THE FOUR APPROACHES
FINAL REPORT

THIS PUBLICATION WAS PRODUCED FOR REVIEW BY
THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
IT WAS PREPARED BY THE MITCHELL GROUP, INC. (TMG) / JANUARY 28TH, 2022
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ACRONYMS

A&A . . . . Assistance and Acquisitions
ADS . . . . Automated Directives System
BAA . . . . Broad Agency Announcements
CLA . . . . Collaborating, Learning & Adapting
CDCS . . . Country Development Cooperation Strategy
EPPR . . . . Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform
DO . . . . Development Objective
FGD . . . . Focus Group Discussion
FSN . . . . Foreign Service National
FSO . . . . Foreign Service Officer
HCD . . . . Human Centered Design
IP . . . . Implementing Partner
KII . . . . Key Informant Interview
MAG . . . . Mission Advisory Group
MEL . . . . Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO . . . . Nongovernmental organization
NPI . . . . New Partnerships Initiative
NUP . . . . New and Under-Utilized Partners
OAA . . . . Office of Acquisition and Assistance
PPL . . . . Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
PSE . . . . Private Sector Engagement
SME . . . . Subject Matter Expert
TMG . . . . The Mitchell Group, Incorporated
USAID . . United States Agency for International Development
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

As part of its Agency Learning Agenda, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a contract to The Mitchell Group (TMG) in September 2019 to research how the following four approaches relate to USAID operations and objectives: co-creation; engaging new and nontraditional actors via the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI); convening power; and integrated programming. The study sought to understand how the approaches are written in policy and guidance and how they are understood and actually implemented by USAID field missions; the study also identified enablers of and barriers to their implementation.

METHODOLOGY

The research team (the Team) consisted of two principal researchers, Larry Garber and Gretchen King, supported by a Study Manager, Karen Hirschfeld. Using a co-creation process, the Team worked closely with the USAID Study Managers to continuously guide and refine study methodology and implementation. A Steering Group composed of USAID staff remained engaged throughout the study to advise the team and to reflect upon intermediate findings and upcoming activities.

THE STUDY CONSISTED OF THREE DISTINCT PHASES:

1. **DESK REVIEW:** A thorough desk review of policies/approaches and associate evaluations, guidance, etc. The USAID Study Managers and Steering Group originally proposed materials and the Team supplemented this list as they interviewed people in the field.

2. **DATA COLLECTION:** The team conducted an online survey of select staff from 21 field missions, followed by two rounds of interviews with program, technical, and contracting officers.

3. **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:** The team held an online, collaborative workshop, which used Human-Centered Design principles to bring together nine participants from six missions to exchange experiences, tips, and advice related to implementing the four approaches, and to brainstorm ideas for addressing common barriers. A similar workshop was conducted with USAID/Washington staff. Findings from these sessions were used to guide the creation of several user-friendly knowledge products, which are described in the report.
While the research provided several important insights regarding USAID’s use of approaches, the Team acknowledges the following methodological limitations:

- Desk review was comprehensive, but not exhaustive;
- Attitudes towards use of approaches evolved during change of administrations;
- Purposeful selection of 21 missions meant that several missions that had been identified as having particular success with implementing one or more approaches were not included in the review;
- Field insights were drawn from a maximum of three interviewees at each mission and during a time-limited interview; and
- No interviews with local actors were conducted.

FINDINGS

The Team’s review of these four discrete, but often overlapping, approaches serve as a reminder of the complex nature of USAID’s operating reality. The four approaches are interrelated conceptually and in their use by the field, even as they are seen by agency staff as distinct lines of effort. At the field level, the approaches interact with each other, with other approaches utilized by the Agency, and with the specific context in which they are being applied.

The approaches are implemented through mission strategies, procurement mechanisms, and engagement with stakeholders at different points of the USAID Program Cycle. Mission leadership and organizational structure play an outsized role with respect to the implementation of the four approaches. Meanwhile, staff knowledge of the intricacies of the approaches varies considerably; reflecting the mechanism used for dissemination of an approach, the experience level of the relevant field staff, and the depth of available training and guidance associated with the approach. In addition, significant differences exist in the capacity of missions to effectively use all four approaches.

The team identified several enabling factors that can be applied to all the approaches. These include interest and flexibility by technical and support teams, and resources to recruit and train Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) that understand the local context, culture, and languages. Additionally, the study found that the socio-political context in the host country also plays a major role in a mission’s ability or interest in using one or many of the approaches. An enabling environment for the use of integrated programming depends heavily on existing structures and needs in a specific region. For example, NPI efforts to work with local non-traditional partners can be enabled by strong capacity and a thriving local nongovernmental (NGO) ecosystem.

The team also identified several barriers to using the approaches in the field. These include the proliferation of approaches and the policy/guidance that accompanies them, which challenge field staff to determine what is a priority and what is not. The field also struggles with the use of “one-size-fits-all” guidance that suggests an approach will work similarly in nearly all contexts when the reality is that the efficacy of a particular approach is quite context-specific. The Agency’s low appetite for certain risks often disincentivizes staff to use co-creation, integrated programming, and NPI. Finally, because the four approaches are intended to strengthen sustainable
development, they require increased work, collaboration, and influence within the host country; however, these essentials are often hindered by a lack of local language fluency among Foreign Service Officers (FSO) and the overly technical, acronym-heavy way of speaking that is prevalent in the development and humanitarian communities.

In sum, the research highlighted the dissonance between USAID’s commitment to being a policy-driven agency and the day-to-day realities faced by Mission staff who must understand, internalize, and apply multiple Washington headquarters-formulated approaches to circumstances of the countries in which they are operating. Even where field staff appreciate the conceptual wisdom underlying the four approaches for promoting Agency development goals, their effective use is often stymied by funding limitations, pressures to obligate funds quickly, staff capacity to address multiple demands, an emphasis on achieving rapid results, competing priorities, and concerns about risk. That said, and without minimizing the articulated frustrations, field staff expressed enthusiasm for the approaches in general as a way to potentially achieve sustainable development results.

The workshops facilitated by the team contributed to the creation of several user-friendly knowledge products, including prototypes for: a virtual exchange program for staff to participate in meetings or planning sessions of another mission that has greater experience implementing one or more of the four approaches; a short, easy-to-absorb one-pager on an approach that provides tips and details on where to learn more; an agency-wide chat function to provide information, tips and other resources for field staff; and recommendations on how the Agency should disseminate the soon-to-be approved new Local Capacity Development Policy based on the study findings.

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1 Sustainable development has been defined as: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals (Frequently Asked Questions).
**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Based on the data collected during the study and workshops, the Team offers twelve recommendations listed below and further developed in the last section of the study. These recommendations are directed primarily at USAID/Washington policymakers.

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<th>Ensure that all newly-developed approaches, along with other policy guidance, are rationalized with existing policies, guidance, and other approaches before dissemination;</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Undertake cost-benefit assessment before deploying approach;</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Maximize field staff flexibility in determining utilization of a particular approach;</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Provide tools for field staff to use in determining the priority of a specific approach given their particular circumstances;</td>
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<td>Initiate periodic reviews of approach implementation and contributions toward Agency development objectives;</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Increase the role that FSNs play in the context of implementing each of the approaches;</td>
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<td>Ensure solicitations, policies, and other guidance documents are translated into local languages;</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Improve capture and dissemination of knowledge regarding approach implementation success stories;</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Simplify and minimize burdens associated with implementing and reporting on approaches, while also crediting successes that go beyond specific technical sectors;</td>
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<td>Refine tools for capacitating local actors to collaborate meaningfully with USAID;</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Prepare case studies that expand on the descriptions of organizational structures that have been used to implement integrated programming; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Develop a “module” on convening power for USAID training programs.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

As part of the Agency Learning Agenda, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a contract to The Mitchell Group (TMG) in September 2019, to research how the following four approaches relate to USAID operations and objectives: co-creation; engaging new and nontraditional actors via the New Partnership Initiative (NPI); convening power; and integrated programming. The study sought to understand how the approaches are written in policy and guidance and how they are understood and actually implemented by USAID field missions, and to identify enablers of and barriers to their implementation. In addition to this final report, the project developed several user-centered learning products and activities to assist the Agency in better understanding and implementing the four approaches.

Per an agreed-upon study design, the team analyzed three research questions:

1. How are each of the approaches documented in policy and guidance? [on paper]
2. How do missions understand and practice approaches to convening power, new partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation? [from paper to practice]
3. What enabling conditions are needed in order to better implement approaches to convening power, new partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation?

Unlike “policy,” the term “approach” is not formally defined in the ADS, but is included in the ADS as a program cycle principle. A recent assessment defined the term “approach” as referencing both a “way of thinking” and “set of tools targeted at a specific result.” The four approaches under review, while distinct, are all connected to USAID’s broader efforts toward ensuring greater aid effectiveness.

Co-creation is a “design approach that brings people together to produce collectively a mutually valued outcome by using a participatory process that assumes some degree of shared power and decision-making.” This

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2 The research questions were revised during the early stages of the study to make them less about the impact of the approaches on the “journey to self-reliance,” which was the original goal of the research study, and instead to emphasize a more ecumenical and field-oriented assessment of the approaches.
3 The Agency defines “policy” in ADS 200.3.3.3 as: Agency development policies articulate the Agency’s corporate position and set a specific priority direction for a sectoral or cross-cutting goal or issue consistent with USG and Administrator directives. These policies can seek to change the way the Agency programs in key areas but do not set specific time bound targets. By stating a specific direction or approach, these policies help USAID organize as an Agency to maximize impact in a certain area.
ADS201.2.1.2.d (Use a Range of Approaches to Achieve Results) provides: The Program Cycle provides the framework for USAID to consider a range of approaches to address specific development challenges in a given country context. The development community has experimented with a range of approaches in recent years, including solutions driven by science, technology, innovation, and private capital. In addition, new partnerships and commitments forged to work in tandem with developing-country governments, the private sector, universities, civil society, faith-based organizations, multilateral organizations, regional institutions, and other donors provide new tactics for planning, achieving, and measuring development outcomes. It is important to consider a range of options to select the most appropriate means for achieving the desired results, matched to the context, needs, and resources available to carry them out.
approach is aimed at involving more voices in shaping USAID programming and is based on the premise that involving more stakeholders throughout the Program Cycle promotes innovation and local ownership.

Closely related to co-creation is NPI. This initiative, which was introduced in 2018 and built on previous initiatives,\(^7\) is intended to diversify the partner base and change how USAID partners by providing more direct awards to local entities, locally established partners, and non-local organizations.\(^8\) Additionally, projects can qualify under NPI if a prime awards more than 50 percent of the funding through subawards or if the prime provides cash leverage. NPI is often viewed as a primary way to increase localization, which is defined in a recently released report “as the journey towards an end-goal of locally-led practice.”\(^9\)

Integrated programming is another approach that responds to local needs. The approach attempts to address development problems that may not fit neatly in a specific sector by designing projects that require technical and funding support from multiple sectors. Integrated programming can also be used to tackle cross-cutting issues like gender and youth.

Finally, convening power has a long history as an embedded approach of US foreign assistance, dating back to the post-World War II Marshall Plan. USAID has long encouraged field missions to serve as a convener of other donors, fellow US government agencies, implementing partners, and host country actors who are working on complementary programs. Depending on the circumstances, USAID may use its convening power to leverage the prestige and power of the United States Government or to project the agency’s role as a major donor within the host country. In recent years, as part of the Agency’s convening power, USAID has sought to expand the range of partners, to be conscious of who is not at the table, and to broaden the types of engagement that are included.

The rationale underlying the initiation of this study is USAID’s recognition across multiple administrations that, to ensure its investments contribute to sustainable development, the Agency must conceptualize “assistance” in a broader frame. This holistic view involves:

\(-\) an increase in the use of non-programmatic approaches;
\(-\) an emphasis on systemic change and the strengthening of local institutions;
\(-\) a commitment to diversifying its partner base and to reimagining what partnership means in practice; and
\(-\) a willingness to embrace a manageable level of programmatic risk.

Of course, the four approaches under review are not the only tools contributing to this broader conception, and indeed there are many other approaches utilized by USAID in Washington and field missions. However, examining the real-world enablers and barriers that affect the adoption and use of these four approaches offers constructive guidance to Agency leadership as they seek to facilitate effective uptake of new initiatives, be they denominated as policy, guidance, or approaches.

\(^7\) The 2018 NPI was a conscious follow-on to the Obama Administration’s USAID Forward and Local Solutions initiatives. However, despite an identical name, the 2018 NPI was introduced with little reference to a 1995 Agency effort, which had three principal objectives: to empower small businesses and entrepreneurs to drive economic growth; to strengthen the role of nongovernmental organizations in development programs; and to help nations bolster democracy at the local level. See Barbara Crossette, Gore Says U.S. Will Shift More Foreign Aid to Private Groups, New York Times, March 13, 1995.

\(^8\) 2021 Guidance to Develop Action Plans for the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) requires all Missions to submit a two-year action plan by January 7, 2022.

\(^9\) Arbie Baguios, Maia King, Alex Martins and Rose Pinnington, *Are we there yet? Localisation as the journey towards locally-led practice: Models, approaches and challenges*, Overseas Development Institute, October 2021, p. 1.
The study’s primary audiences are USAID policy officials and technical staff who are tasked with developing and facilitating the implementation of policy, guidance, and approaches both in Washington and at the Agency’s field Missions. Secondary audiences include other US agencies involved with international development activities, US development counterparts (donors and implementing partners), governments and citizens in aid-receiving countries, and academic and think-tank researchers.

