Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) / Covered Materials
June 30, 2020

The responses in this document are correct as of June 30, 2020, and are subject to change as the Agency issues new guidance related to PPE. Please continue to monitor Agency Notices for updates. New or revised questions appear in blue.
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General Questions

Question: Can guidance be shared with external networks (e.g., not USAID implementing partners (IPs))?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can you clarify who is included in each of the exceptions noted in the guidance?

Answer: IPs must seek written approval from AOs or COs to procure any of the items listed here: N95 filtering facepiece respirators; other filtering facepiece respirators; elastomeric, air-purifying respirators and appropriate particulate filters/cartridges; PPE surgical masks; PPE gloves or surgical gloves; ventilators; or COVID-19 test kits that are meant for the U.S. market. However, IPs may use USAID funding to procure these Covered Materials without written approval from AOs/COs in either of these two situations:
  - One, for the protection of and use by their own staff or for sub-recipient or sub-contracting staff. In this situation, Covered Materials may be procured from any source, not just local or regional manufacturers.
  - Two, for the safe and effective continuity of USAID-funded programs, which include the protection of recipients and/or beneficiaries. In this situation, implementing partners may only procure Covered Materials from local or regional manufacturers, provided the Covered Material is not, and could not reasonably be intended, for the U.S. market.

Question: Can you explain how "staff" is defined under Exception 1?

Answer: For the purposes of Exception 1 in this guidance, staff are considered to be individuals receiving financial compensation from a USAID implementing partner (prime or sub-level) for the work being performed on the USAID project.

Question: What information should be included in the partner’s determination under Exception 2? To what extent are AOs/COs supposed to fact-check/confirm the partner's determination?

Answer: A brief, contemporaneously dated statement that states that the order of PPE is not meant for, and could not reasonably be meant for, the U.S. market, is sufficient. This documentation can take the form of a simple email verification from a vendor or a brief, contemporaneously dated, written statement from the partner confirming its conversation with the vendor. There is no standard or recommended template or format
to capture this information, as long as it is documented in the partner’s files and a copy is sent to the AO/CO to upload to ASIST. AOs/COs are not required to fact-check or verify the partner’s determination.

**Question:** How often should the determination under Exception 2 be done? Is a determination for each new PPE vendor or order required?

**Answer:** For each purchase of each different type of Covered Material under Exception 2, IPs must confirm that the products are not intended for, or could not reasonably be intended for, the U.S. market. Similarly, this confirmation must also be obtained from each new vendor from which the partner procures Covered Material.

**Question:** Regarding Exception 2, does the determination apply to a supplier’s whole inventory, or just the specific order being placed?

**Answer:** The determination applies to the specific type of Covered Material being procured (e.g. masks, gloves). In cases where a supplier’s inventory includes multiple product lines, the determination may not necessarily apply to the supplier’s whole inventory. Under Exception 2, implementing partners may not procure a specific type of Covered Material from a supplier that is currently fulfilling orders for the U.S. market for that product type. Implementing partners must discuss with the supplier to ensure that the specific type of Covered Material they intend to procure is not, and could not reasonably be, intended for the U.S. market.

Given that suppliers change customers, geographies served, and approaches on a regular basis, this determination must be made for each order of PPE. For instance, if a supplier produces filtration masks and is currently fulfilling orders for filtration masks for the U.S. market, implementing partners may not procure filtration masks from that supplier as long as it is fulfilling orders for the U.S. market. However, if the same supplier also produces surgical gloves and is currently not fulfilling orders for those gloves for the U.S. market, the implementing partner may procure gloves from that supplier. In short, each type of PPE within a specific order must receive confirmation from the supplier that those products are not, and could not reasonably be, intended for the U.S. market.

**Question:** What about other types of PPE not explicitly mentioned in this guidance?

**Answer:** All other PPE and test kits for COVID-19 not mentioned in the guidance are not restricted from procurement or subject to limitations pursuant to this guidance.
**Question:** Are hand sanitizer and soap considered PPE?

**Answer:** Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap, non-medical rubber gloves, and other cleaning products are not considered PPE and are not subject to any limitations on procurement. Implementing partners should procure them in accordance from the most efficient and available sources.

**Question:** Are there restrictions on the procurement of cloth masks?

**Answer:** Cloth masks and other face coverings that do not protect the wearer are not considered PPE. The procurement of these items is not subject to the limitations set forth in this guidance. It is important to note that cloth masks are not substitutes for medical-grade PPE.

