenaventura in Colombia, seven Historically Black College or University (HBCU) fellows from Oakwood University, and about 20 students from Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, Martin Luther King Jr. High School, and the University of Chicago Charter School. Nation Builders held a training conference in March 2024 that helped students develop skills in design thinking, leadership, and emerging technologies.

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Each team was managed by a fellow from an HBCU, and the HBCU fellows were supported by mentors from USAID/BHA. The Nation Builders initiative included multiple site visits in Colombia, prototype development of innovative development solutions, and a final presentation of student-developed ideas to government, corporate, and nonprofit representatives. Launch of the prototype development stage involved the creation of a maker space at the Buenaventura high school, which will have a lasting impact on the school's innovation initiatives. The winning team will receive an initial investment and participate in an exchange trip to the United States, an activity covered by Nation Builders outside of the context of its support from the Incubator.

Impact: The Nation Builders program has already fostered connections between American and Colombian high school students, HBCU fellows, and USAID/BHA mentors. The Colombian students demonstrated leadership in their communities through training in design thinking, crisis management, and project management skills. The projects developed under the Nation Builders program will help Colombian and American students to serve as community advocates and innovators. At the same time, the program will train HBCU students in managing international programs while building a career pipeline to USAID.

Other program partners supporting the activity included Microsoft and the U.S. Mission to NATO. Microsoft's Tech for Social Impact program provided subject matter experts and helped set up the prototype maker space, connecting young innovators with the company's social impact programming. Similarly, Nation Builders brought together subject matter experts from the U.S. Mission to NATO to serve as prototype judges, which presented an opportunity for the Mission to raise awareness of the role of NATO in international relations.

The Nation Builders program culminated with a presentation at USAID's HBCU Summit in Cali, Colombia. As a result of its ongoing work and convening role, Nation Builders was selected for an extension funded jointly by the Agency and the U.S. Forest Service. Support from the Incubator has been a catalyst for Nation Builders to expand its programming: The Incubator connected Nation Builders with other MSIs supported through its technical assistance initiative for future iterations of the program.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE (NPI) ACTION PLAN SUPPORT

[IPI/Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub \(LFT\)](#)

Activity Summary: The NPI is USAID's flagship initiative to expand its base of new, local, and nontraditional partners. NPI Action Plans are strategic, operational documents that M/B/OU's use to describe how they plan to address NPI goals. For more than two years, the Incubator supported the first two phases of USAID's efforts to gather NPI Action Plans from all M/B/OU's. Under Phase 1, the Incubator was tasked with completing a review and analysis of the 14 pilot Mission Action Plans to assess and discuss how well the Missions appeared to have understood the guidance. Under Phase 2, the Incubator compiled an NPI Action Plan Summary Report documenting M/OU progress toward NPI goals, aggregated and analyzed data and feedback in NPI Action Plans from 77 Missions and OUs, and documented their intent to use NPI partnership approaches and standard practices in future activities.

Impact: Collectively, M/OU's around the world identified 1,069 NPI activities that would be implemented at some point during three fiscal years (FYs 2019–2021) with a cumulative total estimated cost of \$13 billion. The Agency planned to implement more than 40 percent of these activities in the Africa region, with the next-largest activity numbers in the Asia region and in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Although the Middle East region and the Europe and Eurasia

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region intended to implement fewer NPI activities than others during this three-year period, they planned to issue a larger proportion of direct awards to local partners. The number of overall NPI activities in a region correlated directly to the number of M/OUs in each region. The more M/OUs, the greater the number of NPI activities implemented in that region.

According to the Action Plans, Missions considered the limited capacity of new, local, and nontraditional partners as the most significant barrier and risk to NPI implementation. Such partners may have limited knowledge of USAID systems, procedures, and requirements; lack experience in achieving evidence-based development results; or have operational gaps such as inadequate financial management or insufficient human resources (HR) policies and procedures or procurement processes.

In May 2021, Missions were asked to update their Action Plans for FYs 2022 and 2023 (Phase 3). For the first time, all OUs, including USAID/W Bureaus, were asked to submit plans. We do not know the status of the NPI Action Plans since USAID took data collection in house under Phase 3. Individual M/B/OU Action Plans were not released publicly from any of the phases, although a summary report following Phase 2 was released.

POWERED BY THE PEOPLE (PXP) INITIATIVE

DRG

Vendor: Boostlingo

Activity Summary: PxP was announced in December 2021 as a key deliverable under President Biden's Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal (PIDR). This initiative represents a landmark in policy and foreign assistance efforts, building upon the U.S. Government's substantial and ongoing work to strengthen democracy and defend human rights globally. USAID/DRG engaged the Partnerships Incubator to support the design and facilitation of a post-competition, co-creation workshop intended to bring together stakeholders to build a shared vision of PxP. The Incubator worked with DRG to develop a workshop agenda and facilitation plan and support travel and logistics for participants.

Impact: The Incubator's support enabled 65 representatives from 11 countries to gather in Bogota, Colombia, to share and explore opportunities related to the five-year PxP program. Support included arranging travel logistics for 32 participants, including flights, lodging, and per diems. Facilitation included simultaneous interpretation support for all participants through the Incubator's vendor, Boostlingo.

The PxP conference enabled the USAID/DRG team and PartnersGlobal, the apparently successful applicant (ASA), to receive input from a range of stakeholders from around the world. By holding the co-creation event, the Agency created an environment where organizations were comfortable sharing best practices and discussing their work without losing a competitive advantage. This collaborative event provided PartnersGlobal with the opportunity to improve and develop its proposed approach and maximize the impact of the PxP program.

During the event, Incubator staff provided both remote and on-site support for logistics, event production, and per diems, ensuring the event ran smoothly and allowing participants to focus on co-creation. The Incubator's agenda and facilitation plan ensured successful peer-to-peer networking and encouraged organizations to forge new relationships and opportunities for collaboration beyond the context of PxP.

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Prior to the conference, the Incubator coordinated with USAID to develop a process for capturing information from the sessions. It developed a uniform note-taking template, assigned at least two note-takers to each session, and created a shared folder for session notes. This process resulted in the rapid finalization of the summary report, which the Agency shared with PartnersGlobal in time to inform the final proposal.

Overall, the Incubator's logistics ensured smooth participation, enhancing the event's effectiveness. The QR-coded "Look Book" provided schedules and participant information, careful planning enabled successful site events, and technical support facilitated interaction and productive discussions. Boostlingo's translation services ensured smooth understanding of all presentations, while meticulous note-taking documented the event. The efficient production of the summary report helped PartnersGlobal incorporate insights into its final proposal within the procurement timeline.

PROMOTING INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND RESILIENCE (PRO-INFO) INITIATIVE

DRG/Office of Global Trends and Technology

Vendor: Keylime

Activity Summary: DRG sought to support USAID missions around the world in identifying local organizations active in the field of information integrity and resilience (IIR). To achieve this, the Partnerships Incubator recruited a team of researchers and data analysts to develop a directory that would provide Missions with a snapshot of regional IIR actors in addition to a summary of the key trends, best practices, challenges, and priorities identified during the course of our research.