METHODOLOGY

TMG recruited two principal researchers, Larry Garber and Gretchen King, to conduct the study, supported by a Study Manager, Karen Hirschfeld. ¹⁰ Annex 1 includes biographies of the team members. The team worked closely with the USAID Study Managers—first, Dr. Shannon Griswold, who was later replaced by Jessica Lucas—using a co-creation process to continuously guide study methodology and implementation. To further guide the Team, USAID formed a Steering Group comprising Agency staff, who identified relevant background materials to inform the Team’s understanding of the four approaches, refined the research questions to reflect the Agency’s evolving interests, and remained engaged throughout the study to advise the team and to reflect upon intermediate findings and upcoming activities. Annex 2 includes the research questions that were further elaborated through a series of sub-questions.

The study consisted of three distinct phases:

1. DESK REVIEW OF POLICIES/APPROACHES
2. DATA COLLECTION:
   a. An online survey of select staff from 21 field missions
   b. A set of interviews with program officers from the same 21 missions
   c. Another round of interviews with 12 technical and contracting staff from seven of the 21 missions
3. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:
   a. The development of several prototypes using Human-Centered Design-centric techniques.
   b. The drafting of this report, which lays out the study design, presents findings and conclusions, and offers recommendations for improved uptake of the approaches.

PHASE I - DESK REVIEW AND APPROACH OWNER INTERVIEWS

The Team conducted a thorough desk review of Agency documents and interviewed “approach owners” and others integrally involved in the development and dissemination of the approaches. A complete list of documents reviewed can be found in Annex 3.

PHASE II - QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

As part of the qualitative data collection component, the Team, working with the USAID Activity Manager, selected 23 missions for potential participation in the study.¹¹ This initial group of missions was selected from among those that were participating in the Agency Learning Agenda’s Mission Advisory Group. Additionally, the sampling

¹⁰ The research team notes the contributions of Dr. John McCauley, Michelle Risinger, Spencer Blumberg, Emily DiBella and Nick Schmidt. The team is particularly grateful to Ms. Risinger, who facilitated the human centered development workshops and created the prototypes described later in this report.

¹¹ While 23 missions were approached to participate in the study, only 21 agreed to participate.
strategy sought to include both those known to be using co-creation and NPI, and those where little to no information was available regarding their use. Other missions were chosen for their use of integrated programming and convening power based on feedback from Steering Group members. An online survey completed by staff from the Program Offices of the 21 missions that agreed to participate in the study found that the selected missions were generally familiar with all four approaches.

The next step involved interviewing the program officers at the same 21 missions using a semi-structured key informant interview (KII) instrument. The Team chose program officers to respond to the survey and to interview during the first round of interviews because, given their prescribed role at USAID both in Washington and the field, they have unique exposure to the broad range of policy, guidance, and approaches disseminated by the Agency. Additionally, they are responsible for ensuring their application in mission strategies, project designs, and the implementation of specific activities.
Prior to interviewing the program officers, the team reviewed each mission’s responses to the online survey as well as their Country Development and Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) and NPI Action Plans. The hour-long KIIIs were structured to answer the specific sub-questions under research question two, to gain an appreciation of the program officers’ basic understanding of the four approaches, and to understand in a broad sense how field missions used these approaches. The data from these interviews were coded and analyzed and served as the basis for the Team’s June 2021 presentation to the Steering Group and support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this report.

Following the KIIIs with the program officers, the Team undertook a “pause and reflect” exercise, which included a presentation to the Steering Group. A revised study design was subsequently developed which emphasized the research questions focused on USAID staff uptake (or lack thereof) of the four approaches, identifying the enablers and barriers, and highlighting specific successes emerging from the use of an approach.

While the initial plan called for field visits to two or more missions for in-depth interviews with a range of Agency staff and local actors, the COVID-19 pandemic precluded the envisioned travel. Hence, the Team relied on virtual interviews with technical and contracts officers in seven of the 21 original missions: Cambodia, Colombia, El Salvador, Georgia, Guinea, Malawi, and Morocco. These seven missions were chosen based on survey data results, initial data collection with the program officers, and the Team’s belief that the mission would be favorable to continued participation in the study. The Team conducted twelve interviews, focusing specifically on answering research questions 2 and 3 to understand the utility of the approaches in achieving mission objectives and the obstacles encountered in applying them. Annex 4 contains the KII instrument used during these interviews.

ANALYSIS

The Team analyzed the data by comparing the similarities and differences between applying the four approaches within a single field mission and among the 21 missions that participated in the study. Throughout the research, the Team sought to identify conditions that enhanced the feasibility of using an approach successfully, as well as the existing barriers that inhibited the use of an approach or prevented a mission from achieving the full benefits from the approach. This report incorporates the team’s findings, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from the multiple research components.

USER-CENTRIC PRODUCT

Based on these interviews, the team identified several “insights,” which were then used as the basis for an interactive, collaborative, virtual human-centered design workshop involving nine of the previously interviewed field staff (out of 21 who were invited to participate). The workshop allowed participants to exchange experiences, tips, and advice related to implementing the four approaches, and to brainstorm ideas for addressing common barriers. USAID/Washington staff also participated in a similar brainstorming session. These sessions enhanced the quality of the research findings and contributed to creating several user-friendly knowledge products, which are described later in this report.

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12 Many Missions were in the process of revising or had just finished completing their revised CDCS. The initial NPI plans were submitted in 2020 and had been reviewed as part of an on-going Agency examination of the NPI process.

13 While the focus was on the Missions where the program officers currently served, the interview protocol encouraged them to refer also to prior experiences with other missions.

14 The interviews were coded and analyzed using the Dedoose platform. The interviewees were promised that their comments would not be attributed to them in written or oral reports.

15 As used in Human-Centered Design, an insight is “a non-obvious understanding of your customers which, if acted upon, has the potential to change their behavior for mutual benefit.”
LIMITATIONS

The Team acknowledges specific methodological limitations associated with the research. First, given the vast array of policy documents in the USAID archives related to the four approaches, the Team’s review may not have included all those that are relevant. Second, the approaches and attitudes toward them evolved during the 18 months of the research study, particularly as Agency staff sought to understand and anticipate changes in priorities and terminology in the context of the transition from the previous to the current presidential administration.  

Third, the Team’s purposeful selection of 21 missions meant that several missions that had been identified as having particular success with implementing one or more approaches were not included in the review. Fourth, the field data collected is based on interviews with (and the workshop participation of) one to three officers in the 21 selected missions, who may not necessarily be representative of the mission perspectives as a whole.  

Fifth, the Team interviewed USAID staff and selected external informants, but not local actors or beneficiaries. This was partly intentional, as the Team wished to focus on the “state of mind” of Agency staff. It was also due to the inability to travel because of Covid-19-related restrictions. Sixth, in order to respect the respondents’ time, the team limited interviews to one hour, which meant that they were not always able to cover the large number of sub-questions across four approaches. They were not able to cover two specific areas of focus requested by the study design: 1) A look at the impact of using a particular approach on marginalized groups, and 2) conducting a comparative analysis of the application of one approach across at least two activities in a single mission.  

Finally, the Team notes that this study was never intended to assess the efficacy of the individual approaches. Considerable work is underway within the Agency that is providing real-time feedback regarding co-creation and NPI, and the Team benefitted from consultations with those involved in these efforts.

FINDINGS

The research confirmed that the four approaches were quite diverse in their field application and how Washington mandates their use by the field. While co-creation and NPI were relatively new Agency approaches, they had explicit guidance and dedicated teams supporting their implementation. By contrast, integrated programming and convening power had much longer pedigrees within the Agency, but were vaguely articulated, not prioritized in Agency guidance, and subject to disparate interpretations by Agency personnel in and outside Washington.  

More generally, USAID is a prototypically complex system with many dependencies, competitions, relationships, and other interactions among parts of the system. With respect to the four approaches, there is considerable conceptual and operational interface among them, and the many other approaches used by USAID that are not subjects of this study. Examining the Agency’s application of these distinct approaches provided both research challenges (e.g., structuring hour-long interviews to capture all relevant information), and unique opportunities to contrast the enablers and barriers associated with each application.

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16 It is worth noting that, while the term “Journey to Self-Reliance” is for the most part not employed by the Biden Administration, the guidance underlying the four approaches under review has not been revised and, with respect to co-creation and new partnerships, has been reemphasized. At the same time, as discussed in the report, Agency staff expressed uncertainty regarding the status of previously issued guidance, while recognizing that shifts in Administration priorities may impact the time available to apply one or more of the examined approaches.
CO-CREATION

Documentation in Policy and Guidance

Co-creation is defined in various Agency-wide level policy and guidance documents. As previously stated, co-creation brings people together in a participatory process to produce a mutually valued outcome, be it a strategy, design, project result, or evaluation.\(^{17}\) The approach is a “time-bound process,” that contrasts co-creation with ongoing collaboration or general discussions between USAID and other stakeholders.

Co-creation is one of the most documented approaches reviewed for this study. Several Agency units, primarily the Office of Assistance and Acquisition (OAA), have taken the lead in developing co-creation trainings and guidance documents for field staff. USAID staff are also currently compiling case study examples for missions and implementing partners (IPs).\(^{18}\) Guidance examples include: the Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform (EPPR) Co-Creation Field Guide; A Program Cycle Discussion Note; and guidance for Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) co-creation processes.

A wide variety of USAID staff and implementing partners can use co-creation. The approach can happen at any time in the Program Cycle, within missions, and in Washington, and can involve internal and external processes.\(^{19}\) The Team found that Operating Units, Technical Teams, missions, and IPs are encouraged to use co-creation. For example, OAA staff have used or encouraged the use of the approach in the context of project and activity

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\(^{17}\) USAID ADS 201

\(^{18}\) USAID Business Forecast Q&A December 2021.

\(^{19}\) USAID encourages the use of co-creation with IPs, but also to address issues within a Mission or other office internally. For more see: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EPPR_Co-Creation_Field_Guide-Oct-30-2020.pdf
design and the procurement process. Technical officers from different sectors have also used co-creation to support innovation in programming and access local actors who could serve as potential USAID partners. IPs are also encouraged to use co-creation during program or activity implementation; however, this study did not explore the post-award use of co-creation by implementing partners.

Most significantly for mission operations and programming, co-creation changes the “traditional” approach to design by enabling new stakeholders to participate actively. This impacts the role of USAID staff, particularly technical staff, by placing them in the role of listener and facilitator. Depending on how large the participating group is, and the thoroughness of the process, co-creation can lengthen the time it takes to make an award.

Co-creation has impacted the roles of USAID field staff. For example, co-creation may involve creating a simple problem statement instead of USAID staff designing the entire project (input), dedicating significant staff time to plan and develop workshop agendas (input), and allocating sufficient time to conduct workshops (activity). Short-term outputs can include co-owned plans, shared goals and implementation efforts, and a mutual understanding of intended goals. Potential outcomes of a co-creation process are articulated as increased local ownership, elevated local leadership, greater reliance on innovative procurement mechanisms, and an improved ability by USAID to achieve results. However, co-creation is not a panacea; it is merely one of many approaches that can be used to achieve those outcomes and can be used outside the context of the Agency’s localization objectives.

**In Practice**

There appears to be a wide variety of ways that missions utilize co-creation in practice. During qualitative data collection, mission staff described examples of co-creation processes involving one-on-one interactions with awardees, the use of Annual Program Statements and Requests for Information, calls for concept notes, and convenings of large pre-award workshops to help formulate USAID problem statements or to design programming. These co-creation processes influence the final outcome (a project design, a problem statement, greater understanding of potential local partners, etc.) depending on how the process was implemented and who and how many people were involved.

Nine of the missions that formed part of the sample saw conducting post-award co-creation processes as a preferred or often used option. In an ideal situation, this would mean designing almost from scratch the project and the specific activities in a one-on-one discussion with the awardee. For example, one mission called for concept notes, selected the best submitted note, and worked collaboratively with the awardee to design the full activity. Post-award or one-on-one processes can take less time than using co-creation in the context of designing a project. These processes can also be less alienating than pre-award co-creation processes with multiple stakeholders, which put potential partners in the awkward situation of presenting ideas that can be assimilated into the proposals of competitors and risks the disappointment of potential partners who engage in a long, resource-intensive process and then don’t win an award.

On the other hand, relying on post-award co-creation limits competition and results in a project that is, by definition, designed by a much smaller group of stakeholders. Additionally, the power dynamic in post-award situations is heavily tilted in USAID’s favor, since the IP wants to make their funders happy. Further, a “post-award co-creation process” may, in effect, be the same process that USAID has long used to coordinate, plan, and approve activities with designated IPs.

Ten interviewees had either participated in or had the opportunity to participate in co-creation training. While field staff generally found the training valuable, learning by doing appeared to be the most informative. First-time co-creation efforts at a mission can play a large role in the design of future co-creation sessions by serving as a blueprint of what worked and what needed refinement.
Enabling Environment and Barriers

Co-Creation efforts have been reasonably well-documented by the agency and all missions reviewed for this study had some type of experience with the approach. USAID should view several enabling conditions as important to replicate.

