MISSION ENGAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FROM THE UPTAKE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

JUNE 2018 | EXTERNAL VERSION

Introduction

Why a Mission Engagement Playbook?

Many Headquarters (HQ) Operating Units at the Agency depend on successful engagement and productive working relationships with Missions. The objective of these partnerships is often to achieve sustained uptake with a given Mission. **Sustained uptake is the transference of full ownership and valuation of an innovation, approach, or technical expertise to a Mission, such that they devote additional resources to new opportunities, establish dedicated staff responsibilities, and/or integrate the innovation into Mission priorities.**

The Uptake Developmental Evaluation (DE) in the Global Development Lab (Lab) explored the most efficient and effective ways to secure strong Mission partnerships that facilitate sustained uptake. Three evaluative efforts, 474 sources, and 1,625 unique data points yielded clear evidence on which approaches, tools, and resources work. Given the applicability of these findings across teams in the Lab, as well as to widespread Mission service delivery efforts across the Agency, this Playbook provides best practice guidance for wider Agency use based on evidence from the Uptake DE.

WHAT IS THE UPTAKE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION?

The Lab has evolved its programming related to scaling, adoption, acceleration, and uptake over time in response to its charter to "source, test, and scale" development solutions. Following the conception of the Lab-wide priorities (LWPs), the Lab agreed to undertake active learning to get smarter about the viability of different approaches to achieving sustained uptake. Since then, five teams bought into a Developmental Evaluation (DE) to share and consolidate learnings on sustained uptake. DE is an evaluation approach that utilizes an embedded evaluator, fit-for-purpose methods, and real-time feedback to facilitate data-driven adaptations and learning around a collaboratively set group of learning objectives or research questions.

The Uptake DE focused on four research questions:

1. What are the conditions and working relationships necessary in the LWPs, the Lab, and its partners to achieve sustained uptake internally (through Missions and Bureaus) and externally?

2. How do we determine which current Lab approaches are most effective at sustained uptake? What has been the perceived and real value add of the approaches? What can we learn from the Lab models?

3. What are the replicable principles/elements from the different sustained uptake models and how should others apply them to a different context?

4. How does the Lab balance sustained uptake initiatives that are internal versus external? What impact (internal or external) does the Lab value more? Where can the Lab have the most impact?

The research questions were addressed through comparative and comprehensive analysis of data collected over the course of a year using various evaluation approaches, including process tracing, outcome harvesting, positive deviance, and appreciative inquiry, resulting in data-driven adaptations for the five teams, lessons learned for the Lab, and the guidance in this Playbook for broader Agency use!

WHAT IS THE AUTOMATED DIRECTIVE SYSTEM AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO MISSION ENGAGEMENT?

Most USAID employees are aware that USAID's Automated Directive System (ADS) is the policy document that guides all aspects of the Agency's programs and operations. Adherence to most of the ADS guidance is compulsory, if not strongly encouraged. As such, Operating Units must endeavor to ensure that all aspects of their work are ADS compliant. However, ADS adherence isn't just required, it's good practice! Evaluation findings have demonstrated that several of the ADS requirements related to Mission engagement have been helpful to facilitating effective working relationships between HQ and Mission teams, thus laying the foundation for sustained uptake. You can learn more in Modules 2 and 3.

Who Is This Playbook For?

This Playbook is for any USAID HQ team that supports Missions through technical assistance and other service offerings. While the guidance is particularly geared towards activity managers, team leads, and those who want to establish relationships with Missions, it is also applicable to those teams receiving demand from Missions for service offerings. If you are part of a team responding to Mission demand, Modules 3 and 4 will be the most relevant for you. The Playbook offers practical, well-tested, and effective strategies to users seeking to start new or improve existing Mission relationships and service delivery.

Establishing Mission partnerships is exciting business! But do not forget there are important operational guidelines that affect how Agency teams can and should go about their work, with the Automated Directive System (ADS) being chief among them. Always check to make sure you are compliant with the ADS. Additional compliance guidance related to USAID HQ-Mission engagement and partnerships is offered throughout the Modules in this Playbook.

What Is the Ideal Mission Engagement Process?

Based on evidence regarding the effectiveness of different engagement strategies for USAID HQ teams cultivating demand from Missions, the ideal Mission engagement process entails the following steps or actions by your team:

1 — Conduct stakeholder mapping to support prospective partner Mission selection. Assess your team's available resources and capacity to provide services to Missions at this time. (Module 1)

2 — Determine your team's strongest entry points, and prioritize outreach to a small set of prospective partner Missions based on those entry points and your capacity assessment. (Module 1)

3 — Reach out to prospective partner Missions through identified entry points for initial conversations. Introduce your team, its work, and your desire to support the Mission. Gauge initial interest and alignment between the Mission and your team's work. (Module 1)

4 — Offer an assessment to the Mission as a learning opportunity and/or short-term technical service. Collaboratively develop the scope and approach for a market assessment or stakeholder convening to identify opportunities, gaps, and additional stakeholders that can catalyze Mission work and objectives. (Module 2)

5 — Implement the assessment and leverage its findings, as well as any information your team systematically gathers on Mission priorities, to refine your general service offerings into a targeted scope of work. (Module 2 and Module 3)

6 — Propose your scope of work to the Mission in a way that explicitly demonstrates how the work could serve their needs and contribute to their programming objectives. (Module 3)

7 — In negotiating the scope of work, clarify expectations around the level of Mission involvement by writing up roles and responsibilities. Ensure these roles and responsibilities are also captured in the more formalized Mission Concurrence Memo. (Module 3)

8 — Once the work begins, make sure to regularly communicate progress and build a network of Mission champions who believe in the work and will carry it forward well after your team's direct involvement. (Module 4))

9 — Gradually transfer ownership and responsibility to the Mission. Complement this with capacity building efforts and expansion of the network of champions. (Module 4))

10 — Finalize an exit strategy and fully transfer ownership once the Mission invests in/commits to additional work in this technical area, demonstrating the capacity and willingness to continue. (Module 4))

Congratulations - you've achieved sustained uptake!

What Does this Playbook Contain?

This Playbook provides technical guidance to get your team through each of the above steps, based on evidence from the Developmental Evaluation. Here's an overview of everything you'll find inside:

MODULE 1

Identification of Strong Partner Missions

1.1. **Identifying Entry Points**: Different types of entry points, and how to use stakeholder mapping to identify the specific entry points your team can utilize in Mission outreach.

1.2. **Initial Outreach:** Best practice tactics and framing for initial outreach to selected prospective partner Missions.

1.3. **Cultivating a Demand Pipeline**: Steps to build long-term demand and reduce the burden of identifying new prospective partners each time your team has capacity to support Missions.

MODULE 2

Leveraging Assessments

2.1. **Purpose and Value of Assessments**: Relevant types of assessments, the rationale for conducting them, and how they can facilitate sustained uptake.

2.2. **Sharing Assessments Effectively**: How to share assessment findings to cultivate interest.

2.3. **Compliance and Logistics**: Overview of mandatory actions at the start of formal engagement with a prospective partner Mission, and in preparing for a temporary duty assignment (TDY) to conduct an assessment.

2.4. **Refining Offerings Based on Assessments**: How to translate assessment findings into useful data to refine and support your team's offerings to the Mission. This sub-Module discusses how to move from a general menu of services to a discrete set of possible activities tailored to a Mission's needs.

MODULE 3

Aligning with the Mission and Securing a Scope of Work

3.1. **Identifying Relevant Mission Priorities**: Identification of different sources of Mission priorities, and how to determine which priorities are most relevant to your work.

3.2. **Aligning Service Offerings with Mission Priorities**: How to align and refine your team's service offerings based on identified Mission priorities.

3.3. **Proposing a Scope of Work**: Guidance on framing, writing, and remaining compliant in developing a scope of work to leverage your assessment findings and identified Mission priorities.

MODULE 4

Relationship Management

4.1. **Building a Diverse Network of Champions**: Discussion of the importance of having more than one champion, and how to develop a network of champions.

4.2. **The Importance of Local Champions**: Bringing Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) into your team's work, and how to involve them to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

4.3. **The Importance of USAID Staff Involvement**: Keeping your team involved throughout engagement, setting frequency of communication, and how to make sure the work matters.

4.4. **Engage, Manage, and Maintain Your Network**: Practical relationship management advice for when the work begins.

4.5. **Transitioning Ownership**: Tips and tools for exit strategies to ensure ongoing investment even after your team ends direct engagement.

Where does your team's work start with Missions? Your team has existing service offerings, innovations, or concepts you want to promote. You may have prospective partner Missions knocking on your door, asking for programming, or you may be requested by USAID's leadership to work with a particular Mission. However, where do you start when you need to generate demand for your work yourself? How do you ensure that the time and effort you spend reaching out to a Mission will be effective and efficient for building a partnership and mutually beneficial set of activities? How do you do this strategically, in a way that will ultimately promote sustained uptake of the work with the Mission?

This Module covers how to review your relationships and potential entry points, leverage those relationships to help select a prospective partner Mission, and effectively conduct initial outreach. The end of this Module also provides guidance on how to cultivate a demand pipeline so that your team does not have to start from scratch every time you have the capacity to work with new Missions.

1.1 Identifying Entry Points

How do you identify prospective partner Missions? What foundation will help you best achieve sustained uptake by a partner Mission? USAID Headquarters (HQ) teams need to make relationships and pre-existing entry points a strategic, rather than opportunistic, component of their Mission engagement strategies. This leads to more effective and efficient sustained uptake with partner Missions.

First, consider what the different types of entry points are:
- Implementing partners with close relationships to the Mission
- Consultants whom a Mission has repeatedly hired
- Personal relationships with Mission staff or people close to Mission staff
- USAID HQ teams that have strong, positive working relationships with the Mission, particularly that team's point of contact with the Mission
- Formal Mission points of contact within other Bureaus (like Country Support Officers in the Bureau for Food Security)

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

Utilizing pre-existing entry points and/or relationships in outreach to a prospective partner Mission increases the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving sustained uptake of activities with Missions. This strategy was found to be more effective and efficient at achieving initial buy-in and a scope of work with a partner Mission than identifying a contextual fit through technical criteria (e.g. maturity of infrastructure, comparative integration rates of similar innovations, etc.). Technical criteria can still be useful as a filter, but outreach and final selection of prospective partner Missions should rely heavily on relationships within the current Agency culture. This strategy was used successfully in over 8 tested Mission engagements across 4 USAID HQ teams, and was further refined for scaling by two Lab teams for outreach to over 10 Missions in 2018. As your team and model become more mature, you should begin to leverage established relationships, and use cases and more formal pathways to cultivate and respond to demand (more on that in section 1.3).

- Broader Mission-USAID HQ relationship point of contacts (e.g. Science Technology Innovations and Partnership work in the Lab)
- Any Foreign Service National (FSN) Fellows in your prospective partner Missions that have spent time with your Operating Unit (OU)
- Other donors that have strong, positive working relationships with the Mission through coordinated work
- Private sector companies that are coordinating investments with the Mission
- United Nations Agency partners that have coordinated work with the Mission
- And many more!

Next, your team is going to need a stakeholder map. Your team should do a stakeholder mapping exercise *before* selecting prospective partner Missions to engage. If you are not familiar with this tool, stakeholder mapping is just a way of capturing individuals you know, those you have worked with, and where you have worked. Stakeholder mapping can be done at the individual and/or organization level, and can examine your network within a country, region, or globally.

Remember, you should be ready to provide services to any contacted prospective partner Missions that express interest in working with your team. Take your capacity and resources into consideration when determining how many Missions you will initially contact. You can always reach out to others later if initial contacts don't work out!

SOME WAYS TO EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN YOUR TEAM'S MAP

- Think about connections you haven't identified yet. Ask yourself: What connections do your implementing partners have? Where have champions from past Mission partnerships moved?

- Connect with teams in your OU that work with Missions to learn which partnerships have been productive.

- If you have target prospective partner Missions in mind, think about civil society organizations, government contacts, implementing partner, and/or ongoing efforts you know of and those to which you are already connected.

- Reflect on tenuous relationships that you could strengthen. Are there partners you interact with at conferences or other spaces that know your work and might have connections to Missions?

- Connect with Regional Bureaus and ask about receptivity of different Missions. This will help in Step 5 and 6, when you start to filter and select prospective partner Missions.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING PROCESS FOR MISSION SELECTION

1 **Decide on the scale of the mapping that will meet your needs.** Do you want to prioritize singular points of contact and/or relationships, or do you want to look for organizational partners? There are many different types of entry points, as described above. First determine whether you are looking at the individual or organizational level, and then determine if you want to focus on a network within a few target countries or explore the possibility of leveraging global connections.

2 **Be conscientious of the scope of your stakeholder map.** Are you focusing in on one type of service offering, or are you looking at your relationships across all services? Are you mapping relationships across all your work streams, or just within work you are considering with a prospective partner Mission you may already have in mind? It is beneficial to do a stakeholder mapping exercise that first examines the big picture, then narrows down prospective partner Missions or filters through service offerings.

3 Once you have determined the scope of your map, **sit down with your team and write down the individuals you are currently working with within that scope**. Include notes on the type of work you did/are doing with them, what they are working on now (if you know), and the current status of the relationship. It will be helpful for later on if you can also note their level of expertise relative to your service offerings, sector, and/or familiarity with the Agency.

