



**Fiscal Year 2020-July  
Business Forecast Review Conference Call  
July 17, 2020  
9:00 - 9:30 AM ET**

**Background**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Business Forecast is an informational resource on potential funding and partnership opportunities at USAID. It is an advanced look at grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements that USAID is in the process of developing and plans to issue in the coming year.

**USAID Participants**

- Mark Walther, Director, Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance
- Jennifer Crow-Yang, Cognizant Global Contracting and Agreement Officer for the New Partnerships Initiative
- Teneshia Alston, Deputy Director (Acting) of USAID's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- Brittney Irby, Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance Communications Specialist

**Agenda**

- Welcome and introductions.
- Question and Answer session moderated by Ms. Irby.
- Conclusion of the call.

## Conference Call Transcript

### **Ms. Irby Welcome**

Hello everyone, thank you for joining us today. My name is Brittney Irby. I am a communications specialist in the Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA) at USAID. We will be posting a transcript from this webinar today, as well as a list of the questions we've received as part of our quarterly Business Forecast outreach efforts. You'll hear from a number of folks on the call today, they are:

- Mark Walther, Director, Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance
- Jennifer Crow-Yang, Cognizant Global Contracting and Agreement Officer for the New Partnerships Initiative
- Teneshia Alston, Acting Deputy Director of USAID's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

If you're new to joining us for a Business Forecast webinar, rather than going through all the individual activities and questions that we've received, we like to just provide some general updates on what's happening at USAID. We will be answering some of the general questions we received. We appreciate everyone's continued interest in our Business Forecast. We will be posting the Q&A document to our Business Forecast site after the call today, and will continue to track a few questions that remain unanswered. Our contracting officials stationed around the world are responding to a few remaining questions. Once we receive these answers, we will post an updated document in the week to follow. We'll be sending out an email through our email distribution list and we will be notifying folks through Twitter at our Twitter handle, which is @USAIDBizOpps, once everything is posted and when an updated document is posted.

I would like to turn the call over to Mark Walther, USAID's Director of the Office of Acquisition and Assistance.

### **Mr. Walther Remarks**

Thank you, Brittney. And thanks to everyone participating in the live webinar or reading the transcript afterwards for your continued engagement with USAID. We truly appreciate the high quality of work you continue to maintain during these unprecedented times.

First, I would like to provide a snapshot of acquisition and assistance (A&A) obligations and transactions and where we stand in FY2020 at this time as we've begun the 4th quarter. As of

July 13th, worldwide A&A obligations stand at about \$13.7 billion and represent some 14,000 plus transactions--modifications and awards.

Secondly, I'd like to thank all my Contracting/Agreement Officer (CO/AO) colleagues and our Communications team, Brittney and Matt, for their continued dedication to the Business Forecast. The Professional Services Council reviewed business forecasts across federal departments and agencies for the second year running, and it was very rewarding to see that USAID remained a top performing Agency in its Business Forecast. We continue to be committed to improve and enhance our efforts based on the comments and questions that you, our partners, share with us as well as any insights we gain from other federal agencies.

Thirdly, as you are all well aware, the COVID-19 outbreak continues to have a significant impact around the world, and can also impact items and timelines within the forecast. The role of our Acquisition & Assistance colleagues comprising CORs/AORs and COs/AOs continue to be critical to ensuring Agency operations carry on as we work to achieve our development results. Cross-cutting collaboration is important as well in areas such as program design and monitoring and evaluation--we've been working closely with USAID's PPL colleagues. Specifically, we must continue our work to meet USAID's Mission and allow flexibility that addresses the operating constraints caused by COVID-19. We remain committed to providing support to the A&A workforce and you our partners as implementation continues during these uncertain times. Therefore, we encourage our A&A workforce to work in partnership with you, our implementing partners, and utilize maximum flexibility within rules and regulations when responding to their requests.

