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# USAID Ukraine Economic Resilience Activity

## Mid-Term Performance Evaluation Report



October 2021

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# USAID/UKRAINE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE ACTIVITY

## MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared under Contract No. AID-72014118C00005, USAID/Ukraine Analytical Services in Support of the Economic Resilience Activity

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## EVALUATION ABSTRACT

This report, produced by SSG Advisors (d/b/a Resonance) presents findings from the midterm performance evaluation of the USAID/Ukraine Economic Resilience Activity (ERA) implemented by DAI Global LLC. The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, and unintended effects of ERA's implementation to date through five specific evaluation questions. It documents key results achieved to date, examines opportunities for women and vulnerable groups as a result of ERA interventions, assesses ERA's coordination with partners to achieve results and looks at how capacity of local actors is being built to advance USAID objectives after ERA ends.

The evaluation found that ERA appears on track to achieve expected results in most areas — even in the midst of a global pandemic. ERA staff embrace adaptive management to address challenges and areas of underperformance. ERA has demonstrated significant results through individual consultations and peer-to-peer learning, material and curriculum support to educational institutions, multi-phased “stacked” technical assistance to target businesses, and support for city and regional economic strategy development. ERA's access to finance pilots show promising results and can be further strengthened. ERA assistance has reached women and vulnerable groups, but those groups could be further integrated into growth sector work, and they face challenges that hinder their outcomes. Finally, ERA's work with education partners engaging in dual education and city councils that have gained capacity in participatory planning and constituent relations are examples of promising partnerships and sustainable approaches.

The evaluation provides recommendations for further bolstering ERA's results and promoting sustainability in its remaining years of implementation.

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## ACRONYMS

AMELP	Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERA	Economic Resilience Activity
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOU	Government of Ukraine
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
LOC	Line of Contact
MSC	Most Significant Change
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OH	Outcome Harvesting
SFHH	Single Female-Headed Household
SOW	Statement of Work
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
ULA	Ukrainian Leadership Academy
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UUCU	United Ukrainian Credit Union
VET	Vocational Educational and Training
VP	Vulnerable Population
WNISEF	Western NIS Enterprise Fund

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Economic Resilience Activity (ERA) is a USAID/Ukraine activity implemented by DAI Global LLC. with period of performance from August 2018–August 2024 and a total estimated cost of \$71.8 million. This evaluation was conducted by SSG Advisors (d/b/a Resonance) under the Analytical Services in support of ERA contract. This independent, external evaluation was carried out between December 2020 and July 2021 by an Evaluation Team (ET) of nine international and Ukrainian experts, with the assistance of a Ukrainian research firm.

### Evaluation Purpose and Questions

Per the Evaluation Scope of Work, the primary purpose of this mid-term performance evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and efficiency, as well as unintended effects of ERA’s implementation to date. Primary intended users include the USAID Office of Economic Growth and ERA staff. Additional users include the USAID Ukraine Mission Front Office and Development Objective 2 team, and key Ukrainian stakeholders. The evaluation focused on five key evaluation questions (EQ) (see box).

#### Evaluation Questions

1. What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?
2. How have women’s opportunities been influenced by ERA interventions?
3. How have opportunities for vulnerable populations been influenced by ERA interventions?
4. Given the available opportunities, is ERA maximizing coordination/collaboration with partners to achieve results?
5. How well has ERA identified and reinforced the capacity of key local actors to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation ends?

### Activity Background and Context

The purpose of ERA is to improve the overall economic resilience of eastern Ukraine in response to Russian aggression, which has disrupted critical market linkages, catalyzed the economic decline of previously dominant industries, and caused massive population disruption. ERA is expected to increase economic opportunities for conflict-affected populations through three key components: 1) stabilizing the regional economy, 2) strengthening and increasing the number of micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and 3) building confidence in the regional economy. It is important to note that beginning in Year 2 of implementation (March 2020) and ongoing to date, the global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in dramatic changes to the operating environment, ability to deliver assistance, and significant implementation challenges for ERA and USAID activities worldwide.

### Evaluation Methods and Limitations

The evaluation methodology was based on review and analysis of Activity documents and previous performance reviews, quantitative ERA-generated monitoring data, and participatory qualitative data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders. The evaluation methodology incorporated components of two well-known complexity aware methods, Outcome Harvesting (OH) and Most Significant Change (MSC), to evaluate ERA outcomes. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all data collection was conducted remotely and virtually, resulting in some limitations for qualitative data gathering and participatory processes with evaluation users and stakeholders.

### Evaluation Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Evaluation Question 1 (Results Achieved)

##### EQ 1 Findings and Conclusions

**Progress Toward Expected Results.** Overall, ERA has made notable progress toward its approved targets and appears on track to achieve its overall Activity results in most areas. Two indicators show

consistent underperformance: the number of individuals with new or better employment and beneficiaries of improved infrastructure services. ERA has met the majority of its targets, despite the challenges of COVID-19, and the Activity has taken adaptive measures to address the underperformance in employment and infrastructure.

**Inclusion.** Self-confidence, information about external opportunities, and network building have led to economic outcomes for some training participants. Beneficiaries used knowledge and skills gained during ERA-funded trainings to access grants or loans offered by other donor or government programs, increase sales through online advertising, and expand professional and personal networks. However, lack of financing to start a business, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, and, in some cases, a lack of alignment of training with participant needs has hindered the ability of many participants to put their knowledge and skills to use or improve their economic situations. The highest payoff in terms of investment in skills building is seen in peer-to-peer learning and more specialized technical assistance. Including business development support with equipment would increase job creation, sales, and investment results for businesses that receive grants under the Inclusion component.

**Inclusion Grants to Businesses.** The most successful Inclusion grants to businesses have been for new equipment that results in new products or new markets. Most of these businesses requested additional business development assistance.

**Workforce Development.** ERA-supported educational institutions reported that the technical competencies and marketable skills of students for the labor market will be greatly enhanced through ERA-funded upgrades to equipment and curricula. Students also reported that the pedagogical methodologies used in ERA-supported universities have improved significantly. Many professional lyceums, in contrast with universities and vocational education and training centers (VETs), report additional needs for facility and equipment upgrades. ERA has seen some initial success with its promotion of dual education, but additional support is needed to build and expand this model. The Roboklub science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) model provides key resources that children and youth need to succeed.

**Business Resilience and Growth.** Based on their outlooks, attitudes, and adaptation to a wide variety of personal, professional, and financial shocks and stresses, ERA business beneficiaries are extremely well-positioned to leverage ERA support as agents of consistent optimism and continued resilience. The greatest economic return on ERA's investment is through the well-designed packages of phased assistance, or "stacked support," that ERA offers to businesses within target sectors. Additionally, most business beneficiaries of stacked support are transferring improved processes and organizational skills directly to their personnel through formal or informal onsite trainings, with broader long-term effects on the regional workforce.

There are missed opportunities for additional synergies between and among ERA components, target sectors, businesses, and interventions that, if optimized, would yield improved returns on ERA's investment. Similar types of businesses in the same sector sometimes receive different services, which leads to confusion and lost opportunities for catalyzed benefits. There are also opportunities to strengthen market systems within and across sectors by expanding domestic supplier and buyer channels to include other current ERA business beneficiaries and by designing interventions that reach beneficiaries in multiple Growth sectors.

**Access to Finance.** ERA supported six pilots during the reporting period, each focused on a different business segment. Credit loan beneficiaries found the pilots appropriate and useful but believed the program could have been better advertised and was not coordinated with technical assistance available

through other ERA components. The Western NIS Enterprise Fund (WNISEF) could reach more enterprises and be more sustainable if more risk were shifted to borrowing social enterprises and/or banks over time. ERA's transactions advisory support identified several viable leads but no funds had been disbursed at the time of this evaluation. These early pilots could also benefit from overall strengthening, including additional and more targeted technical assistance to credit unions and SMEs, and a more intentional approach to sustainability.

**Transformation and Confidence in Future.** ERA's assistance with city and oblast officials is resulting in transformation at the city and regional levels. Through its work with youth and city councils, ERA has successfully promoted participatory governance models with local governments. ERA's transformation approach is challenging historical and deeply held mindsets regarding how governments, businesses, universities, communities, youth, and other stakeholders should work together. It builds on previous investments in the region by USAID and other donors. Participatory engagement in strategy development, particularly of youth, increases long-term engagement and buy-in to the development of their city and region. It is important to understand the nuances of drivers of confidence and optimism and what motivates youth and businesses to stay in the region.

### **EQ 1 Recommendations**

ERA should expand support for individual business counseling, peer-to-peer learning, training in specific promising sectors for employment or apprenticeships, and multi-phased stacked support for businesses. ERA should also consider innovative models to provide financing support to women and members of vulnerable groups to start their own businesses. The Activity should expand support to partner educational institutions to assist graduates in their transition from school to work. Where possible, ERA should link interventions under different components and between and within growth sectors in a more coordinated fashion to leverage investments in similar beneficiaries. ERA should also consider integrating a more diverse array of business types into each target growth sector to strengthen each target sector market system. Under Access to Finance, ERA could strengthen its credit union loan program by raising awareness, providing business development services to target businesses, and providing additional technical assistance to credit unions. It should also increase the WNISEF risk-share with banks and enterprises. In the future, ERA should pair its transactions advisory support with targeted technical assistance to build a pipeline of viable companies, preferably through a dedicated fund attached to one or more partner financial institutions. Under Transformation, ERA should draw on its experiences to date with its target cities to identify components of success and lessons learned in the eastern Ukraine context to help replicate success in other cities. To assist ERA to further target its messaging and investments, specialized research should be designed and implemented to identify demographic, economic, or other factors that drive confidence and optimism and how ERA can use this information in its approach and strategy. ERA's effectiveness in influencing confidence would also benefit from clearer guidance from USAID on expected results under this objective.

### **Evaluation Question 2 (Women's Opportunities)**

#### **EQ 2 Findings and Conclusions**

ERA funding to several Ukrainian organizations provides targeted support to women in eastern Ukraine with the goal of increasing economic opportunities, networking, and leadership. While more than 60% of ERA beneficiaries are women, in some cases the representation of women facing an intersection of vulnerabilities is low (for example single, female heads of households). Parenting responsibilities and lack of childcare are obstacles for putting their knowledge and skills gained to use. This problem can be even more of an issue for women who are internally displaced persons (IDPs), who often lack social or



familial support. ERA supports gender equality awareness in some of its training. Viewpoints expressed by both male and female beneficiaries indicate a possible lack of awareness of gender equality issues among the broader set of ERA beneficiaries and the region.

ERA has exceeded its targets for the participation of women and successfully engaged women in its interventions. However, certain sub-categories of vulnerable women, such as single female heads of households, are represented at a lower percentage than women in general among ERA beneficiaries. To advance gender equality, men and women (including youth) should be engaged in changing the roles and attitudes of both sexes. Investments in the region in childcare and financing of women-owned businesses would increase women's participation in the workforce and as business owners.

## **EQ 2 Recommendations**

ERA should build on its existing efforts to further identify the various sub-segments of women based on their levels of vulnerability and should design specific strategies that target their needs and address the obstacles they face. ERA should look for opportunities to involve men in efforts to reduce obstacles and challenge stereotypical female and male roles, behaviors, attitudes, and norms to promote improved female empowerment.

## **Evaluation Question 3 (Opportunities for Target Vulnerable Populations)**

### **EQ 3 Findings and Conclusions**

ERA trainings have reached a broad set of beneficiaries from targeted vulnerable or prioritized groups including youth, women, IDPs, and people living in close proximity to the line of contact (LOC). This has increased business skills, information about different sectors, networks, and personal and business connections among these beneficiaries. Beneficiaries from vulnerable populations (VPs) reported various obstacles and external factors that hinder their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities such as housing, financing, and psychological trauma.

ERA's work with VPs would benefit from a clearer approach and strategy for integration of VPs across ERA's components that link VPs to ERA's targeted economic growth sectors and economic visioning and other work with cities.

### **EQ 3 Recommendations**

ERA should continue its efforts to prioritize vulnerable groups based on a nuanced understanding of the drivers of their vulnerability, acknowledgement of the dynamism and intersectionality within and between groups, and linkages to economic criteria. It would also be beneficial for USAID to further clarify priorities and expected results for ERA's work with VPs and how these contribute to the Mission's strategy for eastern Ukraine. ERA should look for opportunities to further integrate vulnerable groups into its target growth sectors and promote greater awareness of their needs with existing partners across all three components.

## **Evaluation Question 4 (Maximizing Coordination/Collaboration)**

### **EQ 4 Findings and Conclusions**

In general, partners praised ERA's acumen, responsiveness, and dedication to eastern Ukraine. But when asked about challenges in working with ERA, the most common criticism was related to delays in implementation due largely to compliance processes relative to initially set expectations. Representatives of the Government of Ukraine (GOU) cited ERA's help in advancing critical reforestation efforts, new

economic development plans, and large-scale infrastructure projects. Education partners have leveraged ERA partnerships to attract new investment and partnerships.

The depth and diversity of ERA reflects its complex mandate and opportunistic approach to responding to quickly emerging needs in the region during the first two years of implementation. The blend of partnerships has the potential to maximize results, but the volume of partners that ERA identifies as high-touch collaborations creates the risk of too many relationships and workstreams to manage effectively. Despite these concerns, ERA's quickly deployed technical expertise catalyzes important results at the regional and national levels for Ukraine partners.

#### **EQ 4 Recommendations**

ERA should prioritize current and new partnerships based on their areas of competitive advantage — convening and facilitating relationships between diverse stakeholders and promoting MSME growth. USAID and ERA should develop clear priorities and expected results around private sector engagement (PSE) that are ambitious but realistic given the operating environment.

#### **Evaluation Question 5 (Capacity Building for Sustainable Results)**

##### **EQ 5 Findings and Conclusions**

ERA has identified areas of sustainability and is developing plans to reinforce capacity development in future years. The most successful examples of ERA's capacity-building and sustainability efforts are seen with education partners engaged in dual education, city councils that gained capacity in participatory strategic planning and developed enduring relationships with their constituents, and beneficiaries that ERA is supporting in developing coalition and cluster approaches.

As ERA develops its Year 4 work plan, it will be important to continue to support and expand approaches and interventions that build the capacity of partner and beneficiary entities and organizations to adopt and implement key processes independently. There is evidence at the local level that ERA's support has already built the capacity of city councils in participatory planning and other areas, and that both the processes and relationships are enduring. However, there is insufficient evidence thus far that oblast-level officials have changed their mindsets or will use similar processes in the future without ERA support.

##### **EQ 5 Recommendations**

ERA should continue to assess capacity needs and emphasize a deliberate focus on capacity building and sustainability in the design of its interventions and work with partners. This should include building the capacity of partners and beneficiaries to develop more robust risk-mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Annex H presents the full list of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for all EQs.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Проект Агентства США з міжнародного розвитку (USAID) «Економічна підтримка Східної України» (ERA) реалізує «DAI Global LLC» у період із серпня 2018 року по серпень 2024 року. Загальний бюджет проекту становить 71,8 мільйона доларів США. Це оцінювання виконано компанією «SSG Advisors» (комерційне найменування «Resonance») у рамках надання аналітичних послуг за контрактом ERA. Ця незалежне зовнішнє оцінювання було виконане в період з грудня 2020 року по липень 2021 року оцінювальною групою, що складалася з дев'яти міжнародних та українських експертів, за сприяння української дослідницької компанії.

### Мета оцінювання та запитання для його виконання

Технічне завдання з цього середньострокового оцінювання результативності роботи проекту передбачає передусім оцінювання актуальності, дієвості, стійкості та ефективності досягнутих на сьогодні результатів реалізації проекту ERA, а також побіжних незапланованих наслідків його реалізації. Цей Звіт адресований передусім Офісу економічного зростання USAID та персоналу проекту ERA. Також він може бути корисним головному офісу Представництва USAID в Україні, команді експертів із цілі розвитку № 2, а також ключовим зацікавленим сторонам в Україні. Оцінювання було зосереджене на п'яти основних запитаннях (див. виноску).

#### Запитання для виконання оцінювання

6. Яких результатів досяг проект ERA на основі чинних основних підходів та реалізованих на сьогодні заходів?
7. Як заходи в рамках проекту ERA вплинули на можливості жінок?
8. Як заходи в рамках проекту ERA вплинули на можливості вразливих груп населення?
9. Беручи до уваги наявні можливості, чи максимізує проект ERA координацію зусиль/співпрацю з партнерами для досягнення результатів?
10. Наскільки добре проект визначив та зміцнив спроможність ключових суб'єктів на місцевому рівні забезпечувати досягнення цілей USAID після завершення проекту ERA?

### Передумови та умови виконання проекту

Мета проекту ERA полягає в покращенні загальної економічної стійкості сходу України у відповідь на агресію Росії, яка порушила критичні ринкові зв'язки, прискорила економічний занепад галузей промисловості, які раніше переважали у регіоні, та спричинила масове переміщення населення. Очікується, що проект ERA сприятиме розширенню економічних можливостей населення, що постраждало від конфлікту, за рахунок трьох ключових компонентів: 1) стабілізації регіональної економіки, 2) зміцнення та збільшення кількості мікро-, малих та середніх підприємств (ММСП) та 3) підвищення довіри до регіональної економіки. Важливо відзначити, що в період із початку другого року виконання проекту (з березня 2020 року) і до сьогодні глобальна пандемія COVID-19 призвела до кардинальних змін в умовах роботи та здатності надавати допомогу, а також створила значні труднощі на шляхом до реалізації проекту ERA та діяльності USAID у всьому світі.

### Методи оцінювання та обмеження

Методологія оцінювання оснований на огляді та аналізі робочих документів та результатів попередніх оглядів результативності, кількісних даних моніторингу в рамках проекту ERA та якісних даних, отриманих від безпосередніх учасників процесу реалізації проекту, тобто бенефіціарів та зацікавлених сторін. Методологія оцінювання включає компоненти двох відомих

підходів, що враховують складність проєкту: збирання інформації про зафіксовані зміни (англійською «Outcome Harvesting») та аналіз найсуттєвіших змін (англійською «Most Significant Change») — для оцінювання результатів проєкту ERA. Через обмеження у зв'язку з COVID-19 усі дані збирали у віртуальному та дистанційному режимах, що певним чином позначилося на якості зібраних даних та залученості респондентів і зацікавлених сторін.

## Результати оцінювання, висновки та рекомендації

### Запитання для оцінювання № 1 (досягнуті результати)

#### Запитання № 1: висновки

**Прогрес у досягненні очікуваних результатів.** У цілому проєкт ERA демонструє помітний прогрес у досягненні встановлених цілей. Наявні дані свідчать про те, що проєкт загалом виконує графік досягнення цілей проєкту за більшістю напрямів діяльності. Однак за двома показниками спостерігається стабільне відставання: кількість осіб, що мають нову або кращу роботу, та кількість осіб, які мають можливість користатися вдосконаленими інфраструктурними послугами. Проєкт ERA досяг більшості цілей попри труднощі, спричинені COVID-19, і вжив коригувальних заходів для виправлення результативності у сфері зайнятості та інфраструктури.

**Інклюзія.** Учасники тренінгів підвищили впевненість у собі, отримали інформацію про зовнішні можливості та доступ до розбудовуваної мережі, що позитивно позначилося на їхньому економічному становищі. Бенефіціари використали знання та навички, здобуті на тренінгах, фінансованих ERA, для отримання доступу до грантів або позик у рамках інших донорських або державних програм, збільшення продажів за допомогою реклами в мережі Інтернет та розширення професійних та особистих зв'язків. Однак брак фінансування для відкриття бізнесу, вплив обмежень у зв'язку з COVID-19, а в деяких випадках і неузгодженість змісту пройдених тренінгів із реальними потребами учасників не дали багатьом із них змоги використати здобуті знання та навички для раціонального розпорядження своїми економічними ресурсами або їх розширення. У напрямку розвитку навичок найрезультативнішими виявилися інвестиції у взаємне навчання та надання вузькоспеціалізованої технічної допомоги. Підтримка розвитку бізнесу за рахунок забезпечення необхідним обладнанням сприяла би створенню робочих місць, збільшенню обсягів продажів і підвищенню ефективності інвестицій для підприємств, які отримують гранти за компонентом «Інклюзія».

**Гранти підприємствам за компонентом «Інклюзія».** За компонентом «Інклюзія» найуспішнішими виявилися гранти на придбання нового обладнання, що дало змогу підприємствам випустити нові продукти або вийти на нові ринки збуту. Більшість із таких підприємств подали запит про додаткову допомогу в розвитку бізнесу.

**Розвиток трудових ресурсів.** Навчальні заклади, підтримувані проєктом ERA, повідомили, що технічні компетенції та ринкові навички студентів на ринку праці значно покращаться за рахунок оновлення обладнання та навчальних програм за фінансової підтримки ERA. Студенти також повідомили про значне вдосконалення методик викладання в університетах, підтримуваних проєктом ERA. На відміну від університетів та центрів професійно-технічної освіти та підготовки, багато професійних ліцеїв повідомляють про додаткові потреби в модернізації приміщень та обладнання. Проєкт ERA досяг певного успіху на початковому етапі запровадження дуальної освіти, але розвиток та розширення цієї моделі потребує додаткової підтримки. STEM-навчання

(наука, технології, техніка та математики) за моделлю «Робоклубу» пропонує ключові ресурси, необхідні дітям та молоді для досягнення успіху.

**Стійкість та зростання бізнесу.** Завдяки своїм баченням, підходам та здатності адаптуватися до різноманітних особистих, професійних та фінансових криз і труднощів підприємства-бенефіціари проєкту ERA мають усі передумови для отримання підтримки проєкту ERA як взірці непереборного оптимізму та незламної стійкості. Найбільшу економічну рентабельність інвестицій проєкту ERA демонструють раціональні пакети поетапної допомоги, запропонованої проєктом ERA підприємствам у цільових галузях. Крім того, більшість підприємств-бенефіціарів поетапної підтримки передають удосконалені процеси та організаційні навички безпосередньо своєму персоналу за допомогою формального або неформального навчання на робочому місці, що має ширші довгострокові результати для розвитку робочої сили на регіональному рівні.

Не використані всі можливості для досягнення додаткової синергії між компонентами проєкту ERA, його цільовими галузями, підприємствами та заходами, тому в разі оптимізації відповідних процесів можливо підвищити рентабельність інвестицій проєкту ERA. Іноді підприємства подібного типу в межах однієї галузі отримують різні послуги, що призводить до плутанини та втрати можливостей для отримання переваг. Існують також можливості для зміцнення ринкових систем у межах однієї або декількох галузей шляхом розширення каналів вітчизняних постачальників та покупців для залучення інших поточних підприємств-бенефіціарів проєкту ERA та шляхом розроблення заходів, які охоплюють бенефіціарів у кількох галузях у рамках компоненту «Зростання».

**Доступ до фінансування.** Протягом звітного періоду проєкт ERA підтримав шість пілотних проєктів у різних галузях. Бенефіціари, що отримали позику, визнали ці проєкти доцільними та корисними, але зауважили, що програму загалом можна було би краще рекламувати, і вона не була узгоджена із заходами технічної допомоги, які були організовані в рамках інших компонентів проєкту ERA. Фонд розвитку підприємництва західних ННД (WNISEF) міг би охопити більше підприємств і бути стійкішим, якби на соціальні підприємства-позичальники та/або банки перекладали більше ризиків. У ході надання консультативної підтримки операційної діяльності проєкту ERA було виявлено декілька життєздатних потенційних клієнтів, але на момент проведення цього оцінювання кошти не були виділені. Загальне зміцнення потенціалу також може виявитися корисним і для зазначених перших пілотних проєктів, зокрема надання додаткової та більш цілеспрямованої технічної допомоги кредитним спілкам та МСП та більш цілеспрямованого підходу до забезпечення стійкості отриманих результатів.

**Перетворення та впевненість у майбутньому.** Допомога з боку проєкту ERA представникам міських та обласних органів влади сприяє перетворенням на міському та регіональному рівнях. Завдяки роботі з молоддю та міськими радами проєкт ERA успішно популяризував модель місцевого самоврядування із залученням широкої громадськості. Трансформаційний підхід проєкту ERA змушує переглянути традиційні та усталені погляди на те, як уряди, підприємства, вищі навчальні заклади, громади, молодь та інші зацікавлені сторони повинні працювати разом. Він спирається на попередні інвестиції USAID та інших донорів у регіон. Заохочення до участі в розробленні стратегій, особливо заохочення молоді, збільшує довгострокову залученість та зацікавленість у розвитку свого міста та регіону. Важливо розуміти нюанси, що впливають на впевненість та оптимізм, та чинники, що мотивують молодь і підприємства залишатися в регіоні.

## Запитання № 1: рекомендації

Проекту ERA слід розширити підтримку у формі надання індивідуальних бізнес-консультацій, забезпеченні можливостей для взаємного навчання, організації навчання в конкретних перспективних галузях з метою подальшого працевлаштування або стажування, а також багатоетапної підтримки підприємств. Проекту ERA також варто розглянути інноваційні моделі надання фінансової підтримки жінкам та представникам вразливих груп для відкриття власного бізнесу. Проект має розширити підтримку навчальним закладам-партнерам, щоб допомогти випускникам у переході від навчання до роботи. За можливості проект ERA має краще узгоджувати заходи в рамках різних компонентів, а також у межах однієї або декількох галузей за компонентом «Зростання», для залучення інвестицій у подібних бенефіціарів. Проекту ERA також слід розглянути можливість охоплення кожною цільовою галуззю за компонентом «Зростання» більш диверсифікованого спектру видів підприємств для зміцнення ринкової системи кожної цільової галузі. За умови доступу до фінансування проект ERA міг би посилити свою програму позик на базі кредитних спілок шляхом підвищення обізнаності, надання послуг із розвитку бізнесу цільовим підприємствам та надання додаткової технічної допомоги кредитним спілкам. Це також має збільшити частку ризиків у межах WNISEF, призначену для банківських установ і підприємств. У майбутньому проекту ERA слід поєднати надання консультаційної підтримки операційної діяльності з наданням цільової технічної допомоги для створення пулу життєздатних компаній, бажано через спеціальний фонд під егідою однієї або декількох фінансових установ-партнерів. У рамках компонента «Трансформація» проект ERA має використати власний досвід роботи з цільовими містами, щоб визначити складові успіху та сформулювати рекомендації за результатами діяльності у східній Україні для допомоги іншим містам. Щоб допомогти проекту ERA в подальшому раціонально спрямовувати інформаційну роботу та інвестиції, слід розробити та провести спеціалізовані дослідження, щоб виявити демографічні, економічні або інші чинники впевненості та оптимізму, а також способи використання такої інформації проектом ERA при розробленні своїх підходів і стратегій. Підвищенню ефективності роботи проекту ERA в частині формування впевненості також могли би сприяти чіткіші орієнтири від USAID щодо очікуваних результатів досягнення цієї цілі.