4 Next, **make the connections**! Who else do the people or organizations on your primary list know? Who have they worked with before that you know of? Visualize, either manually or with the help of digital tools listed below, how your stakeholders are connected to each other, to you, and - most importantly - to USAID Missions.

5 You can now **analyze your stakeholder map and select of a handful of prospective Mission partners** to reach out to. First, identify strong nodes, or people/organizations in your map that hold a substantial number of connections. Which Missions are they connected to? Then, look at gaps. Are there prospective partner Missions you wanted to target that have no connections or only a few weak connections? Those Missions should probably not be among those you reach out to right now. Filter the prospective partner Missions that have strong relationship ties to your team by how those Missions and relationships relate to your current capacity. You may have a strong connection to one Mission, but perhaps that connection is based on work you no longer do. You are not necessarily unable to leverage that relationship in outreach; rather, such a relationship requires more explanation and effort to make a connection.

6 Finally, **identify which prospective partner Missions have the strongest entry points** to both the Mission and your team, and which also align with your team's current capacity. Select at least 2 prospective partner Missions, but no more than those to whom you are able to provide services. You are ready for initial outreach!

TOOLS TO DO STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

There are a variety of tools available to help create, visualize, and maintain your stakeholder map. Visualization is a particularly great way to make connections, identify key connectors in your network, stay up-to-date with which of your team members manages past, current, and prospective relationships, and identify gaps where you can work on expanding your network.

■ There are many different templates and in-depth guidance documents available online, easily identifiable with a simple search, that can help you organize and draw out some of the details about your network. This type of guidance can help you move from listing to identifying entry points. A Google search for "Stakeholder Mapping" will direct you to various available templates.

■ Kumu – for more creative visuals, Kumu can help you construct a map that can visualize relationship strengths and interconnectedness, identify different types of stakeholders through color coordination, and build simple stakeholder profiles.

■ Stakeholder Onion Maps on Concept Draw – ConceptDraw is a visual tool that can be used to build stakeholder maps. You can jump into readily available templates, such as "onion maps", which can help you distinguish how closely connected stakeholders are to your team or prospective partner Missions.

■ Collaboration Mapping Excel worksheet – The Learning Lab has developed a Collaboration Mapping Excel worksheet and guidance to facilitate identification and mapping of stakeholder relationships. This tool provides a template to help highlight relationship nuances and create a visual.

■ CLA Toolkit – This toolkit has two mapping tools on engaging stakeholders, including a net mapping tool.

■ Gephi – If your network is growing faster than you can create icons in Kumu, you may want to consider more robust software. Gephi is a great analysis and visualization tool built for larger networks, more data input on the relationships, and can be used for social network analysis if needed.

■ For more advanced and nuanced stakeholder mapping over time, you may want to consider investing in Social Network Analysis. You can find more about the tool PARTNER on the Learning Lab.
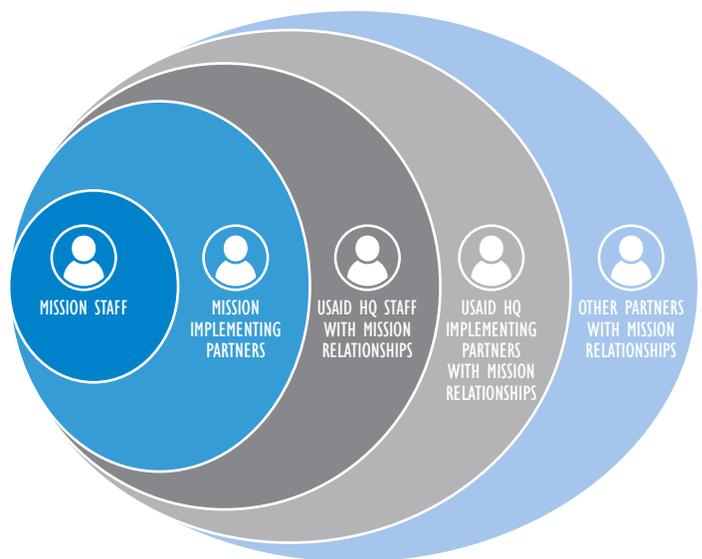
TIP: Having a digital database of your stakeholder map, even in Excel or Google Sheets, makes updates and maintenance easier along the way.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING EXAMPLES

Network map
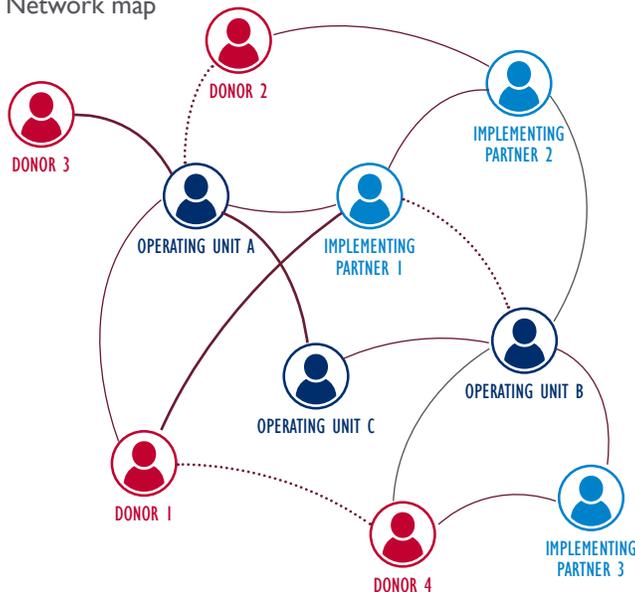
Onion map

1.2 Initial Outreach

Once you've selected your prospective partner Missions to contact, you will need to work on leveraging your entry point(s) and reaching out in a collaborative, service-oriented manner.

Reach out and have a discussion with your chosen entry points. Depending on how long it has been since your team's last interaction with the person/organization, you may need a conversation to catch up before you ask them about connecting you to a prospective partner Mission. Once you have refreshed the relationship, begin asking about the prospective partner Mission. Is your entry point able to gauge potential interest from the Mission, provide you with a specific point of contact to reach out to, give any advice on priorities, what to mention or not mention, or any other people you should connect with before reaching out to the Mission? Make sure to take advantage of the information and insight your chosen entry point may have to offer. Do not just use them as a passthrough to the prospective partner Mission!

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

The Digital Development for Feed the Future (D2FTF) team was mandated to contact the remaining 9 Feed the Future Missions with whom they had not yet worked to see if those Missions would utilize digital tools and technologies in their Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) work. With the prospective partner Missions already chosen, the team still leveraged entry points, assessments (Module 2), and alignment with Mission priorities (Module 3) to design scopes of work (SOWs) that ultimately achieved sustained uptake with the Missions.

The approach D2FTF took was:

- Reach out to the BFS Country Support Officers to determine what they should know and identify an ideal Mission staff to be an initial point of contact.

- Reach out to their existing network within and beyond USAID to see who had worked with the selected Missions before. The team used a preexisting stakeholder map to narrow down who is most likely to have existing relations with the targeted Missions. They follow up individually with anyone with those relationships to learn more and to see if any contacts can connect the team to the Mission.

- Prepare service-oriented, actionable outreach emails to send through or with their entry points that demonstrated the team's success to date in a clear and concise way.

Sending the First Email

The first email is your first impression with a prospective partner Mission. The framing, language, and connections you make in this email can determine if a Mission will even listen to what you have to offer. You will want to make a concise pitch that demonstrates a desire to partner and support, rather than asking for tacit approval to experiment in-country. The initial outreach email should establish a connection and provide a quick overview of your team; anything else should be mostly questions. You want to give the Mission enough information to react to, while also demonstrating a clear desire to provide support and listen to the Mission's needs and concerns. An example email with notes is provided below, pulling from D2FTF's GFSS outreach effort mentioned above.

EXAMPLE EMAIL *On this email, the entry points were CC'd since the team had already had some indirect contact with the prospective partner Mission.*

Dear [Mission staff],

I hope this note finds you doing well and progressing through the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) country plan process (I am looking forward to reading the draft just shared with the WST!)

I am reaching out to you today with **an opportunity to take advantage of resources the D2FTF initiative has available for USAID Missions around digital agriculture** and build upon the work USAID/[prospective partner Mission] is already doing in this space.

The Digital Development for Feed the Future (D2FTF) team is a collaboration between the Bureau for Food Security and the U.S. Global Development Lab and is focused on providing support to leverage digital tools for agriculture in GFSS target countries.

While "digital" was featured throughout the GFSS and has an accompanying Technical Guidance on the topic, we understand not every Mission has the time or resources to fully explore and integrate digital tools and technologies into their agricultural activities.

Recognizing this, **D2FTF has set aside staff, time, and resources this fiscal year to assist Missions in identifying, understanding, and further integrating digital into their agricultural programming**.

The D2FTF team is available to complete rapid, in-country assessments of your country's digital landscape, current and planned Feed the Future activities, and ways to leverage digital tools for results. D2FTF previously conducted assessments in four countries, and found them to be comprehensive and useful in identifying opportunities and understanding how to integrate locally relevant technologies into agricultural programming.

We also have resources available to provide technical assistance, desk research, and leverage mechanisms where relevant (see attached) - we'd be happy to further discuss what might be useful to you.

As resources are limited and will expire on September 30, 2018 please let me know if you are interested in discussing an assessment or other D2FTF support. I'd be happy to set up a call with you or your colleagues to have an initial conversation.

All the best,

[Signature]

GUIDANCE:

Notice the team knows what the Mission is working on, expressed interest, and expectations around minor engagement that was already ongoing.

The team used words like "opportunity" and "resources", which conveys support and partnership instead of coming across as telling the Mission what to do. They also mentioned work the Mission is already doing in this space, demonstrating an early desire to align with Mission priorities.

The team hyperlinked resources. This way the Mission staff could dig deeper if they wanted, but the email was kept concise with priority information only.

Here the team acknowledges burdens on the Mission's plate, while also reminding the Mission of Agency-wide expectations and initiatives.

The team also makes sure to emphasize they have resources to offer, setting the expectation that this is support and not just another request of the Mission's attention, time, and resources.

Given the short timeline for this team's outreach, they offered an assessment right off the bat. This can be a useful strategy as it gives the Mission a concrete initial offering to respond and react to.

The team clarified, since they offered the assessment, that the assessment was not the only service that they had available to the Mission. The team made sure to emphasize the provision of services would be based on what was deemed useful by the Mission.

Finally, the team set clear expectations from their side about time and capacity limitations, encouraging a Mission response to a limited time offer.

Do not be shy in following up with the Mission - they are busy people! Follow up within a week or two to raise the request to the top of their inbox. If you still do not receive a response, follow up after another two weeks. If you still have not heard back after three attempts to reach out, you may want to consider trying a different Mission point of contact or entry point. Alternatively, it may be time to focus your outreach efforts on your other, potentially more receptive, prospective partner Missions.

Assuming you receive a positive response, now is the time to schedule a call with the interested prospective partner Mission to hear their initial thoughts, identify additional people your team should contact in order to build buy-in, and to propose an assessment — more about this in Module 2.

1.3 Cultivating a Demand Pipeline

Supporting a Mission is a resource intensive effort that requires a lot of time. Here are a few practices your team should integrate into day-to-day activities to cultivate your demand pipeline and decrease the effort required to identify potential entry points over time.

Maintain an up-to-date stakeholder map. Establish a database where your whole team knows to add new contacts and their details. If this is the majority of your work, you may want to invest in client management software, like SalesForce. A free solution for smaller teams is to build a tracker in Google Sheets on your team Drive. Set aside time bi-annually to check in and make sure your stakeholder map is current, to identify any relationships that could benefit from refreshed engagement, and to determine any gaps across your service offerings or regions where you may want to strategically build relationships. Maintaining an up-to-date stakeholder map makes for a much easier lift when it comes time to identify future entry points.

Leverage the FSN Fellowship Program to establish a broader range of Mission relationships. Whether a Fellow comes to work with your team or at your Center, make time to get to know them, their Mission, and any potential opportunities for partnership. However, do not let the Fellowship be the only chance for engagement! Keep up regular communication with Fellows after they leave. Reach out for a check-in call every 6 months, or establish a working group with all the Fellows with whom you have interacted. FSNs can be sustainable champions for your team's work, as well as direct entry points for outreach to prospective partner Missions in the future.

Dedicate resources to writing and disseminating use cases and success stories. Do not let all your efforts with current engagements lead to just one success story. Prospective partner Missions are more likely to respond positively to a proposed SOW when they know other Missions have benefited from the work and have enjoyed working with your team. Appreciative partner Missions are a resource and can help spread the good news. Encourage Mission champions to share by providing them with talking points and short success stories that make their Mission look good. Budget for writing a case study towards the end of each Mission engagement. Make sure you build the use case on evidence of outcomes, and present the who, what, why, and how in a concise, storytelling manner.
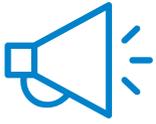
Market your team and work to other HQ Bureaus and teams. Partner Missions are not the only ones who can spread the news about your team's work and successes. Disseminate updates, use cases, new tools, and resources at HQ. Target other Bureaus, teams, and offices that have more natural connections to your service offerings. If those teams know who you are and what you have to offer, they are more likely to mention the work to their partner Missions or consider how it could contribute to larger Agency efforts.