My special thanks to our partner community for all of the joint collaboration and outreach we've undertaken together during this pandemic. As many of you are aware, we concluded another round of implementing partner calls last week with colleagues from the COVID-19 Task Force. We continue our dedication to weekly implementing partner FAQs, guidance and flexibilities, personal protective equipment/covered materials, and the many other areas that we try to advance together during these significant challenges.

- The Agency continues to utilize the COVID-19 Guidance for Implementing Partners page to provide the most recent updates regarding acquisition and assistance policy changes affecting our implementing partner community during this COVID-19 time. Page highlights include:
  - The latest updates regarding Guidance for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as PPE and Covered Materials FAQs, as of June 30th.

- The slide decks for the first and second round of regional partner calls in June and July, respectively. We will continue to take advantage of various venues to continue to engage partners.
- The COVID-19 FAQ document that is updated either weekly or as new information is available.

With regard to Indirect/Overhead costs, often referred to as NICRA, we acknowledge and understand the potential increases in overhead and indirect costs organizations may experience related to staff readiness to return to post as Missions begin the phased approach of returning to work on a case by case basis. I regularly take the opportunity to highlight our established a COVID19\_IndirectCosts@usaid.gov email box where partners can send NICRA related questions or requests to adjust existing provisional rates. As of July 10th, we have received 9 provisional indirect cost rate requests, 7 of which were processed, one withdrawn, and one under current review. Six were completed within 30 days and one within 45 days.

On the Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform (EPPR) and A&A Strategy front, we have continued to work with Randy Tift, Policy, GC and other CO/AO, Program and Technical colleagues on a number of fronts. We've recently issued guidance on Broad Agency Announcements (ADS), a Co-Creation Field Guide, and in the process of issuing new guidance on the ability of for-profit organizations to utilize additive program income similar to non-profit ones. We have active working groups engaged on phased acquisitions, change orders, grants under contracts, evergreening, and transition awards. Finally, also underway is a cross-cutting effort to streamline design to procurement processes and timelines as part of our Agency's Management Operations Council.

And now I will turn it over to Jennifer to further highlight the NPI activities.

### **Jennifer Crow Yang**

Thank you, Mark. It is a pleasure to join you all today.

As many of you already know, the USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy (December 2018) called for a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) to help operationalize the Journey to Self-Reliance.

We have now accomplished or made significant progress on all of the strategic shifts highlighted under the first two guiding principles of the A&A Strategy: 1) diversifying our partner base and 2) changing how we partner.

NPI will continue to multiply USAID's development impact by 1) promoting local leadership, 2) seeking creative and innovative approaches to fostering self-reliance 3) identifying new sources of funding to sustain partnerships and scale impact. 4). Direct awards to new and underutilized organizations that enable local engagement such as local entities, locally established partners, as well as U.S. and locally-based small businesses. 5). Sub-awards to new and underutilized organizations designed to support more facilitative partnerships for effective local engagement. 6.) Direct awards to partners to leverage significant Private/Non-U.S. Government Funding to promote effective local engagement.

For purposes of NPI, "Direct or indirect" refers to whether an organization has received less than \$25 million as either a prime (direct) or sub-award (indirect) partner over the previous five years. USAID has begun tracking the use of new and underutilized partners (NUPs) using the new definition that includes prime and sub-awards.

Just briefly here are other progress reports on the other A&A Strategy shifts.

- Missions have completed NPI action plans with country targets which will help the agency institutionalize the measurement of effective local engagement and further the operationalizing of strategic A&A shifts to increase collaboration and co-creation to change the dynamics of partnership. Finally, NPI Action Plans ask Missions to consider both prime award to local organization and a more strategic use of sub-awards from our traditional partners to empower new and local partners. Initially, we will not be making Mission targets public as they may have procurement sensitive information. However, the Agency plans to report publicly on achievement of global (aggregate) targets through reporting on Agency Priority Goals (APGs) to the Office of Management and Budget.
- There are currently nine active partnership opportunities under the New Partnerships Initiative, with additional opportunities to be listed in the months to follow. Current awards include Higher Innovation for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX), the Women's Global Development and Prosperity addendum (WDG-P), and a Call for Concept Papers for Religious and Ethnic Freedom and Inclusion in the Middle East and

North Africa. Please visit the Partnership Opportunities page of USAID's New Partnerships Initiative site for a complete list of opportunities.

