DESIGNING EFFECTIVE
eVIDENCE-BASED ENGAGEMENT
AND LEARNING FOR
ORGANIZATIONAL
PERFORMANCE (DEVELOP)

BI-ANNUAL REPORT
(MARCH 23–SEPTEMBER 23, 2021)

October 21, 2021
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO DEVELOP</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 Work Plan Progress and Activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-Ins to the DEVELOP Contract</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Deliverables</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELPFUL PRACTICES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKSTREAM HIGHLIGHTS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstream 1: Organizational Development</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstream 2: Professional Development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstream 3: Knowledge Management</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstream 4: Strategic Communications</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMD/Marketlinks Buy-in</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa Bureau Buy-In</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

This bi-annual report is the first for DEVELOP, prepared as one of several deliverables to fulfil contractual obligations. This document, however, is submitted and shared as more than just a USAID requirement. It is more than a report of progress against what we planned to accomplish in the first six months, demonstrating that the contract is being implemented responsibly and with accountability. We see things differently! We see this report as a moment of reflection and an opportunity to represent, in words and pictures, the vision behind DEVELOP, the actions we have taken to date toward achieving that vision, and the enthusiasm we will continue to build on throughout the project's remaining period of performance.

We see this report as a communication tool that conveys the depth and diversity of our work with USAID’s Center for Education in the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation and with other operating units. We see this report as a momentum-builder as we move into the second half of our first year of activities. Furthermore, we see this document as an instrument of inspiration for the Agency, other USAID implementing partners, the American people, and ourselves, as we are reminded that achieving development objectives in the education sector is possible with informed and improved organizational effectiveness.

Writing a report is like telling a story, and it is important to tell the story about what inspires, informs, and improves our work. DEVELOP’s story has just begun, but it is already rich with collaborative connections, lessons learned, timely adjustments, and empowering achievements. This bi-annual report is a moment in the life of our project to pause and reflect, allowing us to capture a healthy glance back and take a holistic look forward. We therefore embrace this opportunity to share the beginnings of our story with you.

As you read this bi-annual report, our aim is for you to experience the past six months with us and be energized for the journey of positive changes that lie ahead. Our hope is that you will gain new insights into several key pillars of capacity strengthening; namely, organizational development, professional development, knowledge management, and strategic communications. Our belief is that you will be able to take helpful practices from our experience and apply them in your own work.

Read on…

Dr. Stuart Belle, Project Director
## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>After Action Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Adaptive Communication Environment Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFR/SD/ED</td>
<td>Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHA</td>
<td>Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CKMT</td>
<td>Communications, Knowledge Management, and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COR</td>
<td>Contracting Officer's Representative</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>C-TIP</td>
<td>Countering Trafficking in Persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLT</td>
<td>Distance Learning Toolkit</td>
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<td>DDI</td>
<td>Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation</td>
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<td>DEEP</td>
<td>Data and Evidence for Education Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVELOP</td>
<td>Designing Effective eVidence-based Engagement and Learning for Organizational Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRG</td>
<td>Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMD</td>
<td>Economics and Market Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Education Overview Course</td>
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<td>EPIC</td>
<td>Education Performance Improvement, Communications, and Knowledge</td>
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<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
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<td>GenDev</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
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<td>KM</td>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>LFT</td>
<td>Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQI+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLDI</td>
<td>Locally Led Development Initiatives</td>
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<td>LTTA</td>
<td>Long-Term Technical Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOE</td>
<td>Level of Effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCSIE</td>
<td>Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education</td>
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<td>MEL</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>OD</td>
<td>Organizational Development</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<td>PDWG</td>
<td>Professional Development Working Group</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>QASP</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan</td>
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<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Question and Answer</td>
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<td>RLC</td>
<td>Regional Learning Centers</td>
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<td>SEL</td>
<td>Social and Emotional Learning</td>
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<td>SMG</td>
<td>Senior Management Group</td>
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<td>SOW</td>
<td>Statement of Work</td>
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<td>STTA</td>
<td>Short-Term Technical Assistance</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>USG</td>
<td>United States Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>UX</td>
<td>User Experience</td>
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<td>vILT</td>
<td>Virtual Instructor-Led Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>YALI</td>
<td>Young African Leaders Initiative</td>
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</tbody>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Designing Effective eVidence-based Engagement and Learning for Organizational Performance (DEVELOP) project is to support USAID’s Center for Education in strengthening its organizational capacity to lead in the education sector, with a particular focus on the four workstreams of organizational effectiveness, professional development of USAID educational staff, knowledge management, and strategic communications. Beginning in March 2021 as a five-year award, DEVELOP began its first year of implementation with formal handover procedures from the Education Performance Improvement, Communications, and Knowledge (EPIC) contract, accompanied by immediate start-up meetings between EnCompass LLC as prime with partners Bixal Solutions Inc. and Knowledge Partners LLC. Within the first three months, staffing plans were activated, and project management tools and protocols were rapidly rolled out. Efforts to develop a Year 1 work plan, a quality assurance surveillance plan, and an activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan quickly followed.

At the six-month mark, DEVELOP has initiated and informed a range of strategic and systems-strengthening activities. DEVELOP’s core work is represented by 14 intermediate results and 27 performance indicators that will be tracked and reported on annually across the life of the project. A total of 155 activities were projected to take place in Year 1, with 33 percent of these already completed, an additional 47 percent of these currently underway, 3 percent on hold pending Agency guidance, and 17 percent scheduled to start in the second half of DEVELOP’s first year of performance. The knowledge management and strategic communications workstreams have seen the most surge to date, followed by an expanding portfolio of organizational development support and growing demands in professional development. Along with this direct support to the Center for Education, DEVELOP designed and is rolling out seven buy-ins with USAID operating units that include the Center for Economics and Market Development (EMD); the Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division; the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Hub; the Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance; the Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub; the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance; and the Program Office in the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation (DDI). Highlights for the EMD/Marketlinks buy-in, as the first to be activated and the furthest along, are provided in this report. We also describe initial activities implemented with the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) as part of our support to the Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division. Updates on additional buy-ins will be highlighted in the next bi-annual report.

Specific achievements to date include design and analysis of data from an organizational effectiveness survey conducted with staff in the Center for Education. The feedback generated through this “listening” process helped us design an All-Hands Retreat, which yielded practical ideas for workplace improvement, integration-focused initiatives, and a strategic road map for organizational change. Direct planning and coordination support to the Strategic Management Group (senior leadership) in the Center for Education is an ongoing activity that contributes to realizing a vision for organizational development.

Professional development efforts focused on building foundational and leadership skills for USAID education staff. DEVELOP welcomed 17 participants to the Education Overview Course (EOC), supported six Professional Development Working Group (PDWG) meetings, and revised the Social and Emotional Learning EOC module, and began design work for a new course on LGBTQI+ Considerations in Educational Programming. A highlight is the launch of a coaching program within the Center for
Education. A diverse cadre of 13 coaches, three of whom are fluent in American Sign Language, support a Year 1 cohort of 18 full- and part-time staff as they widen and deepen their professional capabilities en route to achieving their personal effectiveness goals.

Under the knowledge management workstream, DEVELOP supported strategic and systems-oriented processes for streamlining the prioritization, planning, preparation, and publication of knowledge products, including newsletters, case studies, sector-focused research, practitioner-oriented toolkits, blogs, and digital content. Detailed action related to the management and functionality of EducationLinks, the Center for Education’s primary knowledge management platform, was a central focus. Notably, in the first six months, over 110 content pages were updated or added on EducationLinks, leading to significantly increased engagement on the site—a 58 percent increase in the engagement rate in the last six months compared to the same timeframe the previous year. DEVELOP continues to lead content creation and coordination efforts by shaping a plan to define, update, and align content partners around processes to streamline content operations in line with Center-wide objectives.

Strategic communications activities included robust support to the Center for Education’s campaigns, newsletter publications, factsheet preparation, and support for high-profile events. For example, DEVELOP successfully designed, executed, and contributed to several digital promotion campaigns for International Literacy Day, World Book Day, Pre-G7, International Day of Families, World Environment Day/World Oceans Day, LGBTQI & Pride Month, the U.S. Government COVID-19 International Basic Education Response, and Diversity & Inclusion Month. Social media strategic expansion has been successful. The Center for Education’s social media presence on LinkedIn and Instagram has grown alongside its traditional platforms of Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, DEVELOP has begun to regularly suggest LinkedIn content that can be shared with Agency officials. DEVELOP is monitoring thoughtful metrics on reach and engagement. Successes include a 60 percent open rate for internal newsletters, and the campaign hashtag #ReadingInspires for International Literacy Day, which reached more than 2.3 million people.

In the first six months of implementation, the project needed to make critical adjustments in response to shifts in Agency policies for published content and communication platform use. Changes in clearance procedures for digital content and protocols for secure online dissemination of communications messages meant that DEVELOP needed to work with the Center for Education to implement agile, acceptable, and accessible solutions, which the project did successfully. An important lesson learned is the need to operate with a range of realistic and reliable scenarios that are fit for purpose. DEVELOP established a second set of good practices around the need for a resource-sensitive approach to planning and implementing buy-ins. DEVELOP determined that the complexities of buy-in activities necessitated additional time to flesh out a right-sized scope. In doing so, the project demonstrated a sound, proactive approach to designing and costing a diverse set of buy-in requests by several USAID Operating Units. DEVELOP standardized the buy-in planning process with a core set of templates, maintained steady, solution-oriented communications with Agency buy-in managers, and used strengths-based approaches to consortium engagement and leadership. A lesson learned generated through the buy-in scoping and start-up process is the usefulness of properly estimating and tracking the level of effort required to prepare and approve a buy-in. Realizing the amount of time required to create the most supportive buy-in implementation approach, both in technical scope and in budget, the DEVELOP team worked with the COR to institute a system through which operating units could include the buy-in scoping time and discussions in their budget estimates. This helped keep budgets realistic and aligned across core work plan requirements. Last but not least, an age-old lesson that rang true in DEVELOP’s
first six months is the value of nurturing working relationships that are built on respect, responsiveness, and reliability. Close collaboration with Activity Leads at the Center for Education, including the Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) and Alternate COR, have been critical to creating and maintaining an effective workflow. The same is true for the three partners in the DEVELOP consortium. Planning with purpose, communicating clear expectations, establishing channels for feedback, and opening spaces for building a culture of cooperation and distributed leadership are hallmarks of DEVELOP’s first six months.