Search and probe your stakeholder map for entry points regularly. Thinking about team capacity 3 to 6 months in advance will allow you to start engaging with potential entry points early, such that prospective partner Mission outreach is ripe when your team has the capacity to expand your efforts.

Over time, the above practices ensure you do not have to create a new stakeholder map every time your team is ready for outreach. More importantly, intentional cultivation of existing relationships and successful engagements spread the word and increase the likelihood that prospective partner Missions approach you. In the long run, building this type of network and platform should enable your team to shift from solely leveraging entry points to being able to use both entry points and selection criteria to engage with partner Missions that may be a more ideal contextual fit for your service offerings.

Identification of Strong Partner Missions

- ☐ Complete a Stakeholder Map for Your Team:

  - ☐ Decide on the scale of the mapping that will meet your needs. Determine whether you are looking at the individual or organizational level, within a few countries or globally.

  - ☐ Determine the scope of your stakeholder map. Look at the big picture first and then narrow down prospective partner Missions or filters by service offerings.

  - ☐ Write down who your team is currently working with within the determined scope. Include some notes about what type of work you did/are doing with them, what they are working on now, and the current status of the relationship.

  - ☐ Make the connections. Visualize, either manually or with the help of digital tools, how your stakeholders are connected to each other, to you, and to USAID Missions.

  - ☐ Analyze your stakeholder map and select of a handful of prospective Mission partners to reach out to. Filter the prospective partner Missions that have strong relationship ties to your team by how those Missions and relationships relate to your current capacity.

  - ☐ Select at least 2 prospective partner Missions, but no more than you will be able to provide services to.

- ☐ Reach out and have a discussion with your chosen entry points.

- ☐ Make a concise pitch to the prospective partner Mission(s). Write an initial outreach email that focuses on making a connection, a quick overview of your team, and questions that demonstrate an interest in Mission priorities.

  - ☐ Follow up a week or two later to raise the request to the top of the Mission staff's inbox. Follow up after another two weeks. If you still have not heard back after three attempts to reach out, you may want to consider trying a different Mission point of contact or focus your outreach efforts on your other prospective partner Missions.

- ☐ Maintain an up-to-date stakeholder map. Establish a database where your whole team knows to add new contacts and their details.

  - ☐ Set aside time bi-annually to check in and make sure your stakeholder map is current, to identify any relationships that could benefit from reaching out to catch up, and to determine any gaps across your service offerings or regionally where you may want to strategically build relationships.

  - ☐ Search and probe your stakeholder map for entry points regularly. Think about team capacity 3 to 6 months in advance to start engaging with potential entry points early.

- ☐ Leverage the Foreign Service National (FSN) Fellowship Program to establish a broader range of Mission relationships. Keep up regular communication with Fellows after they leave. Reach out for a check-in call every 6 months, or establish a working group with all the Fellows you have interacted with.

- ☐ Dedicate resources to writing and disseminating use cases and success stories. Encourage Mission champions to share by providing them with talking points and short success stories that make their Mission look good. Budget for writing a case study towards the end of each Mission engagement.

- ☐ Market your team and work to other HQ Bureaus and teams. Disseminate updates, use cases, new tools and resources at HQ. Target other Bureaus, teams, and offices that have more natural connections to your service offerings.

MODULE 2

Leveraging Assessments

Once your team has a prospective partner Mission's attention, how do you transition that attention into a Concurrence Memo and established partner in activities? Conducting an assessment is an evidence-driven approach to help you design Mission-friendly scopes of work (SOWs), and, ultimately, secure activities with Missions. Teams can even conduct assessments that facilitate some of the other steps recommended in this Playbook, such as understanding Mission priorities (Module 3) and cultivating relationships (Module 4), thereby leading to overall efficiencies in the engagement process. This Module will explain what assessments are, why they are important, and what types of assessment options are available to your team. The Module also offers guidance on how to leverage your assessment to refine your team's service offerings and entice prospective partner Missions.

2.1 Purpose and Value of Assessments

If a prospective partner Mission has indicated preliminary interest in working with your team, assessments can help pinpoint opportunities, gaps, contextual market information, and new stakeholders that can help target your offerings and demonstrate your team's value add to the Mission.

WHAT IS AN ASSESSMENT?

Assessments can serve a wide variety of purposes, and can likewise take many forms. The ADS 201 defines an assessment as "a forward-looking process that may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform strategic planning or project design, or an informal review of a strategy, project, or activity." In the context of Mission engagement, this typically involves an HQ-based team or their implementing partner, conducting research about the local context— and often, though not necessarily, with the aid of one or more temporary duty assignments (TDYs). The assessment team seeks to understand the needs on the ground and how those needs can best be addressed. Assessments can be technical or operational in nature:

- **Technical assessments**: These assessments focus on understanding the extent to which a certain context is ripe for a team's service offerings. For example, teams may conduct market assessments to determine whether there is sufficient infrastructure or customer receptivity to their offerings (e.g. digital financial services, solar home systems, dialogue and mediation training, mobile health units, etc.) in a certain country or region.

- **Operational assessments**: These assessments can help teams understand whether a Mission would be receptive to undertaking the new services your team is offering. These assessments typically include a mapping of staffing, priorities, current programs, and HQ engagements—not unlike the stakeholder map discussed in Module 1.

WHY SHOULD I CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT?

There are three primary, interrelated reasons your team should consider in deciding to undertake an assessment:

☑ **It helps make the case.** Your team can make an evidence-based claim about the need for your offerings. If you can frame your assessment findings in the context of Mission priorities, you will have a much easier time convincing your Mission counterparts and their leadership about the value your team can add to the Mission by conducting activities in those areas.

☑ **It helps you contextualize.** If your team has any pre-outreach ideas regarding the possible structure of activities with the prospective partner Mission, you can use the assessment data to validate, refine, and/or change those ideas to tailor them appropriately to the local context. Likewise, during your team's brainstorming, assessment data can serve as an important reference point in ensuring the intervention is relevant.

☑ **It generates goodwill.** By providing a helpful service at little or no cost to a prospective partner Mission, you can show that your team is committed to helping contribute to Mission needs and priorities. Some Missions find that HQ-based programming can feel like a resource drain. By conducting an assessment, you may be able to provide the Mission something that they need, but do not have the resources (e.g. time, funds, or attention) to procure on their own.

This list is not exhaustive, however. As suggested above, the very process of conducting an assessment can help achieve some of the other steps recommended in this playbook—namely, understanding and targeting Mission priorities and developing good working relationships with multiple field-based stakeholders. Given these myriad benefits, HQ teams should always endeavor to undertake some form of assessment as part of their Mission engagement strategy. Although the type and depth of the assessment may vary depending on availability of resources (especially budget or the availability of existing information), the importance of doing such due diligence cannot be understated!

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

The use of various assessments contributed to solidification of programming and relationships between four Lab teams (D2FTF, Digital Financial Services (DFS), Digital Inclusion, Scaling Off-Grid Energy) and a USAID Mission in Africa. Assessment activities by each team included consultations/workshops with implementing partners, other donors, and private sector companies in the field, use of existing/secondary data (e.g., program documents), and original research through interviews/surveys conducted by USAID HQ implementing partners.

HOW SHOULD I CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT?

As noted above, there are different assessment modalities that your team can employ. Most often, the availability of resources is the greatest determinant of the type of assessment you will be able to conduct. Therefore, before deciding on a particular modality, you should first determine what resources are at your disposal.

ASSESSMENT TEAM COMPOSITION

- **Key questions to consider**: What available time or budget does your team have to contribute to this effort? Who on your team has the technical or regional expertise you think you might need to conduct the assessment? Do you have an implementing partner that can assist? Recall that at this stage, the assessment is a sort of "gift" to the Mission. Although there are some cases in which a Mission will commission and fund an assessment, it is rare! Be prepared for your team to conduct the vast majority of the work, in close consultation with the Mission.

- **Decision point**: Identify an assessment team. This can be comprised entirely of your own USAID colleagues if you have the availability. This is a great way to catalyze the relationship with the Mission. Alternatively, you can hire an implementing partner to collect data on your behalf. Or, you can adopt a hybrid approach with both USAID and implementing partner staff.

Once you have identified your team, establish clear roles and responsibilities for all team members, particularly any Mission staff from whom you may be requesting information or logistical assistance. These roles and responsibilities may depend on the time, budget, and expertise each assessment team has to offer. Ideally, you will select your team after deciding on an assessment design and will want to avoid developing a plan that you later cannot implement due to resource constraints.

ASSESSMENT SCOPE

Next, determine which questions your assessment will seek to answer. Do you need information on the programmatic or operational context, or both? Select a series of three to five questions geared towards better understanding the context that your team will use to guide its research. Here are a few examples of questions you might want to answer:

- What sector or system trends are being prioritized through dedicated efforts across implementers, other donors, and at the Mission?

- To what extent is the [target innovation] integrated into development programming in country? What do integration levels look like disaggregated across different types of actors (e.g. international non-governmental organization (iNGO), local civil society organization (CSO), different donor activities, government, etc.)?

- How do contextual variables, like socio-economic, political, climate, and/or conflict dynamics, impact work in this sector or system? What dynamics would activities need to respond to in order to remain conflict sensitive?

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Once you have defined your questions, you will need to decide how to gather the data necessary to answer them. There are a few possible research tools at your disposal, depending on resource availability. Three basic options include:

Low Resource Availability: At a minimum, all assessments should involve some kind of **literature review**. Start by reading existing literature about the

sector, field, or location in question. This literature can come from a wide variety of sources; a simple Google search can help you track down recent reports from academic sources, donors, implementing partners, or other experts on the subject. For programmatic information, you may need to peruse the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). See Module 3.1 for ideas of specific programmatic documents to review. Complement the reading with a series of **key informant interviews** (KIIs) by phone with Mission staff, which can help you fill information gaps from the literature review, and even suggest additional documents to read that can help you gain contextual insights.

Medium Resource Availability: If resources permit, you can send one or more members of your team on a TDY to the Mission to build on the literature review. While in country, your team can conduct in-person KIIs with additional Mission staff, implementing partners, other donors, or any other stakeholder group that you identify during the course of your research. **Focus group discussions** may be another appropriate method to use if you need to glean information about different stakeholder groups' attitudes towards a certain subject. Finally, site visits that include structured or semi-structured **observation** can be a helpful method to get an even clearer picture of Mission programming.

High Resource Availability: In addition to the methods described in the low and medium resource environments above, some teams have used participatory methods to carry out assessments. This has primarily occurred through **convenings or workshops** that bring together interested stakeholders to discuss barriers, challenges, gaps, and potential solutions with implementing partners, other donors, private sector actors, and other relevant stakeholders in the sector. This method can be a great way to establish a network in-country and build external champions (Module 4.1) to support your work later on, or even to vet Mission implementing partners who may want to be included in your service offerings. Workshops can also be a very effective way to build buy-in and ownership of the subsequent offerings.

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

A case study conducted on Lab team engagement with a USAID Mission in Asia found that the Mission engagement was successful in part because of the team's use of myriad assessments, including an operational assessment that mapped staffing, priorities, current programs, and HQ engagements. The team's use of a robust convening to hear from implementers and gauge their interest in sector innovations was also crucial. Ultimately, the evaluation found that the assessments were key to developing service offerings that the Mission not only bought into, but sustained after the conclusion of the engagement with USAID/HQ. Although you don't want to go overboard with assessments, designing a multifaceted approach often improves efficiencies in the

2.2 Sharing Assessments Effectively

You can get the most out of your assessment if you cultivate buy-in before, during, and after you complete the work:

Prior to Conducting an Assessment

Engage audiences with assessment results early in the process, even in the design stage of an assessment. Engaging the prospective partner Mission early through preliminary research (via interviews or literature review) will give you the best chance of answering questions the Mission may have about the collaboration's potential to best meet their needs and ensure context relevancy. Throughout the preparation process, keep the following questions in mind: How does your team's expertise relate to the Mission's needs? What information does your team or the Mission need in order to be convinced that your services meet those needs? Is this assessment going to gather that information? How do your team's offerings align with assessment findings? Is there a natural fit?

At this stage, sharing will occur primarily through exchanges via phone and/or email. Once you generate a draft assessment design, send a brief overview to the prospective partner Mission colleagues for review and feedback.

During Assessment Fieldwork

Your team should seize opportunities to engage Mission colleagues face-to-face when in the field. This gives Mission staff an opportunity to put faces to names, articulate their primary interests, and react to the work you are conducting in real-time. In-person interactions facilitate relationship building, trust, and more effective conversations about any potential activities or support. Engaging Mission colleagues can also provide your team the chance to make any necessary adjustments before it is too late.

