# Assessing the Merits and Challenges of the Current Participating Agency Service Agreement with the United States Agency for International Development



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION®

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*A White Paper by the*

**NATIONAL ACADEMY OF**

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*for the Agricultural Research Service*

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# *Agricultural Research Service*
*Assessing the Merits and Challenges of the Participating Agency Service Agreement with the United States Agency for International Development*

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# ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) is an independent non-profit, non-partisan organization established in 1967. Chartered by Congress in 1984, the Academy provides expert advice to government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. To carry out this mission, the Academy draws on the knowledge and expertise of its over 900 Fellows—including former cabinet officers, Members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as prominent scholars, business executives, and public administrators. The Academy assists public institutions address their most critical governance and management challenges through in-depth studies and analyses, advisory services and technical assistance, congressional testimony, forums and conferences, and online stakeholder engagement. Learn more about the Academy and its work at www.NAPAwash.org.

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# Foreword

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is a leading global agricultural scientific research agency. As the lead research agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), ARS employs roughly 2,000 researchers in plant and animal science focused on over 670 on-going research projects in around 90 locations around the country. In an ever-shrinking, increasingly inter-dependent world, the profound impacts of this Agency's domestic plant and animal research have no boundaries, having enormous impact outside the Nation's borders as well.

Given the global relevance of ARS research work, the Agency established a focused inter-agency relationship with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the form of a Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA). Created in 2002, the agreement permits several ARS scientists to be embedded in, and financially supported by, USAID in order to help advance USAID's global mission.

This white paper, prepared by a study team of the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) and overseen by a three-member Expert Advisory Group of Academy Fellows, provides an evaluation of the PASA with respect to meeting ARS goals for the program. It also provides insights on how the PASA might be improved through enhanced administrative services for the ARS employees who participate in it.

As a congressionally chartered non-partisan and non-profit organization with over 900 distinguished Fellows, the Academy has a unique ability to bring nationally-recognized public administration experts together to help agencies address their challenges. We are pleased to have had the opportunity to assist ARS by conducting this study, and we appreciate the constructive engagement of its many employees and others, including USAID employees, who provided important observations and context to inform this white paper. I am deeply appreciative of the work of the Academy's study team, as well as that of an Expert Advisory Group who provided their valuable insights and expertise throughout the project.

I trust that the Academy study team's white paper will provide important insights into the current value, and future potential, of the PASA relationship between ARS and USAID.


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Teresa W. Gerton
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Academy of Public Administration

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **ARS** | Agricultural Research Service |
| **CRDF** | Civilian Research and Development Foundation |
| **CRF** | Collaborative Research Funding |
| **EAG** | Expert Advisory Group |
| **FAS** | Foreign Agricultural Service |
| **FTE** | Full-Time Equivalent |
| **FtF** | Feed the Future |
| **GS** | General Schedule |
| **HR** | Human Resources |
| **OBCL** | Overseas Biological Control Laboratories |
| **OIRP** | Office of International Research Programs |
| **ONP** | Office of National Programs |
| **PAPA** | Participating Agency Program Agreement |
| **PASA** | Participating Agency Service Agreement |
| **REE** | Research, Education and Economics |
| **The Academy** | National Academy of Public Administration |
| **USAID** | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| **USDA** | U.S. Department of Agriculture |
| **USFS** | U.S. Forest Service |

# Executive Summary

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is one of 17 agencies that comprise the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As USDA's in-house research agency, ARS is considered a world leader in plant and animal research, providing valuable information primarily focusing on domestic agricultural issues.

ARS partners with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to deliver foreign assistance through a reimbursable Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) managed by ARS's Office of International Research Programs (OIRP), which is a part of the ARS Office of National Programs (ONP). There are two main components to the PASA program. First, ARS supports USAID by providing scientists and technical experts for posting within USAID. The administration of these scientists and technical experts is supported by ARS. Second, the PASA allows USAID and ARS to develop cooperative activities of mutual interest which are implemented in partnership with research institutions in developing countries.

The white paper focuses on two key issues. First, it is intended to assess the value of the PASA to ARS. Second, this white paper offers recommendations on how performance under the PASA might be enhanced through improved administrative arrangements.

