

# 2022

# Local Works Guidance

---

Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation  
Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub



[localworks@usaid.gov](mailto:localworks@usaid.gov)



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW	2
2. PRINCIPLES	4
3. PRIORITY LEARNING AREAS	6
4. THE OPPORTUNITY	10
Local Works Programming Options	
5. APPLICATION GUIDELINES	15
Letter of Interest Evaluation Criteria	
The Challenge	
Locally Led Development Approach	
Overcoming Operational Barriers to Locally Led Development	
Contribution to Learning about the Locally Led	
Development Priority Areas	
Feasibility	
6. CONSULTATION PROCESS	22
7. DECISION PROCESS	22
8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	22
9. 2022 TIMELINE	23



*If we truly want to make aid inclusive, **local voices** need to be at the center of everything we do... we've got to approach this work with **intention** and **humility**... the **entire development community** needs to interrogate the **traditional power dynamics of donor-driven development** and look for ways to amplify the local voices of those who too often have been **left out** of the conversation."*

- Administrator Samantha Power



## I. OVERVIEW

To support more equitable and inclusive local leadership of development, to advance the Agency’s localization agenda, and to achieve sustainable outcomes, USAID is shifting its relationships with local development actors. Local actors—individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, governments—are increasingly setting their own development agendas, developing solutions, and bringing the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality. This shift puts local contexts, aspirations, dynamics, organizations, and change agents at the center of our programming.

Since 2015, USAID’s Local Works program has been at the forefront of [locally led development](#), enhancing the Agency’s ability to empower local actors to lead their own development. Local Works provides technical support and flexible funds to Missions to expand and deepen relationships with local actors throughout the Program Cycle, to invest in the ability of local actors to sustainably resolve development challenges, and to facilitate learning that benefits the whole Agency.

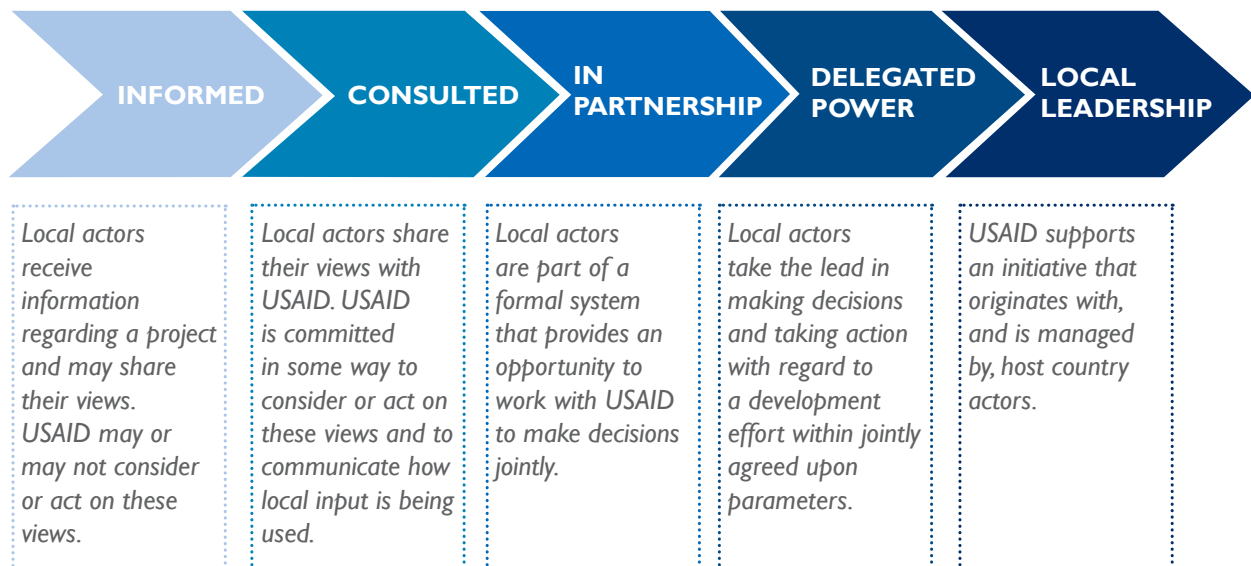
[The Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub](#) in USAID’s [Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation](#) (DDI/LFT) provides funding and works with Missions to carry out locally led development through the Local Works program. Local Works has five-year discretionary funds, which provide Missions more time and greater freedom to pursue locally led programming and experiment with innovative operational approaches that may be challenging under typical institutional constraints, all in order to move along the Locally Led Development Spectrum towards greater local leadership:



### DDI/LFT HUB

The Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub (LFT) is strengthening USAID's ability to partner with nontraditional and diverse actors, including local, faith-based, and community organizations; schools and hospitals; minority-serving institutions; foundations; diaspora communities; cooperatives; and volunteer organizations.

## What do we mean by locally led development?





## LOCAL WORKS AT A GLANCE

Open to all USAID Missions

### Facilitated by:

USAID Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub

### Three Programming Options:

Choose the option(s) most appropriate for your Mission, details on page 11

### 2022 Global Budget:

\$50 million in five-year funds that may be used in any sector

### Letters of Interest Due:

5pm ET on March 3, 2023

### Questions?

[localworks@usaid.gov](mailto:localworks@usaid.gov)

## CONSIDER THE “HOW” IN YOUR PROPOSED APPROACH

How could your Mission:

- Shift relationships from being driven by international donor funds and priorities to ones driven, identified, and set by local priorities;
- Shift leadership and decision-making to local actors and organizations;
- Facilitate listening, feedback, and downward accountability among USAID, its local partners, and the constituents they serve;
- Shift from a process of post-design consultation with local actors to empowering local actors to set the agenda and identify solutions;
- Strengthen local capacity to achieve development outcomes and access technical support through local actors, networks, and partners;
- Promote long-term sustainability of local systems; and,
- Transition from partnerships with international actors to partnerships with local actors.

