

Focus Group Discussion Guides:

- Opportunities to Reduce Operational Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
- Opportunities to Improve the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) of Implementing Partner (IP) Workforces

FOCUS GROUP ON OPERATIONAL GHG EMISSIONS

Introduction: Thank you for taking your time today to meet with us to discuss a key USAID priority: USAID's response to the Climate Crisis.

My name is [FACILITATOR NAME] and my pronouns are [PRONOUNS].¹ Also on the call is my colleague [NOTE TAKER NAME]. I'll be the one primarily asking the questions while my colleague(s) will be taking detailed, anonymized notes during today's session.

If relevant: We invite you to join and participate with your camera on today, but please participate in whatever way you are most comfortable with.

Welcome and Informed Consent: USAID is approaching climate change with renewed ambition to support the Biden-Harris Administration's bold climate agenda and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

USAID released a draft of its forthcoming Climate Strategy at the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November 2021 and published the final Strategy on April 22, 2022—Earth Day. You can find the Strategy at the link [NOTE TAKER NAME] will share in the chat momentarily. [NOTETAKER TO SHARE [LINK](#) IN CHAT].

Through our Strategy, USAID is committed to confronting the climate crisis by reforming our operations and supporting our implementing partners (IPs) to undertake aligned efforts. In line with the Special Objective (SpO) of the Climate Strategy, "Strengthen operations and approaches to programming to address climate change and further climate justice within USAID and our partner organizations," USAID is taking steps to integrate climate objectives internally across the Agency's policies, processes, programming, and operations. We are interested in connecting these efforts with those of our implementing partners—you.

Our Climate Strategy seeks to reduce operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide, including through increasing the energy efficiency of infrastructure, vehicle fleets, information technology, employee travel, and supply chains.

Before we go any farther, to comply with the Privacy Act of 1974, we are required to read a Privacy Act Statement as part of our informed consent process. USAID is hosting this customer research discussion today to gather information to help the Agency understand how it can most

¹ Facilitators, like participants, are not required to state their gender pronouns. While it is a recommended best practice, it is never mandatory for any person to do so.

efficiently and effectively engage and inform its efforts with its IPs through the Climate Strategy implementation process. In particular, USAID is interested in understanding actions your organization is currently taking, or plans to take, to improve its energy efficiency, reduce its *operational* GHG emissions,² and work toward becoming a net-zero organization.³ We would also like to understand what barriers your organizations might face to doing these things. Understanding your organization's plans, current efforts, and barriers may inform USAID's approach to implementing the Climate Strategy efficiently and effectively, especially as we strive to maximize our outcomes.

For today's conversation, we are focusing on large, domestic implementing partners to start to understand what your organizations might be doing to reduce their carbon footprints.

Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. We will not attribute the input you provide today to you as individuals nor to your organizations. We will not be recording this Google Meet session. We will aggregate and analyze the information you share to inform USAID's engagement with IP organizations to implement the Climate Strategy. We may share aggregated, anonymized conclusions within USAID and with IP organizations.

For more information, please feel free to contact MBureauClimateChangeWG@usaid.gov [NOTETAKER TO SHARE ADDRESS IN CHAT].

Participant Introduction:

Before we get into the discussion, we'd like to do a round of introductions. As a reminder, my name is [FACILITATOR NAME] and my pronouns are [PRONOUNS]. I'm joining this conversation with [DISCUSS LENS].

Please share your name, organization, and your role that you would like the group to be aware of.

[PARTICIPANTS INTRO THEMSELVES]

RoadRules:

We want you to know that this is a safe space to talk candidly.

We have prepared some questions to guide the discussion. However, we'd like to have a flexible, dynamic conversation. We welcome any and all responses.

Please use the raise hand function at the bottom of your screen. If and when people use the raise hands function, please keep in mind that I will not be going in order of who raised their hand first, but will instead prioritize people who haven't had the opportunity to speak up often.

² <https://ghgprotocol.org/standards>

³ **Facilitator Note:** These discussions should not focus on individual procurements nor the specifics of forthcoming regulations. The focus should remain on best-practices and potential barriers to reducing operational GHG emissions.

Those who do not have a chance to verbally participate may use the chat; we will copy and paste those chat comments into our notes and delete the names.

Do you have any questions or framing comments before we get started?

As a reminder, we will not attribute the input you provide today to you as individuals nor to your organizations.

We want to have an open, casual conversation.

Discussion Questions:

Assessment of IP organizations' existing efforts, best practices, and capacities to work toward net-zero (to inform USAID's understanding of its IPs' current level of maturity).

