

Implementation Tips for USAID Partners

Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global CSO Community

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Definitions

AO—Agreement Officer. A person with the authority to (1) enter into, administer, terminate, and close out assistance agreements, and (2) make related determinations and findings on behalf of USAID.

AOR—Agreement Officer's Representative.

Key Personnel—Individuals directly responsible for managing the agreement, or those personnel whose professional/technical skills are certified by the AOR as being essential for successful implementation of the project.

Poaching—Hiring someone away from their current job—working for another project, a competitor, or host country government—to join your organization.

References

[How to work with USAID.](#)

Online series designed to answer some of the most frequently asked questions and concerns from organizations interested in partnering with USAID. This how-to training is designed to provide you with practical tips and concrete examples on topics ranging from researching potential funding opportunities to effectively putting together a proposal or application, budget or monitoring and evaluation plan.

Key Personnel

Q. What if someone designated as Key Personnel leaves the project?

A. Your Cooperative Agreement names as “Key Personnel” specific individuals on your project team who were approved at the time the award was made (or later); it states that any changes must be approved by the Agreement Officer (AO). But what does this mean?

Key Personnel are individuals identified in your Cooperative Agreement who are directly responsible for the effective implementation of the project and management of the agreement. These are the positions deemed most critical to the success of a project (such as a chief of party or director of finance and administration) and require USAID's approval before an implementer can hire them or replace them with a different candidate.

Although everyone on your team plays an important role, only a small number of people will be designated in the Agreement as Key Personnel. The number of Key Personnel designated for any award must not be more than five individuals or five percent of the employees working under the award, whichever is greater.

Any changes in Key Personnel require USAID approval. If a change is necessary, you will want to follow these steps:

1. Notify your Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) as soon as a possible change is brought to your attention (for example, if an individual designated as Key Personnel gives his or her resignation). In the case of a termination, be sure you have followed your organization's human resources (HR) procedures.
2. Following your organization's procedures, conduct a fair and open competition to recruit a replacement. Document the process and your decision. Based on the position's requirements, select the best candidate to be put forward to your funding agency, since only one candidate can be proposed per Key Personnel position.
3. When you have selected a candidate, if your HR policy allows, you may extend a conditional job offer that states that the candidate's selection must be approved by the AO. Do not offer a job or sign an employment agreement without this condition.

In Your Agreement

The Key Personnel clause may be found in the Substantial Involvement section of the Schedule of your Cooperative Agreement. The clause contains both the terms of the requirement and the list of Key Personnel named in your Agreement.

For More Information

For this or other issues of *Implementation Tips*, please visit www.NGOConnect.net. The Web site is a dynamic and interactive portal dedicated to connecting and strengthening CSOs, networks and CSO support organizations worldwide.

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4. Submit a request for approval of the new candidate in writing to your AO, including the candidate's CV (curriculum vitae) and a brief explanation of why the individual is being proposed (for example, strengths, expertise and so on).

Barring any concerns, the AO will communicate back to you an approval, after which you can move forward to hire the individual you have selected.

Finally, the AO will modify your agreement to formally document the change in Key Personnel. This formal modification may come at a later date. Sometimes the AO will wait to make several modifications together to cut down on paperwork, but this will not delay your ability to hire your new Key Personnel.

Human Resources Tips

Confirm that your organization has HR policies in place that address:

- recruitment,
- resignation, and
- termination

Put it in writing

Always document USAID approval in an email or formal letter. For example, if you discuss a personnel change with your AO on the telephone, follow up in writing via an email confirming verbal approval.

Avoid poaching

If you are considering hiring someone from another project or the host-country government, please discuss this with your AOR early, before even a conditional offer is extended. The issue of concern is "poaching," that is hiring someone away from another USG-funded project or the host-country government. It is not good practice.