How to share at this stage:

Before an in-brief with the Mission: Share a short document with an overview of the assessment design and

During an in-brief with the Mission: Bring hard copies of the assessment design or any team information to hand out at the meeting (or, be environmentally friendly and project onto a screen if you have audiovisual infrastructure). Items you should cover during this discussion include:
- Introductions
- Purpose of visit/assessment
- Overview of research completed to date
- Assessment design (What questions will this assessment answer? What methods, data sources, and analysis techniques will the team employ?)
- Field work schedule

During an out-brief with the Mission: Prior to departing, schedule a meeting and develop an accompanying PowerPoint presentation to cover:
- Overview of in-country activities completed
- Key takeaways
- Action plan
- Next steps

Be sure to include time for a discussion of what the Mission would and would not like to see incorporated into a subsequent report and a draft SOW. This can help sustain their interest and reduce the need for significant revisions to the content later on. For an example of an out-brief, see page 12 of the Digital Agriculture Assessment Toolkit here. For guidance on developing a SOW, see Module 3.

Do not underestimate the importance of in-briefs and out-briefs. These meetings provide stakeholders the opportunity to share their impressions of which findings are most/least interesting, or those needing further review. These interactions can and should help you determine how to design programming that will turn your prospective partner Mission into an active partner!

After Assessment Fieldwork

Once you have had a chance to analyze your data and generate recommendations for a SOW, create a short assessment report that summarizes the results. In general, reports tend to be most effective when they are well-organized, concise, convey important information, and are visually appealing. This is particularly important for Mission staff, who tend to be especially busy.

Organization: Always include a 1-2 page executive summary. Other content should also be in distinct, well-labeled sections.

Length: Review the report for information that is most pertinent to the assessment scope, and remove or annex extraneous information.

Framing and Formatting: Use active voice; include bullets or small text boxes when appropriate, and be concise.

Content: Always maintain a utilization focus, i.e. include information that is relevant to identified Mission priorities (Module 3). Draw direct connections between Mission priorities, findings from the assessment, and the service offerings you can provide to the Mission.

VISUALIZATION

A plethora of best practices and guidance exist regarding good data visualization. Leveraging good visualization will make your report more attractive, easier to process, and more likely to get a response from Mission staff. When creating graphs, consider using this checklist to assess whether they follow good practices. Finally, remember that data visualization is more than just graphs. Other forms include timelines, maps, charts, matrices, and pictograms. Consider how these can help communicate assessment findings to reduce the reliance on text.

WHAT TOOLS CAN YOU USE TO MAKE ASSESSMENT PRODUCTS VISUALLY APPEALING?

There are a variety of online tools you can use to create visuals. Here is a sampling of some free, user-friendly tools:

- **Canva** – tool to create visually appealing one-pagers, infographics, convening materials, and reports.
- **Lucid** – simple platform to create clear charts or diagrams.
- **Flat** – library of free icons to help illustrate text.
- The latest version of **Office Suite** also contains icons available for free use.

If done properly, you can leverage your assessment to make a programming sales pitch to the Mission. Be sure to produce something that effectively communicates the information the Mission wants and needs to make decisions about partnering with your team!

2.3 Compliance and Logistics

It is likely that your first encounter with mandatory protocols will be while planning TDYs for assessments as you begin formally interacting with the prospective partner Mission. **There are important protocols that you must follow along the way to ensure** **that relevant parties are aware of and formally in agreement with any HQ-Mission collaboration**. The Center for Agency Integration (CAI) in the Lab developed the following list of best practices that teams visiting Missions on TDYs should follow *prior to their departure*.

- If Mission support is needed as part of the field visit, then you must seek **Mission approval** BEFORE planning travel.

- A **security clearance** verification is required to confirm your security clearance to all overseas destinations. All requests must be submitted by an authorized requestor: AMS officer (for those based in Washington, DC) or through your Executive Officer (EXO) or Regional Security Office (RSO - for those posted overseas). Submit all requests for clearance verification 15 business days prior to the desired travel date. To facilitate this activity for Top Secret, Secret, or Facility Access levels, complete a 566-6 form electronically and have it processed by the appropriate personnel outlined above through the secclearanceverif@USAID.gov mailbox only.

- If your Mission requires **country clearance**, file the clearance several weeks in advance of travel.

- Check with StateMed about **medical considerations** and required vaccinations (polio, yellow fever, etc.), and arrange to take any necessary steps needed to fulfill those requirements prior to travel.

- If traveling to a high threat location, determine whether you need to take **mandatory trainings**, such as the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) course and the High Threat Security Overseas Seminar (HTSOS).

- Inform the Mission and Regional Bureau/Country Desk Officer at least one month in advance of a **field visit**, even if approval is not required (i.e. if Mission support is not needed as part of the field visit). Ask about any special issues or sensitivities prior to meeting with senior host government or regional officials on policy or other related matters.

- Send the Mission all TDY **members' bios**, as some Missions do require them prior to departure.

- For **External Event Planning** involving participants outside the Mission, partners, Embassy officials and host country government counterparts, follow internal USAID guidance.

2.4 Refining Offerings Based on Assessments

As stated in Modules 2.1 and 2.2, one of the most important purposes of conducting assessments is to design programming that is appropriately tailored to the operating context. Therefore, sticking to any original ideas or plans without incorporating assessment findings negates the point of an assessment in the first place! Once you have completed your assessment, think about the implications for your initial service offerings.

Key questions to consider:

- Is the operating context viable for your team's offerings? Is there market demand? Are other actors already doing something similar?

- Does the Mission have the absorptive capacity to support and eventually manage the activity? What support might they need from your team or others, especially beyond a period of direct engagement?

- What is the right timing for this activity?

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

A case study conducted of DFS' engagement with a USAID Mission in Africa highlighted the use of assessments in their early Mission engagement to develop a compelling, contextually appropriate SOW. DFS used one stakeholder assessment to identify two initial implementing partners that were willing to collaborate on activities that integrated digital payments into their ongoing programming. A second, technical assessment tested DFS' operating assumptions about the local digital finance market. This assessment also collected data on the behaviors of potential activity participants, such as service providers and farmers. DFS used these inputs to develop an intervention to bring those communities into a digital financial services ecosystem.

See Module 3.2 for more details on how to align your service offerings with Mission priorities and assessment findings.

- Are there other partners that should be involved?
- What factors had you not previously accounted for which were raised in the assessment that might affect the success of the activity (e.g. cost, political transitions, etc.)?

EXAMPLE OF REFINING SERVICE OFFERINGS BASED ON ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

ORIGINAL SERVICE OFFERINGS

Interdependent offering of nation-wide conflict-sensitive radio programming and targeted support to telecommunication entities to increase last-mile access and engagement with radio programming.

ASSESSMENT AND MAPPING FINDINGS

Conflict tension points are around resource disparities between ethnic groups, as well as significant lack of opportunities for youth [Assessment Finding]

Most of the country has access to radio, but listenership rates are dropping rapidly. Younger generations are listening to podcasts, but mobile phone use is not as widespread as radio access. [Assessment Finding]

The major telecommunications company in the country is in the middle of pivoting its strategy and marketing to bring on new mobile users [Assessment Finding].

The Mission is prioritizing leveraging private sector investment in their new 5-year self-reliance agenda. [Mission Priority].

Three Mission implementing partners are working on communications programming. One is using radio in last-mile locations for democracy, rights, and governance programming. The other two are using a combination approach of podcasts and radio programming to support mediation and dialogue capacity building. All implementing partners expressed interest in the team's offerings [Stakeholder Mapping Information].

A team member has a friend who knows the head of marketing at the main telecommunications company. [Stakeholder Mapping Information]

REFINED SERVICE OFFERING

Our team can support the Mission through engaging in capacity building support to the main telecommunications company. Leveraging co-investment through a Corporate Social Responsibility plan, our team can refresh the company's marketing targeting last-mile customers, with free advertisements for Mission implementing partner media. The team will also support current implementing partners focused on leveraging telecommunications to address conflict-related issues. Our team can provide guidance around conflict-sensitive youth engagement and job creation components of programming that fit nicely with ongoing efforts, as well as provide additional capacity for the pivot from radio to podcasts.

☐ Offer an assessment. HQ teams should always endeavor to undertake some form of assessment as part of their Mission engagement strategy. Pitch this as a learning opportunity and/or short-term technical service to the Mission. Technical or operational assessments help pinpoint opportunities, gaps, contextual market information, and new stakeholders that can help target your offerings and demonstrate your team's value add to the Mission.

☐ Identify an assessment team. This can be comprised entirely of your own USAID colleagues if you have the availability. Alternatively, you can hire an implementing partner to collect data on your behalf. Finally, you can go with a hybrid approach with both USAID and implementing partner staff.

  ☐ Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all team members involved-- especially including any Mission staff from whom you might be requesting information or logistical assistance.

☐ Develop the scope and approach. Collaboratively work with the Mission to determine availability of resources for the assessment and key assessment questions.

☐ Remain compliant during planning and implementation of the assessment. The ADS has requirements for USAID HQ teams engaging with Missions. In addition, you can ensure smooth logistics for any TDY by following the best practice guidance below. More information can be found in the TDY checklist in the Resource Folder.

  ☐ You must seek Mission approval *before* planning travel, especially if Mission support is needed for the visit.

  ☐ A security clearance verification is required to confirm your security clearance to *all* overseas destinations. Submit requests 15 business days prior to the desired travel date. Complete a 566-6 form electronically and have it processed through the secclearanceverif@USAID.gov mailbox only.

  ☐ If your Mission requires country clearance, file the clearance several weeks in advance of travel.

  ☐ Check with StateMed about whether there are particular medical considerations and required vaccinations (polio, yellow fever, etc.) and arrange to take any necessary steps needed to fulfill those requirements prior to travel.

  ☐ If traveling to a high threat location, determine whether you need to take mandatory trainings, e.g. the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) course and the High Threat Security Overseas Seminar (HTSOS).

  ☐ Inform the Mission and Regional Bureau/Country Desk Officer at least one month in advance of a field visit, even if approval is not required. Ask about any special issues or sensitivities prior to meeting with senior host government or regional officials on policy or other related matters.

  ☐ Send the Mission all TDY members bios, as some Missions do require them prior to departure.

☐ Conduct an in-brief and out-brief during assessment fieldwork to finalize design with the Mission and share preliminary findings.

☐ Create a short, visual assessment report that summarizes the results post-fieldwork. Remember, sharing of information and generating buy-in should occur throughout the entire assessment process and not just at the completion of the assessment.

☐ Use assessment findings, as well as information your team systematically gathers about Mission priorities, to refine your general service offerings into a targeted scope of work, with a discrete set of possible activities tailored to a Mission's needs.

Aligning with the Mission and Securing a Scope of Work

Why Should I Align with Mission Priorities?

The foundation of an effective Mission partnership comes from alignment with their priorities from the outset. Without an intentional effort to align with current Mission priorities, it is much less likely that a Mission will dedicate the resources, staff time, and attention to an effort coming from USAID Headquarters (HQ). And, alignment keeps your team compliant! At a minimum, USAID HQ teams must receive Mission concurrence for any programming in a country. In the best case, failure to align with Mission priorities creates inefficiencies in achieving uptake, frustrated communications, and can risk the potential for Mission ownership and sustainability of the initiative in question. In the worst case, Missions become resentful of HQ-led activities, view them as burdensome, and are likely to be disengaged when future activities come along or when the direct engagement ends. As such, USAID HQ-led Mission support and partnerships need to align with Mission priorities in intentional, consistent, and specific ways.

Aligning with Mission priorities does not take a significant amount of additional effort. Covered in this Module are a few easy steps to help you through each part in the Mission engagement process. This Module will start by digging into which Mission priorities are important to know, how to identify those priorities for a specific Mission, and then reviewing how those priorities can help refine your proposed service offerings. Lastly, this Module will cover how to convey Mission alignment and targeted service offerings through a partnership-oriented scope of work (SOW).

3.1 Identifying Relevant Mission Priorities

No matter the sector or the scope of your proposed activities, it is important to review all of the following Mission priorities, ensure alignment between these priorities and what your team is offering to the Mission, and demonstrate how your offering responds to a current gap in programming that will contribute to the priorities. It is important to note that it is insufficient to align with just the Mission Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). Mission CDCS alignment should serve as a foundation. Subsequent alignment with relevant strategies, Office-level interests, and Agency initiatives will greatly strengthen the likelihood of prospective partner Mission buy-in towards achieving sustained uptake.

WHAT ARE RELEVANT MISSION PRIORITIES?

PERSONALITY-DRIVEN PRIORITIES	**OFFICE-LEVEL PRIORITIES**	Offices within a Mission will also have their own, sector-specific interpretation of Mission strategies, as well as internal interests and priorities. Since Office-level support is necessary for activity implementation and ownership later in engagement, it is crucial to align with Office-level priorities from the start.
	MISSION DIRECTOR PRIORITIES	Mission Directors have their own interpretation of priorities and interests that are beneficial to be aware of.
SECTOR SPECIFIC PRIORITIES	**SECTOR SPECIFIC COUNTRY-LEVEL STRATEGIES**	(ex: Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plans): The Mission technical office your team is in contact with, program office, or Regional Bureau will be familiar with country-level strategies that are of interest and are being prioritized. These may be official host country government policies or more informal strategies.
MOST ESSENTIAL PRIORITIES	**USAID-WIDE INITIATIVES**	(ex: Self-reliance, Collaborating Learning Adapting [CLA]): While your team should already be aware of these through Agency notices, note that they are often prioritized differently at the Mission-level.
	USAID-WIDE STRATEGIES	(ex: USAID Operational Policy (ADS), Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), Principles of Digital Development, etc.): These strategies should be familiar to your team, as they are often sectoral in nature, or well-known across the Agency.
	MISSION COUNTRY OR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS/RDCS):	Key overview document that presents expected results within a time-defined period (typically 5 years), provides a common vision, and an organizing framework for Mission/Region priorities. This document is important to reference throughout Mission engagement. However, the language is often too ambiguous to draw a direct and sufficiently detailed link to your team's proposed work and why it should matter to the Mission.