## Запитання для оцінювання № 2 (можливості жінок)

### Запитання № 2: висновки

Фінансування, яке проект ERA надає декільком українським організаціям, забезпечує цільову підтримку жінок на сході України для сприяння збільшенню їхніх економічних можливостей, налагодженню зв'язків та розвитку лідерських навичок. Хоча жінки становлять більше ніж 60% бенефіціарів проекту, в деяких випадках представництво жінок, які стикаються одночасно з різноманітними труднощами, є низьким (наприклад, одинокі жінки, які очолюють домогосподарство). Батьківські обов'язки та неможливість розділити з кимось догляд за дитиною є перешкодами для реалізації їхніх знань та навичок. Ця проблема може бути ще гострішою для жінок з-поміж внутрішньо переміщених осіб (ВПО), оскільки їм часто бракує соціальної або сімейної підтримки. Проект ERA проводить інформаційно-роз'яснювальну роботу на тему гендерної рівності в рамках деяких своїх тренінгів. Погляди як чоловіків, так і жінок-бенефіціарів свідчать про можливий брак обізнаності щодо питань гендерної рівності серед ширшого кола бенефіціарів проекту ERA та регіону.

Проект ERA спромігся перевищити свої цільові показники щодо участі жінок та успішно залучив жінок до участі у своїх заходах. Однак у відсотковому співвідношенні серед бенефіціарів проекту ERA деякі підкатегорії вразливих жінок, як-от одинокі жінки-голови домогосподарств, менш представлені, ніж жінки в цілому. Для сприяння досягненню гендерної рівності чоловіків та жінок (зокрема молоді) слід спонукати до зміни ролей та ставлення до обох статей. Інвестиції в регіоні в послуги з догляду за дітьми та фінансування підприємств, власницями яких є жінки, сприятимуть збільшенню частки жінок на ринку праці та в структурі власників бізнесу.

### **Запитання № 2: рекомендації**

Проекту ERA слід використовувати власні напрацювання для подальшого визначення різних підкатегорій жінок на основі їхнього рівня вразливості, а також розробити конкретні стратегії, спрямовані на задоволення їхніх потреб та усунення перешкод, із якими вони стикаються. Проекту ERA слід активніше залучати чоловіків до діяльності, спрямованої на зменшення перешкод та подолання стереотипів щодо жіночих і чоловічих ролей, поведінки, ставлення та норм для сприяння розширенню прав і можливостей жінок.

### **Запитання для оцінювання № 3 (можливості для цільових вразливих груп населення)**

#### **Запитання № 3: висновки**

Тренінги в рамках проекту ERA охопили широку групу бенефіціарів з-поміж цільових уразливих або пріоритетних груп, зокрема молоді, жінок, внутрішньо переміщених осіб та людей, що живуть у безпосередній близькості до лінії зіткнення (ЛЗ). Це сприяло вдосконаленню підприємницьких навичок, отриманню інформації про різні галузі та мережі, налагодженню особистих і ділових зв'язків між цими бенефіціарами. Бенефіціари з-поміж вразливих груп населення (ВГН) повідомили про різні перешкоди та зовнішні чинники, що перешкоджають їм реалізувати свої економічні можливості, наприклад, проблеми з житлом, недостатнє матеріальне забезпечення та психологічні травми.

Роботі з ВГН у рамках проекту ERA сприяли би чіткіший підхід і стратегія інтеграції ВГН до компонентів проекту ERA, які пов'язали б ВГН із цільовими секторами економіки за компонентом проекту «Зростання», баченням економічних перспектив та іншою роботою з містами.

#### **Запитання № 3: рекомендації**

У рамках проекту ERA варто продовжувати роботу з пріоритизації вразливих груп на основі глибокого розуміння чинників їхньої вразливості, визнаючи динамічність та взаємопов'язаність різних чинників як у межах однієї групи, так і в масштабі декількох груп, а також встановлюючи зв'язки з економічними критеріями. Також USAID варто було б уточнити пріоритети та очікувані результати роботи з ВГН в рамках проекту ERA та внесок таких груп у реалізацію стратегії Місії щодо сходу України. Проекту ERA слід спробувати краще інтегрувати вразливі групи в цільові галузі за компонентом «Зростання» та сприяти підвищенню обізнаності щодо їхніх потреб серед поточних партнерів за всіма трьома компонентами.

### **Запитання для оцінювання № 4 (максимізація координації/співпраці)**

#### **Запитання № 4: висновки**

Загалом партнери високо оцінили проникливість, чутливість та відданість проекту ERA в роботі над вирішенням проблем на сході України. Згідно з отриманими відгуками, найбільші труднощі при

роботі з проектом ERA полягають у недотриманні графіків, в основному через намагання досягти відповідності визначеним від початку очікуванням. Представники уряду України відзначають допомогу проекту ERA в реалізації важливих заходів у сфері відновлення лісів, нових планах економічного розвитку та масштабних інфраструктурних проектів. Партнери у сфері освіти використовували партнерство з проектом ERA для залучення нових інвестицій та налагодження партнерських відносин.

Глибина та різноманітність проекту ERA відображає його складну місію та опортуністичний підхід до реагування на мінливі потреби регіону протягом перших двох років реалізації проекту. Мережа партнерств потенційно може допомогти досягнути максимальних результатів, але кількість партнерів, співпрацю з якими проект ERA визначає як високоефективну, створює ризик виникнення занадто великої кількості контрагентів та робочих потоків, що заважатиме ефективному управлінню. Незважаючи на ці побоювання, швидко надавана проектом ERA технічна допомога прискорює досягнення важливих для українських партнерів результатів на регіональному та національному рівнях.

#### **Запитання № 4: рекомендації**

Проект ERA має пріоритизувати наявні та нові партнерства з урахуванням сфер їхніх конкурентних переваг — започатковувати та заохочувати взаємодію між різними зацікавленими сторонами та сприяти зростанню кількості ММСП. USAID та проект ERA мають визначити чіткі пріоритети та очікувані результати щодо залучення приватного сектору, які мають бути амбітними, але водночас реалістичними з огляду на наявні обставини.

#### **Запитання для оцінювання № 5 (розбудова спроможності для досягнення стійких результатів)**

##### **Запитання № 5: висновки**

Проект ERA визначив сфери для досягнення стійких результатів та розробляє плани щодо посилення розвитку спроможності найближчими роками. Найуспішніші приклади заходів у рамках проекту ERA щодо розбудови спроможності та забезпечення стійкості результатів можна побачити у співпраці з партнерами у сфері освіти, які пропонують дуальну освіту, міськими радами, що набули навички стратегічного планування із залученням громадськості та розвинули стійкі відносини зі своїми виборцями, та бенефіціарами, яких проект ERA підтримує за рахунок розвитку коаліційного та кластерного підходів.

При розробленні проектом ERA свого плану роботи на четвертий рік важливо продовжувати підтримувати та розширювати підходи та заходи, що допомагають у розбудові спроможності бенефіціарів та організацій-партнерів самостійно запроваджувати та реалізовувати основні процеси. На місцевому рівні помітно, що підтримка в рамках проекту ERA вже сприяла розширенню спроможності міських рад здійснювати планування із залученням широкої громадськості та вдосконаленню інших їхніх компетенцій, і що ці процеси та відносини є стійкими. Однак наразі ще рано говорити про те, чи представники обласних органів влади змінили свій менталітет або будуть використовувати подібні процеси в майбутньому без підтримки проекту ERA.

##### **Запитання № 5: рекомендації**

Проект ERA має продовжувати оцінювати потреби в розвитку потенціалу та підкреслювати важливість цільової розбудови спроможності та досягнення стійких результатів під час



розроблення своїх заходів та роботи з партнерами. Це має включати підвищення спроможності партнерів та бенефіціарів розробляти стійкіші стратегії зменшення ризиків та адаптації.

Додаток Н містить повний перелік результатів, висновків і рекомендацій за всіма запитаннями для оцінювання.

## SECTION I. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

ERA is a USAID-funded activity implemented by DAI Global, LLC with a period of performance from August 2018 to August 2024 and a total estimated budget of \$71.8 million. SSG Advisors (d/b/a Resonance) conducted this evaluation under the USAID/Ukraine Analytical Services in Support of ERA contract. This report summarizes the evaluation scope, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### Evaluation Purpose

Per the Evaluation Scope of Work (Annex A), the primary purpose of this mid-term performance evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, and any unintended effects of ERA’s implementation to date. The evaluation critically and objectively takes stock of the Activity’s implementing experience and environment. The scope encompassed a broad range of ERA interventions conducted across all three Activity components (inclusion, growth, and transformation) in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and targeted areas of the coastal Sea of Azov region in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. Resonance conducted the evaluation over a period of approximately six months (January–June 2021) and covered the first two and one-half years of ERA’s implementation.

The primary intended users include USAID — the ERA Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR), Alternate COR, USAID/Ukraine Office of Economic Growth and ERA staff. Additional users include the USAID Mission Front Office and Development Objective 2 team, as well as key Ukrainian stakeholders.

### Evaluation Questions

Based on input from the Evaluation Design Workshop and approved in the Inception Report, this evaluation focuses on five evaluation questions (EQ) listed in Exhibit I. These EQs guided development of key outcome areas, data collection methodology and instruments. They provide an outline for the findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report.

#### Exhibit I. ERA Mid-term Performance Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Questions	
EQ 1	What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?
EQ 2	How have women’s opportunities been influenced by ERA interventions?
EQ 3	How have opportunities for vulnerable populations been influenced by ERA interventions?
EQ 4	Given the available opportunities, is ERA maximizing coordination and collaboration with partners to achieve results?
EQ 5	How well has ERA identified and reinforced the capacity of key local actors to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation ends?

## SECTION II. EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

The Resonance ET consisted of six core members. Annex B describes the positions, roles and responsibilities, and qualifications of the core ET. Three additional subject matter experts provided review and analysis in specialized programmatic areas that ERA identified during the evaluation in-briefing (VP programming, Access to Finance, Private Sector Collaboration, and Workforce Development). In addition to the ET, Resonance engaged a Ukrainian research firm, Info Sapiens, to collect interview and focus group data from ERA beneficiaries.

The ET also coordinated closely with a team of ERA staff who served as primary points of contact to provide requested documentation and beneficiary information, respond to questions and issues, and connect the ET to appropriate ERA colleagues. Taking into account USAID principles of evaluation independence, no ERA staff were involved in evaluation data collection processes, such as interviewing beneficiaries, or conducting primary analysis and formulation of findings.

## **SECTION III. ACTIVITY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

ERA is a six-year USAID-funded activity with an estimated cost of \$71,818,352 USD. It is being implemented by DAI under Contract No. 72012118C00004. Major subcontractor partners under this Activity are the Danish Refugee Council and FHI 360. In 2020, DAI received a one-year extension, making the period of performance from August 2018 to August 2024.

### **ERA's Contribution to USAID Ukraine's Objectives**

This Activity contributes to USAID's 2019–2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Ukraine. The overall goal of the CDCS is an independent, democratic, prosperous, and healthy Ukraine united around core European values. ERA falls under Development Objective 2, Impacts of Russia's Aggression Mitigated, and Intermediate Results (IR) 2.1, Conditions Improved for Reintegration and IR 2.4, Common Civic Values Increasingly Embraced Across Ukraine. These IRs aim to improve the governance and economic conditions of eastern Ukraine and to align the region with the democratic, European trajectory of the rest of the country, as well as creating confidence in the region's future. ERA is one of the key activities under the Mission's Project, Increasing Confidence in the Democratic Governance and Economy of Conflict-Affected Regions of Ukraine.

### **Context**

In 2014, Russian-led forces initiated a war that has taken thousands of Ukrainian lives, created massive population displacement, resulted in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts being under the control of Russian-led forces, and destabilized the country's economy. The economy in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts was in decline before the outset of the conflict, with a lack of investment and inefficiencies in state-owned enterprises necessitating unsustainable government subsidies to the region. Russia's aggression in the region has catalyzed that decline. Critical market and industrial linkages have been disrupted, leaving smallholder farmers without access to markets. Access to finance is very limited due to the risk inherent in investing or lending in an ongoing conflict zone. Large industries have closed, small businesses have difficulty starting up and growing, close to one-fifth of the workforce is unemployed, and young people are leaving for better prospects elsewhere. Surveys show that residents in Ukrainian-controlled territory are alienated and have little optimism for the future of the region's economy. Trade in the region has also been disrupted. Over 1.6 million Ukrainians have become IDPs, representing not just a mass exodus of human capital but an enormous demographic and socio-economic shift within the country. "Brain drain" is a threat to the economy's future, as is the large number of elderly people in the region in need of assistance. With the global coronavirus pandemic, businesses now suffer from the effects of multiple, ongoing shocks and stresses.

### **Activity Purpose and Theory of Change**

The purpose of ERA is to improve the overall economic resilience of eastern Ukraine in response to the Russian aggression that has disrupted critical market linkages, catalyzed the economic decline of previously dominant industries, and caused massive population disruption.

According to the ERA Statement of Work (SOW), ERA is expected to improve the resilience of eastern Ukraine’s economy through its three key components: 1) stabilizing the regional economy, 2) strengthening and increasing the number of MSMEs, and 3) building confidence in the regional economy. The overarching goal of ERA is to improve the overall economic resilience of eastern Ukraine, which has been exacerbated by Russia’s aggression. As per the Activity contract, Exhibit 2 describes the overall Theory of Change.

**Exhibit 2. ERA’s Theory of Change**

<p><b>If ERA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides assistance to stabilize the economy of eastern Ukraine; and</li> <li>• Supports the sustainable development of MSMEs in eastern Ukraine; and</li> <li>• Builds confidence in the future of the eastern Ukrainian Economy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Then</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved confidence in the future of eastern Ukraine’s economy will induce more Ukrainians to make investments in eastern Ukraine, invest in their human capital, and start their own businesses;</li> <li>• Investors, entrepreneurs, and firms will be encouraged to consider new business interventions that increase incomes and employment in eastern Ukraine;</li> <li>• The number of MSMEs and entrepreneurs will increase, expanding the regional private sector and making the regional economy less dependent on big businesses;</li> <li>• Increased economic activity in the region and stronger economic ties to the rest of the country and the European Union will reduce eastern Ukraine’s dependence on Russia as a trading partner;</li> <li>• Perceptions about the economic downturn of eastern Ukraine will be improved; and</li> <li>• All of the above will make the region’s economy more resilient and less susceptible to economic shocks and Russian pressure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Because</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conflict in eastern Ukraine has made it clear that overdependence on Russia, Russian-influenced oligarchs, and outdated industries must change in order for Ukraine to be secure, independent, and prosperous.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Critical Assumptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relative strengths and demonstrated commitment of local, regional, and national governments;</li> <li>• Shifts in U.S. Government foreign policy priorities for activities and geographic focus, based on funding sources or other factors; and</li> <li>• Shifts in the operating environment that influence the identified risks and assumptions of the Activity.</li> </ul>

To accomplish the Activity’s objectives, ERA’s work is organized under three components: Inclusion, Growth, and Transformation. ERA teams formed around these components work collaboratively to reinforce objectives, and ERA focuses on several key growth sectors: biofuel, honey, innovation for manufacturing, information technology (IT), tourism, and vegetables.

## SECTION IV. EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

### Evaluation Methods

The evaluation methodology incorporated components of OH and MSC techniques — well-known complexity-aware methods — to evaluate ERA outcomes and respond to the five EQs. The strength of these approaches lies in triangulating the wealth of pre-existing data on ERA interventions with insights gained from local, situated knowledge and the voices of beneficiaries, stakeholders, and ERA component team members.

The evaluation methodology was based on review and analysis of Activity documents (SOW, progress reports, work plans, success stories, strategy documents, etc.), quantitative ERA-generated monitoring data, recently conducted award fee assessments of performance, and participatory qualitative data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders. The ET used Dedoose, an online qualitative analytical software tool, to code, analyze, and process all interview transcripts. The ET conducted 206 in-depth interviews (IDI) with beneficiaries, eight focus group discussions (FGD), and 45 key informant interviews (KII) with ERA partners and beneficiaries. The Evaluation Work Plan in Annex C details the specific tasks and timelines of this evaluation. Annex D provides a list of documents reviewed; Annex E lists data sources for IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs. Annex F lists the evaluation data collection tools used.

### Outcome Harvesting

The evaluation utilized OH as its primary approach. OH is an evaluation approach informed and inspired by both utilization-focused evaluation and outcome mapping approaches. It is designed for users who want to learn what was achieved from Activity interventions and how — especially in environments where cause and effect relationships are not fully understood.

As part of OH implementation, the ET developed a set of Outcome Areas. These were presented and agreed upon with ERA and USAID during the evaluation in-briefing. The Outcome Areas, based on the EQs, served as an organizing structure to identify ERA key interventions, data sources, and areas of intensity. During the in-briefing, ERA was asked to rank areas of intervention according to the level of Activity focus and expected level of results based on implementation to date. This information helped the ET to prioritize its data collection efforts and ground-truth its analysis. The ET also used the Outcome Areas to develop data collection tools and the coding system used in the analysis of primary qualitative data collected through IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs.

### Most Significant Change

MSC is a participatory monitoring and evaluation technique based on collecting stories of significant change from beneficiaries that relate to specific “domains of change.” MSC is participatory in the sense that beneficiaries are involved in deciding and prioritizing the outcomes shared by members of the same group. MSC contributes to evaluations by providing insights on impacts and outcomes that may not be captured in formal monitoring systems, and can thus be used both to help assess Activity performance as a whole and also identify intended and unintended outcomes. The process is developed around positive questions such as, “Looking back over the [period in question], what do you think was the most significant change in [the particular domain of change]?” or “From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant?” MSC is based on value inquiry; it and captures what beneficiaries perceive as the most significant change occurring from their perspective.

During this evaluation, the ET used MSC techniques to develop the instruments and conduct FGDs with eight groups of ERA beneficiaries. These beneficiary groups consisted of IDP business owners and non-business owners, male MSME owners, female MSME owners, large business owners, students

participating in specific ERA-funded university programs (Agrokebety master's program, Sikorsky Challenge), and a youth-focused working group involved in the development of the Mariupol Development Strategy for 2021–2030. Annex G presents a summary of stories collected during FGDs.

### Limitations and Challenges

OH and MSC evaluation methodologies are most effective when conducted in person. The use of open-ended questions is intended to elicit a range of responses, and these can often be best followed up on in more personal settings. To mitigate this challenge, the ET held two training sessions with the staff of Info Sapiens, the data collection firm that Resonance hired. The purpose of the training was to provide Info Sapiens moderators and interviewers with the principles and tools needed to conduct OH and MSC, as well as techniques and tips for conducting remote and virtual data collection. The ET team then conducted follow-up quality control by observing the Info Sapiens team in action. Using technology provided by Info Sapiens, the ET team could watch interviews and provide comments to interviewers in real time via a YouTube link. A Zoom link provided simultaneous translation. Overall, the ET was pleased with the work of the Info Sapiens team and confirmed that they understood how to conduct OH and MSC and also demonstrated skill in following up interviewee responses with additional probing questions. The ET worked with approximately 1,000 pages of transcripts from IDIs and FGDs and is confident in the scope and depth of data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders.

While Info Sapiens effectively navigated the challenges of remote data collection caused by COVID-19 restrictions, the ET is cognizant of the following challenges:

- With any qualitative data there is the risk of potential bias in responses. However, with over 200 IDIs conducted with a range of beneficiaries and a six-member ET to review responses, any form of bias was limited.
- Some key ERA partners were not available during the evaluation timeframe, therefore limiting the inclusion of some input on ERA interventions. However, in many cases, Resonance was able to draw on previous interview data from an ERA award fee assessment conducted in Fall 2020.
- In a few cases, beneficiaries refused to be interviewed because of negative feelings toward ERA or demonstrated respondent fatigue because they had been contacted multiple times to provide data for ERA routine monitoring.
- Ideally, MSC is conducted where dialogue and mutual trust can be facilitated easily; therefore, Info Sapiens had limited success in implementing a more rigorous MSC approach that would entail additional ranking of stories collected.
- COVID-19 created multiple disruptions for all stakeholders involved. Aside from the challenges the pandemic posed to data collection efforts, the additional stressors and overall angst caused by restrictions, curfews, social distancing, and economic pressures potentially impacted the ET's ability to detect, analyze, and synthesize the full results of ERA interventions.
- Finally, the fifth step of the OH process entails substantiation via independent external, third-party experts. Due to ERA's scope and complexity, this process was modified. The ET relied instead on internal substantiation by triangulating findings and confirming them findings and recommendations from validation workshops with ERA and USAID staff.

## SECTION V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides detailed evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations<sup>1</sup> for each of the five evaluation questions. Findings are organized by relevant Outcome Areas under each evaluation question. Annex H is a table of all findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Findings for each EQ are listed in a table at the start of each sub-section, followed by a discussion with further detail and clarifications on key findings. Conclusions and recommendations appear at the end of each EQ section. Recommendations considered to be the most important are listed first and in bold type under each EQ.

### Evaluation Question I

#### What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?

This EQ takes a comprehensive look at results achieved across all ERA interventions and approaches and positive and negative and intended and unintended outcomes. Data drawn from Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMELP) data, documents, IDI, FGD, and KII from all categories and types of beneficiaries and partners informed the analysis of this EQ. Findings are organized under an initial section on AMELP results and then the relevant EQ I Outcome Areas — Inclusion, Competitiveness and Economic Resilience, Transformation, and Confidence in Future Economy. Several cross-cutting EQ I findings relate to training outcomes across ERA’s programming; these are described in the Overall sub-section.

#### EQ I Findings

Under the original AMELP approved in April 2019, there were 10 performance indicators with one sub-indicator and two context indicators developed to measure the progress of ERA. What follows are the findings related to AMELP results as of Q2 of ERA’s third year of implementation.

AMELP Findings
I.1. There have been five iterations of the AMELP since initial approval in 2019. As a result of this process, one indicator was dropped, one was added, and three were significantly altered. The remaining nine remain the same, although collection and definitions have been adjusted periodically.
I.2. ERA received a ceiling increase for an additional year of implementation, responding to both a broadened mandate and COVID-19-related challenges. Responding to that, four of the nine initial (and still relevant) AMELP targets were adjusted.
I.3. ERA has gradually improved its ability to meet annual AMELP targets. In Year 1, only 40% of the set targets were met, and in Year 2, 70% targets were met. As of the second quarter of Year 3), 87% of the eight indicators that have updated data, appear to be on track to meet annual targets.
I.4. When aggregating actuals over 2.5 years with the revised life of the Activity, three main indicators risk not meeting targets: beneficiary confidence in their economic situation, new and improved employment, and direct and indirect beneficiaries from infrastructure.

<sup>1</sup> Per guidance provided at [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/How-to-Note\\_Preparing-Evaluation-Reports.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/How-to-Note_Preparing-Evaluation-Reports.pdf), findings are empirical facts based on data collected during the evaluation. Conclusions synthesize and interpret findings and make judgements supported by one or more findings. Recommendations are proposed actions to be taken by the Activity management team that are based on findings and conclusions.

The complexity and adaptive stance of ERA is evident when reviewing the evolution of the AMELP. Despite numerous adjustments to definitions and data collection protocols, it is clear that ERA overcame a slow start with performance in Year 1, and is now largely on track for most of its indicators. Although beneficiaries' economic optimism is understandably quite short of initial targets due to circumstances that occur once in a century ERA has produced results and make significant progress toward its targets despite the overwhelmingly difficult circumstances and challenges that the global COVID-19 pandemic presents. There are multiple examples of ERA's adaptive management, including staffing reorganization at the end of Year 1 and a quick response to COVID-19 restrictions, such as converting trainings to a digital platform, supporting distance learning and online service delivery for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and adding a specific focus on support to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

However, ERA has continued to underperform on two indicators, and it is unclear whether overall life of Activity targets will be achieved. Results under employment and number of infrastructure beneficiaries have missed targets each year. ERA has taken adaptive measures to programming in both areas to address underperformance. The progress of these indicators will be important to monitor during Year 4. Overall, ERA has made notable progress on its AMELP and appears on track in most areas to achieve overall Activity results.

## Overall

Overall Findings on Training Assistance for EQ 1
I.5. Increased self-confidence, boosted morale, idea generation, and opportunities to develop both personal and business relationships are top results reported by training and event beneficiaries.
I.6. Practical training models, site visits, individual consultations, and mentoring are most effective in producing results for trainee and MSME beneficiaries.
I.7. The expertise and quality of training instructors and consultants were routinely praised by trainee, MSME, educational institution and government beneficiaries.
I.8. Training and MSME beneficiaries frequently complained that training content was either too elementary or too sophisticated compared to the way the event was advertised.
I.9. Most ERA training and business beneficiaries appreciated organized events with a wide array of stakeholder representation and active facilitation and reported increased optimism or positivity after such events.

When asked to describe the most meaningful result of ERA assistance, beneficiaries across the board overwhelmingly responded that they gained self-confidence and that meeting people facilitated the exchange and generation of new ideas. This provided psychosocial support and helped build networks with lasting benefits. Additionally, trainings and assistance that included practical skills modules, follow-up individual consultations and peer-to-peer learning were found the most effective in producing economic outcomes for participants, showed the most adoption of skills, and were widely favored by beneficiaries. In some cases, there appeared to be a misalignment of training to participant need or level, as beneficiaries reported that training content was either too basic or too advanced for their level. This led to less effectiveness and hindered the ability to put the

### Feeling Supported

“... This program helped to realize perspectives for the future, to see this future... And certainly now I have some vision where to go and how to get there. There is an understanding which options are closing and which on the contrary can go up and this understanding inspires. And this feeling of support. You understand that you are not alone. That's cool to have this feeling of support and assistance. I cannot even tell to what extent this support is appreciated.” — *Female training beneficiary under grant to East Donbass Regional Development Agency*



knowledge or skills to use. ERA has researched online training conducted during the pandemic and is using the learning gained to address this issue adaptively.