Impact: The Incubator research team interviewed 18 IIR experts referred by USAID and conducted key informant interviews with 15 IIR organizations identified by the initial experts. Our team also conducted a survey to identify additional IIR collaborators. In total, we identified 274 potential IIR partners.

The Incubator worked with DRG to co-design the directory, identifying the most effective format and language to convey information on a potentially sensitive topic while protecting the privacy of the organizations consulted. The DRG team requested the Incubator team organize the directory by region, giving USAID the option to split the report into regions to serve as useful, relevant documents to teams working in specific geographic areas. The Incubator completed the directory in July 2024, and it will be made available to Missions to help them engage with and support IIR stakeholders.

The directory was designed to assist USAID teams in mapping key individuals, civil society organizations, private-sector institutions, think tanks, strategic messaging and communications firms, and academic researchers and departments active in the IIR space by regions in which they work.

SUPPORTING USAID'S GREATER INTERNET FREEDOM DESIGN (CIVIC DEFENDERS)

DRG/Office of Civil Society, Labor, and Media

Activity Summary: DRG released a NOFO in spring 2024 to advance the Bureau's Global Internet Freedom programming. The Bureau engaged the Partnerships Incubator to develop an agenda and support the logistics of a post-competition, co-creation conference. The conference would connect the ASA and consortium partners with local experts and stakeholders.

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Impact: The Incubator recruited an experienced facilitator to develop an agenda for the conference. The team held regular planning calls with the Bureau to co-design the agenda. These discussions included the number of days necessary, techniques to drive peer-to-peer learning, and methods to maximize participant engagement.

The Incubator also provided logistical and travel support. This included securing and covering the cost of airfare and per diems for ten participants, securing a hotel and venue, and arranging meals. The Incubator advised the Bureau on the timeline for visa procurement and worked with attendees to secure visas when necessary. Throughout the planning process, the Incubator monitored its budget to identify excess funds that could cover additional travelers' expenses.

The Incubator's work will maximize the impact of the Civic DEFENDERS program by creating a collaborative environment in which the ASA can integrate the perspectives and expertise of a range of stakeholders into its work on Global Internet Freedom. The conference was held in July 2024.

SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

M/OAA

Vendor: TM Design

Activity Summary: In consultation with M/OAA, the Incubator learned that SAM required several online training modules, FAQ, and how-to documents to train partners and USAID staff. The Incubator developed several training and FAQ materials that made the SAM registration process easier.

Impact: This project created a package of training and FAQ materials that makes the SAM registration process easier for partners to navigate. To further this impact, the FAQ and how-to guides have been translated into French, Spanish, and Arabic to make it easier for organizations outside the United States to bid on federal contracts. The training significantly enhanced the SAM registration process by guiding new and returning users in a clear and comprehensible manner. Overall, this work had an outsized impact in improving partners' experience with the SAM registration process.

STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK OF FAITH-BASED AND LOCAL PARTNERS WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

USAID/Middle East

Activity Summary: The USAID/Middle East and USAID/IPI/LFT's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP) engaged the Incubator to identify and empower organizations serving religious and ethnic minorities working in COVID response (including second-order impacts). To achieve this, the Incubator conducted two activities in parallel. We conducted a streamlined partner landscape assessment to identify relevant organizations operating in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia; and we supported the USAID/Middle East's capacity strengthening workshop in Tunis.

Impact: The Incubator fielded a facilitator and developed capacity strengthening content to accompany content developed by the USAID/Middle East's other partners. The Incubator also expanded the scope of our engagement by taking responsibility for overall coordination of the event. Our team developed a tracker to help the USAID/Middle East record the commitments and progress of its partners. The Incubator supported travel for 20 participants and nine staff

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and consultants who staffed the event and responded to challenges as they arose. During the planning stage, we collaborated with USAID/Middle East and other stakeholders to identify an ideal number of participants and design engaging and tangibly beneficial workshop sessions.

To support these efforts, the Incubator recruited an experienced Arabic-speaking facilitator and developed presentations and sessions on topics including communications and branding, M&E, and collaboration, learning, and adaptation. We also held an introductory session on working with development partners and understanding the Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS) process. We hired a communications firm to set up and run a storytelling booth. Attendees could sit for an interview, which was turned into a template they could adapt into marketing resources for their organizations. Recognizing the importance of networking, the Incubator allocated time for attendees to connect and discuss their work. Attendees were also invited to join a WhatsApp group, which they continued to use after the workshop ended. By connecting these organizations as a cohort and introducing WorkwithUSAID.org, the Incubator enabled them to broaden their exposure to other partners and access tools to enhance their impact.

The Incubator's staffing support was critical to the event's success. We encountered several challenges, including concerns for participants' safety. By maintaining a robust team on site, including the Incubator's Project Director, we were able to respond in real-time, keeping USAID aware of challenges as they arose but avoiding any delay in response. As a result, we were able to reassure participants and other stakeholders that we were addressing their concerns and preventing challenges from escalating.

UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS/APPLICATIONS (UP/AS)

M/OAA

Vendor: Miew

Activity Summary: The Partnerships Incubator helped USAID streamline its UP/A process by making it more transparent for applicants while easing the review and selection burden for Agency staff. In collaboration with subcontractor Miew, the Incubator developed a pilot for a standardized, centralized platform for receiving and evaluating UP/As. Following preliminary research on the existing process, interviews with dozens of USAID staff and awardees following unsolicited proposals, the team outlined the challenges and requirements for the pilot. The platform was officially launched on WorkwithUSAID.gov on April 15, 2024. The M/OAA team then assumed ownership of the platform; it will continue to implement Incubator recommendations across the Agency.

Impact: This activity emerged following an issue paper and discussion between the Incubator and the M/OAA team. The effort addressed an identified problem: The Agency was required to accept and evaluate unsolicited submissions, but the email- or hard copy-based process was inconsistent and lacked transparency. Applications would get lost and the majority of applicants never received a response. The expectations and standards also varied by USAID Mission or office. When USAID did not respond to submitted applications and proposals, it created a reputational risk and barrier for new organizations seeking to become partners.

This activity simplified the process, automated it as much as possible, and standardized it across all USAID M/B/OU's. In collaboration with web development subcontractor Miew, the Incubator team designed a portal with feedback incorporated from those USAID staff tasked with evaluating unsolicited submissions as well as previously awarded unsolicited applicants. The new system allows for real-time tracking of unsolicited submissions, a significant improvement from what

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applicants said often felt like a black hole. Although the new platform is still being piloted, the impact is already evident and has great potential to result in the selection of innovative proposals and applications for funding. The step-by-step process of the new centralized, online portal improves USAID's efficiency, clarity, and accessibility in handling UP/As.