As a starting point, USAID benefits from the PASA by having access to a vast pool of quality scientific and technical ARS personnel resources to implement U.S. development assistance. ARS scientists, on the other hand, benefit from the PASA by having non-competitive funding available for specific projects that provide international opportunities to test hypotheses, collaborate, and enhance aspects of their domestic research projects.

The white paper assesses the value of the PASA to ARS in greater detail by examining the following five criteria determined by ARS:

- **Meet the goals established with the initial PASA**
- **Meet the goals of the USDA strategic plan**
- **Meet the goals of the ARS strategic plan**
- **Assess financial viability of the PASA program**
- **Meet the goals of the USAID Strategic Plan**

Based on interviews and documentary research, the study team assessed the five criteria based on the following three evaluative rating outcomes: whether the current ARS PASA exceeds, meets, or falls short of expectations. These ratings are defined below.

- **Exceeds Expectations**: substantial empirical impact; near unanimous interviewee acknowledgement of impact
- **Meets Expectations**: observable empirical impact; regular interviewee acknowledgement of impact
- **Falls short of Expectations**: little to no empirical impact; no interviewee acknowledgement of impact

The study team's assessment for each of the five criteria leads to a unanimous conclusion that the PASA meets the Agency's criteria. The details of each evaluative criterion are provided below.

## PASA Evaluation Summary:

**Criterion 1: Meets the Goals Established by the Initial PASA - Meets**

**Criteria 2 and 3: Meets the Strategic Goals of USDA and ARS - Meets**

**Criterion 4: Assess Financial Viability of the PASA Program - Meets**

**Criterion 5: Meets the Goals of USAID Strategic Plan – Meets**

In meeting expectations, the PASA Program develops strategic connections between the well-being and profitability of U.S. agriculture and the global engagement of U.S. scientists. Critical food system security needs are addressed through CRF funding and PASA Employee work that targets potential future pests and diseases. OIRP provides administrative support, including travel arrangements for PASA Employees, ensuring that the PASA Program supports USDA and ARS goals. Additionally, OIRP administratively supports short-term Civilian Research and Development Foundation Consultants and, until recently, supported USAID's Feed the Future Initiative. Together, these efforts prove mutually beneficial for both agencies and, when strengthened, could help the PASA Program exceed expectations.

In addition to an assessment of PASA goals, the study team investigated whether there are any actions that could be taken to improve administrative services provided to ARS employees involved in the PASA program (PASA Employees). PASA Employees are formally ARS employees, but in practice function as USAID employees, embedded in USAID for 13-month term appointments, with the potential to extend up to 4 years. In the course of this research, several issues came to light that are addressed in recommendations outlined below. The study team notes that, while ARS is responsible for PASA administrative services, PASA program success also depends on engagement from USAID. The recommendations offered in the white paper reflect the necessity of a robust mutual engagement between the two agencies that should involve frequent communication between them as global challenges create new needs for scientific expertise.

**Recommendations**

The study team reviews the challenges reported during research, and offers recommendations on how ARS, and USAID, might enhance administrative services to better support the PASA program. In order to enhance PASA Employee experience, the study team provides the following three recommendations:

1) Improve travel processes through a multifaceted approach to increase communication and understanding of role responsibility. As PASA Employees are required to make frequent international travel, ARS should encourage a flexible travel process that reflects the international nature of PASA work.

- As the authority over government travel passports is held in the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), ARS should advocate for transfer of this authority to USAID. If transitioning this process to USAID is not possible, ARS should seek the authority to issue passports to PASA Employees in order to streamline the travel process by removing the redundant communication and wait time with FAS.
- Given USAID's expertise in travel booking, ARS should advocate that USAID assume this responsibility from ARS.
- Onboard new ARS administrative staff with all relevant travel booking system information. This information should direct administrative professionals where to enter data for portals and create process checklists of required documents needed before reaching out to other agencies.
- Encourage PASA Employees to submit requests for travel four to six weeks in advance, following applicable ARS Standard Operating Procedures. Given the current process ARS employees are required to complete for travel, timely submission from PASA Employees is needed for the different steps to finish. In addition, PASA Employees should submit pre- and post-trip reports with sufficient detail for ARS to understand trip justifications and objectives.