With Local Works funds, Missions can:

- Build strong relationships and promote collaboration with and among local actors;
- Empower networks of local actors to initiate and lead development efforts;
- Elevate a wide variety of local and marginalized voices to better understand needs and capacities;
- Proactively look for opportunities to engage more equitably, increase diversity, and include a wider range of local actors and communities in programming;
- Launch **new** programming with local partners that test approaches to increase local leadership;
- Adapt **existing** programming to increase local leadership;
- Apply participatory systems approaches and processes to enable local actors to achieve sustainable outcomes;
- Develop and test flexible approaches to acquisition and assistance to facilitate work with local and nontraditional partners;
- Troubleshoot management and operational challenges associated with locally led development through creative solutions (e.g., staffing, language, communications and outreach, events that effectively engage new prospective partners, and more);
- Utilize Local Works flexibilities to strengthen local humanitarian actors who are responding to complex and often unpredictable crises, such as COVID-19, climate change, conflict, closing political space, etc.; and,
- Advance Agency priorities and initiatives (e.g. Localization and the New Partners Initiative).



## 2. PRINCIPLES

Local Works is aligned with the [USAID Policy Framework](#), the [Local Systems Framework](#), the [5Rs Framework in the Program Cycle](#), the [Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#) and [ADS 201 “Program Cycle Operational Policy,”](#) all of which promote sustainability through local ownership, resilience, and innovation. The Local Works [legislation](#) and five-year discretionary funding provide a significant amount of flexibility

unavailable to most other programs. This, combined with the technical support provided by the Local Works team in DC, creates a supportive enabling environment for participating Missions to explore a wide range of innovative and experimental approaches for locally led development. Missions are encouraged to design and implement a Local Works program according to the following principles:



Here is more detail on each principle:

**1. Listen to Local Actors.** With humility, actively listen to people, communities, faith groups, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the host country government. Give special attention to centering local marginalized populations, including women and girls, youth, LGBTQIA+ people, and indigenous groups. Create mutually beneficial feedback loops between USAID and local actors to learn and adapt together.

**2. Understand Local Systems.** Identify key local actors, understand their relationships and interdependencies, and support them in developing and leading their own development solutions that positively transform systems. Recognize the roles that donor organizations like USAID play in shaping local systems and development outcomes, including unexpected or unintended outcomes. Respect and work to strengthen existing positive networks and relationships by building upon local initiatives, ideas, resources, and capacity.



## USAID/BURMA: UNDERSTAND LOCAL SYSTEMS

In Burma's Kachin State, a highly complex heroin epidemic is raging. Although it was identified as a development concern, previous USAID funding had been limited to earmarked health sector funding. Local Works funding allowed USAID/Burma to take a multi-sector systems approach to the problem. After significant time listening to local actors in Kachin State, the Mission formed a local advisory committee of well-respected leaders. USAID/Burma then hosted a three-day Whole System in the Room (WSR) workshop where more than 110 participants from across sectors identified common priorities in addressing the heroin epidemic. These priorities are informing USAID's first direct awards to local organizations in Kachin State.

3. **Think Long-Term.** It takes time to understand local systems, build relationships, and support enduring positive systemic change. Take the time to understand power dynamics among local actors, understand the root causes of development challenges, engage in meaningful local co-creation processes, and focus on achieving long-term, sustainable outcomes.
4. **Support Local Leadership.** Shift priority-setting, decision-making, leadership, and power to local actors. Support local actors in identifying, achieving, and measuring their own priorities. Consistent with the [Acquisition and Assistance Strategy](#), align with local priorities, leverage local resources, and increase locally led implementation to sustain results over time.
5. **Experiment, Learn, and Share.** Consistent with USAID's [Risk-Appetite Statement](#), and commitment to [Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting](#), take thoughtful programmatic risks and experiment with innovative approaches. Measure what matters to local actors - and measure whether and how locally led collaboration results in systemic change, including unexpected outcomes. Share learning so that the Agency, other donors, partner organizations, and local actors all benefit from our investments.
6. **Embrace Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.** "Nothing about us, without us." To the greatest extent possible, ensure the full spectrum of knowledge, neurodiversity, and experiences of people of all ages, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as other marginalized communities are included and centered in decision-making and programming that affects them. People with diverse, intersectional identities are instrumental in the holistic transformation of local systems and have the power to drive systems change to produce and sustain new paradigms and outcomes.

## STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS SUSTAINING RESULTS

Local Works supports programs that strengthen the performance of local actors and local systems to achieve and sustain measurable results. This is not just about building an individual organization's ability to receive and manage U.S. funding directly, but rather strengthening the system of local institutions and actors to interact and function effectively to drive positive systemic change.



### USAID/MOROCCO: SUPPORTING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

In Morocco, although many civil society organizations (CSOs) function as brokers between citizens and the government, they have still lacked the ability to advance systemic change. In response, through Local Works, USAID/Morocco made direct awards to five key local CSOs and supported them to become capacity development “go-to” centers for 1,000 local organizations in their networks. As a result, the CSOs strengthened organizations’ capacities to advocate for change, listen to constituents, and mobilize local resources for local needs.



### USAID/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC/ HAITI BORDER REGION: WHOLE SYSTEM IN THE ROOM

Rather than design a border program in-house, USAID/DR utilized an approach that combined listening tours, system mapping/analysis and Whole System in the Room (WSR) to bring together all local actors (national and local government, communities, private sector, community leaders, local organizations) to develop a shared vision on the scope of DR/ Haiti programming. The result was that a diversity of actors bought into the vision, and activities leveraged resources from the private sector. Together, local actors have created advisory committees to mobilize local resources for water system maintenance, and have trained youth in best practices to ensure investments are sustainable and extend beyond the life of the intervention.

## 3. PRIORITY LEARNING AREAS

Local Works is a learning program. Local Works Missions contribute to ongoing learning on these and other areas as part of the Research and Learning Agenda for Locally Led Development, through which DDI/LFT facilitates knowledge capture, exchange, and learning among Missions and the wider locally led development community. We encourage Missions to consider these priority learning areas carefully and discuss how proposed approaches will incorporate and increase our collective expertise and capability in these areas.

While the following list of priority areas is not exhaustive or definitive, Mission submissions that seek to address challenges across many of these areas will be viewed favorably. That said, we recognize that not every priority will be relevant to each submission; therefore, Mission submissions are not required to address every one. Rather, letters of interest (LOIs) must respond strategically to the local context, local priorities, the Mission operating environment, and potential ways in which development challenges may be addressed by empowering local actors.