Over the next six months, DEVELOP will advance the in-progress and upcoming work plan activities, aiming to reach at least a 95 percent completion rate by the end of Year 1 in March 2022. The project will capture, seek to understand, and use data related to performance indicators in processes that support continuous improvement. DEVELOP will advance the analysis and application of information generated through the project’s learning agenda and infuse engagements with the Center for Education, its other support mechanisms, and other operating units with a combination of evidence and implementation experience. Finally, the project will continue to actively and more deeply bridge the integrating links across DEVELOP’s four workstreams so that efforts in each are enabling of others across their different functions, and so that organizational effectiveness gains for the Center for Education may be more holistically sustained.
INTRODUCTION TO DEVELOP

The Center for Education is a USAID operating unit that sits within the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation (DDI), and leads the Agency’s investment, engagement, learning, and best practices in the education sector. Fully staffed at about 55 personnel, the Center for Education is the second largest unit in DDI. The Center is responsible for an annual global education budget of approximately $1.2 billion, with programming priorities that include pre-primary, basic, and higher education, foundational skills, youth and workforce development, access and inclusive development, private-sector partnerships, strategy and policy engagement, systems strengthening, and measurement and evaluation. With a shift in USAID toward a “field first” service delivery model, the Center for Education is transforming its structure, functions, and organizational culture as it advances the Agency’s education policy, effectively leads programming, and meaningfully coordinates the wider U.S. government (USG) education strategy. Doing this successfully means that the Center for Education must catalyze and sustain its processes for organizational learning and improvement.

The Designing Effective eVidence-based Engagement and Learning for Organizational Performance (DEVELOP) contract supports the Center for Education in strengthening its capacity to lead in the education sector. As a five-year award, with a period of performance from March 23, 2021, to March 22, 2026, DEVELOP is designed with particular focus on organizational effectiveness, professional development of USAID education staff, knowledge management, and strategic communication. DEVELOP supports more than tools, technology, and training; the project pays careful attention to strengthening strategic alignment and a culture of knowledge generation and use, with facilitation of integration across technical and operational areas so the Center can respond more comprehensively across the entire education continuum. DEVELOP also works to build a climate that nurtures workplace satisfaction and advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments.

DEVELOP is implemented by a consortium of three organizations. EnCompass LLC leads as prime and partners with Bixal Solutions Inc. and Knowledge Partners LLC to design and deliver a diverse menu of services and support to the Center for Education. DEVELOP is structured around four workstreams, each representing a focal point for organizational capacity building (see Exhibit 1). Each partner brings distinct capacity and a unique skillset to the activities implemented under DEVELOP, but there is a coherent approach to planning and coordination so that solutions are integrated and yield the envisioned results. The core workstreams are:

- **Organizational development.** The strengthening of processes, tools, relationships, and knowledge assets that increase an organization’s capacity to achieve its strategic goals and objectives. Organizational effectiveness is the efficient, equitable, and enduring ability of an organization to fulfill the purpose for which it has been established. DEVELOP views organizational development as the prerequisite or pathway to organizational effectiveness.

- **Professional development.** The activities, experiences, and relationships that contribute to an individual’s knowledge, skills, and capabilities to carry out their role(s) and responsibilities.

- **Knowledge management.** The series of actions and decisions that enable the planning, preparation, publication, and promotion of content and products that advances understanding of what works in the education sector and/or facilitates the adoption of improvement practices.

- **Strategic communication.** Activities that support the prioritization, presentation, and placement of key messages that effectively tell the story of USAID’s achievements in education and call stakeholders to action.
The activities and solutions implemented within these four workstreams may be accessed by other operating units within DDI or across the Agency via buy-ins. The combination of DEVELOP’s core work with the Center for Education plus strategic support to operating units in key capacity-building areas creates a truly diverse and dynamic set of engagements that drive key processes for leadership, learning, and leverage forward. This is work to which our consortium is proud to be central. This bi-annual report is a synthesis of analyses, applications, accomplishments, and adjustments to which DEVELOP has been responsive in the first six months of project implementation.

Exhibit 1. DEVELOP’s Results Framework
OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The DEVELOP contract award date was March 23, 2021, taking over activities from a preceding contract, Education Performance Improvement, Communications, and Knowledge (EPIC). With a five-year period of performance through March 22, 2026, DEVELOP implemented a rapid start-up, which included maintaining existing activities from the EPIC project within a very short timeline of three days. During this handover, the DEVELOP team worked with the prior project to transition ownership of all public USAID assets to ensure continuity of these resources. The start-up process included many stakeholders and involved project handover meetings with EPIC staff, project initiation planning with USAID, and kickoff meetings with the DEVELOP consortium partners. DEVELOP worked quickly to stand up the necessary staff, tools, subcontractors, and resources to begin work on activities within the first week of the contract to support the Center for Education and early buy-in interests. The quantity and complexity of DEVELOP’s planned activities are a clear indication of both the desire for DEVELOP’s services and the impact the project can accomplish for the Center for Education.

DEVELOP works closely with the USAID Center for Education to identify needs and prioritize key project activities and deliverables. Close collaboration with Activity Leads at the Center, including the project Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) and Alternate COR, was critical to creating and maintaining an effective workflow. In addition to partnering with staff in the Center for Education, DEVELOP relies on full-time project staff, part-time staff, and short-term technical assistance to complete activities. In the project’s first six months, eight full-time staff members were hired for the project. An additional four full-time staff will be onboarded in the coming months—a Professional Development Specialist, an Organizational Development Specialist, a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist, and a Strategic Communications Specialist. At that point, the project will be fully staffed with 12 full-time staff members across EnCompass and Bixal, with additional long- and short-term technical assistance across the consortium. While hiring for the aforementioned open positions, DEVELOP drew on short-term technical assistance to fulfill project needs and ensure uninterrupted delivery of project activities.

YEAR 1 WORK PLAN PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES

DEVELOP’s first year work plan spans the period from March 23, 2021, to March 22, 2022. DEVELOP tracks the status of all activities listed in the project’s work plan. Activities may be ongoing (a routine task or process that spans the work plan period), in progress (work is underway), paused (at the request of the client), not started (activity timeline has not yet begun), or completed (work on the activity is finished and any deliverables are finalized). In the first six months of the project, DEVELOP began 82 percent of the workstream-specific activities listed in the Year 1 work plan, meaning these activities were either in-progress, ongoing, or completed. As of this report, DEVELOP has completed 51 activities (33 percent), with 36 activities in progress (23 percent) and 36 ongoing activities (23 percent). An additional five activities (3 percent) are paused, and 27 activities (17 percent) have not been started.

Exhibit 2 highlights activity progress within each workstream. Across all four workstreams, activity progress is within the originally planned timeframes or has been adjusted in line with client requests. Workstream 1 (Organizational Development) is 25 percent complete, with all remaining activities either in progress or ongoing. Workstream 2 (Professional Development) is 8 percent complete, with 63 percent of activities ongoing or in progress, and 29 percent of activities that will be started in the next six months. Workstream 3 (Knowledge Management) is 37 percent complete, with 49 percent of
activities either ongoing or in progress. Five percent of activities in this workstream were paused at the request of the client, and 8 percent will be started in the second half of DEVELOP’s first year. In Workstream 4 (Strategic Communications), 26 percent of activities are completed, and 38 percent are in progress or ongoing. Three percent of strategic communications activities were paused at the client’s request, and 33 percent will begin in the next six months.

Exhibit 2: DEVELOP Activity Status by Workstream (March – September 2021)

During the next six months, DEVELOP will continue to build on the progress made during the project’s start-up phase, and is on track to complete all workstream deliverables within the first year of the project.

BUY-INS TO THE DEVELOP CONTRACT

In addition to DEVELOP’s core work with the Center for Education, other operating units within DDI will have the opportunity to buy into the contract mechanism. Within the first six months of the project, DEVELOP received requests from eight operating units. Exhibit 3 below summarizes the status of these buy-in requests as of September 23, 2021.

Exhibit 3: Summary of Buy-In Requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BUY-IN PURPOSE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Economics and Market Development (EMD) Marketlinks</td>
<td>Management of USAID/DDI/EMD’s Marketlinks (<a href="http://www.marketlinks.org">www.marketlinks.org</a>) content creation, fostering communities of practice, and content sharing through social media, event hosting, and working with USAID partners on additional tasks as needed.</td>
<td>Buy-in approved, with work ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### NAME

**Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division (AFR/SD/ED)**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Strengthen organizational culture and operations to enable continuous learning and improvement in AFR/SD/ED, and to improve communications and knowledge use among technical practitioners within AFR/SD/ED and Missions. A roadmap for YALI will also be developed through lessons learned, team building, and strategic planning.

**STATUS**
Buy-in approved, with work to begin in early October 2021

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**Education and Youth Division (AFR/SD/ED), Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Facilitate two retreats for the YALI team on/about June 23 and 30, 2021. These retreats will focus on capturing YALI lessons learned and best practices and team building following the recent DiSC assessment. This activity will be included in the overall Education and Youth Division (AFR/SD/ED) buy-in and represents the first portion of the total buy-in activity.

**STATUS**
Buy-in work completed

---

**Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Hub (GenDev)**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Provide additional communications capacity for GenDev. This added capacity is required to respond to high-priority and immediate actions on behalf of the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. High-quality work products are often required with very little turnaround time from a variety of sources, such as USAID leadership, the Interagency, the Hill, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. DEVELOP will support GenDev with the development and execution of work products in a timely and high-quality manner, including the design and development of a new website.