Staff at eleven of the 21 missions examined explicitly mentioned co-creation as an important way to diversify the partner base and solicit innovative, locally-owned ideas. When referencing the use of co-creation, one interviewee commented:

_The reasoning has been to tap the existing knowledge which is out there on the market. We do understand that the mission can have technical insights in terms of what ideas we should use to address the development challenges in the prevailing context locally. But we also do understand our ideas have limitations. Because we are government agents, we are not experts on the implementation side. So, we want to tap into the market to say, ‘this is what we are thinking, but what is it that the market can offer in terms of innovations in terms of creative approaches in terms of new ways of implementing development activities?’_

One barrier mentioned was the mission staff’s language limitations, leading to difficulties conducting the co-creation meetings in the local language, and the failure to translate all relevant documents into local languages. Another somewhat related barrier was the “development speak” that local organizations face when attempting to become a USAID partner. Development and humanitarian professionals often use phrases and terms that are challenging for a layperson to appreciate, while USAID has developed a vernacular filled with jargon, acronyms, policies, and procedures that the uninitiated can find difficult to understand.

Additionally, co-creation processes are or are perceived to be messy, time-consuming, and produce an outcome that might have happened more quickly through a traditional process. Indeed, more inclusive, complex processes can take several months or even years to complete. One interviewee described an example from several years ago where a mission used a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) to implement a co-creation process. There wasn’t much guidance at the time, and the process got complicated. The interviewee remembered the experience in the following manner: “I have two boys. I always say that the [co-creation] project was my third child because I invested so much energy, and I had so much emotional involvement.”

The co-creation process at this mission attempted to use integrated programming to address the identified problem, suggesting that sometimes using more than one approach complicates the procurement process. As the process continued, offices were unwilling to share their money for the project—another major barrier to implementation—further complicating co-creation and ultimately implementation of the project.

ENGAGING NEW AND NONTRADITIONAL PARTNERS:
NEW PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE

Documentation in Policy and Guidance

Similar to Co-Creation, NPI is meant to strengthen sustainable development by elevating “local leadership to define priorities that matter to their communities, design and implement solutions with the full range of development partners, mobilize resources across local systems and foster accountability for the results.”

broadly interprets non-traditional partners to include organizations that have received less than $25 million in direct or indirect awards from USAID over the past five years. Strongly connected to this goal are NPI's efforts to lower the barriers for underrepresented groups to work with USAID and to promote an emphasis on equity and inclusivity.

NPI requires all missions to develop Action Plans, which define how each mission is working toward increasing diversity in the Agency's partner base, including non-traditional partners. Updated guidance for revising NPI Action Plans was issued on October 25, 2021. Additionally, the NPI Incubator offers significant guidance for missions and potential new partners.

NPI's inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes are similar to co-creation. Both approaches call for a change in the programming approach, meaning USAID staff spend more time cultivating potential new partnerships and explaining processes to work with USAID. However, several activities and outputs for NPI are similar to the traditional award process because missions, notwithstanding efforts to implement procurement reforms, must follow the same rules and regulations for making awards as they have in the past. This includes the same process of awarding grants and contracts and the same obligation implementing partners have to develop project work plans and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plans, conduct relevant assessments, and keep up with reporting requirements all directed at or in collaboration with USAID staff. The diversification of a mission's partner base is intended to be implemented at the mission level through the efforts of the technical offices, with support from OAA. However, mission leadership encouragement is often required to incentivize the use of the approach.

Changes to a mission's operations and programming because of NPI include investing additional time in identifying and supporting new partners, preparing action plans and periodic reports for submission to USAID/Washington, creating awards with a lower dollar amount than traditional awards, and requiring increased support from Mission staff to ensure compliance for awardees unfamiliar with USAID's rules, regulations, and reporting requirements. Additionally, the emphasis on working with local partners often requires reliance on co-creation processes, which represents a change from USAID's traditional top-down approach to project design where USAID staff lead in the design of activities and then issue awards to partners who then implement the activity.

In Practice

On paper, NPI is well defined and documented, and has significant guidance. In practice, while missions have a clear understanding of the goals of NPI, implementing the initiative is more complex. Generally, mission staff see NPI as a way to encourage increased funding to local actors and that it constitutes a continuation of “Local Solutions,” which was initiated during the Obama Administration. The variance in implementation from mission to mission depends on several factors, including: mission leadership support; the willingness of technical and OAA staff to invest time into working with local partners; the size of the mission's budget related to the need to “burn down the pipeline;” and the ability of local partners to effectively program USAID funds.

The Team found that neither implementation of the approach nor utilization of guidance has been uniform. For example, ten missions cited a lack of capacity by local actors that can prevent increases in direct funding to local

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21 Non-local organizations can include US-based organizations that have not received more than $25 million in USAID funding in the prior 5 years.
22 USAID General Notice issued on October 25, 2021.
24 The use of co-creation is a standard practice of NPI. For more information see: https://www.usaid.gov/npi.
actors or make it more challenging to work with them. Additionally, NPI Action Plans varied by mission, with USAID/Jordan reporting as many as 40 NPI-related projects, including 28 awarded to local entities, and USAID/Tunisia listing four projects, equally divided between mentoring and leveraging awards.

Enabling Environment and Barriers

While USAID/Washington strongly pushed for the implementation of NPI, there are still real and perceived barriers to uptake at the mission level. With a significant emphasis on working with non-traditional partners, NPI, and predecessor initiatives, have been challenged when actually awarding significant amounts of money.

Mission staff shared that USAID structural and systems issues created challenges to implementing NPI. More staff time and more staff are required to support non-traditional partners unfamiliar with USAID regulations and reporting requirements. Often, new partners lack the financial systems and resources to manage large awards from USAID; thus, missions may provide relatively small dollar amounts to minimize risk and ensure the partner isn’t overwhelmed. Additionally, the time necessary to manage an award does not necessarily vary by the dollar amount associated with the award. Eight staff commented that existing staff can feel overwhelmed and/or the mission would likely need more financial management and contracting staff to manage many smaller awards to local organizations. As noted by one interviewee,

*I think that if USAID wants to work with local partners, there needs to be a recognition that these are not going to be $40 million awards, they're going to be small, and there needs to be sort of a commitment on the part of the mission that they're willing to accept that that's just how it's going to be. If what they want to do is move towards [working with] local [actors], I think that they need to accept that they need to hire more staff who can help them.*

Related to the need to give lower dollar awards to local partners, USAID mission staff cited the pressure to obligate significant amounts of money during a fiscal year. This demand makes it challenging to spend time working with local actors that lack the real or perceived capacity to manage money. As noted by an interviewee:

*The more money you have, in theory, the less money is available for [working with local actors], because if you know that you're going to be getting $15 or $20 million a year, in a certain type of funding, you make it a point to lock it up in a big five-year procurement, which means that all that money is spoken for. So, on paper, you have a lot of money, but none of it is yours. It all belongs to … whoever is implementing your activity. So, you have to tell these small actors that approach you, 'hey, you came to the wrong guy, talk to this non-USG private implementer. Maybe they'll have a subgrant to throw your way."

Mission staff expressed that the ability to work with local partners also depends on the country’s context. Staff from three missions explained that non-permissive environments can make it challenging to work with local actors because of both security concerns and the fear of being associated with unfavorable organizations. Additionally, the capacity of local partners can vary greatly, making some countries more favorable to working with local actors than others.

26 Interviewees often cited poor financial and organizational management and M&E capacity.

27 As of 2021, USAID gives about 6% of total funding to local actors despite past goals to reach 30% under the Obama Administration.

28 Missions cited context specific dynamics including: an inability to work directly with the government, lack of local NGO capacity, security concerns and concerns of working with unfavorable actors, the existence of a strong local NGO ecosystem, a friendly government that supports locally-led development, and events in their country that were a high priority of the US like migration.
Virtually all staff saw value in efforts related to NPI. As noted above, the initiative has roots in the idea that working more locally can create local ownership, increase aid effectiveness, and foster sustainable development. As one interviewee noted, “For the country to continue to progress, there needs to continue to be local voices that have the capacity to demand efficiency, honesty, and effectiveness from their government.”

Overall, USAID’s structure does not easily enable staff to work with non-traditional partners, particularly partners that have little experience managing USAID funds and navigating reporting requirements. Several changes that need to be made to create a more enabling environment for successfully implementing NPI are discussed further in the recommendation section.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

Documentation in Policy and Guidance

Integrated programming has a long pedigree within USAID and is much-referenced in technical office handbooks and think-tank/academic literature. Early examples include “Integrated Rural Development,” which sought to achieve results across multiple objectives focused on specific geography, “law and development,” which sought to strengthen host country legal frameworks and institutions across multiple sectors, and “integrated governance,” which was most recently been embedded in USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) Strategy published in 2013. However, contemporary Agency documents do not explicitly define the term. As one recently-published external examination of integrated governance states: “while governance integration is enjoying renewed time in the policy and program spotlight, we find in both the literature that we have looked at and in conversations with colleagues, partners, and donors that there is little agreement on what integrated governance is (and is not) and what it can do to help achieve and sustain development impacts.”

Conceptually, the approach seeks to create synergies across sectors that enhance results and is consistent with the Agency’s commitment toward applying a systems lens to addressing development challenges. However, the Policy Implementation Assessment for the 2013 DRG Strategy offers the following mixed appraisal regarding the use of integrated programming:

Many believe that the [DRG Strategy] provides a strong argument and justification for why DRG integration is essential to sustainable development across all sectors…. Others remarked that, despite all the fanfare on DRG integration and cross-sectoral programming, the 2013 Strategy essentially just repackage[s] the same old stuff and does little to fundamentally change DRG programming or to adequately address the ‘stovepiping’ it sought to eliminate.

No Agency policy explicitly calls for integrated programming, but several USAID/Washington technical offices have produced extensive guidance documents and organized training programs to encourage operationalization of integrated programs. Consistent with the data collected through the Team’s interviews, Agency staff have compiled a list of ten emerging lessons on managing integrating programs (see Table 1). More generally, integrated programming within USAID is promoted through the use of cross-sector, collaborative, and multi-sector communities of practice. From a headquarters perspective, the new Bureau of Democracy, Development, and

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29 See Derek Brinkerhoff and Sarah Frazer, Integrated Governance Then and Now: Beyond Hammers and Nails, RTI, June 18, 2021.
30 2019 USAID Policy Framework, ““To do so, we should apply a ‘systems lens’ to our country strategies and project designs. Programs should always consider the larger context in which they operate. Each program should first understand the constellation of actors and institutions relevant to achieving meaningful and lasting results, their interrelations, and the incentives that guide them.”
Innovation (DDI) is designed to foster integration. However, with five offices and five hubs, several technical bureaus outside DDI, and a commitment to maintaining a decentralized, field-oriented concept of operations, the leadership challenges associated with achieving operational coherence across the Agency are extraordinary.

**TABLE 1: TEN EMERGING LESSONS ON MANAGING INTEGRATED PROGRAMS**

1. Tailor the management approach to what is needed for the particular mission.
2. Document in writing how the integrated strategy, project, or activity will be managed.
3. Include language in activity solicitations and awards requiring collaboration, integration, and adaptability.
4. Consider choosing a “neutral” party to lead integrated development objectives (DO), Project, or activity teams.
5. Obtain leadership buy-in and explicit support for integration.
6. Pay attention to decision-making processes and authorities.
7. Clarify roles and responsibilities of team leads and supervisors.
8. Provide incentives, training, and coaching to support the behaviors most conducive to the smooth functioning of integrated programming.
9. Incorporate integrated programming into routine practices, such as portfolio reviews, work plans, and contract language, so that integrated approaches become part of standard processes rather than time-consuming additional tasks.
10. Recognize that integration is a mindset rather than a rigid set of practices.

Prepared by Lane Pollock and Carl (Tony) Pryor.

**Mission Understanding and Practice**

Field staff describe several broad sets of activities that fall under the integrated programming umbrella. As noted by one interviewee,

> Integration may include co-location through joint selection of geographic locations and beneficiaries; better coordination through cross-sectoral project designs, use of overlapping or common indicators to achieve outcomes, collaborative annual work planning, use of mixed funds, and joint field-based portfolio reviews; and/or increased collaboration to foster new partnerships and better efficiencies.