- **Acquisition and assistance**, ranging from reducing management burden (for both USAID and local awardees) and barriers to entry for new and local partners, to testing and learning from mechanisms that might be more responsive to changing needs. This might include streamlined application processes, modular/iterative contracting, fixed amount awards, transition awards, renewal awards, pay-for-results models, simplified grants, public-private partnerships, prizes, or other approaches that creatively expand local partnerships while meeting compliance requirements. This includes having the flexibility and risk appetite at the Mission to utilize other than full-and-open competition for the awarding of ideas stemming from robust local engagement and analysis.



- **Collaboration and co-creation throughout the Program Cycle** to ensure local ideas and priorities, not donor ideas and priorities, lead the way. Collaboration and co-creation is an ongoing process, not limited to a finite period after a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is released. Before award, this could mean engaging with local stakeholders prior to issuing a NOFO to understand local priorities and to develop a shared vision. It could also mean exploring options other than full-and-open competition in assistance (e.g. restricted eligibility and sole source awards) that enable nimble and deep collaboration with partners. Examples of eligible partners include those with strong local credibility and trust and those willing to work closely with local communities to develop programs reflecting locally defined development agendas. This can also include shaping awards to enable Pause and Reflect opportunities, ongoing multi-stakeholder collaboration throughout implementation to make adjustments based on learning and shifting realities, and ensuring that all aspects of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) are co-created to reflect local accountability and learning priorities.
- **Feedback mechanisms** that improve the flow of information among local constituents,

partners, and USAID to improve program effectiveness and to strengthen accountability to local constituents for achieving and sustaining results. This includes iteratively incorporating local voices and feedback throughout the Program Cycle – maximizing local involvement in conceptualization, design, implementation, and learning – and being transparent in how collected information is used and shared.

- **Participatory systems-based analytical approaches**, which allow us to better understand the complex environments in which we operate and the role USAID plays (or should play) in local systems. Working with and through local systems enables us to better understand complex contextual dynamics that produce development outcomes. This helps us identify strategic entry points for interventions that foster transformative and sustained change in those outcomes. We can strengthen system performance by developing local capacities, deepening interrelationships between local actors, improving equity, and aligning the incentives that shape the system.
- **Participatory decision-making**, which builds on system-based approaches and includes locally led priority-setting, collaborative design, and other means of shifting decision-making power and control to local actors and ensuring inclusive local leadership. This requires shifting from the traditional model where USAID and donors define the problems and their solutions to one where priority-setting, decision making, leadership, and power are led by local actors.



### LOCAL WORKS TOOLBOX

DDI/LFT has put together a [Toolbox](#) of resources, examples, tools, and guidance on how to support locally led development at USAID. This resource is always expanding as participating Missions test new approaches.





- **Strengthening local networks**, which includes understanding and supporting existing and emerging networks of local actors, supporting the work of local organizations, market facilitation, collective action, collective impact, and other demand-driven approaches to connecting local needs with local resources. This shifts away from the model in which USAID, other donors, and external consultants are brought in to fill a technical need, and toward a model that taps into local knowledge and networks to identify and carry out development solutions.
- **Mobilizing local resources** as part of tapping into local networks and assets, strengthening a local system, and contributing to sustainability of outcomes. This includes financial resources in the form of community philanthropy and partnerships that leverage resources from the local private sector, civil society, academia, and other actors. It also includes in-kind resources in the form of local actors' time, skills, and spaces. Investment of local resources is foundational to shift from donor leadership to local leadership.
- **Locally led approaches to design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning** that prioritize local definitions of success and enable USAID to enhance local actors' role in collecting, managing, and using data and learning related to the development process and the sustainability of results achieved. In monitoring efforts, this includes shifting away from indicator data such as '# of people trained' or 'X number of Y provided,' and toward an approach that measures progress toward local priorities. This means tracking gains in organizational capacity and performance, measuring meaningful inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups (not just counting the number of participants from identified groups), and considering



### USAID/GUINEA: PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

Participatory decision-making builds on system-based approaches and includes locally led priority-setting, collaborative design, and other means of shifting decision-making power and control to local actors and ensuring inclusive local leadership. USAID/Guinea Local Works successfully implemented this by competitively selecting approximately 30 Guinean youth to form a Youth Advisory Committee. This group serves as USAID's partner in identifying the problems surrounding rural youth unemployment, and the Mission is following their lead to determine the priorities to be highlighted in an upcoming solicitation.



### USAID/NORTH MACEDONIA: MOBILIZING LOCAL RESOURCES

In North Macedonia, Local Works supports multiple local resource organizations (LROs) that focus on different constituencies, including the Roma population. By supporting these LROs in achieving their objectives, USAID is able to leverage the existing relationships of trust these organizations have within their target communities. At the same time, USAID support enables these LROs to expand their networks and diversify their programming – for example, a Local Works award is enabling an organization focused on the Roma community to strengthen their connections with Roma university alumni as a way to help Roma youth pursue higher education.



## USAID/VIETNAM: COLLECTIVE ACTION MODELS

In Vietnam, local partners are improving environmental health by reducing air, water, and plastics pollution. These partners are using a collective action approach to encourage local NGOs and the private sector to work together with the Government to address development priorities. The success of these efforts lies in the ability of backbone organizations to mobilize the efforts of diverse local actors to collaborate around shared common concerns. By combining their efforts, local networks can own and lead their own development.



## USAID/NEPAL: FLEXIBILITY

USAID/Nepal responded to COVID-19 stressors by supporting a series of awards. However, processing multiple, co-creation awards seemed daunting. Adapting resources from the wider Local Works Community of Practice, the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA) experimented with a streamlined Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) review process, using simplified TEC review memos in Google Docs. With this innovation, the initial TEC memos were finished within the respective one hour TEC meetings.

sustainability of outcomes. It also means using qualitative data to track the way we do development, like shared visioning or partnerships. In evaluation, this includes recognizing and seeking out local evaluation expertise, and pursuing participatory approaches to evaluation with local stakeholders. And in learning, this includes fostering Pause and Reflect opportunities to take stock of how locally led a given initiative is, and identifying and implementing key adaptations to make our work more locally led.