[Facilitators: Please read this note aloud to frame the questions] *What are IP organizations currently doing to reduce their operational carbon footprints? We are interested in identifying examples of promising practices for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions in the international development and humanitarian assistance sectors to inform how USAID could enable, promote, and scale those promising practices among the IP community through the Climate Strategy implementation process, to ensure efficient and effective outcomes, and minimize the burden on IPs.*

1. Does your organization have a sustainability plan or strategy? Can you describe your goals and approach?
 - a. Using the raise hand function, please raise your hand if your organization has plans to work toward net-zero emissions from its operations? [If no one answers yes:] Please raise your hand if your organization has plans to work towards greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
2. We'd like to hear about your organization's efforts to reduce its operational GHG emissions and your organization's motivations.
 - a. What drives your organization's climate and GHG activities and motivations?
 - b. How has your organization integrated efforts to reduce GHG emissions into your operations?
3. What are some of the successes your organization has already had in reducing its operational greenhouse gas emissions? What internal operations-focused sustainability and climate change initiatives is your organization working on that you would like to share? What actions did your organization take, and what have the impacts been?
 - a. What lessons learned or promising-practices have emerged thus far?

What can be improved and how?

[Facilitators: Please read this note aloud to frame the questions] *What could IP organizations do to reduce their operational carbon footprints? We are interested in understanding how much IP organizations have thought about environmental sustainability, what barriers they might have encountered, and current and potential future factors external to them might be affecting or could affect their GHG emissions reduction efforts.*

USAID wants to inform and tailor our approach to implementing the Climate Strategy, as appropriate, to reflect the needs of IP organizations as they work toward reducing GHG emissions from their operations.

1. What challenges or barriers have your organizations experienced with addressing climate change and reducing GHG emissions?
 - a. What barriers do your organizations face to reaching a target, such as net-zero emissions?
 - b. What (if any) interventions or actions might help address these barriers?
 - c. If USAID were to consider implementing a GHG reduction guidance, what steps would your organization need to take to scale this policy, and what would be a realistic timeframe?
2. Does your organization have an estimate of the volume of greenhouse emissions it generates?
 - a. [For those who answered yes:] How does your organization measure/estimate its GHG emissions? (E.g., what methodologies, tools, frameworks, etc., does your organization use to track GHG emission data?)
 - b. If not, what are barriers to tracking how much your organization is emitting?
3. How could USAID help IP organizations further adopt and implement operational GHG reduction objectives?
4. How could USAID and IP organizations best communicate achievements toward operational GHG reductions?
 - a. What concerns about communicating your organization's GHG emissions reduction efforts do you have?
5. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the operational sustainability of your organization and helped you reduce your carbon footprint? (E.g., has your organization considered how full-time telework, reduced employee travel, etc., has affected its greenhouse gas emissions?)

Recap and Next Steps

In closing, thank you all for the robust discussion and candid responses.

To reiterate, through our Climate Strategy, USAID is committed to confronting the climate crisis by reforming the Agency's operations. We are interested in connecting our efforts with those of our implementing partner organizations and are glad you could join us today to provide important feedback.

Thank you, again. Please feel free to contact MBureauClimateChangeWG@usaid.gov if there is anything more you would like to share that you may have been unable to during the discussion.

FOCUS GROUP ON STRENGTHENING DEIA IN THE CLIMATE WORKFORCE

Introduction: Thank you for taking your time today to meet with us to discuss a key USAID priority: USAID's further climate justice within USAID and our partner organizations in its response to the Climate Crisis.

My name is [FACILITATOR NAME] and my pronouns are [PRONOUNS].⁴ Also on the call is my colleague [NOTE TAKER NAME]. I'll be the one primarily asking the questions while my colleague(s) will be taking detailed, anonymized notes during today's session.

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Through USAID's Climate Strategy, USAID is committed to confronting the climate crisis by reforming our operations and supporting our implementing partners (IPs) to undertake aligned efforts. One component of the Climate Strategy's Special Objective is to strengthen the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) of the climate workforce. We are focusing on this particular segment of the workforce because this segment will play a major role in USAID's implementation of the Climate Strategy; we also recognize a need and opportunity to increase and improve DEIA in this segment of the workforce.

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In line with the Special Objective (SpO) of the Climate Strategy, "Strengthen operations and approaches to programming to address climate change and further climate justice within USAID and our partner organizations," USAID is taking steps to integrate climate objectives internally across the Agency's policies, processes, programming, and operations. This is consistent with USAID's focus on advancing the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility across its programs, partner base and its people as evidenced in the Agency's recently published Equity Action Plan focused on increasing equity in its programs and partnerships and a DEIA Strategic Plan that seeks to diversify our workforce across all mechanisms, functions, and sectors, and at all levels of the organization.