**STATUS**
Buy-in approved, with work beginning in late September 2021

---

**DDI Bureau Pulse Check Survey Support**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Support the DDI Culture and Change Management Committee (CCMC) in managing and analyzing two pulse check surveys.

**STATUS**
Buy-in approved, with work beginning in late September 2021

---

**Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Marketlinks Activities**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Support knowledge management and community of practice learning through Marketlinks blog posts and webinars.

**STATUS**
Buy-in approved, with work beginning in early October 2021

---

**Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Countering Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) Policy Revision**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
The C-TIP Policy was revised and published in January 2021 but is now undergoing a light revision process to align it with the new Administration’s priorities.

**STATUS**
Buy-in approved, with work beginning in winter 2021

---

**Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub, Locally Led Development Initiatives**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Support three areas for the Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub: 1) support the communications goals of the LFT Hub’s Locally Led Development Initiative’s (LFT/LLDI) communications, knowledge management, and training (CKMT) strategy; 2) build and improve upon LFT/LLDI’s training strategy to strengthen the capacity of USAID, its partners and sub-awardees, and local stakeholders; and 3) build out and improve upon LFT/LLDI’s knowledge management and CKMT strategies to support peer-to-peer learning events with LLDI partners.

**STATUS**
Buy-in request received; on hold pending Agency directives

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**Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance**

**BUY-IN PURPOSE**
Provide communications and change management support, along with business process development to update, standardize, consolidate, and streamline onboarding and offboarding operations, procedures, and policies.

**STATUS**
Buy-in request received; on hold pending Agency directives
CONTRACT DELIVERABLES

DEVELOP successfully completed five contract deliverables that were submitted on time and approved by the COR. The Annual Work Plan outlined the projected activities in the project’s first year and was successfully submitted within 90 days of contract award, with approval August 13, 2021. The Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP) formalized DEVELOP’s approach to quality assurance. The QASP was successfully submitted within 90 days of contract award and was approved July 29, 2021. The Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan defined the project’s theory of change, results framework, performance indicators, and learning agenda. The MEL Plan was successfully submitted within 120 days of contract award with interim approval, to be finalized in early October 2021. The Quarterly Financial Report provided detailed activity expenses, disbursements, and balances. The financial report was submitted 30 days after the first three-month period and was approved August 20, 2021.

DEVELOP held its first pause-and-reflect session for the project on August 26, 2021. This session included the DEVELOP COR, Alternate COR, the Center for Education Activity Leads for DEVELOP workstreams, and the DEVELOP project management team. Attendees convened for the two-hour meeting to discuss accomplishments from the first five months of the project and to identify opportunities to build efficiencies. The session also served as an opportunity to share and affirm components of DEVELOP’s MEL Plan. DEVELOP uses regular pause and reflect sessions as part of its collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) toolkit to support project documentation, performance improvement, and quality assurance. The group recognized the many accomplishments achieved during the early stages of the project. Using a Jamboard, participants listed noteworthy accomplishments, processes developed, efficiencies achieved, and other highlights (see Exhibit 4). Attendees also highlighted lessons learned in the first six months of the project. DEVELOP has begun to gain a deeper understanding of the Center’s overall work, systems, and processes, building its institutional awareness. The team acknowledged that DEVELOP’s effectiveness as a project and its support to staff in the Center for Education will be greater the more it deepens this knowledge. Over the next six months, DEVELOP will work toward having more visibility on what is on the horizon for the Center for Education so that the team can be aware of resource balancing, goals, priorities, and the timing of the project’s work. Increased communication with the Center’s working groups and across workstreams will help with this.

Thanks for all the hard work DEVELOP put into this [MEL plan] -- I’m really impressed with the quality and think it can/should play a key strategic role in our work going forward.”

—DEVELOP COR
HELPFUL PRACTICES

DEVELOP’s start-up phase offered the challenge of coordination across three consortium partners with eight full-time project staff, short-term technical assistance, and a network of consultants, all in a virtual format. To meet this challenge, the project developed tools, templates, and techniques to start DEVELOP off on strong footing.

To coordinate across virtual platforms, different organizations, and multiple geographies, DEVELOP uses an adaptive framework consisting of coordination meetings and virtual tools. DEVELOP’s teams use methodologies such as Scrum meetings to set priorities for the week, and Kanban boards to track progress of activities and deliverables across DEVELOP’s core workstreams and buy-ins.

Meetings are a key component of DEVELOP’s coordination efforts. The cadence and structure of DEVELOP’s team meetings has been tailored to a new way of working virtually, in a manner that balances a need to clearly and frequently communicate across a consortium of activity managers, while also reducing the amount of unnecessary meeting time. Another method used to create efficiency is through a mix of synchronous and asynchronous meetings, which allows for in-depth discussion time when necessary, or a quick exchange of top-level updates when sufficient.

DEVELOP stood up several additional processes during the first six months of the project for internal knowledge management, organization, leveraging technical skills, and building a strong team. Some of these tools include:

- **Activity tracker**: DEVELOP created an activity tracker that details responsible parties for each activity under DEVELOP’s core workstreams and buy-ins, the progress of each, and the projected...
timeline. This tracker, which is updated weekly and shared with USAID via Google Drive, assists with coordination across DEVELOP’s many activities and increases transparency—a priority and best practice of DEVELOP’s—because activity status is always available to DEVELOP’s COR. See Exhibit 5 for a sample from the activity tracker.

- **Buy-in statement of work (SOW) process**: In collaboration with the USAID contract management team, DEVELOP created a procedure to receive and respond to new buy-ins on DEVELOP that incorporates Agile methodologies and streamlines the buy-in start-up process. This process includes a SOW template for buy-in requests, which is used in tandem with frequent conversations with the client to refine expectations, and an adaptive budgeting approach that facilitates any shifts to the scope. To track overall buy-in status and progress, and to support DEVELOP’s values of transparency, project staff employ a buy-in Kanban board internally, paired with a tracker shared with the USAID contract management team so the buy-in status is always visible. Once a buy-in has begun, DEVELOP’s buy-in management also utilizes Agile methodologies and regular sync meetings within DEVELOP and relevant USAID partners to provide buy-in updates and offer opportunities for collaboration. Activity trackers specific to each buy-in also serve to facilitate shared understanding between the buy-in client and the DEVELOP technical team.

- **Internal knowledge management**: DEVELOP created a robust internal knowledge management system that allows for a seamless project start-up with a new, all-virtual team. DEVELOP’s knowledge management process allows the project to easily organize, locate, and retain crucial information. DEVELOP has several levels of information sharing systems so that relevant information can be easily found by stakeholders, but sensitive information is stored in secure locations. The knowledge management system also includes a process and template for meeting notes to ensure action items and decisions are captured.

- **Billing codes**: A few months into the project, DEVELOP overhauled the charge code structure to include over 20 codes, with four to five subcategories per workstream. This new, detailed system allows for tracking and projecting more precisely within workstreams. To facilitate this transition, DEVELOP created job aids for staff to act as a guide to the new system and precise level of effort (LOE) trackers across all the codes that align with the work plan.

- **Consultants**: Throughout the start-up phase, and while hiring to fill its full-time staff, DEVELOP has engaged short- and long-term technical assistance for discrete activities and tasks to ensure seamless, agile, and responsive work. To quickly bring on technical assistance, DEVELOP constructed processes to efficiently onboard and manage part-time project staff and leverage technical expertise from short-term technical assistance, both from home office staff and a network of external consultants. These processes include internal consultant onboarding and tracking templates, rapid LOE assignment and access to relevant resources, and developing consultant pools to build a network of consultants who can be called upon as needed.

- **Teambuilding**: To build rapport and trust among staff, elements of culture-building have been built into DEVELOP’s regular meetings. These can take the form of icebreakers in team meetings to allow for relationship and trust building, or more formal methods such as internal pause and reflect sessions, where the team comes together to reflect on the project’s strengths, progress, and recommended adjustments.
### DEVELOP Year 1 Work Plan Activity Tracker: March 23, 2021 - March 22, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Status</th>
<th>Activities Completed (A %)</th>
<th>Activities in Progress (A %)</th>
<th>Activities Passed (A %)</th>
<th>Activities Not Started (A %)</th>
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#### Summary:

- **In Progress**: Develop blog strategy and management plan.
- **In Progress**: Develop 12 original blog, copy-edit, and publish.
- **In Progress**: Develop blog series on resource learning, beginning with topics selected by DOI/EDU.
- **Not Started**: Development of short summary products of CEA resources, copy edit and publishing (e.g., K-12 training, hiring/procurements and CEA related articles, guidance).

### 3.5 WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

#### Ongoing

- **EducationLinks Content Updates**: Research and publish new and existing DOI/EDU generated content in line with DOI/EDU editorial calendar.

#### Ongoing

- **Manually track for approximate events, resources, or announcements to add to EducationLinks and track base content sent by DOI/EDU**

#### Ongoing

- **Publish SHARE products**

#### Ongoing

- **Development of four tools**

#### Completed

- **2 Distance Learning Education**

#### Not Started

- **3 Updates to Education Reporting**

#### Not Started

- **4 Gender Toolkit**

#### Developed

- **SHARE...**

### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Center for Education POC</th>
<th>Technical Lead</th>
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<th>June</th>
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<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>Expected Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>Develop blog strategy and management plan</td>
<td>Heather Raley</td>
<td>Hope Byer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Increase the use of data, information, guidance, and evidence about education programming, through effective web and content strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>Develop 12 original blogs, copy-edit, and publish</td>
<td>Heather Raley</td>
<td>Hope Byer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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### Expected Outcomes

- Increase the use of data, information, guidance, and evidence about education programming, through effective web and content strategy.
WORKSTREAM HIGHLIGHTS

WORKSTREAM 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOP is partnering with the Center for Education to lead collaborative processes to engage or re-engage staff and stakeholders to build excitement for opportunities within DDI and to catalyze processes that maximize staff success. The DEVELOP contract started three months after the establishment of the Center for Education, an opportune moment to assist in the final stage of transformation. While the Center has made much progress since it transitioned from the Office to the Center, it is still adjusting to what it means to be aligned with DDI functional areas within a new matrix structure. DEVELOP understands the task of the organizational development (OD) workstream on two levels: the development of the individual, and of the organization. Individual capacity must be strengthened for the Center’s organizational effectiveness to improve. DEVELOP infuses an OD perspective into its work with the Senior Management Group (SMG), individuals, and working and matrix groups across the Center. While the OD workstream has its own portfolio of activities, all of DEVELOP’s workstreams intersect and are essential to increasing overall organizational effectiveness.