- **Flexibility in Mission operations**, which could include anything from experimenting with adaptive management techniques to exploring novel approaches to Mission organization, the elimination of unnecessary procedures, and staff incentives to better support locally defined efforts. Local Works funds, which can be re-programmed to any sector, can also enable cross-Mission management and leadership and avoid siloed programming.
- **Locally led development in non-permissive environments**, which includes better understanding how local actors adaptively manage and find creative ways of advancing local humanitarian and development objectives in complex environments where uncertainty, instability, inaccessibility, or insecurity constrain USAID's ability to operate safely, openly, and effectively. Much can be learned from the experience of local actors who led COVID-19 response and recovery work, particularly in supporting highly marginalized people and communities.



## 4. THE OPPORTUNITY

Local Works was launched in 2015 in response to [legislation](#) enacted by Congress to integrate locally led development practices into Agency operations and programs. Since then, Local Works has held an annual competition among USAID Missions to support programming that embraces the Local Works principles.

Through the submission of a Letter of Interest (LOI), and depending on the desired programming options, Missions may apply for a total funding amount ranging from approximately \$1 million to \$10 million, which will include funds to support awards and funds to support management of Local Works activities by the mission. Missions may award grants and contracts of up to \$2 million each to local, international, and/or U.S.-based organizations that have not received more than \$5 million from USAID in the past five years. These statutory requirements are meant to encourage support for local, new, and nontraditional partners, and awards that are co-created with the partner in the driver's seat.

Local Works awards may be acquisition or assistance and Missions may issue awards by any means allowed by the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS). All solicitations/ NOFOs and awards must be made and managed by the participating Mission. Missions should expect to dedicate a significant level of time and effort to managing partnerships with non-traditional partners under Local Works, and LOIs should include plans to address the increased level of effort required for these partnerships. It is important to note that Local Works awards can be cross-cutting or managed outside of technical sectors and offices.

DDI/LFT transfers funding to Missions in multiple tranches over the life of a Mission's Local Works program. Transfer requests are linked with planned activities in a Mission's Local Works Program Plan to ensure rational alignment of funding with need. When possible, funds will be transferred on a "first-in-first-out" basis: older funds that expire prior to 2026 may be substituted if a Mission is ready to obligate.

Up to 20 percent of Local Works funds globally may be used for program support (including staffing, operating expenses (OE), travel, training, and events). Local Works Missions are strongly encouraged to use Local Works funding to hire or reassign dedicated local staff to lead the program. Local Works staff are happy to discuss options with you at any time. In terms of staff qualifications, technical sector expertise is less important than (1) dedication to locally led development; (2) strong linkages to actors in the local system; (3) the ability and willingness to strengthen the capacity of local organizations through a genuine and equitable partnership; and (4) enthusiasm for facilitating new partners' understanding of any necessary USAID processes. Program design and learning (PD&L) expenses can also be supported using Local Works funds.

The actual amount of program support funding used will vary from Mission to Mission. The specific amount of total funding available to each selected Mission will be based on the size and scope of the proposed activities and the needs of each Mission.

**NEW THIS YEAR!****Local Works Programming Options**

Missions interested in Local Works may choose from **three options**:

- 1. Full Local Works Portfolio**
- 2. Local Capacity Strengthening**
- 3. Tools & Approaches**

**Missions may choose one or more of these options. Please note that Option 1 is already inclusive of Option 3.**

**I. Option 1: Full Local Works Portfolio:**

The “traditional Local Works approach,” which consists of funding for locally led design, award, implementation, and MEL and is inclusive of the tools and approaches outlined under Option 3 (below). Successful applications for this option will be responsive to the priorities outlined in Section 3 and the Criteria in section 5 of this guidance. While Missions are not required to propose a fully designed activity or set of activities for Local Works, Missions are invited to propose an approach that increases the understanding of local development priorities, the local systems they are embedded in, and how an approach to strengthen the local ability to resolve development challenges will be co-created with local actors. Missions may propose anything from a nascent concept articulating a challenge or opportunity that they want to address to a more fully fleshed-out proposal, although the latter must reflect locally-defined priorities and voices.

This is not an opportunity to fund a Mission-conceived and designed idea that will be vetted with local actors for their buy-in. The idea should originate from local actors and advance locally led development. Details

**USAID/ARMENIA:  
LETTER OF INTEREST**

Following a series of government decentralization reforms beginning in 2015, concerns grew that while the reforms were being taken to empower local communities, the reality has been that its a fairly centrally driven process, with limited space for community leadership. Thus, USAID/Armenia applied to the Local Works program as an opportunity to further examine and address this issue, and described in their Letter of Interest (LOI) how they would engage local actors to learn more, and follow those actors’ lead, in increasing capacity for citizen-led development. Since joining LW, USAID/Armenia has conducted a multi-year learning and local engagement process to fully understand the range of local priorities and contexts, which has included desk research, community engagement, and collaborative program design workshops to develop a shared framework and vision for the country’s Local Works program amongst community members, NGOs, and government representatives.

of how the Mission chose the proposed programming is highly encouraged to be included in the LOI. Local Works envisions supporting a wide range of funding levels. A Mission may choose to focus on a discrete issue and request a modest amount of funding – or it may choose to tackle a broad portfolio of challenges through a number of new awards, requiring more funding.



Missions may also choose to adapt a range of existing activities to be more locally led. For example, a Mission wishing to increase inputs from indigenous communities in the priority-setting, design, implementation, and measurement of an existing Mission portfolio may use Local Works funds to establish permanent Mission advisory committees with indigenous community representatives who are consulted throughout the program cycle, including during Mission strategic planning.

A Local Works activity or set of activities can support the Mission Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), and may be integrated into an existing project but it is not a requirement. Since the focus is to support local needs, a Local Works activity may stand alone outside of the Mission strategy to address previously unaddressed local priorities, initiate programming in a new region, pilot activities to inform a new Mission strategy, etc.