The M/OAA team is prioritizing the unsolicited submissions platform and continuing to make improvements as it is piloted. The team established a change management group within the Agency made up of stakeholders across different M/B/OU's. The M/OAA team aims to engage these champions through regular update and feedback sessions and acclimate all USAID users to the new platform and tracking system. Ultimately, the receipt, evaluation, and award selection will be more transparent, straightforward, and efficient. In the near future, USAID plans to incorporate AI applications to further increase efficiencies and reduce burdens for both applicants and staff. Ideally, this will result in the funding of more unsolicited submissions for innovative development solutions.

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OBJECTIVE 3: Help Partners Work with USAID

ADVANCING LOCAL PARTNER CAPACITY

BHA/Office of Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (ALAC)

Vendor: Boostlingo

Activity Summary: From April 2021 to May 2024, the Partnerships Incubator provided pre- and then post-award support to a local NGO in the LAC region that was implementing a countrywide water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) project. The Incubator provided capacity strengthening support in three technical areas: monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (MER); organizational policy development; and financial management. We also provided executive coaching to two of the organization's leaders in the final three months of our engagement. At the completion of the project, the partner will have delivered a [REDACTED] five-year humanitarian WASH program to vulnerable populations in LAC.

Impact: Following its original award in 2021, the local partner secured two additional cost modifications from BHA and extended its overall engagement with USAID to five years. This would not have been possible without intensive effort by NGO leadership and staff to learn about Agency systems and ensure they were compliant with USAID rules and regulations. Thanks to their internal efforts, and the support and guidance of BHA and the Incubator, the partner has become a strong implementer within the region. They have:

- delivered hygiene kits and emergency non-food items to communities and eldercare facilities;
- furnished communities with water storage and purification systems;
- installed water tanks and handwashing stations at schools and health centers;
- supplied communities and nursing homes with hygiene promotion kits;
- distributed dignity kits to women throughout the country;
- conducted workshops on infection prevention and control; and
- provided humanitarian coordination, information management, and evaluation to 40 other local NGOs.

The partner has begun to garner attention from LAC regional organizations seeking to emulate its capacity to implement humanitarian projects at a significant scale. When the project concludes in 2026, the organization will have reached more than 2 million people and hundreds of schools, health centers, eldercare facilities, and local communities outside of urban centers.

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KICKSTART TRAINING PROGRAM

IPI/LFT

Vendors:

- ECG
- Keylime
- TM Design
- Big Blue
- LearnWorlds
- Synthesia

Activity Summary: The Partnerships Incubator worked with IPI/LFT to develop a standardized post-award training program, “USAID KickStart: Training Program for New Assistance Awards,” to strengthen the kickoff and onboarding process for new local partners receiving assistance awards. USAID KickStart is a self-paced e-learning initiative designed to equip recently awarded partners with foundational skills and tools to navigate and implement their assistance awards. The training course consisted of 10 modules—some required depending on the individual’s role and some elective. The training program leveraged cutting-edge technology and AI to develop engaging, easily customizable courses tailored to local partners’ needs.

Impact: As the Agency’s leader in collaborating with new, local, and nontraditional partners, USAID/IPI encountered ongoing challenges in the onboarding process for those receiving assistance awards. The previous process involved an optional one-hour kickoff call between the partner and the Agreement Officer’s Representative (AOR). However, this approach proved inadequate in two ways. On the partner side, although many organizations possessed the technical expertise to execute USAID projects, they often lacked a deep understanding of USAID’s processes and the specifics of managing an award. The kickoff call typically provided only a general introduction and did not allow sufficient time to address detailed questions.

On the Agency side, limited staffing and bandwidth posed a significant challenge. Agreement Officers (AOs) and AORs are often stretched thin, making it inefficient to schedule multiple follow-up meetings to address frequently asked questions.

In response to these issues, the LFT Hub developed a solution: a standardized post-award training program delivered by USAID staff at the start of new awards and used as a reference throughout award implementation. The Incubator team proposed creating an online e-learning course that partners could complete at their own pace. This idea was inspired by CAPTALO!, a previous e-learning project by the Incubator that received positive feedback from both partners and the Mission in El Salvador.

This program provides partners with a foundational understanding of what is required to successfully manage and implement a USAID assistance award, utilizing innovative learning management systems and AI video generation tools to keep the material engaging and up to date. The software was accessible to edit, even for those without e-learning or web development expertise, allowing the Agency’s Professional Development Training Division to easily customize and update the content in house.

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The full impact of this project will not be known until the Incubator hands it off to the Agency, but it has significant potential to transform how USAID works with partners. For partners, it is an engaging resource they can return to at any point during implementation. For AOs and AORs, it reduces their management burden so they can dedicate live calls to answering questions specific to the partner's situation.

CURSO DE CAPACITACIÓN PARA EL AVANCE Y LA CREACIÓN DE ALIANZAS PARA ORGANIZACIONES LOCALES (CAPTALO!) – EL SALVADOR

USAID/El Salvador

Activity Summary: At the request of USAID/El Salvador, the Partnerships Incubator team developed CAPTALO!, an Spanish-language, e-learning course consisting of eight modules with weekly live online sessions and a concluding in-person event. The goal of CAPTALO! was to strengthen the capacities of local organizations, providing them with key tools to become better development partners and ultimately build a more robust ecosystem. Missions can use this course to lower barriers of entry and enhance opportunities for partnership with USAID and other donors.

Impact: CAPTALO! has had an overwhelmingly positive impact, achieving the core objectives in its pilot implementation: It enhanced organizations' capacity to engage with and secure funding from international development partners such as USAID and strengthened their ability to implement programs. The program's effectiveness is substantiated by compelling data and participant testimonials.

Key outcomes included 86 percent of participants rating the knowledge acquired as “highly effective” for soliciting and receiving funding, while 11 percent found it “effective.” All participants (100 percent) reported feeling more confident and empowered to apply for funding opportunities after completing the course. Additionally, 94 percent felt more capable of structuring and submitting concept notes, and 88 percent were applying the acquired knowledge in their organizations.

The project's impact was illustrated by stories such as that of Cecilia from Asociación Manos Amigas. The organization supports vulnerable families in San Luis Talpa through initiatives including economic opportunities for single mothers, a community clinic, and infrastructure projects. Using the knowledge from CAPTALO!, Manos Amigas secured funding from a private company for its entrepreneurial project.

The course's impact extended beyond individual participants. Ninety-one percent reported to have shared the information with others, broadening the program's reach. Examples included university professors incorporating modules into their curriculums and participants delivering training sessions within their organizations.

CAPTALO! exemplified a successful strategic partnership between the Incubator and USAID/El Salvador Mission. The course's structure—combining self-paced online modules with weekly live sessions—fostered continuous engagement and practical learning. This methodology, coupled with the collaborative efforts in course creation, has been pivotal in achieving the project's objectives. To sustain and expand CAPTALO!'s success, the course is available to the public on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusa.gov).

