

SURVEY INSTRUMENT on Practitioners' Perspectives

Administered online through Qualtrics, July 12-August 7, 2026

Consent

Instruction Participant Information and Consent.

You are invited to participate in a survey exploring lessons from former USAID practitioners regarding the future design and effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance. The purpose of this survey is to gather informed perspectives from former USAID personnel on how U.S. foreign assistance could have been more effective and impactful, particularly in situations where key institutional, political, or operational constraints limited decision-making. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. The survey is expected to take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is confidential. Findings will be reported in aggregate form. Any quotations from open-ended responses will be presented in a manner that does not identify individual respondents. No comments will be attributed by name or other identification mark. While there are no direct benefits to participants, your insights may contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the future design and management of U.S. foreign assistance programs. If you have questions about this project, please contact: Paul Weisenfeld
Email: paul.weisenfeld@duke.edu

By selecting "I agree" and proceeding to the survey, you acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age, have read the information above, and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

- ☐ I agree to participate
- ☐ I do not agree to participate

Skip To: End of Survey If Instruction = I do not agree to participate

Section 1: Priority Changes



Q1 If you had the authority to make three changes that would have significantly improved USAID's effectiveness, which would you have prioritized? Please select up to three options:

- ☐ Simplify and accelerate project design and approval processes
 - ☐ Reform procurement and acquisition procedures
 - ☐ Reduce compliance and reporting requirements
 - ☐ Increase flexibility in program implementation and adaptation
 - ☐ Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems
 - ☐ Increase direct funding to local organizations
 - ☐ Improve workforce management, staffing, and talent development
 - ☐ Increase field mission authority and decision-making
 - ☐ Improve budgeting and resource allocation processes
 - ☐ Improve coordination between USAID and the Department of State
 - ☐ Improve coordination across U.S. government agencies involved in foreign assistance
 - ☐ Clarify and focus USAID strategic priorities
 - ☐ Strengthen partnerships with host-country governments
 - ☐ Improve collaboration with implementing partners
 - ☐ Strengthen technical expertise and sectoral knowledge
 - ☐ Improve crisis response and operational agility
 - ☐ Strengthen accountability for results
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Simplify and accelerate project design and approval processes



Q1A You identified **"simplifying and accelerating project design and approval processes"** as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Reduce the number of required approval steps
 - ☐ Delegate more approval authority to missions
 - ☐ Shorten project design timelines
 - ☐ Simplify project design documentation requirements
 - ☐ Increase use of adaptive and iterative project design
 - ☐ Reduce Washington review requirements
 - ☐ Increase mission discretion in modifying project designs
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Reform procurement and acquisition procedures



Q1B You identified "**reforming procurement and acquisition procedures**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Simplify solicitation and proposal requirements
 - ☐ Shorten procurement timelines
 - ☐ Delegate greater procurement authority to missions
 - ☐ Reduce documentation requirements
 - ☐ Expand use of local organizations and firms
 - ☐ Increase use of fixed-amount or simplified awards
 - ☐ Simplify risk-management requirements
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Reduce compliance and reporting requirements



Q1C You identified "**reducing compliance and reporting requirements**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Reduce reporting frequency
 - ☐ Reduce the number of required indicators
 - ☐ Streamline environmental and regulatory compliance requirements
 - ☐ Reduce partner reporting burdens
 - ☐ Simplify approval requirements for project modifications
 - ☐ Harmonize reporting requirements across programs
 - ☐ Focus reporting more on outcomes than processes
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Increase flexibility in program implementation and adaptation



Q1D You identified **"increasing flexibility in program implementation and adaptation"** as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Increase authority to modify activities during implementation
 - ☐ Allow greater budget reallocation within projects
 - ☐ Increase use of adaptive management approaches
 - ☐ Reduce restrictions tied to project design documents
 - ☐ Increase flexibility to respond to changing country conditions
 - ☐ Reduce approval requirements for implementation changes
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems



Q1E You identified "**strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Focus more on learning and adaptation rather than compliance
 - ☐ Reduce the number of required indicators
 - ☐ Improve measurement of long-term outcomes and impact
 - ☐ Increase use of real-time data for decision-making
 - ☐ Strengthen evaluation quality and rigor
 - ☐ Improve sharing of lessons learned across missions and bureaus
 - ☐ Increase use of evidence in program design and budgeting decisions
 - ☐ Strengthen feedback mechanisms from beneficiaries and local stakeholders
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Increase direct funding to local organizations