## Inclusion

EQ I Findings Under Inclusion (Including Workforce Development)
I.10. Some beneficiaries reported accessing external grants or other finance and increasing sales or customers due to information received or contacts made during ERA-funded training.
I.11. Those reporting use of skills gained in training mostly cited examples related to advertising and marketing via social media and specific training aimed at IT specialists.
I.12. Many reported attending similar donor-funded entrepreneurship trainings in the past.
I.13. Some businesses that received grants for equipment reported improved productivity, expanded product lines, increased sales, and increased access to new markets.
I.14. Several businesses that received Inclusion grants are focusing on business expansion but lack basic business operational and planning skills and the capacity to properly train new staff hired as a condition of grant assistance.
I.15. Universities and VETs reported increased competitiveness based on material and curriculum support from ERA.
I.16. Universities reported that ERA's distance learning support — donated distance learning equipment and software — allowed them to continue classes and hold conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic.
I.17. Universities developed strategic partnerships with European institutions and leveraged ERA assistance to access additional European Union funding.
I.18. With ERA support, universities are beginning to generate their own revenue streams by starting to develop partnerships with local businesses, providing consulting services, particularly in IT, and commercializing research.
I.19. Students and universities reported optimism that ERA-funded improvements to classrooms and curricula will result in job placement/internships.
I.20. Education partners trained by ERA on dual education reported satisfaction with applying the model. Education partners and the Ministry of Education and Science reported optimism that this model will be scaled and will lead to increased job placement for graduates.
I.21. Despite ERA's support to universities and VETs for increased job placement or internships, a lack of overall opportunities in the region will likely force continued out-migration by graduates if there are no improvements in the local and regional economy.
I.22. The Roboklub STEM after-school programs for training children, largely from internally displaced families, provides a number of positive benefits for school-age youth and is a unique and innovative service in the region.
I.23. Students in the Agrokebety-East master's program appreciated the program's approach to practical, broad-based learning — and the six-month internship that provides joint training and mentorship support.
I.24. Sikorsky Challenge students felt the program had changed their mindsets, teaching them to evaluate a potential innovation through the lens of market utility and demand rather than primarily whether it is personally fulfilling for the entrepreneur.

**Inclusion.** While ERA does not currently fund start-ups, in multiple cases beneficiaries used knowledge and skills gained during ERA-funded trainings (such as business plan writing) to access grants or loans offered by other donor or government programs. Some beneficiaries also reported that, based on connections made with other businesses during training, they were able to increase sales or customers because they could partner to fill larger orders. Still others cited increased sales due to social media advertising skills that they gained and put to immediate use. However, particularly among those for whom training did not increase their economic opportunities, many reported having taken similar

trainings offered by other donors. Despite struggling to put what they learned to use, mostly due to lack of financing, the relevance of a topic to their level or need, or COVID-19 restrictions and related economic impacts, they were motivated to continue attending similar trainings to keep their spirits up, meet others, and get ideas for possible businesses.

**Inclusion Grants to Businesses.** The most successful inclusion grants to businesses have been for new equipment that enables a business to increase its product range or access new markets through improved quality. Both encourage the likelihood that newly created jobs will be viable in the long term. Inclusion grants to service-related businesses are less likely to create stable jobs, especially if they are not paired with technical assistance for business growth or staff training; these businesses are seeing high turnover in newly hired staff who are not being trained and may not have clearly defined roles or responsibilities. Most businesses that received inclusion grants requested business development assistance.

**Workforce Development.** ERA-supported universities, VETs, and professional lyceums reported that the technical competencies and marketable skills of students for the labor market will be greatly enhanced through use of state-of-the-art equipment and software as well as modernized, teacher-developed curricula that incorporate use of the new technical equipment in labs and classrooms. Students also reported that the pedagogical methodologies used in ERA-supported universities have changed significantly — from book learning and teacher-based lectures and lab work with old and obsolete equipment to the incorporation of expanded experiential-based pedagogical methodologies such as Socratic and dialogical practices by teachers, newly equipped labs, game-based and virtual reality or simulator-based learning platforms, lectures by foreign teachers, presentations by owners of enterprises, site visits to companies, participation in dual education programming while being mentored by company employees, access to six-month internships at certain companies, and participation in competition type events relevant to their courses of study. Some of the more innovative and popular solutions that ERA supports include the University Case Club model, through which students apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to find solutions to actual problems faced by companies instead of using case studies in textbooks; the Roboklub Centers that provide IT and STEM exposure for school-age children; and the Sikorsky Challenge which serve as innovation hubs for students who want to start their own enterprises at select universities. Finally, universities, VETs, and professional lyceums reported increased competitiveness and enrollment that they believe is due to ERA-funded improvements in curricula and equipment. Despite these improvements, these partners expressed concern that, due to factors beyond ERA’s control (ongoing conflict, closures of industrial or manufacturing complexes and the expectations of entry-level workers for increased salaries for entry level workers), many of their graduates will need migrate to other regions of the country and beyond to seek employment.

**Benefit of Engaging Private Sector in Education**

“I can say that the first most important thing is that we are now being taught through the Zoom platform by people who practice everything they talk about. They are practitioners, they are owners of large enterprises. They tell us the latest information. It is very useful.” — *Male student beneficiary enrolled in Agrokebety master’s program*

**Growth**

EQ I Findings Related to Targeted Growth Sector Assistance and Access to Finance
1.25. There are missed opportunities for additional synergies between and among ERA components, target sectors, and businesses within target sectors.
1.26. Many business beneficiaries were not offered or were not aware of additional, complementary support within their sectors that they could receive from ERA.

## EQ I Findings Related to Targeted Growth Sector Assistance and Access to Finance

I.27. Most business beneficiaries that chose to stay in the region are highly resilient and have practical, yet confident, attitudes about the future of their region.

I.28. There were no discernible demographic commonalities (e.g., by age, sex, vulnerability status, length of time in sector) across the most successful or most optimistic business beneficiaries.

I.29. ERA business beneficiaries that received multi-phased, tailored, stacked support were extremely satisfied with the quality and utility of the technical assistance, including its impact on motivation, long-term visioning, and hope for improved economic outcomes.

I.30. Most ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support have integrated new business management approaches, processes, and techniques, resulting in direct improvements in productivity and product or service diversification; in many cases — and despite a global economic downturn — ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support have already realized reduced costs, increased sales, expanded markets, and/or improved profits.

I.31. Most ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support are transferring improved management approaches, processes, and organizational skills to their personnel through formal and informal onsite trainings.

I.32. Some ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support admitted that they agreed to follow through with technical assistance only to receive grant funds, although they still acknowledged the value and utility of the technical assistance.

I.33. One-off technical assistance without follow-up support is not an effective catalyst and can unintentionally result in confusion, frustration, or unfulfilled expectations of potential ERA support; moreover, it absorbs resources that could be better invested elsewhere.

I.34. ERA's grant requirement of job creation works well for investments that need additional human capacity but can unintentionally compromise longer-term economic growth if businesses are using resources to pay for unnecessary workers.

I.35. Most ERA farmer festival exhibitors were highly satisfied with sales generated and new customers reached; some exhibitors expanded product lines and/or profiles in response to feedback, and most have repeat customers that are purchasing through the mail.

I.36. Sponsorship of international trade show participation is extremely valuable as an individual learning experience to identify international trends and standards but is not likely to deliver market expansion outcomes in the next several years, if at all.

I.37. Many ERA farmer festival exhibitors are female pensioners; this opportunity has provided self-confidence in their ability to financially provide for themselves.

I.38. The United Ukrainian Credit Union (UUCU) loan program, while demonstrating positive initial results, was not coordinated with other ERA support that could have amplified its impact.

I.39. ERA addressed initial UUCU loan concerns by providing technical assistance to reduce application burdens and increase local credit unions' capacity to work with farmers.

I.40. Of six participating credit unions, most UUCU loans originated from just one, potentially highlighting the need for additional but more targeted technical assistance.

I.41. WNISEF Guarantee Program funds have fully obligated ERA's grant contribution and guaranteed loans to three social enterprises by formal banks, but scalability and longer-term impact could be improved by shifting more risk to social enterprises and/or banks over time.

I.42. Ten bankable companies have been identified between the two transactions advisory firms (Soul Partners and Ernst & Young), with a high likelihood of achieving ERA's target of closing four transactions with a total value of the equivalent of approximately \$4.5 million in financing)for this round.

I.43. The transactions advisory pilot revealed that some SMEs are willing to at least partially cover the cost of transaction advisory services, a good sign that such services are in demand in the local market and can create potential leverage opportunities for ERA in the future.

## EQ I Findings Related to Targeted Growth Sector Assistance and Access to Finance

I.44 The transactions advisory pilot also revealed that not enough companies in the region are ready and/or willing to take on external financing to be able to scale up such a program in any significant way. This suggests a need to pair transactions advice with technical assistance to build a viable pipeline in the future.

**Business Resilience and Growth.** Based on their outlooks, attitudes, and adaptation to a wide variety of personal, professional, and financial shocks and stresses, ERA business beneficiaries are extremely well-positioned to maximally leverage ERA support as agents of consistent optimism and continued resilience. The greatest economic return on ERA investment is through the well-designed packages of phased assistance, or “stacked support,” that ERA offers to businesses within some target sectors. Relative to one-off assistance — such as a single study tour or initial consultation — stacked support addresses several simultaneous challenges and, as a result, is much more effective and efficient as an economic catalyst. Especially when businesses leverage this assistance to improve their workforce or increase competitiveness within their sectors, it has the potential to catalyze longer-term, more sustainable results at the regional level.

**Access to Finance.** ERA piloted six access to finance programs during the evaluation period, each focused on a different business segment. At the lower end of the business spectrum (up to \$5 million in annual revenue), ERA support focused on unlocking working capital debt. While beneficiary interviews indicate that those who received UUCU loans found them appropriate and useful, the program could have been better advertised and was not coordinated with technical assistance available to similar MSMEs through other ERA components. This could have amplified its impact. ERA did provide technical assistance to the credit unions in response to initial problems with loan disbursements, which appear to have paid off. However, 12 of the 18 loans disbursed during the reporting period originated from just one of the six participating credit unions, which may indicate a need for additional, more targeted support. The VNISEF program, while novel in its approach in Ukraine, could reach more enterprises more sustainably if more risk is shifted to borrowing social enterprises and/or banks over time (ERA currently takes 100% of the risk). At the higher end of the business spectrum (more than \$5 million in revenue), ERA support focused on unlocking both debt and equity, primarily through targeted transactions and pre-investment support. While the program identified 10 viable leads and generated useful learning, no funds had been disbursed at the time of this evaluation.

### Feedback from Target Growth Sector Business Beneficiaries

“Ninety percent of managers, business owners, those who are currently running business, did not complete any special training courses. And when there is information that helps to systematize yourself, your capacities, your production, this is always very useful... We expanded our consciousness and we understood who we are, where we are and where we are in the market... We simply became self-aware.” — *14M business beneficiary*

Regarding other types of support that would be helpful: “It’s better, let’s say, to improve the provided support. Don’t turn us away. The support should be more stable, so to say... If you promise, then do everything on time.” — *Vegetable farmer beneficiary*

“Well, of course, if every enterprise develops, this will contribute to the development of the whole community simultaneously. Because if an enterprise works, pays taxes, these deductions get into the local budget. And, of course, this is employment ... If we succeed in implementing the strategy, then the plan is to create additional jobs. Therefore, I think that if every enterprise, like ours, strives to implement a strategy, it will definitely have a positive effect on the development of the community.” — *14M business beneficiary*

## Transformation

EQ I Findings Related to Transformation
I.45. Through ERA support to the Ukrainian Leadership Academy (ULA), youth were engaged as leaders in a working group that helped develop an evidence-based strategy in Mariupol focused on youth needs and priorities.
I.46. Multiple voices and interests were represented in the participatory engagement process for the Mariupol strategy, which resulted in reported buy-in and accountability for implementation among stakeholders involved in strategy development.
I.47. ERA's ability to convene and consult a variety of stakeholders while developing transformation strategies showed officials how participatory engagement can be effective in empowering citizens and enabling urban areas to develop more responsive strategic plans.
I.48. ERA consultations, recommendations, and trainings helped city councils to structure positions of various interest groups, build a chain of actions, and estimate resources during strategy development.
I.49. ERA is assisting its partners in cities, raions, and oblasts in leveraging the empowerment and additional funding that arises from state decentralization.
I.50. According to city council members, ERA has helped clarify and prioritize development strategies and the most pressing infrastructure needs.
I.51. A number of government training beneficiaries report that ERA trainings helped them secure international donor funding, and on a few occasions helped them gain better employment within their departments.
I.52. Among ERA beneficiaries, even those reporting increased self-confidence, there is no clear determinant as to whether ERA support motivates beneficiaries to stay in the region or look for opportunities elsewhere in Ukraine or abroad.
I.53. Some training respondents reported that they gained encouragement and national pride via deeper engagement with the Ukrainian language and literature.
I.54. ERA has considered several approaches to building confidence, and it modified performance indicators, staffing, and its general organizational structure to be more responsive to USAID guidance.
I.55. Due to a lack of evidence, it is not possible to determine whether communication is being used effectively to influence confidence and build optimism.

**Transformation/Driving Vision.** ERA's current philosophy toward transformation, embodied in the macro equation, Inclusion + Growth = Transformation, underscores the complexity and systems dynamics occurring in eastern Ukraine. ERA's assistance with city and oblast officials via new approaches, strategies, concepts, and leveraging decentralization is resulting in transformation at the city and regional levels (e.g., Mariupol Strategy Development, development of IT clusters, Mariupol Investment Forum, and Transformation Strategy development in the seven coal mining cities in Donetsk oblast).

Through its work with youth and city councils, ERA has successfully promoted participatory governance models with local governments. Mariupol youth attending the ULA, demonstrated how their

### Results of Participatory Planning Processes

"The more opportunities we provide for youth to 'drop anchor' in Mariupol — and this is the very same model of urban development — the younger Mariupol becomes, and the more economic diversification we have due to the fact that young people are shifting from working class mentality towards entrepreneurial mindset." — *Mariupol City Council official*

"Because there are activities and goals set by myself and my organization.... I also have a responsibility to implement it. Responsibility to the people with whom I wrote this... We also began to communicate with the authorities even more. We began to understand each other much more." — *Cool Youth Strategy Working Group participant*

"We created working groups with civil society organizations. We were working very fruitfully with members of the public, too... So, we did have a very effective joint work and we are sort of reaping the benefits now of getting somehow closer to our local folks." — *Dobropillia city official*

involvement resulted in a more comprehensive evidence-based strategy and also facilitated long-term skill development and applied learning experiences for recent high school graduates. ERA's work with Shift, a non-profit youth organization in Kramatorsk, is another example of how transformation is occurring by curating spaces where young people's creativity and entrepreneurial spirit can be promoted and developed.

**Confidence/Optimism in the Future.** Beneficiary interviews identified multiple narratives related to linkages between attitudes and behavior. Many beneficiaries reported wanting to leave the region to find better opportunities in other regions of Ukraine or in countries such as Germany, Poland, or Turkey. Many also expressed frustration with economic, social, and geopolitical issues in the region. Others reported planning to stay in the region either due to family connections or to invest their efforts in helping the region change for the better. Respondents, both youth and adult, mentioned that those who leave often return when opportunities arise, or due to family responsibilities. A positive outcome of temporary migration is that they bring back fresh insights and innovative solutions that invigorate eastern Ukraine with new energy and vision.

ERA has tried various approaches to influence confidence, mostly through sharing stories of successful entrepreneurs and supporting events such as farmer festivals and the high-profile Mariupol Investment Forum. Recently, ERA has also trained about 40 local journalists on constructive journalism to build their capacity to promote the region's achievements and counter negative views of the region as only a conflict zone. Current metrics are insufficient to capture and attribute attitudes or behavior related to optimism that resulted due to ERA. ERA is currently developing a more robust learning strategy for measuring its effectiveness in communication and messaging.

## EQ I Conclusions

**Inclusion Training and Business Grants.** Self-confidence, information about external opportunities, and network building have contributed to economic outcomes for some training participants. However, lack of financing to start a business, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, and, in some cases, lack of alignment of training with participant needs has hindered many participants from putting their knowledge and skills to use or improving their economic situations. Other donors fund training that is similar to ERA entrepreneurship training. Given that beneficiaries report low economic results for general entrepreneurship training (unless combined with a grant), it may not be the most efficient use of ERA training resources. The highest payoff from building investment skills is through peer-to-peer learning (mentoring and individual consultation) and more specialized technical assistance either by sector (for example specialized IT trainings) or topic (social media advertising, cluster approach). Including business

### Attitudes Related to Confidence in the Future

"If you put aside all these military and political moments, then, of course, I see positive things here. This is my home, I grew up here, everyone grew up here. Well, communication is here, and work, respectively." — *Male, 47, Donetsk oblast, private entrepreneur*

"I think that it's about common efforts, common activities, a positive attitude towards your region. It's not the worst one possible, and there are possibilities for development. We need to learn to listen to each other and to work together." — *Female, 32, Donetsk oblast, social entrepreneurship training beneficiary*

"My view of the future doesn't foreshadow anything good. We live day by day. Maybe I was supposed to tell you that 'yes, we're moving forward, and everything's going to be fine,' but I'll tell you that, for me personally... we're just living, just getting by, floundering, and getting by, that's all. With product prices low and with high prices on all these films, fertilizers, heating and the rest." — *Female, 47, Luhansk oblast, vegetable sector beneficiary*

"When we came here with two children, there was a big board here saying 'The city of the strong people.' And we thought: why not happy? Why not healthy? Why strong? After three years here, we understood why. People here survive and are living in a continuous stress." — *Female, 37, Mariupol, IT training beneficiary*

development support with equipment would increase job creation, sales, and investment results for businesses receiving grants under the Inclusion component.

**Workforce Development.** Although grateful for the support, many professional lyceums, compared to universities and VETs, appear to be underserved by ERA. In particular, lyceums reported the need for additional equipment, such as whiteboards, tablets for student use, projectors, and metallurgy equipment, and especially the need to renovate and equip deteriorated classrooms and labs. While ERA has seen some initial success with its promotion of dual education, additional support is needed for job placement for graduates. The Roboklub STEM model provides a number of key resources that children and youth need to succeed and an opportunity to support multiple programmatic objectives (VPs, transformation, increased optimism and motivation for youth to stay in the region, IT sector growth, and workforce development).

**Business Resilience and Growth.** There are missed opportunities for additional synergies between and among ERA components, target sectors, businesses, and interventions that, if optimized, would yield improved returns on ERA investment. In some cases, similar types of businesses within the same sector sometimes receive different services, which leads to confusion and lost opportunities for catalyzed benefits that result from complementary, stacked support. For instance, most beneficiaries in the honey sector are not aware of available UUCU loans with favorable interest rates for input and equipment purchases, and many are not aware of the 30-70 Program for discounted inputs and equipment. UUCU lenders are not aware of any other services offered by ERA, including the 30-70 Program, GrandExpert farmer-beekeeper communication efforts, or technical trainings. There are also opportunities to strengthen market systems within and across sectors by expanding domestic supplier and buyer channels to include other current ERA business beneficiaries and to design interventions that reach beneficiaries in multiple Growth sectors, such as through coordination of farmer festivals or agro-tourism activities that could simultaneously reach beneficiaries in the produce farming, honey, tourism, and IT sectors.

Resources allocated to one-off events or services would have greater impact if offered together in a package of mutually reinforcing, phased services as stacked support. ERA should design stacked support packages for each target sectors by tailoring existing models. Where ERA provides stacked support to businesses, they reported extremely high satisfaction and success, including immediate integration of new management practices and improved business metrics, even in the midst of a global economic downturn. In almost all cases, ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support have already seen reduced costs, increased sales, expanded markets, and/or improved profits. Additionally, most business beneficiaries of stacked support are transferring improved processes and organizational skills directly to their personnel through formal or informal onsite trainings, which have broader, longer-term effects on the regional workforce.

**Access to Finance.** ERA's first year implementing the Access to Finance program was characterized by a period of piloting, experimentation, and learning. ERA piloted six initiatives that have demonstrated positive initial results after some course correction. However, there are opportunities to amplify their impact through better coordination with complementary ERA components. These early pilots could also benefit from overall strengthening, including additional and more targeted technical assistance to credit unions and SMEs and a more intentional approach to their longer-term sustainability.

**Transformation and Confidence in the Future.** It is important to note that ERA's transformation approach is challenging historical and deeply held mindsets regarding the ways that governments, businesses, universities, communities, youth, and other stakeholders should work together. It builds on

previous investments by USAID and other donors in the region. Paradigm shifts of this magnitude require time and long-term strategic thinking, a challenge compounded by limited ability to measure how ERA's interventions influence people's motivation and ability to stay in the region. It is important to understand the nuances of drivers of confidence and optimism and what motivates youth and businesses to stay in the region. While increasing economic opportunities (jobs and entrepreneurship) is a clear factor, it is important to understand which types of jobs will motivate certain groups to stay — low-skill entry-level jobs (service sector), manufacturing, agricultural, IT, etc., and how these opportunities align with visions of the future economy and workforce in the region. Thus, in addition to looking at Transformation and Confidence as a linear equation (Inclusion + Growth = Transformation), it is important to view Transformation and Confidence as reinforcing and driving factors for ERA's Inclusion, Workforce Development, and Growth investments to ensure that the Activity's assistance is helping to build workforce and market system capacity in sectors identified in local and oblast-level economic development plans. Participatory engagement, particularly of youth, in strategy development increases long-term engagement and buy-in to the development of their city and region.

### **EQ I Recommendations**

**I.a. To increase adoption of skills and economic outcomes, consider investing fewer resources in general online trainings, once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, (knowing that while online trainings can help reach a higher number and broader group of beneficiaries, key results are likely to be more psychosocial and less economic); instead, consider channeling more resources into support for individual business counseling and peer-to-peer learning across and within sectors to promising entrepreneurs from prioritized groups, and in specific, promising sectors for employment and apprenticeship.**

**I.b. Continue to expand support to partner educational institutions to assist graduates in the transition from school to work by establishing formal job placement centers, dual education, internships, post-training assistance, or other career placement services.<sup>2</sup>**

**I.c. Consider providing additional business development support for business grantees who received equipment, including designing personnel training programs, to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the grant.**

**I.d. Where possible, link interventions under different components and between and within growth sectors in a more coordinated fashion to leverage investments in similar beneficiaries, including designing more cross-sectoral interventions (e.g., agro-tourism). ERA should also consider integrating more diverse business types into each target growth sector (e.g., business advisors, marketing experts, legal advisors) to strengthen each target sector market system.**

**I.e. Consider offering multi-phased, stacked technical assistance to all business beneficiaries in each target sector to increase the likelihood of sustainable investment; potentially offer discrete support bundles to beneficiaries with different levels of sophistication to address concerns about misaligned content.**

**I.f. Consider encouraging business beneficiaries under the Growth component to design and implement onsite personnel training programs to scale knowledge and skills transfer,**

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond dual education programs and internships, such services would include job postings, job fairs, guidance on preparing resumes and interviewing, assistance with job applications, mentoring and coaching, following up on job status, alumni engagement, and post-training assessments of completers and employers.



**especially where a job creation requirement exists. If formally documented and registered, employees could be added as ERA direct beneficiaries and tracked through ERA workforce-related indicators.**

**I.g. Consider innovative models to provide financing support for women and members of vulnerable groups to start their own businesses. Some examples include a milestone-based, pay-for-results model for business service providers; business plan competitions funded in partnership with banks or other private sector partners; and support for social enterprises that employ and serve VPs.**

I.h. To increase alignment of training needs and use of new skills, continue to apply more rigorous selection criteria for training participants. Provide clear descriptions of training topics and target participant levels (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) in application materials and advertisements.

I.i. Continue to expand support for collaborative events with a wide range of stakeholders, including practical workshops and team-based competitions, to promote business growth, support psychosocial wellbeing, and foster more diverse engagement.

I.j. Build the capacity of educational partners to conduct regular labor market assessments focused on employer human resource demands and skills requirements to identify opportunities in specific sectors for graduates to enter the workforce or open businesses..

I.k. Consider expanding the Roboklub STEM model to other towns and adding basic career education and planning, financial literacy training, life and employability skills training, and introduction to basic entrepreneurship for older children to better prepare them for the workforce after graduation.

I.l. To help scale stacked support to smaller businesses, ERA should explore future integration of a reciprocity element into the stacked support it provides; businesses that receive support could mentor micro- or small businesses within their geographic area or industry, create training modules based on experience, or participate in informational events as role models to other regional businesses.

I.m. Consider encouraging business beneficiaries to complete some level of technical assistance activities prior to receiving financial assistance, which will improve the likelihood of investment sustainability and help identify the most motivated recipients.

I.n. Consider re-evaluating the job creation requirement for grants to ensure it is not in conflict with incentives to improve productivity through automation.

I.o. Develop a one-stop resource or portal that lists events and support opportunities with related skills levels and ensures that learning events integrate content aimed at multiple knowledge levels.

I.p. Consider strengthening the UUCU grant by raising awareness, providing business development services to target MSMEs, and providing additional technical assistance to credit unions.

I.q. Consider increasing WNISEF risk-share with banks and enterprises to free up funds for other borrowers.

I.r. Consider deploying targeted, on-demand technical assistance — preferably through a dedicated fund that sits alongside one or more partner financial institutions — to SMEs to increase bankability and investment readiness and build future pipeline for transactions advisory services.

I.s. Continue to support training and skills building for government staff, as they seem to utilize the knowledge they gain and help leverage funding at the municipal level to implement strategies.

I.t. Draw on ERA’s work to date with its target cities in eastern Ukraine to identify components of success and lessons learned from the local context to help replicate success in other cities.

I.u. Showcase cities, projects, and partnerships that are attractive to the general population as well as to specific stakeholders (applicable for the cross-cutting communications team) to motivate other cities and sectors in their strategic planning and coalition building.

I.v. To assist with further targeting messaging and investments, ERA could support specialized research that identifies demographic, economic, or other factors that drive confidence and optimism and clarify how ERA can use this in its approach or strategy. Since increased optimism is an Activity-level objective, ERA could consider partnering with the USAID DG East Activity or perhaps USAID could support this research to better clarify its expected Activity-level results.

I.w. To increase ERA’s ability to contribute to and measure changes in optimism, USAID should provide clearer guidance on the strategic direction and concrete, expected results under this component.

