

# Introduction

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## 1.1 Why This Guide?

*The Essential NGO Guide to Managing Your USAID Award* is designed as both a capacity-building tool and desktop reference. In preparing this *Guide*, the authors consulted the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as well as a range of documents issued by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Above all, this *Guide* is intended to serve as an engaging and informative resource to strengthen your NGO's capacity-building efforts as well as to be a handy resource for understanding and complying with USAID rules and regulations.

### Please note

This *Guide* focuses specifically on USAID regulations, not those of other U.S. Government agencies. It is intended only to help USAID awardees. The regulations themselves and your agreement with USAID are the definitive sources.

## 1.2 Who Is the Guide For?

The *Guide* is not just for the leaders of USAID partner organizations; it is for all staff members who play a role in managing or implementing a USAID award. Many topics addressed by this *Guide* apply to both prime partners receiving funds directly from USAID as well as organizations receiving subawards from them.

The *Guide* presents rules, regulations, and processes organizations need to address in every phase of project management—from award, start-up, and implementation through monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and close out.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking resources for their programs may also find the recommendations in this *Guide* useful to becoming stronger organizations and, therefore, more competitive in their efforts to pursue USAID funding and opportunities from a diverse range of donors. Whether an organization is focused on health, education, civil society, microenterprise, agriculture, women's empowerment, or other technical areas, the same USAID regulations as well as the same capacity-building tools generally apply.

## 1.3 How Is the Guide Organized?

Part One of the *Guide* leads you through four phases of managing your award: [chapter 2](#) covers the Award Phase; [chapter 3](#) discusses the Start-Up Phase; [chapters 4–5](#) address the Implementation Phase and [chapter 6](#) guides you through the Close-Out Phase.

Part Two covers topics essential to getting your project off to a good start and maintaining the ability to deliver results, including NGO capacity building ([chapter 7](#)), developing a strategic plan ([chapter 8](#)), and tips for seeking future funding ([chapter 9](#)).

Each chapter provides links to useful tools to help you implement your work and references to documents and Web sites to obtain more detailed information on a particular subject.

## 1.4 How to Use This Guide

The *Guide* is designed to be read like a book or consulted as a desktop reference. The table of contents at the beginning and the index at the end can help you quickly find the specific information you need. Many of the sections provide detailed, step-by-step instructions for meeting certain USAID requirements.

### Online Tips

Online readers will be able to skip from one page in the *Guide* to another whenever a word or phrase is [in green and underlined](#). These are active links, meaning that, when clicked, a new page will appear that contains more information on that particular subject. A highlighted box at the start of each chapter provides active links to let you “skip ahead” to a specific topic rather than scrolling through the document page by page.

To avoid duplicating information that is provided in depth elsewhere, when you click on a word or phrase underlined in green you will go to a Web site that we believe is safe and useful. You can tell where you are by looking at the Web site “address” at the top of your Web browser “window.”

## 1.5 Ties to Organizational Development

The Capable Partners Program's approach to NGO institutional strengthening reflects seven capacity-building domains: compliance,

external relations, financial management, governance, human resources, monitoring and evaluation, and program management. While the *Guide* is organized according to the life cycle stages of an award, the chart below offers a handy way to reference its resources by capacity-building domain.

### The *Guide* as Seen through an Organizational Development Lens

#### Compliance

- ▶ Cooperative Agreement Basics (Ch. 2)
- ▶ Procurement Policy Standards (Ch. 3)
- ▶ Reporting (Ch. 5)
- ▶ Close Out (Ch. 6)

#### Governance

- ▶ Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses (Ch. 7)
- ▶ Governance and Management (Ch. 7)
- ▶ Strategic Planning (Ch. 8)

#### External Relations

- ▶ Marking and Branding (Ch. 3)
- ▶ Communication Planning (Ch. 3)

#### Financial Management

- ▶ Financial Systems: Minimum Requirements (Ch. 3)
- ▶ Financial Management (Ch. 4)

#### Human Resources

- ▶ Key Personnel (Ch. 2)
- ▶ Human Resources Policies (Ch. 3)

#### Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- ▶ Starting your M&E System (Ch. 3)
- ▶ Baseline Surveys (Ch. 3)
- ▶ M&E Progress (Ch. 4)
- ▶ Demonstrating Impact/Telling Your Story (Ch. 3)

#### Program/Project Management

- ▶ Workplanning (Ch. 3)
- ▶ Technical Program Management (Ch. 4)
- ▶ Learning and Sharing (Ch. 4)