## 2. Option 2: Local Capacity Strengthening:

Funding and technical assistance for the selected Mission to design and implement a locally led capacity strengthening approach. The approach should connect local actors that have demand for specific areas of capacity strengthening and performance improvement, with local actors able to provide capacity strengthening support in these areas. Local Works requires a focus on capacity strengthening priorities that are self-defined by the participating individuals, organizations, networks and systems which are identified as critical for achieving locally valued development outcomes. Strengthening local capacity to comply with USAID requirements (e.g., to receive and manage USAID funding)

may also be considered, but is of secondary importance and relevant only when prioritized by participants (**see box, “Strengthening Systems, Sustaining Results” on page 5**).

USAID should approach every context with the assumption that local actors have capacity. Local Works has documented evidence over the years that (1) local organizations have identified and know what areas need strengthening and (2) would prefer to be able to self-select the organizations/firms that provide capacity strengthening support to them. The primary goal of capacity strengthening should be on local ability to achieve local development priorities – ability to comply with donor requirements should only be a focus when needed to achieve this primary goal. Effective capacity strengthening programming requires a tailored approach, resources, and longer time horizons. Sustained progress is more likely to be attained when capacity strengthening is understood as a strategic and intentional programmatic approach, in which strengthening the capacity of key actors contributes to sustainable change at the system level.

While specific capacity strengthening approaches will differ depending on context, Local Works encourages a local capacity marketplace approach, where USAID makes an award to a local organization able to support, sustain, and strengthen a broader network of local organizations - with the goal of advancing the local ability to meet locally defined priorities sustainably, even after external donor funding ends. **A local capacity strengthening partner is not expected to possess the full range of capacities to do everything themselves.**



Instead, successful applicants are expected to be strong and credible facilitators, drawing on strong interpersonal, networking, and advocacy skills to connect organizations in need of support with others able to provide support, nurture coalitions based on shared interests, provide strategic sub-awards, and identify and mobilize financial resources to maintain operations beyond the project life.

**3. Option 3: Tools and Approaches:** This is an opportunity to request technical assistance and funding to employ a specific tool or approach to advance locally led development within a specific activity or initiative that will benefit both the Mission and the Agency. There are [many tools and approaches](#) for program design and implementation that are well suited to identifying local priorities and solutions, and engaging local actors to implement, assess, and learn from them. This includes (but is far from limited to!) listening, stakeholder analysis, human centered design processes, and systems approaches such as collective action and ‘Whole System in the Room.’ For example, a listening program can

target a specific community to hear diverse voices. A set of systems mapping exercises can reveal the underlying and interrelated factors and actors that affect the development challenge you are addressing. The Local Works team can help identify appropriate methods and support the Mission in implementing them.

In all three options, five-year funds remove traditional pipeline and political pressures to program quickly and allow the time necessary for thoughtful analysis, design, and relationship building. Five-year funds also provide Missions with time for iterative design processes and adaptive management during implementation. Local Works Missions are highly encouraged to spend the first year (or longer) of the program listening to local actors, understanding local priorities and systems, and designing approaches in close collaboration with local actors before making awards.

OPTIONS	FULL LW PORTFOLIO	LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING	TOOLS AND APPROACHES
FUNDING AMOUNT:	\$\$\$	\$-\$\$	\$-\$\$
TIMELINE:	5+ YEARS	1-3 YEARS	1-3 YEARS
OVERALL ESTIMATED LEVEL OF EFFORT	HIGHER	MEDIUM	LOWER

HIGHEST TO LOWEST

# Do you want to change the way your Mission does development to be more locally led?

- ▶ If so, consider these questions to determine which Local Works option could be right for your Mission!

## 1. Mission Objectives

What are your objectives?

- A** Launch new programming or expand in a new region or sector in a manner led by local actors.
- B** Strengthen local capacity to implement programs, receive USAID funding, or amplify or scale development outcomes.
- C** Conduct research on local priorities and leverage local knowledge to inform the Mission's strategy or program designs.

## 2. External Context

We have seen successful direct partnerships with local actors in contexts with organizations that have a high level of readiness to receive donor funds, and those without. Still, the level of local organizational capacity impacts the level of Mission effort needed to identify potential local partners, make awards, and manage those awards. What's the situation in your Mission and context?

- A** We are committed to direct local partnerships, and will work to strengthen local organizations—both in terms of readiness to receive donor funds and to achieve development goals.
- B** We see opportunities to expand our direct engagement with the local system through investing in strengthening local capacity.
- C** We're not sure what local capacity exists, and want to start by learning more about the local system and hearing more local voices.

## 3. Mission Bandwidth

Shifting programs to be more locally led requires intentional effort in the beginning for more sustainable, locally owned results. Describe your Mission's ability to commit staff time to implement the Local Works approach.

- A** We plan to use LW funds to hire and/or dedicate significant staff time (especially FSNs) across offices to carry out this effort over the years ahead.
- B/C** We want to dedicate staff time (especially of FSNs) to carry out a specific approach, and want targeted technical or financial support to use a specific locally led tool or approach in a time bound manner.

## 4. Mission Buy-In

Shifting the way we work requires buy-in beyond the technical team. OAA, OFM, and the Program Office must support the often longer processes of working with local actors. What description best fits your Mission's overall internal context to be able to adapt to partnering directly with local actors, or to partner in a more locally led way?

- A** Leadership, support offices, and technical offices are enthusiastic about including local actors.
- B** Some staff believe it's too hard to work with local actors who may be unprepared to partner directly.
- C** We have some champions to lead locally led development

## If you answered mostly...

### **A** OPTION 1: FULL PORTFOLIO

Includes funding and technical assistance for locally led design, award, implementation, and MEL. This may include launching new activities, or adapting existing activities to be more locally led. This option is inclusive of all activities in options B and C.

### **B** OPTION 2: CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Includes funding and technical assistance to design and implement a locally led capacity strengthening approach. This approach must focus on capacity development priorities that are self-defined by the participating organizations, and which are identified as critical for achieving locally-valued development outcomes.