Q1F You identified "**Increase direct funding to local organizations**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Increase direct awards to local organizations
 - ☐ Simplify eligibility requirements for local organizations
 - ☐ Increase use of local subawards and partnerships
 - ☐ Strengthen capacity-building support for local organizations
 - ☐ Reduce compliance requirements for local organizations
 - ☐ Increase local participation in project design and decision-making
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Improve workforce management, staffing, and talent development



Q1G You identified **"Improve workforce management, staffing, and talent development"** as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Increase hiring flexibility and speed
 - ☐ Improve workforce planning and succession management
 - ☐ Strengthen leadership development and management training
 - ☐ Increase opportunities for staff mobility across sectors, regions, and functions
 - ☐ Improve recruitment and retention of technical experts
 - ☐ Reduce administrative burdens on staff
 - ☐ Strengthen incentives for innovation and calculated risk-taking
 - ☐ Improve performance management and accountability systems
 - ☐ Increase support for staff well-being and morale
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ Don't know
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Increase field mission authority and decision-making



Q1H You identified "**Increase field mission authority and decision-making**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Delegate greater programmatic decision-making authority to missions
 - ☐ Delegate greater budget authority to missions
 - ☐ Delegate greater procurement and acquisition authority to missions
 - ☐ Reduce Washington approval requirements
 - ☐ Increase flexibility to adapt programs to local conditions
 - ☐ Increase authority to modify projects during implementation
 - ☐ Reduce earmark-driven restrictions on mission decision-making
 - ☐ Clarify roles and responsibilities between Washington and the field
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Improve budgeting and resource allocation processes



Q1I You identified "**Improve budgeting and resource allocation processes**" as one of your top reform priorities. Within this area, which specific changes would you have prioritized? Please select up to three.

- ☐ Increase flexibility to move funds across activities and sectors
 - ☐ Reduce restrictions associated with earmarks and directives
 - ☐ Improve alignment between budgets and country strategies
 - ☐ Improve multi-year planning and funding predictability
 - ☐ Simplify budget approval and allocation processes
 - ☐ Increase mission input into budget decisions
 - ☐ Improve allocation of resources toward evidence-based priorities
 - ☐ Improve coordination of budget decisions across U.S. government agencies
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q1 = Other

Q1J You identified a reform priority not included in the previous list. Please briefly describe the reform you would have prioritized.



Q2 Of the three reforms you selected, which one would have had the greatest impact on USAID's effectiveness?

- ☐ Simplify and accelerate project design and approval processes
- ☐ Reform procurement and acquisition procedures
- ☐ Reduce compliance and reporting requirements
- ☐ Increase flexibility in program implementation and adaptation
- ☐ Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems
- ☐ Increase direct funding to local organizations
- ☐ Improve workforce management, staffing, and talent development
- ☐ Increase field mission authority and decision-making
- ☐ Improve budgeting and resource allocation processes
- ☐ Improve coordination between USAID and the Department of State
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- ☐ Clarify and focus USAID strategic priorities
- ☐ Strengthen partnerships with host-country governments
- ☐ Improve collaboration with implementing partners
- ☐ Strengthen technical expertise and sectoral knowledge
- ☐ Improve crisis response and operational agility
- ☐ Strengthen accountability for results
- ☐ Other

Q3 Please briefly explain why this reform would have had the greatest impact.



Q4 What were the three most significant obstacles preventing these reforms from being implemented? Select only three.

- ☐ Congressional directives and earmarks
 - ☐ Statutory restrictions
 - ☐ Federal regulations
 - ☐ Political leadership priorities
 - ☐ Risk aversion
 - ☐ Organizational culture/resistance to change
 - ☐ Bureaucratic inertia
 - ☐ Budget constraints
 - ☐ Oversight/OIG concerns
 - ☐ State Department priorities/interagency dynamics
 - ☐ Staff capacity
 - ☐ Competing stakeholder interests
 - ☐ Insufficient leadership commitment
 - ☐ Other
-



Q5 Of the obstacles you selected, which was the single most important? Select one.

- ☐ Congressional directives and earmarks
- ☐ Statutory restrictions
- ☐ Federal regulations
- ☐ Political leadership priorities
- ☐ Risk aversion
- ☐ Organizational culture/resistance to change
- ☐ Bureaucratic inertia
- ☐ Budget constraints
- ☐ Oversight/OIG concerns
- ☐ State Department priorities/interagency dynamics
- ☐ Staff capacity
- ☐ Competing stakeholder interests
- ☐ Insufficient leadership commitment
- ☐ Other

Q6 Please briefly explain how this obstacle limited reform efforts.