**Question:** What about the use of existing stockpiles of PPE?

**Answer:** The use of existing stockpiles does not involve the procurement of PPE and therefore is not subject to the limitations set forth in this guidance:

A) The USAID-funded stockpile managed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) provides PPE for outbreaks of, and investigations into, animal pests and diseases, including zoonotic pathogens:

   a) Missions and B/IOs may continue to request to use the FAO-managed stockpile to provide PPE for investigations of outbreaks of animal pests and diseases, including zoonotic diseases.

   b) Requests for the use of the FAO-managed stockpile should continue to go through the cognizant Agreement Officer’s/Contracting Officer’s Representative (AOR/COR).

B) The USAID-funded stockpile managed by the World Health Organization (WHO) provides PPE for outbreaks of human diseases, and is explicitly meant to serve low- and middle-income countries:

   a) Missions and B/IOs may continue to ask to use this stockpile to fulfill requests from national governments for PPE to respond to outbreaks.

   b) Requests for use of the WHO stockpile should continue to go through the cognizant AOR/COR.
C) The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance maintains relief supplies, including PPE, in warehouses around the world for quick shipment to disaster-affected countries.

**Question:** What if I am an AO/CO and have questions about if / when to approve the procurement of restricted commodities?

**Answer:** For any other requests to procure Covered Material that does not meet the exceptions described above, AOs/COs must consult with USAID’s leadership by sending an email to the following inbox: coveredmaterials@usaid.gov

**Question:** For how long is this guidance applicable?

**Answer:** The rules set forth in this interim guidance will apply as long as the domestic demand in the United States for Covered Material exceeds the available supply. Once a domestic surplus exists for such items, the Agency will revise this guidance.

If the Administration issues guidance through a final Presidential Memorandum or other mandate that differs from the approach outlined here, USAID will revise this guidance and require implementing partners to adapt accordingly.

**Question:** Does the guidance have an effective date or is the guidance retroactive?

**Answer:** The guidance is effective as of June 9th, 2020. The guidance does not apply retroactively, and is applicable only prospectively moving forward. Restrictions pursuant to this guidance only apply to new awards and existing awards that are modified at the time of funding modifications.

**Question:** What if I have further questions about this guidance?

**Answer:** For any questions not already addressed in the guidance, please send an email to the following inbox: coveredmaterials@usaid.gov.

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**Current Awards**

**Question:** Do purchases of PPE require a redirection change notice?

**Answer:** The updated Covered Material guidance states that if falling into the two exceptions noted, no further approvals are required. Using USAID funding to purchase
Covered Material for either of the two exceptions noted in the guidance therefore does not require a redirection notice. If Covered Material procurement falls outside those two exceptions, written AO/CO approval is needed. While not required, AOs/COs can feel free to consult with the Task Force through coveredmaterials@usaid.gov if they have questions about providing approval. In short, there are no further approvals or redirection notices required for purchases of PPE (other than the required AO/CO approval pursuant to the guidance).

Please note that hand sanitizer and cleaning products are not considered PPE and are not under any procurement restrictions. Procuring these supplies also does not require a redirection or reprogramming notice, as this can be considered tantamount to the cost of doing business in a world with COVID-19.

**Question:** Is the redirection/reprogramming process still required?

**Answer:** Please refer to the redirection and reprogramming guidance. A new notice was recently released and can be found [here](#). Other updates to that guidance may be released soon. As noted in the question above, redirection notices are not required for the purchase of PPE.

**Question:** The determination documentation requirement isn’t listed within the award provision language. How will recipients know to submit this required determination documentation and how can AOs enforce submission if it’s not an award requirement?

**Answer:** Please see the revised PPE guidance for updated grant/contract language for inclusion in the award document. Implementing partners must submit a brief, contemporaneously dated statement that documents their determination for Exception 2 to AOs/COs. AOs/COs must upload this documentation into ASIST.

**Question:** For existing awards where new language has not been amended for COVID, does procurement of PPE or diagnostics need to be specifically in the award prior to procurement?

**Answer:** No, an award does not need to specifically mention procurement of PPE, as that stipulation is more granular than the language in many of our awards, and it is often included in a general procurement or supplies line items. For example, for a health implementing partner, the award does not need to specifically mention procurement of PPE -- a general mandate to support infection prevention and control in health facilities is sufficient.

If the costs for PPE were allowable in existing awards before the issuance of the guidance, they continue to be allowable unless and until the awards are modified to include the new special contract requirement, at which point the terms of that special
contract requirement will apply. AO/AOR review or coordination is only needed if required under the terms of the existing awards.

**Question:** As the Agency will add the agreed-upon special contract requirement to existing awards at the time of any funding modifications, can partners continue to procure PPE and other Covered Material under existing awards until any funding modification?