2) Currently, PASA Employees are required to undergo the full training required by USDA and USAID. ARS should coordinate with USAID to reduce unnecessary duplicative workloads by working with USAID to determine which training programs are duplicates and removing them from required training for PASA Employees. Through meeting with USAID, ARS can agree to remove training requirements that are present in both USDA and USAID. Some duplicative training is necessary because USAID or USDA Standard Operating Procedures or different countries cultural contexts require an adjusted curriculum. Courses like ethics, technology security, or sexual harassment training, which are important, but may have significant duplicative material, should be streamlined to ease workloads.

3) While process improvements can help address the efficiency of a variety of pain points, the departure of previous staff and the inability to hire long-term replacements has compounded the problem. ARS needs to increase administrative staff capacity by hiring the additional full-time equivalent (FTE) roles funded by the current PASA Agreement. The study team acknowledges that ARS has filled one GS-7 position as of March 2020 and are currently attempting to fill the second position, but wants to reinforce the necessity of these two administrative support positions. Historically, the hiring and retaining of temporary administrative support staff proved to be

challenging for ARS. Given the difficulty in filling these roles, USAID should explore increasing the General Schedule (GS) classification to attract more qualified candidates. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) determines the GS classification based on a combination of education and experience. Raising the GS grades from GS-7 to GS 9 and GS-9 to GS-11 should lead to more qualified applicants and the subsequent salary increase may result in greater new hire retention.

# Section 1: Project Background

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is one of 17 agencies that comprise the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As USDA's in-house research agency, ARS leads the nation to a better future through plant and animal research and information primarily focusing on domestic agricultural issues.
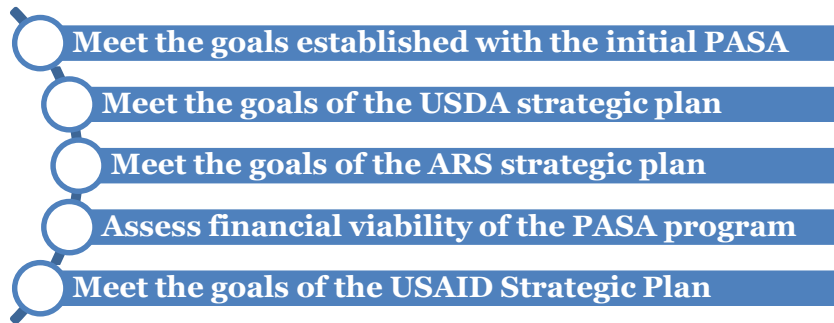
ARS partners with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to deliver foreign assistance through a reimbursable Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) managed by ARS's Office of International Research Programs (OIRP),[1] which is a part of the ARS Office of National Programs (ONP). There are two main components to the PASA program. First, ARS supports USAID by providing scientists and technical experts for posting within USAID. The administration of these scientists and technical experts is supported by ARS. Second, the PASA allows USAID and ARS to develop cooperative activities of mutual interest which are implemented in partnership with research institutions in developing countries. USAID benefits from the PASA by having access to a vast pool of quality scientific and technical resources to implement U.S. development assistance. ARS scientists also benefit from the PASA by having non-competitive funding available for specific projects that provide international opportunities to test hypotheses, collaborate, and enhance aspects of their domestic research projects.

Historically, PASA project funding has supported long-term ARS ONP priorities including cooperation to address wheat stem rust (UG99) and West African cocoa production improvement projects. Thus, the PASA allows ARS to support collaboration with international and foreign institutions that can provide research capacity in target countries, unique research insights based upon their specific locations, and have a vested interest in the outcomes of these research activities.

## Project Scope and Methodology

ARS contracted with the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) for a six-month project to assess the PASA with the overall goal of supporting an arrangement that provides value to both ARS and USAID. This white paper is prepared by an Academy study team, benefitting from the oversight of a three-member Expert Advisory Group (EAG) consisting of Academy Fellows (see Appendix A for biographical information on the study team and EAG members). In assessing the value of the PASA, the study team agreed with ARS to evaluate the following five criteria with respect to the PASA Program:

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[1] ARS' Office of International Research Programs (OIRP) will be renamed the Office of International Engagement and Cooperation (OIEC) on March 31st, 2020.