## Evaluation Question 2

### How have women’s opportunities been influenced by ERA interventions?

This question examines the extent to which positive results have been achieved for women, reduced gender gaps, and empowered women. Key intervention areas include training and workforce development for women, assistance to women-owned or -led MSMEs and entrepreneurs, and women’s leadership and networking initiatives. Findings relate to the Women’s Economic Opportunities and Empowerment outcome area.

### EQ 2 Findings

EQ 2 Findings Related to Women’s Economic Opportunities and Empowerment
2.1. ERA’s funding to several Ukrainian organizations provides targeted support to women in eastern Ukraine aimed at increasing economic opportunities, networking, and leadership.
2.2. While more than 60% of ERA beneficiaries are women, the representation of women facing an intersection of vulnerabilities or discrimination is low.
2.3. Female ERA beneficiaries are primarily engaged under the Inclusion component and represent a much smaller proportion of beneficiaries under Growth-focused interventions (representing about one-third of total Growth beneficiaries, with the majority involved in Tourism).
2.4. Parenting responsibilities and lack of childcare support are obstacles for women in making use of the knowledge and skills gained through ERA-funded trainings. This problem is particularly acute for female IDPs, who often lack social or familial support.
2.5. Viewpoints expressed by both male and female beneficiaries indicate a possible lack of awareness of gender equality issues among the broader set of ERA beneficiaries and region.

**Women’s Economic Opportunities and Leadership.** ERA supports business plan and entrepreneurship training to women through grants to Ukrainian Women’s Fund, East Donbass Regional Development Agency, and Pokrovsk League of Professional Women. ERA also supports the inclusion of women in the IT sector by targeting women with trainings by Global Compact. ERA works with the Slavic Heart to provide support to survivors of gender-based violence. In Year 3, ERA is also supporting a network-building initiative among women entrepreneurs. Based on ERA monitoring data, women as a group make up 60% of ERA beneficiaries, with a similar percentage of women reporting new or better employment. However, looking at the categories of most vulnerable women, single female-headed households (SFHH) represent 6.9% of beneficiaries and 6.1% of beneficiaries reporting new or better

employment. Women who are IDPs represent only 8% of beneficiaries, and women with three or more children represent about 3%.

Women reported being unable to move forward with their business plans and other opportunities due to their roles as primary caregiver in their homes and the lack of available childcare. This problem is particularly acute for single mothers, mothers of children with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and women who are IDPs. IDPs often do not have a social network or family nearby to provide support with childcare. In addition to being unable to put to use the skills they have gained, women reported that, without childcare it is difficult to attend or participate in trainings. In one case, multiple women complained that they were told the childcare would be available during a planned ERA-funded training, but as the event approached this option was cancelled. These women reported that the lack of childcare caused them significant inconvenience and threatened their ability to participate.

The opinions of female beneficiaries regarding online training were mixed. Some appreciated the flexibility that online training allows and found it a helpful way to manage caregiver responsibilities. Others reported that they needed to get away from their household duties to focus on learning new skills and preferred in-person events.

## **EQ 2 Conclusions**

ERA has exceeded targets for participation of women and has successfully engaged women in its interventions. However, for specific sub-categories of women, participation is much lower. ERA is working with survivors of gender-based violence to address their needs; however, there is little evidence that ERA has designed specific strategies to address the needs of other groups of women who experience intersections of vulnerability. Overall, a majority of ERA's work with women has occurred under Inclusion assistance. Within target growth sectors, tourism has the highest participation by women (including SFHH), and a significant number of women (except SFHH) have also participated in IT skills-building trainings.

Prevailing attitudes of both men and women in the region on gender equality indicate a lack of awareness of issues and challenges that women face. To advance gender equality, both men and women (including youth) must be engaged in changing roles and attitudes. Investments in the region in childcare and financing of women-owned businesses would increase women's participation in the workforce and as business owners. ERA has focused on encouraging women in IT; in other cases, the Activity can do more to counter gender-stereotyped sectors for women. Often in traditional environments, people need assistance in "thinking outside of the box." Development assistance is poised to provide new ideas by drawing successful examples from similar environments within the broader region or globally.

## **EQ 2 Recommendations**

**2.a. To increase economic results among female beneficiaries, address the obstacles that diverse women face in taking advantage of economic opportunities (specifically, access to childcare and access to financing). For example, ERA could provide childcare for ERA-funded trainings and events. ERA could also consider investing in the promotion of childcare services as a business. Other innovative options for addressing childcare should be explored such as community-based cooperative childcare models. Recommendation 1.h above discusses potential financing solutions. Several strategies may be necessary to reach diverse segments of women.**

2.b. As with ERA's assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, continue to define the intersectionality of discrimination and vulnerability that women in the region face to identify specific

subsets of vulnerable women and their needs (for example, women who are single parents, rural women, female IDPs, etc.).

2.c. Expand on the approach ERA has used with survivors of GBV and female IDPs to further develop specific strategies that target the needs of various segments of women.

2.d. To increase awareness of the challenges that women face (including youth) face, integrate a gender awareness approach across all interventions. ERA should look for opportunities to involve men in efforts to reduce barriers and obstacles (including gender-based violence) and stereotyped gender roles, behaviors, attitudes, and norms to promote improved female empowerment.

2.e. Through strategic messaging and communication and focused support to women jobseekers and entrepreneurs, encourage openness among men and women to non-typical sectors to expand economic possibilities and job creation and growth, and to begin to alter behaviors and norms. This may require ERA to provide examples from outside Ukraine to spur ideas and innovation.

#### Attitudes Related to Gender

“I think this problem is far-fetched, and we have no gender differences at all. I understand that, again, our wind from the West wants to see them in us, but they are not there.” — *Male IDP business owner, FGD*

“The region has its specific features... What are the main industries? Mining, steelmaking. Who are employed? Mostly men? Male professions prevail, unfortunately. The region is characterized with heavy industries. Therefore, the prevailing occupation for women is secretary, kindergarten teacher and so on... If a woman is able to earn money, there will be no abuse in the family, and she will be more independent. The infrastructure will develop around women both female oriented and general, such as small business, shops, hospitals. Everything is connected.” — *Female training beneficiary, under grant to East Donbass Regional Development Agency*

“Overcoming Gender Inequality [training] surprised me. The attention was really paid to this issue. I have learned many stories that women entrepreneurs can be successful, much more successful than men, that they can achieve big enough success in business. It is aspirational.” — *Female training beneficiary, under grant to Global Compact*

“Indeed, there are some limitations in the ability of women to take the position of a leader...there are also certain peculiarities, not difficulties, but peculiarities, in the conduct of business by women. Because, as a rule, we still have a woman taking a maternity leave to take care of children, as a rule, a woman has the main responsibilities for housekeeping, which include a very wide range of household responsibilities, which, of course, leaves an imprint on her business area.” — *Female IDP business owner, FGD*

“We’re talking about nothing. I don’t know what gender is, this word. What is gender equality?” — *Male IDP business owner, FGD*

### Evaluation Question 3

#### How have opportunities for vulnerable populations been influenced by ERA interventions?

This EQ explores how ERA-supported interventions and approaches are relevant to the needs of vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations, how they have contributed to increased opportunities for these groups, and to what extent targeted growth sectors are inclusive of VPs. Analysis of this EQ was based on interviews with beneficiaries from targeted VPs, FGDs with IDP business owners and non-business owners, select KIIs, and document review. Key intervention areas include workforce development and job creation for target VPs, support to organizations that offer services to VPs, and assistance to MSMEs and entrepreneurs from vulnerable groups. For this evaluation, target VPs include IDPs, returnees, people living with disabilities, single parents, families with three or more children, veterans, people living within 5 kilometers of the LOC, and people living within 6 to 20 kilometers of the LOC. Since EQ 2 focuses specifically on women’s opportunities and outcomes, EQ 3 analysis is focused on other vulnerable groups and does not address gender.

## EQ 3 Findings

EQ 3 Findings Related to Opportunities for Target Vulnerable Populations
3.1. ERA-funded grants have supported NGOs working with vulnerable populations to build their capacity in program development, project implementation, management, training, and community relations, including in improved outreach and building improved relations for VPs and the communities in which they live. Some grants have funded social enterprises such as gyms for the elderly.
3.2. Among VPs, most ERA assistance is reaching people living within 6 to 20 kilometers of the LOC and IDPs across all components.
3.3. The vegetable sector mostly engages people living within 5 kilometers of LOC and women. I4M mostly engages people living within 20 kilometers of the LOC. The honey and tourism sectors engage the target VPs most broadly across almost all groups.
3.4. While the IT sector is often cited as an option for people with disabilities, single parents, or caregivers of multiple children, few from these groups are currently reached through ERA IT interventions.
3.5. Under Inclusion and Growth, aside from youth and communities in close proximity to the LOC, very few interventions specifically target any vulnerable groups or their particular needs.
3.6. There is a lack of clarity about USAID expectations for the prioritization of and expected results for VPs.
3.7. Reported obstacles and external factors that hinder economic opportunities for VPs include housing, financing, and psychological trauma.

**Opportunities for Target Vulnerable Populations.** ERA trainings have reached a broad set of beneficiaries from targeted vulnerable or prioritized groups including youth, women, IDPs, and people living in close proximity to the LOC. This support has increased business skills and disseminated information about different sectors, networks, and personal and business connections among these beneficiaries. However, based on the beneficiary database, only VPs from the target group “living within 6–20 kilometers from the LOC” make up a significant portion of ERA beneficiaries (32%). Other groups account for 15% or less of total beneficiaries. Like women, other VPs are mostly engaged under the Inclusion component, with far fewer VPs integrated into Growth component activities.

All VPs have social issues and needs due to a multitude of complexities. IDPs report a lack of affordable housing. Beneficiaries across the board cite support for ongoing psychological trauma from the conflict as a key issue or need — particularly those living close to the LOC.

Additionally, lack of financing and childcare for female members of VP groups keeps many from moving forward on their business plans. ERA’s research efforts have initiated hard-to-discuss social issues, an important pathway for improved acceptance and inclusion for all VPs. In addition, ERA’s research has

### Attitudes Related to Vulnerable Populations and Their Needs

“IDPs are perceived by some government authorities or someone else as second-class people. It leads to the fact that you cannot even register a current account in the state-run banks – in Privatbank or in Oschadbank. You cannot get a loan.” — *Male IDP beneficiary from Donetsk*

“Today, everyone who could do something active have assimilated, moved. They have found where to move. As for those who stays here, these are people who could not move for health reasons. And they are almost equal to the elderly who are also helpless.” — *Employed male beneficiary from Luhansk*

“Internally displaced people are the most vulnerable people because they are left with no roof over their heads. I myself am an internally displaced person.” — *Female beneficiary from Luhansk*

“The one thing that could have been helped was job creation. That would definitely be a big help. Not just job creation, but job creation with decent wages. With a sane, shall we say, at least.” — *Female beneficiary from Luhansk*

“Pensioners who get minimum pension is very vulnerable at present due to rise in prices for public utilities, food, medications. Also, I think that people with disabilities are vulnerable because many companies do not provide employment for people with disabilities. Not everyone can live on disability pension.” — *Student beneficiary from Sea of Azov region*

outlined many of the important or key barriers and issues related to the 18 targeted groups to improve targeting and inclusion for the ERA program. However, it is not yet clear how this evidence is resulting in new and more targeted activities for impact, scale, and sustainability.

### **EQ 3 Conclusions**

The broad range of VPs requires an understanding of each group's needs, challenges, and opportunities, as well as the intersectionality across and between groups. To achieve impact and scale, assistance must acknowledge diverse needs and tailor responses appropriately. To start, reducing the number of targeted VP groups and aligning those groups based on economic criteria for increased inclusion would enable the Activity to have greater impact, increase efficiency, and create a multiplier effect to achieve scale. In addition, ERA's work with vulnerable populations would benefit from a clearer approach and strategy for integration of VPs across ERA components that links VPs to ERA's targeted economic growth sectors and economic visioning and other work with cities. , and acknowledges the dynamism and intersectionality within and between groups. It is important to integrate this model for target beneficiaries seamlessly. Some sectors, such as honey and tourism, appear to have the potential to engage a broad set of beneficiaries across a spectrum of VPs. ERA support for IT training also has broad reach among certain groups but more financial support and specialized training for IT entrepreneurs may be needed to increase economic results.

Many beneficiaries express the view that the most vulnerable (elderly, single parents, parents of children with disabilities, and people with physical disabilities) require social assistance but that all others can succeed if they want to. This may indicate a lack of awareness in communities where ERA works related to the issues and needs of VPs, and that mainstreaming awareness into current activities and communication strategies could encourage further acceptance of VPs and action by stakeholders. ERA has done this to some extent under its Transformation/Driving Vision component by engaging VPs in the strategy development process.

### **EQ 3 Recommendations**

**3.a. USAID/Ukraine should provide clear and proactive guidance to ERA on the objectives, expected results, and focus of its work with vulnerable groups as they contribute or relate to achievement of USAID's DO or CDCS strategy. We recommend increased engagement between ERA staff and USAID staff with inclusion expertise — at the Mission (Gender Advisor), E&E Bureau (Gender Advisor), or perhaps the Human Rights team in the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance — to assist in providing ongoing guidance and direction.**

**3.b. Taking into account specific challenges and opportunities for VPs, continue to further integrate more VPs into ERA's target growth sectors, including through value-added product development or linked services, and investigate community social enterprise opportunities. To create additional and diverse jobs, ERA may want to explore additional ways to connect selected industries to one another. For example, the creative industries and food sectors could be linked to the tourism sector.**

**3.c. Continue to pursue strategies for prioritizing VPs and ongoing assessment of needs and opportunities based on a nuanced understanding of the drivers of their vulnerability, acknowledgement of the dynamism and intersectionality within and between groups, and linkages to economic criteria.**

3.d. Continue to target grants and support to prioritized VPs, linked to specific sectors and growth opportunities. As ERA currently has multiple grants whose programs aim to improve skills and entrepreneurship for women, ERA could consider re-opening a grant call for prioritized VPs linked to specific sectors and growth opportunities.

3.e. Enhance mainstreaming and communication approaches to build awareness of VPs and their needs across components and among its existing beneficiaries and partners, many of whom revealed biases in interviews. For example, during trainings or community events, ERA could integrate messaging around VPs in that community, highlighting not only successes but increasing awareness of challenges for these groups. Another example is in working with city councils: as part of capacity building assistance, help city councils to put in place systems and processes to identify, engage, and address the needs of VPs. This in turn could be done with ERA’s networking support for businesses and sectors by engaging participants in discussions that help build awareness and support businesses to adopt policies that reduce discrimination. These efforts will help further integrate VPs into communities and increase their economic opportunities.

**Evaluation Question 4**

**Given the available opportunities, is ERA maximizing coordination/collaboration with partners to achieve results?**

EQ 4 examines current coordination and collaboration with partners in relation to results achieved. To avoid confusion, Resonance has defined coordination as a lower-touch partnership, with activities such as information sharing to avoid duplication and leverage other networks. Resonance considers collaboration to be more significant work performed together that includes shared goals, resource sharing, and joint activities. Analysis was based on input from ERA staff and KIIs with government, education, and private sector partners. Findings relate to the Collaboration/Partnerships outcome area.

**EQ 4 Findings**

<b>EQ 4 Findings Related to Collaboration/Partnerships</b>
4.1. Prior to data collection, ERA identified 73 distinct partners. Based on the above definitions, ERA further classified 28 of these as coordination partnerships and 45 as the more intensive collaboration partnerships.
4.2. Although many partnerships are just beginning, both GOU and education stakeholders noted substantial results. For example, GOU partners pointed to ERA technical assistance as helping advance critical reforestation efforts, new economic development plans, or large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Luhansk Connector Railway. Education partners have leveraged ERA partnerships to attract new investment and partnerships from European partners.
4.3. Seven partners identified were not fully aware of ERA activities or able to validate current activities despite being identified as more intensive collaboration partners.
4.4. Partners most often criticized ERA for implementation delays, especially around construction.
4.5. Beneficiary interviews illustrated an active and complex donor landscape, with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) the most often cited. ERA and UNDP meet frequently to avoid duplication, but they do not collaborate actively on joint programming.
4.6. ERA employs a multi-faceted approach to engaging the private sector. This includes providing linkages and playing a facilitative role, training and technical assistance (especially around dual education), and funding.
4.7. ERA is particularly effective at facilitating connections and communication among universities, private companies, and government.

## Collaboration/Partnerships

Exhibit 3 provides a graphical representation of the number and type of partnerships included in ERA's network. The ET interviewed or received written responses from 31 of the 73 partners identified by ERA. Those responses revealed a spectrum of results and satisfaction. Thirteen partners identified accomplishment of activities based on working with ERA (represented in green).

The most notable results were with GOU and education partners. For example, GOU partners noted ERA technical assistance that helped advance critical reforestation efforts, new economic development plans, or large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Luhansk Connector Railway. Education partners leveraged ERA support to attract new investment and build relationships with European

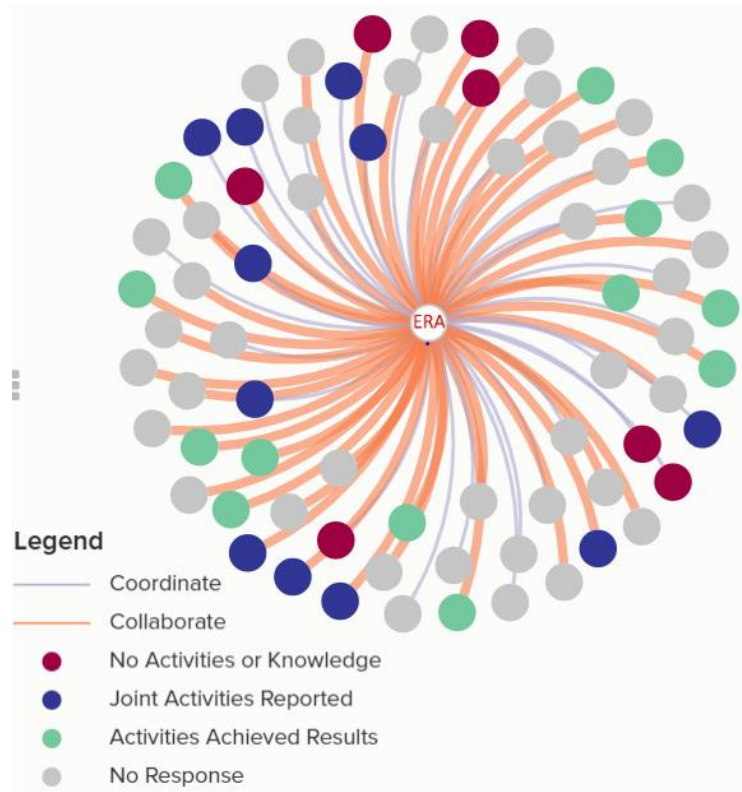
universities. However, seven partners interviewed were unaware of working with ERA or unfamiliar with ERA at all (represented in red). The three media outlets, in particular, spoke of pulling information about ERA from their Facebook page, but reported no active collaboration.

In general, partners were quick to praise ERA's acumen, responsiveness, and dedication to those within eastern Ukraine. But when asked about any challenges with ERA, the most common criticisms related to delays in implementation, including construction activities, awarding grants, and mobilizing technical support. Partners are divided as to why delays occur; they cite COVID-19, stringent U.S. Government contracting regulations, and inefficiencies on the part of ERA.

## EQ 4 Conclusions

ERA's depth and diversity is reflective of its complex mandate and opportunistic approach to responding to quickly emerging needs of the region during the first two years of implementation. This blend of partnerships has the potential to maximize results, but the number of partners that ERA identifies for high-touch collaborations creates the risk of an unmanageable number of relationships and workstreams. Some partners' lack of familiarity with ERA, and delays in delivering commitments to partners, both point to overextension with the current network of partners. In some instances, as with UNDP, there is only basic coordination despite the fact that 25% of interviewed beneficiaries mention UNDP. This raises the risk of duplication or failure to maximize joint efforts to achieve shared objectives. For example, UNDP noted that increased coordination on assistance to VETs could be useful.

**Exhibit 3. ERA's Partnership Network and Current Results**





Despite these concerns, ERA's quickly deployed technical expertise catalyzes important results at the regional and national levels for Ukraine partners. Educational partnerships have delivered impressive short-term results that point to sustained change for the future. ERA has done a noteworthy job of inspiring and galvanizing partners around development and has become known as a credible convener around complex issues. ERA's comparative advantage lies in expertise that leverages donor-led investment, stacked intensive support, and knowledge transfer for MSMEs; connects actors across the region, and facilitates high-profile investment opportunities. ERA's strategy for supporting MSMEs is clear and offers flexibility in responding to a variety of needs; however, methods for measuring or vetting the results PSE more generally are less clear.

#### **EQ 4 Recommendations**

**4.a. Review the list of 73 partnerships and reduce the intensity of some collaborative partnerships to enable the team to fully deliver on commitments. An ideal time to do this would be during work planning prior to Year 4.**

**4.b. Prioritize partnerships through which ERA can deliver the competitive advantage identified above. In other instances, ERA can use its relationships to offramp partners to other organizations.**

**4.c. As part of the recent PSE strategy that ERA submitted, USAID and ERA should develop clear priorities and expected results around PSE as a means to secure enduring outcomes from its work.<sup>3</sup> These should be both ambitious and realistic given the operating environment. The PSE strategy under development should clearly distinguish between current forms of support that ERA provides to individual businesses versus PSE, which is the facilitation of partnerships and linkages to leverage private sector resources, influence, and knowledge to catalyze broader, more sustainable changes within a sector, community, or regional economy. ERA's PSE strategy should introduce metrics — either as formal or internal indicators — that can monitor whether PSE efforts are having the intended effect at a larger scale.**

4.d. Going forward, new partnerships should be not only opportunistic but intentional and should link explicitly to ERA's comparative advantage in the donor landscape and to the Activity's articulated expected results. ERA should also identify partnerships that are anticipated to produce large-scale results after the life of the Activity. These are promising but require USAID's recognition of the risk and resources required for such commitments.

4.e. Continue to emphasize and prioritize relationships with the GOU and Education partners; these show the greatest promise for sustainable results through which resources delivered will have a multiplier effect.

4.f. ERA's Inclusion team should determine whether areas of programming similar to that of UNDP are valid based on the dramatic needs of the region, or if there is unnecessary duplication. ERA should also

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of PSE might include continuing to facilitate and expand partnerships between the private sector and universities that can contribute to ongoing support and financing for improved curriculum, equipment, and job placement; integrating a wider variety of businesses into sectoral work to strengthen market systems; continuing to include private sector stakeholders in dialogue with local authorities; providing more technical assistance to local credit unions to administer loans to target beneficiaries (already a recommendation under Access to Finance); and strengthening the capacity of local business service providers to respond to market demand at market prices.

explore with UNDP areas where complementary, coordinated programming could result in greater impact for both.

### Evaluation Question 5

#### How well has ERA identified and reinforced the capacity of key local actors to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation ends?

This question explores the long-term sustainability of ERA interventions and effectiveness of current capacity building efforts with grantees, educational institutions, local government, oblast-level departments, and MSME beneficiaries. The analysis is based on data drawn from document review and KIIs and relates to the Sustainability outcome area.

#### EQ 5 Findings

EQ 5 Findings Related to Capacity Building and Sustainability
5.1. As demonstrated in the Year 3 work plan and implementation, ERA is planning for the sustainability of efforts through university partnerships and investments in target growth sectors.
5.2. Although in its early stages, ERA has identified a range of local actors and developed performance measures under the foreign assistance standard indicator CBLD-9.
5.3. City councils reported that ERA assistance has built their capacity in a variety of areas and helped them build relationships with constituents that will endure beyond the strategy development process.
5.4. Oblast-level officials involved in regional strategy development reported appreciation for ERA support but did not recognize increased capacity or any changes in their systems or processes as a result.
5.5. Assistance to local actors in the development of coalitions and clusters supports sustainable long-term economic development by helping to catalyze and build momentum for a more diversified and integrated economy.
5.6. NGO grantees reported that ERA resources and support have helped their organizations to develop and, in some cases, further professionalize aspects of their operations. This contributes to the increased number of local organizations sustainably providing training services in the region.

**Sustainability/Capacity Building.** ERA has identified areas of sustainability and is developing plans to reinforce capacity development in future years. The introduction of dual-education approaches fundamentally shifts the future of education and job skill development by bringing creating a sustainable approach to aligning the needs of businesses and universities. For other stakeholders, efforts center on sustainable income generation (e.g., in the honey sector, grants support the rental of pollen-rich herb, shrub, and tree planting equipment; for civil society organizations, engagement with entrepreneurial activities; and within the IT sector, offering IT business services to the region’s manufacturing and engineering companies). At the municipal level, city officials reported that their capacity has been built and enables them to transfer skills and experiences with participatory strategy development to effectively plan for the future. Additionally, strengthened relationships with citizens and businesses represent an enduring benefit of ERA assistance.

A challenging area for sustainability is outdated industrial areas, where the workforce can remain trapped in obsolete work, even among resident youth, who show more allegiance to family tradition. The Pittsburgh Model and ERA’s support for the emerging coal mining cities strategy are promising approaches to address transition to a more modern, diversified economy.

Regarding the capacity building of NGO partners, several reported that ERA’s grant requirements and support helped them build their organizational capacity and further professionalize aspects of their

operations. At the oblast level, while officials lauded ERA’s support for the strategy development process, officials did not report any changes in their capacity or approach to processes as a result of ERA assistance.

## EQ 5 Conclusions

ERA has identified key actors (NGOs, GOU, education partners, the private sector) with potential to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation and has recently developed performance measures and improvement plans for many of these partners. There is evidence at the local level that ERA’s support has already built the capacity of city councils in participatory planning and other areas, and that both the processes and the relationships will yield enduring positive results. However, there is insufficient evidence to date that oblast-level officials have changed their mindsets or will use similar processes in the future without ERA support. City officials may feel empowered by ERA, but their future success and sustainability will depend on ongoing support and cooperation with oblast-level officials. Successful examples and lessons learned can be drawn from ERA’s work with diverse communities to demonstrate the potential of sustainable approaches and changes in mindsets to communities that do not yet demonstrate the same capacity.

