

## **GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVED BUREAU FOR FOOD SECURITY AND MISSION COORDINATION ON CENTRALLY-FUNDED AND CENTRALLY-MANAGED MECHANISMS**

### **BACKGROUND**

In early 2013, the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) conducted a series of Feed the Future (FTF) Mission Portfolio Reviews. These reviews provided an opportunity to take stock of country progress in implementing FTF multi-year strategies. Among the many findings from the process, Missions highlighted the need for improved collaboration between BFS and Missions in designing and implementing BFS centrally-funded and centrally-managed activities.<sup>1</sup> Missions noted that they are often insufficiently informed of BFS-led activities in-country. Improved coordination was viewed as critical to advancing key FTF priorities, including private sector engagement, scaling-up agricultural technologies, and policy implementation.

The objective of these guidelines is to provide a framework to improve BFS-Mission cooperation for the design and implementation of centrally-funded and centrally-managed BFS mechanisms implemented at the country-level and for which the activity AOR/COR is Washington-based. These guidelines take account of the fact that some centrally-managed and centrally-funded activities are conducted in countries on a regular and intensive basis, while other activities only occasionally “touch down” in countries, with minimal impact to Missions and ongoing programs. Application of these guidelines will be more robust where BFS activities are more regular and intensive, such as in activities which directly support farmers or local institutions. “Lighter touch” activities require little to no Mission participation, thus necessitating less stringent application of these guidelines. Examples include field trials, most conferences, etc.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF OPERATING UNITS**

#### **1. Responsibilities of the Bureau for Food Security**

##### Design stage:

- Undertake a review to determine the efficacy of undertaking a centrally-managed and/or centrally-funded activity versus the Mission incorporating the activity/funding into a broader Mission FTF project appraisal document (PAD).
- For activities that will be conducted on a regular and intensive basis at the country-level, invite one or two appropriate Mission staff to review and comment on the project concept paper and on the PAD of a centrally-funded project.
- Design and implement centrally-funded projects under a centrally-funded PAD that align with Mission strategies (including CDCS), and portfolio and performance monitoring plans.
- For activities that will be conducted on a regular and intensive basis at the country-level, invite one or two appropriate Mission staff to review and comment on draft scopes of work, terms of reference, and requests for proposals/applications for new centrally-funded mechanisms and any task orders under centrally-funded mechanisms that are proposed to operate in that Mission.

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<sup>1</sup> “Centrally-funded” activities are wholly funded and managed by BFS. “Centrally-managed” activities receive funding from BFS and buy-in funding from Missions. For both centrally-funded and centrally-managed activities, the activity AOR/COR is based in BFS, while Mission staff may act as Activity Managers for those activities that are partially Mission-funded.

- For activities that will be conducted on a regular and intensive basis at the country-level, invite one or two appropriate Mission representatives to participate in a technical review panel for centrally-funded awards. For projects with regular and intensive activities in a country, there should be Mission concurrence on proposed awards. Identify a point of contact (POC)/Activity Manager in the Mission with whom the AOR/COR can begin contact [also notifying the relevant BFS Country Support Officer (CSO)].

#### Implementation:

- Any approved centrally-funded mechanism and related activities should be formally communicated by email or other written communication by the responsible BFS AOR/COR to the designated Mission POC/Activity Manager, FTF Team Lead, and relevant Office Director to ensure Mission staff is adequately notified of the mechanism. The BFS AOR/COR should ensure that the message has been received.
- BFS will ask for Mission concurrence in writing (email is sufficient) for centrally funded and managed activities with significant operational, policy or other impact, and to advise Missions of specific support that may be required.
- Invite appropriate Mission staff to provide input on the country work plan implemented by the contractor/grantee for the centrally-funded mechanism. Consider how matching funds might extend the scope of the Mission-based interventions under this mechanism.

#### Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:

- Provide opportunities for Mission staff to offer input on Performance Management Plans (PMPs) and determine reporting pathways and accountability for centrally-managed mechanisms in which BFS anticipates considerable Mission buy-in. Share copies of final PMPs with the relevant Missions.
- Encourage Missions to communicate activity successes and opportunities for improvement even if reporting is accountable to BFS. [For both centrally-funded and centrally-managed activities, Missions can communicate activity success by providing or uploading narratives and success stories to the Feed the Future Monitoring System (FTFMS).]
- Reporting processes differ between centrally-funded and centrally-managed mechanisms. For centrally-funded activities that are wholly funded and managed by BFS, all activity results are attributed to BFS. For centrally-managed activities, FTFMS guidance should be followed.<sup>2</sup> The BFS activity manager for centrally-managed activities mechanisms that are wholly or partially Mission-funded should provide the reporting required by the Mission for its PAD's M&E Plan.
- Provide copies of all activity performance reports (quarterly, annual, etc.), including results tables and performance narratives from annual FTFMS reporting.
- During BFS country portfolio reviews, BFS will provide a breakdown of mechanism financials and indicators by country for centrally-managed (not centrally-funded) mechanisms to share with all countries. BFS will engage Mission POCs/activity managers in discussions on performance monitoring to avoid potential double counting, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Per October 2013 FTFMS Guidance: **Buy-ins to central/BFS-managed mechanisms:** Missions should coordinate with BFS to report buy-ins to Washington-managed mechanisms. Activity results are attributed to operating units proportional to funding. Each buy-in should be reported separately in FTFMS (a buy-in entry can be created in FTFMS if it did not appear in the Operational Plan). The BFS activity manager is responsible for ensuring Missions receive reporting data for centrally-managed activities. In most cases data will be entered by the IP for all buy-in entries in the FTFMS at the same time data are entered for the centrally-funded FTFMS entry.