We are interested in connecting these efforts with those of our implementing partners—you.

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Before we go any farther, to comply with the Privacy Act of 1974, we are required to read a Privacy Act Statement as part of our informed consent process. USAID is hosting this customer research discussion today to gather information to help the Agency understand how it can most efficiently and effectively engage and inform its efforts with its IP organizations through the Climate Strategy implementation process. In particular, USAID is interested in understanding what your organization is doing and plans to do to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and how these efforts help you achieve your climate goals. We would also like to understand what barriers your organizations might face to doing these things. Understanding your organization's plans, current efforts, and barriers may inform USAID's approach to implementing the Climate Strategy efficiently and effectively, especially as we strive to further climate justice while also maximizing our outcomes.

For today's conversation, we are focusing on large, domestic implementing partners to start to understand what your organizations might be doing to strengthen workforce DEIA in the climate and environment space.

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For more information, please feel free to contact MBureauClimateChangeWG@usaid.gov [NOTETAKER TO SHARE ADDRESS IN CHAT].

Participant Introduction:

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[PARTICIPANTS INTRO THEMSELVES]

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Assessment of IP organizations' DEIA best practices in the climate- and environment-focused workforce, levels of maturity, current efforts, and measures in place.

[Facilitators: Please read this note aloud to frame the questions] *What are IP organizations currently doing to strengthen the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) of their climate- and environment-focused workforces? We are interested in understanding current levels of maturity and existing DEIA strengthening efforts, as well as identifying examples of DEIA best practices to inform how USAID could most efficiently and effectively engage with IP organizations to further these efforts and best practices among the IP community through the Climate Strategy implementation process, to maximize outcomes and minimize the burden on IP organizations.*

1. What is your organization *doing well* in terms of ensuring diversity of identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, and beliefs through your recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices? Can you please share any best practices and/or lessons learned?
 - a. What efforts or lessons learned does your organization employ to train its workforce to recognize and minimize unconscious bias in hiring?
 - b. What policies or procedures are working well within your organization to ensure that your workforce is offered equitable pay and benefits regardless of identifier—e.g., age, race, gender, ability, or category of staff (permanent, not permanent), etc.?
 - c. What policies or procedures are in place to increase accessibility in your organization's workplace?
 - i. (Note: the White House defines “accessibility” as: design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.)
 - d. Does your organization have any *novel* practices—practices that are yielding equitable and transparent results—for employees to disclose and resolve issues related to experiencing discrimination or harassment in the workplace?
2. Are there other internal initiatives that your organization is planning or implementing to strengthen DEIA within its workforce? (E.g., employee affinity groups focused on DEIA and making recommendations to leadership?) If so, can you share how these initiatives especially relate to climate- and environment-focused positions?
3. Please raise your hand if your organization currently assesses, tracks, or measures DEIA within its climate- and environment-focused workforce? If yes, how does it go about doing that? What is working well for your organization?
 - a. [If participant answers mostly focus on “diversity”, consider asking:] Does your organization currently assess, track, or measure equity, inclusion, and accessibility within its climate- and environment-focused workforce?

IP organizations' DEIA opportunities: improving maturity and measures, and removing barriers

[Facilitators: Please read this note aloud to frame the questions] *What could IP organizations do in the future to strengthen the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) of their climate- and environment-focused workforces? We are interested in understanding what opportunities and challenges IP organizations have already identified, as well as if there are any USAID requirements that inadvertently contradict our goal to strengthen DEIA. We are planning to use this information to inform how USAID could most efficiently and effectively engage with IP organizations to strengthen DEIA in the climate and environment workforce through the Climate Strategy implementation process, to maximize outcomes and minimize the burden on IP organizations.*

1. How might your organization better assess or measure DEIA within its climate and environment-focused workforce?
 - a. How might better measurement and reporting on the DEIA of your organization's climate- and environment-focused workforce improve equity in the Climate Strategy implementation process?
2. What challenges does your organization face in improving DEIA in its climate- and environment-focused workforce at all levels, including at the leadership level? What might be holding your organization back?
3. Is there anything USAID asks of your organizations that might inadvertently be contradictory to our goal to strengthen DEIA, specifically within your organization's climate- and environment-focused workforce?

Recap and Next Steps

In closing, thank you all for the robust discussion and candid responses.

To reiterate, through our Climate Strategy, USAID is committed to confronting the climate crisis by reforming the Agency's operations. We are interested in connecting our efforts with those of our implementing partner organizations and are glad you could join us today to provide important feedback.

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