### Capacity-Building Results for City Officials

“All the projects that we have implemented and are implementing together, they helped us, one way or another, to structure more clearly the approaches toward their implementation.” — *Mariupol city official*

“We do hope very much that the long-term outcome of this is a traditional event, a regular one, that we will receive assistance and be able to hold festivals like that in our communities all by ourselves in the future. That is, the last year’s result was that we could see how events like that could be held professionally... for us, it provided a very good understanding of how things could be organized the proper way... So... the medium-term outcomes is what we have already done, and the long-term ones are the new skills we learn, new knowledge, and cooperation experience, including cooperation with the donor.” — *Berdiansk city official*

[*What has changed in the work of the City Council*]

“First of all, of course, it is the fact that us and businesses are now closer to each other. Secondly, we have come to understand now that we have developed a capacity to write a community strategy on our own.” — *Starobliisk city official*

## EQ 5 Recommendations

**5.a. Continue to assess the long-term capacity of its partners and other local actors and consider how to structure interventions to maximize potential for sustainability beyond the Activity. ERA should build on its initial successes in facilitating strong relationships between stakeholders, as these can be the foundation for enduring change to processes and mindsets in the region.**

5.b. Build more deliberate capacity-building and organizational development assistance into interventions and support to local actors or institutions.

5.c. Consider strengthening its support to key actors, particularly businesses and government, to assess risk and develop more robust risk reduction and adaptation strategies as part of a longer-term approach to sustainability in eastern Ukraine.

## Cross-Cutting

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this section address issues related to operational and measurement issues that span components and EQs.

### Cross-Cutting Findings

Cross-Cutting Findings related to Operational Issues and Metrics
6.1. Across components and beneficiary groups, there are common complaints related to ERA's grant process and delays.
6.2. There are several examples of current Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (AMELP) indicators that are either failing to capture results or potentially failing to properly incentivize more results-focused, sustainable approaches.

**Grant Process and Delays.** Representatives of educational institutions expressed deep appreciation for ERA's technical and material assistance, but also wished that the grant approval process period could be shortened. Almost all ERA business grant applicants raised concerns about the length of time the process takes, lack of communication from ERA, and especially the challenges that delays create for business planning. Some businesses experienced financial losses due to ERA's unmet timelines.

**Measuring Results.** The current AMELP lacks indicators that capture short-term intermediate workforce development outputs and outcomes. For example, under Workforce/Youth Development, longer-term outcomes such as new or better employment for students and youth may not occur within the life of ERA implementation. Additionally, current indicators appear to encourage investment of Activity resources in reaching more people through interventions that are not resulting in sustainable economic outcomes for beneficiaries. Finally, it is difficult to capture specific outcomes related to gender, VPs, and increased optimism in the region because the expected results are poorly defined.

### Cross-Cutting Conclusions

As important context, ERA should be commended on the large number of grants awarded in Years 2 and 3, as well as its existing pipeline. ERA has already take adaptive management steps such as increasing grants staff and streamlining its application process to address delays and bottlenecks within its control. However, it is important to note that any continued delays in grants may significantly jeopardize the activities and results that ERA and beneficiaries are able to realize in the remaining three years of implementation. Past delays have caused negative attitudes among some partners and beneficiaries, and reluctance to continue working with ERA. In the most extreme cases, delays and lack of proper communication or planning has resulted in negative, unintended outcomes for business beneficiaries.

There are opportunities to further capture and communicate results across all ERA components and investments and clearly define expected results. For example, ERA may want to consider ways to capture and better tell the story of its work under workforce development. Currently, some results are captured under cross-cutting indicators on training, skills adoption, and employment. However, investments in improved curricula that meet the needs of the region do not appear to be captured, but are described as a result in ERA's Theory of Change. Additionally, some output indicators may be incentivizing short-term quantity-focused results instead of long-term economic outcomes.

### Cross-Cutting Recommendations

6.a. Continue to improve communication with grant applicants through the receipt and review phases of application, and set initial realistic expectations

6.b. Take additional precautions to ensure that delays or disruptions to planned assistance due to internal policies or processes do not inadvertently cause financial hardship to business beneficiaries; if this occurs, ERA should fast-track resolution to avoid further economic disruption.

6.c. Consider ways to measure and communicate ERA's results under workforce or youth development that are not currently captured elsewhere. For example, consider disaggregating by "student of assisted educational institution." Another option could be a learning activity focused on exploring results of ERA's efforts to improve curricula and facilities for education partners.

6.d. USAID should review indicators and expected results to confirm that they properly incentivize use of Activity resources for interventions that are more likely to produce long-term economic outcomes rather than simply increase the number of people reached or trained.

## ANNEX A. EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

### I. Introduction and Summary Information

This is a Statement of Work (SOW) for a mid-term performance evaluation of USAID’s Economic Resilience Activity implemented by DAI Global LLC (detailed information is presented in the table below). The current COR is Larissa Piskunova, and the Alternate COR is Nathaniel Bills.

In August 2018, Resonance was awarded the Analytical Services in support of the Economic Resilience Activity (ERA\_AS) activity. Under Component C of this contract, Resonance will conduct a mid-term performance evaluation of ERA. Per Resonance’s Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and approved annual work plans, the evaluation will take place in Spring 2021. This timeline corresponds with the original mid-point of ERA implementation. However, ERA’s period of performance was extended by one year (to 2024). In discussions with ERA’s COR, it was decided that the mid-term evaluation would not be postponed and would take place according to the original timeline.

### Purpose and Intended Use of Evaluation

<b>Activity Name</b>	Economic Resilience Activity
<b>USAID Office and COR</b>	USAID/Ukraine Office of Economic Growth: Larissa Piskunova (COR) Nathaniel Bills (Alternate COR)
<b>Implementer</b>	DAI Global LLC
<b>Contract #</b>	72012118C00004
<b>Total Estimated Ceiling of the Evaluated Activity</b>	\$71,818,352
<b>Life of Activity</b>	August 2018–August 2024
<b>Active Geographic Regions</b>	Eastern Ukraine: Government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and Sea of Azov coastal region
<b>Development Objective</b>	Development Objective 2
<b>Required evaluation?</b>	Yes
<b>External or internal evaluation?</b>	External

The purpose of the ERA midterm evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, unintended effects of ERA’s implementation to date. The primary intended users of this evaluation are USAID/Ukraine mission staff — especially the Office of Economic Growth and staff involved in managing ERA — and DAI as the primary implementing partner of ERA.

Intended uses of the evaluation are to:

- Provide information to USAID and DAI on the degree to which ERA is achieving its key objectives and is on track to achieve life of activity objectives;
- Facilitate learning about what results have been achieved and how they have been achieved (i.e., how ERA is being implemented);
- Identify any positive or negative unintended outcomes resulting from ERA’s interventions;
- Assess the relevance and effectiveness of interventions;
- Provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of programming and make mid-course corrections, if necessary;

- Document lessons learned; and
- Assess the sustainability of ERA’s interventions.

## II. Background

### Description of the Problem

In 2014, Russian-backed separatist forces initiated a war that has taken thousands of Ukrainian lives, created massive population displacement, resulted in a portion of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts being under the control of separatists, and destabilized the country’s economy. The economy in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts was in decline before the outset of the conflict, with a lack of investment and inefficiencies in state-owned enterprises necessitating unsustainable government subsidies to the region. Russia’s aggression in the region has catalyzed that decline. Critical market and industrial linkages have been disrupted, leaving smallholder farmers without access to markets. Finance is all but unavailable due to the risks inherent in investing or lending in an active conflict zone. Large industries have closed, small businesses have difficulty starting up and growing, close to one-fifth of the workforce is unemployed, and young people are leaving for better prospects elsewhere. Surveys show that residents of Ukrainian-controlled territory are alienated and have little optimism in the future of the region’s economy. Trade in the region has also been disrupted. Over 1.6 million Ukrainians have become internally displaced, reflecting not just a mass exodus of human capital, but an enormous demographic and socio-economic shift within the country. “Brain drain” is a threat to the economy’s future, as is the high number of elderly people in the region in need of assistance.

With the global coronavirus pandemic, businesses now suffer from the effects of multiple, ongoing shocks and stresses.

### Description of the Theory of Change and the Activity to Be Evaluated

According to the SOW, ERA is expected to improve the resilience of the eastern Ukrainian economy through three key components: 1) stabilizing the regional economy, 2) strengthening and increasing the number of small and medium enterprises, and 3) building confidence in the regional economy. The overarching goal of ERA is to improve the overall economic resilience of eastern Ukraine exacerbated by Russia’s aggression.

As per the Activity contract, the overall Theory of Change is described as follows:

#### ***If*** ERA

- Provides assistance to stabilize the economy of eastern Ukraine and
- Supports the sustainable development of MSMEs in eastern Ukraine and
- Builds confidence in the future of the eastern Ukrainian economy

#### ***Then***

- Improved confidence in the future of the eastern Ukrainian economy will induce more Ukrainians to make investments in eastern Ukraine, invest in their human capital, and start their own businesses;
- Investors, entrepreneurs, and firms will be encouraged to consider new business interventions that increase incomes and employment in eastern Ukraine;
- The number of MSMEs and entrepreneurs will increase, expanding the regional private sector and making the regional economy less dependent on big businesses;
- Increased economic activity in the region and stronger economic ties to the rest of the country and the European Union will reduce eastern Ukraine’s dependence on Russia as a trading partner;

- Perceptions about the economic downturn of eastern Ukraine will be improved; and
- All of the above will make the region's economy more resilient and less susceptible to economic shocks and Russian pressure.

**Because**

- The conflict in eastern Ukraine has made it clear that overdependence on Russia, Russian-influenced oligarchs, and outdated industries must change for Ukraine to be secure, independent, and prosperous.

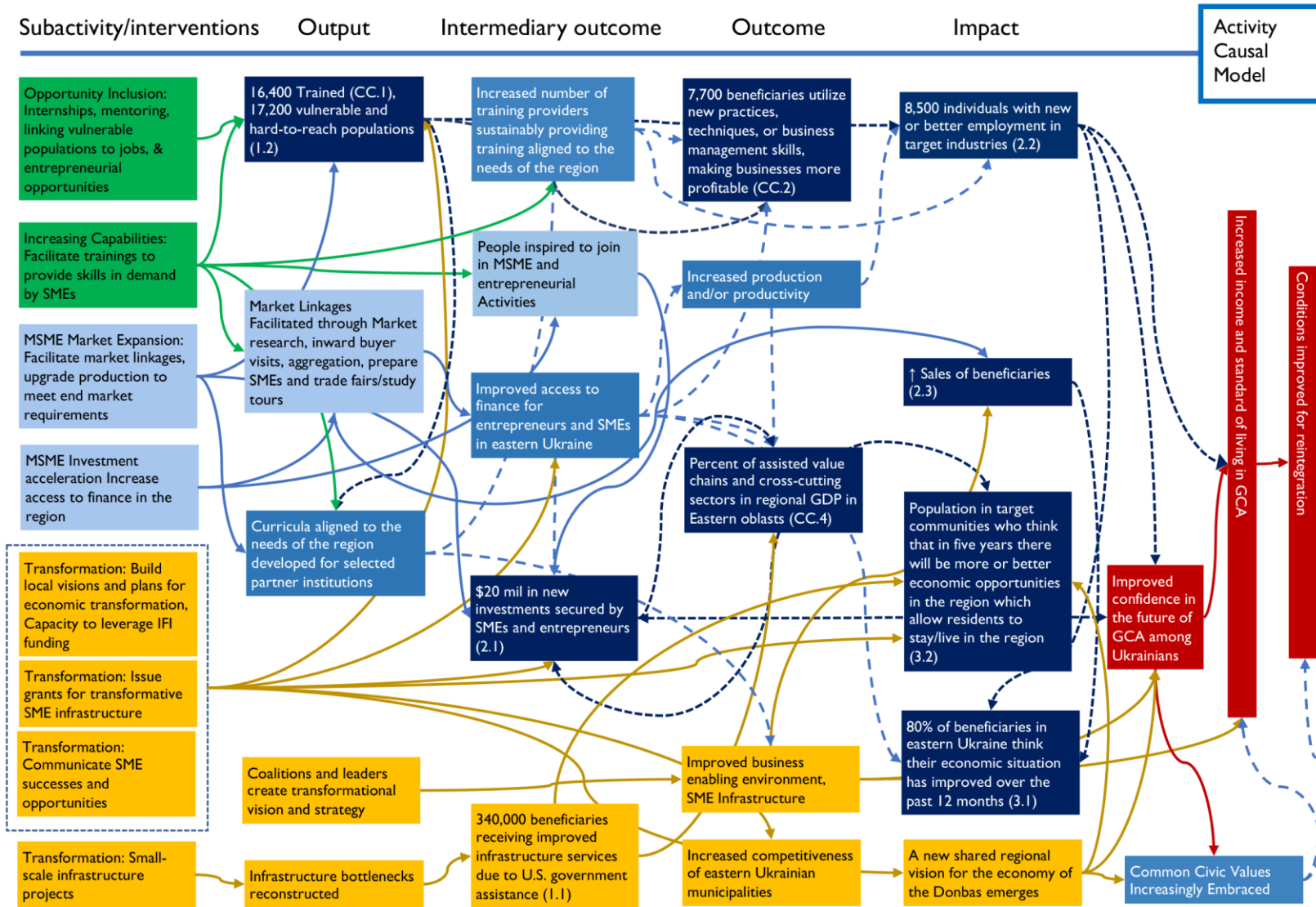
Per the approved Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan, the critical assumptions relevant to ERA programming are as follows:

- The relative strengths and demonstrated commitment of local, regional, and national governments;
- Shifts in U.S. Government foreign policy priorities for activities and geographic focus, based on funding sources or other factors; and
- Shifts in the operating environment that influence the identified risks and assumptions of the Activity.

The most recent version of the ERA causal model (next page), as included in the revised ERA AMELP dated October 30, 2020, describes ERA's key expected inputs, outputs, and outcomes.



**ERA Causal Model (as of October 30, 2020)**



### III. Evaluation Questions

USAID provided seven draft evaluation questions that will be further refined, finalized, and prioritized during the participatory design phase of the evaluation, taking into account USAID’s guidance on best practices related to evaluation questions. Resonance will use the six evaluation criteria presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the framework for organizing and structuring evaluation findings. USAID’s draft evaluation questions, organized according to the OECD criteria, are presented in the table below.

Elements To Be Examined Under OECD Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’ global, country, and partner or institution needs, policies, and priorities and continue to do so if circumstances change.</li> <li>Extent to which the Activity was designed to take into account the economic, cultural and political context and existing relevant program activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent have women benefited from positive outcomes achieved by ERA?</li> <li>To what extent have vulnerable populations benefitted from positive outcomes achieved by ERA?</li> <li>To what extent has the award fee mechanism encouraged learning and adaptive management to enhance performance?</li> </ul> <p>(Also contribute to the Effectiveness and Efficiency criteria)</p>
<b>Coherence</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which other non-ERA interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine ERA interventions, and vice versa.</li> <li>Extent of synergies with other USAID projects (internal coherence) and other donors and actors (external coherence).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has ERA’s coordination with key stakeholders supported outcomes related to ERA’s objectives? (Also contributes to the Efficiency criterion)</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the intervention has achieved or is on track to achieve key objectives and results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is ERA positioned to strengthen market system resilience in targeted sectors in eastern Ukraine?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the award fee mechanism encouraged learning and adaptive management to enhance performance? (Also contributes to the Relevance and Effectiveness criteria)</li> <li>To what extent has ERA’s coordination with key stakeholders supported outcomes related to ERA’s objectives? (Also contributes to Coherence)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What positive and negative unintended consequences have resulted from ERA’s implementation?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue (financial, economic, social and environmental dimensions are included).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What measures has ERA taken to identify and reinforce the capacity of key local actors to advance ERA objectives after USAID assistance ends?</li> </ul>

#### **IV. Evaluation Design and Methodology**

The USAID/ERA Mid-term Performance Evaluation (“the Evaluation”) will draw on reviews of existing activity-related documents (progress reports, work plans, success stories, etc.), recently conducted award fee assessments of performance, and participatory qualitative data collected from beneficiaries and stakeholders as part of the evaluation effort. The ET will use two well-known complexity aware methods, OH and MSC, to collect and analyze data related to ERA outcomes and respond to USAID evaluation questions. These methods, including the sampling methodology, will be described in detail in the Inception Report. Neither a statistically representative sample nor control groups are anticipated. However, the aim will be to cover outcomes that are representative of results across all ERA programming (as relevant to answer the Evaluation Questions in a comprehensive manner). Input from ERA staff, USAID, beneficiaries, and stakeholders will be collected via interviews and reviews of outcome descriptions and MSC stories. More information on these methods can be found on the Better Evaluation website at [https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome\\_harvesting\\_and](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting_and) [https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most\\_significant\\_change](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change)

#### **Gender and Inclusion Considerations**

The evaluation design, methodology, data collection, analysis, and findings will strive to adequately capture the situations and experiences of males and females, and of persons from vulnerable groups, participating in and/or benefiting from ERA activities. The evaluation design will incorporate data collection methods that can identify positive and negative unintended consequences for men and women. The ET will also consider factors that might influence the likelihood that disproportionate numbers of males and females, or people of vulnerable status, will participate in data collection for the evaluation. Evaluation data collection instruments and protocols should reflect an understanding of gender roles and constraints in a particular cultural context in combination with other criteria such as age, income, urban or rural divide, etc., as well reflect local contexts and norms concerning the conditions under which women (or men) feel empowered to speak freely. Disaggregation of people-level data will include sex, age, vulnerability status, and location as relevant and possible. Firm-level data will be disaggregated by size of business and sector to the extent possible.

Further, Resonance will draw on utilization-focused evaluation principles to promote participation by and feedback from the primary intended evaluation users throughout the evaluation process. This will include organizing a remote participatory design session aimed at finalizing evaluation questions, outlining roles and responsibilities of the ET, USAID, and ERA staff and relevant timelines and discussing the use and dissemination strategy. USAID and ERA staff will be engaged in developing the use and dissemination strategy and participating in a co-creation recommendations workshop to maximize uptake of evaluation recommendations.

The matrix below outlines our evaluation. A more detailed design matrix will be included in the Inception Report.

## Evaluation Design Matrix

Questions	Suggested Data Sources	Suggested Data Collection Methods	Suggested Data Analysis Methods
<b>Relevance</b>			
<p>To what extent have women benefitted from positive outcomes achieved by ERA?</p> <p>To what extent have vulnerable populations benefitted from positive outcomes achieved by ERA?</p> <p>To what extent has the award fee mechanism encouraged learning and adaptive management to enhance performance?</p>	<p>ERA documents and interviews with beneficiaries, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Review of ERA progress reports, award fee assessment data, AMELP data, ERA's social media, and success stories</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID, and other stakeholders, including staff from other USAID activities</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>
<b>Coherence</b>			
<p>To what extent has ERA's coordination with key stakeholders supported outcomes related to ERA's objectives?</p>	<p>ERA documents and interviews with beneficiaries, USAID and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Review of ERA progress reports, award fee assessment data, and success stories</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>
<b>Effectiveness</b>			
<p>To what extent is ERA positioned to strengthen market system resilience in targeted sectors in eastern Ukraine?</p> <p>To what extent has the award fee mechanism encouraged learning and adaptive management to enhance performance?</p>	<p>ERA documents and interviews with beneficiaries, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Review of ERA progress reports, award fee assessment data, social media, and success stories</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>

Questions	Suggested Data Sources	Suggested Data Collection Methods	Suggested Data Analysis Methods
<b>Efficiency</b>			
<p>To what extent has the award fee mechanism encouraged learning and adaptive management to enhance performance?</p> <p>To what extent has ERA's coordination with key stakeholders supported outcomes related to ERA's objectives?</p>	ERA documents and interviews with ERA staff and USAID	<p>Review of ERA progress reports and award fee assessment data</p> <p>Interviews with USAID and ERA staff</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>
<b>Impact</b>			
<p>What positive and negative unintended consequences have resulted from ERA's implementation?</p>	ERA documents and interviews with beneficiaries, USAID, and other stakeholders	<p>Review of ERA progress reports, social media, award fee assessment data, and success stories</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>			
<p>What measures has ERA taken to identify and reinforce the capacity of key local actors to advance ERA objectives after USAID assistance ends?</p>	ERA documents and interviews with beneficiaries, USAID and other stakeholders	<p>Review of ERA progress reports, social media, award fee assessment data, and success stories</p> <p>MSC: Interviews with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders</p> <p>OH: Development of outcome descriptions, with reviews and input by relevant ERA staff, USAID, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>Participatory review and selection of relevant data</p> <p>Use of qualitative analytical software (as needed) to identify recurring themes</p> <p>Classification of outcome descriptions and MSC stories per evaluation questions</p>

## V. Deliverables and Reporting Requirements

Evaluation Deliverable/ Reporting Requirement	Description of Deliverable
Inception Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plan and Schedule of Evaluation Tasks</li> <li>• Members of the evaluation team, delineated by roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Detailed evaluation design matrix that links the Evaluation Questions from the SOW (in their finalized form) to data sources, methods, and the data analysis plan</li> <li>• Draft questionnaires and other data collection instruments, or their main features</li> <li>• List of potential interviewees and sites to be visited (depending on the COVID-19 situation) and proposed selection criteria and/or sampling plan (must include sampling methodology and methods, including a justification of sample size and any applicable calculations)</li> <li>• Dissemination plan (designed in collaboration with USAID)</li> <li>• Evaluation Report outline (including a report template and all required content per ADS 201 and the USAID Evaluation Policy)</li> </ul>
In-briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of methodology, roles, and key dates and timelines for the participation of USAID and ERA staff</li> </ul>
Presentation of Draft Findings and Co-Creation Recommendations Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An in-person workshop or remote-led meeting with relevant USAID and ERA staff and stakeholders, facilitated by the Resonance ET</li> <li>• Validation of findings and participatory discussion of recommendations</li> </ul>
Draft Evaluation Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A report that responds to each evaluation question with evaluation findings and recommendations and summarizes the methodologies used</li> <li>• Data collection instruments and Evaluation SOW, included as annexes</li> </ul>
Final Evaluation Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A finalized report that responds to and incorporates feedback from USAID, including an Abstract.</li> </ul>
Final Presentation of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A presentation to USAID and ERA stakeholders that summarizes key evaluation findings and recommendations</li> </ul>
Public Dissemination of Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission to Development Exchange Clearinghouse</li> <li>• Submission to Development Data Library</li> </ul>

## VI. Evaluation Team Composition

The proposed core evaluation team's composition, roles, and qualifications are presented below.

### Resonance Evaluation Core Team Matrix

Roles and Responsibilities	Qualifications
<b>Team Leader Valerie Hovetter</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary point of contact with USAID</li> <li>• Manage evaluation tasks, schedule, and quality and submission of deliverables</li> <li>• Provide input on design and analysis</li> <li>• Assist with recommendations co-creation and presentation of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 20 years of experience managing international and community development projects with economic growth focus</li> <li>• Experience reviewing and developing evaluation SOWs; supervising; and conducting performance evaluations for USAID activities, including ensuring engendered evaluation questions, tools and approaches per ADS 205</li> <li>• As an active member of the USAID Agency-wide Gender Champions and DRG Center Gender Working Group, provided guidance to USAID staff on measuring gender outcomes</li> </ul>

Roles and Responsibilities	Qualifications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Leader of Analytical Services in support of ERA activity</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Qualitative Evaluation Expert (TBD)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide expertise in qualitative, participatory evaluation methodology</li> <li>Lead design and development of data collection methodology, tools, and analysis</li> <li>Lead drafting of evaluation report</li> <li>Assist with recommendations co-creation and presentation of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience designing and managing performance evaluations for USAID activities using Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change methods.</li> <li>Experience in the Eastern Europe region preferred.</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Economic Growth Expert Jane Shearer</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide technical subject matter expertise throughout evaluation process</li> <li>Provide input and lead analysis of questions related to economic growth</li> <li>Assist with recommendations co-creation and presentation of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 years of experience in economic growth and private sector development, data-driven design and evaluation, and participatory-focused adaptation</li> <li>Senior Technical Advisor, USAID/Ukraine Analytical Services in Support of ERA activity</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Specialist Justin Lawrence</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide input on design</li> <li>Assist with qualitative data analysis</li> <li>Design and help facilitate Recommendations Workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 years of evaluation experience</li> <li>Experience in workshop design for more than eight performance evaluations</li> <li>Proficient in Dedoose, creating inductive and deductive coding approaches for qualitative analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Ukrainian Evaluation Expert (TBD)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide Ukrainian expertise, Ukrainian language skills, and evaluation expertise</li> <li>Provide in-country quality control of data collection; assist in supervising local data collection partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience conducting evaluations of USAID activities</li> <li>Experience with quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, including for key informant interviews and focus group discussions</li> <li>Experience in eastern Ukraine and/or with economic growth issues</li> </ul>
<b>Data Analyst and Logistician Isabella Gallegos</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with data analysis</li> <li>Assist with organization of Recommendations Workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience using Excel, SPSS, and Dedoose to analyze quantitative and qualitative data</li> <li>Experience organizing large stakeholder workshops</li> </ul>

**Local data collection partner:** Resonance will use a competitive process to recruit a local data collection firm to assist in gathering qualitative data via interviews (and possibly focus group discussions) with ERA beneficiaries and stakeholders. The detailed scope of work for the local data collection partner will be developed during the design phase and released after approval of the Inception Report.

**Role of ERA implementing partner:** In addition to the core ET, Resonance will engage an ERA staff member, to be designated in coordination with USAID and ERA, to provide critical information related to ERA implementation and help facilitate coordination with the broader ERA team. This team member will provide input on the design, methodology (e.g., helping the team identify the most appropriate beneficiaries and stakeholders to interview for certain questions), and dissemination strategy. This person will also serve as a point of contact to coordinate with ERA on evaluation needs and the participation of ERA staff throughout the process, including the formulation or co-creation of recommendations. This staff member will serve as an “informant” to explain and clarify ERA’s approach, relevant interventions, and other matters to the ET. To ensure adherence to the principles of evaluation

independence as directed in ADS 201, this team member will not be involved in data collection processes such as interviewing beneficiaries or analyzing or formulating findings.

Per OH and MSC methodology, ERA staff, representing the various components and sectors that ERA supports, will play active and participatory roles in reviewing and providing input during data collection and co-creation of recommendations.

