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# Instructions and Template for Senior Obligation Alignment Review (SOAR) Document

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 300

Partial Revision Date: 03/10/2021  
Responsible Office: M/MPBP  
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**PART 1 – STANDARD DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

*(No more than three sentences per row)*

Activity Name	
Bureau/Office/Mission	
Contract/Grant/Cooperative Agreement/ and expected number of “prime” awards?	
Describe the reasoning behind the choice of instrument.	
Total Estimated Cost/Amount	
Anticipated Funding Type or Account (DA, ESF, IDA, OCO, AEECA, SEED, etc.) <sup>1</sup> for all years of funding. Note if expiring funds. Please see example to the right.	Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 \$X million Development Assistance (DA), \$X million Economic Support Funds (ESF) Anticipated funding for future years: FY 2018 \$X million ESF FY 2019 \$X million DA FY 2020 \$X million DA, \$X million ESF
Estimated solicitation posting date	
Planned Period of Performance	
What country or countries are involved, if known?	
Did planners consider simultaneously competing both acquisition and assistance, as parallel mechanisms through “dual tracking” if a large activity, to meet activity objectives? Yes/No. If no, why not?	
List Washington technical staff and their respective office(s) who contributed to the design of this activity prior to initiating the SOAR process.	

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<sup>1</sup> Development Assistance Fund (DA), Economic Support Fund (ESF), International Disaster Assistance (IDA), Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA), Support for East European Democracy (SEED)

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Describe any leveraging, cost-sharing, or funding in parallel to the USAID-funded activity, including in-kind contributions. If none, please explain why.	
What problem(s) does the proposed award address?	
What are the anticipated major interventions proposed to address the defined problem?	
What are some illustrative examples of the interventions anticipated under the proposed award?	
What are the desired outcomes and projected results and how will they be measured?	
Does this activity target new or “underutilized” partners <sup>2</sup> ( <i>i.e.</i> , either through the New Partnerships Initiative [NPI] or other means)? If yes, please specify the partners.	
(If applicable) What provisions are being made for the involvement and development of local in-country organizations (local entities or “locally established” partners <sup>3</sup> )?	
(If applicable) What provisions are being made, if any, for the involvement of U.S. small business and/or minority-serving institutions?	

<sup>2</sup> Underutilized partner: An organization that has received less than \$25 million in direct or indirect awards from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) over the past five years.

<sup>3</sup> A U.S. or international organization that works through locally led operations and programming models.

Locally established partners (LEPs) have maintained continuous operations in-country for at least five years and materially demonstrate a long-term presence in a country through adherence or alignment to the following: at least 50 percent of office personnel composed of local staff; maintenance of a dedicated local office; registration with the appropriate local authorities; a local bank account; and a portfolio of locally implemented programs. LEPs have demonstrated links to the local community, including: if the organization has a governing body or board of directors, then it must include a majority of local citizens; a letter of support from a local organization to attest to its work; and other criteria that an organization proposes to demonstrate its local roots. **The definition of LEPs from the NPI working group will be inserted as soon as it is finalized.**

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<p>(If applicable) Are any of the types of organizations from the previous three questions expected to apply as prime contractors/recipients or expected to be subcontractors/sub-recipients?</p>	
<p>Also note if the activity links to the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC) tools. If so, how?</p>	
<p>(For contracts only) Does the proposed award include Information Technology resources for use by Agency staff? If yes, please provide a copy of M/CIO approval. Please see <a href="#">ADS 300sab, FAQs</a> and <a href="#">ADS Chapter 509, Management and Oversight of Agency Information and Technology Resources</a>, for additional information.</p>	

## PART 2 – JUSTIFICATION

*(The justification must be no more than five pages and, for reviewer/reader reference, it is only necessary to include the bold titles and italicized questions when answering a question. Documents that exceed the page limit will be returned for revision. Annexes will not be accepted.)*

There is no fixed format for the questions below since the nature of activities can differ extensively. Some questions are mandatory, and others are as applicable. For the “as applicable” questions, Operating Units (OUs) should exercise judgment in determining which questions to address meaningfully and refrain from including boilerplate language that provides little value. If an “as applicable” question does not apply, there is no need to include it in this document. OUs should include a discussion of any other items not mentioned below that they deem significant to the approver(s).

Clear, relevant explanations will maximize the chances that the activity will be approved quickly and without additional review by the approver (Administrator/Assistant Administrator, depending on the size of the activity). Anticipating any questions that could be asked and covering such matters in this submission is helpful (e.g., if a follow-on, and selection of instrument type is changing from acquisition to assistance, or *vice versa*).