The most common model involves programs from different sectors that are included under a single development objective within a Mission Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). While integrated programming covers the gamut of USAID operations, among the more prominent examples of such mingled objectives are programs involving health and education, democracy and economic policy reform, and environment and water. In some instances, the integrated programming designation is applied within a single sector (e.g., combining family planning and HIV activities within a broader Health Development Objective (DO), or micro-enterprise and agriculture under a broader Economic Growth DO). Multi-sector development objectives can be found in many CDCSs, often reflecting a genuine commitment to integrated programming; however, several staff mentioned their entrepreneurial efforts to maintain a specific program while still adhering to Agency guidance regarding limits on the number of authorized DOs.33

33 See, e.g., USAID, DRG PIA p. 21 (“DRG officers said that they were forced to pursue cross-sectoral programming not necessarily because it was the highest priority, but rather as a means of keeping the DRG sector afloat.”)
A second prominent model of integrated programming refers to the incorporation within a sectoral program of priority Agency themes such as gender, youth, civil society, private sector engagement, anti-corruption, localization, and others. In some cases, missions may explicitly establish a cross-cutting special objective, while in other instances the mission’s CDCS includes language that highlights the importance of applying an inclusive development approach.\footnote{For example, the Youth Policy Implementation Assessment states: “Some missions have sought to work with inclusive development as an umbrella to integrate many population-based categories of special interest to USAID, including: youth; gender; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI); disability; and indigenous peoples—though the degree to which these efforts are successful remains unclear.”}

A third model involves mission efforts that emphasize such themes as resilience, conflict prevention, countering violent extremism and, in the future, climate change and pandemic recovery. Here, programming by definition requires inputs from multiple sectors, but under a strategic objective that often reflects the broader US government national security concerns related to the country. For example, the USAID Mission in Georgia has adopted an integrated program involving the economic development and agriculture sectors, which is explicitly designed to counter malign influence areas near Russian-occupied regions of the country.\footnote{See Georgia CDCS pg. 22: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CDCS-Georgia-MAY-2025.pdf.}

**Enabling Factors and Barriers to Implementation**

Reliance on integrated programming is context-specific and often requires shifts in organizational structure and culture. The decision to use an integrated programming approach is often addressed during the CDCS stage; as an interviewee stated: “CDCSs promote integrated programming, but there is still resistance at some levels within the Mission.” Even where the CDCS is organized around sector-specific DOs, a lack of resources available for implementing programs within the sector may dictate using an integrated programming approach. For example, the Morocco Mission incorporated a governance component to strengthen the institutions of a particular technical sector and to maintain democracy and governance programming despite limited available resources.

USAID recognizes integrated programming as a best practice and evaluations have extolled its use, but no consistent guidance exists as to when it should be used, or when circumstances suggest that the investment is not worth the effort, or how to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles that inhibit use by field missions. One interviewee noted: “In terms of integrated programming, I see a lot of discussions among ourselves in technical sectors and program offices around the world…. But I don’t see a lot of guidance coming up.”

The team heard about or received documented guidance from at least four missions regarding their implementation of integrated programs. For example, Malawi developed a matrix management structure for integrated programming, developed roles and responsibilities for champions of the integrated developments, and conducted a deep dive analysis to examine the continued applicability of job descriptions.

As evidenced in the interviews, mission personnel appreciate the conceptual basis for moving forward with integrated programming, i.e., most development problems are not sector-specific but instead reflect system-wide challenges that span across sectors. As one field staffer emphasized, “integrated programming, where it makes sense and is applied correctly yields better development outcomes.” However, another interviewee expressed suspicion of those who promote “integration for integration’s sake” because the efficiency gains from integration are not always self-evident.

Nonetheless, Agency culture related to promotion precepts, limits on the use of earmarked funds, and organizational structures within missions that divide staff by technical functions often act as barriers to the effective utilization of integrated programming. As one interviewee commented:
We have one very big funding stream (health) and then Democracy and Governance and Economic Growth with much less or no funding, and there is less of an incentive to do integrated programming. This is further compounded by the strict earmarks and M&E processes governing health funds, which discourage too much outside-the-box thinking. That said, thanks to the specific personalities and priorities of some people at our mission, the health team is trying to integrate a more systemic vision into their work, and this has meant a big focus on health governance.

Ultimately, committed mission leadership and a well-defined vision were identified as essential to incorporating integrated programming systematically into a CDCS and to organizing mission structures to ensure effective implementation. As noted by one interviewee, “Within a siloed Agency, it is important to differentiate roles and responsibilities of integrated development objective team leads vs technical office directors.” To address this concern, five missions mentioned having disrupted traditional organizational structures by eliminating technical offices or by designating senior staff to facilitate the Mission’s integrated programming, which may operate at the sub-national level. In other instances, the Program Office plays a policing role in ensuring that the agreed-upon rules of the road are respected, including respect to use of funds associated with particular sectors. See Table 2 for select examples among the missions with whom we interacted.

**TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF USAID MISSIONS Structures ACOMMODATING INTEGRATED PROGRAMS**

- **Kenya:** Established County Liaison Teams (CLTs) within the mission for about half of the country’s counties where the Mission is most active. These CLTs are made up of staff (mostly foreign service nationals (FSNs), but also some foreign service officers (FSOs)) from across the Mission, including Program, Controller, Contracts, Executive and technical offices. The role of the CLT is not to oversee/manage projects—the technical staff, COR/AOR have that responsibility—but to represent the Mission as a whole at the county level. The Mission also has recruited a dynamic senior FSN as the Senior Advisor in the Front Office, who has working relationships with senior people in the government.

- **Malawi:** Created three FSN-12 positions, reporting to the mission director (MD) and tasked with looking across the portfolio. In addition, the Mission received authority to recruit 14 FSNs to implement the CDCS, with the Embassy and Regional Bureau both being very supportive.

- **Colombia:** Integrated programs incorporated into CDCS; specific regional integrated strategies, with a Senior FSN 13 position—Chief Mission Advisor—established in the front office (FO) to lead the coordination and integration effort at the regional level across Technical Portfolios. The Chief Mission Advisor oversees two new FSN positions—Regional Integration Advisors—who are working directly with contracting officer’s representative/agreement officer’s representative (CORs)/AORs in the Mission and Implementing Partners to ensure this integrated programming takes place. Also, a regional integration Strategy (RIS) was created by this team and disseminated by our office to IPs to ensure they are all on the same page and working towards achieving this Mission Priority.

Other factors that contribute to the utilization of an integrated programming approach include country context, the interest and capabilities of host country actors, the prior experiences of key mission staff and their willingness to try something new, and perceptions of flexibility afforded by the designation of funds by congressional or executive directives. Integrated programming also emerges as the result of the exigency whereby a mission is not allocated any or sufficient funds for a priority sector, but by creating a combined DO, can maintain activities
in the otherwise inadequately funded sector. As an example, an interviewee noted that the mission is “funding value chains, but incorporated Democracy and Governance so we could use DG funding. The work is now related to both governance and value chains.”

The following table lists rewards and risks associated with Integrated Programming that were frequently mentioned during the field interviews.

**TABLE 3: RISKS AND REWARDS OF INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING**

<table>
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<th>REWARDS</th>
<th>RISKS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent with the realities of development</td>
<td>A loss of focus on the outcomes prescribed by USAID headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation by host country actors at national and local levels</td>
<td>Inevitable in-fighting among staff for “control” of project and consequent delays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can contribute to more sustainable outcomes and increased value for money</td>
<td>Constant questioning as to whether the “squeeze is worth the juice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability in the fragile contexts where USAID often operates</td>
<td>Challenges associated with implementing this approach in sector-based Agency, which dominates everything from funding to FSO backstop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables more context-specific programming</td>
<td>Integrated programming is operationalized from the perspective of USAID and not the Mission’s local counterparts, who may have their own views on how different sectors should interact with each other</td>
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**CONVENING POWER**

The term convening power is a catch-all phrase covering activities ranging from traditional donor coordination to partnerships with host country actors, and everything in-between. At the macro-level, USAID encourages other donor countries to adopt standardized policies, to fund targeted sectors, and to share development knowledge. USAID also has played a convening role in the post-fall of the Berlin Wall era with respect to reconstruction activities in east and central Europe and, after military interventions, in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in encouraging others to focus on such thematic issues as HIV/AIDS, food security, and democracy and governance.

The objectives associated with county-level convening are to foster a common purpose for development programming, to mobilize resources through coordinated activities, and to promote coherent host government planning strategies. However, the circumstances in which the approach is applied may vary considerably: a) between coordinating aid programs and pushing policy reforms; b) between implementing a development program in normal circumstances and providing time-sensitive assistance during a humanitarian emergency or in responding to national security imperative; and c) between contexts where the host-country government is a strong partner and where interacting with the government is off-limits making other actors the object of the convening. Moreover, USAID is not always the formal lead convener, but is almost always a significant participant in such host country coordination efforts, even where the funds brought to the table by USAID are limited. This
inclusion of USAID reflects the US government’s prominence on the global stage, even as USAID must frequently overcome suspicions of being viewed as an actor with multiple motives.

**Documentation in Policy and Guidance**

Despite the ubiquity of convening as a USAID approach, and the widespread appreciation that convening is a powerful tool for achieving Agency development objectives, there is currently no overarching document that defines convening (power) or that assigns explicit roles and responsibilities to specific Agency personnel. Multiple terms are used to describe the approach, including convene, leverage, influence, engage, advocate, and facilitate. Nonetheless, the use of these terms represents a subtle, but conscious, shift from the traditional donor coordination frame.

Unlike the other approaches examined in this study, there is no community of practice that serves as a resource for those seeking guidance or that collects “best practice” case studies and makes them accessible to interested staff. As became evident during the field interviews, no training has been provided for those charged with utilizing this approach, although there is work now underway in Washington to document examples of convening power as best practice case studies. As one interviewee noted,

*The State Department has their protocol training, but we have no protocol training at USAID. And that would be helpful if you expect us to go out and have convening power as an approach. We should really know proper protocols and how we can reach out to international organizations, to other countries, and how we bring in the State Department.*

**Mission Understanding and Practice**

Although field staff do not regularly use the phrase convening power, the approach intuitively forms part of missions’ approaches in a variety of circumstances, involves potentially a broad range of actors, and interfaces with other approaches (those that are the subject of this Study and others). The ambiguous role of convening power as an approach was reflected by a field officer who stated, “maybe we're not that intentional in thinking about and defining exactly how and when we use it, we maybe take it for granted.” At the same time, a field officer questioned whether convening power is really an approach since there is no explicit USAID/Washington policy encouraging its use. In addition, the use of the term “convening power” has “imperialist” connotations and the preferred term is “partnering.”

One officer explained that In some countries where the US government has considerable influence, USAID’s convening power can “make things a priority that may not be a priority…. We can get actors together that may not want to talk about a certain issue that needs to be discussed.” A similar sentiment was expressed by another interviewee: “I would say, in general, USAID has strong convening power, not just amongst its development partners, but within the local community here and the local government, too.” However, the concern of overreaching is captured in this quote: “The US government has incredible convening power and the influence that we have in the country is shocking, and I’m not sure entirely right.”

Recently-approved CDCSs often incorporate reference to specific leveraging tactics that the mission intends on using and acknowledge that more than just USAID-funded interventions are necessary to enhance the prospects for achieving sustainable outcomes. For example, one field officer commented: “We do talk about facilitating relationships. I don’t recall if we use the word convening [in the CDCS], or the phrase convening power. But we did strive to add that to the relevant sections of the strategy.”

As has long been recognized, convening the full range of actors can contribute to more efficient and coherent use of scarce resources, and crucially increases buy-in among local actors. However, in preparing their CDCS,
missions do not always specify the investment of staff time required for convening-related activities, which often require relationship building and patience to obtain the desired payoff. One interviewee provided this mixed perspective:

“Meetings kind of take more time and that affects your ability to convene. But I think our ability to organize that meeting has given us an edge - we’ve organized an agenda, we have the ability to follow up on issues. And generally, in terms of how we are structured, we have those technical offices, but we also have the program office that helps to fill in the gap.”

Convening is often a necessary default by staff wanting to remain active in a particular sector but having no funding to support specific activities. As one interviewee described,

“[Feed the Future] funding did materialize the first year… And my first task was to gracefully close out and step back from $30 million worth of procurements … that we had to cut short…. So that forced us to pivot. And so now, pretty much the bulk of what we do is convening power. We have a big focus on private sector engagement, and that extends also to civil society. And a lot of what we do is to reach out proactively, but we also are responsive when others reach out.”

Enabling Environment and Barriers

Overall, effective utilization of convening power by USAID field missions is impacted by mission leadership, FSO and FSN knowledge of Agency procedures, tenure of local staff and their relationships with host country actors, and staff creativity as encouraged by mission leadership. As an interviewee commented,

“In the mission, we’ve understood the importance of relationship-building from a front office perspective, but also from a technical perspective as well. So, it’s not just for an office who manages these relationships, it’s throughout the mission.”

The most typical scenario for the use of convening power is to rely on the discretion of the relevant mission staff to decide how and when to use the convening power. The current reality, where COVID-19 has precluded face-to-face meetings, and yet USAID’s convening power has proven crucial to ensuring effective coordination among various actors, further highlights the paradoxes associated with convening power.

Field staff raised several concerns that they confronted in utilizing a convening approach. First and foremost is the risk of associating unintentionally with disreputable or corrupt partners. Second, they noted the time wasted in endless coordination meetings with prospective partners, which is particularly problematic when USAID is not the convener and when staff is pressed to fulfill other critical functions. Third, they noted that local actors, particularly at the sub-national level, did not always understand the Agency’s emphasis on convening. Fourth, the lack of language fluency among some FSOs often inhibits proactive engagement. As one interviewee suggested,

“It would be extremely helpful if USAID had more language training, local language training… in some countries, you don’t need it, obviously, but in a lot of countries, a little bit of local language opens a lot of doors. And we’re not very good at language training.”

Finally, they acknowledged that effective convening depends on senior managers providing real-time guidance and newly-assigned staff learning on the job.
GENERAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Team’s review of four discrete, but often overlapping approaches serves as a reminder of the complex nature of USAID’s operating reality. At the field level, the approaches interact with each other, with other approaches utilized by the Agency, and with the specific context in which they are being applied. For example, field missions use co-creation to engage new and underutilized partners, which often leads to integrated programs, and which in turn reflects USAID’s ability to convene a broad range of actors to invest their time and energy as part of a USAID-led effort.