And now I will turn it over to Teneshia Alston, Acting Deputy Director of USAID's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

**Ms. Alston**

Thank you Mark, Jennifer, and Brittney. I always appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Business Forecast calls.

I am pleased to announce that the Agency is continuing on an upward trajectory to meet its Fiscal Year 2020 small business goal of 12 percent for awards issued directly to small businesses, and 16 percent for subcontracting awards issued to small businesses by our larger partners.

Before I proceed, I want to briefly re-cap statistics Mauricio Vera provided concerning our small business achievement for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. The acquisition data indicated USAID awarded approximately \$784 million to small businesses out of a total portfolio of \$5.4 billion in prime contracts. This translates to approximately 14.6 percent of prime awards, which exceeded our FY 2019 Small Business Goal of 12.5 percent. We anticipate the U.S. Small Business Administration will issue agencies' Scorecard grades within a few weeks.

The our team recognizes that these past few months have been difficult for many. We are fully operational and steadfast in maintaining our level of excellence in providing guidance to the small business community is an ongoing commitment. We continue to incorporate aspects of EPPR into how we engage the small business community, and how we work collaboratively with our M/OAA colleagues.

I want to highlight several significant small business awards the Agency issued this year. First, the Jordan Mission issued a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) contract with an estimated value of \$26 million to the Kaizen Company; and a \$4 million award to Proximity International to provide monitoring and analysis services in Syria. I also want to highlight a \$700,000 award in Cyber Security Support Services to Eagle Harbor Solutions issued by the Bureau for Management, CIO. I was especially pleased to learn about this award because it is a

good example of small businesses capabilities in non-traditional industries, such as cyber security.

Earlier this year, the OSDBU partnered with USAID colleagues in our Middle East Regional Platform in Frankfurt, Germany, our Mission in Ukraine, and of course the Office of Acquisition and Assistance in Washington to plan and host the Agency's second overseas small business conference on March 3-4, 2020 in Frankfurt, Germany. The event represented another internal collaborative effort to focus on the programming priorities and procurement needs for the Missions of Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East and Africa.

Like other years, our office continues to plan national small business outreach activities. Due to the ongoing pandemic outbreak, we are reassessing our plans to ensure the safety of our staff and implementing partners. Our outreach plans for now include three key events. First, to continue to expand our cadre of new partners, we will host a virtual outreach event for Service-Disabled Veteran Owned small businesses and firms in Historically Underutilized Business Zones during the September/October period. Our second event represents our continuing efforts to expand our outreach outside of the Washington, DC metro area, we are scheduled to partner with the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce to host a West Coast Women Owned Small Business outreach activity. These plans are still a fluid, but it is tentatively scheduled for the December/January period. Lastly, our premier event, the 13th Annual USAID Small Business Conference is tentatively scheduled for the late Spring 2021 at the JW Marriott in Washington, DC, the same location as last year. The event will more than likely be a combination of virtual and in person activities. Please look for the information on [Beta.sam.gov](https://beta.sam.gov)

Thanks again to Mark and team for the opportunity to present our update and for your continuing support of our small business initiatives.

### **Questions and Responses Segment**

The following segment is facilitated by Brittney Irby. She asked several general questions presented by stakeholders, and USAID leadership provided their response. The remaining questions and responses will be included in the final transcript posted on USAID's website

1. **(Mark) COVID-19: COVID Response Task Force:** Earlier this year the COVID task force issued an open call for concept notes designed to support the global response to the pandemic. Have any awards been made as a result of those submissions? Are these submissions still being considered for funding and/or further co-creation?