Q7 Which of the following commonly proposed reforms do you believe are overstated, unrealistic, or likely to produce unintended negative consequences if pursued too aggressively? Select up to three.

- ☐ Dramatically increasing direct funding to local organizations
- ☐ Reducing compliance and oversight requirements
- ☐ Significantly increasing mission autonomy
- ☐ Consolidating foreign assistance into a single agency
- ☐ Further integrating foreign assistance into the Department of State
- ☐ Reducing the role of large international implementing partners
- ☐ Expanding use of adaptive management approaches
- ☐ Relying more heavily on domestic resource mobilization
- ☐ Shifting resources away from long-term development toward humanitarian assistance
- ☐ Shifting resources away from humanitarian assistance toward long-term development
- ☐ Expanding use of private-sector financing and market-based approaches
- ☐ Increasing emphasis on measurable results and performance metrics

Q8 Please briefly explain at least one of your selections:

End of Block: Section 1: Priority Changes

Start of Block: Section 2: Looking Forward

Q9A If the United States were designing a new foreign assistance system from scratch, what is one feature of the former USAID system that should not be repeated?

Q9B And what is one feature of the former USAID system that should absolutely be preserved?

Q10 Optional Final Comment Are there any important reforms, constraints, or lessons not captured by the previous questions? Please provide any additional observations you believe should be considered.

Section 3: Background (for context only)

Note **We are nearly finished**. The remaining questions focus on your professional background and any suggestions you may have regarding additional individuals whose perspectives should be included in this study.

Q11 How many years did you work for USAID?

- ☐ Less than 10 years
 - ☐ 10–19 years
 - ☐ 20–29 years
 - ☐ 30+ years
-



Q12 Which best describes your primary role during most of your USAID career? (Select up to two only)

- ☐ Mission leadership (Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, Office Director)
- ☐ Technical officer/advisor
- ☐ Program officer
- ☐ Acquisition & Assistance / Contracting
- ☐ Humanitarian assistance
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Policy, budget, or strategy
- ☐ Management/operations
- ☐ Other

Display this question:

If Q12 = Other

Q12B Please, describe your primary role during most of your USAID career:



Q13 In which region did you spend the largest portion of your USAID career?

- ☐ Africa
 - ☐ Asia
 - ☐ Latin America and the Caribbean
 - ☐ Europe and Eurasia
 - ☐ Middle East
 - ☐ Primarily Washington-based/global roles
 - ☐ Multiple regions with no dominant region
-

Q14 What was the most senior position you held at USAID?

- ☐ Technical specialist/advisor
 - ☐ Program, contracting, legal, or management professional
 - ☐ Office Director
 - ☐ Deputy Mission Director
 - ☐ Mission Director
 - ☐ Senior Washington leadership (e.g., Deputy Assistant Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Counselor, etc.)
 - ☐ Other
-

Display this question:

If Q14 = Other

Q14B Please, describe the most senior position you held at USAID:

Q15 In what year did you leave USAID?

- ☐ 2025
- ☐ 2024
- ☐ 2023
- ☐ 2022
- ☐ 2021
- ☐ 2020
- ☐ 2019
- ☐ 2018
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- ☐ 1985
- ☐ 1984

☐ 1983

☐ 1982

☐ 1981

☐ 1980



Q16 1. Overall, how would you assess USAID's effectiveness prior to 2025?

- ☐ Very effective
 - ☐ Somewhat effective
 - ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective / Mixed performance
 - ☐ Somewhat ineffective
 - ☐ Very ineffective
 - ☐ Not sure / Prefer not to answer
-



Q16A 2. How extensive do you believe reforms to USAID would have needed to be prior to 2025?

- ☐ Minor adjustments only
- ☐ Moderate reforms
- ☐ Significant reforms
- ☐ Fundamental restructuring
- ☐ Complete redesign of the institution
- ☐ Not sure / Prefer not to answer

End of Block: Section 3: Background (for context only)

Start of Block: Section 4: Conclusion

Q17A To help deepen our understanding of the issues raised in this survey, we may conduct a limited number of follow-up interviews. Would you be willing to participate if contacted?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Display this question:

If Q17A = Maybe

Or Q17A = Yes

Q17B Please provide your preferred contact information (email, phone number, or both).

Q18 As we seek to capture a broad range of perspectives, are there former USAID colleagues whose experience or viewpoints you believe should be included in this effort? Please provide the names of up to five individuals you would recommend, along with any contact information you are comfortable sharing. If you do not have their current email address or phone number, please provide their full name and any identifying information you recall, and our team will attempt to locate them.