### **C** OPTION 3: LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

Includes funding and technical assistance for a specific tool or approach to advance locally led development within a specific activity that will benefit both the Mission and the Agency. Examples include: listening, stakeholder analysis, human centered design processes, and systems approaches like collective action and 'Whole System in the Room.'



## 5. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Local Works invites Missions that are committed to advancing locally led development to submit a LOI by March 3, 2023. The LOI provides a basis for Missions and the Local Works team to discuss basic principles and potential approaches for a long-term Local Works partnership.

### LOI Instructions and Format

- Choose which option you are applying for (see “Local Works Programming Options”). If you wish to apply for a combination of more than one option, such as Option 1 (Full Local Works Portfolio) and Option 2 (Local Capacity Strengthening) or Option 2 and Option 3, (Tools and Approaches), please ensure that your LOI is responsive to the criteria for both options. Option 1 (Full Local Works Portfolio) is already inclusive of Option 3 (Tools and Approaches), so that combination is not necessary.
- LOIs must be no more than five pages. For LOIs responding to two options, the limit is seven pages.
- Overview - a one paragraph summary of the LOI, including the chosen option(s) being applied for. The overview will not be evaluated and does not count towards the page limit.
- Required Components:
  - a. The Challenge
  - b. Locally Led Development Approach
  - c. Operational Innovation to Support Locally Led Development
  - d. Contribution to Learning about Locally Led Development - see Priority Areas, Section 3
  - e. Feasibility
- The evaluation criteria for each option can be found in the next section.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO MISSIONS

As part of its ongoing engagement with selected Missions, DDI/LFT will provide Option 1 Missions with the following: (please note for Options 2 and 3 the support will be more limited):

- Lead Mission staff through an onboarding process
- Assign a primary, alternate, MEL, and communications POC for each Mission
- Guide Mission staff in developing a learning agenda, which will guide initial program design
- Advise Missions on analysis and design options
- Check in with the Mission team on a regular basis, typically bi-weekly or monthly
- Guide Missions through the locally led development spectrum (see page 3) and Local Works requirements, principles, and legislation.
- Provide strategic technical support as needed through TDYs, connections to Agency and external contacts and resources, training, facilitation, and other support as agreed
- Work with the offices at the Mission (financial, assistance and acquisition, program, etc.) to share flexible approaches (eg. co-creation, fixed amount awards) and guide them through this shift in development programming
- Facilitate funds transfers to Missions
- Ensure compliance with Congressional legislation and intent, including that programming is responding to and partnering with local actors and shifting the power from USAID to the local system
- Capture learning to strengthen the global Local Works Community of Practice and USAID’s ability to support locally led development
- Share success stories, case studies, and lessons learned with Congress and other leaders to elevate Mission and program visibility.





## LETTER OF INTEREST CRITERIA FOR OPTION 1: FULL LOCAL WORKS PORTFOLIO

Successful LOIs will address the following, equally weighted, components in no more than five pages:

### A. The Challenge

Thinking about the broader system, what is the development or humanitarian challenge being addressed, and how could this challenge be transformed through local ownership and leadership? How might the current system change so that outcomes achieved can be sustained and future challenges addressed by local actors without foreign assistance? Explain how the challenge reflects locally articulated development needs and priorities, especially for highly marginalized populations.

- **Criteria:** LOI articulates a specific development or humanitarian challenge(s) that the Mission will address through Local Works and presents evidence that this challenge reflects local priorities. Further, it articulates why the challenge is best addressed through a locally led solution and how local ownership and leadership would affect sustainability of outcomes.

### B. Locally Led Development Approach

Reflecting on the principles (Section 2) and priority areas (Section 3) described in this guidance, explain your proposed approach(es), and how they will be designed to advance locally led and sustained development. LOIs may reflect on past efforts, successes, and challenges the Mission has experienced in fostering locally led development. Describe how you will engage with existing in-country resources (including but not limited to local expertise, the local private sector, local/national government(s), universities, think

tanks, associations, philanthropy) to bring new ideas and resources to bear on local development priorities. Remember, Missions are not expected to propose a fully designed activity or set of activities for Local Works in the LOI. Instead, Missions are encouraged to discuss the potential steps, types of analyses, and design processes/approaches they anticipate undertaking during the next 5 years with Local Works funding to work towards increased local leadership.

- **Criteria:** LOI proposes an approach or approaches that contribute to the Local Works goals to advance locally led development, localization and enhance the Agency's ability to empower local actors to take the lead in addressing development challenges. The key question is, in what ways is the approach locally led and why is the proposed approach most appropriate?

## TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE?

Missions are not expected to propose a fully designed activity or set of activities for Local Works in the LOI. Instead, Missions are encouraged to discuss the steps, types of analyses, and design processes/approaches they anticipate undertaking with Local Works funding to better understand local priorities and advance local leadership in programming.



### C. Operational Innovation to Support Locally Led Development

Operational and bureaucratic barriers often hinder USAID's ability to work efficiently and effectively in support of locally led development. What are some of the most pressing operational and bureaucratic barriers that challenge the Mission? How will your Mission work differently to make development efforts more locally led and increase USAID's flexibility and capacity to empower local actors to lead their own development? This may include reducing unnecessary internal requirements and exploring creative acquisition and assistance, financial management, communications, facilitation, and reporting approaches that effectively engage local actors in a new way for the Mission. It may also include leadership opportunities for local staff and allowing them the time and flexibility to engage local actors through listening, systems analysis, and relationship building. Technical teams in Missions are especially encouraged to consult with their OAA and OFM teams to discuss potential challenges to working in a more locally led way, and propose ideas for overcoming these challenges in the LOI.

- **Criteria:** LOI identifies internal USAID barriers and proposes creative potential solutions to enable local actors to lead the development process. LOI clearly and thoughtfully articulates why the proposed practices are expected to enable more locally led and sustainable development outcomes as compared to existing operational practice in the Mission.

### D. Contribution to Learning about the Locally Led Development Priority Areas

Describe how your proposed approach will incorporate and increase USAID's (and our

partners') expertise in the priority areas described in section 3 of the guidance. How will this effort build our evidence base for what works and what doesn't, and contribute to Agency-wide learning around locally led development? What specific learning questions do you hope to tackle through your program? You may address the priorities articulated in Section 3, and/or propose new priority areas.