HOW DO I IDENTIFY WHICH MISSION PRIORITIES ARE APPLICABLE TO MY WORK?

Identification of a Mission's priorities should be a core task in your team's scoping and stakeholder mapping exercises during the outreach phase of Mission engagement. You can learn more about best practices for stakeholder mapping in Module 1 and about assessments in Module 2. The steps outlined below are based on best practices during each stage of outreach to help you identify Mission priorities that are relevant to your service offerings in an effective, low-burden manner, making it easy for the Mission to say "yes".

Pre-Outreach

1. **Read the Mission's CDCS**. Make sure you complete a deep review of any prospective partner Mission's CDCS. Highlight any relevant material and make the connection for the Mission as to why your work aligns with their priorities. Back this up with additional connections to ways in which your work will catalyze, accelerate, or contribute to Agency-wide strategies, initiatives, Mission Director interests, and Office-level priorities. The more priorities you can align your work with, the easier it is for your Mission point of contact to endorse your team's engagement with their leadership and eventually secure a SOW with your team.

2. **Make sure you are familiar with Mission expectations related to USAID-wide strategies**. The ADS, CLA work, GFSS, and other USAID-wide strategies have different applications at the Mission-level than USAID HQ. Make sure you understand what different Missions are prioritizing and how. Ask a Mission you have already worked with how they are interpreting the most relevant USAID-wide strategies, and add this to your list of questions for the Regional Bureau.

3. **Reach out to the relevant Desk Officer**. It is a common courtesy (if not an expectation) at USAID to keep the desk officer informed of communications to a Mission they cover. Desk officers can also provide a briefing on the priorities and key players at a Mission, see e-country clearances, and help with visas or other questions.

4. **Reach out to the Regional Bureau**. Regional Bureaus are bounties of information. They can help with stakeholder maps by sharing organograms of Missions. They can also provide key information on Mission dynamics, how to approach different Mission personnel, and preliminary information on the prospective partner Mission's broader priorities. Make sure to prepare tailored questions that best utilize time with Regional Bureau staff, and speak with them well before any temporary duty assignment (TDY) so you can tailor your visit accordingly.

5. **Reach out to other HQ teams that have worked with the prospective partner Mission before**. Other teams that have worked with the prospective partner Mission in question may have valuable insights into how teams from USAID HQ are perceived by that Mission, important Mission dynamics to consider, preferred methods of communication, and other identified Mission priorities. Make sure your team is also coordinating with other teams from your Center or Bureau in outreach efforts, minimizing the burden on the Mission. Capitalize on available resources where possible with other teams. Most importantly, make sure the prospective partner Mission is receiving cohesive messaging and communication and is not being bombarded with a seemingly endless amount of offerings. This will cause decision paralysis and burden the Mission, often leading to all HQ teams losing out on engagement and making it more difficult to cultivate a future relationship.

During Initial Outreach

1. **Ask intentionally about Mission Director priorities**. During initial outreach to the potential partner Mission, write up your questions before your first conversation. Make sure you use any time on the phone, not just to share ideas for how you might support the Mission, but to demonstrate a keen interest in Mission priorities, validate assumptions about priorities identified in the pre-outreach efforts, and secure Mission buy-in for any early assessment work on the ground. This is prime time to ask about Mission Director priorities. Make sure you take note of how rhetoric around certain topics may differ from USAID HQ, and use that rhetoric when framing ideas back to the Mission.

2. **Ask about Office-level priorities**. Delve into what the Office is currently working on, how they are interpreting the CDCS/RDCS, or other high-level priorities. Ask what matters to Office leadership and how they feel the country is shifting. Make sure you are taking a customer-service approach, asking these questions to better support the Mission, not just for your own information.

3. **Ask about anticipated shifts in priorities**. Priorities change. Sometimes those changes are unexpected, but often there are clues in advance. Ask Mission staff directly about any anticipated shifts, new interests, or expected changes in context dynamics that may affect the efficacy and entry point of your service offerings.

During an Assessment TDY to the Mission

1. **Listen**. This is your first in-person opportunity with Mission staff. Pay attention and spend time listening to what Mission colleagues say.

2. **Leverage the Mission in-brief to confirm identified priorities**. This is another key opportunity to validate the priorities you have identified to date. Use the in-brief with the Mission to review your interpretation of those priorities and capture any additional ones that come up in-person. As noted in Module 2, adapt your assessment design to align with capturing information relevant to those priorities.

3. **Convey the desire to align and support Missions in all communication**. Make sure to circle back in future communication so that the Mission feels heard and that their priorities are at the forefront of your mind in the engagement.

4. **Review Module 2.3 to ensure your assessment TDY is ADS compliant**.

Take a customer-service oriented, partnership approach in all communications!

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

Examples from teams across the Global Development Lab and multiple, successful Mission engagements provide data that demonstrates the efficacy and importance of aligning service offerings with as many Mission priorities as possible.

■ **Digital Development for Feed the Future (D2FTF)**- D2FTF has worked to align not only with CDCS documents, but also with the Principles for Digital Development, GFSS, individual GFSS Country Plans, and Office-level priorities they source during their first TDY in all their Mission engagements. This has led to successful engagement with 13 Mission in less than three years, three of which have already achieved sustained uptake.

■ **Scaling Off-Grid Energy (SOGE)**- SOGE worked hard to align with the Mission's CDCS, interest in the Rural Electrification Association's work, and Office-level interest in coordinating with the Gates Foundation's ongoing electricity work in-country in order to build a solid foundation for a robust portfolio for their whole partnership with a USAID Mission in Africa.

■ **Digital Financial Services (DFS)**- The DFS team combines knowledge of Mission CDCS', the Principles for Digital Development, Mission interest in Program Activity Descriptions (PAD) language revisions, and personal connections and interests of Mission staff across their engagements to establish strong interest and foundations on which to build their work. This has led to achieving sustained uptake with over 6 Missions in just the past few years.

3.2 Aligning Service Offerings with Mission Priorities

HOW DO I ADAPT SERVICE OFFERINGS BASED ON WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT THE MISSION'S PRIORITIES?

While familiarity alone with Mission priorities will aid your interactions with Mission colleagues, it is more important to demonstrate your understanding by adapting your service offerings to align with Mission priorities. Aligning service offerings or proposed activities with Mission priorities does not mean starting with a blank slate or fully reimagining proven workstreams. Alignment requires leveraging the information you have gathered if you followed Module 1 and 2, and using it to contextualize and refine the scope of what you offer to the Mission. The assessment findings (Module 2.3), combined with identified Mission priorities covered in the last section, should result in a few targeted offerings. This refinement process will help your team narrow down service offerings that have the highest potential for sustained uptake. Alignment starts with thinking about these four quick adaptations below:
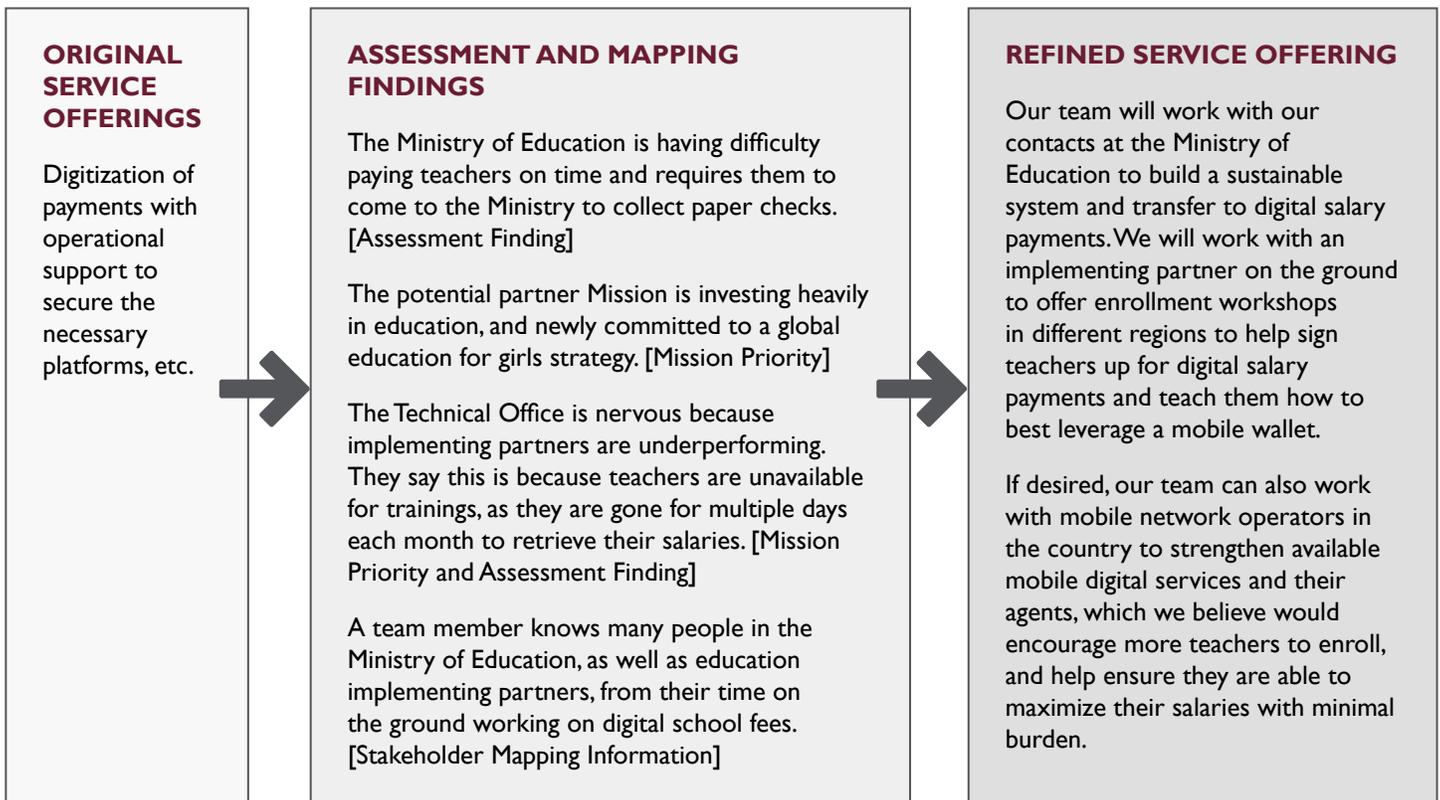
THINK ABOUT

Specifics

It is important to be specific in your service offerings and not just express a general desire to support the Mission. Your stakeholder mapping and information from the assessment can help you to identify potential Mission implementing partners you can support, flagship programming that can incorporate your innovation, a particular gap in the market your services can help solve, or other creative ways to engage Mission partners of interest. Your proposed activities to the Mission should be actionable and easy for relevant staff at the Mission to understand without any additional explanation.

EXAMPLE OF REFINING SERVICE OFFERINGS BASED ON MISSION PRIORITIES

ORIGINAL SERVICE OFFERINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MAPPING FINDINGS	REFINED SERVICE OFFERING
Digitization of payments with operational support to secure the necessary platforms, etc.	The Ministry of Education is having difficulty paying teachers on time and requires them to come to the Ministry to collect paper checks. [Assessment Finding] The potential partner Mission is investing heavily in education, and newly committed to a global education for girls strategy. [Mission Priority] The Technical Office is nervous because implementing partners are underperforming. They say this is because teachers are unavailable for trainings, as they are gone for multiple days each month to retrieve their salaries. [Mission Priority and Assessment Finding] A team member knows many people in the Ministry of Education, as well as education implementing partners, from their time on the ground working on digital school fees. [Stakeholder Mapping Information]	Our team will work with our contacts at the Ministry of Education to build a sustainable system and transfer to digital salary payments. We will work with an implementing partner on the ground to offer enrollment workshops in different regions to help sign teachers up for digital salary payments and teach them how to best leverage a mobile wallet. If desired, our team can also work with mobile network operators in the country to strengthen available mobile digital services and their agents, which we believe would encourage more teachers to enroll, and help ensure they are able to maximize their salaries with minimal burden.

THINK ABOUT
The Context

Think about how you can adapt your service offerings to the context. What interventions might be appropriate for the country landscape that are also aligned with Mission priorities? What gender dynamics should you be aware of? It is important to take a systems approach when assessing the context so you understand the influencing variables. Demonstrating that you have spent time to ensure the service offerings are contextually relevant elevates work for the Mission and makes it easier for them to see clearly how your offerings fit with other dynamics and issues the Mission may be facing. However, it is important to recognize that what your team thinks may be the most important, contextually appropriate offering may not be aligned with top Mission priorities at the time. You must ensure the alignment process narrows down to offerings that are **both** relevant to the Mission and the context.