DEVELOP spent its first few months becoming oriented with the Center and its staff. The DEVELOP team focused its efforts on learning the intricacies of both the work and the ways in which it is accomplished at the Center, the wide range of stakeholders, and the various and sometimes overlapping contract mechanisms, all within the context of a broad USG Education Policy and USAID Education Strategy. Through one-on-one meetings with each member of the SMG, the Organizational Effectiveness Survey results, and time getting to know staff through matrix group and working groups, DEVELOP learned that there is much that staff appreciate about the Center’s new structure and significant work that remains to finalize the transformation.

During the first six months of implementation, DEVELOP made important first steps toward the overarching workstream result of strengthening organizational operations and culture. Early on, DEVELOP set the strategic direction and defined supporting steps in that direction with regular checkpoints with the SMG. DEVELOP took simple steps on several OD fronts with an emphasis on smaller, realistic, and consistent interventions. The project planned for organizational change with a sense of timeliness and transparency to establish relationships and build trust among the DEVELOP team, the SMG, and Center for Education staff. DEVELOP holds transparency and trust as core operating principles. Recognizing staff members’ diverse styles and needs, DEVELOP blended individual and group-level engagements using a variety of appreciative and interactive facilitation approaches.

Organizational Development Workstream

The purpose and result, as described in the Activity MEL plan, of the efforts of the organization development workstream are to strengthen organizational operations and culture. Expected outcomes are: positive work environment enhanced, markers for organization development identified, increased morale, and enhanced organizational processes. Signals of success are: there is affirmation of the strategic direction toward increased organization effectiveness for Center for Education, the SMG is actively engaged, and inaugural organization development modalities are viewed as effective.
DEVELOP is committed to using evidence to inform the design and implementation of its OD activities. The results of the Organizational Effectiveness Survey informed the design of the All-Hands Retreat and has served as a basis for the OD support DEVELOP regularly provides to the SMG. The All-Hands Retreat provided DEVELOP with data to inform the development of an initial roadmap of recommended organizational development activities.

DEVELOP has learned that flexibility, adaptability, close listening in a complex environment, and taking time to understand the context of the Center’s history as an Office and now a Center are crucial to providing support that meets the Center where its needs currently stand. DEVELOP has found a strong practice in offering a range or menu of options to each client and investing the time in connecting on a human level while conducting solid technical work.

DEVELOP has learned how important it is to put together a roadmap for the strategic work the project wants to see, and that it is necessary to revisit and revise it and take time to map out key milestones. For the next six months, DEVELOP will work with the SMG and staff to solidify the OD roadmap. Planned activities include a strategic planning retreat for the SMG, a second All-Hands Retreat, a series of regional town hall meetings for the Center and regional education sector staff, an examination of the Center’s operational structure, and refinement of the Center’s strategic priorities. Much of the foundational work has been started, including a strategic framework and draft MEL plan. DEVELOP will support the SMG and the Center to finalize these important pieces of work and complete the transformation.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

Six months into the transformation of the Office of Education into the Center for Education within the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation, and with the release of data from the first DDI Pulse Check Survey, the Center for Education had an opportunity to renew a focus on strengthening efforts that promote organizational effectiveness and enrich an inclusive work experience for all Center staff members. To further understand the DDI Pulse Check Survey findings, DEVELOP designed a brief organizational effectiveness Survey that was administered to all Center for Education staff. The purpose of this follow-up to the DDI Pulse Check Survey was to invite all voices to surface and co-create concrete ideas and actions to move the Center forward to a promising future.

The brief, five-question survey asked respondents about their hopes, ideas, and vision for organizational strengthening. It was not intended to be a repeat of the DDI Pulse Check Survey but, rather, provide an important complement to help inform planning and preparation for change. DDI released its own analysis of the Bureau-wide results. The DDI Pulse Check Survey highlighted some overall concerns that need to be addressed both system-wide and by individual operating units. The themes presented in the DDI survey are similar to those reflected in the data in the Organizational Effectiveness Survey. This follow-up survey provided deeper detail and additional ideas for forward-thinking actions. Staff responses to the DEVELOP-led survey were thoughtful and thorough. DEVELOP prepared a report to share the main findings of the survey. These results helped inform the design of the subsequent All-Hands Retreat.
FOLLOW-UP SURVEY QUESTIONS

The questions included in the Organizational Effectiveness Survey were open-ended and oriented toward capturing the workplace experiences and expectations of Center for Education staff. The questions posed were:

1. What is one aspect of your work you are particularly proud of?
2. What aspects of the new Center for Education structure do you especially appreciate that can be a foundation to build on?
3. What did you enjoy about pre-transition but no longer enjoy or is no longer available?
4. What strategic, technical, or operational aspects of the Center for Education do you recommend as priorities for improvement? List up to three.
5. What steps should the SMG take to support a positive climate at the Center for Education?

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Responses to the Organizational Effectiveness Survey included practical suggestions for management arrangements and operational considerations that are perceived to be of benefit to Center for Education organizational planning and process improvement. The health of working relationships, honoring strengths, and ensuring that a respectful tone is maintained were some additional themes.

The data presented a pivotal moment to begin to chart a concrete roadmap for improvement and to optimize the potential that resides within the Center for Education. DEVELOP encouraged the SMG to actively use the data generated through this survey as a base for grounding decisions and overall strategic direction. DEVELOP recommended continually refreshing collective perspectives and practices that support progress toward a shared vision for the Center for Education. DEVELOP recommended the following as next steps:

1. Discuss the survey data in an all-hands session to provide a space for all staff to affirm what has worked and what is needed to further strengthen organizational effectiveness. Resulting action: All-Hands Retreat.
2. Support appropriate spaces to follow up on the status of recommended areas for improvement. Staff meetings, scheduled check-ins with supervisors, working group planning sessions, and quarterly all-hands meetings can be places where staff and Center for Education leadership can continually gauge the status of commitments in response to feedback surfaced in the survey. Resulting action: Guidance and support for shifting the culture of the Thursday staff meeting provided.
3. Identify and integrate opportunities to link with Bureau-wide initiatives for organizational transformation support, strategy alignment processes, professional development, and staff care.
4. Work with appropriate mechanisms (e.g., DEVELOP) to design and scale effective organizational learning and performance improvement activities such as strategic planning and measurement, coaching and soft-skills training, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and organizational design. Resulting action: Coaching program designed and initiated; support to the IDEA Matrix Group provided.
5. Establish sound feedback loops with Center for Education stakeholders within DDI, Missions, and other USAID operating units to discover and (re)define how Center for Education processes, technical support, outputs, and leadership are making positive contributions and are adjusted as suggested. Resulting action: Conversations with DEVELOP, pause and reflect sessions, content alignment meetings, IDEA Matrix Group meetings.

ALL-HANDS RETREAT

All-Hands Retreats are an important investment. Gathering the entire Center staff for a significant length of time is done with the intention of increased staff participation and buy-in for Center technical and operational priorities, enhancing and solidifying the Center’s culture, structure, and functions, and deepening bonds among colleagues. DEVELOP implemented the first All-Hands Retreat on July 7 and 8, 2021. The purpose of the retreat was to take stock of the Center for Education’s structure and operations after its first six months, to engage staff in a process of identifying opportunities to affirm a vision for strengthening organizational effectiveness and identify ways to begin moving in that direction. DEVELOP designed, facilitated, and implemented the retreat over two half-days from 9 a.m.–12 p.m. on Zoom.

The retreat took staff through an Appreciative Inquiry process with the objective of co-creating options for organizational effectiveness activities for the Center for Education. Data from a DDI Pulse Check survey and the follow-on organization effectiveness survey informed the design of the retreat and were used as a basis for discussion. The full results of the survey data were shared with all staff the evening before the retreat.

The event opened with welcoming remarks from the DDI Acting Deputy Administrator and the Center for Education Acting Director. They welcomed participants and expressed appreciation to staff for their constructive and concrete input in the DDI Pulse Check survey and follow-up organization effectiveness surveys. They encouraged staff to be open and frank about their hopes and expectations for the Center during the retreat. They emphasized the importance of this moment, six months after the official establishment of the Center as part of the overall DDI transition and remarked that it is a time when the Center may reset itself, with a new U.S. Government administration and a new Agency Administrator, both of whom value the education sector and are placing a renewed emphasis on inclusive education. The leaders recognized the difficulty of the past 18 months in the country, around the world, and with the change in Center leadership. Staff were encouraged to use this dedicated time to think about the next steps needed for operationalizing the vision for the Center for Education and to look ahead to Year 2 to determine what the Center needs to do to make the transformation complete. They closed their remarks by noting that the Center for Education’s work is essential, and this shared commitment to mission is a powerful motivator for staff to work well together and to focus their considerable expertise and energies on the goals they have committed to for USAID’s partner countries.

The DEVELOP facilitator led Day One with a presentation on the principles and processes of Appreciative Inquiry, then guided participants through appreciative interviews in pairs followed by wish-setting and prioritizing and sharing wishes.
Day Two began with a team-building activity where participants shared an artifact from their home that had special meaning for them. For the main activity of the day, participants were placed in five groups based on the themes that emerged from the prioritization of their wishes: (1) technical strategy, priorities, and vision, (2) clarity of roles and responsibilities/institutional memory, (3) collaboration and communication, (4) workplace environment: trust, respect, inclusion, and joy, and (5) decision-making, delegation, and empowerment. The groups worked to develop possibility statements and actions to operationalize the wishes. They presented their possibility statements and ideas to the plenary for comments, questions, and additional contributions from peers.