**USAID Response:** Since March 2020, USAID has received hundreds of qualified, unsolicited concepts and applications through the COVID-19 Portal, including concepts from current implementing partners (prime and sub) and also potential new, underutilized, and local partners, including nontraditional partners. If USAID determines that the concept reasonably fits an existing program, the Agency reserves the right to make the concept note available, internally, for appropriate consideration. These concepts or applications will remain viable for potential further consideration and the submitter will only be informed if their concept is acted upon. To date the Agency has not yet obligated funding to a specific unsolicited concept or application received by the COVID-19 Task Force. Reviews of submissions are ongoing. However, several current USAID implementing partners that submitted unsolicited concepts have received COVID-19 supplemental or reprogrammed funding through other mechanisms. USAID will continue to review the status of the unsolicited concepts received and seek to respond as more data on awards is collected, including on possible sub-awardees. To note, the COVID-19 Unsolicited Concept Portal has transitioned from the Task Force to the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs. The Agency will continue to accept unsolicited concepts for COVID-19 through the standard, LPA-managed process. All future unsolicited concepts and applications should be submitted to USAID according to the Agency's Unsolicited Proposals and Grant Applications guidance. For details please visit: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/unsolicited-proposals>.

2. **(Jennifer) New Partnerships Initiative - direct/indirect awards:** Under NPI, by definition, an underutilized partner is “an organization that has received less than \$25 million in direct or indirect awards from USAID over the past five years.”
  - a. Could you please define “direct awards” and “indirect awards”?
  - b. Will USAID be making NPI plans/targets for each country publicly available?

**USAID Response:** As stated above, For purposes of NPI, “Direct or indirect” refers to whether an organization has received less than \$25 million as either a prime (direct) or sub-award (indirect) partner over the previous five years. USAID has begun tracking the use of new and underutilized partners (NUPs) using the new definition that includes prime and sub-awards, based on information from both the Agency's Phoenix system and the USA Spending public reporting system, aligning with our existing data systems and laws.

Initially, we will not be making Mission targets public as they are contained in NPI Mission Action Plans that may have procurement sensitive information. However, the Agency plans to report publicly on achievement of global (aggregate) targets through reporting on Agency Priority Goals (APGs) to the Office of Management and Budget.

The Agency seeks to increase partnerships with NUPs at prime and sub-award levels, and is also engaging its largest partners to increase sub-awards that are more strategic, i.e. enabling sub-award partners with country presence and “staying power” to lead in activity implementation while traditional partners offer technical oversight, capacity building and compliance support. The Agency also seeks greater compliance in public reporting of sub-awards through the USASpending site. All of these steps are part of the Agency's shift toward the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) and its A&A Strategy.

**3. (Teneshia) OSDBU - clearer guidance about USAID priorities for set-aside categories:** USAID’s OSDBU team recently shared in the annual matchmaking day that large businesses should focus on including small businesses in as many set-aside categories as possible in their proposals. Offerors often struggle to respond to NPI, J2SR, and small business partnering requirements as well as the technical requirements of solicitations. Can USAID please provide guidance to the implementer community and USAID staff that offers clearer partnering guidance/requirements on USAID priorities in responding to solicitations?

**USAID Response:** USAID solicitation requirements are consistent with Agency initiatives such as the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI), Journey to Self Reliance (J2SR), and Federal Acquisition Regulations concerning the participation of small businesses. The Office of Small and Disadvantage Business Utilization (OSDBU) recommends that offerors review sections C, L, and M of the Request for Proposal (RFP) to determine subcontracting or partnership recommendations. If partnerships or a subcontracting plan is required, and the guidance is not clear, it is recommended that the offeror contact the contracting official to request clarification. If additional guidance is needed, the contracting official may modify the solicitation so that all interested offerors may have access to the information.