THINK ABOUT
Your Unique Value

The most attractive offerings to Missions provide a service, tool, or support that is not readily available within the Mission. While a Mission will always appreciate additional capacity, most recognize that there are technical areas of expertise they do not currently have in-house. Demonstrating the unique value proposition your team's work offers the Mission can create interest beyond your initial champion, and ensure the service offerings are enticing to decision-makers. Again, this does not mean you have to think of new service offerings; rather, leverage your intel on the Mission to understand what skills and capacities they may want to build through a partnership with your team. Frame your offerings as that unique value add, and you'll be closer to sealing the deal!

THINK ABOUT
Capacity

While most of your service offerings may be complementary, and the majority may even be applicable to the Mission context, you cannot do everything at once. Even if you are offering to take on the majority of the work under the initial SOW, the Mission is not likely to have the bandwidth to consider and track a broad range of offerings all at once. Too many offerings can dilute your unique value proposition. For an initial scope, it is most important to identify the service offering that is most likely to create some early value add that will garner favor. Once you've whittled down your list of offerings that meet the previous 3 criteria, review one last time to identify the priority offering. This does not mean that you can only offer to do one thing for the Mission at a time. Rather, you need to prioritize an offering that is most likely to demonstrate early results to further solidify the relationship. The more successful this initial activity is, the more likely the Mission will want to invest further and be willing to increase their level of resource and responsibility commitment. Offer what you know your team can resource well and what the Mission can pay attention to, then expand from there.

3.3 Proposing a Scope of Work

WHAT NEEDS TO GO INTO MY SCOPE OF WORK?

At this stage, the Mission is probably expecting a draft SOW for your team's activities. You can demonstrate alignment with Mission priorities through a clear and concise presentation of the aligned service offerings, framing the work as a partnership, and being sure to set clear expectations. This section covers both an overview on setting up a SOW, as well as a review of what the core content should be.

OVERVIEW

Framing

So much of the Mission's attention is dependent on whether or not they feel ownership over the idea or see that the idea could advance, catalyze, or enhance their ongoing work and priorities. Missions do not want to be told what to do or be caught off-guard by USAID activities happening in the country. It is important to frame any communications, but especially a potential SOW, as service-oriented. The Mission will be more responsive and likely to discuss ideas back and forth if they feel their priorities are heard, the activity is in their best interest, and that roll-out will be done in partnership. Mission attention does not guarantee resources (i.e. time or funding), but it does greatly increase the likelihood of engaging in a partnership and securing future resources.

Audience

If the Mission is interested in considering the proposed activities, it is essential to make sure the right people (refer to the list of champions in Module 4.1) are included in the discussions and process towards agreeing on a SOW. The initial contact or champion of the work may not have the necessary decision-making authority to sign off. Leverage your understanding of Mission dynamics (Module 1.1) and the stakeholder map (Module 1.3) to determine who needs to approve and implement

the SOW so nothing comes as a surprise to leadership or other key stakeholders. It is also important that the framing, tone, and content of the SOW is written in a way that the core involved Mission staff can leverage the SOW as a pitch to other Mission colleagues and as key talking points to any senior leadership. There is a lot riding on the SOW, but it is well worth the effort needed to compose an excellent document as this stage, as it is likely to serve as the cornerstone of your partnership.

Offerings

At last we get to the meat of it all, what your team has to offer the Mission. This is still a significant part of the equation, but can be overlooked by the Mission if the framing and audience is not quite right. As mentioned in section 3.2, you should have a few targeted offerings for the Mission with the highest potential for sustained uptake. These offerings should be specific, contextualized to the country and Mission, demonstrate a unique value add, and acknowledge available capacity of your team and the Mission. It is important to minimize any technical jargon, while still conveying the technical expertise of your team. Offerings should be presented in a clear and concise manner, with identifiable prioritization and interlinkages if there are dependencies between offerings.

CONTENT

Successful SOWs are well-organized and contain all of the following information:

1. Introduction and expression of desire to partner with Mission

2. Identification of market gaps (from assessment findings)

3. Identification of unique value add to the Mission

4. Presentation of service offerings

5. Expectations around timeline and roles and responsibilities between HQ team, Mission staff, and implementing partner involvement

Introduction and Expression of Desire to Partner:

DO:	**DON'T:**
• Emphasize previous communications and interest expressed by the Mission	• Focus solely on what your team does
• Present the scope as a partnership opportunity in service to Mission priorities	• Tell the Mission what they should do
• Provide an outline of the scope and objectives of the partnership (What would be the ideal outcomes of the work for both your team and the Mission?)	• Suggest you know better than the Mission does what is needed in country

Identification of Market Gaps:

You should then transition into a very concise overview of assessment findings that pertain to the offerings you are including in the SOW. This section should provide new information to the Mission. Be specific. The Mission knows the general context and background of the country, so provide only new information pertinent to your sector. Triple

check for clarity. Minimize technical jargon. It is also important that the links between the identified gaps or opportunities connect logically and simply to the proposed offerings. Have someone outside your team proofread this section to make sure the connections are coming through clearly. Ideally, this section can be done in 1 to 2 paragraphs or 3-5 bullets.

Identification of Unique Value Add to Mission

Spell it out! Pitch why partnering with your team is a timely and unique opportunity for the Mission. Mention specific priorities here that you have validated with Mission staff. You can also mention 1 or 2 other use cases (partnerships with other Missions) as examples of leveraging an effective approach and positive working relationships with Missions. This section should be a 1-paragraph overview of your team's technical expertise, experience, and fit for this specific Mission partnership.

Service Offerings

Offerings should be presented in a clear and concise manner, with identifiable prioritization and linkages if there are dependencies between offerings. These offerings should be specific, contextualized to the country and Mission, demonstrate a unique value add, and acknowledge available capacity of your team and the Mission. It is important to minimize any technical jargon, while still conveying the technical expertise of your team. Make sure you outline what you anticipate doing, who you anticipate working with, and what the expected results will be.

Expectation Setting

The last section of a SOW should establish expectations for both parties. In addition to a requested timeline for response to the SOW, you should also clarify how long you think the scope will take, and when certain activities and/

or milestones can be completed. Identify clear roles and responsibilities for everyone involved, including expectations for Mission engagement in the activities.

Clear Actions and Timelines:
Actions here can get more specific and detailed than the overview of offerings presented above. This section can be annexed if that type of presentation makes more sense. Some teams submit a tentative Gantt chart, work plan, or timeline with activities, anticipated deliverables, and level of effort. Any format you think the Mission can digest quickly will work, as long as you include all the appropriate information needed to enable decision-making.

Clear Roles and Responsibilities
Designation, clarity, and balance of roles and responsibilities are essential to achieving sustained uptake with a partner Mission. Clarity around roles and responsibilities should be a reflection of your own team and your team's relationships with implementing partners, external partners, and other Mission colleagues. This approach to expectation-setting makes your team easier to work with, which can strengthen the relationship with the Mission and their buy-in to your activities. It is important to outline here:

1. Which Mission staff you expect to be engaged;

2. How often you expect to engage with them;

3. What activities you expect them to do;

4. The anticipated level of effort or time needed to do those activities; and,

5. How those responsibilities tie into the overarching offerings, or how they might translate to longer-term capacity and expertise.

Clearly delineated expectations around roles and responsibilities in a SOW serve as a reference later on if you need to encourage different levels of Mission participation (see Module 4.5).

HOW DO I ENSURE MY SOW AND MISSION PARTNERSHIP IS COMPLIANT?
Do not forget the ADS 201.3.3.6 requires that you obtain Mission Concurrence for Washington or Regional Mission/Platform Funded Activities. This means:

You must get the Mission Concurrence Request Form signed by the Operating Unit and partner Mission Director, or their designee. When possible, concurrence should be obtained during SOW and activity design. Maintain frequent, transparent, and two-way communication with your Mission counterparts. Nothing that appears in the Mission Concurrence Request Form should come as a surprise!

In communication requesting approval from the Mission for a field-based activity, be clear about the timelines by which a response is needed. Language stating "if we do not receive a response within X days/weeks, we will assume concurrence and proceed with this award" *is acceptable*, but be generous (no less than two weeks) with the timelines the Mission has to review.

The key to successful Mission engagement is frequent, open communication, so be sure that all relevant stakeholders at both HQ and the partner Mission are aware and supportive of your activities in every step of the engagement process!

☐ Read the Mission's CDCS. Highlight any relevant material and make the connection for the Mission as to why your work aligns with those priorities. Back this up with additional connections to ways in which your work will catalyze, accelerate, or contribute to Agency-wide strategies, initiatives, Mission Director interests, and Office-level priorities.

☐ Make sure you are familiar with Mission expectations related to USAID-wide strategies. Ask a Mission you have already worked with how they are interpreting the most relevant USAID-wide strategies and add this to your list of questions for the Regional Bureau.

☐ Reach out to the relevant Desk Officer. It is a common courtesy (if not an expectation) at USAID to keep the desk officer informed of communications to a Mission that they cover.

☐ Reach out to the Regional Bureau. Make sure to prepare tailored questions so as to best utilize time with Regional Bureau staff, and speak with them well before any temporary duty travel (TDY) so you can tailor your visit accordingly.

☐ Reach out to other HQ teams that have worked with the prospective partner Mission before. Ensure your team is coordinating with other teams from your Center or Bureau in outreach efforts-- minimizing the burden on the Mission.

☐ Ask intentionally about Mission Director priorities. Note how rhetoric around certain topics may differ from USAID HQ, and use that rhetoric when framing ideas back to the Mission.

☐ Ask about Office-level priorities. Delve into what the Office is currently working on, how they are interpreting the CDCS/RDCS, or other high-level priorities. Ask what matters to Office leadership and how they feel the country is shifting.

☐ Ask about anticipated shifts in priorities. Ask Mission staff directly about any anticipated shifts, new interests, or expected changes in context dynamics that might affect the efficacy and entry point of your service offerings.

☐ During an Assessment Temporary Duty Assignment (TDY) to the Mission

    ☐ Listen. Pay attention and spend time listening to what Mission colleagues say.

    ☐ Leverage the Mission in-brief to confirm identified priorities. Use the in-brief with the Mission to review your interpretation of those priorities and capture any additional ones that come up in-person.

    ☐ Convey the desire to align and support Missions in all communication. Make sure to circle back in future communication so that the Mission feels heard and that their priorities are at the forefront of your mind in the engagement.

    ☐ Review Module 2.3 to ensure your assessment TDY is ADS compliant.

☐ Refine your team's service offerings

    ☐ Use your stakeholder mapping and findings from the assessment to identify proposed activities to the Mission that are actionable and specific.

    ☐ Demonstrate you have spent time to ensure the service offerings are contextually relevant.

    ☐ Leverage your intel on the Mission to understand what skills and capacities they might want to build through a partnership with your team. Frame your offerings as that unique value add to the Mission.

    ☐ Prioritize offerings that are most likely to demonstrate early results to further solidify the relationship. Offer what you know your team can resource well and what the Mission can pay attention to-- then expand from there.

☐ Apply this overview to writing a Scope of Work:

    ☐ Frame any communications as service-oriented. The Mission will be more responsive and likely to discuss ideas back and forth if they feel their priorities are heard, the activity is in their best interest, and that roll-out will be done in partnership.

    ☐ Make sure the right people (refer to the list of champions in Module 4.1) are included in the discussions and process towards agreeing on a SOW. Leverage your understanding of Mission dynamics and the stakeholder map to determine who needs to approve and implement the SOW so nothing comes as a surprise to leadership or other key stakeholders.

    ☐ Minimize any technical jargon, while still conveying the technical expertise of your team. Offerings should be presented in a clear and concise manner, with identifiable prioritization and interlinkages if there are dependencies between offerings.

☐ Apply this outline when writing the content of a Scope of Work:

    ☐ Emphasize previous communications and interest expressed by the Mission, present the scope as a partnership opportunity in service to Mission priorities, and provide an outline of the scope and objectives of the partnership in the Introduction.

    ☐ Provide a concise overview of findings from the assessment that pertain to the offerings you are including in the SOW. This section should provide new information to the Mission. This section can be done in 1 to 2 paragraphs or 3-5 bullets.

    ☐ Pitch why partnering with your team is a timely and unique opportunity for the Mission. Mention specific priorities that you have validated with Mission staff. Mention 1 or 2 other use cases (partnerships with other Missions) as examples of leveraging an effective approach and positive working relationships with Missions. This section should be 1 paragraph.

    ☐ Write offerings in a clear and concise manner, with identifiable prioritization and linkages if there are dependencies between offerings. These offerings should be specific, contextualized to the country and Mission, demonstrate a unique value add, and acknowledge available capacity of your team and the Mission. Outline what you anticipate doing, who you anticipate working with, and what the expected results will be.