The situation is complicated by the lack of an explicit definition for the term “approach.” This study reflects the use of the term as ranging from a mandatory directive from USAID/Washington to a tool that can be used in appropriate circumstances. To illustrate the variations, the Team identified four heuristic typologies that the Agency uses for disseminating and encouraging compliance with approaches:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brute Force</td>
<td>NPI: reporting is mandated, training capacity is established, technical teams are available to support implementation, and extensive guidance is disseminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged Practice</td>
<td>Co-Creation: extensive guidance exists, and technical support and training is available, but there is an acknowledgment that circumstances should dictate when utilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledged Practice</td>
<td>Integrated Programming: tentative guidance and case study descriptions of successful efforts exist, but the application is subject to field judgment as to the appropriateness given consideration of multiple factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Convening Power: guidance and training are limited, but the approach is well-embedded in the Agency’s culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A definition of approach should clarify that the Agency uses the term in a multitude of settings and should reinforce that being denominated as an approach does not imply mandatory use by all Agency actors or applicability in all contexts.

The four approaches reviewed are implemented through mission strategies, procurement mechanisms, and engagement with stakeholders at different points of the program cycle. Not surprisingly, mission leadership and organizational structure appear to play an outsized role with respect to the implementation of the four approaches. Meanwhile, staff knowledge of the intricacies of the approaches varies considerably reflecting the mechanism used for dissemination of an approach, the experience level of the relevant field staff, and the depth of available training and guidance associated with the approach. In addition, significant differences exist in the capacity of missions, including staff size and available funds, to permit effective use of all four approaches.

The study suggests that all four approaches implicate often unaccounted for costs. These costs may include the time associated with making an award when utilizing co-creation processes, staff support to non-traditional partners when implementing NPI, significant organizational changes to enable integrated programming, and equipping staff with appropriate skills to enhance the use of the Agency’s convening power. Hence, the true costs of deploying these approaches must be assessed against the prospective benefits.
Incentive structures play a critical role. As noted by an interviewee, “there is certainly high-level encouragement or messaging from [headquarters] around convening power, local partnering, co-creation, and integration. Probably everyone in the Agency is nominally on board with these principles.” However, the interviewee then stated that if the Agency is serious about these becoming a new way of doing things, “then it needs to tweak incentive structures to actually reward, or at least not penalize … approaches that require more time, burn less money, and yield fewer short-term countable outputs.”

At present, many indicators measuring application of the approaches are input-oriented. For example, NPI requires missions to count the number of projects that fit within the prescribed definition, and co-creation is focused on the number of new and underutilized partners who were able to participate in the process. Field staff need to be convinced practically that using a particular approach will contribute to major successes in achieving USAID objectives.

Combining reporting requirements for individual approaches would lessen the burden on mission staff and likely increase available time to work with and support partners. More specifically, holistic reporting requirements, reflecting results from more than one sector, could also reduce barriers to using integrated programming and incentivize staff to see the bigger picture of development and not just focus on “keeping their money” and “achieving their outcomes.”

In sum, the research highlighted the dissonance between USAID’s commitment to being a policy-driven agency with directives and guidance from headquarters provided on a broad range of issues, and the realities faced by Mission staff who must understand, internalize, and apply multiple headquarters-formulated approaches to the particular circumstances of the countries in which they are operating. While field staff appreciate the conceptual wisdom underlying the four approaches for promoting Agency development goals, their effective use is often stymied by funding limitations, time pressures to obligate funds, staff capacity to address multiple demands, an emphasis on achieving quick results, competing priorities, and concerns about risk. That said, and without minimizing the expressed frustrations, field staff were enthusiastic about applying open-ended procurement processes and taking advantage of organizational innovations within missions that facilitated effective use of the approaches.

As demonstrated throughout this report, the Team found that all four approaches can be used together and are ways of working that can be encouraged or required by USAID. The following sections outline enabling factors and barriers to uptake of the approaches. Through comparative analysis, the team was able to identify enabling factors that were common across approaches and missions. Similarly, the team was able to identify barriers that were common across approaches and missions. In some cases, missions were able to implement an approach successfully because of certain enabling factors, while another mission was unable to achieve similar success likely because of one of the outlined barriers.36

ENABLING FACTORS

The Team found that a mission’s leadership is often a key ingredient to encouraging or enabling mission staff to use one, many, or all of the approaches. Since these approaches often require additional effort or changes in a traditional programming approach, USAID mission staff indicated that they felt either required or incentivized to use the approaches if their leadership strongly supported them.

36 The term success was not defined for the study. Interviewees were asked to define what it meant to them in the specific context of implementing one of the approaches. Examples include, making an award, having co-owned goals, and being able to work around existing structures.
In addition to mission leadership’s support, interviewees said that the interest and flexibility of a mission’s technical and support teams were vital to using the approaches. Whether it was greater innovation, diversity in the partner base, tackling development challenges holistically, or building relationships and influencing stakeholders, staff emphasized that effective uptake of the approaches required a broad commitment within the Mission; i.e., beyond a single champion, to implement them.

Mission staff stated that FSNs were an important component of the Agency’s ability to utilize all four approaches. Adequate resources to recruit and train local staff enabled missions to understand the local context and mitigate language barriers that generally exist between FSOs and local populations. FSNs were greatly valued for their ability to play a leading role in several approaches. For example, one mission staff member shared that FSNs were often excited to lead efforts around integrated programming and convening power. They were eager to meet with their country’s government, civil society, and private sector to understand the development challenges from a holistic lens and support the development of solutions.

After speaking with staff from 21 different Missions that operate in a wide variety of contexts, the Team found that an enabling local context contributes significantly to a missions’ desire and ability to use any of the four approaches. The relevance of using integrated programming, for example, depends on a specific country or regional context. Likewise, the ability to work with local non-traditional partners is contingent upon the strong capacity of the local NGO, the government, or the private sector ecosystem. Convening power may be used to engage with the government in some countries because of USAID’s existing positive relationships with the government, while missions in countries with corrupt or poor-performing governments might see less risk in engaging civil society and choose that route.

The ability to plan and implement in non-crisis settings, as opposed to responding to an immediate emergency, also facilitates use of the approaches. Where there is pressure to move money or to show immediate results, the time-consuming processes associated with co-creation or setting up integrated programs are a luxury that can often not be afforded. And approaches like convening power may look quite different in a humanitarian response setting as opposed to a more traditional development context.

Other contextual factors influencing the utilization of approaches included the size of a mission’s budget. The Team found that missions with smaller budgets often used the approaches out of necessity. Missions with less money can turn to convening power with more frequency since it was easily implemented within their more limited resource base. For example, when the Guinea Mission lost Feed the Future money it ended up shifting more efforts toward convening power. The mission began reaching out to local companies and NGOs every three months or so to keep communication channels open. Through this engagement the mission connected a U.S. company with a local company that are now working together.

**BARRIERS**

The team also identified a number of barriers to utilizing the approaches. USAID has numerous cross-cutting policies; gender, youth, indigenous peoples, which also must be taken into account in designing a program. These policies are one of many issues field staff have to take into account. Additionally, each administration often has its own policies or signature initiatives that may or may not connect to the previous administration. More generally, guidance and policy for approaches continue to grow and change, often depending on new administrations and their goals. These goals often have little sense of prioritization.

Additionally, guidance or training on approaches is often developed in Washington and uses a “one size fits all” product that may or may not work in all mission settings. This lack of context specificity can mean that staff are unable to use the guidance in their work or must significantly adapt it to make it useful.

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37 5 missions discussed how they saw NPI as just repackaging of elements of USAID Forward like Local Solutions.
The Team found that, in principle, field staff thought many of the approaches contributed positively to development results. However, the time it can take for staff to ensure that risk is minimized as much as possible doesn’t incentivize staff to go the extra mile to use co-creation, integrated programming, and NPI.

*Even when there are good ideas, we are overwhelmed and overburdened with all of these requirements, and all of these processes, a lot of which are not really valuable. It’s just difficult for us to find the time and the mental energy to actually do these interesting new things that can move the development agenda forward.*

The Team found that some field staff believe that using an approach may take more time, money, and staff resources, with uncertain evidence of greater impact, and hence are disinclined to make the necessary investment unless otherwise incentivized.

Finally, because all the approaches are intended to strengthen sustainable development, they require increased work, collaboration, and influence with the host country. However, working with host country actors is complicated by the ever-present language barriers. Most USAID documents (policy, solicitations, guidance materials) are written in English. While the Agency is increasing efforts to translate documents, USAID staff believe there is a long way to go. In addition to foreign language barriers, interviewees also noted that USAID and the development/humanitarian community have their way of speaking that is overly technical and full of acronyms making it almost a foreign language on its own.

Co-creation processes and awards to local actors can further illustrate language barriers when FSOs cannot communicate in local languages. As one interviewee commented, “from the get-go, there is this obstacle of the language. English is a requirement and local organizations do not have that capacity.” He continued,

> So, you make them sign … a 60 or 80-page document, which is the award in English, and they don’t have a clue. It’s actually a binding document with a lot of legal obligations. And you don’t provide them with a copy in French or Arabic. So, they’re kind of blind … We would remind them about some of the provisions of the award. And they’re like, ‘we had no clue,’ because they didn’t really know that it existed.

**PROTOTYPES FOR HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN PRODUCTS**

As a part of this study’s deliverables, the Team developed several knowledge products based on research and two workshops with USAID staff. Development of the products used Human-Centered Design principles for the two workshops. The first workshop, which took place over two days, included participants from six of the seven missions chosen for the final round of KIs. The second workshop had participants from the SG and other USAID/Washington staff. The team’s Human-Centered Design expert, Michelle Risinger, facilitated all workshop sessions and enabled participants to contribute ideas, insights and express pain points virtually using Google Meet and Miro Boards. During both workshops participants were asked to brainstorm knowledge products, or prototypes, that could be further developed by the Team for use by USAID.

As a result of these workshops, and complementary to the Team’s other research, four prototypes and one product were developed. The prototypes include:

- A Virtual Learning program to shadow a mission currently implementing an approach by participating in relevant meetings
- An in-person Learning Research program to conduct a week-long retrospective of how an approach was used in a mission
• A template to quickly convey what an approach is, how to use it, and where more information/resources can be found

• The creation of a designated email, gotevidence@USAID.gov, managed by PPL where any USAID staff member can send evaluations, assessments, reports or other details outlining successes, challenges or tips for implementing an approach.

The prototypes are included in Annex 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The examination of four distinct approaches used by USAID, and particularly the interviews with field staff, provided a wealth of ideas for improving disparate aspects of USAID operations. The specific recommendations that follow are directed primarily at agency headquarters staff responsible for maintaining policy coherence and implementation within USAID. Additionally, some of the recommendations will require action by mission leadership. The recommendations range from macro to micro, and from the seemingly feasible in the short-term to those that are more aspirational, but nonetheless merit present consideration as part of the Agency’s ongoing commitment to a broad and transformational reform agenda.

1. **ENSURE THAT ALL NEWLY-DEVELOPED APPROACHES, ALONG WITH OTHER POLICY GUIDANCE, ARE RATIONALIZED WITH EXISTING POLICIES, GUIDANCE, AND APPROACHES BEFORE DISSEMINATION:** As demonstrated in the findings section, the four approaches interact with each other and with other approaches promoted by USAID. Moreover, while an approach may seem rational standing alone, when considered in the context of competing Agency priorities the same approach may cause confusion among those charged with implementation. Hence, accounting up-front for the likely reaction of field staff operating in different circumstances and providing better guidance on how approaches (or policies more generally) should work together would reduce the dissonance when applying a newly-disseminated approach.

2. **UNDERTAKE FORMAL COST-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT BEFORE DEPLOYING APPROACH:** The resources required to implement an approach in the field include the staff time and financial costs associated with initial training on the approach, engaging in the requisite activities associated with the approach, and preparing mandated or ad hoc reports that allow for measurement of the efficacy of the approach. Moreover, applying certain approaches, such as NPI or integrated programming, implicate the need for increased staffing levels and changes in organizational structures within field missions. These oft-hidden costs should be accounted for in determining the extent to which a particular approach is mandated, the level of support that USAID headquarters is prepared to provide to missions implementing the approach, and changing the agency incentive structures to ensure that effective field staff utilization of a particular approach is appropriately rewarded.

3. **MAXIMIZE FIELD STAFF FLEXIBILITY IN DETERMINING UTILIZATION OF A PARTICULAR APPROACH:** USAID operates as a policy-driven agency that strives for coherence among field missions operating in a wide variety of circumstances. By formalizing specific approaches and imposing reporting requirements for assessing their efficacy, the Agency, in effect, reduces the discretion available to field staff. As demonstrated by the findings, enabling factors and barriers are often context-specific making it challenging to implement an approach uniformly. To ensure flexibility, approaches should be disseminated with an emphasis on providing field staff, including mission leadership, sufficient discretion to adapt them to the prevailing circumstances in which they are operating by maximizing “navigation by judgment” and minimizing “navigation by direction.”

4. **Provide tools for field staff to use in determining the priority of a specific approach given their particular circumstances:** Faced with the proliferation of directives from headquarters, field staff are understandably overwhelmed and often frustrated by the competing demands. Effective mission leadership is the principal mechanism for meeting this challenge. However, field staff would also benefit from more tools that guide them through the process of determining when/how a specific approach makes sense in their particular operating context. Given the current emphasis on localization, the tools should also provide guidance on applying approaches in a manner that properly balances risk factors while facilitating inclusivity.