**Answer:** Yes. Partners may continue to procure PPE and other Covered Material under existing awards that have PPE components consistent with the terms of those awards until USAID adds the special contract requirement to their awards at the time of a funding modification.

**Question:** Will the Agency add the special award requirement to awards with PIOs?

**Answer:** Yes. USAID will add the special award requirement to cost-type PIO agreements that have PPE components. The special award requirements do not apply to project contribution or general contribution PIO agreements.

**Question:** How should awards be handled that use supplemental IDA funds for COVID-19 that include a more-restrictive clause on Covered Material?

**Answer:** Some current awards funded by resources from the IDA account from COVID-19 supplemental appropriations include a more restrictive special requirement but allow the cognizant AOR/COR to approve other procurements. AORs/CORs of the awards that include such special requirements should approve procurements in a manner consistent with the new interim Agency guidance. The cognizant AO/CO should modify these awards to include the new special contract requirement at the time of any funding modification.

**Local and Regional Procurement**

**Question:** What constitutes “local and regional procurement”?

**Answer:** When procuring Covered Material for the safe and effective continuity of USAID’s programs, including the protection of beneficiaries, implementing partners may procure PPE from in-country manufacturers, or from manufacturers in the same geographical region as the country in which USAID is providing assistance, as defined by the U.S. Department of State’s regional system (Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Near East, South and Central Asia, and the Western...
Hemisphere). If seeking to procure from a manufacturer that also provides products for the U.S. domestic market, partners should engage in conversation with the supplier and ensure it is not fulfilling orders for the U.S. domestic market. Implementing partners must document this determination in their files or records, and provide a copy of such documentation to their cognizant AO/CO, who must upload it into the file for the award(s) in USAID’s Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System (ASIST).

**Question:** Under Exception 2 in the guidance, is procuring PPE manufactured regionally, but not in the same region where the country is located, allowed? For example, can Senegal purchase face masks manufactured in India or Turkey and sold in local Senegalese pharmacies?

**Answer:** Written AO/CO approval is required for this type of situation, given that this example falls outside of both exceptions. Partners must still ensure that the products are not, and could not reasonably be, intended for the U.S. market. If AOs/COs have questions about approving this type of request, they are encouraged to contact their GC backstop attorney/RLO to determine whether a source-nationality waiver under an Expedited Procedures Package (EPP) or other source-nationality waiver applies. Questions also may be posed to coveredmaterials@usaid.gov.

**Procurement of Restricted Items**

**Question:** Can implementing partners use funds from USAID to procure COVID-19 test kits?

**Answer:** The procurement with USAID’s funds of test kits for COVID-19 manufactured in, or intended for, the U.S. domestic market remains on pause. Otherwise, the procurement of high-quality COVID-19 test kits for programs and projects pursuant to approved Scopes of Work that include the purchase of diagnostics is allowed.

Right now, nucleic-acid tests are the standard for testing for COVID-19, and point-of-care immunochromatographic rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) are not recommended for diagnostic use at the moment. Based on current evidence, the World Health Organization recommends the use of rapid diagnostic tests only in research settings (such as eventual performance evaluations compared to other tests), but not clinical decision-making until there is much more evidence to support their use.

**Question:** Are reagents subject to procurement limitations like COVID-19 diagnostic tests?

**Answer:** No, reagents are not subject to the procurement limitations set forth in this guidance.
Program-Funded Local Production of PPE

**Question:** Can implementing partners use funds from USAID for the local production of PPE in partner countries?

**Answer:** Yes. The prior Task Force notice still applies. Implementing partners may use funds from USAID to finance the local production of medical-grade and non-medical-grade PPE, including (but not limited to) masks, gowns, face shields, protective eyewear, boot covers, linens, and gloves. This guidance pertains to all USAID programs funded from any appropriation account, including supplemental appropriations. Where feasible, USAID’s B/IOs may also invest in, advise on, or encourage local regulatory authorities to validate manufacturing practices for, or conduct quality-assurance testing on, PPE. Further guidance from the Bureau for Global Health in this area is forthcoming.

Agency Communications about PPE

**Question:** Can USAID’s Missions or Washington-based B/IOs promote stories about past distributions of PPE?

**Answer:** Yes. USAID’s Missions and B/IOs may share stories and photos of past PPE deliveries publicly.

**Question:** Can USAID’s Missions or Washington-based B/IOs promote stories about the production of PPE for local use by USAID-funded programs?

**Answer:** Yes. USAID’s Missions and B/IOs can promote stories and information about the production of PPE for local use by USAID-funded programs.