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING SUPPORT TO PARTNERS

BHA/Cameroon

Local Partners:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF)
- Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS)
- Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD)

Vendor: Humentum

Activity Summary: In Year 4, at the request of USAID/BHA/Cameroon, the Partnerships Incubator launched an organizational capacity assessment with three Cameroonian partners engaged through a prime partner, the World Food Programme (WFP). This activity provided the three local partners with roadmaps for self-guided performance improvements with an emphasis on effective prime-sub relationships. Building on the success in Year 4, USAID expanded the program in Year 5. The Incubator renewed the work with the three local organizations and provided support in the areas of financial management, talent management, M&E, and resource mobilization.

Impact: In Year 4, the Incubator developed roadmaps each partner could use to strengthen identified gaps and implement self-paced recommendations to prepare for partnership opportunities. The roadmaps empowered organizations once the Incubator no longer provided technical assistance support. In June 2023, LUKMEF used the roadmap to expand services within its online portal to support civil society-strengthening activities to enhance Cameroon's NGO ecosystem.

To support the three partners in Year 5, on-site consultants provided remote and in-person training. The Incubator also facilitated a remote training, "NGO Budget Monitoring Essentials" from Humentum, for staff from the three organizations. They reported significant improvements in institutional capacity and ability to operate as a result of the Incubator training. Staff reported the Humentum training provided useful tools for tracking project budgets, specifically mentioning their plans to use budget variance analysis. The three partners reported a variety of tangible impacts from the training provided directly by Incubator staff.

Additionally, all three organizations reported feeling better equipped to manage financial reporting to donors. They incorporated indirect cost recovery strategies into new business proposals and improved the quality of budget projections and budget monitoring. LUKMEF and SHUMAS adopted QuickBooks to replace less robust financial management software, with SHUMAS reporting the system was saving the financial management team 40 to 50 hours of labor per month. COMINSUD, meanwhile, hired a new staff member to support the finance team and developed a chart of accounts to better reflect the organization's circumstances. All partners also developed organization-wide theories of change while revising their internal monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) policies to incorporate best practices. The organizations also increased investment in monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), better defining roles and increasing the staff involved.

After the Incubator's training on resource mobilization, the organizations developed or updated resource mobilization plans and developed mobilization pipelines to track and value new business opportunities and efficiently allocate resources. SHUMAS and COMINSUD defined roles for team members in business development, and SHUMAS and LUKMEF submitted new business proposals, including one to USAID. The organizations reported being more

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proactive in their approach to resource mobilization. SHUMAS noted it had revamped the proposal development process, which increased proposal quality and improved the organization's ability to meet submission deadlines.

Finally, after participating in training for talent management, the partners began to update or develop succession plans to cope with staff turnover. They updated HR policies to incorporate best practices related to staff retention and performance management, including implementing 360-degree evaluation processes for performance improvement. With the Incubator's support, SHUMAS used the new process to develop a performance improvement plan for a struggling staff member and implemented new policies to improve staff retention. These policies include working with staff on career development plans and implementing an annual leave policy to improve morale and performance.

USAID/Dominican Republic (DR)

Local Partners:

- Dominican Network of Persons Living with AIDS (REDOVIH)
- Diversidad Dominicana
- Grupo de Apoyo Este Amor (GEA)
- Asociación Dominicana de Planificación Familiar (ADOPLAFAM)
- Universidad ISA

Vendors:

- Humentum
- Entrena

Activity Summary

Technical Assistance: USAID/DR engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance to build the organizational capacity of three local President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) partners (REDOVIH, Diversidad Dominicana, and GEA) and one local Youth, Education, and Security (YES) Office partner (ADOPLAFAM). Following an assessment of the four local organizations, the Incubator coordinated services from Humentum, an online training company that specializes in development practice; Entrena, a DR-based consulting firm that provides learning and development solutions; and specialists within the Incubator team.

The Incubator team developed and delivered three Spanish-language webinars to introduce local partners to best practices in working with the Agency. The sessions—delivered during three consecutive Thursdays from July 22 to August 5, 2021—were co-hosted by USAID/DR and Centro Nacional de Fomento y Promoción de las Asociaciones Sin Fines de Lucro (CASFL) within the Ministerio de Economía, Planificación, y Desarrollo. The sessions addressed how to work with USAID, write a successful proposal, and build competitive alliances.

Visit and Technical Assistance to Universidad ISA and USAID/DR: In 2019, USAID/DR selected Universidad ISA (ISA) as the winner of the cooperative agreement Higher Education Partnership-Dominican Republic (HEP-DR). USAID/DR requested support from the Incubator to coach HEP-DR staff on productive ways to work with the Agency and build team capacity to complete and report on program activities to Mission standards. The Mission also asked the

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Incubator to provide feedback and advice to HEP-DR during recruitment of its next Chief of Party (COP). The scope of work involved an examination of the university's documentation and hiring process and coordination and participation in all aspects of the hiring process, including serving on the candidate evaluation committee.

The support, delivered by Incubator Project Director Donna Vincent Roa, comprised three main components. First, the Incubator conducted a project review to identify strategic and operational gaps and staff needs. Recommendations involved improving the culture of leadership, behavioral dynamics, and communications to enhance trust and team performance. Second, the Incubator provided in-person coaching and training to address gaps and staff needs. Recommendations involved capitalizing on leadership qualities and building empowered relationships to generate positive influence at the workplace. Third, the Incubator provided feedback regarding COP candidates as well as input on the hiring of the COP.

Impact

Technical Assistance: The Incubator support to REDOVIIH, Diversidad Dominicana, GEA, and ADOPLAFAM enhanced their organizational skills in finance and budget, technical reporting, workforce and talent management, compliance, marketing and communications, and new business development. In addition, Project Director Donna Vincent Roa provided intensive, on-site support to GEA on social media and website development, supplemented with sustained assistance from an additional subject matter expert.

After each webinar, participants were asked to complete a three-question survey to determine the effectiveness of the sessions. Of those responding, 54 percent indicated their level of preparedness to work with USAID was “extremely” or “very” improved; 77 percent indicated their level of preparedness to develop a proposal was “extremely” or “very” improved; and 83 percent indicated that their level of preparedness to partner on a competitive proposal was “extremely” or “very” improved. While survey respondents indicated the webinars effectively shared useful information, they also reiterated a strong demand for information on how to work with USAID.

“The institution and its workers have learned better reporting techniques, financial management, and knowledge of rules and norms of USAID; everything related to funds not allowed; and how to report mandatory situations to the country manager.”

—PARTICIPANT FROM REDOVIIH

“The new [marketing and branding] policies and patterns implemented are very effective for a greater scope of our visibility outside and within the country.”

—PARTICIPANT FROM GEA

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Visit and Technical Assistance to Universidad ISA and USAID/DR: The Incubator's support enhanced cultural behavior, communication, and inspirational leadership that resulted in efficiencies, heightened performance, and improved staff morale. The support enabled the ISA team to recruit, identify, and select a new COP candidate in just three weeks. The technology assistance—with support to elevate vacancy communications and improve targeted interview questions—was critical to this accelerated timeline. The university now has a technology solution to complement its robust candidate selection processes. The support enhanced ISA's and USAID's confidence in the selected candidate.