- **Criteria:** LOI responds to Section 3 of the guidance and articulates how proposed approaches will incorporate these (or different) priority areas. LOI also articulates how learning generated through the Mission's Local Works programming, including through failure and iteration, will contribute toward USAID being better able to support locally led development.

### E. Feasibility

Advancing locally led development and managing partnerships with non-traditional and local actors requires a significant level of effort. Identify what resources (human, knowledge, local staff, funding, existing networks, others) the Mission can dedicate to this approach. What additional resources (including hiring new staff with Local Works funds), technical assistance, and other support do you need in order to try this approach? LOIs must consider the enabling context for locally led development, which may include the country context; the Mission's autonomy and commitment to pursue novel and experimental operational and programming approaches; support for the proposed approach across Mission offices including the Front Office; and local security and access considerations. Local Works encourages efforts in challenging environments, but please note likely constraints and potential mitigation approaches.



- **Criteria:** The LOI provides a realistic assessment of the resources available and needed (human, financial, and others) to carry out the proposed approach in the given country context. The proposed approach makes good use of the unique resources available through Local Works. The LOI addresses risks and vulnerabilities and measures the Mission will take to mitigate them. The LOI provides a notional budget broken down by years and type of funds. For example (and to the extent possible, understanding that this will be very notional and subject to change), please provide how much budget you will need each year: 1) for the actual program (e.g. awards for local partners and local capacity strengthening firms); 2) to administer and oversee the program (e.g. to hire staff, fund TDYs, contribute to motorpool, pay for training or retreats, etc.); and 3) program design & learning (e.g. to fund assessments, listening, mapping, workshops, etc).

## LETTER OF INTEREST CRITERIA FOR OPTION 2: LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Successful LOIs will address the following, equally weighted, components in three to five pages:

### A. The Challenge

Thinking about the broader system, what is the development or humanitarian challenge being addressed, and how could this challenge be transformed through a locally led capacity strengthening approach? How might the current system change so that outcomes achieved can be sustained and future challenges addressed by local actors without foreign assistance? Explain

how the challenge reflects locally articulated development needs and priorities, especially for highly marginalized populations.

- **Criteria:** LOI articulates a specific development or humanitarian challenge(s) that the Mission will address through a locally led capacity strengthening approach and presents evidence that this challenge reflects local priorities. Further, it articulates why the challenge is best addressed through a locally led solution and how local ownership and leadership would affect sustainability of outcomes.

### B. Locally Led Development Approach

Reflecting on the principles (Section 2) and priority areas (Section 3) described in this guidance, explain your proposed locally led capacity strengthening approach(es), and how it will be designed to advance locally led and sustained development. LOIs may reflect on past efforts, successes, and challenges the Mission has experienced in fostering locally led development. Describe how you will engage with existing in-country resources (including but not limited to local expertise, the local private sector, local/national government(s), universities, think tanks, associations, philanthropy) to bring new ideas and resources to bear on local development priorities and the planned capacity strengthening approach. Remember, Missions are not expected to propose a fully designed activity or set of activities for Local Works in the LOI. Instead, Missions are encouraged to discuss the potential steps, types of analyses, and design processes/approaches they anticipate undertaking during the next five years with Local Works funding to work towards increased local leadership.



- **Criteria:** LOI describes a potential locally led capacity strengthening approach, including potential partners, participants, and how the Mission might engage with local actors in designing and implementing this potential approach. LOI describes an approach that contributes to locally led development, localization, and empowering local actors to take the lead in sustainably addressing development challenges? The proposed capacity strengthening approach goes beyond just training in donor compliance, and emphasizes strengthening local systems and local ability to achieve self-defined development priorities.

### C. Operational Innovation to Support Locally Led Development

Operational and bureaucratic barriers often hinder USAID's ability to work efficiently and effectively with local capacity strengthening service providers. What are some potential challenges, and how will your Mission work differently to make capacity strengthening efforts more locally led? This may include reducing unnecessary internal requirements and exploring creative acquisition and assistance, financial management, communications, facilitation, and reporting approaches that effectively engage local actors in a new way for the Mission. It may also include leadership opportunities for local staff and allowing them the time and flexibility to engage local actors through listening, collaborative design, and relationship building. Technical teams in Missions are especially encouraged to consult with their OAA and OFM teams to discuss potential challenges to working in a more locally led way, and propose ideas for overcoming these challenges in the LOI.

- **Criteria:** LOI identifies internal USAID barriers and proposes creative potential solutions to enable local actors to lead the development process. LOI clearly and thoughtfully articulates why the proposed practices are expected to enable more locally led and sustainable development outcomes as compared to existing operational practice in the Mission.

### D. Contribution to Learning about the Locally Led Development Priority Areas

Describe how your proposed approach will incorporate and increase USAID's (and our partners') expertise in the priority areas described in section 3 of the guidance. How will this effort build our evidence base for what works and what doesn't, and contribute to Agency-wide learning around locally led development? What specific learning questions do you hope to tackle through your program? You may address the priorities articulated in Section 3, and/or propose new priority areas.

- **Criteria:** LOI responds to Section 3 of the guidance and articulates how proposed approaches will incorporate these (or different) priority areas. LOI also articulates how learning generated through the Mission's Local Works programming, including through failure and iteration, will contribute toward USAID being better able to support locally led development.

### E. Feasibility

Advancing locally led development and managing partnerships with non-traditional and local actors requires a significant level of effort. Identify what resources (human, knowledge, local staff, funding, existing networks, others) the Mission can dedicate to this approach. What



additional resources (including hiring new staff with Local Works funds), technical assistance, and other support do you need in order to try this approach? LOIs must consider the enabling context for locally led development, which may include the country context; the Mission's autonomy and commitment to pursue novel and experimental operational and programming approaches; support for the proposed approach across Mission offices including the front office; and local security and access considerations. Local Works encourages efforts in challenging environments, but please note likely constraints and potential mitigation approaches.