    ☐ Establish expectations for both parties. Clarify how long you think the scope will take and when certain activities and/or milestones could be completed. Identify clear roles and responsibilities for everyone involved, including expectations for Mission engagement in the activities.
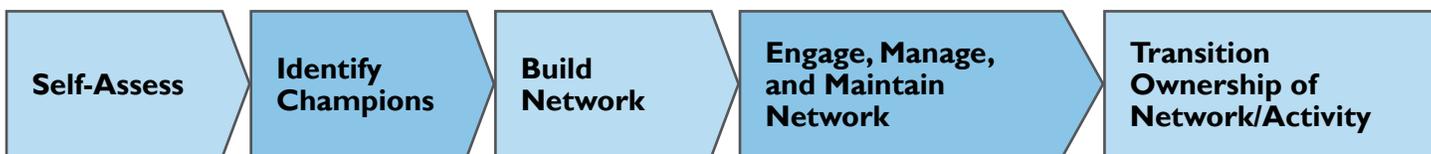
Relationship Management

You now have a partnership-oriented scope of work (SOW). So, what's next? While engagements with a Mission often start with one champion, a key contributing factor to sustained uptake of an activity is the presence of a network of champions – a group of stakeholders committed to building and embedding your area of technical expertise in the Mission. You must maintain and manage your relationships with the Mission, and further, re-evaluate and extend your network of supporters over the life of the activity. Your relationship-building and networking does not end with the completion of a SOW and signing of a Concurrence Memo! Ultimately, you need to strategically and intentionally build a network and transition ownership of the efforts to the partner Mission.

This Module contains helpful steps toward building and maintaining a diverse network of champions.

Recommended Relationship Management Process

| Self-Assess | Identify Champions | Build Network | Engage, Manage, and Maintain Network | Transition Ownership of Network/Activity |

The module also explores the importance of local and USAID headquarters (HQ) staff involvement.

4.1 Building a Diverse Network of Champions

WHO ARE CHAMPIONS?

"Champions" are stakeholders that are committed to a USAID HQ initiative (e.g. activity, innovation, and/or technical specialty) and are convinced of its value to the partner Mission and the partner country. They may be convinced of the initiative's value for personal reasons, because they have sector/technical expertise aligned with the initiative, or because they see the contribution the initiative can make to Mission objectives. Champions can come from a range of positions and backgrounds.

While engagements with a prospective partner Mission in the Outreach and Early Phase often start with one champion/entry point (see Module 1.1), a key contributing factor to sustained success of an initiative relies on building a network of champions. These champions may include those individuals mentioned in the SOW (assigned roles and responsibilities), but will ideally cover broader territory. Champions should include individuals from both within the partner Mission and external to USAID, and should represent differing levels of influence/positions. Having champions in senior leadership, below senior leadership, and among local staff is an important enabling factor for implementation and sustainability of the activity, and moreover, is necessary given staff turnover.

Potential champions include:

- Mission Director (and other senior leaders/decision-makers)
- Mission Front Office (Program Office, Office of Financial Management, etc.)
- Mission Technical Offices
- Mission Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) (see Module 4.2!)
- Other USAID HQ teams
- Desk Officers
- Regional Bureaus
- Personnel from USAID HQ on-the-ground (example: STIP fellow)
- Implementing partners (especially Chiefs of Party)
- Other donors

WHY SHOULD I BUILD A NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS?

The simple reason is that it works! It has been proven to be an important factor in the success of engagement, implementation, and achieving sustained uptake. Furthermore, putting intentional effort into building a network of champions:

✔ Helps your activity team understand partner Mission dynamics

✔ Ensures initial (and continued) alignment with partner Mission priorities (see Module 3)

✔ Expedites (initial and continued) Mission buy-in

✔ Provides your team information on gaps and strengths of a given sector/market in the partner country

✔ Helps you deliver findings to more targeted audiences later in engagement

✔ Ensures key decision-makers are involved from the beginning and throughout

✔ Builds local capacity

✔ Promotes ownership of the activity, increasing the likelihood of sustained uptake in the partner country and potentially to other Missions (see Module 4.5)

✔ Broadens uptake to both operational and programmatic audiences

✔ Promotes stability of the activity in the face of staff turnover

✔ Aids in expanding portfolios

HOW DO I START?

You now know who the ideal champions are and why you want to put in the time and effort to build a strong network. How do you start?

1 **Self-Assessment**: Determine if you are the right person for the job. USAID HQ network conveners (the Point of Contact for the partner Mission) are most effective when they a) understand USAID dynamics; b) are personable and have experience successfully coordinating and communicating with partner Missions and field-based activities; c) believe that champions make a difference; and d) have the appropriate technical expertise. Consider whether you meet these criteria or if there is someone else on your team you could learn from or who would be better suited to lead the network development.

2 **Identify Champions** through:

Leveraging personal relationships: As noted in Module 1, you can leverage personal relationships and/or pre-existing entry points during your initial outreach to a prospective partner Mission.

TIP: Do this in an intentional and strategic, rather than opportunistic, way. For any formal or informal conversations and/or meetings, make sure to write up your questions and points beforehand. Use the time well, demonstrating an interest in Mission priorities, sharing ideas about how the individual could serve as a champion/supporter of the activity, and listening to the Mission's concerns.

Conducting workshops: If you bring together stakeholders in a workshop during early visits to the partner Mission, such as an implementing partner (IP) convening, use that opportunity to make note of potential champions!

Stakeholder Map: Use your stakeholder map to examine who would be well-placed to be a champion. Who is well-connected and well-respected? Updating your map on an annual basis is good practice, and allows you to keep track of new potential champions and determine which stakeholders may no longer be well-suited for that role.

3 **Build your Network:** Equipped with your stakeholder map and initial interaction(s) with the partner Mission, select your champions! At minimum, establish a network of three to four champions, including a decision-maker, an activity manager, local Mission staff and/or a point of contact, and USAID HQ staff. See below for details about these recommended champions:

Partner Mission decision-maker: Throughout the USAID HQ-partner Mission engagement, do your best to ensure that leadership from the Mission is included in your network of champions. Ideally, your decision-maker will be the Office Director or middle management. Though the Mission Director may not be the decision-maker in your network, cultivate Mission Director support and approval for the activity if at all possible. To do this, identify any particular interest or experience that the Mission Director has related to the activity and leverage that as an entry point for further work. See Module 1 for more details on engaging the Mission Director.

Activity Manager: When the USAID HQ activity begins, you will most likely be serving as the Activity Manager. However, the goal is for you to set up a strong network of champions so you can transition ownership of the activity to the Mission (thereby transferring the "Activity Manager" role to a partner Mission champion).

Partner Mission local staff: Ensure your network includes Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) as noted below in Module 4.2. This helps ensure local ownership, stability during implementation, and sustained uptake.

Partner Mission Point of Contact: Ideally, one of these champions is your point person at the Mission. Having a point of contact greatly facilitates coordination between USAID HQ and the partner Mission. Your point person at the Mission may be able to help you identify and reach out to potential new champions. Remember, building a network of champions is advantageous for the Mission as well, since more people supporting the activity enables more easily secured decisions and resources. This champion should be Mission staff (from the front office or a technical office), rather than from USAID HQ embedded in the Mission (like a Science, Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (STIP) fellow).

You/USAID HQ staff: See Module 4.3 about the necessity of involving USAID HQ in this network and in activity management and oversight. You play an important role as the champion network builder and convener, particularly in the early phases of the activity. You also set the stage for transition of ownership of the activity in the Mature Phase (see Module 4.5).

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

For the Digital Financial Services (DFS) Team, intentional relationship building first with Finance Office staff from a USAID Mission in Africa followed by key individuals in technical offices and alongside Mission implementing partners, culminated in buy-in from core decision-makers and sustained, expanded engagement with the Mission that influenced both Mission operations and programming.

4.2 The Importance of Local Champions

Involving local Mission staff as champions of a USAID HQ activity is *critical*.

WHY DOES MY NETWORK NEED TO INCLUDE LOCAL CHAMPIONS?

Having individual Mission-based champions below the senior leadership level is an important enabling factor for the implementation and sustainability of an activity. Local champions, namely FSNs, provide stability during implementation while Foreign Service Officer (FSO) personnel turnover. Local champions facilitate connections with local stakeholders, and can secure (and maintain) senior leadership buy-in. Most importantly, they carry work forward beyond USAID HQ involvement.

HOW CAN I INTENTIONALLY INVOLVE LOCAL CHAMPIONS IN MY NETWORK?

Ensuring local buy-in and capacity starts with initial interactions with potential champions and continues as the activity matures and the portfolio expands.

For FSNs:

Make sure you reach out to FSNs within the primary Mission Office you are engaging, and court them. Spend time getting to know them. Do not jump immediately to asking them to sign onto your team's initiative. Understand FSNs' individual interests and priorities, and then share your team's work only with those FSNs with a natural alignment to the work. Share a concise overview at the outset to gauge interest. Make sure you have a role in mind or specific way for FSNs to engage in the event that they do demonstrate interest. Once you have one FSN onboard, ask who else they know who may also be interested. Spend dedicated time with your FSN colleagues so they become champions and feel that engaging with your team is beneficial to their career, not just in service to the objectives of your initiative.

For local organizations/ international non- governmental organizations:

As part of strategic landscaping (discussed in Module 1), you will explore potential synergies between your initiative and ongoing (or past) work in the prospective country. Part of that exercise involves identifying complementary goals and vision, existing partnerships with the partner Mission, and existing relationships with other donor agencies or institutions. Though you may not have engaged these organizations in your initial outreach (deferring to other potential entry points), engaging with these external-to-USAID stakeholders while you build and maintain your network is valuable. Welcome them to join regular check-in meetings about the initiative, or invite them to workshops or events that you host. Invite them to collaborate with the initiative in some way (depending on your needs and the organization's skills and capacities). Ask if they would like to be added to your dissemination list for all initiative communications.

4.3 The Importance of USAID Staff Involvement

Involving USAID HQ staff in activity management and oversight is also critical. Your network of champions must have a committed individual from USAID HQ (you or someone else!) involved in all activity phases leading up to transitioning ownership of the initiative. The activity should not solely involve a relationship between the partner Mission and your implementing partner.

WHY DOES MY NETWORK *NEED* TO INCLUDE USAID HQ STAFF?

When USAID HQ staff are directly involved in support to partner Missions, the activity is legitimized in the eyes of the Mission staff, and they tend to find more value in and from the work. Remember, you convinced them of your team's technical expertise, and that is the expertise they trust and want to rely on. In the long-term, partner Missions directly supported by USAID HQ staff take on more ownership of the activity. All of this increases the likelihood of sustained uptake!

Your team must commit dedicated time to building and managing your network of champions and to the activity itself. This is a critical part of your engagement with the activity and your network, so be honest about how much time you need to succeed. Clearly outline for your champions the time and resources you have available to contribute. Take time to assess and secure sufficient level of effort (LOE) to support the activity, ensuring that part of your LOE is allocated to champion network building and maintenance. Some USAID HQ teams have conducted annual or semi-annual LOE planning and found this to be helpful in realistic goal setting.

More specifically, estimate the number of hours each month you will need to manage the activity. Now double it. This doubling helps manage unexpected bumps in the road with building, maintaining, and managing your network of champions, and eventually transitioning ownership to the partner Mission. With this time, you should have coordination phone calls at least once a month and dedicate time for troubleshooting with your implementing partner or the partner Mission. Once you have identified this LOE, protect it. Return to your LOE calculations when you are asked to take on more

WHAT DOES THE DE EVIDENCE SAY?

The Digital Development for Feed the Future (D2FTF) team used a customer service-oriented approach in their engagement with a USAID Mission in Asia. The team maintained regular contact and updates with the Mission, anticipated and delivered the completion of necessary paperwork, and provided significant capacity around coordination of the Data Driven Farming Prize, as well as introduced the Mission to a diverse range of stakeholders new to engaging with that country's Mission. These actions laid the groundwork for sustained uptake by that Mission.

work, and make a clear argument for the importance of managing partner Mission relationships to secure your team's pathway to sustained uptake.

Here are a few ways you should be involved – the more the better!

- Provide technical expertise and innovation to the partner Mission related to the activity.

- Offer logistical and administrative support (e.g. preemptively filling out paperwork related to Mission concurrence) to the partner Mission to help secure buy-in.

- Keep the Mission updated. Don't make Mission colleagues dig to find updates about the progress of activities. Send progress updates and talking points about results when available.

- Introduce new partners to the Mission, leverage external partnerships, and/or assist with coordination of Mission implementing partners.

- Give inputs and support Program Activity Descriptions (PAD) and Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) development.

- Introduce an innovative procurement mechanism.

- Share USAID HQ research, tools, networks, and knowledge about innovations relevant to your team's sector. Share insights with the Mission about the global conversation and anything new that is cropping up.

- Offer other support not found within the capacity of the partner Mission.

While you may initially plan to commit LOE and support the activity and network by completing several of the items noted above, also be prepared (and willing) to pivot, adapt, or iterate on your support. Your involvement is critical, but how you are involved should be continually re-assessed with the partner Mission and your network of champions to ensure it is aligned with current needs.

4.4 Engage, Manage, and Maintain Your Network

Here are some quick tips about how to intentionally engage, manage, and maintain your network of champions once the work is underway:

Communicate

Consistency in communication is important, and Missions value frequency and clarity of communication. Communication is pivotal in maintaining good working relationships and continued buy-in from champions.

- **Frequency and medium**: Depending on the champion, this may include one-on-one email and/or phone communication on a monthly basis. Ideally, you should set-up regular check-ins with your champions as a network to discuss the initiative's progress and sectoral updates.