5. **Initiate periodic assessments of approach implementation and contributions toward agency and development objectives:** As evidenced in this study, approaches disseminated to the field by USAID/Washington, even when conceptually sound, do not fully account for the operational realities facing field missions. Hence, reviews similar to the Agency policy implementation assessments, which have proven successful for reviewing the impact of Agency policies five years after issuance, should be applied for Agency approaches. However, the primary emphasis should be placed on soliciting formal and informal feedback from field staff and partners so as to ensure that the Washington promotion of a particular approach is actually enhancing, rather than compromising, the prospects for achievement of results.

6. **Increase the role that FSNs play in the context of implementing each of the approaches:** FSNs should play an essential role in partnering with, convening, and influencing local stakeholders. As citizens of the country and representatives of USAID, FSNs are in a unique position to collaborate with civil society and the host government. Moreover, language barriers were cited as a challenge to a mission's ability to implement the approaches. FSNs' fluency in both language and cultural norms positions them well to be seen as trusted partners by local stakeholders, which can be particularly useful to support locally-led development. USAID/Washington and mission leadership should seek opportunities to make FSNs primary connectors, facilitators, and influencers between USAID and local actors by relying on their existing expertise and knowledge, and by providing them with the skills needed to be more effective communicators, advocates, and strategic thinkers.

7. **Ensure that solicitations, policies, and other guidance documents are translated into local languages:** Field staff related that USAID documents are frequently not translated into local languages. This severely limits the ability of local actors to fully understand policies, project goals, rules, and regulations, which can negatively impact their ability to draft a strong proposal and to understand the full implications of implementing USAID-funded programming. If USAID is serious about increasing locally-led development, then USAID should take practical steps to ensure that local actors are aware of potential funding opportunities and understand USAID policies in a manner that can better position them as partners. This will mean allocating funding and staff time for translation and for educating local actors in the intricacies of USAID regulations and procedures (or, preferably, minimizing those regulations and procedures that make it difficult for local actors to serve as effective and empowered partners).

8. **Improve capture and dissemination of knowledge regarding approach implementation success stories:** USAID/Washington has produced several examples of successes related to the approaches, which can be found on the CLA case competition website, NPI project profiles, and in various evaluations of agency experience with integrated programming. However, given their multitude of responsibilities, field staff complain that the Agency information system is difficult to navigate. Hence, several interviewees welcomed improvements in the sharing of information regarding successful application of the approaches. Consistent with USAID’s ongoing efforts to improve the dissemination of success stories, the Team has developed prototypes to establish virtual exchanges between missions to facilitate real-time engagement and a chat function that can easily connect staff with each other to provide tips and successful examples. [see annex 5].
9. **SIMPLIFY AND MINIMIZE BURDENS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING AND REPORTING ON APPROACHES, WHILE ALSO CREDITING SUCCESSES THAT GO BEYOND SPECIFIC TECHNICAL SECTORS:** Several interviewees said reporting and regulation requirements were challenging when implementing the approaches. For example, multiple initiatives such as private sector engagement, Local Works, and NPI have their own planning and reporting requirements. Combining these requirements would lessen the burden on mission staff and increase available time to work with and support partners. Additionally, reporting requirements should be designed to reflect results emerging from multiple technical sectors; this would reduce one of the barriers to using integrated programming and would incentivize sector staff to see the bigger picture of development, rather than focusing on “keeping their money” and “achieving their outcomes.”

10. **REFINE TOOLS FOR CAPACITATING LOCAL ACTORS TO COLLABORATE MEANINGFULLY WITH USAID:** For years, the Agency has emphasized capacity strengthening as integral to the development process. However, several interviewees commented that implementing approaches like NPI was challenging because, despite previous investments, local actors lacked capacity. Adopting the recently-released draft Local Capacity Development policy and implementing the specific recommendations included therein would provide a much needed impetus to this effort. [Note - based on the research conducted for this study, the Team has submitted specific comments on the draft policy, which are included in Annex 6.]

11. **PREPARE CASE STUDIES THAT EXPAND ON THE DESCRIPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES THAT HAVE BEEN USED TO IMPLEMENT INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING:** Several missions participating in this study were implementing a model of integrated programming. USAID should compile and make available the techniques that missions have used to incentivize integrated programming champions, organize multi-sectoral technical offices, create matrixed teams, and utilize innovative reporting structures when implementing integrated development objectives.

12. **DEVELOP A “MODULE” ON CONVENING POWER FOR USAID TRAINING PROGRAMS:** While denominated as an approach, there is little guidance regarding convening power in the ADS or in other USAID documents. While work is underway to address aspects of this gap related to work with other donors, staff generally learn how to use USAID’s convening power “by doing.” In particular, staff would welcome a training module that describes different types and purposes of convening power, protocols for using convening power, and several success stories where convening power has been applied to achieve Agency or Mission objectives. One of the prototypes offers an “informal guide” for field staff contemplating the use of convening power. [See Annex 5.]
ANNEX 1: STUDY TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

**LARRY GARBER**, the Study Lead, is a former senior USAID official with extensive senior management experience in government and nongovernmental world, and is a recognized thought leader on a broad range of international subjects.

During his 18-year career at USAID, he served under two administrations as the acting head of USAID’s policy bureau and as USAID Mission Director for West Bank/Gaza from 1999-2004. He taught at the National Defense University during a two-year detail from USAID and currently teaches at George Washington and Arizona State Universities.

He has facilitated training programs for civil society organizations in multiple settings, played a leading role in the preparation of USAID’s 2014 Local Systems Framework, and helped introduce the Thinking and Working Politically discourse to USAID staff and implementing partners. His writings include the first-ever handbook for election observers (published in 1984) and articles, book reviews and blogs on international development, democracy promotion, election observation and human rights.

**GRETCHEN KING**, researcher, has 12 years of experience in international development policy, communications and research with specializations in the aid effectiveness principles of ownership, transparency and accountability. She also specializes in political economy, systems thinking and community engagement approaches.

Ms. King has conducted evaluations/assessments of INGO programming as it relates to policy influencing with host governments, legislative reform, sustainability approaches and efforts to advocate for policy and practice changes within the US Government and UN system. Her expertise in evidence-based policy formation, policy influencing, and deep understanding of aid effectiveness practice approaches, enable her to connect global policy to practical implementation in the field.

She holds a Master’s Degree in Violence, Conflict and Development from the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies and a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications from Columbia College Chicago. She is also certified in public participation techniques and planning and social network analysis.

**KAREN HIRSCHFELD**, the Activity Manager for this study, has 20 years of experience in project management, evaluation and design working with the United Nations, international non-governmental organizations, the US Agency for International Development, and international development contractors throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas.

She has prior experience in research design and implementation, including leading a major research project on violence in Darfur, and survey work, having managed the first nationwide opinion survey in Afghanistan.

Prior to her work with The Mitchell Group, Ms. Hirschfeld worked at USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) for seven years, serving as Acting Deputy Country Representative in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Haiti, Burma and Cameroon. She oversaw the redesign of OTI Anywhere, the office’s knowledge management platform, and designed and delivered several trainings to new staff in headquarters and in the field.

Ms. Hirschfeld earned a Master’s degree in International Affairs from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs and a Bachelor’s in International Relations from Brown University. She is trained in facilitation and mediation.
ANNEX 2
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are approaches to convening power, new partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation documented in policy and guidance? [on paper]

SUGGESTED AREAS OF INQUIRY:

- How is each approach defined? By whom? Is this definition consistent/agreed or contested?
- Who is intended to implement the approach, and how?
- What are the intended inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the approach?
- What should be different about Mission operations, programming, or development outcomes because the approach is operationalized?
- What are the risks and rewards to USAID of this approach? To participants/stakeholders beyond USAID?
- How is the approach meant to foster Self-Reliance? To meaningfully engage marginalized/underrepresented groups?
- What policies, guidance, training, support, or other capacity building have been provided on each approach to those who must implement them?

2. How do Missions understand and practice approaches to convening power, new partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation? [(from paper to) in practice]

SUGGESTED AREAS OF INQUIRY:

- How is each approach understood? Is this generally consistent with how the approach is defined in policy and guidance?
- How is each approach implemented? By whom? Is implementation consistent across instances or contexts? Is this generally consistent with how the approach is meant to be operationalized, according to policy and guidance?
- What policies, guidance, training, support, or other capacity building have been received on each approach by those who must implement them?
- What are the planned and actual inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the approach?
- What are the perceived differences in Mission operations, programming, or development outcomes because the approach has been operationalized?
- What are the risks and rewards to USAID of this approach? To participants/stakeholders beyond USAID?
- What difference does it make to meaningful engagement of marginalized/underrepresented groups? To fostering Self-Reliance?
- What combinations of these approaches appear to be most common, and why?
3. What enabling conditions are needed in order to better implement approaches to convening power, new partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation?

SUGGESTED AREAS OF INQUIRY:

- What enables (i.e. supports motivation, opportunity, ability to engage in) shifts to these approaches - individually and/or in combination - and how can this be strengthened? By whom?
- What poses barriers to shifts to these approaches - individually and/or in combination?
- Which marginalized/underrepresented groups are left out by using these approaches, and how can we best engage them?
- What efforts and incentives are needed to strengthen enablers and reduce barriers? What new - or changes to existing - policy/definitions, guidance, training, mentoring, and other skill-building efforts are needed?
ANNEX 3

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance
2. Acquisition and Assistance Strategy
3. Private Sector Engagement Policy
4. Private Sector Engagement Evaluation & Learning Plan
5. Self-Reliance Learning Agenda X CDCS Questions Crosswalk Document
6. FAQs: Putting the PSE Policy into Practice & PSE Plans
7. 6 Ways We Engage the Private Sector
8. STIP Public Goods Study
9. Redefining our Relationships with Partner Governments
10. Summary of Support to Self-Reliance Learning Agenda Q8: Co-Creation
11. Self-Reliance Learning Agenda Q8 USAID Co-Creation Landscape: Documentation of Definitional Sources of USAID Co-Creation
12. Co-Creation Field Guide
13. Collaborative Activity Redesign: Putting CLA in Practice
14. Co-Creating MEL Plans
15. NPI Website
16. EPPR PowerPoints Sept. and July 2020
17. Synthesis and Lessons Learned from Pilot NPI Action Plans
18. Recommendations on NPI Action Plan Guidance
19. EPPR External Listening Tour Summary Report
21. DMD Workshop- Insights and Key Takeaways
22. Integrated Programming Blog by Tony Pryor
23. Consolidated Resources on Listening to and Engaging with Local Stakeholders
24. AID/W Learning Agenda Snapshot Feb 2020
25. Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle in Mission Operations
26. Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
27. Integrating Voices Listening and Learning Series
ANNEX 4
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW USAID ROUND 2

Hello, as mentioned in our previous correspondence, I am Larry Garber and this is my colleague, Gretchen King. Today we would like to ask you a series of questions related to four approaches we have been examining over the last year for USAID—Co-Creation, New and Underutilized Partnerships (NUPs), convening power, and integrated programming.

As (technical, contract) Officer at _____ Mission, you have been selected to participate because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on the issues covered by this research study. We want to understand how these approaches are used everyday, what makes their use successful and what barriers there might be to use.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and/or to end the interview at any time with no consequence. Your honest responses will help USAID understand how these approaches are being implemented at the Mission level, including identifying successes and barriers.

Your personally identifiable information will not be connected to any information you provide in this interview, unless permission is specifically requested and granted. The data from this interview will be used by the team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported as part of an aggregated data set. To aid our notetaking, we would like to record the interview, but you may choose to participate and not be recorded, with no consequence.

This interview will last approximately one hour.

1. Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)
2. Do you allow voice recording of the interview? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)
3. Could you tell us a bit about your background and how long you have been at the Mission? Have you been in any other positions at the Mission?
4. Could you rank which of the approaches you have had the most experience with from most to least? (We will order approach questions based on their answer)

CO-CREATION
1. Can you give us a brief overview of a co-creation process you participated in or led?
2. What led you to pursue co-creation for this activity/process?
3. Was the process successful? If so, what made it successful?
4. What changes would make it easier for you to use the co-creation process?
5. Does co-creation allow USAID to engage local actors? Can we use the approach to reach marginalized and underserved groups?

NPI
1. Can you give us a brief overview of an activity/project involving NUPs?
2. What has helped enable or motivate you to work with NUPs?
3. What changes (internal processes or context) would make it easier to work with NUPs?
4. Does your work with NUPs include programming with marginalized or underserved groups? Are there barriers to working with them? Explain.
5. What excites you about working with NUPs?
INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING
1. Can you give us a brief overview of an activity/project/strategy that used integrated programming?
2. What or who is supportive of integrated programming at your mission?
3. What motivates you to use integrated programming?
4. What makes you less likely to use integrated programming? Can you share a specific example?
5. What role does integrated programming have in relation to working with marginalized or underserved groups? Is integrated programming a good way to engage those groups?

CONVENING POWER
1. Can you give us a brief overview of a time you used the Mission’s convening power?
2. What or who is supportive of using your Mission’s convening power?
3. What issues make you less likely to use convening power? Can you share a specific example?
4. What changes at your mission or agency-wide would make it easier for USAID to use its convening power?
5. What should USAID/Washington know about convening power, in relation to how we engage local actors, and marginalized or underserved groups?