### Communication:

- BFS AOR/CORs should establish regular communication with Missions through the Mission Activity Manager/POCs. Each centrally-funded mechanism should provide regular country-specific activity updates to the Mission (in accordance with the reporting requirements of the implementing partner agreement) and to the appropriate BFS CSO, including updates on results and impacts. The CSO is responsible for keeping the appropriate regional bureau informed.
- Any BFS AOR/COR or headquarters' staff travel related to the centrally-funded activity should be coordinated with the Mission Activity Manager/POC well in advance of the visit and Mission participation should be invited. If the Mission is unable to participate, offer timely pre- and/or post- country briefs/debriefs.
- When traveling, BFS AOR/CORs (or implementing partner) should inform the relevant BFS CSO of travel to a country or Mission. This allows CSOs to informally track the TDY load on Missions, and enables a CSO to address related questions from Missions.
- Participate periodically in regional teleconferences with Missions to provide updates on centrally-funded activity implementation, especially key milestones. As requested by Missions, communicate with government, donors, CSOs and private sector colleagues.
- Allow opportunities for Missions to provide input to communications on program progress, successes, and need for improvement, such as case studies and annual reviews.
- Provide Missions with access to award documents and modifications; notify Mission POC/activity manager of changes in BFS AOR/COR assignments.
- Develop and share a database of centrally-funded activities. Assign a point person for maintaining the list and sharing it semi-annually with the field.
- BFS AOR/CORs will inform and seek input from Mission Environmental Officers (MEOs) on environmental requirements and issues. A copy of all Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)-related documentation should be shared with the Missions.
- Be sensitive to Mission time constraints, including providing Missions with sufficient time to respond to requests, whenever possible. Suggested timing for requests/approvals: *International travel* - 10 days; *Input on documents* - 2 weeks; *Requests for information* - 2 weeks; *Site visits* - 6 weeks.

## **2. Responsibilities of Field Missions**

### Design stage:

- Provide timely input on proposed BFS project-level concept papers, PADs, draft scopes of work for procurements, terms of reference, and/or requests for proposals/applications for centrally-funded mechanisms, suggesting options for how these activities can better integrate with or at least complement field PADs. If there is no feedback, the Mission will communicate this.

### Implementation:

- As Mission Activity Manager/POC, provide input on work plans of centrally-funded activities to be implemented in the partner country.
- Meet with implementing partners when they visit the country, as time permits, to learn about ongoing activities, upcoming plans, become informed about any pitfalls or lessons learned that might require an adaptive response or have an impact on other parts of the Mission's portfolio, and provide feedback to strengthen the activities.
- Invite centrally-funded implementing partners to participate in Agriculture Partner meetings and related events, especially to present any learning that others might benefit from, as appropriate.

#### Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:

- Engage BFS AOR/COR in discussion on performance monitoring to provide language for performance narratives. Inform BFS about Learning Events that the centrally-funded or centrally-managed partners might prefer or need to participate in.
- For centrally-managed activities, discuss monitoring processes and responsibilities to ensure comprehensive reporting and avoid potential double-counting.

#### Communication:

- Advise BFS AOR/CORs and/or BFS Office Directors of concerns with any aspects of implementation and/or coordination of centrally-funded activities.
- Provide BFS AOR/COR with notice of and feedback on site visits, success stories, opportunities for improvement, or other information which has also been provided to Mission staff.

#### Local Partner Relationships:

- Provide introductions, contacts, and communications with potential and existing local partners to advance USAID Forward objectives.
- Serve as POC for these partner organization relationships. Participate in meetings between BFS implementers and partner organizations as feasible in order to ensure the coordination of actions and to deepen local relationships with Mission staff.
- Make suggestions and offer facilitation support for successful field visits.

### **3. Centrally-Funded Implementing Partners**

#### Implementation:

- Design and implement activities that align with Mission strategies (including CDCS), portfolio and performance monitoring plans, and Mission-based Learning Events, where possible.
- In accordance with grant and/or contract provisions, advise BFS AOR/COR and seek Mission concurrence, as required and preferably at least 10 days in advance of country travel. BFS AOR/COR should then inform the relevant BFS CSO concerning the travel. This allows CSOs to informally track the TDY load on Missions, and enables a CSO to address related questions from Missions and keep regional bureaus informed.
- Provide timely pre- and/or post- country TDY briefs/debriefs. These do not need to be in person; but can be done via a 10-15 minute courtesy phone call, at the discretion of the Mission.
- Seek guidance from Activity Manager on whom to meet; in particular, get a briefing from the Mission about any special issues or sensitivities prior to meeting with senior partner government or regional officials on policy or related matters.
- Provide a list of local partners/sub-grantees with whom you are working to BFS and Missions in the countries where centrally-funded activities are carried out. Introduce relevant Mission staff to local partners/sub-grantees as appropriate.
- Become familiar with Mission FTF Multi-Year Strategy (MYS), CDCS, project and program documents, and documents recommended by relevant USAID personnel.
- Seek opportunities to establish guidelines and other working agreements with Mission implementing partners.
- Comply with Agency Environmental Regulations and inform the BFS AOR/COR, Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO), and local Mission staff (Activity Manager/POC and MEO) about environmental monitoring and mitigation issues. Share copies of Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) with Mission.

Communication:

- Institute a process for systematic and continual communication with the Mission points of contact and implementing partners.
- As requested by Missions, communicate with government, donors, Civil Society Organizations, or private sector colleagues about program objectives and progress.
- Present interim results periodically and as requested. Reach out to Mission Program Officer and relevant Mission technical office staff to ensure that you participate as needed in Mission-wide and PAD-specific learning events to share and benefit from dialogue on lessons learned and to enhance portfolio alignment and integration.