### Mandatory:

1. **Approach:** *How did the Operating Unit develop its approach to addressing the problem?*
  - *How does the proposed approach support the Administration’s priorities and the Administrator’s vision of helping countries become self-reliant?*
  - *How does the approach align with priorities in the USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy?*
    - i. *(i.e., advancing collaboration and co-creation in USAID’s partnering, designing programs less prescriptively, more collaboratively, and with more adaptability)?*
    - ii. *How is the concept demonstrating the use of diversified approaches in the design, solicitation, and award of programs (i.e., the use of optimal solicitation approach and award type)?*
    - iii. *How is the approach using adaptive management in awards (such as modular design and option years)?*
    - iv. *How is the approach encouraging broader integration of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) methods?*
    - v. *Is the approach using incentive tools, such as pay-for-results, performance-based incentives, or fixed amounts/prices, in the design of programs, and what metrics will measure results?*

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- vi. How is the approach simplifying access and lowering barriers to entry for new and underutilized partners?
- vii. What steps is the Operating Unit taking to broaden opportunities to enhance competition (e.g., industry days, requests for information, pre-solicitation conferences)?
- viii. To the extent known at this stage, how is the award applying or considering innovation?

Possibilities include the development, adaptation, or scaling of new interventions, processes, or approaches; the integration of digital technologies to drive greater efficacy and project outcomes; collaboration with new partners to advance the evidence-base, apply learning and adaptation, introduce design-thinking, and/or embody more-iterative and agile approaches; scientific research that leads to a new intervention or body of knowledge related to the development problem; or new methods of partnering with the private sector, local entrepreneurs, and in-country actors.

2. **Other Public- and Private-Sector Resources:** Could the private sector solve the target problem by itself? Could a market-based approach address the problem? Are there factors that constrain the private sector from involvement and investment? Could the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) alleviate or eliminate these constraints? Does the proposed approach mobilize other public- and private-sector resources to increase development impact with the potential to carry forward beyond USAID's funding?
3. **Use of Evidence:** What has been the use of evidence (e.g., from impact or performance evaluations, scientific research) and assessments and/or analysis (e.g., [political-economy analysis](#), [cash benchmarking](#), [cost-effectiveness analysis](#), [cost-benefit analysis](#), [gender analysis](#), [inclusive development analysis](#), etc.) in designing the activity? What evaluations or research projects are planned to facilitate learning from this activity? Is this activity a new, untested approach that is anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through U.S. Government or other funding sources? If so, is an impact evaluation planned, as required, if feasible, in [ADS Chapter 201.3.6](#)? Why or why not?
4. **Past Activities:** How does the activity build on past activities?
  - If this is a follow-on award not based on a thorough review of the initial award, please explain why not.
  - If this is a follow-on award, explain how the new award will demonstrate the following:

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- (a) the inclusion of lessons learned from the previous award to inform better program design;
- (b) an expanded level of results that builds on previous work; and/or
- (c) increased sustainability of development assistance and impact.

5. **Sustainable Results:** How is the activity designed to deliver results achievable beyond U.S. engagement or sustained beyond the life of this activity? How, if at all, will this activity work to increase the capabilities of host governments, local partners (non-governmental organizations, private industry, institutions of higher education), and/or the availability of local resources to enable the country and/or local actors one day to either undertake similar work or maintain the results achieved through this activity over time?

As Applicable:

1. **Size of Activity:** [For Indefinite-Delivery/Indefinite-Quantity (IDIQ)/Leaders with Associates awards only] How did the Operating Unit determine the dollar value of the activity? Why did the Operating Unit select one large mechanism for multiple activities rather than country-specific awards or multiple, smaller global activities in which a set of smaller awards might provide more opportunity for context-specific responses and small/local/different organizations? If a large activity, are there any provisions or incentives to enable small/local organizations to participate in the award? Is there any upper limit on the size of Task Orders or Associate Awards?
2. **Scale:** What is the scale of this activity? If not country-wide, how would it be possible, if successful, to scale the outcomes to eventually affect the entire country or all affected areas of it? How can lessons and impact reach beyond the target country or countries?
3. **Cross-Sectoral Synergies:** In what ways does this activity offer unique synergies with work done in other sectors in the same country or location (whether by the United States, the host government, other donors, or other actors)?
4. **Risks and Unknowns:** What particular risks or unknowns (e.g., insecurity, the sustainability of development outcomes, scalability, political economy, etc.) need to be raised? What actions are planned to mitigate such risks? Submissions should only identify and state real risks that senior management should consider; do not present "straw men" simply to respond to the topic.

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5. **Clear Choice:** How is this activity designed to further the objectives of the Clear Choice Framework and counter competing foreign (e.g., Chinese, Russian, Iranian) influences?

An Action Memorandum addressed to the Administrator (for acquisition and assistance awards at or over \$100 million) or to the relevant Assistant Administrator (for acquisition and assistance awards at or over \$50 million and under \$100 million) must accompany all SOAR requests. The most recent Action Memorandum templates are available at the Executive Secretariat website "[What We Provide](#)." The Action Memorandum must request approval or disapproval of the SOAR document and provide a short summary of the request.

6. **COVID-19:** How does this activity address initiatives outlined in the Administration's Immediate Priorities, specifically, the plan to beat COVID-19? How does this activity expand defenses to predict, prevent, and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic?

*Please list unresolved comments generated during the five-day review period by Pillar and relevant Regional Bureaus labeled as "Substantive" and that included a solution by the Reviewer. Please include the Reviewer's self-identifying information (name, office, title). This section will not be considered as part of the five-page limit for the Justification section.*

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