The OSDBU provides market research guidance and support to contracting officials during the acquisition planning process. The OSDBU is also available to support “other than small businesses” in hosting activities to identify small businesses engaged in the international development sector. For additional information, contact us at [osdbu1@usaid.gov](mailto:osdbu1@usaid.gov).

**4. (Jennifer) New Partnerships Initiative - GUCs:** In a recent New Partnerships Initiative informational call, USAID mentioned the possibility of increasing the ceiling amount for Grants Under Contracts (GUCs). Is this still being considered? If so, could USAID provide any further clarity on what the new ceiling will be?

**USAID Response:** The publicly issued and Agency approved recommendation for Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform in the area of GUCs was to increase the ceiling for US organizations to \$500,000 per GUC. This is still under review. Action on this EPPR recommendation should be finalized soon.

**5. (Teneshia) OSDBU: Small Business Goals:** Are all USAID Missions now participating in the Small Business Goal Program?

**USAID Response:** Yes, all USAID Missions with an acquisition obligations exceeding \$5 million annually (with the exception of two) are participating in the Agency's Mission Small Business Goaling Program. You may view the list of participating Missions at the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization website <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/independent-offices/office-small-and-disadvantaged-business-utilization-0>). Questions may be submitted to [osdbul@usaid.gov](mailto:osdbul@usaid.gov).

**6. (Mark) Bureau for Management/ OAA Worldwide Training:** In the first quarter of FY20 business forecast Q&A, USAID specified that worldwide training "will be placed as originally set with a RFI as an OASIS small business award within FY20."

a. Could USAID provide additional information about this activity?

**USAID Response:** USAID is currently working with GSA for the procurement of a new worldwide training contract. For this reason, this procurement will no longer be listed on USAID's business forecast, since USAID will not make the procurement. So that interested parties can continue to track the release of the solicitation related to this work, the following information is provided:

- The likely name of this procurement will be: Global Learning Solutions and Services.
- The procurement will be made either under HCaTS or under OASIS.
- The anticipated value of this procurement is likely to be approximately \$150M over 5 years.
- The solicitation will likely be released by GSA in FY21, Q1.

**Mark Walther - closing remarks**

I'd like to remind folks regarding the different questions that came in, especially around U.S. small businesses, new and underutilized partners, that we continue to actively engage with the Bureaus and Missions through senior obligation review processes. Everything over \$40 million and above for new awards, and new solicitations are reviewed by the Administrator. This is because they all have these key faucets as well as areas of A&A strategy and adaptive management, including partnering and engagement. Anything below the \$40 million is also separately reviewed by assistant administrators. So, on a variety of fronts, we continue to engage, and we welcome advancing all these efforts as we try to move forward. There are a lot of competing goals that we have among U.S. small businesses, category management, the new partnerships initiative, and a host of others. So far we've been successful in a number of areas in parallel and we hope to continue that trend. I'd like to echo efforts that Teneshia, John, Mauricio, and others in the OSDBU Team have undertaken about the mission goaling, increasing the mission goals across the Agency and U.S. small businesses. That clearly has been, in my mind, a significant driver in helping us break records each year in U.S. small businesses. So thank you again to our acquisition partners, our assistance partners, nonprofits, for profits, U.S. small businesses, new and underutilized partners - we really appreciate all the engagement. It seems like another world in another time in March during the Frankfurt Overseas Small Business Conference when we were with 300 firms, and now we're in the virtual world on an ongoing basis, but we still value and appreciate all the opportunities, the associations have offered us, be it InterAction, the Professional Services Council, Humentum, the Small Business Association of International Development Companies; it really is a pleasure to work with the Associations, as well as with you, our individual partners, as we've done individual outreach with partners as well. We appreciate all these efforts. Thank you again for this opportunity, and we'll be working on getting these completed questions out as soon as we can, and will update any remaining unanswered questions later next week.