As the new COP stated: “Donna and the Incubator had a crucial role in organizing some aspects of the project that were essential to its operations. Donna advised in the [COP] recruiting process and put together a process to guarantee adequate recruiting for the university as well as for the project. Donna advised on how to manage relationships with USAID and deal with bureaucratic processes and how to handle negotiations. They also helped build a happier space where there is room to train the team, relax, and learn. This is a space that helped set values and expected behaviors.” The Incubator's support also introduced modalities the university has integrated into its recruitment processes: “Donna's intervention gave them a robust recruitment protocol, which they further improved and tailored to be more selective. ... They used this protocol in January for another four recruitments. This process is now systematized across the university.”

BHA/Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Local Partners:

- Action pour le Bien-Être Communautaire (ABCom)
- Programme de Promotion des Soins de Santé Primaires (PPSSP)
- Rebuild Hope for Africa (RHA)
- Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO)
- Caritas Développement Goma (Caritas)
- Association Locale pour le Développement Integral (ALDI)

Vendor: Keylime

Activity Summary: USAID/BHA/DRC engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance and capacity-strengthening support to four local BHA partners in Year 4. The following year, USAID renewed the Incubator's technical assistance and capacity-strengthening services to the four partners and extended support to two new local BHA partners. The objectives were to strengthen partners' organizational capacity to successfully implement awards while preparing them for future growth and sustainability as well as reinforce their ability to use each other as a resource by deepening, formalizing, and expanding the local partner network.

Impact: Typically, the Incubator conducts a partner needs assessment followed by technical assistance to address identified areas. However, due to the relatively short timeframe of the partners' USAID/BHA/DRC awards, the Incubator delivered assistance in parallel with the needs assessment. This proactive approach supported partners throughout the award implementation, enhanced their capacity to manage USAID and other donor awards, and ensured successful programmatic outcomes. The Incubator team shared individual assessment results and held co-creation discussions with partners to better understand their capacity strengthening priorities and foster trust and rapport.

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Drawing on lessons from prior technical support sessions with USAID's local partners in the DRC, cohort-based sessions incorporated peer-to-peer learning and engagement where possible. The Incubator team designed individual complementary technical assistance components to strengthen each partner's strategic and operational capabilities. The team delivered tailored assistance through a combination of case studies, coaching, specific technical support, guided discussions, after-action feedback, and office visits. Both technical staff and executives were encouraged to attend service sessions, as the former implement changes on the ground and the latter advocate for policy changes with their boards. The Incubator delivered technical assistance and capacity strengthening in compliance, grant management, finance, and networking, enhancing partners' understanding of USAID/BHA procedures and enabling them to review and update their policies and service processes.

During service design and co-creation, partners expressed interest in launching a network for learning, sharing promising practices, technical support, and potential collaboration and advocacy. This led to the February 2024 establishment of the local DRC partner network, complete with terms of reference and outreach and communications materials to guide operations. The Incubator supported the six local partners in establishing a structure, terms and conditions for participation, agendas, and discussion topics for the initial months of this community of practice. The network will be managed by one of the six partners on a revolving, quarterly basis. This network, which has met at least four times in recent months with USAID participation, is gaining momentum as it seeks to expand and engage the broader local humanitarian community in the DRC.

USAID/DRC commended the Incubator's support, noting it significantly helped expand engagement with local partners, which has resulted in a more than threefold increase in funding and number of local awards.

USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) Regional Mission

Local Partners:

- Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat
- Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)
- Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH)
- Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC)
- University of the West Indies Caribbean Educational Research Centre (CERC)

Vendor: Keylime

Activity Summary: USAID/ESC Regional Mission contracted the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance to six Caribbean partners from April 25, 2022, through June 30, 2023. The Incubator conducted a two-step Partner Rapid Needs Assessment to identify each partner's performance gaps and prioritize a set of capabilities for capacity strengthening. The goal was to help organizations achieve greater administrative and technical capacity to implement and manage USAID awards and enhance their ability to be stronger development actors.

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Impact: The Incubator supported a cohort of six multilateral, regional institutions in the ESC region. These partners were uniquely positioned to support regional initiatives such as a common market, regional integration, disaster recovery and resilience, research, and policy development. They included major strategic partners for the USAID Mission, such as the CARICOM Secretariat and the OECS Commission.

After completing the needs assessments, the Incubator, Mission, and partners co-designed technical assistance packages to outline capacity-strengthening services in areas such as financial management, marketing, and USAID compliance. The Incubator then paired the organizations with teams of subject matter experts who provided technical assistance in three or four capacity areas during the course of about six months. In collaboration with the ESC Regional Mission, the Incubator strengthened the operational and technical capabilities of these stakeholders supporting integration across the Caribbean region.

Through surveys following the support engagement, the partners expressed Incubator services positively impacted their teams and helped them address their unique challenges related to USAID award management (in some cases) and organizational capacity (in all cases). In the years to come, these organizations will be better equipped to serve as strategic partners to USAID, manage donor funding, and become stronger and more efficient institutions.

[USAID/EI Salvador](#)

Local Partners:

- Asociación Azul Originario (AZO)
- Fundación Salvadoreña para la Salud y el Desarrollo Humano (FUSAL)
- Fundación Calleja
- Fundación Gloria de Kriete
- Fundación Rafael Meza Ayau
- Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima (FUNDASAL)
- Fundación Salvadoreña para la Promoción Social y el Desarrollo Económico (FUNSALPRODESE)
- Fundación Salvador del Mundo (FUSALMO)
- Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad El Salvador
- La Factoria Ciudadana
- Servicio Social Pasionista
- Fundación Sus Hijos

Activity Summary: USAID/EI Salvador engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance and capacity-strengthening support to 12 local partners in El Salvador. The Incubator's technical support targeted six critical business areas: finance and budget management, workforce and talent management, MEL, business model viability, new business development, and executive coaching. Leveraging a team of ten expert consultants across nine months, the Incubator delivered support through targeted training, workshops, and hands-on assistance to address practical challenges facing the organizations. Throughout, the Incubator team championed the value of knowledge sharing, mentorship, and networking among the 12.

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Impact: By creating a unified cohort of partners rather than managing individual organizations, the Incubator adopted a more sustainable approach to amplify future impact. This initiative's success spanned 12 organizations and six technical areas, showcasing its extensive reach. To foster collaboration, the Incubator hosted several cohort-based training sessions, including a two-day summit with participation from all partners. The impact of this service is already evident: We have observed numerous collaborations on new ideas, the formation of mentor-mentee relationships, and instances of partners becoming sub-awardees. Moreover, the capacity-strengthening support has significantly advanced the partners' technical capacities, supporting their abilities to grow and sustainably implement programs.

“Our experience with the Incubator has been extremely enriching. The Incubator has made me feel enormously confident in being able to speak and be honest. To develop a theory of change or to improve internal institutional communication, the level of trust is essential; otherwise there will be no improvements, because we will not be honest with ourselves. The national context is one of great distrust. I want to emphasize this because having achieved the confidence to speak is truly admirable and is a testimony to the quality of the [Incubator] personnel with whom we have been working.”