Highlights of the plenary discussion included:

- Staff are looking for increased definition and guidance on the Center’s strategic direction and a clear understanding of how they contribute to that bigger picture. They want to build on the draft strategic framework.
- Staff want to feel empowered in technical areas of their work with clear expectations for delegation and decision-making.
- Staff are looking for increased clarity and descriptions of job roles and functions.
- Staff would like clarification on the Center’s mandate compared to the mandate of the Regional Bureaus.
- Staff long for more connection with their Center colleagues professionally and personally, through meetings with technical groups, stocktaking of achievements and reflection, and optional structured events to foster relationships.

The objective of the retreat was to gain clarity on Center for Education staff hopes and visions for organizational strengthening. Through the retreat (and supported by the results of the DDI Pulse Check survey and the follow-up organizational effectiveness survey), DEVELOP learned that there is much that works well at the Center for Education in its new structure and identified steps that need to be taken to complete the Center’s transition. Clarification is needed on the Center’s strategic priorities and its relationship with the USG Education Policy. Increased guidance on the roles and responsibilities of working group and matrix group leaders and members is needed along with clear paths for communication within and across groups. Staff seek clear lines of communication and decision-making. They want to understand how they fit into the Center’s strategic priorities and are looking for a sense of belonging with their colleagues. Staff appreciate the opportunities that are available for professional growth and the increased collaboration that are central aspects of the new structure. They are excited to have opportunities to follow their passions and flexibility to participate in a variety of organizational activities. They are passionate about their work and are motivated and eager to do more of it. They believe that this final stage of the transformation is just the right time to put the pieces in place to operationalize these final adjustments, and that the challenges the Center faces are resolvable and are typical of any organization as it undergoes major transformation and growth.

As a follow-up, DEVELOP and the SMG reviewed staff inputs, discussed the feasibility of activities that may be pursued, and determined, with staff, a timeline for implementation. These actions form the basis for an initial overall organizational effectiveness plan for the Center and will be sequenced for the short, medium, and long term. DEVELOP created a framework as a guide to thinking about next steps. Referred to as the Adaptive Communication Environment (ACE) framework (see Exhibit 6), it encouraged the SMG to think about organizational development activities in three ways: (1) maximizing and accelerating the structures and spaces that exist in terms of staff and contract mechanisms; (2)
examining structures that may need to be adjusted; and (3) encouraging experimentation to allow for growth and change. DEVELOP continues to use this framework as it collaborates with the SMG to plan OD activities.

Exhibit 6: Layers of Organizational Development Emphasis in the Center for Education

**LEADERSHIP SUPPORT**

With new members joining and leadership roles shifting, the SMG continues to undergo change. By designing and facilitating bi-weekly or monthly meetings, DEVELOP provides OD strengthening for the SMG to support its work as a group and as individual leaders. Meeting topics include leadership, decision-making, organizational communication, inclusive engagements, and support to matrix and working groups. With the ACE framework in mind, DEVELOP shared iterations of a road map of activities and quarterly timeline to respond to the data mentioned above and with flexibility based on needs as they arise.

To strengthen bonds among staff members, DEVELOP is facilitating team-building activities during the Center for Education Thursday staff meeting. To give staff a place for continued dialogue on the Center’s organizational effectiveness and an opportunity to connect with each other, a monthly activity called Conversations with DEVELOP will launch during the second six months. These smaller activities are meant to build trust and connection over time. DEVELOP is working with the SMG on an ongoing basis to help the group consider the roles and responsibilities, clarify decision-making processes, and increase the communication flow between the SMG and Center staff.

**WORKSTREAM 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

USAID’s Education Sector staff require support to build strong technical and leadership skills to support progress toward education outcomes. The purpose of the professional development (PD) workstream is to enhance staff abilities to operate as champions and thought leaders to deliver results for USAID’s Education Policy and the USG Education Strategy. During the first six months, DEVELOP welcomed 17 participants to the Education Overview Course (EOC), supported six Professional Development
Results and Progress Markers for Professional Development

Purpose and results:
• Foundational and technical leadership skills increased

Expected outcomes:
• Learning opportunities match staff performance expectations
• Engaging courses that meet or exceed participant expectations
• Enhanced collaboration, and networking with key stakeholders
• Enhanced technical expertise
• Meaningful connections forged or deepened among staff
• Enhanced solution development to workplace and technical challenges
• Enhanced self-awareness and increased motivation

Signals of success:
• PD efforts achieve progress toward an adopted competencies framework
• Activities provide increased opportunities for enriched growth experiences for Center for Education staff
• On-the-job and peer-supported learning opportunities contribute to improved employee knowledge and skills for Center for Education staff and field-based education staff, respectively

Working Group (PDWG) meetings, revised the Social and Emotional Learning EOC module, and begun design work for a new course on LGBTQI+
Considerations in Educational Programming. In addition, DEVELOP contributed to the design of a Center for Education Webinar Strategic Plan to increase peer-to-peer learning opportunities. In an effort to increase stakeholder collaboration, DEVELOP is also supporting the USAID Global Partnership for Education (GPE) webinar series, and delivered the first of three sessions in June. DEVELOP designed and launched a coaching program to contribute to staff personal growth and overall organizational effectiveness. DEVELOP has continued to revise EOC modules: Disability and Inclusive Education, Pre-Primary Education, Education Finance, and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). For the Education Finance module, DEVELOP intends to create learning bursts, short, asynchronous activities meant to reinforce and deepen key course messages sent to participants via email. DEVELOP will collaborate with Center subject matter experts to create a new course on Gender and Education.

During the next six months, DEVELOP will focus on new and continuing PD opportunities based on the latest needs indicated by education sector staff. Using best practices in adult learning, DEVELOP’s PD workstream activities will continue to be founded on experiential learning that considers the expertise learners bring to the table, are timely and relevant, and are diversified to ensure that learning styles and preferences are accommodated. DEVELOP expects to disseminate and analyze the results of a Learning Needs Priorities survey. DEVELOP will use the data from the survey to ensure that opportunities for staff personal development are elevated or created, implement the coaching program with nineteen staff members enrolled, and continue to refine the webinar series and create a marketing plan. In early 2022, DEVELOP will begin the process of building a robust competency development framework for education sector staff outside of the Foreign Service at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels (building on USAID’s current competency approach). The framework will be bolstered by learning paths for competency attainment through formal and informal learning. DEVELOP will continue to revise EOC modules: Disability and Inclusive Education, Pre-Primary Education, Education Finance, and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). For the Education Finance module, DEVELOP intends to create learning bursts, short, asynchronous activities meant to reinforce and deepen key course messages sent to participants via email. DEVELOP will collaborate with Center subject matter experts to create a new course on Gender and Education.
COACHING

The highly motivated Center staff are eager to increase their technical expertise and performance. In the Organizational Effectiveness Survey, staff cited appreciation for current professional development opportunities and a desire for more. The SMG supports distributed leadership (leadership at all levels) and requested that DEVELOP design and implement a coaching program for all Center for Education staff as a PD offering. Coaching can and should contribute to organizational change by helping individuals grow professionally and in a manner that is aligned with organizational goals and objectives. The primary purpose of this pilot coaching program is to strengthen and grow staff members’ personal capacity to fulfill their job responsibilities.

DEVELOP worked with the SMG to design a pilot program that protects the confidentiality of the coaching arrangement and offers opportunities to Center leadership to learn about additional professional development needs. As part of the intake form, coachees indicated leadership competencies of interest and ranked their ability in each. Through a quarterly survey, with permission from the coachee, coaches will share the competencies they are working on. This information may inform the development of additional professional development activities and provide insight to the SMG into staff needs. As part of the evaluation of the pilot, staff will rank themselves again to indicate areas of growth. DEVELOP created a session log, coaching notes, and a goals and measures of success template for optional use by the coachee and coach.

DEVELOP initially recruited a diverse cadre of ten coaches. Upon request, DEVELOP recruited an additional three coaches who are fluent in American Sign Language. DEVELOP will recruit additional coaches to accommodate specific requests as they arise.

CENTER FOR EDUCATION WEBINAR SERIES PLAN

Center for Education staff are highly productive and eager to share new resources with key stakeholders. Both Washington and Mission-based staff need fora where they can share challenges and best practices. Given the proliferation of new tools and demands on staff time, a coordinated plan for webinar delivery would help ensure that webinars are offered in a way that is accessible to staff. Ideally, topics would be selected based on Mission technical assistance requests expressed to the Client Services working group or other education sector staff, the results of previous or future learning priorities surveys, or proposals from education sector staff. Topics will be selected and scheduled to be complementary to education campaigns, conferences, or other programmatic events, and in

DEVELOP will provide support to six sector-wide webinars.

1. New Resource Orientation - These webinars seek to increase awareness and build capacity around a Washington-supported initiative such as a new policy, guidance document, or toolkit, and generally target USAID education staff in the field and other relevant global stakeholders. These webinars will typically include presentations on a new product with time allowed for Q&A and general discussion. When appropriate, additional interactivity may be built into the session to allow participants to practice using new tools or techniques.

2. Peer to Peer Exchange – These webinars provide a forum for Mission and/or Washington-based education staff to engage and learn from each other. These interactive, facilitated discussions will allow participants to share challenges and opportunities, and crowd-source ideas and strategies.
coordination with other Center for Education mechanisms that offer webinars. The initial plan for the series suggested limiting webinars to once a month.

DEVELOP learned that creating a more structured and strategic approach to the webinar series will take time. Staff have already scheduled webinars, supported through other contracts when needed, for the rest of the calendar year. Making the cultural shift to thinking about the webinar offerings as a coordinated whole will require more coordination across mechanisms. A content operations model, when implemented, should significantly assist with the cultural change.