**Role of USAID:** The USAID Evaluation Activity Manager will supervise and provide technical instruction and will approve the submission of high-quality deliverables for the evaluation. The ERA COR and other relevant USAID staff will review and provide input to the evaluation design and development of Evaluation Questions. Additionally, relevant USAID staff will provide input as part of the qualitative, participatory data collection process and in the co-creation of evaluation recommendations.

## VII. Evaluation Schedule

The illustrative evaluation schedule will be updated in collaboration with USAID prior to finalization of the work plan.

### Performance Evaluation Schedule

Timeline	Evaluation Task/Deliverable
December 2020	Participatory discussion of design and finalization of evaluation questions; preparation of Inception Report (work plan and evaluation design)
December 2020–January 2021	USAID review of work plan and evaluation design; In-briefing (once work plan and evaluation design are finalized)
January 2021	Data collection preparation and document review (review activity-related documents, select outcome categories and “story domains,” conduct procurement and sign contract with local data collection partner, develop data collection instruments)
February–March 2021	Qualitative data collection
April 2021	Data analysis
May 2021	Co-creation Recommendations Workshop with primary intended users
June 2021	Submission of draft report and review by USAID
July 2021	Address USAID comments and submit final report; distribute electronic copies according to agreed-upon distribution strategy, including any translations of the entire report or parts of it into Ukrainian
August 2021	Submit dataset(s) to Development Data Library and Development Experience Clearinghouse

## VIII. Evaluation Management

The USAID/Ukraine Mission will appoint an Evaluation Activity Manager to provide technical guidance and administrative oversight of the ERA evaluation, to review the Evaluation Inception Report and Work Plan, and to review and accept the draft and final Evaluation Reports. The Mission may delegate one or more USAID staff members to work full-time with the ET and/or participate in field data collection. The Evaluation Activity Manager will inform Resonance of any full- or part-time Mission delegates no later than three working days after the submission of the draft Evaluation Inception Report. All costs associated with the participation of full- or part-time Mission delegates in the evaluation will be covered by the Mission.



Resonance will be responsible for all logistical support for evaluation activities, including translation and interpretation, transportation, accommodations, meeting and visit arrangements, office space, equipment, supplies, insurance, and other contingency planning. Resonance must not expect any substantial involvement of Mission staff in planning or conducting the evaluation. Upon request, the Mission will provide Resonance with introductory letters to facilitate meeting arrangements, if needed. USAID requests that American and local holidays be considered in scheduling evaluation meetings, group discussions, surveys, and site visits in the United States and Ukraine.

To ensure adherence to USAID principles of evaluation independence, the following measures will be put in place:

- All Resonance evaluation team members will provide signed statements attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project or activity being evaluated.
- The evaluation will be managed by Mission Program Office staff.
- Resonance has been contracted under a separate contract with USAID to conduct this evaluation. Neither Resonance nor the team leader of the evaluation contract bear any fiduciary relationship to the ERA implementing partner. The Scope of Work for the contract under which this evaluation is to be conducted was reviewed by the Mission Contracting Office prior to award.

## ANNEX B. DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION TEAM AND MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

Roles and Responsibilities	Qualifications
<b>Evaluation Team Leader Valerie Hovetter</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Served as ET's primary point of contact with USAID</li> <li>Drafted and managed Evaluation SOW and initial design parameters</li> <li>Managed evaluation tasks, schedule and quality, and submission of all deliverables; ensured compliance with USAID requirements and policy</li> <li>Provided input on design, tool development, selection and management of local data collection partner, and analysis</li> <li>Assisted with recommendations co-creation process and presentation of findings</li> <li>Led drafting of evaluation report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's degree in Public Administration, with specialization in International Development</li> <li>Over 20 years of experience managing international and community development activities with an economic growth focus</li> <li>Experience reviewing and developing evaluation SOWs, supervising, and conducting performance evaluations for USAID economic growth activities in post-conflict settings as both a COR and an implementing partner, including ensuring engendered EQs, tools and approaches per ADS 205</li> <li>Was an active member of USAID Agency-wide Gender Champions and Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center Gender Working Group; provided guidance and training to USAID staff on measuring gender outcomes (including managing the development of gender measurement toolkit for DRG)</li> <li>Team Leader of Analytical Services in support of ERA award</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Qualitative Evaluation Expert Dr. Steven Lichty</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided expertise in qualitative, participatory evaluation methodology</li> <li>Led design and development of data collection methodology, tools, and analysis</li> <li>Provided substantial input on EQs and other sections for evaluation report</li> <li>Assisted with recommendations co-creation and presentation of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ph.D. in Comparative Politics</li> <li>Over 20 years of qualitative research, evaluation, and international development management experience and significant experience designing and leading participatory evaluation and learning approaches with a variety of NGOs and donors, including USAID, in policy, resilience, agricultural value chain development, regional trade, youth, and humanitarian assistance</li> <li>Extensive expertise using Outcome Harvesting, beginning in 2013 and with several NGOs and donors (UK Department for International Development, IRI, DAI, Freedom House, Tearfund)</li> <li>Experience using qualitative analysis software such as NVivo, Dedoose, SurveyCTO, NodeXL, and Kumu.</li> <li>Completed an evaluation of a USAID-funded Ukrainian legislative capacity building activity in 2014</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Economic Growth Expert Jane Shearer</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided technical subject matter expertise throughout the evaluation process</li> <li>Provided input and lead analysis of questions related to economic growth</li> <li>Assisted with recommendations co-creation and presentation of findings</li> <li>Provided written input to the evaluation report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's degree in International Relations.</li> <li>25 years of experience in economic growth and private sector development; data-driven design and evaluation; and participatory-focused adaptive management</li> <li>Extensive experience conducting data analysis and research</li> <li>Senior Technical Advisor, USAID/Ukraine Analytical Services in Support of ERA award</li> </ul>

Roles and Responsibilities	Qualifications
<b>Evaluation and Learning Specialist Justin Lawrence</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provided input on SOW and design</li> <li>● Supported procurement, selection, and management of local data collection partner</li> <li>● Led qualitative data analysis with Dedoose</li> <li>● Conducted key informant interviews</li> <li>● Advised on design of participatory workshops</li> <li>● Provided input and review for evaluation report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Master's degree in Public Administration.</li> <li>● 10 years of evaluation experience, including as acting Chief of Party for MEL platform in Egypt.</li> <li>● Experience in workshop design for eight performance evaluations around Economic Growth, Value Chain Development, and Resilience</li> <li>● Proficient in Dedoose, creating inductive and deductive coding approaches for qualitative analysis, and Kumu for visualizing complex data ecosystems</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Expert/Local Economic Development Planning Nataliia Baldych</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provided Ukrainian expertise, Ukrainian language skills, and evaluation expertise</li> <li>● Provided in-country quality control of data collection; assisted in supervising local data collection partner</li> <li>● Conducted key informant interviews with ERA government partners</li> <li>● Provided input on evaluation findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ph.D. in Public Administration.</li> <li>● Over 18 years of relevant research and evaluation experience, managing complex research activities for Government of Ukraine, NGOs, and international donors</li> <li>● Conducted II assignments focused on locally driven economic development, public policy, and institutional capacity building.</li> <li>● Experience in Donetsk and Luhansk as an organizational development specialist for local socio-economic development strategies</li> <li>● Currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of Economic Policy and Governance at the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine</li> </ul>
<b>Data Analyst and Logistician, Isabella Gallegos</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assisted with data analysis</li> <li>● Led design and use of technology for remote participatory workshops</li> <li>● Provided other ad hoc logistical coordination tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bachelor's degree in Global Studies</li> <li>● Two years of research experience using Excel, SPSS, and Dedoose to analyze quantitative and qualitative data.</li> <li>● Experience organizing large stakeholder workshops focused on learning and adaptive management</li> </ul>

## ANNEX C. EVALUATION WORK PLAN

USAID/ERA Mid-term Performance Evaluation Task	Timeline
USAID/ERA Evaluation Statement of Work approved by USAID	November 2020
Participatory Design Workshop with Primary Users	December 2020
Introductory discussions and review of Inception Report	January 2021
Ongoing desk review of relevant documents	January–May 2021
In-briefing Workshop	January 26, 2021
Final Inception Report submitted to USAID	January 29, 2021
Recruitment and training of local data collection team	February–March 2021
Outcome harvesting data collection (In-depth Interviews)	March–April 2021
Most Significant Change data collection (focus group discussions)	April 2021
Key Informant Interviews	April–May 2021
Data analysis and synthesis	April–May 2021
Findings Validation Workshop with Primary Users	May 21, 2021
Recommendations Workshop with Primary Users	May 26, 2021
Mission Outbrief	May 27, 2021
Draft Evaluation Report Submission	June 10, 2021
Comments from USAID	June 24, 2021
Final Evaluation Report Submission	July 8, 2021
Dissemination of Evaluation Report	July–August 2021

## ANNEX D. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

<b>ERA Programmatic Documents</b>
USAID/ERA Statement of Work
USAID/ERA Year 1 Annual Report
USAID/ERA Year 2 Annual Report
USAID/ERA FY2020 Quarter 3 Progress Report
USAID/ERA FY2021 Quarter 1 Progress Report
USAID/ERA Year 2 Approved Work Plan
USAID/ERA Year 3 Approved Work Plan
USAID/ERA Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan, including Theory of Change
USAID/ERA Vulnerability and Gender Analysis and Activity Integration Strategy
USAID/ERA Labor Market Development Strategies and Activities
USAID/ERA Outreach Strategy
<b>Other USAID ERA-Related Documentation</b>
ERA Beneficiary Database (provided by ERA MEL Team)
Updated information on ERA grants awards based on current ERA grants database
List of partner organizations, as provided by ERA
ERA newsletters
ERA-produced COVID-19 updates
ERA Pause and Reflect memos
ERA Third party Award Fee Assessment interview notes and reports
USAID Ukraine Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2019–2024
USAID Ukraine Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2012–2016
Transformation of coal cities: goal tree by strategic direction in seven communities of Donetsk region
Model Cities Study for Eastern Ukraine: Learning from the Revival of Industrial Cities in North America and Europe
<b>External Documents</b>
Getting Employment to Work for Self-Reliance: A USAID Framework for Programming
Youthpower2 Learning and Evaluation: <a href="https://www.youthpower.org/resources">https://www.youthpower.org/resources</a>
USAID Thinking and Working Politically through Applied Political Economy Analysis
USAID Measuring Systemic Change in Market Systems Development
IRI Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Ukraine (March 2021)
IRI Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Ukraine (August–October 2020)
USAID LED Ukraine Project Document
USAID Local Investment and National Competitiveness Project Document

## ANNEX E. LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSANTS

### I. In-Depth Interviews

Type of ERA Assistance Received	Number of Beneficiaries Interviewed
<b>ERA Component (per ERA Beneficiary Database): INCLUSION</b>	
Female training beneficiaries focused on women’s entrepreneurship under grant to Ukrainian Women’s Fund (G-KRA-004)	10
Female training beneficiaries under Grant to East Donbass Regional Development Agency, Women’s rights and gender equality trainings: Business Planning (G-KRA-020)	10
Female training beneficiaries under Global Compact ITNaton/ua (G-KRA-015)	10
Female training beneficiaries of Online Marathon — Marketing in Social Media	3
Female and male beneficiaries under grant to Social Boost (G-KRA-002)	7
Female and male beneficiaries under grant to Terre des Hommes Foundation Digital Fabrication for Vocational Education (G-KRA-047)	4
Female and male training beneficiaries under grant to Svitlo NGO (G-KRA-009)	4
Female and male training beneficiaries under grant to Shift NGO Youth Movement (G-KRA-019)	2
Female training beneficiaries under grant to Severodonetsk Youth Council (G-KRA-031)	2
Student beneficiaries receiving workforce development training related to tourism	5
Beneficiaries receiving workforce development training or study tour participants (DUAL-O, Study Tour to Unit City; First Agro-forum)	1
Beneficiaries receiving training by Employment Center or Yulio Tupikalo	8
Business grantee recipients of Inclusion Grants	11
Teachers, lectors, and VET employees trained or receiving consultation support under grants to Volyn Resource Center/Kramatorsk Technical and Vocational Center/Dahl University/VET lyceums	10
<b>ERA Component (per ERA Beneficiary Database): GROWTH</b>	
Female, male, and target vulnerable group beneficiaries from honey sector	24
Female, male, and target vulnerable group beneficiaries from IT sector	8
Female, male, and target vulnerable group beneficiaries from I4M sector	19
Female, male, and target vulnerable group beneficiaries from tourism sector	15
Female, male and target vulnerable group beneficiaries from vegetable sector	19
Beneficiaries from biofuel sector	3
<b>ERA Component (per ERA Beneficiary Database): TRANSFORMATION</b>	
Female and male youth beneficiaries under grant to Ukrainian Leadership Academy (G-KRA-011)	9
Beneficiaries of other training and capacity building	19
Participants in study tours	3

## 2. Focus Group Composition

	Beneficiary Type
<b>FGD 1</b>	Internally displaced business owner beneficiaries (male and female)
<b>FGD 2</b>	Internally displaced non-business owner beneficiaries (male and female)
<b>FGD 3</b>	Male micro and small business owner beneficiaries
<b>FGD 4</b>	Female micro and small business owner beneficiaries
<b>FGD 5</b>	Male and female medium and large business owner beneficiaries
<b>FGD 6</b>	Students of Agrokebety master's program
<b>FGD 7</b>	Students of Sikorsky Challenge
<b>FGD 8</b>	Members of Cool Youth Mariupol Strategy Working Group

## 3. Partner Sources

Partner Type	Partner
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LLC Turbokom</li> <li>• Association of Ukrainian Banks</li> <li>• Zorya LLC</li> </ul>
City Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berdiansk</li> <li>• Dobropillia</li> <li>• Mariupol</li> <li>• Staroblisk</li> </ul>
Education Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luhansk National Agrarian University</li> <li>• Volodymyr Dahl National University</li> <li>• Pryazovshkyi State Technical University</li> <li>• College of Economics and Humanities</li> <li>• Berdyansk Vocational College</li> </ul>
ERA Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Management</li> <li>• Workforce Development Staff</li> <li>• Growth Component and Access to Finance Staff</li> <li>• Transformation Staff</li> </ul>
Government of Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of President of Ukraine</li> <li>• Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine</li> <li>• SMEDO (5-7-9%)</li> <li>• Department of Economics LOSA</li> <li>• Department of Innovation, Investment, and External Relations, LOSA</li> <li>• Forest Management and Hunting Agency, LOSA</li> <li>• Market Environment Development Department of the Economy Department of the Donetsk Regional State Administration</li> <li>• Toretsk Civil-Military Administration</li> <li>• Internal policy department, Soledar City Council</li> <li>• Donetsk Oblast Employment Center</li> <li>• Department of internal information and public relations, Oleksandrivka Village Councils</li> </ul>
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNDP</li> </ul>
Non-governmental Organizations/ Grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pokrovsk Professional League of Women</li> <li>• Roboklub STEM Centers</li> <li>• Ukrainian Women's Fund</li> <li>• Bakmut Community Development Agency</li> <li>• Agro-Tavria Information and Consulting Center</li> </ul>

Partner Type	Partner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="516 233 883 260">• Western NIS Enterprise Fund</li><li data-bbox="516 264 987 291">• Media Outlet, <a href="http://www.golos.com.ua">http://www.golos.com.ua</a></li><li data-bbox="516 296 932 323">• Media Outlet, <a href="https://acmc.com.ua">https://acmc.com.ua</a></li><li data-bbox="516 327 878 354">• Media Outlet, <a href="https://svoi.city">https://svoi.city</a></li></ul>



## **ANNEX F. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

Per Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change methodology and qualitative interviewing best practices, the ET developed the tools on the following pages as guides for moderators during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. However, moderators were instructed to use these tools only as guides and to make adaptations as necessary during interviews depending on the responses of interviewees.

Two types of sample moderator guides are presented:

1. In-depth interview guides
2. Focus group discussion guide

## I. In-depth Interview Moderator Guides

### A. Women's Economic Opportunity and Leadership Beneficiary: Interview Guide

#### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Age:

Location:

Vulnerability Status to be completed by Moderator before interview based on information in ERA beneficiary database and validated with interviewee]:

Grant Under Which ERA assistance was provided to be completed by Moderator before Interview based on information in ERA beneficiary database and validated with interviewee]:

\* IF A BUSINESS OWNER/SELF-EMPLOYED/INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEUR per beneficiary database, ask the following:

Name of Business:

Sector:

Size of Business:

#### II. RESULTS FROM SUPPORT RECEIVED:

- **AWARENESS OF ERA:** Are you aware of the Economic Resilience Activity funded by USAID? If so, what do you know about this project? Do you know of any examples of how this project is helping women in eastern Ukraine?
- **GENERAL RESULTS:** Thinking broadly about the support that you received under this program or training, what results come to mind related to women's economic opportunities and empowerment/leadership?
- **CHANGES IN SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE:** Has your job-related skills or knowledge changed because of this support? a) If yes, how specifically? How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what were the challenges and why not?
- **CHANGES IN AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES:** Has your ability to access new opportunities (ex. new jobs, promotion at current job, opening a business, etc.) changed as a result of this support? a) If yes, how specifically? How did the support you received influence this change? c) If no, what were the challenges?
- **OPTIMISM IN FUTURE:** How do you feel about your future opportunities? B) Has the support you received changed your feelings about the future at all? c) If so, how?

\*IF A BUSINESS OWNER/SELF-EMPLOYED/INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEUR per beneficiary database:

- **BUSINESS RESULTS:** Has your business benefitted from the support you received?) a) If yes, can you provide some concrete examples? How did the support you received influence these changes? c) If no, what where the challenges, why not?

### III. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

- **YOUR LEADERSHIP:** Has any of ERA's support had an effect on your ability to act in a leadership role or increase your influence in the home, community, business, or other groups that you belong to? b) If yes, can you provide some concrete examples? How did the support you received influence this change? c) If no, what were the challenges?
- **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN GENERAL:** What about other women that you know who received support from [ERA/Name of Organization], have you seen changes in their abilities to lead or increase their influence in their home, community or business? b) If yes, can you provide some concrete examples? How did the support you received influence this change? c) If no, what where the challenges?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) When thinking about the support that you received, are there things you would recommend changing, if yes, what are they? b) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for women looking for better employment or for women-owned businesses in this region?

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\*\*IF FROM A TARGET VULNERABLE GROUP, PLEASE ASK THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- **CHANGES IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As a member of the [Fill in with appropriate group/s] community, has the support provided by [ERA or Name of Organization] resulted in changes for this group/overall? a) If yes, please provide examples. How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what are the challenges?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for people who have been negatively impacted by the conflict who are looking for better employment or for businesses in this region? b) What about people that face discrimination because of their identity or their economic situation?

## B. Training Beneficiary [Under Inclusion or Transformation per ERA beneficiary database]: Interview Guide

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Location:

Vulnerability Status [to be completed by moderator before interview based on information in ERA beneficiary database and validated with interviewee]:

### II. RESULTS FROM SUPPORT RECEIVED:

- **AWARENESS OF ERA:** Are you aware of the Economic Resilience Activity funded by USAID? a) If so, what do you know about this project? b) Do you know of any examples of how this project is helping youth in eastern Ukraine? C) Do you know of any examples of how this project is helping to transform your town or region?
- **GENERAL RESULTS:** Thinking broadly about the support that you received under this program or training, what results come to mind related to youth's economic opportunities and empowerment/leadership?
- **CHANGES IN SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE:** Has your job-related skills or knowledge changed because of this support? a) If yes, how specifically? How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what were the challenges and why not?
- **CHANGES IN AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES:** Has your ability to access new opportunities (ex. new jobs, promotion at current job, opening a business, etc.) changed as a result of this support? a) If yes, how specifically? How did the support you received influence this change? c) If no, what were the challenges?
- **YOUR LEADERSHIP:** Has any of the support from had an effect on your ability to act in a leadership role or increase your influence in the home, community, business, or other groups that you belong to? b) If yes, can you provide some concrete examples? How did the support you received influence this change? c) If no, what were the challenges?
- **OPTIMISM IN FUTURE:** How do you feel about your future opportunities in this region? b) Has the support you received changed your feelings about the future at all? c) If so, how?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) When thinking about the support that you received, are there things you would recommend changing, if yes, what are they? b) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for youth looking for better employment or to open a business? C) What do you think would motivate youth to stay in this region?

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\*\*IF FROM A TARGET VULNERABLE GROUP, PLEASE ASK THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- **CHANGES IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As a member of the [Fill in with appropriate group/s] community, has the support provided by [ERA or Name of Organization] resulted in changes for this group/overall? a) If yes, please provide examples. How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what are the challenges?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for people who have been negatively impacted by the conflict who are looking for better employment or for businesses in this region? b) What about people that face discrimination because of their identity or their economic situation?

## C. Business Beneficiary: Sample Interview Guide

### I. Demographic Information

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Location:

Name of Business:

Sector:

Size of Business:

Vulnerability Status [to be completed by moderator before interview based on ERA beneficiary database and validated with interviewee]:

### II. BUSINESS SUPPORT FROM ERA

- **GENERAL RESULTS:** a) In a general sense, have there been changes in your business as a result of working with ERA? B) If yes, please describe these changes and ERA's role.
- **GRANTS:** a) Have you received a grant or applied for a grant from ERA? b) What was it for? c) What results have come from this grant, or what results do you hope will come from this grant? d) Do you have any feedback about your experience with the grant process?
- **TRAINING:** a) Have you participated in training [separate from any grant received] to improve some area of your business because of ERA? b) What was the training about? c) Have you or do you plan to use anything you learned from this training? d) If yes, please provide specific examples e) If not, why not?
- **LOAN/FINANCIAL SERVICES:** a) Has any of your work with ERA helped you to get a loan or some other type of financing that you need for your business? b) If yes, what specifically and what is ERA's role? c) What challenges have you encountered related to this specific effort?
  - a) Are there other things ERA could be supporting that would help businesses gain more access to financing? b) What are other examples of programs or other support related to access to finance that are working or have worked in the past?
- **OTHER SUPPORT:** a) What other types of things has ERA helped you with? b) Has there been any changes for you or your business because of this? c) If so, what specifically, and what was ERA's role? d) If not, why not? What are the challenges?
- **RESPONSE TO CRISIS:** a) Has ERA helped your business adapt to changes due to COVID-19? b) If so, what support did ERA provide? c) What has been the result? d) Has ERA helped your business adapt or respond to other changes (for example the conflict, or other disasters/crises?) b) If so, what support did ERA provide? c) What has been the result?
- **SECTOR SUPPORT:** Do you think there have been changes to the overall sector you work in because of ERA support? If so, what specifically? c) What about changes or opportunities for

other businesses in your community or the region that you know of, because of ERA? If so, what specifically?

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other kind of support do you need for your business? b) What about other support to help the overall sector that you work in? c) What about businesses in your community in general? d) Are there challenges that you or your sector face that are different from other businesses?

## II. CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE ECONOMY

- Have there been changes because of the support you receive from ERA that make you feel differently about the future? b) If yes, what have those changes been? c) How have your feelings about the future changed?
- a) Have you attended a business or community event organized with the help of ERA or heard some news about ERA's work? b) If yes, what was it? c) How did this event or news make you feel about your future opportunities for working or operating a business here?
- a) Do you think that ERA is taking the appropriate actions on the major issues that affect people's ability to work or operate a successful business in the region? b) If yes, what specific examples c) If no, then what else could ERA be doing? d) What challenges need to be addressed to make people feel more optimistic about their future here?

\*IF FROM A TARGET VULNERABLE GROUP, PLEASE ASK THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- **CHANGES IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As a member of the [Fill in with appropriate group/s] community, has the support provided by [ERA or Name of Organization] resulted in changes for this group/overall? a) If yes, please provide examples. How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what are the challenges?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for people who have been negatively impacted by the conflict who are looking for better employment or for businesses in this region? b) What about people that face discrimination because of their identity or their economic situation?

IF A WOMAN, PLEASE ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTION:

- **WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITIES:** a) Has the assistance that ERA provides resulted in any changes for women working in this sector? b) If yes, what changes have occurred? c) What was ERA's [or name of organization providing assistance directly] role in creating this change?

## D. Employee or Individual Beneficiary [Not Business Owner/Self-Employed/Individual Entrepreneur]: Sample Interview Guide

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name of Individual:

Sex:

Age:

Location:

Name of Business/Employer [if applicable]:

Size of Business:

Sector:

Vulnerability Status [To be completed by Moderator before Interview based on ERA beneficiary database and validated with interviewee]:

### II. EMPLOYEE SUPPORT FROM Economic Resilience Activity

- **GENERAL:** a) In general, have there been changes in your knowledge, skills, or opportunities as a result of assistance provided by [ERA, or replace with name of organization directly providing assistance]? b) If yes, please describe these changes and [ERA's/Name of organization] role.
- **SUPPORT FROM ERA:** a) What types of assistance has ERA provided specifically to you (e.g., training, skills development)? b) Has your ability to perform your current job changed as a result of [ERA/Name of Organization] assistance? c) Has your ability to work other jobs or for other businesses changed as a result of this ERA assistance? d) Have your opportunities improved as a result of ERA assistance (e.g., job promotion, pay increase) e) If yes, please explain. If not, how would you improve the assistance you received from ERA?
- **OTHER SUPPORT TO YOUR EMPLOYER:** a) Has [ERA and/or Name of Organization] provided other support to the business that you work for? b) Have there been any changes in your work opportunities because of this assistance? c) If so, what specifically, and what was [ERA's/Name of Organization] role? d) If not, why not? What are the challenges?
- **RESPONSE TO COVID-19:** a) Did ERA provide specific assistance to help you adapt to changes in work due to COVID-19? b) If so, what assistance did ERA provide? c) What has been the result?
- **RESPONSE TO OTHER CRISES:** a) Has ERA provided specific assistance to help you adapt to changes in work caused by other major challenges, such as the eastern conflict or wildfires? b) If so, what assistance did ERA provide? c) What has been the result?
- **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** a) Do you think there have been changes to the knowledge, skills, or opportunities of workers in this specific sector because of ERA support? b) If so, what specifically? c) What about changes or opportunities for workers in general because of ERA support? d) If so, what specifically?



- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What additional support do you need to improve your ability to work – either for your current employer or in general? b) What types of support do workers in this sector need most, especially compared to other sectors? c) What do you think are the biggest challenges to improving workers’ skills in this region? d) Do you have any ideas or know of any successful models for improving workers’ skills?