- **Tone**: In your communication and interactions with champions, be personable and build a positive team dynamic. Getting to know your champions on a personal level and celebrating activity successes together can help break down barriers. In all communication (starting from your first outreach), adopt a customer-service approach to the partner Mission. This means you must be proactive, patient, responsive, and communicative.

- **Content**: Share information about potential or ongoing activities beyond the required action of signing a Concurrence Memo. Clarify roles and responsibilities. Discuss new ideas, innovations, or opportunities. Share research and tools.

Allocate LOE for temporary duty assignments (TDYs)

It is helpful to have in-person connections with Mission colleagues through TDYs. In-person meetings are catalysts for strengthening Mission-HQ team relationships. Teams should include at least one TDY at the beginning of their engagement with a Mission, and identify other strategic opportunities for in-person meetings with Mission staff in their planning. Conduct an in-brief and out-brief for all TDYs to a partner Mission.

Get your hands dirty

You as USAID HQ must be involved in the activity, instead of relying solely on the implementing partner. Build and support champions through activities, including through the provision of technical assistance and non-technical work (like filling out activity approval documentation and contracting information ahead of time). This helps ensure the activity does not become too burdensome to the Mission. Anticipate taking on a heavier amount of work at the beginning of the partnership for overstretched Missions, particularly when getting activities off the ground. Make sure, however, to provide an avenue for greater Mission staff responsibility and activity management for sustainability down the road. As the work progresses, be generous with giving credit and look for ways to help your champions shine, which helps maintain buy-in.

Provide/secure long term on-the-ground support

As resources permit, supply HQ staff on the ground to support collaboration between USAID HQ and the partner Mission.

Keep them hooked

Your champions are busy people and your engagement with them may be lengthy. You will need to remind them why they should care about this work, and how it is aligned with their priorities. You can do this through interactive presentations of activity progress, or by sharing new ideas and insights from the sector (e.g. the emergence of blockchain in digital services and how it might benefit the Mission). communications.

4.5 Transitioning Ownership

Sustained uptake within the Agency is full ownership and valuation of an innovation, approach, or technical expertise by the Mission, such that they devote additional resources to new opportunities, establish dedicated staff responsibilities, or integrate it into Mission priorities. Sustained uptake is more likely when FSNs are a part of this network, as explained in Module 4.2, and initial uptake occurs when those same Mission staff (or others) increasingly take on ownership and management of an activity or identify new opportunities to invest in. Keep in mind that if you step back from the work and it halts or stalls, sustained uptake has not been achieved. This Module shares guidance on transitioning ownership to help move from initial uptake or buy-in to a singular scope of work to sustained uptake and long-term commitment by the partner Mission.

Module 4.4 explained how you engage, manage, and maintain your network during the Middle Phase. Additionally, during that phase, you should be taking strategic and intentional steps to transition ownership of the work from USAID HQ to the partner Mission. To help transition ownership from USAID HQ to the partner Mission for a sustainable exit strategy, you will need to be an effective leader, clarify roles, conduct planning, and pace the transition. Each of these points are unpacked below.

BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER/NETWORK CONVENER

If you are an effective and engaged champion, your local champions will quickly and easily see what it takes to maintain an activity and use the network to promote uptake. It is important to be a good example of an action-oriented convener and consistent communicator. Here are some ways you can foster an adaptive, action-oriented team:

- Be data-driven: Ensuring your network has good, available data makes sure you can stay on track towards objectives, capture and articulate results, and adapt in an informed and strategic manner. This goes beyond a results framework, to ownership of monitoring responsibilities for all activity managers.

- Foster a common strategic vision: A clear and cohesive strategic vision can help bring your network together and ensure you are all working toward common goals. Clear strategy improves team efficiency, a cohesive team culture, and external marketing of network efforts.

- Enthusiastically encourage problem solving: Leadership and champions that encourage active problem solving and enthusiastically embrace learning can help identify potential pitfalls early and adapt quickly to improve programming and lead to better results (including sustained uptake!). This means you should be honest about failure but focused on adaptations.

CLARIFY (OR REVISIT) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

From implementation to sustained uptake: Clearly designating roles and responsibilities increases network efficiency, decreases confusion, and simplifies partnership relations. Clarifying roles and responsibilities is an ongoing task that should be done with your champions, during each phase of the activity at a minimum. Roles and responsibilities should be initially defined in the SOW. However, expect that roles and responsibilities will need to shift and adjust as the activity progresses toward maturity. New stakeholders will need to join, and initial stakeholders may step out of the work.

From extracurricular to formal: Encourage partner Mission champions you are working with to incorporate activity management into FSN work plans, job descriptions, and objectives, rather than consider the activity an extracurricular effort. If the activity remains extracurricular for local Mission staff, this has been found to be a barrier to sustained uptake due to the demands they place on already full-time jobs. Though the activity may be extracurricular at the inception of the activity, adding it to staff's official work plan and job description institutionalizes the continued work on the activity and sustains it beyond USAID HQ engagement.

How? Here are some helpful rules to follow while clarifying roles and responsibilities:

- Start with your local point of contact champion and formalize their work plan. They will most likely be included in the SOW and have designated tasks, a role, and LOE. Build off of this initial role, and expand it when possible to encourage consistent increase in ownership.

- Do not rely on one champion and allocate all requirements to him/her. As cautioned in Module 4.4, this can threaten the sustainability of the USAID HQ-Mission partnership.

- Do not overburden local champions during early phases of the activity. Overburdened teams lead to blurring of roles and responsibilities. Instead, plan according to phases of the activity and clearly define how roles will change as the activity progresses toward maturity.

- Establish clear delineation of roles with external partners (not just internal USAID champions). Define a role for implementing partners and other external partners to contribute to the work.

OUTREACH/EARLY/MIDDLE PHASE

MATURE PHASE
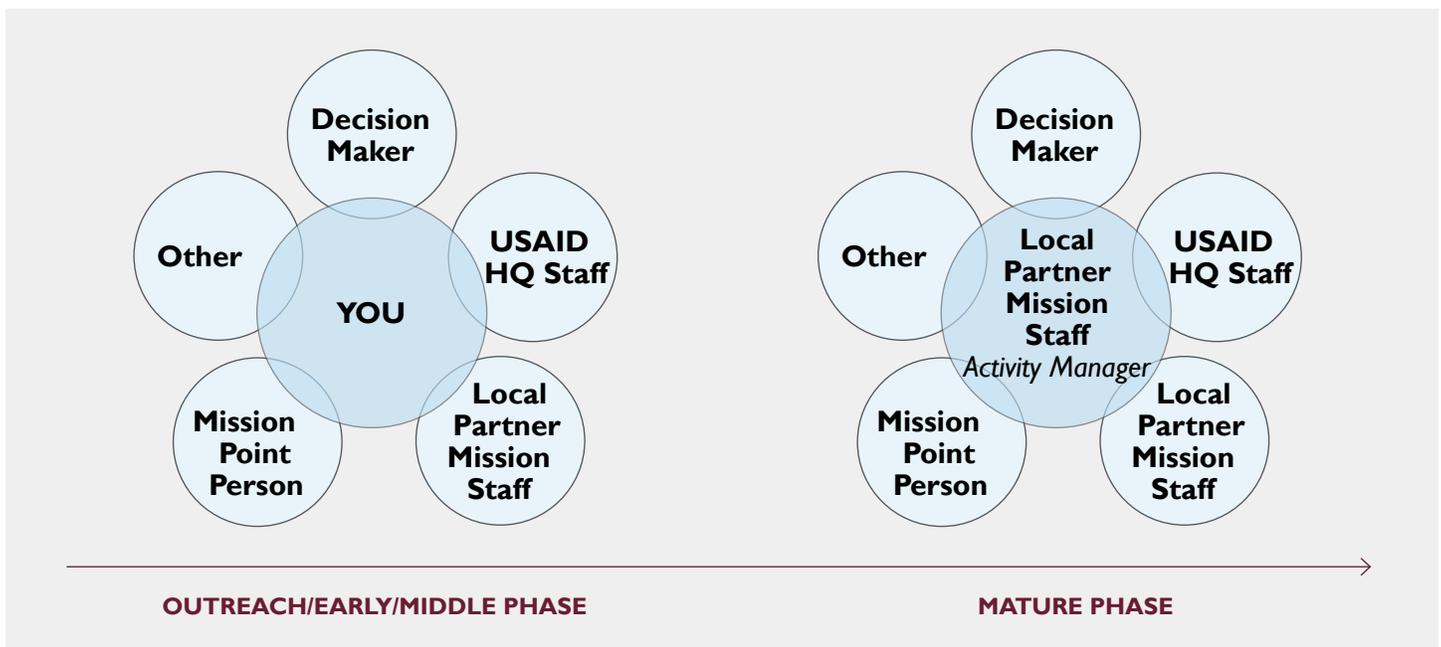
CONDUCT DEDICATED PLANNING AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE PARTNER MISSION CAN LEAD

During role clarification, help your local champion(s) think through ways they can support the activity. Initially, this may simply involve participating in monthly check-in calls with you and the point person in the partner Mission (providing support during TDYs, updating the Mission Director and leadership on activity progress, etc.). This should involve identifying upcoming opportunities in which partner Mission staff can take the lead (e.g. an activity workshop or event). Encourage your point person to prioritize establishing or growing stronger, collaborative networks of internal and external stakeholders in a particular sector to contribute to sustainability.

Encourage your local champion(s) to proactively plan for any Mission culture shifts or changes. Your network should be aware of and create backup plans to address issues arising from Mission Director turnover or other contextual shifts. A more proactive risk assessment and plan may limit the impact of Mission culture, context, and politics on the activity, transition of ownership, and overall sustained uptake.

PACE THE TRANSITION

Do not expect your local champion(s) to take over management and promotion of part or all of the activity in the course of a month (or even a year, depending on the activity!). As the work progresses, establish roles and responsibilities that make sense for the amount of time/LOE and resources both USAID HQ and the partner Mission staff have to contribute. As your goal shifts/transitions toward maturity, revisit roles and responsibilities and identify small but consistent ways you can encourage local ownership of the activity and any follow-on activities that occur.

Once you have transitioned ownership, continue to follow up with the Mission and the activity to document sustained uptake and new initiatives. The DFS team saw success from continued engagement as partner Mission staff moved to new Missions and reached out to replicate the engagement with their new Mission. If you have built a strong, adaptive, and action-oriented network, there is no limit to the impact it can have in moving the work along!

Relationship Management

☐ Identify potential champions. Champions are those who believe in the work and will carry it forward beyond the period of your team's direct involvement. Leverage personal relationships, conduct workshops, and/or utilize your team stakeholder map.

☐ Build a network of 3-4 champions. Make sure your network includes a decision-maker, an activity manager, local Mission staff and/or a point of contact, and USAID HQ staff (at minimum). Champions should be individuals from both within the partner Mission and external to USAID and should represent differing levels of influence/positions.

☐ Make sure you reach out to FSNs within the primary Mission Office you are engaging and court them. Share a concise overview of your work to gauge interest. Make sure you have a role in mind or specific way for them to engage in case they do demonstrate interest. Spend dedicated time with your FSN colleagues so they become champions and feel that engaging with your team is beneficial to their career.

☐ Plan your involvement in the network. Your involvement should include providing technical expertise, offering logistical and administrative support, providing updates to the Mission, and sharing resources and tools at a minimum. It is essential that you as USAID HQ be involved in activity management and oversight at the outset to legitimize the work from the Mission perspective.

☐ Manage and maintain the network:

    ☐ Communicate regularly with your network and your partner Mission. Set-up regular check-ins with your champions as a network to discuss the initiative's progress and sectoral updates. Be proactive, patient, responsive, and communicative to build positive team dynamics. Share information about potential or ongoing activities beyond the required action of signing a Concurrence Memo. Clarify roles and responsibilities. Discuss new ideas, innovations, or opportunities. Share research and tools.

    ☐ Visit the partner Mission and your initiative to catalyze relationship building. Teams should include at least one TDY at the beginning of their engagement with a Mission, and identify other strategic opportunities for in-person meetings with Mission staff in their planning. Conduct an in-brief and out-brief for all TDYs to a partner Mission.

    ☐ Provide guidance, technical assistance, administrative support, and resources/tools. Anticipate taking on a heavier amount of work at the beginning of the partnership for overstretched Missions, particularly when getting activities off the ground. Provide an avenue for greater Mission staff responsibility and activity management for sustainability down the road.

    ☐ Secure long term on-the-ground support. As resources permit, supply HQ staff on-the-ground to support collaboration between USAID HQ and the partner Mission.

    ☐ Regularly remind your network why they should care about the work and how it is aligned with the partner Mission priorities. You can do this through interactive presentations of activity progress or by sharing new ideas and insights from the sector.

☐ Transition ownership of the initiative to the network. For this, you will need to be an effective leader, clarify roles, conduct planning, and pace the transition. Complement this with capacity building efforts and expansion of the network of champions.

☐ Finalize an exit strategy. You can fully transfer ownership once the Mission invests in and commits to additional work in this technical area, demonstrating the capacity and willingness to continue the initiative.