—CLAUDIA BLANCO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FUNDASAL

USAID/Honduras

Local Partners:

- Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Honduras (ASONOG)
- Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (FOSDEH)

Vendor: Keylime

Activity Summary: USAID/Honduras engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance to build the organizational capacity of two local partners in Honduras: FOSDEH and ASONOG. The objective was to help them achieve greater administrative and technical capacity to implement programs while preparing for future growth and sustainability.

Impact: In collaboration with USAID/Honduras, the Incubator developed a work plan to deliver technical support to the two local partners. Between November and December 2023, the Incubator conducted a collaboration-style survey and a Partner Rapid Needs Assessment, which included a self-assessment by each organization. This was followed by comprehensive interviews to delve deeper into the organizations' initial responses. Subsequently, the Incubator analyzed collected data, identified performance gaps among partners, and proposed a prioritized set of capabilities for capacity enhancement to USAID/Honduras.

To address FOSDEH's and ASONOG's priority needs, the Incubator engaged four consultants to provide technical services in person and remotely in workforce and talent management, finance and budget management, business viability, and marketing and communications.

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After the interventions, the Incubator team reviewed FOSDEH's HR activities and provided insights, recommendations, and tools that have enhanced the organization's management system. The training implemented a new, progressive discipline policy organization-wide, conducting extensive sessions to educate all employees on its applications and the situations in which it should be applied. In finance and budget management, ASONOG and FOSDEH gained a clear understanding of allowability of cost requirements, improved identification of direct and indirect costs and the budgeting process, enhanced capacity to manage budgets, and reviewed the requirements and regulations governing the NICRA.

Through the technical assistance the Incubator provided, ASONOG was able to enhance business model viability, co-created strategic growth objectives, and identified technical areas with limited funding. Our hands-on training strengthened the organization's business development efforts, positioning it on a pathway aligned with long-term business development recommendations. The increased and ongoing sustainability and stability of ASONOG allowed for improved revenue through expanded services and hinges on solidifying internal roles and delegation of responsibilities to execute the business development strategy. ASONOG also developed foundational understanding and tools for storytelling and content marketing, building from the basics to the significance and structure of compelling narratives and inbound marketing strategies. As a result, the organization claimed an enhanced ability to engage audiences by focusing on writing techniques, audience understanding, and content optimization for various platforms and formats.

[BHA/Iraq](#)

Local Partners:

- Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development
- Organization for Reconstruction, Development, and Humanitarian Aid (RUSAZ)
- Hariwan Organization for Development of Human Rights

Vendors:

- ECG
- Keylime

Activity Summary: USAID/BHA/Iraq engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance to build the organizational capacity of three local partners in northern Iraq. The Incubator provided this support in the context of a broader transition from humanitarian aid to more targeted development activities, following a significant reduction in humanitarian assistance needs in the country. Technical assistance was critical in facilitating this transition to support long-term sustainability and implementation of local partners' development initiatives.

Impact: By integrating a business perspective with an accelerator approach to drive growth, the Incubator assessed partners' needs, developed a customized training program validated by the partners, and delivered technical assistance services in two phases (Year 4 and Year 5). As we developed customized training, we co-created a plan with USAID/BHA/Iraq and the three partners to establish solid processes and enable them to pursue new opportunities while optimizing their operational framework. As a result of Incubator support, the partners enhanced existing organizational processes and learned new methodologies for conducting business development and partnership activities—strengthening business models with a sustainable component by exploring new funding opportunities and creating new partnerships. As part of the initial phase, we provided finance and budget management training. We also recommended the organizations implement the cloud-based system QuickBooks. All three organizations did so, which helped enrich their financial capacities.

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We provided marketing and communications training to create awareness and attract new donors. Hariwan expressed interest in partnership training, so our team provided best practices on how to create a balanced partner pipeline and compelling messages to pursue new alliances and drive growth. Hariwan immediately applied the knowledge and tools acquired and secured additional funding from a Dutch organization to implement a women's empowerment project supporting the UN's Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Anbar, Iraq.

For the second phase, USAID/BHA/Iraq extended the Incubator's contract to continue providing technical services to the same three partners. Following a co-creation process, we developed a comprehensive training program to strengthen their M&E capacities and workforce management. The Incubator delivered best practices to establish monitoring activities and provided an M&E framework partners could establish within their organizations. We also implemented a business development help desk to continue to assist partners with questions in this area as they leveraged tools and resources acquired during the first year. This project was successful in enabling these three organizations to grow and inspire more partners.

BHA/Malawi

Local Partners:

- Find Your Feet (FYF)
- The Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS)
- Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)

Activity Summary: USAID/BHA/Malawi engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide two phases of technical assistance to enhance partners' administrative and management capacities to apply for, secure, and manage donor awards. The Incubator provided the first phase of support January through June 2023 and a second round of capacity building November 2023 through April 2024 to the three local organizations.

Impact: During the first quarter of 2024, the Incubator team provided the Malawian organizations comprehensive support in compliance, communications, new business development, and MEL. Support was delivered through a blend of remote and in-person sessions. The Incubator facilitated a three-part proposal writing workshop with consultants in Malawi directly assisting the partners with questions during the sessions and homework assignments between sessions. The Incubator identified performance gaps, analyzed progress, and recommended how each partner reach critical milestones. This multifaceted support increased the Malawian organizations' understanding of USAID/BHA opportunities, regulations, and procedures and enhanced their NUPAS readiness assessments.

As a direct result of new business development coaching, the partners developed capacity statements, concept notes, and proposals. FYF was asked by BHA/Malawi to submit a noncompetitive proposal for [REDACTED] and all three responded to the USAID call for unsolicited solutions for locally led development.

Compliance coaching saw the MRCS make substantial strides to improve procurement policies and include prequalification of suppliers and service-level agreements for transporters. Following Incubator training, the organization conducted a review that led it to restructure several positions and elevate the heads of the finance, procurement, and HR to the management team. MRCS built a recruitment pool of pre-assessed staff for emergency response and focused on retention and succession planning. Its new organogram separated those implementing from those evaluating programs, enhancing accountability and effectiveness. The organization also overhauled training and development policies, developed an induction curriculum, and, with funding from the Swiss Red Cross, improved compliance processes based on Incubator recommendations.

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The Incubator's communication training empowered all three organizations to review how they present themselves and tell success stories. They strengthened visibility strategies, branding and marketing guidelines, digital storytelling, and social media content. One of the highlights of the second phase was a media engagement event in late March 2024. The event brought media visibility to the tremendous work of FYF, MRCS, and CARD and led to partnerships between media houses and the organizations to amplify their humanitarian and development efforts.

The Incubator strengthened the skills and confidence of the three local partners to conduct assessments and write proposals, monitor and report progress, tactically approach consortium development, and design and deliver well-defined interventions that address urgent community needs.