When DEVELOP learned that there were many webinars already planned, it recalibrated to take smaller steps toward a cohesive series. Through its work supporting the Professional Development Working Group (PDWG), DEVELOP will continue to encourage coordination across the Center and mechanisms toward a more strategic calendar of events. DEVELOP will partner with the PDWG to encourage staff to share the same language or nomenclature for webinars and is creating templates for save-the-date and invitation announcements to brand the events and shape them into becoming a series.

WORKSTREAM 3: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

USAID education sector staff and their implementing partners require ongoing, innovative knowledge and skills to learn, improve, and create in order to implement successful and effective international education development programs. The knowledge management (KM) workstream seeks to increase knowledge use among education practitioners that leads to technical skills-building and learning.

In this space, DEVELOP is partnering with the Center for Education to design a strategic framework to plan, align, and optimize content operations and implementation to support the KM and Communications workstreams. DEVELOP has started using an iterative approach to facilitate coordination and collaboration across multiple stakeholders and partners and enable visibility and promote planning across the content operations cycle to support Center-wide objectives.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

BLOG MANAGEMENT

DEVELOP staff partnered with the Center for Education to strategize a blog management plan to kick-start the process from concept to promotion and provide subject-matter expertise, writing, editing, copy editing, and publishing on EducationLinks. The team also created an outline and new format for a lessons learned blog series focused on the blog as a flexible option to track and update what USAID has invested in learning without requiring the same amount of rigor or focus on monitoring and evaluation as a more formal document. This outline will be applied to the series in the next six months. DEVELOP will also kick off the full blog series with a synthesis of the Return to Learning Case Study Series and a lessons-learned blog from a COVID-19 Sector Response Analysis.
CONTENT OPERATIONS

DEVELOP launched a new process to assess the Center’s current state of content management and operations and provide recommendations to rationalize content operations and support an enabling environment for critical Center functions. The Content Operations, or ContentOps, process will align Center priorities, coordinate editorial priorities, improve workflow, and encourage more strategic communications. The process, which is well under way, involves a process audit, recommendations, and updated tools for content development, management, delivery, promotion, measurement, and governance.

DEVELOP has already conducted a content operations maturity assessment, reviewed and inventoried existing materials, conducted an after-action review (AAR) on past initiatives and strategies, mapped Center-wide processes for key functions, including facilitating stakeholder inputs and feedback, and created beta boards to support the new processes. The facilitated self-assessment sessions were critical in allowing DEVELOP to design a framework to co-create an editorial strategy for the Center.

Within the next six months, DEVELOP plans to create a change management plan that will allow DEVELOP and the Center to implement the accepted recommendations and leverage new tools to improve the overall Center workflow and efficacy of content and communications.

PARTNER COORDINATION PLAN

As part of DEVELOP’s directive to support the Center for Education’s partner engagement, DEVELOP has created a partner coordination plan to help facilitate coordination and collaboration across multiple stakeholders and partners to enable visibility and promote planning across the content operations cycle.

The DEVELOP team has launched the process to define, update, and align stakeholders around the future vision for Center content to support Center-wide objectives. The plan includes a content managers’ hub with links to shared tools, an iterative editorial calendar, a content planner, production schedule, periodic meetings, communication kits for technical initiatives and periodic outreach, updates, and reporting products.
In the next six months, DEVELOP will support partner coordination, planning, collaboration, and co-creation.

**KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR MCSIE CONTRACT**

DEVELOP advised the Center for Education on approaches to designing knowledge products sourced from this study and developed guidance for the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) implementation team, for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal. The KM and Dissemination Planning Guidance includes a multi-step guide with assumption and insights exercises, stakeholder sorting, content approaches, product planning, and dissemination considerations.

The project is currently in the research phase and DEVELOP is ready to support implementation.

**EDUCATIONLINKS HUB AND SPOKES SITES**

The Center for Education’s EducationLinks and its two spoke sites, Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN) and the Global Reading Network (GRN), are online resources for knowledge dissemination and learning. Over the last six months, DEVELOP has worked through priority issues during the transition, improved performance, and maintained the sites using Agile principles for iterative enhancement.

At project start, DEVELOP ensured a seamless transition of EducationLinks and the ECCN/GRN sites and their associated technologies in record time, due to DEVELOP’s experienced and dedicated staff. Based on USAID’s request, DEVELOP accelerated the handover process seven times faster than the norm and without any incident. This also included a full transfer of technology (e.g., domain/hosting, credentials, content management system, code), documentation (architecture, configuration, security, privacy), and all third-party tools needed for launch and updates. Right after launch, the team began auditing the sites’ code, modules, governance, configuration, security, privacy, and accessibility in preparation for the Drupal 9 upgrade installed in Month Five. DEVELOP experienced no issues during implementation of the upgrade and the site is now better protected from various vulnerabilities and its performance has increased. EducationLinks and its spoke sites have experienced only one very brief outage since start-up.

Over the past six months, DEVELOP researched and published new and existing Center for Education-generated content on EducationLinks in line with the Center’s editorial calendar.
More than 110 content pages were added or updated during this period, leading to increased engagement on the site. Website pageviews increased significantly (58 percent higher) in the last six months (April-September 2021) compared to the same period in 2020.

The 2021 increase in pageviews comes primarily from organic traffic based on unpaid search—i.e., views that come from accessing the site via search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, and others. Improvements such as creating better user centric content, enhancing the tech stack, and increasing site performance and reliability have contributed to these increases. Reading and literacy were the topics published the most during this period in 2021.

Throughout summer 2021, the DEVELOP team worked closely with the Center for Education’s Data and Evidence for Education Programs (DEEP) project team to upload a new interactive map that
highlights where USAID is funding higher education activities around the world. DEVELOP’s communications team promoted the map through Center for Education distribution channels. During the same time, the team responded quickly to an urgent request by the Center involving sensitive content on the hub and spoke sites. The team made it a top priority and immediately took action to manage the site appropriately within the same day. DEVELOP works collaboratively and iteratively with the Center to respond to ever-changing environments while mitigating security concerns.

During the next six months, DEVELOP will continue operations and maintenance activities of EducationLinks and the spoke sites and will deploy module updates and code patches to keep the site up and running. DEVELOP will provide continued content updates to EducationLinks, including the Higher Education Scholarship and Gender Toolkits and updates to the Education Reporting Toolkit.

**DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLKIT**

One reason for EducationLinks’ increased engagement is the addition of toolkits to the site. In Month Five, DEVELOP staff worked diligently with subject matter experts to add over 25 separate components that made up the Distance Learning Toolkit (DLT), a tool that provides practical guidance for designing a comprehensive distance learning strategy that covers an entire education sector or system.

Immediately after the toolkit was installed on the site, DEVELOP drafted a Dissemination and Engagement Strategy for USAID staff and the distance learning working group to share the toolkit among key stakeholders and initiate its use among USAID partners within and outside the Agency. The DEVELOP team reached out to other dissemination partners to gather information on ways to leverage networks and channels. The team also coordinated with the PD workstream to tap into the development of the Center for Education Webinar Series as a dissemination resource.
A DLT Sharing Guide was also developed that included messaging and resources for USAID’s dissemination partners to share, as a public good, to increase equitable access to distance learning opportunities, especially for marginalized learners.

WORKSTREAM 4: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The DEVELOP team is partnering with the Center for Education’s communications staff to help tell the story of USAID’s leadership in international education by reaching out to stakeholders—including Missions, partners, Congress, and the American public—through meticulously crafted content that resonates with each audience. The team produces compelling digital and publications content for the Center’s communication channels and events, featuring multimedia and graphics. DEVELOP is creating and disseminating mini campaigns that include photos and key messages around education sector topics, priorities, and themes to raise awareness of the Center’s key priorities for high profile events and platforms and as a part of monthly themes for Agency communications.

In the first six months, the DEVELOP team has partnered with the Center for Education’s communication leads on immediate needs, mid-term goals, and long-term aspirations. One of the most effective approaches for the DEVELOP team has been to initiate bi-weekly check-ins with the Center for Education’s communication leads to ensure that all communications align with Center and Agency priorities, to improve workflow, and to coordinate messaging across all channels, including newsletters, social media, EducationLinks, Mission and partner updates, and campaign communications. DEVELOP also continually reviews and assesses several Center for Education communications plans and protocols to offer guidance on implementing more effective tactics, when appropriate.

CENTER FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTERS

Over the last six months, DEVELOP provided internal and external newsletter drafting, publishing via Constant Contact, and dissemination support to the Center to increase awareness of the Center’s
activities and priorities to staff and partners. The Center’s external quarterly newsletter highlights success stories and new knowledge products and targets the Center’s partners and stakeholders. In the past six months, DEVELOP has drafted one and distributed two newsletters.

DEVELOP supported three editions of the first internal monthly newsletter (Newsletter #1), which included a Center leadership message, Center updates, and upcoming events and activities. DEVELOP also supported seven editions of the second internal monthly newsletter (Newsletter #2), which is sent in the second half of the month and focuses on sharing technical resources and knowledge products mainly from new content on the EducationLinks site. The open rate for these newsletters averages 60 percent.

In May, USAID’s Office of the Chief Information Officer identified a vulnerability with the Constant Contact email marketing platform and immediately requested that those platforms no longer be used to conduct official USAID business. DEVELOP responded quickly and made a separate copy of all the email distribution lists so they would be easily transferable to another platform. The team also conducted a forensics analysis of the EducationLinks hub and spoke sites to get ahead of further potential breaches.

Because of the suspension of Constant Contact, DEVELOP has worked with the Center on other newsletter dissemination options, including analytics tracking of Google Documents via the URL shortener Bitly. Over the next six months, DEVELOP expects the Center to buy into USAID’s contract with the GovDelivery platform. DEVELOP will learn how to work within the platform to continue newsletter publishing and dissemination.

COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS

Since project start, DEVELOP has worked with the Center for Education to design, develop, and produce two technical knowledge publications on pre-primary education that have been made 508 compliant and posted to the EducationLinks site for further knowledge dissemination. Eight more publications are in production, including a Return to Learning Case Study Series and briefs highlighting disability and social and emotional learning. In the next six months, publications support will focus on knowledge products, including on the topics of the higher education learning agenda and inclusive education, for use by USAID staff and promoted on EducationLinks as key resources.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

DEVELOP has successfully designed, executed, and contributed to several digital promotion campaigns, including for International Literacy Day, World Book Day, Pre-G7, International Day of Families, World Environment Day/World Oceans Day, LGBTQI & Pride Month, the USG COVID-19 International Basic Education Response and Diversity & Inclusion Month. Beyond crafting these toolkits, and adding new platform content when appropriate, DEVELOP also began producing campaign-specific reports to assess the performance of specific tactics.

For instance, DEVELOP advocated for the use of campaign-specific hashtag use to generate audience enthusiasm and for better tracking of content traction. DEVELOP has now produced three of these reports, each creating an understanding of baseline performance and unique audience engagement. Below are graphics from the #ReadingInspires International Literacy Day campaign report.
Exhibit 11: International Literacy Day #ReadingInspires hashtag use over time

Exhibit 12: International Literacy Day Twitter accounts ranked by hashtag use

In the next six months, DEVELOP will assess specific campaign performance and strategy efficacy to continually improve the overall reach and engagement of education content with target audiences.
CENTER FOR EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY CAMPAIGN

DEVELOP partnered with the Center for USAID’s 2021 International Literacy Day promotion by co-creating an ambitious social media campaign that involved several high-profile partners, such as NASA and the Department of Education, and a complex video that was developed in several iterations. DEVELOP was able to support the effort and be agile as the direction changed in the days leading up to the event. The final campaign was touted throughout the Center and Agency as a success and the campaign video, featuring Administrator Samantha Power, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator LeAnna Marr, and NASA Astronaut Jessica Meir, received more than 15,400 views across YouTube and Twitter. The campaign hashtag #ReadingInspires reached more than 2.3 million people.

Hi DEVELOP team. Sending a note of appreciation for your support in making ILD such a success! Thanks for being such great partners in creatively brainstorming, intricately planning and successfully executing for this key moment in the education sector. We definitely couldn’t have done it without you all!

—Advisor, Engagement and Communications, Center for Education

Exhibit 13: Cover image of Grace in Space, the book featured in USAID’s International Literacy Day campaign

In the next six months, DEVELOP will work with the Center Communications team to promote mini-campaigns around USAID’s 60th anniversary as well as gender and girls education.
Literacy Day 2021
#ReadingInspires
Social Media Campaign Results

U.S. GOVERNMENT COVID-19 INTERNATIONAL BASIC RESPONSE REPORT

As part of the DEVELOP directive to provide Communications Product Support, DEVELOP initiated an effort to promote the USG Basic Education and COVID-19 Response report. The report highlighted the collective impact of the U.S. Government on ensuring safe return to learning, especially for the most marginalized, and helping partner countries build more resilient and equitable education systems and societies with the capacity to better manage future shocks and prevent development backsliding. The DEVELOP team worked with the report’s authors to develop concise messaging and highlight compelling stories that helped promote the report as a whole.

“Thank you to everyone at DEVELOP – you all rock!”
—Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator

The DEVELOP team, again, demonstrated particular agility in this effort as First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, agreed to write the forward of the report just as it was scheduled to be released. DEVELOP crafted a social media toolkit and digital promotions on a tight deadline that highlighted the First Lady’s contributions and helped spread the word about the USG’s important work.
SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIC EXPANSION

As part of DEVELOP’s directive to support and enhance the Center’s digital storytelling, DEVELOP immediately took on the role of crafting and publishing social media content on a daily basis. Within the first months of the project, DEVELOP partnered with the Center’s communications team to expand the Center’s social media presence on LinkedIn and Instagram in addition to the Center’s traditional platforms of Twitter and Facebook. DEVELOP has begun to regularly suggest LinkedIn content that can be shared with Agency officials and partners to share on their personal accounts. DEVELOP also regularly suggests specific content promoting Center activities for the Administrator to consider. DEVELOP includes LinkedIn and Instagram content in social media toolkits, offering recipients more choices in how and where they share the Center’s story.

EMD/MARKETLINKS BUY-IN

USAID’s Center for Economics and Market Development (EMD) in the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation supports the Marketlinks (www.marketlinks.org) knowledge-sharing platform, and a broad array of tools, strategies, and events through DEVELOP. Management of the platform includes content creation, fostering communities of practice, amplifying content through social media, event hosting, website management, and working with USAID partners on additional tasks as needed. DEVELOP provides communications and knowledge management support to engage the Marketlinks community, USAID economic support staff, and market systems development professionals in sharing good practices in economic and market systems development around the world.

During the EMD Buy-In Six-Month Pause and Reflect session, the EMD Activity Manager expressed that she was very appreciative of the way the DEVELOP team was able to continue activities immediately after the handover, ensuring a smooth experience for the Marketlinks users.

During the project handover from EPIC, and concurrently with the transfer of the EducationLinks hub and spoke sites, the DEVELOP team provided critical website management support in record time that ensured a seamless transition without service outage. DEVELOP also supported ongoing content development activities without interruptions to the publishing schedule. During the summer, DEVELOP’s Web Team successfully upgraded the Marketlinks platform to Drupal 9 ahead of schedule.

In the first six months of project implementation, DEVELOP supported robust content development efforts, including:

- Posting 126 new items on the Marketlinks platform (total traffic on the site was 120,761 sessions, up from 101,170 from same period the previous year; and 24.19 percent bounce rate, down from 65.8 percent from same period the previous year)
- Drafting the first blog post for a bi-monthly original blog series
- Supporting five webinars (including a highly successful joint webinar with Agrilinks in September 2021)
- Hosting six theme months in coordination with different offices across USAID
- Developing and disseminating six newsletters and six event-promoting e-blasts
The DEVELOP and EMD collaboration is characterized by frequent and clear communication to align expectations, which allows for successful creation of strategic vision and implementation of tasks. This collaboration also allows for thoughtful reflection on what is working and what additional resources are needed to better implement the work and/or achieve key goals. Below is a breakdown of DEVELOP’s budget spend as of August 2021, highlighting that the majority of DEVELOP’s activities were focused on web content and communications in addition to the website transition.
EMD/MARKETLINKS ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHT: THE MARKET CORNER

The DEVELOP team broke new ground in developing original content to boost readership and engagement on the Marketlinks platform among market systems development professionals by designing a concept for a bi-monthly blog series sharing market systems development insights to inform the next generation of development leaders. To date, the team has researched and finalized two blogs for Marketlinks examining the use of systems thinking in driving development outcomes with a production schedule of two posts per month in the coming six months. To communicate USAID’s work in this realm effectively, DEVELOP plans a branded promotional campaign to accompany the series, which will highlight key learning in an attractive format for use across Marketlinks’s social media platforms. These graphics will accompany the series launch in October 2021.
Drawing on DEVELOP’s product development and user experience expertise to meet EMD’s request to iterate and improve the engagement and community participation on Marketlinks, DEVELOP led four focus group sessions with EMD to co-develop a new strategic vision for the site and identify priority areas to inform the Marketlinks product roadmap and subsequent marketing and content strategies. DEVELOP learned that EMD’s hopes for the site moving forward are to increase users and make Marketlinks the first site practitioners go to in order to find the latest and greatest in market development and the tools and templates to carry out their work. Fears they shared included the site becoming too USAID heavy and shaped through a USAID lens, contributors not seeing the benefit of engagement, and competitors “cornering the market.”

A sudden pivot occurred in late summer with an urgent request from EMD to remove sensitive information from the platform. DEVELOP responded within hours with a whole-of-team effort, successfully staffing and sequencing the work to meet the request. In addition to staffing editing teams to conduct a whole-of-website content review, DEVELOP’s Web team provided crucial technical support, including muting the user profile feature and temporarily unpublishing key pages throughout the website. While time-consuming and requiring a re-routing from existing project work, the DEVELOP team knew the effort was crucial to USAID and its security.

One lesson learned during the first six months of project implementation was that the Communications and Knowledge Management Specialist role required more resourcing as a result of EMD asking DEVELOP to take over management of Marketlinks’ monthly themes and working extensively with various USAID Bureaus and Offices each month, including orienting each month’s host to the Marketlinks platforms, outlining expectations, supporting their content development efforts, full webinar preparation and production support, and leading promotion of all public components. To adequately support this work alongside leading activity management, there was a strong need to create and staff the EMD Marketlinks buy-in lead role and boost resources for existing project staff.

Clear and frequent communication between DEVELOP and EMD through bi-weekly check-ins has resulted in expedited work flows and content development efforts, particularly when coordinating with the client on developing the bi-monthly Market Corner blogs and drafting social media content to showcase Marketlinks technical content offerings to the broader community. DEVELOP held an AAR with EMD to identify lessons learned to improve implementation efforts going forward. DEVELOP also held an AAR with Agrilinks to discuss the joint September webinar, which led to an agreement that partnering with other platforms has the potential to significantly increase reach and that Marketlinks will prioritize collaborating with other Links platforms where there is appropriate content overlap.

Through hosting six successful theme months, DEVELOP has learned that providing explicit guidance for USAID subject matter experts drafting content for Marketlinks is key to producing impactful blog posts for each monthly theme that speaks to USAID policy priorities and encourages practical application among the market systems community. DEVELOP piloted this guidance in September 2021, resulting in an expedited theme month blog release and ensuring that its content aligned with EMD’s strategic and policy priorities.

**GOALS FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS**

To better understand EMD’s needs and strategic objectives to calibrate LOE and work planning efforts going forward, DEVELOP facilitated a pause and reflect session with EMD at the six-month implementation mark to discuss progress against objectives to date, identify areas for iteration and improvement, and calibrate priorities against LOE to align strategic objectives and ensure a successful
next six months of project implementation. From that session, DEVELOP updated the EMD buy-in work plan based on EMD priorities.

