

## Answering Your USAID Funding Questions

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Tips & Guidance

New Partners

Potential Partners



Bianca Ontiveros



A spark of passion led you here. You may be providing global health solutions, revitalizing an ecosystem, or establishing democratic practices. Funding will always be a pivotal topic when striving to realize your passion to accomplish development feats. USAID partnerships offer excellent funding opportunities for organizations like yours to accomplish their goals. The challenge lies in understanding the policies, procedures, and regulations to obtain monetary support.

At the Partnerships Incubator, one of our main objectives is to help you easily navigate this system. In this blog, we hope to answer some of your most pressing funding questions and point you to valuable resources on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusaid.gov).

## What types of USAID awards are available?

In order to understand the elements of [USAID's funding](#), it's essential to first know where it comes from. As a U.S. Government agency, USAID receives funding from Congress. Because these funds are coming from a government budget—and ultimately U.S. taxpayers—the Agency must be strategic about how they dedicate them to various activities.

These dedicated funds are distributed through competitive contracts (acquisition) or grants or cooperative agreements (assistance). These two award methods address different needs. With an **acquisition award**, USAID will share a request for proposal (RFP) to announce an opportunity. These opportunities are to purchase goods and services from an implementing partner for a USAID-directed activity. **Assistance awards** are announced through a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) or request for applications (RFA). In this method, USAID serves as a funder rather than a buyer.

As part of [USAID's localization agenda](#), the Agency's Missions, its overseas offices, are encouraged to seek more local partners for their acquisition and assistance awards. The Agency has committed to providing 25 percent of all funds directly to local partners in the next four years. This is important to note for local organizations, as they should keep an eye out for more local award opportunities in the coming months and years.

## How can my organization find and qualify for an opportunity?

To discover [acquisition or assistance awards](#), organizations can explore [SAM.gov](#) for current contracts, [Grants.gov](#) for grants and cooperative agreements, and [USAID's Business Forecast](#) for all *upcoming* funding opportunities. Always start with these three options. If you don't find any viable opportunities on these sites, an alternative option is called an [unsolicited proposal \(contracts\) or unsolicited application \(grants\)](#). USAID will consider your proposal or application if it offers a groundbreaking approach to a development challenge. Explore USAID's [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) for useful information that can help ensure your pitch is relevant.

All funding opportunities are guided by USAID's [Country Development Cooperation Strategies \(CDCS\)](#). The CDCS provides a framework for all of USAID's activities in a country, therefore it is essential to review the development strategies in your country or region and understand how your organization's objectives and work align with USAID. This can pave the way for a potential opportunity for your organization to pursue. You should also be on the lookout for [Requests for Information and Sources Sought Notices](#), which can allow you to begin a dialogue with the Mission on your area of expertise.

Both U.S.-based and non-U.S.-based organizations must complete required registrations to be eligible for award opportunities. These registrations are free but do require time and effort. We encourage you to visit the [WorkwithUSAID.gov Resource Library](#) and review the [Registering to Work with USAID](#) training module which outlines the various registration components you'll need before receiving an award.

## How does my organization apply for an opportunity?

Once you have found a good fit that you qualify for, get familiar with the many terms and acronyms you will need to know for the application process. Start with our [Acronym Soup](#) video and [quick reference guide](#). As you read the solicitation carefully, this will help

you understand the anticipated activities, eligibility criteria, and supporting documentation required of you.

During the “open question period,” your organization is able to ask all questions to the solicitation’s point of contact. Once this period closes, you will need to pay attention to the specific requirements—such as deadlines, page limits, and submission instructions. Tie your submission together with detailed and consistent descriptions. Your technical approach must clearly explain and match your proposed work and budget.

One of the most important steps is a final review. Before you submit your application, it's critical that you make time for your staff to review your entire response. This builds in room for key stakeholders to offer input, catch details you might have missed, and share what they’ve learned from this experience.

### **What can we do while we wait?**

By responding to a USAID funding opportunity, you have taken a great first step at introducing your organization’s work to the Agency’s technical staff. Take the next step by registering on WorkwithUSAID.gov’s [Partner Directory](#). From there, you can expand your network by connecting with thousands of like-minded partners, strengthen your organization’s capacity by taking the [Pre-Engagement Assessment](#), stay sharp with trending topics in the [News & Insights](#) blog, participate in engaging development [events](#), and learn USAID partnership best practices through the [Resource Library](#).

If your organization’s proposal or application is accepted, congratulations—you have become one of the more than 3,500 organizations working with USAID! If your proposal or application is not accepted by USAID, don’t worry. Your organization can learn from the process so that you can improve your chances of success in the future. You can request a debriefing meeting with the Agency’s team to get information about why your organization was not selected.

There is much more you can learn! Begin the [How to Work with USAID](#) training modules today to learn all there is to know about funding and partnership opportunities.

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