BHA/Zimbabwe

Local Partners:

- Mwenezi Development Training Centre (MDTC)
- Nutrition Action Zimbabwe (NAZ)
- Bulawayo Projects Centre (BPC)
- Linkages for the Economic Advancement of the Disadvantaged (LEAD)
- Musasa
- Dabane Trust

Vendor: ECG

Activity Summary: USAID/BHA/Zimbabwe engaged the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance to build the organizational capacity of seven local organizations across two years. Between 2022 and 2023, the Incubator provided technical assistance to one organization (MDTC) and strategic comprehensive roadmap documents to three organizations (NAZ, BPC, and LEAD) with guidance to implement our capacity-strengthening recommendations on their own. From 2023 to 2024, the Incubator provided technical assistance to two organizations: Musasa and Dabane Trust.

Impact: In the first phase, the Incubator's technical assistance to MDTC culminated in an organizational capacity-strengthening workshop in Harare, Zimbabwe, with MDTC. Twelve staff from the organization attended the workshop, which focused on providing best practices on business model viability, business development, partnerships, and finance. The Incubator facilitated a learner-led approach to help MDTC identify organizational strengths to harness and prioritize critical actions to take during the next year. In the end, the capacity-strengthening project resulted in enhanced business model development, increased donor and client engagement, improved financial management systems, elevated organizational vision, and improved staff confidence. As the first local organization in Zimbabwe to directly receive BHA funding, MDTC was able to serve as a model and mentor for other organizations. During the workshop, the Incubator piloted the "Voices of Local Partners" video series to highlight MDTC's work with USAID and the Partnerships Incubator.

During the second phase, the Incubator provided highly impactful capacity strengthening to Musasa and Dabane Trust. The Incubator delivered tailored technical assistance to each organization individually, because we found that although both organizations aim to build a sustainable nonprofit business and generate diverse, resilient revenue streams, they had unique capacity gaps.

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Throughout the training and coaching, we prioritized providing templates, tools, and resources to leave with the partners for sustained growth and success. These included a business development toolkit with worksheets, scoring systems, and Excel formats, a HR long-term roadmap, and a partnership tracker. At the end of the support, Musasa had used the skills they developed to submit three new proposals. Musasa had heard back from one of them so far, and the proposal was successful. Using knowledge gleaned from the Incubator support, Musasa also secured a partnership with a farm in Zimbabwe to provide gender-related training to staff members. Overall, both phases of this technical assistance resulted in tangible results for partners and prepared them to make even more meaningful impacts in their communities and beyond.

PILOT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

IPI/LFT

Local Partners:

- AgriCentric Ventures (Ghana)
- MorseCode Medical (United States)

Activity Summary: The Incubator worked with two organizations—Ghana-based AgriCentric Ventures and U.S.-based MorseCode Medical—selected to receive a package of support for participating in the December 2019 survey of WorkwithUSAID website users. Occurring early in the Incubator’s existence and before Missions leveraged the buy-in mechanism to mobilize technical assistance for partners, this activity enabled the Incubator to pilot partner support services and delivery as well as demonstrate its capabilities and potential for impact to USAID. With these two partners, the Incubator tested its approach for diagnosing partner performance gaps and identifying value-add opportunities as well as its methodology for designing a program of support and mobilizing subject matter experts and vendors to deliver it.

Impact: AgriCentric Ventures, a for-profit company based in Ghana that produces biofertilizer and dietary supplements for livestock and fish, had a mission to strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers to diversify and improve revenue streams. The Incubator provided a comprehensive program of advisory services to prepare the company for effective partnership with USAID and strengthen its business model and organizational effectiveness.

The Incubator’s support helped AgriCentric strengthen its branding, marketing, and online presence; clarify its competitor landscape and market positioning; and develop a near-term strategy to build solid evidence of past performance, which is crucial for partnering with the Agency and other donor agencies, commercial partners, and investors.

Through the Incubator’s support, AgriCentric secured SAM and DUNS registration and prepared a new corporate capabilities statement to use for future USAID funding opportunities. It established partnerships with three government agencies and local village leaders to implement the company’s AgriSistas/AgriYouth Project.

“The Incubator’s support [enabled us] to revise and roll out activities that cut across our marketing and communications, our products and services, and our entire business management approach. We are inspired!”

—GIDEON NYAMESEN, AGRICENTRIC VENTURES FOUNDER AND CEO

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MorseCode Medical works to commercialize medical devices designed for global health environments and with a focus on low-resource settings. The Incubator provided strategic guidance for identifying and approaching potential prime contracting partners and raising the organization's professional profile with USAID-relevant audiences. Through Incubator support, the company gained a better understanding of the Agency's funding process and how to access useful resources within the large volume of publicly available information.

PROJECT TURNAROUND – KENYA

USAID/Kenya and East Africa (KEA)

Local Partner:

- Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST)

Activity Summary: The USAID Boresha Jamii (UBJ) project, awarded to JOOUST in 2021, was a new, local partnership that demonstrated strong technical implementation and impact but experienced a variety of administrative and management challenges. To help the partner get back on track, USAID/KEA asked the Partnerships Incubator to support JOOUST following a tumultuous 18-plus months of staff changes, management tensions, descoping, and award restructuring. A team of six Incubator staff and consultants traveled to Kisumu and Bondo in January 2023 to assess the relational and technical challenges facing the project and provide responsive on-site technical assistance.

Impact: The Partnerships Incubator team developed a set of recommendations and took a number of actions spanning six identified weaknesses: processes and procedures, communication, roles and responsibilities, leadership, project morale, and training. With the support of the Incubator team and the attention of USAID/KEA, the partner was positioned to successfully implement the remaining activities.

Key actions and impacts included the following.

- The award was modified to an Fixed Amount Award (FAA) structure. The collaborative co-creation process for developing these milestones ensured they were achievable and the partner was comfortable with expectations.
- The Incubator team and partner updated three foundational manuals—HR, finance, and procurement—which JOOUST then adopted. Incubator consultants helped draft and accelerate the approval process for these manuals.
- An Incubator executive coach worked with project leadership to support needs around team morale and communication. Focusing on leadership “soft skills” that were often neglected in times of stress and transition, this effort benefitted the project team’s mindset and helped project leadership feel supported during a time of upheaval and uncertainty.
- The Incubator conducted a RACI—or responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed—exercise with project and university leadership to clarify roles and responsibilities and provided RACI training at the staff level. These foundational issues related to ownership and accountability were at the heart of much of the day-to-day unease at the project level; taking action on them sends a message of confidence as well as a signal that concerns have been heard and addressed.

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PRE- AND POST-AWARD SUPPORT TO TWO NEW, LOCAL USAID/MOROCCO AND USAID/TUNISIA PARTNERS

USAID/Middle East

Local Partners:

- Association Mimouna (Morocco)
- Attalaki (Tunisia)

Activity Summary: USAID/Middle East was interested in supporting two Missions (USAID/Morocco and USAID/Tunisia) in funding new, local partners, Association Mimouna and Attalaki. Both partners needed pre- and post-award support in several technical areas to secure and then implement their awards.