## II. CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE ECONOMY

- **NEWS/EVENTS:** a) Have you attended a business or community event organized with the help of ERA or heard some news about ERA’s work? b) If yes, what was it? c) How did this event or news make you feel about your future opportunities for working or operating a business here?
- **COMMUNITY CHANGES:** Thinking about the overall economic situation in your community or region: a) Have there been changes because of [ERA’s/Name of Organization] work that make you feel differently about the future? b) If yes, what changes? c) How have they influenced your feelings about the future?
- **PERSONAL CHANGES:** Now, thinking specifically about your own financial situation: a) Did [ERA’s/Name of Organization] assistance change your financial situation? b) If yes, in what ways? c) Did [ERA’s/Name of Organization] assistance change your feelings about the future? d) If yes, in what ways?
- **ERA FOCUS:** a) Do you think that [ERA/Name of Organization] is addressing the major issues that affect people’s ability to work in the region? b) If yes, how specifically? c) If no, what else could [ERA/Name of Organization] be doing? d) What challenges need to be addressed to make people feel more optimistic about their future here?

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 \*\*IF FROM A TARGET VULNERABLE GROUP, PLEASE ASK THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- **CHANGES IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As a member of the [Fill in with appropriate group/s] community, has the support provided by [ERA or Name of Organization] resulted in changes for this group/overall? a) If yes, please provide examples. How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what are the challenges?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for people who have been negatively impacted by the conflict who are looking for better employment or for businesses in this region? b) What about people that face discrimination because of their identity or their economic situation?

IF A WOMAN, PLEASE ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTION:

- **WOMEN’S OPPORTUNITIES:** a) Has the assistance that ERA provides resulted in any changes for women working in this sector? b) If yes, what changes have occurred? c) What was ERA’s [or name of organization providing assistance directly] role in creating this change?

## E. Credit Union/Loan Beneficiary: Interview Guide

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Location:

Name of Business:

Sector:

Size of Business:

Vulnerability Status:

### II. GENERAL RESULTS:

- Did you apply for a loan through a credit union? If yes, did you receive this loan?
  - If yes, when (month/year)?
  - **If the loan has not been received**, why not? Has there been a delay? Has there been any negative impacts on your business by not receiving this loan yet?
- What is the purpose of this loan? What are your expectations for how this loan will be used?
- In a general sense, have there been changes in your business as a result of the loan? If yes, please describe any positive OR negative changes related to the loan.
- Overall, has this loan met your business needs and your expectations?
- Are you receiving any other support (such as training, grants, technical consultations, etc.) from the credit union or from other organizations?
- Have you heard of the USAID Economic Resilience Activity? If so, what do you know about it? Have you attended any events or received any support from this project?

### II. EXPERIENCE WITH LOAN PROCESS:

- How did you hear about this loan opportunity?
- Why did you decide that this loan was the right choice for your business?
- What did you think of the loan application process?
- Did you receive any support or training from the credit union to help you with the application?
- Do you have any recommendations on how the loan application process or anything else related to the loan could be improved?
- Would you recommend this type of loan to other businesses like yours? Why or why not?

## F. Teacher/Lector/University Employee Beneficiary Sample Interview Guide

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name of Individual:

Sex:

Age:

Location:

Name of Educational Institution:

Vulnerability Status [to be completed by moderator before interview and validated with interviewee]:

### II. SUPPORT from Economic Resilience Activity [training, new equipment, curricula, or teaching materials, etc.]

- RESULTS OF SUPPORT FROM ERA TO YOU:
  - a) What types of assistance has ERA provided specifically to you (e.g., training/skills development, new equipment, improved curricula and/or classroom materials)?
  - b) In general, have there been changes in your knowledge, skills, or opportunities as a result of assistance provided by [ERA, or replace with name of organization directly providing assistance]? If yes, please describe these changes and [ERA's/Name of organization] role in these changes.
  - c) What was most useful or meaningful to you about the support you received?
  - d) Specifically, has your ability to perform your current job changed as a result of this assistance? If yes, please explain how. If no, why not?
    - If not covered in the responses to above questions – please follow-up with specific questions on:
      - a) Have there been changes to the **curricula** based on ERA's support? If so, please explain any positive or negative results of the changed curricula.
      - b) Have there been any changes to the **pedagogical methodologies** that you use based on support from ERA? If so, please explain those changes and any positive or negative results of those changes.
        - e) Have you experienced other changes in your work due to ERA's support? f) If yes, please explain.
        - f) How would you improve the support you received from ERA? What could be better?
- OTHER SUPPORT TO YOUR EMPLOYER/SCHOOL:
  - a) Has [ERA and/or Name of Organization] provided other support to the students or educational institution that you work for? If so, please explain.
  - b) Have there been any changes in practices, policies, attitudes or other because of this assistance? If yes, please explain. If no, why not?
  - c) Have there been any changes in opportunities for students because of this assistance? If so, what specifically, and what was [ERA's/Name of Organization] role? d) If not, why not? What are the challenges?
    - d) Apart from support from ERA to your school/institution, do you know if your school/institution received support from other donors? If so, please explain what type of support was provided? What was useful about this support?

- **RESPONSE TO COVID-19:** a) Did ERA provide specific assistance to help you or your institution adapt to changes in your work due to COVID-19? b) If so, what assistance did ERA provide? c) What has been the result?
- **RESPONSE TO OTHER CRISES:** a) Has ERA provided specific assistance to help you adapt to changes in work caused by other major challenges, such as the conflict or wildfires? b) If so, what assistance did ERA provide? c) What has been the result?
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What additional support do you need to improve your ability to perform your job? b) What additional support does your school/education institution need? C) What additional support do students need to be able to improve their skills and opportunities?

## II. CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE ECONOMY

- **OPTIMISM IN FUTURE:** How do you feel about your future opportunities in this region? b) Has the support you received changed your feelings about the future at all? c) If so, how?
- **NEWS/EVENTS:** a) Have you seen anything on social media or in the news about ERA or USAID-funded work? b) If yes, what was it? c) How did this event or news make you feel about future opportunities for working or operating a business here?
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH/STUDENTS:** a) How do you feel about opportunities for youth and students in this region? b) What do you think are the biggest challenges to improving education and opportunities for students/youth in this region? c) Thinking ahead for the next 2 years, what do you think would be the best ways to improve opportunities for youth in this region and make them want to stay here to live?
- **WORKFORCE/SECTOR SUPPORT FROM ERA:** a) Think about the field or sectors related to what you teach or specialize in -- Do you think there have been changes to the knowledge, skills, or opportunities of workers in this specific sector because of ERA support? If so, what specifically? b) Has the assistance that ERA provides resulted in any changes for women working in this sector? If yes, what changes have occurred? What was ERA's [or name of organization providing assistance directly] role in creating this change?
- **ERA FOCUS/RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) Do you think that [ERA/Name of Organization] is addressing the major issues that affect people's ability to study and work in the region? b) If yes, how specifically? c) If no, what else could [ERA/Name of Organization] be doing? d) What challenges need to be addressed to make people feel more optimistic about their future here?

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 \*\*IF FROM A TARGET VULNERABLE GROUP, PLEASE ASK THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- **CHANGES IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR TARGET VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As a member of the [Fill in with appropriate group/s] community, has the support provided by [ERA or Name of Organization] resulted in changes for this group/overall? a) If yes, please provide examples. How did the support you received influence this change? b) If no, what are the challenges?

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** a) What other type of support do you think is needed to help increase opportunities for people who have been negatively impacted by the conflict who are looking for education, better employment or support for their businesses in this region? b) What about people that face discrimination because of their identity or their economic situation?

## 2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION MODERATOR GUIDE

### Sample MSC Moderator Guide

Primary Most Significant Change Domain/s:

**Guiding Question:** “From your point of view, can you describe the most significant change in your personal life that has resulted from your experience of [insert description of USAID/ERA support/event]?”

**Practical Approach:** Keep the initial discussion about MSC (i.e., process of them writing down top two or three stories) centered around their engagement with the focus of ERA support/MSC domain. If a participant happens to share a story about their experience with other interventions, this will interfere with MSC principles of keeping the change stories centered around one intervention/group focus. Invariably, this may happen and we can still learn from the experience.

**Gender Questions:** [Once IS completes the MSC portion of the FGD, there a couple of follow-up questions related to gender we would like to ask. This approach is more akin to a traditional FGD, i.e., just letting the group share their perspectives. There is no need for ranking or sharing multiple stories.

- 1) Do male and female youth face different challenges in [insert appropriate focus of support/type of beneficiary]? If so, describe these differences?
- 2) Have you seen any changes in the attitudes about women’s role in the workplace or as business owners? If so, can you describe the changes?

**Optional Guiding Question:** [depending on the time and how well the response goes with the first guiding question, you could flip the script and ask about most significant **challenges**] “From your point of view, can you describe the most significant **challenge** faced by [insert appropriate beneficiary type – youth, IDPs, students, business owners]?”

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Additional specific questions for business owner beneficiaries:

1. Many of you have received very different types of support from ERA. Which single type of support has been the most helpful, and why?
2. Can you think of a way to improve the type of support you just mentioned to make it even more useful?
3. If you worked for ERA, what new type of support would you design for businesses in your **sector**? What problem(s) would this address?
4. Like the previous question, if you worked for ERA, what new type of support would you design for businesses in your **region**? What problem(s) would this address?
5. ERA provides support in several different sectors (intentionally not listing). Are there any sectors that ERA is not working in -- but you think it should? And what specific types of support should it provide in these sectors?

## ANNEX G. MOST SIGNIFICANT STORIES SUMMARY

### Summary Overview

Info Sapiens conducted eight focus group discussions with different sets of ERA beneficiaries to pilot the use of the Most Significant Change evaluation technique. MSC was a new approach for Info Sapiens; its staff received training by Resonance’s qualitative expert and quickly adapted their moderation skills to work with the unique dynamics of each group. Challenges faced in the FGDs included:

- COVID-19 restrictions precluded any in-person gathering, so the FGDs were conducted via Zoom. MSC is predicated on the idea that stories are freely shared and a dialogue can flow freely among all participants. With remote sessions, this communication style is formal, and poor WiFi connection can result in loss of content and meaning.
- In some FGDs, a lack of trust hindered true expression of thoughts and opinions; in others, some opinionated individuals dominated the discussion despite the best efforts of the moderator.
- MSC works best when all participants shared the same experience from a particular ERA intervention. This was the case for only for FGDs 6, 7, and 8. Participants in FGDs 1–5 had diverse experience and engagement with ERA but shared a similar characteristic or experience such as being IDPs or owners of enterprises of similar size.

These challenges impeded use of MSC in its more rigorous form (following all 10 steps). Instead, the ET, in partnership with Info Sapiens, used more creative approaches based on the FGD demographics. For example, FGD 1 included had two participants — a size that does not work well for MSC. With this FGD, Info Sapiens took the opportunity to conduct some of the 10 MSC steps. Where the sessions included larger and more animated groups, the moderators guided participants through several rounds of collection of most significant stories. The ET added a question about gender equality at the end of some FGDs. This moved the conversation closer to what might occur in a typical FGD.

The eight synopses below capture the essence of the MSC approach. Each includes the demographic group, date, and number and sex of participants. A short overview gives some background information and practical insight into the group. Rather than identifying three detailed stories, most FGDs listed numerous stories and then ranked their significance.

The eight FGDs yielded 117 pages of transcripts from the eight FGDs. Because this MSC approach was a pilot, and in the interest of brevity, each MSC Headlines sections describes the spirit of the story and, in some cases, includes more than the top three significant stories. If an FGD included a gender equality question, the synopsis concludes with a summary of this discussion.

### FGD 1: IDP Business Owners

**Date:** April 23, 2021

**Participants:** 3 females, 2 males

**Overview:** Participants in this FGD initially gave assessments related only to themselves and their enterprises. In prioritizing their stories, the respondents were not ready to make compromises and tried to defend their opinions. The moderator addressed this challenge from various angles — for example, asking them to assess the scale of a change or its importance for businesses, and dividing business representatives by their level of experience. However, firmly held opinions remained. When respondents were asked to assess the impact of ERA on entrepreneurs and the region, the consensus

was that there was no impact on the region, but that ERA affects specific enterprises that participate in the Activity.

### **MSC Headlines**

1. Receiving practical grant support and finances for business development.
2. Interaction with other businesses and the opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs, leading to cooperation, partnerships, and relationships.
3. Knowledge received through ERA training events, which affirmed what some participants already knew and united those who attended.

**Gender perspectives:** The group critiqued European perspectives on gender equality, claiming that there are no differences in Ukraine regarding gender. The same opportunities exist for men and women to engage in entrepreneurship, develop themselves, and interact. Further, women are highly valued in Ukraine, even more so than men. Participants saw no limitations in opportunities and that a person of any sex or gender identify can open an enterprise and do business. Further discussion identified some limitations — for example, in budgets, hiring, in wage levels, and the ability of women to take leadership roles.

### **FGD 2: IDP Beneficiaries (Non-business Owners)**

**Date:** April 25, 2021

**Participants:** 2 males, 1 female

**Overview:** One participant was not an IDP but lived within the 20-kilometer conflict zone. Two attended training on web development and one on social entrepreneurship. One participant, who was very sensitive to the topic of IDPs' problems, insisted that the state and local authorities do almost nothing to solve the problems of IDPs. This participant emphasized that support from ERA drew attention to IDPs' problems and was very important and significant. Many people turn a blind eye to this problem, and many are tired of the war and hostilities but, most importantly, people are given a chance and told that problems with IDPs do exist.

### **MSC Headlines**

1. New contacts made through pre-trainings, consultations, and cooperation.
2. The acquisition of new skills and the possibility of further employment, expansion of knowledge for development, advancing training leads to life change and self-realization.
3. Increasing one's value in the labor market and ability to compete through practical experience.
4. Chance to prove oneself and help solve problems, including for IDPs.
5. Transfer of knowledge and experience to others.
6. Useful projects to improve conditions in the community and society (practical component).
7. Paying attention to the problems of IDPs.



### FGD 3: Male Owners of Micro and Small Businesses

**Date:** April 26, 2021

**Participants:** 6 males

**Overview:** Some respondents received one type of support, some received several, but all noted the necessity and usefulness of such activities. The greatest amount of criticism came from participants in grant programs, who were eagerly awaiting funding and noted that the lengthy times required for approval and provision of funding negatively affected their plans for developing enterprises. The delays required them to refinance and purchase some equipment from their own funds.

#### MSC Headlines

1. Developing strategies, setting goals, and making progress toward achieving them.
2. Funding instruments (such as discounts for the purchase of equipment), a positive decision to receive a grant, the possibility of funding.
3. Selling surplus products, marketing, expanding a circle of customers.
4. Gaining new partners.
5. Business expansion.
6. Receiving specialized education, gaining new knowledge (for example, becoming acquainted with new equipment and technologies).
7. Learning more about grain producers and their problems, increasing understanding of customers' problems, understanding the market.

### FGD 4: Female Owners of Micro and Small Businesses

**Date:** April 24, 2021

**Participants:** 7 females (6 of whom knew of each other)

**Overview:** All but one respondent knew one another from participating in farmer's markets. Two ran beekeeping businesses, three fruits and vegetables, and the others ran cosmetics and personal care projects, dried fruit, winemaking, medicinal herbs, and herbal tea production. The participants freely shared stories and experiences, made recommendations, and wished each other success in developing the business capacity of the Donetsk region. All agreed that an entrepreneurial spirit was the most significant story — an opinion that they held prior to any form of engagement with ERA. After the moderator guided the participants back to their stories, the following story lines emerged.

#### MSC Headlines

1. As older females, participants felt gratitude for ERA's support of their businesses, which enabled them to be financially independent of their children or the state.
2. Starting an organization that will train others to start and/or run a business.
3. Additional markets for products.
4. Inspired work, self-confidence, fundraising for development and general desire to develop.
5. Farmers' markets brought opportunities to acquire new (now regular) customers and develop partnerships with other entrepreneurs.
6. Expanded range of products offered.

7. Insights on better packaging of goods and advertising of products (e.g., business cards).
8. Meeting and sharing experiences with other entrepreneurs.
9. The desire to develop social entrepreneurship skills.

**Gender perspectives:** The group did not feel there were any unique inequalities between men and women; rather, most issues related to the desire of a man or woman. The only difference related to the physical strength of women and men. As far as difficulties in life, the group agreed that women have responsibility for taking care of a household and children, running a business, and others. But the group agreed that women today are much more independent — but that having a strong man in one's life is better than living alone and doing what she likes.

### FGD 5: Owners of Large and Medium-Sized Businesses

**Date:** April 24, 2021

**Participants:** 4 male, 1 female

**Overview:** The group reiterated that the greatest support for businesses in Donetsk and Luhansk regions is the financial component, investments, grants, and the ability to obtain loans at low interest rates. However, while they are working to develop more robust strategies and are systematically moving forward, participants have little time for such efforts, as they often focus on survival and maintaining the viability of their enterprises. Participants said that these regions have always been depressed, but the situation has worsened. To retain the region within Ukraine (rather than sliding toward Russia), participants noted that it is worth paying attention to the people and businesses who stayed there to work and develop their communities.

#### MSC Headlines

1. ERA activities pull participants out of their normal routines and lay the foundation for changes, thus enabling participants to systematically see their work from a broader perspective.
2. Practical recommendations were provided for finding partners, including the use of LinkedIn.

**Gender perspective:** Overall, the group did not think Ukraine faces gender inequality and that Ukraine has had gender equality at all levels for a long time — a legacy of Soviet society, in which women are treated with respect. Some leaders have difficulties dealing with women, but in Luhansk oblast, there is such a shortage of specialists that gender issues do not play any serious role.

### FDG 6: Students in the Agrokebety Master's Program

**Date:** April 28, 2021

**Participants:** 2 males, 2 females (all 21 to 22 years of age)

**Overview:** Each participant focused on the changes in their lives as a result of participation in the Agrokebety Master's Program; they did not address other topics. This demonstrates how MSC works best when all participants share the same experience. Ranking most significant changes was easier, as participants saw no need to argue or defend their positions. The participants also associated their future with Ukraine and strive to develop the agricultural sector, as evidenced by many of their side hustles, such as growing melons, cherries, vegetables, conifers, deciduous and ornamental plants. One participant hybridizes sunflower and corn.

## MSC Headlines

1. Six-month internship with the added support of a mentor.
2. Learning practicing instructors (successful farmers who share relevant information).
3. Foreign instructors facilitated comparison of agriculture in other countries.
4. Opportunities to develop a creative approach and earn money.
5. The attitude of instructors has changed: there are incentives to learn and motivations for teachers and students to interact, thus facilitating better understanding of material, through practical examples.
6. Exposure to new and interesting subjects (economics, management, communication, time management) fostered a focus on developing habits.
7. A field trip to the enterprise motivated participants to develop and work on themselves.
8. Interactive games, new approaches broaden horizons, fosters different ways of thinking, and develops communication skills.

## FDG 7: Students participating in the Sikorsky Challenge

**Date:** April 28, 2021

**Participants:** 5 female, 3 male

**Overview:** This group of eight graduate and postgraduate students were participating in the Sikorsky Challenge, which fosters an open ecosystem that brings together Ukraine's institutions interested in advancing a Ukrainian innovation economy. This group divided their MSC stories into professional and educational and personal stories.

### Professional Change-Oriented MSC Stories

1. Changing mindsets and vision regarding start-ups, presentations design, and own proposals in the business area.
2. Implementation of scientific projects that will interest potential investors, an idea of whether the product is needed initially, reducing risks in implementation.
3. New ideas for educational programs, innovative approaches, authors' developments, and the involvement of as many teachers as possible; introduction of innovations and changes in teaching methods.
4. Students and teachers from other universities, business representatives, and new clients started participating.
5. Improving the ability to visualize and present one's thoughts.
6. Problem-solving schemes.
7. The ability to understand a client's point of view.

### Personal Change-Oriented MSC Stories

1. Learning to leave one's comfort zone.
2. Increased motivation and self-confidence.
3. Mental transition from the idea of "I want" to "I must."

4. Improving one's personal skills.
5. Gaining the ability to recognize one's mistakes.

### **FGD 8: Cool Youth/ Ukrainian Leadership Academy Strategy Working Group**

**Date:** April 21, 2021

**Participants:** 1 female, 1 male

**Overview:** With only two participants, a group dynamic was missing from this FGD. Because the participants were acquainted, the discussion took the form of a conversation between peers. Both mentioned the irresponsible behavior of a number of project participants who missed many meetings. They found the absences regrettable, as current strategy development places great emphasis on youth — who were given the opportunity to take part in building their future in Mariupol. In general, the respondents had similar thoughts and perceptions of the situation in the city; therefore, they had no difficulty and experienced no controversy in telling and ranking MSC stories. However, most of the stories the two participants told were not personal but referred more to changes benefiting the community.

#### **MSC Headlines**

1. Mariupol's consideration of young people as a priority in the strategy development process, and a separate working group was established to involve them and address their interests.
2. Use of a sociological survey and statistical analysis to understand the basic elements that caused young people not to want to live in the city.
3. A ripple effect, with a focus on youth in other areas, such as their emotional health.

## ANNEX H. EVALUATION FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p><b>AMELP-specific</b></p> <p>1.1. There have been five iterations of the AMELP since initial approval in 2019. As a result of this process, one indicator was dropped, one was added, and three were significantly altered. The remaining nine remain the same, although collection and definitions have been adjusted periodically.</p> <p>1.2. ERA has received a ceiling increase for an additional year of implementation, responding to both a broadened mandate and COVID-19-related challenges. Responding to that, four of the nine initial (and still relevant) AMELP targets were adjusted.</p> <p>1.3. ERA has gradually improved its ability to hit annual AMELP targets. In Year 1, only 40% of the set targets were met, and in Year 2, 70% of targets were met. As of Quarter 2 of Year 3, 87% of the eight indicators that have updated data appear to be on track to meet annual targets.</p> <p>1.4. When aggregating actuals over 2.5 years with the revised life of the Activity, three main indicators risk not meeting targets: beneficiary confidence in their economic situation, new and improved employment, and direct and indirect beneficiaries from infrastructure.</p> <p><b>OVERALL</b></p> <p>1.5. Increased self-confidence, boosted morale, idea generation, and opportunities to develop both personal and business relationships are top results reported by training and event beneficiaries.</p> <p>1.6. Practical training models, site visits, individual consultations, and mentoring are most effective in producing results for trainee and MSME beneficiaries.</p>	<p>1.1. Self-confidence, information about external opportunities and network-building has led to economic outcomes for some training participants, but lack of financing, COVID restrictions and impact, and, in some cases, a lack of alignment of training with participant needs has hindered the ability of many participants to put knowledge and skills to use or improve their economic situation.</p> <p>1.2. Funding similar, general entrepreneurship training already offered by other organizations may not be an efficient use of ERA resources due to the duplication of available services and the lack of increased economic results for participants.</p> <p>1.3. The highest pay-off in terms of investment in skills-building is with peer-to-peer learning (mentoring or individual consultations) and more specialized technical assistance.</p> <p>1.4. ERA training on dual education best practices has led to early adopters applying the model, and it is expected that this programming will continue to scale and create internship and job placement opportunities for students.</p> <p>1.5. Roboklub offers a unique service to families that is not available in the formal school system or offered by other providers and helps expose children from vulnerable families to IT and other STEM skills at an early age.</p> <p>1.6. Support to develop on-site training programs for Inclusion business grantees would help workforce capacity, including the capacity of newly hired personnel.</p> <p>1.7. Lack of opportunities and factors outside ERA's control, despite improved curricula, will result in</p>	<p><b>1.a. To increase adoption of skills and economic outcomes, consider investing fewer resources in general online trainings once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted (understanding that, while online trainings can help reach a larger number and broader group of beneficiaries, key results are likely to be more psychosocial and less economic); instead, consider channeling more resources into support for individual business counseling and peer-to-peer learning across and within sectors to promising entrepreneurs from prioritized groups, and in specific, promising sectors for employment and apprenticeship.</b></p> <p><b>1.b. Continue to expand support to partner educational institutions to assist graduates in the transition from school to work by establishing formal job placement centers, dual education, internships, post-training assistance, or other career placement services.</b></p> <p><b>1.c. Consider providing additional business development support for business grantees who received equipment, including designing personnel training programs, to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the grant.</b></p> <p><b>1.d. Where possible, link interventions under different components and between and within growth sectors in a more coordinated fashion to leverage investments in similar beneficiaries, including designing more cross-sectoral interventions (e.g., agro-tourism). ERA should also consider integrating more diverse business types into each target growth sector (e.g., business advisors, marketing</b></p>

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>1.7. The expertise and quality of training instructors and consultants were routinely praised by trainee, MSME, educational institution and government beneficiaries.</p> <p>1.8. Training and MSME beneficiaries frequently complained that training content was either too elementary or too sophisticated compared to the way the event was advertised.</p> <p>1.9. Most ERA training and business beneficiaries appreciated organized events with a wide array of stakeholder representation and active facilitation and reported increased optimism or positivity after such events.</p> <p><b>INCLUSION</b></p> <p>1.10. Some beneficiaries reported accessing external grants or other finance and increasing sales or customers due to information received or contacts made during ERA-funded training.</p> <p>1.11. Those reporting use of skills gained in training mostly cited examples related to advertising and marketing via social media and specific training aimed at IT specialists.</p> <p>1.12. Many reported attending similar donor-funded entrepreneurship trainings in the past.</p> <p>1.13. Some businesses that received grants for equipment reported improved productivity, expanded product lines, increased sales, and increased access to new markets.</p> <p>1.14. Several businesses that received Inclusion grants are focusing on business expansion but lack basic business operational and planning skills and the capacity to properly train new staff hired as a condition of grant assistance.</p>	<p>continued out-migration. A continued focus on job placement/internships and job creation is necessary.</p> <p>1.8. Based on their outlooks, attitudes, and adaptation to a wide variety of shocks and stresses, ERA business beneficiaries are extremely well-positioned to maximally leverage ERA support as agents of confidence and continued resilience.</p> <p>1.9. Increasing programmatic cohesion between and among ERA components, target sectors, and businesses within target sectors will ultimately strengthen individual business networks and market systems overall, resulting in more sustainable, longer-term impact.</p> <p>1.10. Multi-phased, tailored, stacked support yields the greatest economic and psycho-social returns on ERA investment in businesses — both to the business itself and to the broader regional economy, especially in the long-term.</p> <p>1.11. In the common trade-off between job creation and increased productivity, certain grant requirements may be creating unintended conflicts between short-term employment and long-term sustainability and economic growth.</p> <p>1.12. While ERA learning events often build technical knowledge, they always offer a venue for camaraderie, network expansion, and inspiring optimism at multiple levels.</p> <p>1.13. When expected as a planned income source, unanticipated changes or poor communication related to grant disbursal can negatively impact operations, cash flow, or relationships with suppliers and customers, as well as attitudes about USAID and ERA.</p> <p>1.14. ERA Access to Finance pilots, while demonstrating some positive results, may miss</p>	<p><b>experts, legal advisors) to strengthen each target sector market system.</b></p> <p><b>1.e. Consider offering multi-phased, stacked technical assistance to all business beneficiaries in each target sector to increase the likelihood of sustainable investment; potentially offer discrete support bundles to beneficiaries with different levels of sophistication to address concerns about misaligned content.</b></p> <p><b>1.f. Consider encouraging business beneficiaries under the Growth component to design and implement onsite personnel training programs to scale knowledge and skills transfer, especially where a job creation requirement exists. If formally documented and registered, employees could be added as ERA direct beneficiaries and tracked through ERA workforce-related indicators.</b></p> <p><b>1.g. Consider innovative models to provide financing support for women and members of vulnerable groups to start their own businesses. Some examples include a milestone-based, pay-for-results model for business service providers; business plan competitions funded in partnership with banks or other private sector partners; and support for social enterprises that employ and serve VPs.</b></p> <p>1.h To increase alignment of training needs and use of new skills, continue to apply more rigorous selection criteria for training participants. Provide clear descriptions of training topics and target participant levels (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) in application materials and advertisements.</p>