GENERAL
1. What advice do you have for USAID/Washington regarding each of the four approaches? What might support for the approaches from USAID/W or other Missions look like?
2. Have you ever received counterproductive or unreasonable guidance/training from Washington regarding one of these programming approaches? What made it so?
ANNEX 5

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT PROTOTYPES

The following prototypes were created using principles of Human-Centered Design (HCD). In November and December of 2021, the team and an HCD expert held two workshops: first with staff from six of the initial 21 missions, and then with Agency staff serving in Washington. These workshops provided a platform for staff to discuss challenges and successes, and then to generate new ideas for ways to better implement the four approaches based on their perspectives. Following these workshops, the team and the HCD expert further refined these ideas and made them into prototypes—draft tools that could be used/distributed to users—both in Washington and at missions—to help improve implementation of the approaches.

Prototype One: Approach Quick Tips

This prototype attempts to address a need identified during the workshops and interviews with mission staff who wanted short, easy to read, jargon-free documents on the approaches that included tips, best practices, practical examples, and contact details of where to learn more. This prototype is an example for one of the approaches, convening power.

If this is a prototype PPL is interested in further designing, questions or next steps may include:

1. Can this template easily be used for other approaches—not just the four for this study?
2. Can the prototype be shared with select field staff for further refinement and feedback?
3. How will this prototype be disseminated, i.e., with reporting requirements or to use as needed?
4. Where will the final product “live” and who will “own” it?
5. Can the prototype be shared with select field staff for further refinement and feedback?

Convening power can take a lot of different shapes. Basically, it’s a way of bringing together stakeholders to get to know each other’s priorities and interests better, so they can work together to solve problems. Convening power can take a lot of different shapes.

**CONNIE THE CONVENER**

Is here to share her tips on how to make the most of USAID’s convening power. A seasoned program officer, Connie strategically uses convening power to get everyone on the same page and to ensure that all stakeholders work together for better solutions to development problems.

Connie is ready to share her tips with you to influence, persuade, connect, and build relationships through the use of CONVENING POWER.

**HERE ARE SIX OF CONNIE’S MOST IMPORTANT CONVENING POWER TIPS:**

1. **MAKE THE RIGHT MOVE AT THE RIGHT TIME**
   - Figure out if bringing people together will help you solve your problem or create an additional burden for the people you convene. Sometimes it’s best to speak with others before convening to help support and build relationships.

2. **DON’T DO ALL THE TALKING**
   - Sometimes, we are in the middle of a meeting and feel like we need to control the conversation, but it’s important to make sure that everyone feels included and has the opportunity to contribute.

3. **USE YOUR PRESENTATION SKILLS**
   - Be inclusive! Invite both internal and external actors to the discussion to make sure that everyone feels represented and has the opportunity to contribute.

4. **ENSURE COMFORT OF THE GUESTLIST**
   - Ensure that the meeting space is comfortable and inviting. Make sure that everyone feels welcome and has a chance to participate.

5. **ENSURE SUPPORT**
   - Be an advocate for the stakeholders you are convening. Make sure that everyone feels supported and has the opportunity to contribute.

6. **DON’T BE ALL THE GIANTS**
   - Be patient and know when to step back and let others lead. The key to convening is to bring people together to listen to one another. You may just be a fly on the wall, or you may provide much-needed facilitation.

**THANKS**

Use your listening and presenting skills to make the most of USAID’s convening power and build on these relationships to move your objectives.

---

**USAID’s Convening Power:**

THE “SWISS ARMY KNIFE” OF APPROACHES

**THE TALKING DON’T DO ALL THE TALKING CURATE THE GUESTLIST ENSURE COMFORT OF THE GUESTLIST ENSURE SUPPORT DON’T BE ALL THE GIANTS
PROTOTYPE TWO: Retrospective Learning Exchange

This prototype aims to address a need/desire of mission staff to learn how other missions have successfully implemented approaches by those missions, and that “learning by doing” has significant value. The Retrospective Learning Exchange would be an opportunity for staff from one mission to visit another that recently completed a process to implement one of the approaches. This weeklong research finding mission would be a chance for the visiting staff to interview key stakeholders in the process, and to learn what worked and what could have been improved. The visiting staff would be required to write up a short case study that would be made available to all missions and Washington staff. Visiting staff would not be required to be evaluation or research experts.

The visiting staff would also share their learning with their own mission by hosting brown bag sessions, presenting their findings to leadership, and becoming champions of the approach at their own mission. The host mission would benefit from this exchange by having their colleagues from another mission provoke reflections on their implementation of an approach.

If this is a prototype PPL is interested in further designing, questions or next steps may include:

1. Determine who will manage the program.
2. Determine who would be interested in participating in this exchange.
3. How will the program be funded?
4. How will the case studies be disseminated?
5. PPL would need to design parameters, questions, and case study templates to make it easy for mission staff to gather consistent information and present it in a similar format.

PROTOTYPE THREE: Virtual Learning Exchange

Like the previous prototype, this idea attempts to address the need expressed by mission staff that “learning by doing” is helpful, as is the opportunity to see how other missions implement the approaches in real time. This prototype is an exchange program that is entirely virtual. An “observer” from the learning mission would observe planning, design, and implementation meetings at an implementing mission. The benefit for the learning mission staff is that they would get first-hand experience without having to leave their own mission. The benefit for the implementing mission is to be able to solicit feedback and ideas from the observer which may improve their own approach processes.

If this is a prototype PPL is interested in further designing, questions or next steps may include:

1. Determine who will manage the program.
2. Determine who would be interested in participating in this exchange.
3. Will there be requirements for the learning mission staff to document the process?
4. Should PPL develop templates for the observers to use to spur their learning/help them be more effective?
5. How many meetings will the learning mission staff be required to attend? How will participation impact their full-time job?

Prototype Four: Approach Evidence Gathering Inbox

This prototype attempts to address a need expressed by Washington staff on the need to better gather and know what evidence missions have related to the four approaches (or, more generally, any approach). Washington would create a new email account that can be accessed by select PPL staff. The email account would be called GotEvidence@usaid.gov. Mission staff would be able to quickly send reports, evaluations, assessments, and learning products or tools to PPL and, perhaps most importantly, would not have to know names of people in PPL in order to know to whom to send evidence. An automatic confirmation email would be sent, and PPL would have the chance to follow up with questions after reviewing the evidence.

If this is a prototype PPL is interested in further designing, questions or next steps may include:

1. Work with IT to set up the email.
2. Determine who “owns” the inbox and how to curate the incoming evidence.
3. How will PPL let missions know about this new email? How can this one-pager be shared?
4. Will there be required formats for the evidence?
ANNEX 6
RESEARCH TEAM COMMENTS ON DRAFT LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

TMG was tasked by USAID’s Bureau of Policy, Programs and Learning in September 2019 to undertake a USAID-funded research study examining four distinct Agency approaches: co-creation, new partnership initiative (NPI), convening power, and integrated programming. In addition to reviewing USAID policy and guidance documents, we have conducted structured interviews with more than 40 agency staff working in Washington and in missions in all regions where USAID operates. Based on this research, and the rich insights gleaned about the challenges USAID staff in the field face when working with local actors, the Team has reviewed the Agency’s recently released Local Capacity Development Policy (“the policy”), offering perspectives on the relative strengths of the policy and providing recommendations from the initial research that are applicable to the LCD Policy.

The research provides considerable evidence of the importance that the past three USAID administrations have placed on the issue of localization and local capacity development. Indeed, two of the approaches addressed, co-creation and NPI, represent conscious efforts by USAID/W to encourage increased reliance by Agency field missions on the input of local actors in the design, implementation, and evaluation of USAID-funded projects. Yet, multiple officers expressed frustration regarding their efforts to balance the anticipated benefits with the required investment of significant staff time and the added risks associated with using a specific approach.

The recently released Local Capacity Development Policy paper responds constructively to many issues that emerged from the research. Adoption of the policy would be considered a positive step by many of those interviewed. At the same time, the research suggests that several issues deserve further examination, either in the context of finalizing the policy or through the proposed senior level committee envisioned in the policy.

2. STRENGTHS OF THE LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The recently released Local Capacity Development Policy draft offers a welcome and much needed discussion of the USAID perspective on local capacity development and the broader localization construct. Specifically, the policy presents an authoritative vision for local capacity development: “USAID contributes to achieving and sustaining development outcomes and effective local humanitarian response systems by making strategic and intentional decisions about why and how to invest in the capacity of local actors, based on a shared understanding of the principles for effective local capacity development.” (p. 6)

The policy properly highlights that “there are a wide range of approaches for strengthening capacity—coaching, facilitation, network-building, training, co-creation, local awards, technical assistance, catalyzing collective action, and many others.” (p. 10) USAID’s role in strengthening local capacity is defined as fluid depending on the circumstances and ranging from “connecting local actors with desired sources of technical assistance, to convening local actors with global actors, to strengthening relationships and connections across the system, or to directing resources to key local actors to strengthen their influence.” (Id.)

The policy also forthrightly states that “training will not be our default approach to local capacity development.” Instead, the policy highlights a range of possibilities, depending on the needs of diverse local actors. These include learning by doing, creating peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and facilitating relationship brokering and network weaving. (p. 13)
Significantly, the policy recognizes the importance of systems analysis and of analyzing development challenges through the objective of “improving systems performance.” The policy acknowledges that “strengthening the performance of the whole system often requires going beyond just capacity development and addressing other constraints through complementary interventions.” For example, the policy suggests: “We may need to help address harmful power dynamics or other incentives that limit actors’ ability to change or identify ways to unlock financial resources needed for the system to function better.” (p. 14)

As TMG’s research established, USAID field staff often assume that local actors lack capacity. This was often mentioned in the context of financial management or organizational capacity to deal with USAID’s rules and regulations. The policy suggests a different perspective: “USAID should not approach every challenge or context with the assumption that local actors lack capacity.” (p.8). Equally important, the policy stresses that “capacity development” should not be viewed from the perspective of “developing skills for the short-term, such as donor-specific financial management or branding and marking,” (p. 15) but requires “intentionality, resources, and longer time horizons.” (p. 8)

The seven articulated principles are designed “to guide with flexibility.” This is particularly true because “local circumstances evolve and therefore needs may change, [and] so capacity development programming should be managed adaptively to accommodate unpredictable shifts and changing needs of local actors.” (p. 15) The encouragement of field staff to use their judgment based on an understanding of the local context perhaps merits even more emphasis.

Channeling the field staff perspective, arguably, the most important sections involve the discussion of risk. As the paper states, “financial and management risk associated with a local award must be evaluated in the context of the overall programmatic logic.” The paper urges USAID to take a “holistic approach to risk that weighs fiduciary and management risk alongside programmatic, reputational, and other considerations of risk.” (p. 11) The paper also seeks to counter the tendency toward “risk avoidance, compliance, and short-term, easily-counted results,” by encouraging field staff to focus instead “on improving the performance of the partner to pursue their own mission.” (p. 11) The articulation of these principles, particularly if supported by concrete examples that describe how the Agency will support and encourage versus punishing risk-taking, will create an Agency ecosystem more conducive to locally-led development.

The incorporation of a “change management process” directly into the policy is welcome, as, in the opinion of the research team, the six specified action areas are essential for fulfilling the objectives of the policy. In this regard, the development and implementation of an internal and external engagement and dissemination strategy to promote the policy must move forward, as emphasized throughout the document, in the spirit of collaboration. (p. 24)

3. AREAS WHERE THE POLICY COULD BE STRENGTHENED

The following comments highlight areas where the policy could be strengthened by clarifying ambiguities. The comments derive from the research and analysis that we have undertaken.

1. The policy rightly emphasizes that “local capacity development is the cornerstone of sustainable development, which depends on local actors designing and leading efforts to improve their communities (p. 2).” And, while the policy states that “developing local capacity is … vital to ensuring that marginalized and underrepresented groups have the skills and opportunities to lead on their country’s development,” (p. 2) it does not explain why. As USAID staff must explain to their counterparts the basis for this position, the policy should elaborate this link in clear and precise language that can be adopted by field staff.

2. The paper encourages listening to local actors. However, as the policy acknowledges there is a wide array of local actors and there is little guidance on how to draw conclusions from the oft-dissonant host country voices. Indeed, the policy seems to slight the role of host country national government officials, leaving read-
ers unclear as to whether this “local capacity development policy” applies to them or is directed primarily at civil society organizations, and, possibly, the private sector and municipal officials. In this context, it’s noted that the first substantive reference to Government-to-Government support occurs on page 22 of the paper (although one of the case studies presented earlier is a G2G example). Therefore, the policy should clarify its position vis-à-vis national-level officials, even if to say that it is dependent upon the country context and the composition of its government and should therefore be done on a case-by-case basis.

3. Incorporating marginalized and underrepresented groups is essential to achieving the objectives of the policy, but the list of who qualifies -- LGBTQI+ people, women and girls, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, marginalized ethnic and religious populations, internally displaced persons, youth and elderly, and other socially marginalized individuals – exacerbates the challenges facing the field officer who struggle to include this long list of potential partners into a coherent strategy and an implementable project. (p. 12) Similarly, while “every person, regardless of identity, [may be] instrumental in the transformation of their own societies,” the time available for hard-pressed field staff to hear every voice is limited. Agency field staff need tools to help them filter among these voices in a respectful but practical fashion; stakeholder mapping and political economy assessments provide the building blocks, but providing guidance on how best to correlate these tools with the broader localization objectives is essential.