Impact: Rabat-based Mimouna and New York, U.S.-based American Sephardi Federation (ASF) co-created Rebuilding Our Homes and submitted a concept note under NPI. The project sought to train residents of Morocco's mellahs, or Jewish quarters, to share the history of their neighborhoods as tour guides and through the sale of Judaica-focused handicrafts, giving residents an economic lifeline while preserving an important dimension of Morocco's diverse past. Mimouna aimed to serve as subawardee with ASF as the prime partner.

The Partnerships Incubator provided pre-award assistance to Mimouna in finalizing its SAM.gov registration. Through multiple WhatsApp messages, emails, and video calls during the course of three months, the Incubator worked alongside staff to walk them through the registration process and input their information into the various systems. The Incubator provided post-award support to Mimouna in MEL and gender and social inclusion plans. The Incubator provided additional assistance on budget elements to support the organization's proposal. This support helped Mimouna overcome early hurdles as they became a new USAID partner.

Attalaki was founded in 2016 by young Tunisians from different religious minorities. Today, it is considered a key force in Tunisia, working on freedom of religion and playing a valuable role as defender of the rights of religious minorities. USAID/Tunisia, seeking to make its first direct grant to a Tunisian organization, engaged the Incubator to provide pre-award support to Attalaki in drafting its MEL plan during co-design with USAID. We also provided branding and marking guidance to Attalaki for its project, Let's Talk About Religious Freedom. The goal of the activity was to support tolerance and acceptance by promoting a culture of differences. The activity promoted religious diversity through interfaith dialogues, started a social media campaign to raise awareness of religious freedom, and advocated for reforms that can improve freedom of religion in Tunisia.

Both partners went on to successfully implement their awards.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 3

SUPPORTING USAID’S YEAR OF ACTION TO ADDRESS COVID-19 WITH FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

USAID/Burkina Faso

Activity Summary: In August 2022, USAID’s FBNP collaborated with the Partnerships Incubator to support local community engagement on COVID-19 vaccinations. This initiative involved a four-day roundtable in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to enhance the capacity of CSOs in vaccination campaigns. The roundtable featured sessions on pandemic understanding, response analysis, and planning, which led to the creation of replicable materials for future use. Despite security challenges, the project fostered community engagement and preparedness for future health crises.

Impact: Burkina Faso faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including political instability, weak government institutions, and a resource-constrained health care sector. The country’s top-down public outreach strategy for the COVID vaccine was ineffective, with less than 20 percent of the population vaccinated. The Incubator worked with USAID/Burkina Faso to design and implement a four-day COVID-19 response roundtable in Ouagadougou, intended to be a replicable model for other regions in the country.

The roundtable, “Table ronde sur la réponse à la COVID-19 au Burkina Faso,” took place June 13–16, 2023. The Incubator and USAID/Burkina Faso identified relevant resources and recruited seven consultants to help develop and deliver content. The roundtable engaged the participation of 40 CSO representatives. These representatives expressed appreciation for the dedicated time and space to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and preparedness in the context of Burkina Faso. As a result of the discussions, the leaders of participating CSOs are committed to contributing to the preparation and response to potential health crises, with a clear roadmap ahead. They pledged to continue supporting government initiatives in the health care sector, engage in risk prevention, enhance coordination among their organizations for community response to health crises, and promote good governance and transparency in resource management for crisis interventions.

Overwhelmingly positive feedback included 96 percent of participants responding they were very satisfied or satisfied with the event, 100 percent responding the roundtable exceeded or met their expectations, and 92 percent saying it would enable their organization to better respond to future pandemics. One participant shared: “The quality of the speakers and interventions was top-notch. I learned so much from each session.” Another participant commented, “The open dialogue and exchange of ideas were truly beneficial.”

“It’s incredibly enriching to hear from others in the field; we don’t usually have the opportunity to sit together and reflect.”

—CSO REPRESENTATIVE

The roundtable also facilitated the creation of materials that can be replicated and used in other regions of Burkina Faso and by other CSO leaders to better prepare for future pandemics. CSO leaders and USAID/Burkina Faso have these materials on file, including a report in French that can serve as a reference for replicating the event in other regions. Former government officials attended and shared their successes, failures, and lessons learned. Attendees reported that, in light of Burkina Faso’s ongoing conflict and political instability, the opportunity to meet in this fashion was appreciated.

ANNEX: OBJECTIVE 3

USAID/Peru

Local Partners:

- Center for Information and Education for the Prevention of Drug Abuse (CEDRO)
- Certeza
- Central de Café y Cacao

Activity Summary: In 2020, Peru had one of the most severe COVID-19 outbreaks worldwide and one of the highest death tolls. USAID/Peru embraced localization, partnering with local organizations and identifying potential partners to address the pandemic and its second-order impacts. These included CEDRO, a local capacity strengthening organization; Certeza, a smaller organization identified as a high-potential partner; and Central de Café y Cacao, a cooperative organization representing 11 cooperatives and 9,000 coffee and cocoa producers and families that is currently implementing a \$13,432,935 cooperative agreement (██████████ matching funds from USAID). The Agency asked the Partnerships Incubator to provide technical assistance and capacity strengthening support to all three partners and create a platform for future local capacity development. In March and April 2023, the Incubator conducted an accelerated Partner Rapid Needs Assessment with each organization that included a self-assessment followed by in-depth interviews to further explore initial responses. The Incubator analyzed the data collected, identified partner performance gaps, and recommended a bespoke set of interventions for each organization.

Impact: Through its intensive work with our consultants, CEDRO decided to create a for-profit component and register as a for-profit entity in Peru and the United States. The new company offers consulting services internationally (technical assistance approaches and methodologies favored by donors) and supports the commercialization of products from the Peruvian Amazon. Also, the company team will analyze existing data owned by CEDRO and explore business models for data commercialization in the health sector. The goal is for the company to generate revenue for CEDRO as a whole, enabling the parent organization to become more financially sustainable.

The Incubator's work with Certeza was also impactful, despite a delay in signing the award and delivering the technical assistance. As the Mission prepared to formalize Certeza's award in August 2023, our financial and HR consultants collaborated on a financial action plan tailored for start-up activities, facilitated Certeza's introduction to a third-party financial services provider, developed an HR manual, and outlined job descriptions for the project team. This comprehensive approach ensured Certeza was well-equipped to meet the demands of the project.

Central Café y Cacao struggled to comply with its USAID award, due in part to the team's inability to understand the English-language agreement from the Agency. The Incubator hired a consultant to translate Central's agreement to Spanish and provided an expert in USAID finance and budget to walk the team through it. The Incubator recommended an optimization assessment and facilitated the approval for a Deputy Chief of Party position to manage compliance. Additionally, the Incubator conducted HR and financial audits to align the organization's systems with USAID standards. These efforts included developing a recruitment policy, compliance training, and advocating to USAID the importance of a post-award orientation to ensure Central Café y Cacao could manage its programs and meet reporting demands.

CONTACT:

