

Implementation Tips for USAID Partners

Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global CSO Community

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Definitions

HR Policies—A set of rules or guiding principles that define how an organization addresses personnel related matters.

A **policy** is a formal statement of a principle or rule that members of an organization must follow. Each policy addresses an issue important to the organization's mission or operations.

A **procedure** tells members of the organization how to carry out or implement a policy.

A **policy** is the “what” and the procedure is the “how to”. Policies are written as statements or rules. **Procedures** are written as instructions, in logical steps.

References

USAID Mandatory
Standard Provisions:

[U.S.-based Organizations](#)

[Non-U.S.-based Organizations](#)

[HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector](#)

HR Policy Essentials for Recipients of USAID Funding

Q. Does our civil society organization (CSO) need particular personnel or human resources (HR) policies?

A. Yes! Some human resources policies are required by local law, U.S. law or USAID, while others are practical or necessary rules for managing an effective organization. Regardless of the source, establishing clear, well-developed HR policies will not only enhance communication between managers and employees, clarify expectations and ensure that all staff are treated equitably. They can also protect your organization against grievances and lawsuits if they arise.

Although a number of U.S. Government (USG) regulations touch on HR-related issues (for example, under procurement you will find policies on conflict of interest, gratuities and disciplinary actions) only a few HR-specific USG regulations apply to all recipients of USAID funding. The following focuses mainly on those.

USAID Required HR Policies

Labor Laws and Regulations—Organizations must comply with the labor laws of the country in which staff are employed. For example, there may be regulations to prevent hiring discrimination or to require certain benefits. It is also important for both the organization and the employees to be clear from the beginning about the rights of the employee and employer, the grounds for discipline and termination and the processes for discipline and termination.

Standards of Conduct—Standards of conduct are established to address the behaviors and professional conduct that affect the employee's ability to perform his or her job and represent the organization. They may include reporting to work on time, performing assigned duties, supporting a safe and healthy work environment and common workplace standards, such as prohibiting sexual harassment or discrimination.

Timesheet Tracking—Timesheets are required for all personnel who are paid with USAID funds, including contractors and part-time staff, and for your annual audit. In addition, it is helpful to have volunteers fill out simplified timesheets, so you can track their hours and count these toward your cost-share contribution (if you have one).

Human resources (HR) policies should reflect sound practice, be written down, communicated to everyone and reviewed and modified periodically to reflect changing circumstances.

Due Diligence in Hiring Decisions—You are required to have a summary of a candidate's academic and work history (a curriculum vitae or CV) for every employee hired under your award to verify his or her employment and salary history. Although your Cooperative Agreement may not require the use of the SF-1420—the Contractor Employee Biographical Data Sheet, the standard form used to document the salary history of employees and contractors—the SF-1420 bio data sheet is often used during the hiring process, because it is an easy way to capture the relevant information. It is also used by USAID to help justify salaries.

Faith-based Organization Hiring Protections—Under U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity laws, a faith-based organization that implements a USAID program has the right to hire people who share the organization's faith. If you choose to do this, make sure your HR policies are clear. You may wish to have a lawyer or HR expert review your policies before you implement them.

Drug-Free Workplace Policy—Your Cooperative Agreement requires you, and any of your organization's subrecipients, to establish a drug-free workplace policy. Every staff member in your organization must sign this policy statement. A good way to address the signature requirement for this policy is to include it in two documents: first in the personnel manual and second as a separate one-page policy document that is signed by each employee and filed in personnel files.

According to USG Mandatory Standard Provisions, your drug-free workplace policy statement must include:

- a declaration that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the workplace;
- specific actions your organization will take against employees who violate that prohibition; and
- conditions of employment under any award, which state that an employee must abide by the terms of the statement and must notify you in writing if he or she is convicted of violating a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five calendar days after the conviction.

In addition, your organization is required to establish an ongoing drug-free awareness program to inform employees about the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace; your drug-free workplace policy; any available drug counseling, rehabilitation and employee assistance programs; and the penalties you may enforce for drug policy violations in the workplace.

The laws of the country in which you are registered as an organization and in which you work take precedence over U.S. Government policy.

Human Resources Policies

- Apply to: All recipients of USG funds
- Required for: Annual Audit (particularly time tracking)
- Verified by: Annual Audit
- Governed by: Your Cooperative Agreement and funding agency regulations and in-country laws

The policy statement and program must be in place no later than 30 days after the effective date of your award.

If an employee is convicted of a drug violation in the workplace, you are required to notify USAID, in writing, within 10 calendar days after conviction. The notification must identify the employee's position title and the number of each award on which the employee worked. Within 30 days of an employee's conviction, you must either:

- take appropriate action against the employee, up to and including termination (as appropriate with your organization's HR policies and applicable labor laws), or
- require the employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug-abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved by a national, state or local health, law enforcement or other appropriate agency.

In the event that local laws prevent you from following the mandates of the USG drug-free workplace policy in full, notify your Agreement Officer (AO) or Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and seek their guidance.

HIV/AIDS Policy—An HIV/AIDS policy defines an organization's stance on the employment of persons living with HIV or AIDS and the expected treatment in the workplace of persons living with HIV or AIDS. Although an HIV/AIDS policy is not required by USG funding agencies, it is considered best practice for any organization, particularly those working within the field of HIV/AIDS. An HIV/AIDS policy formalizes the organization's commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS and supporting staff living with HIV or AIDS, including benefits for care or treatment, accommodations where possible and job security. The development of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy can enable the organization to keep and benefit from talented staff.

Ensure your organization is in compliance with your country's national and local labor laws regarding the employment of persons living with HIV and AIDS. In some cases, your organizational policies may exceed what is legally required, particularly in countries with no laws regarding the employment of persons living with HIV.

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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Codify Policies and Procedures

No matter how small or large, every CSO needs policies and procedures designed to help engage and manage people—the organization's most valuable asset. These policies and procedures must follow local laws and address donor requirements. In addition, your policies and procedures should reflect your organization's mission, vision and values.

Policies and procedures are only as good as they are honest and useful—honest means objectively accounting for internal and external factors and requirements; useful means using clear language that is easy to understand and follow. To get buy-in and improve the chances that your policies and procedures will not gather dust on a shelf, give staff a voice in shaping them. Codify the policies in a manual or handbook that is shared with all staff and volunteers in print and online. The benefits of capturing policies and procedures in a handbook are many: Everyone receives the same information about the rules of the organization and they know what the CSO expects of them and what they can expect from the CSO. Also, should someone charge that your policies are unfair or discriminatory, it may keep you from facing costly legal challenges.