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>I.15. Universities and VETs reported increased competitiveness based on material and curriculum support from ERA.</p> <p>I.16. Universities reported that ERA’s distance learning support — donated distance learning equipment and software — allowed them to continue classes and hold conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>I.17. Universities developed strategic partnerships with European institutions and leveraged ERA assistance to access additional European Union funding.</p> <p>I.18. With ERA support, universities are beginning to generate their own revenue streams by starting to develop partnerships with local businesses, providing consulting services, particularly in IT, and commercializing research.</p> <p>I.19. Students and universities reported optimism that ERA-funded improvements to classrooms and curricula will result in job placement/internships.</p> <p>I.20. Education partners trained by ERA on dual education reported satisfaction with applying the model. Education partners and the Ministry of Education and Science reported optimism that this model will be scaled and will lead to increased job placement for graduates.</p> <p>I.21. Despite ERA’s support to universities and VETs for increased job placement/internships, a lack of overall opportunities in the region will likely force continued out-migration by graduates if there are no improvements in the local and regional economy.</p> <p>I.22. The Roboklub STEM after-school programs for training children, largely from internally displaced families, provides a number of positive benefits for</p>	<p>opportunities to build on one other and amplify impact; they could benefit from overall strengthening, including additional and more targeted technical assistance to credit unions and SMEs and a more intentional approach to their longer-term sustainability.</p> <p>I.15. ERA is successfully introducing cities, universities, and local businesses and industries to new approaches, strategies, and concepts that will facilitate their ability to develop responsive, evidence-based strategies in the future.</p> <p>I.16. ERA’s transformation approach is challenging historical and deeply held mindsets of how governments, businesses, universities, communities, youth, and other stakeholders should work together.</p> <p>I.17. Understanding the nuances of drivers of confidence and levels of optimism is a challenge and can thus be difficult to measure, as influencing factors are often outside of the manageable interest of ERA and USAID.</p> <p>I.18. ERA has struggled to define its interventions and strategy and measure its contributions to building confidence and optimism in the region.</p>	<p>I.i. Continue to expand support for collaborative events with a wide range of stakeholders, including practical workshops and team-based competitions, to promote business growth, support psychosocial wellbeing, and foster more diverse engagement.</p> <p>I.j. Build capacity educational partners’ capacity to conduct regular labor market assessments focused on employer human resource demands and skills requirements to identify opportunities in specific sectors for graduates to enter the workforce or open businesses.</p> <p>I.k. Consider expanding the Roboklub STEM model to other towns and adding basic career education and planning, financial literacy training, life and employability skills training, and an introduction to basic entrepreneurship for older children to better prepare them for the workforce after graduation.</p> <p>I.l. To help scale stacked support to smaller businesses, ERA should explore future integration of a reciprocity element into the stacked support it provides; businesses that receive support could mentor micro- or small businesses within their geographic area or industry, create training modules based on experience, or participate in informational events as role models to other regional businesses.</p> <p>I.m. Consider encouraging business beneficiaries to complete some level of technical assistance activities prior to receiving financial assistance, which will improve the likelihood of investment sustainability and help identify the most motivated recipients.</p> <p>I.n. Consider re-evaluating the job creation requirement for grants to ensure it is not in conflict with incentives to improve productivity through automation.</p>

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>school-age youth and is a unique and innovative service in the region.</p> <p>I.23. Students in the Agrokebety-East master’s program appreciated the program’s approach to practical, broad-based learning, and the six-month internship that provides joint training and mentorship support.</p> <p>I.24. Sikorsky Challenge students felt the program had changed their mindsets, teaching them to evaluate a potential innovation through the lens of market utility and demand rather than primarily whether it is personally fulfilling for the entrepreneur.</p> <p><b>GROWTH</b></p> <p>I.25. There are missed opportunities for additional synergies between and among ERA components, target sectors, and businesses within target sectors.</p> <p>I.26. Many business beneficiaries were not offered or were not aware of additional, complementary support within their sectors that they could receive from ERA.</p> <p>I.27. Most business beneficiaries that chose to stay in the region are highly resilient and have practical, yet confident, attitudes about the future of their region.</p> <p>I.28. There were no discernible demographic commonalities (e.g., by age, sex, vulnerability status, length of time in sector) across the most successful or most optimistic business beneficiaries.</p> <p>I.29. ERA business beneficiaries that received multi-phased, tailored, stacked support were extremely satisfied with the quality and utility of the technical assistance, including its impact on motivation, long-term visioning, and hope for improved economic outcomes.</p>		<p>I.o. Develop a one-stop resource or portal that lists events and support opportunities with related skills levels and ensures that learning events integrate content aimed at multiple knowledge levels.</p> <p>I.p. Consider strengthening the UUCU grant by raising awareness, providing business development services to target MSMEs, and providing additional technical assistance to credit unions.</p> <p>I.q. Consider increasing WNISEF risk-share with banks and enterprises to free up funds for other borrowers.</p> <p>I.r. Consider deploying targeted, on-demand technical assistance — preferably through a dedicated fund that sits alongside one or more partner financial institutions — to SMEs to increase bankability and investment readiness and build future pipeline for transactions advisory services.</p> <p>I.s. Continue to support training and skills building for government staff, as they seem to utilize the knowledge they gain and help leverage funding at the municipal level to implement strategies.</p> <p>I.t. Draw on ERA’s work to date in target cities in eastern Ukraine to identify components of success and lessons learned from the local context to help replicate success in other cities.</p> <p>I.u. Showcase cities, projects, and partnerships that are attractive to the general population and specific stakeholders (applicable for the cross-cutting communications team) to motivate other cities and sectors in their strategic planning and coalition building.</p> <p>I.v. To assist in further targeting messaging and investments, ERA could support specialized research that identifies demographic, economic, or other factors that drive confidence and optimism and clarify</p>



EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>I.30. Most ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support have integrated new business management approaches, processes, and techniques, resulting in direct improvements in productivity and product or service diversification; in many cases — and despite a global economic downturn — ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support have already realized reduced costs, increased sales, expanded markets, and/or improved profits.</p> <p>I.31. Most ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support are transferring improved management approaches, processes, and organizational skills to their personnel through formal and informal onsite trainings.</p> <p>I.32. Some ERA business beneficiaries of stacked support admitted that they agreed to follow through with technical assistance only to receive grant funds, although they still acknowledged the value and utility of the technical assistance.</p> <p>I.33. One-off technical assistance without follow-up support is not an effective catalyst and can unintentionally result in confusion, frustration, or unfulfilled expectations of potential ERA support; moreover, it absorbs resources that could be better invested elsewhere.</p> <p>I.34. ERA’s grant requirement of job creation works well for investments that need additional human capacity but can unintentionally compromise longer-term economic growth if businesses are using resources to pay for unnecessary workers.</p> <p>I.35. Most ERA farmer festival exhibitors were highly satisfied with sales generated and new customers reached; some exhibitors expanded product lines and/or profiles in response to feedback, and most</p>		<p>how ERA can use this in its approach or strategy. Since increased optimism is an Activity-level objective, ERA could consider partnering with the USAID DG East Activity, or perhaps USAID could support this research to better clarify its expected Activity-level results.</p> <p>I.w. To increase ERA’s ability to contribute to and measure changes in optimism, USAID should provide clearer guidance on the strategic direction and concrete, expected results under this component.</p>

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>have repeat customers that are purchasing through the mail.</p> <p>I.36. Sponsorship of international trade show participation is extremely valuable as an individual learning experience to identify international trends and standards but is not likely to deliver market expansion outcomes in the next several years, if at all.</p> <p>I.37. Many ERA farmer festival exhibitors are female pensioners; this opportunity has provided self-confidence in their ability to financially provide for themselves.</p> <p>I.38. The United Ukrainian Credit Union (UUCU) loan program, while demonstrating positive initial results, was not coordinated with other ERA support that could have amplified its impact.</p> <p>I.39. ERA addressed initial UUCU loan concerns by providing technical assistance to reduce application burdens and increase local credit unions' capacity to work with farmers.</p> <p>I.40. Of six participating credit unions, most UUCU loans originated from just one, potentially highlighting the need for additional but more targeted technical assistance.</p> <p>I.41. WNISEF Guarantee Program funds have fully obligated ERA's grant contribution and guaranteed loans to three social enterprises by formal banks, but scalability and longer-term impact could be improved by shifting more risk to social enterprises and/or banks over time.</p> <p>I.42. A total of 10 bankable companies have been identified between the two transaction advisory firms (Soul Partners and Ernst &amp; Young), with a high likelihood of achieving ERA's target of closing four transactions (valued at the equivalent of</p>		

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>approximately \$4.5 million in financing) for this round.</p> <p>I.43. The transactions advisory pilot revealed that some SMEs are willing to at least partially cover the cost of transactions advisory services, a good sign that such services are in demand in the local market and can create potential leverage opportunities for ERA in the future.</p> <p>I.44. The transactions advisory pilot also revealed that not enough companies in the region are ready and/or willing to take on external finance to scale up such a program in any significant way,</p> <p><b>TRANSFORMATION</b></p> <p>I.45. Through ERA support to the Ukrainian Leadership Academy, youth were engaged as leaders in a working group that helped develop an evidence-based strategy in Mariupol focused on youth needs and priorities.</p> <p>I.46. Multiple voices and interests were represented in the participatory engagement process for the Mariupol strategy, which resulted in reported buy-in and accountability for implementation among stakeholders involved in strategy development.</p> <p>I.47. ERA’s ability to convene and consult a variety of stakeholders while developing transformation strategies showed officials how participatory engagement can be effective in empowering citizens and enabling urban areas to develop more responsive strategic plans.</p> <p>I.48. ERA consultations, recommendations, and trainings helped city councils to structure positions of various interest groups, build a chain of actions, and estimate resources during strategy development.</p> <p>I.49. ERA is assisting its partners in cities, raions, and oblasts in leveraging the empowerment and</p>		

EQ 1: What results has ERA achieved under its current key approaches and interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>additional funding that arises from state decentralization.</p> <p>I.50. According to city council members, ERA has helped clarify and prioritize development strategies and the most pressing infrastructure needs.</p> <p>I.51. A number of government training beneficiaries report that ERA trainings helped them secure international donor funding, and on a few occasions helped them gain better employment within their departments.</p> <p>I.52. Among ERA beneficiaries, even those reporting increased self-confidence, there is no clear determinant as to whether ERA support motivates beneficiaries to stay in the region or look for opportunities elsewhere in Ukraine or abroad.</p> <p>I.53. Some training respondents reported that they gained encouragement and national pride via deeper engagement with the Ukrainian language and literature.</p> <p>I.54. ERA has considered several approaches to building confidence, and it modified performance indicators, staffing, and its general organizational structure to be more responsive to USAID guidance.</p> <p>I.55. Due to a lack of evidence, it is not possible to determine whether communication is being used effectively to influence confidence and build optimism.</p>		

EQ 2: How have women’s opportunities been influenced by ERA interventions?		
Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>2.1. ERA’s funding to several Ukrainian organizations provides targeted support to women in eastern Ukraine aimed at increasing economic opportunities, networking, and leadership.</p> <p>2.2. While more than 60% of ERA beneficiaries are women, representation of women facing an intersection of vulnerabilities or discrimination is low.</p> <p>2.3. Female ERA beneficiaries are primarily engaged under the Inclusion component and represent a much smaller proportion of beneficiaries under Growth-focused interventions (representing about one-third of total Growth beneficiaries, with the majority involved in Tourism).</p> <p>2.4. Parenting responsibilities and lack of childcare support are obstacles for women in making use of the knowledge and skills gained through ERA-funded trainings. This problem is particularly acute for female IDPs, who often lack social or familial support.</p> <p>2.5. Viewpoints expressed by both male and female beneficiaries indicate a possible lack of awareness of gender equality issues among the broader set of ERA beneficiaries and region.</p>	<p>2.1 ERA has exceeded targets for participation of women and has been successful in engaging women in its interventions.</p> <p>2.2 Tourism is ERA’s growth sector with the highest participation by women (including single female-headed households), and a significant number of women have also participated in IT skills-building trainings (with the exception of single female-headed households).</p> <p>2.3 Prevailing attitudes on gender equality among both men and women in the region indicate a lack of awareness of the issues and challenges that women face.</p> <p>2.4 Investments in the region in childcare and financing for women-owned businesses would increase women’s participation in the workforce and as business owners.</p> <p>2.5 ERA has focused on encouraging women in IT; in other cases, the Activity can do more to counter gender-stereotyped sectors for women.</p>	<p><b>2.a. To increase economic results among female beneficiaries, address the obstacles that diverse women face in taking advantage of economic opportunities (specifically, access to childcare and access to finance). Several strategies may be necessary to reach diverse segments of women.</b></p> <p>2.b. As with ERA’s assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, continue to define the intersectionality of discrimination and vulnerability that women in the region face to identify specific subsets of vulnerable women and their needs (for example, women who are single parents, rural women, female IDPs, etc.).</p> <p>2.c. Expand on the approach ERA has used with survivors of GBV and female IDPs to further develop specific strategies that target the needs of various segments of women</p> <p>2.d. To increase awareness of the challenges that women face (including youth) , integrate a gender awareness approach across all interventions. ERA should look for opportunities to involve men in efforts to reduce barriers and obstacles (including gender-based violence) and stereotyped gender roles, behaviors, attitudes, and norms to promote improved female empowerment.</p> <p>2.e. Through strategic messaging and communication and focused support to women jobseekers and entrepreneurs, encourage openness among men and women to non-typical sectors to expand economic possibilities and job creation and growth, and to begin to alter behaviors and norms. This may require ERA to provide examples from outside Ukraine to spur ideas and innovation.</p>

**EQ3: How have opportunities for vulnerable populations been influenced by ERA interventions?**

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>3.1. ERA-funded grants have supported NGOs working with vulnerable populations to build their capacity in program development, project implementation, management, training, and community relations, including in improved outreach and building improved relations for VPs and the communities in which they live. Some grants have funded social enterprises such as gyms for the elderly.</p> <p>3.2. Among VPs, most ERA assistance is reaching people living within 6 to 20 kilometers of the LOC and IDPs across all components.</p> <p>3.3. The vegetable sector mostly engages people living within 5 kilometers of LOC and women. I4M mostly engages people living within 20 kilometers of the LOC. The honey and tourism sectors engage the target VPs the most broadly across almost all groups.</p> <p>3.4. While the IT sector is often cited as an option for people with disabilities, single parents, or caregivers of multiple children, few from these groups are currently reached through ERA IT interventions.</p> <p>3.5. Under Inclusion and Growth, aside from youth and communities in close proximity to the LOC, very few interventions specifically target any vulnerable groups or their particular needs.</p> <p>3.6. There is a lack of clarity about USAID expectations for the prioritization of and expected results for VPs.</p> <p>3.7. Reported obstacles and external factors that hinder economic opportunities for VPs include housing, financing, and psychological trauma.</p>	<p>3.1 The broad range of VPs requires an understanding of each group’s needs, challenges, and opportunities, as well as the intersectionality across and between groups.</p> <p>3.2 Reducing the number of targeted VP groups and aligning those groups based on economic criteria for increased inclusion would enable the Activity to have greater impact, increase efficiency, and create a multiplier effect to achieve scale.</p> <p>3.3 ERA’s work with vulnerable populations would benefit from a clearer approach and strategy for integration of VPs across ERA’s components that link VPs to ERA’s targeted economic growth sectors and economic visioning and other work with cities.</p> <p>3.4 Some sectors, such as honey and tourism, appear to have the potential to engage a broad set of beneficiaries across a spectrum of VPs.</p> <p>3.5 ERA support for IT training also has broad reach among certain groups but more financial support and specialized training for IT entrepreneurs may be needed to increase economic results.</p> <p>3.6 Beneficiary views on vulnerability indicate a lack of awareness in communities where ERA works related to the issues and needs of VPs, and that mainstreaming awareness into current activities and communication strategies could encourage further acceptance of VPs and action by stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>3.a. USAID/Ukraine should provide clear and proactive guidance to ERA on the objectives, expected results, and focus of its work with vulnerable groups, as these contribute or relate to achievement of USAID’s DO or CDCS strategy. Increase engagement between ERA staff and USAID staff with inclusion expertise — at the Mission (Gender Advisor), E&amp;E Bureau (Gender Advisor), or perhaps the Human Rights team in the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance — to assist in providing ongoing guidance and direction.</b></p> <p><b>3.b. Taking into account specific challenges and opportunities for VPs, continue to further integrate more VPs into ERA’s target growth sectors, including through value-added product development or linked services, and investigate community social enterprise opportunities.</b></p> <p><b>3.c. Continue to pursue strategies for prioritizing VPs and ongoing assessment of needs and opportunities based on a nuanced understanding of the drivers of their vulnerability, acknowledgement of the dynamism and intersectionality within and between groups, and linkages to economic criteria.</b></p> <p>3.d. Continue to target grants and support to prioritized VPs, linked to specific sectors and growth opportunities.</p> <p>3.e. Enhance mainstreaming and communication approaches to build awareness of VPs and their needs across components and among its existing beneficiaries and partners, many of whom revealed biases in interviews.</p>

**EQ 4: Given the available opportunities is ERA maximizing coordination/collaboration with partners to achieve results?**

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>4.1. Prior to data collection, ERA identified 73 distinct partners. ERA further classified 28 of these as coordination partnerships and 45 as the more intensive collaboration partnerships.</p> <p>4.2. Although many partnerships are just beginning, both GOU and education stakeholders noted substantial results. For example, GOU partners pointed to ERA technical assistance as helping advance critical reforestation efforts, new economic development plans, or large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Luhansk Connector Railway. Education partners have leveraged ERA partnerships to attract new investment and partnerships from European partners.</p> <p>4.3. Seven of the partners identified were not fully aware of ERA activities or able to validate current activities despite being identified as more intensive collaboration partners.</p> <p>4.4. Partners most often criticized ERA for implementation delays, especially around construction.</p> <p>4.5. Beneficiary interviews illustrated an active and complex donor landscape, with the UNDP the most often cited. ERA and UNDP meet frequently to avoid duplication, but they do not collaborate actively on joint programming.</p> <p>4.6. ERA employs a multi-faceted approach to engaging the private sector. This includes providing linkages and playing a facilitative role, training and technical assistance (especially around dual education), and funding.</p> <p>4.7. ERA is particularly effective at facilitating connections and communication among universities, private companies, and government.</p>	<p>4.1. ERA's depth and diversity is reflective of its complex mandate and opportunistic approach to responding to quickly emerging needs of the region during the first two years of implementation.</p> <p>4.2. ERA's blend of partnerships has the potential to maximize results, but the number of partners that ERA identifies for high-touch collaborations creates the risk of an unmanageable number of relationships and workstreams.</p> <p>4.3. Some partners' lack of familiarity with ERA, and delays in delivering commitments to partners, point to overextension with the current network of partners.</p> <p>4.4. In some instances, there is only basic coordination, as with UNDP, despite the fact that 25% of interviewed beneficiaries mention UNDP.</p> <p>4.5. ERA's quickly deployed technical expertise catalyzes important results at the regional and national levels for Ukraine partners.</p> <p>4.6. Educational partnerships have delivered impressive short-term results that point to sustained change for the future.</p> <p>4.7. ERA's comparative advantage lies in expertise that leverages donor-led investment, stacked intensive support, and knowledge transfer for MSMEs; connects actors across the region, and facilitates high-profile investment opportunities.</p> <p>4.8. ERA's strategy for supporting MSMEs is clear and offers flexibility in responding to a variety of needs; however, methods for measuring or vetting the results PSE more generally are less clear.</p>	<p><b>4.a. Review the list of 73 partnerships and reduce the intensity of some collaborative partnerships to enable the team to fully deliver on commitments. An ideal time to do this would be during work planning prior to Year 4.</b></p> <p><b>4.b. Prioritize partnerships through which ERA can deliver the competitive advantage identified above. In other instances, ERA can use its relationships to off-ramp partners to other organizations.</b></p> <p><b>4.c. As part of the recent PSE strategy that ERA submitted, USAID and ERA should develop clear priorities and expected results around PSE as a means to secure enduring outcomes from its work.</b></p> <p>4.d. Going forward, new partnerships should be not only opportunistic but intentional and should link explicitly to ERA's comparative advantage in the donor landscape and to the Activity's articulated expected results. ERA should also identify partnerships that are anticipated to produce large-scale results after the life of the Activity. These are promising but require USAID's recognition of the risk and resources required for such commitments.</p> <p>4.e. Continue to emphasize and prioritize relationships with the GOU and education partners; these show the greatest promise for sustainable results through which resources delivered will have a multiplier effect.</p> <p>4.f. ERA's Inclusion team should determine whether areas of programming similar to that of UNDP are valid based on the dramatic needs of the region, or if there is unnecessary duplication. ERA should also explore with UNDP areas where complementary,</p>

		coordinated programming could result in greater impact for both.
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**EQ 5: How well has ERA identified and reinforced the capacity of key local actors to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation ends?**

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>5.1. As demonstrated in the Year 3 work plan and implementation, ERA is planning for the sustainability of efforts through university partnerships and investments in target growth sectors.</p> <p>5.2. Although in its early stages, ERA has identified a range of local actors and developed performance measures under the foreign assistance standard indicator CBLD-9.</p> <p>5.3. City councils reported that ERA assistance has built their capacity in a variety of areas and helped them build relationships with constituents that will endure beyond the strategy development process.</p> <p>5.4. Oblast-level officials involved in regional strategy development reported appreciation for ERA support but did not recognize increased capacity or any changes in their systems or processes as a result.</p> <p>5.5. Assistance to local actors in the development of coalitions and clusters supports sustainable long-term economic development by helping to catalyze and build momentum for a more diversified and integrated economy.</p> <p>5.6. NGO grantees reported that ERA resources and support have helped their organizations to develop and, in some cases, further professionalize aspects of their operations.</p>	<p>5.1 ERA has identified key actors (NGOs, GOU, education partners, the private sector) with potential to advance USAID objectives after ERA implementation and has recently developed performance measures and improvement plans for many of these partners.</p> <p>5.2 There is evidence at the local level that ERA's support has already built the capacity of city councils in participatory planning and other areas, and that both the processes and the relationships will yield enduring positive results.</p> <p>5.3 There is insufficient evidence to date that oblast-level officials have changed their mindsets or will use similar processes in the future without ERA support.</p>	<p>5.a. Continue to assess the long-term capacity of ERA's partners and other local actors, and consider how to structure interventions to maximize potential for sustainability beyond the Activity. ERA should build on its initial successes in facilitating strong relationships between stakeholders, as these can be the foundation for enduring change to processes and mindsets in the region.</p> <p>5.b. Build more deliberate capacity-building and organizational development assistance into interventions and support to local actors or institutions.</p> <p>5.c. Consider strengthening support to key actors, particularly businesses and government, to assess risk and develop more robust risk reduction and adaptation strategies as part of a longer-term approach to sustainability in eastern Ukraine.</p>



**Cross-Cutting: The findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this section address issues related to operational and measurement issues that span components and EQs**

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>6.1. Across components and beneficiary groups, there are common complaints related to ERA’s grant process and delays.</p> <p>6.2. There are several examples of current Activity AMELP indicators that are either failing to capture results or potentially failing to properly incentivize more results-focused, sustainable approaches.</p>	<p>6.1. ERA has taken adaptive measures to greatly increase the number of grants awarded and in the pipeline and to streamline internal processes to reduce delays.</p> <p>6.2. If delays in grants continue, this may significantly jeopardize the activities and results that ERA and beneficiaries are able to realize in the remaining three years of implementation.</p> <p>6.3. Past delays have caused negative attitudes among some partners and beneficiaries, and reluctance to continue working with ERA.</p> <p>6.4. In the most extreme cases, delays and lack of proper communication or planning has resulted in negative, unintended outcomes for business beneficiaries.</p> <p>6.5. There are opportunities to further capture and communicate results across all ERA components and investments and clearly define expected results.</p> <p>6.6. Some output indicators may be incentivizing short-term quantity-focused results instead of long-term economic outcomes.</p>	<p>6.a. Continue to improve communication with grant applicants through the receipt and review phases of application and set initial realistic expectations.</p> <p>6.b. Take additional precautions to ensure that delays or disruptions to planned assistance due to internal policies or processes do not inadvertently cause financial hardship to business beneficiaries; if this occurs, ERA should fast-track resolution to avoid further economic disruption.</p> <p>6.c. Consider ways to measure and communicate ERA’s results under workforce or youth development that are not currently captured elsewhere. For example, consider disaggregating by “student of assisted educational institution.” Another option could be a learning activity focused on exploring results of ERA’s efforts to improve curricula and facilities for education partners could be another.</p> <p>6.d. USAID should review indicators and expected results to confirm that they properly incentivize use of Activity resources for interventions that are more likely to produce economic outcomes rather than simply increase the number of people reached or trained.</p>