- **Criteria:** The LOI provides a realistic assessment of the resources available and needed (human, financial, and others) to carry out the proposed approach in the given country context. The proposed approach makes good use of the unique resources available through Local Works. The LOI addresses risks and vulnerabilities and measures the Mission will take to mitigate them. The LOI provides a notional budget broken down by years and type of funds. For example (and to the extent possible, understanding that this will be very notional and subject to change), please provide how much budget you will need each year: 1) for the actual program (e.g. awards for local partners and local capacity strengthening firms); 2) to administer and oversee the program (e.g. to hire staff, fund TDYs, contribute to motorpool, pay for training or retreats, etc.); and 3) program design & learning (e.g. to fund assessments, listening, mapping, workshops, etc).

## LETTER OF INTEREST CRITERIA FOR OPTION 3: TOOLS AND APPROACHES

Successful LOIs will address the following, equally weighted, components in three to five pages:

### A. The Challenge

What is the challenge the Mission is interested in exploring? The challenge(s) can be external (developmental, humanitarian) or internal (e.g., limited USAID awareness of the local NGO ecosystem or local power dynamics, etc.) How has the Mission approached these challenges in the past, and how might more resources to explore locally led approaches assist in addressing these challenges?

- **Criteria:** LOI describes a development or humanitarian challenge(s) that the Mission is interested in exploring, and how this challenge is reflective of local priorities. LOI describes past approaches to these challenges, including successes and failures. LOI describes how additional resources to explore locally led approaches to addressing these challenges might be beneficial.

### B. Locally Led Development Approach

What potential locally led development tools and approaches does the Mission envision using (at this early, theoretical stage)? Describe how you might engage with existing in-country resources (including but not limited to local expertise, the local private sector, local/national government(s), universities, think tanks, associations, philanthropy) to bring new ideas and resources to bear on local development priorities. If you don't know the answers at this point, that is absolutely fine – please describe some of the questions you have at this stage and hope to find answers to with additional funding and support.



- **Criteria:** LOI suggests potential tools, approaches, and/or questions the Mission hopes to answer with additional funding and support.

### C. Operational Innovation to Support Locally Led Development

Operational and bureaucratic barriers often hinder USAID's ability to work efficiently and effectively in support of locally led development. What are some of these challenges the Mission has faced in supporting locally led development? How might an exploration of additional locally led approaches address, sidestep, or overcome these challenges and empower local actors to lead their own development?

- **Criteria:** LOI identifies internal USAID barriers and describes how an exploration of additional locally led approaches might address, sidestep, or overcome these challenges and empower local actors to lead their own development.

### D. Contribution to Learning about the Locally Led Development Priority Areas

Describe how your proposed approach might incorporate and increase USAID's (and our partners') expertise in the priority areas described in section 3 of the guidance. How might this effort build our evidence base for what works and what doesn't, and contribute to Agency-wide learning around locally led development? What specific learning questions do you hope to tackle? You may address the priorities articulated in Section 3, and/or propose new priority areas.

- **Criteria:** LOI considers Section 3 of the guidance and articulates how proposed approaches could incorporate these (or

different) priority areas. LOI also articulates how learning generated through the Mission's Local Works programming, including through failure and iteration, will contribute toward USAID being better able to support locally led development.

### E. Feasibility

Advancing locally led development and managing partnerships with non-traditional and local actors requires a significant level of effort. Identify what resources (human, knowledge, local staff, funding, existing networks, others) the Mission can dedicate to this approach. What additional resources (including hiring new staff with Local Works funds), technical assistance, and other support do you need in order to try this approach? LOIs must consider the enabling context for locally led development, which may include the country context; the Mission's autonomy and commitment to pursue novel and experimental operational and programming approaches; support for the proposed approach across Mission offices including the front office; and local security and access considerations. Local Works encourages efforts in challenging environments, but please note likely constraints and potential mitigation approaches.

- **Criteria:** The LOI provides a realistic assessment of the resources available and needed (human, financial, and others) to carry out the proposed approach in the given country context. The proposed approach makes good use of the unique resources available through Local Works. The LOI addresses risks and vulnerabilities and measures the Mission will take to mitigate them. The LOI provides a notional budget



broken down by years and type of funds. For example (and to the extent possible, understanding that this will be very notional and subject to change), please provide how much budget you will need each year: 1) for the actual program (e.g. awards for local partners and local capacity strengthening firms); 2) to administer and oversee the program (e.g. to hire staff, fund TDYs, contribute to motorpool, pay for training or retreats, etc.); and 3) program design & learning (e.g. to fund assessments, listening, mapping, workshops, etc).

## 6. CONSULTATION AND CO-CREATION PROCESS

We understand that this guidance is dense and it may be useful to meet with someone on the Local Works team prior to submission. We are here to help! Please reach out to [localworks@usaid.gov](mailto:localworks@usaid.gov) to schedule consultation(s) with the Local Works team to ask specific questions and run through ideas. This will be a chance to see if your idea fits within the Local Works parameters and mission. If you'd like to engage in a more in-depth co-creation process for your LOI, please contact us before November 22. This opportunity will be provided on a first come first serve basis and will be scheduled depending on DDI/LFT bandwidth. We encourage Missions to share a rough outline of ideas prior to the consultation.

## 7. DECISION PROCESS

Following the release of this guidance, DDI/LFT will hold calls open to all Missions to answer questions. After the LOI submission deadline, LOIs will be reviewed according to the criteria contained in this guidance by a panel drawn from DDI/LFT staff and current Local Works Missions, with participation from relevant specialists in USAID/Washington on a case-by-case basis. Mission selections will be made based on the LOIs, with possible follow-up for clarification from finalists (e.g video calls, written questions, etc). Successful Missions will enter into a partnership with DDI/LFT for ongoing design and implementation. Local Works will share with respective Mission Directors information outlining program requirements and commitments to maintaining the legislative intent of the program.

## 8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Keep current on Local Works and DDI/LFT by subscribing to our newsletter [here](#).

Provide feedback on any aspect of Local Works [here](#), including ideas for improvement. Input welcome from all.

Lastly, check out our extensive [frequently asked questions](#), and send an email to [localworks@usaid.gov](mailto:localworks@usaid.gov) with any questions.



## 9. TIMELINE