Over the next six months, DEVELOP will continue its ongoing support to the Marketlinks site and communications coordination and management including maintaining social media accounts; developing and disseminating monthly newsletters maintaining and posting content to the Marketlinks platform; conducting routine client/stakeholder meetings and coordination with client; conducting stakeholder and community outreach; managing the editorial process for Marketlinks blogs and social media accounts; and managing the monthly webinar production process.

DEVELOP will pivot from an initial full website discovery phase to using the outcome from the focus group visioning sessions to create a “lite” content strategy and a marketing plan with a supplemental social media strategy. The DEVELOP team will also conduct website improvements informed by strategic priorities identified during client focus group discussions and the forthcoming content and marketing strategies. DEVELOP will continue providing monthly analytics and will produce an analytics dashboard to highlight web site performance trends over time. A MEL plan will be developed to help capture and understand behavior changes and trace Marketlinks’s impact.

DEVELOP plans to produce 12 original blogs at a rate of two posts per month as part of the ongoing Market Corner blog series to equip the Marketlinks community with insights into the application of systems thinking in international development. DEVELOP will also support the updating of the Marketlinks Value Chain Wiki in coordination with EMD, which will supply the content for the updates. DEVELOP will work with EMD on technical content planning for 2022 to improve knowledge-sharing among technical practitioners in the market systems development field. On this effort, the project will support EMD in leading coordination efforts across all USAID Links platforms to identify synergies in the platforms’ 2022 content planning and collaborate on outreach efforts where sensible.

AFRICA BUREAU BUY-IN

The purpose of the Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division (AFR/SD/ED) buy-in is to strengthen organizational culture and operations to enable continuous learning and improvement and to improve communications and knowledge use among technical practitioners within AFR/SD/ED and Missions. This work aligns with DEVELOP’s OD workstream and utilizes the same practices and principles.

The AFR/SD/ED activity will provide support for needs assessments and analysis to design, organize, deliver, evaluate, and report on learning opportunities to include retreats, workshops, communications, and coaching. Tasks under this buy-in are intended to support development of a division-wide vision and strategy, a new five-year Africa Regional Education Strategy, increased collaboration among staff and clarity around their roles, and individual performance and team effectiveness. Additional support may be provided to facilitate pre-design discussions related to designated procurement mechanisms, processes, and channels for communicating with regional education and youth teams, and a field-focused technical conference for Sub-Saharan Africa Missions. With a relatively new AFR/SD/ED leadership team, new Administration priorities, and ongoing work environment adjustments related to COVID-19, the Division leadership team is seeking to inclusively outline goals and ensure alignment of the Division’s work with the overall strategic direction for the Africa Bureau.
In June, DEVELOP rapidly mobilized to accommodate an urgent need to conduct two retreats for the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) before the full scope of work for the buy-in was complete, showcasing the project’s adaptability.

“Thanks so much for all your help with the two retreats. Both retreats were very productive and insightful…”
—USAID Activity Manager for Africa Bureau/YALI Buy-In

YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE (YALI)

YALI has been in operation since 2010 and is now in a transition period. YALI has seen impressive accomplishments and generated great passion on the part of staff, students, and alumni. YALI covers the entire continent with four Regional Learning Centers (RLC) in South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, and Ghana. Initially conceived to be a program overseen by USAID and managed by the RLCs, the idea of a continent-wide and self-sustaining initiative managed by Africans emerged from the close collaboration among the RLCs. Many reports and discussions have brought forth possible options for the structure and form of what was called YALI Africa. With the end of the host institution contracts managing the RLCs in 2021, new short-term contracts were awarded for a transition period. With new leadership within YALI, this was an important moment to take stock of the ideas that had been circulating, review them with a critical analysis, and make decisions about the future of the program. Two retreats were designed and implemented to address this time of transition: a stocktaking initiative for the YALI staff from Washington, D.C., and country offices, and a YALI teambuilding retreat for the new team based at headquarters.

YALI STOCKTAKING RETREAT

On June 30, 2021, 12 YALI staff members convened for three hours for the YALI Stocktaking retreat. The retreat objectives were to create a shared vision of YALI in five years driven by USAID, determine needs of YALI regional groups, draft priority strategies for reaching the vision, identify major milestones for each strategy, and plan next steps.

The retreat began with a welcome by the YALI coordinator. Using a Mentimeter, participants listed YALI’s successes to date and their vision for the future of YALI’s students, alumni, RLC/HI, and partners. In small groups, participants worked on desired outcomes and strategies to achieve them. Finally, in plenary, the group discussed the question, “What would a centralized structure and role for YALI look like?” The group discussed both the structure and roles of YALI stakeholders. There was consensus around programming ideas such as harmonizing curricula, building capacity of HIs/RLCs, strengthening programming and opportunities for alumni, and increasing the appeal of YALI to partners who can provide financial support while gaining from the collaboration. The future direction and development of YALI remains to be further clarified.

Exhibit 17: YALI Outcomes and Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIRED OUTCOMES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a harmonized curriculum in core areas and allow for diversity of technical curriculum in different RLCs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Empower the Curriculum Work Group to identify core leadership content/activities to share across the content</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### DESIRED OUTCOMES

#### Alumni
- A moment of change
- Equal opportunities across RLCs

#### HIs/RLCs
- Recognition as the premier youth leadership development institution
- More exposure for host institutions in partnership work, especially with American host institutions

#### Partners
- Increased commitment and more partners coming to the table to support YALI

### STRATEGIES

#### Alumni
- Build alumni capacity to continue movement
- Standardize opportunities during program and post-grad

#### HIs/RLCs
- Host institution engagement strategy with things like regular meetings, summits for host institution leadership

#### Partners
- Revise messaging to partners, move beyond training and financial contribution to more focus on how YALI alumni are affecting their bottom line

### YALI TEAMBUILDING RETREAT

On June 28, 2021, the YALI team based in Washington, D.C. came together to pause and reflect on team collaboration and strengthening. The objectives of the retreat were to get to know one another better, understand each person’s latest key responsibilities, identify team successes, understand team member work style preferences, implement protocols for interaction, and plan next steps.

Six staff members, including an intern, gathered virtually for three hours. DEVELOP conducted a needs assessment through pre-session interviews and subsequently designed and facilitated the retreat. The purpose of the interviews was to better understand how the team functions, what could be strengthened, and gain input into developing the agenda for the session. The event was held on Zoom.

The retreat began with a welcome by the YALI coordinator, who explained that the purpose of the meeting was to recognize the strengths of the team and to use those strengths as a foundation for continued team development. The facilitator presented the objectives, agenda, and guidelines or norms for interaction during the session. Each participant introduced themselves and answered the question “If you could talk to any writer living or dead, who would it be and why?” The team spent the next part of the morning, reflecting on YALI’s many successes and accomplishments in its history. The team was asked to think of as many successes as possible, from small things that are not as well known to larger, recognized achievements—both individual and group. Using the Jamboard application, the team wrote them down on virtual sticky notes.
Building on the successes from the past year, the YALI team envisioned its best future. The facilitator asked team members to imagine what that would mean one year from now and how the team could interact and communicate better than before. What would that look like in a few words or phrases? Participants used Mentimeter to capture their collective ideas. Working in small groups, the team developed protocols, approaches, or procedures for communicating and interacting even more effectively. The final topic was to focus on actionable next steps.

During the next six months, DEVELOP’s work with AFR/SD/ED will focus on launching the Africa Regional Education Workshop (AREW) and designing and implementing a coaching program. DEVELOP will employ the same best practices in adult learning it brings to the Center for Education PD workstream to design and deliver AREW. Normally an in-person event, DEVELOP will design and implement this first virtual iteration of AREW because of COVID-19 limitations. DEVELOP will design and implement a coaching program to increase individual and organizational performance of AFR/SD/ED staff. In early 2022, DEVELOP will design and implement a strategy support retreat and an AFR/SD/ED division-wide retreat.
CONCLUSION

DEVELOP’s first six months have been a rich period of excitement, learning, and relationship-building. DEVELOP is designed to consider and work holistically with the Center for Education, understanding that organizational effectiveness comes from the integration of strong organizational development, professional development, knowledge management, and strategic communications. Strategic alignment is crucial across each workstream, whether developing OD activities, creating opportunities for professional development, designing knowledge management platforms for content operations, or creating plans for timely, relevant communication of the Center’s work. Technical and operational integration is foundational to DEVELOP and to the Center’s success.

Standing up a new project involves building relationships, tools, and systems not just for the client but for the team itself. The foundation DEVELOP has established during this stand-up period is designed to allow for and reinforce complementarity across the project and its workstreams. Collaboration tools that are easily accessible and shared across the project consortium have created efficiency and transparency for a dispersed, virtual extended team. Synchronous and asynchronous meetings designed to build human connection while accomplishing technical and administrative work have fostered trust and strong relationships.

The lessons DEVELOP has learned about collaboration and communication internally have been customized for the project’s support to the Center and to the operating units of DEVELOP’s buy-ins. Close collaboration with Activity Leads at the Center, including the project COR and Alternate COR, have been critical to creating and maintaining an effective workflow. Ongoing and open dialogue with the Center for shared reflection and learning and actively seeking feedback has resulted in work that meets or exceeds expected standards. Systematically discussing progress against objectives to date, identifying areas for iteration and improvement, and calibrating priorities accordingly has resulted in a solid partnership. DEVELOP has learned that flexibility and adaptability in terms of resources, timelines, personnel, processes, and strategic planning are essential to providing support that meets the Center where its needs currently stand—in a complex environment, in the final stages of transformation from an Office to a Center. DEVELOP’s use of an iterative approach to facilitate coordination and collaboration across multiple stakeholders and partners has contributed to increased visibility and planning across the content operations cycle to support Center-wide objectives.

Over the next six months, DEVELOP looks forward to deepening its relationship with the Center and expanding its work across the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation through its buy-ins. Through strategic planning and activities both technical and operational, implementation of the Content Operations model, the development of education sector competencies, increased partnership and coordination among content partners and expanded strategic communications efforts, DEVELOP is energized to strengthen and share the story of the USAID Center for Education’s leadership in the global education sector.