4. Similarly, the projected paradigm shift from “doing things ‘for’ to doing things ‘with’” requires further elaboration to ensure that it can be effectively operationalized by staff who must determine which local actors to engage. Staff may need less to rely on their technical sector expertise and instead further develop their facilitation, communication, negotiation and listening skills. The Agency might consider increasing funding for classroom and on-the-job training on these “soft skills.”

5. The “shift away from a directive role and toward a facilitative role in local capacity development—a role that inspires, encourages, and supports local actors to achieve their self-defined objectives” – will be among the most challenging for the Agency to achieve given existing incentives and embedded practices. (p. 17) Effecting this cultural change should be among the high priorities of the senior leadership committee established by the policy.

6. Field staff appreciate the Biden Administration’s emphasis on climate change, COVID-19 recovery, and anti-corruption, while maintaining momentum on such issues as food security, global health, democracy and governance, and conflict prevention among others. However, a common complaint among field staff is the proliferation of policies and other directives emanating from USAID/W, with no little clarity regarding relative prioritization. Hence, the newly formed leadership committee must not only identify and enable synergies across other Agency priorities and initiatives, but also guide field staff on how to rationalize the dissonances caused by the panoply of policies. The committee should also ensure that existing incentives promoting or encouraging the use of one policy or another are mutually supporting (as opposed to creating counter-productive competition among priorities).

7. The policy has placed a welcome priority on continuing to “advance procurement reform.” While field staff reported appreciating changes that have been made to provide a more robust menu of procurement options, they expressed frustration by many of the rules and regulations that inhibit flexibility and that, unintentionally, favor large awards to implementing partners that have experience managing them. A major constraint currently affecting the field is the limited number of warranted contracts officers assigned to the field. Further empowering USAID’s talented foreign service national contracts officers by increasing their warrants and authority would contribute to alleviate current bottlenecks.

8. The Agency should be sure to highlight practices that are applicable regardless of sector such as a “holistic approach to risk that weighs fiduciary and management risk alongside programmatic, reputational, and other considerations of risk.” (p. 11). This guidance should be applied in all sectors and embraced by technical officers from health to economic development.
4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are several recommendations taken from the research team’s final report that are applicable to the LCD policy.

- Ensure the Local Capacity Development Policy is rationalized with existing policies, guidance, and other approaches before final dissemination—our research found that field staff appreciate understanding the relationships among approaches and that such an understanding contributes to their effective use.

- Undertake formal cost-benefit assessment before deploying the LCD policy—nudges may be more appropriate than mandates, and reporting requirements should account for existing staff time constraints.

- Encourage mission leadership to embrace and call for the implementation of this policy at the field level—this can best be accomplished by seeking their continued input in developing guidance and providing them the tools, including necessary staff and bureaucratic flexibility, to move the localization agenda forward.

- Cultivate and grow champions of local capacity development at the mission level—ensure that field staff understand the purpose in using an approach is vital to effective implementation.

- Maximize field staff flexibility in determining utilization of the LCD policy—tools that encourage mission staff to use their judgment and gather context specific evidence may prove more valuable than sector-specific directives on meeting certain targets for local capacity development.

- Carve out specific roles for Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) in the implementation of the LCD Policy—FSNs are well positioned to support capacity development through their understanding of host country context, knowledge of existing capacity, and cultural and language understanding.

- Review and refine mechanisms for capacitating local actors to collaborate meaningfully with USAID—should include allocating necessary funds to ensure the policy and related guidance can be translated into local languages when appropriate.
LEARNING USE CASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In order to (LEARNING OUTCOME), (state the desired decision point or behavior the learning should inform)</th>
<th>Clarify and operationalize approach concepts in policy, guidance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we think (USER), (target individual/group whose behavior or decisions the learning should inform)</td>
<td>‘Owners’ of approaches and other policy formulators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants/needs to know (FINDINGS &amp; CONCLUSIONS), (evidence needed to inform decision or inspire behavior)</td>
<td>How (in)consistently each approach is defined, where references can be found in USAID policy, guidance or other key documents, who within USAID is responsible for tracking use of the approach, and how well articulated is the theory of change related to the approach (including the ‘so what’/outcomes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Suggested Areas of Inquiry (Actual in Bold) | • How is each Approach defined? By whom? Is this definition consistent/agreed or contested?  
• Who is intended to implement the Approach, and how?  
• What are the intended inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the Approach?  
• What should be different about Mission operations, programming, or development outcomes because the Approach is operationalized?  
• What are the risks and rewards to USAID of this Approach? To participants/stakeholders beyond USAID?  
• How is the Approach meant to foster sustainable development? To meaningfully engage marginalized/underrepresented groups?  
• What policies, guidance, training, support, or other capacity building have been provided on each Approach to those who must implement them? |
## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

| Data Sources/Study Participants | * Approach Owners in Washington  
* Documents reviewed: |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  | • USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance  
• Acquisition and Assistance Strategy  
• Private Sector Engagement Policy  
• Private Sector Engagement Evaluation & Learning Plan  
• Self-Reliance Learning Agenda X CDCS Questions Crosswalk Document  
• FAQs: Putting the PSE Policy into Practice & PSE Plans  
• 6 Ways We Engage the Private Sector  
• STIP Public Goods Study  
• Redefining our Relationships with Partner Governments  
• Summary of Support to Self-Reliance Learning Agenda Q8: Co-Creation  
• Self-Reliance Learning Agenda Q8 USAID Co-Creation Landscape: Documentation of Definitional Sources of USAID Co-Creation  
• Co-Creation Field Guide  
• Collaborative Activity Redesign: Putting CLA in Practice  
• Co-Creating MEL Plans  
• NPI Website  
• EPPR Power Points Sept. and July 2020  
• Synthesis and Lessons Learned from Pilot NPI Action Plans  
• Recommendations on NPI Action Plan Guidance  
• EPPR External Listening Tour Summary Report  
• Partnerships Incubator Guidance for Reviewing Action Plans for the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI)  
• DMD Workshop- Insights and Key Takeaways  
• Integrated Programming Blog by Tony Pryor  
• Consolidated Resources on Listening to and Engaging with Local Stakeholders  
• AID/W Learning Agenda Snapshot Feb 2020  
• Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle in Mission Operations  
• Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples |
### Data Collection Methods
- Desk review of key policy, implementation and evaluation documents, and KIIs with Approach Owners

### Data Analysis
- Comparative Analysis

### Outputs
- The creation of notional ToCs for Integrated Programming and Convening Power - see slides 19 and 21 of 3/9/21 Slide Deck
- Presentation on findings related to question 1 and it's sub-questions. See link below.

### Dissemination/ Uptake
- 3/9/21 Initial Question 1 findings session with study Steering Group - slides
- 3/21 Distribution and presentations to other approach owners not part of the Steering Group - Co-Creation, NPI, Integrated Programming and Convening Power.

### Timeline & Key Milestones
- Desk review was conducted January/Feb. 2021. Presentation of findings in March.

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**Research Question 2.** How do Missions understand and practice approaches to convening power, new and underutilized partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation? [from paper to practice]

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### LEARNING USE CASES

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<tr>
<th>In order to (LEARNING OUTCOME), (state the desired decision point or behavior the learning should inform)</th>
<th>Utilize these approaches</th>
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<th>we think (USER), (target individual/group whose behavior or decisions the learning should inform)</th>
<th>Potential USAID Mission staff users of these approaches</th>
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<tr>
<th>wants/ needs to know (FINDINGS &amp; CONCLUSIONS), (evidence needed to inform decision or inspire behavior)</th>
<th>How each approach is understood and implemented, and why it may be helpful to their work ['real' approach] Whether/ why this way of working is 'worth it'—value-add? Risk-reward?</th>
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<td>Suggested Areas of Inquiry</td>
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<td>(Actual in Bold)</td>
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<td>• How is each Approach understood? Is this generally consistent with how the Approach is defined in policy and guidance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How is each Approach implemented? By whom? Is implementation consistent across instances or contexts? Is this generally consistent with how the Approach is meant to be operationalized, according to policy and guidance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What policies, guidance, training, support, or other capacity building have been received on each Approach by those who must implement them?</td>
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<td>• What are the planned and actual inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the Approach?</td>
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<td>• What are the perceived differences in Mission operations, programming, or development outcomes because the Approach has been operationalized?</td>
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<td>• What are the risks and rewards to USAID of this Approach? To participants/ stakeholders beyond USAID?</td>
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<td>• What difference does the approach make to meaningful engagement of marginalized/ underrepresented groups? To fostering sustainable development?</td>
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<td>• What combinations of these Approaches appear to be most common, and why?</td>
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<tr>
<th>RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</th>
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**Data Sources/ Study Participants**

For sample of 21 Missions (Missions listed below)

* Written surveys completed by Program Office
* Review of CDCS, NPI Action Plans and other key documents provided by Program Officers
* Interviews with Program Officers
  * El Salvador/ Central America
  * Guatemala
  * Colombia
  * Georgia
  * Paraguay
  * Guinea & Sierra Leone
  * Morocco
  * Sahel Regional
  * Nigeria
  * Tunisia
| Data Sources/ Study Participants (Cont’) | • Libya/MER  
• Malawi  
• Zambia  
• Zimbabwe  
• Jordan  
• Kenya  
• Pakistan  
• Bangladesh  
• Kyrgyz Republic  
• Cambodia  
• Indonesia |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>Key informant interviews, survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>Comparative Analysis (across missions and between approaches)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Outputs                                | • Small group discussions/presentations with Approach Owners: NPI, Co-Creation, Integrated Programming and Convening Power.  
• Development of areas for further inquiry during the second data collection phase (link)  
• When/ where/ how will we hear about initial findings related to Question 2 areas of inquiry? (i.e. what did we learn from Program Officers via the survey and KIIs?) |
| Dissemination/ Uptake                  | • Presentation to the Steering Group  
• Small group discussions with Approach Owners |
| Timeline & Key Milestones              | • Surveys were circulated in February 2021,  
• Interviews and document review conducted between March and May 2021.  
• Pause and Reflection exercise May-June 2021  
• Steering Group presentation June 2021 |
**Research Question 3.** What enabling conditions are needed in order to better implement approaches to convening power, new and underutilized partnerships, integrated programming, and co-creation?

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<th>LEARNING USE CASES</th>
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<td><strong>In order to</strong></td>
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<td><strong>(LEARNING OUTCOME)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(state the desired decision point or behavior the learning should inform)</em></td>
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| we think **(USER)** | Owners’ of approaches + ‘Owners’ of key barriers & enablers |
| *(target individual/ group whose behavior or decisions the learning should inform)* | |

| wants/ needs to know **(FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS).** | What is needed to understand how best to utilize the approaches, i.e., apply in appropriate circumstances appropriate and overcome barriers to effective utilization |
| *(evidence needed to inform decision or inspire behavior)* | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Areas of Inquiry <strong>(Actual in bold)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What enables (i.e. supports motivation, opportunity, ability to engage in) shifts to these Approaches—individually and/or in combination—and how can this be strengthened? By whom?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What poses barriers to shifts to these Approaches—individually and/or in combination?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Which marginalized/ underrepresented groups are left out by using these Approaches, and how can we best engage them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What efforts and incentives are needed to strengthen enablers and reduce barriers? What new - or changes to existing - policy/ definitions, guidance, training, mentoring, and other skill-building efforts are needed?</td>
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<tr>
<th>RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data Sources/ Study Participants</strong></td>
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Selected missions all have experience with the four approaches and have implemented them to varying degrees and with varying success. Further study of these six missions will thus provide insights into the barriers that missions face, in addition to the contextual factors that may facilitate implementation and positive outcomes.

Technical Officers in each mission are best informed regarding the implementation of approaches, and can thus provide important insights regarding technical barriers and enabling factors. The Contracting Officers are best positioned to shed light on the procurement obstacles and what steps have been taken to address them in the specific context of a field program. Data from these sources across six missions will complement the initial interviews with Program Officers, adding greater detail relevant to identifying enabling factors, barriers, and incentives.

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<tr>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
<th>Key Informant Interviews, Workshops</th>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis &amp; Methodologies</td>
<td>Comparative Analysis</td>
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<td>The research team will identify implementation attempts for each approach that were more and less successful. “Success” in this case will be defined by the interviewees, and researchers will probe why they thought it was successful, asking for any metrics of success the respondents might be able to provide. The researchers will conduct comparisons to determine why and to pinpoint the enabling factors in successful efforts and the barriers that arose in both successful and not successful cases, and will explore barriers in successful cases and enablers in less successful instances. The research team will note how ‘success’ was defined and measured for each: if there was a common definition/ measure for success across these, or are they being judged on different merits).</td>
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<td>In addition, the research team will conduct an intra-case comparative analysis, in which one mission employed (or attempted to employ) an approach on multiple occasions, once with success and once without success. Again, success will be defined by the interviewee. The researchers will draw data from informants to understand why outcomes differed within this mission. This research methodology holds constant factors that may differ across missions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preliminary case selection: TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Final Report:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Q3 methods, finding, conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Products related to Q3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dissemination/ Uptake | Presentation to Steering Group- Jan. 27  
|                       | Presentation to other USAID leadership - TBD  
|                       | Dissemination of final report and learning products to Approach Owners and Implementers |
| Timeline & Key Milestones | • Interviews in September-October  
|                          | • Workshop December  
|                          | • Final Report and learning products submitted in January |