- Meet the goals established with the initial PASA
- Meet the goals of the USDA strategic plan
- Meet the goals of the ARS strategic plan
- Assess financial viability of the PASA program
- Meet the goals of the USAID Strategic Plan

The study team reviewed relevant background documents, including the current Phase IV PASA agreement; historical perspectives on the spirit and intent of the PASA provided by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) (see Appendix B); and the USDA and ARS strategic plans. Additionally, the study team conducted 19 interviews with a variety of stakeholders from ARS, USAID, United States Forest Service (USFS) and FAS (see Appendix C for a complete list of interviews).

Following interviews and documentary research, the study team assessed the five criteria based on the following three evaluative rating outcomes: whether the current ARS PASA exceeds, meets, or falls short of expectations. These ratings are defined below.

- **Exceeds Expectations**: substantial empirical impact; near unanimous interviewee acknowledgement of impact

- **Meets Expectations**: observable empirical impact; regular interviewee acknowledgement of impact

- **Falls short of Expectations**: little to no empirical impact; no interviewee acknowledgement of impact

In addition to assigning a rating evaluation to each of the five criteria, the study team analyzed current administrative challenges expressed by PASA participants, identifying areas of concern and providing recommendations for potential solutions to address them.

## White Paper Organization

This white paper is organized into the following sections:

**Section 1** provides project background information, including scope and methodology.

**Section 2** describes the PASA, including the background, rationale, and description of its components.

**Section 3** assesses the current PASA using evaluative criteria established by ARS and the study team.

**Section 4** offers observations and recommendations for improving administrative services provided by ARS to USAID PASA Employees.

# Section 2: PASA History and Current Status

This section provides information on the current PASA Program, including its intent and development.

## Historical Background

Created by the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, USAID works to "promote and demonstrate democratic values abroad, and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world" by leading "the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance through partnerships and investments that save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance."[2] In 1966, a general agreement between USDA and USAID outlined the purpose, premise, and types of assistance to be provided by both organizations, creating what is known as the PASA.[3]

### *Original Purpose and Premise for All PASAs*

Given the mission of USAID, and in recognition of the connection between international development and foreign policy during the 1960s,[4] the development of the PASA sought to enhance the prospects that U.S. assistance overseas provided the best "professional skills and institutional resources available in the United States."[5] Within the agreement set forth in 1966, the USDA , "recognize[d] its responsibilities within its authority, to contribute toward U.S. foreign policy by participat[ing] in foreign assistance programs."[6]

USAID and USDA agreed to collaborate for "joint planning, coordination, and consultation." Noting the unique technical skills held by USDA employees, the PASA was developed to take advantage of the existing capacity of the USDA to further USAID mission goals they relate to agriculture. Employees working overseas under the PASA would "receive support, benefits, and privileges on the same terms as they [were] provided to AID direct-hire personnel." As such, USAID would reimburse the USDA for the employees and services provided by the PASA.

### *USDA PASAs*

Today, three USDA agencies have PASAs with USAID: ARS, FAS, and the U.S. Forest Service. These PASAs allow USAID to hire temporary term-positions with the expertise provided by each agency. USAID provides overhead funding to agencies that supply administrative services connected with the PASA Program. In the case of ARS, USAID also provides collaborative research funding (CRF) used by ARS to support projects of domestic and international significance.

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[2] "Mission, Vision and Values," *USAID*, last modified February 16, 2018, https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/mission-vision-values.

[3] USAID, ADS Chapter 306 Interagency Agreements, Washington, D.C., USAID, 2002. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/306.pdf; "General Agreement Between The Department of Agriculture and the Agency for International Development", U.S. Congress, accessed February 21, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951p01180795n&view=1up&seq=379

[4] "USAID History", USAID, accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/usaid-history

[5] General Agreement, U.S. Congress, pg. 371

[6] Ibid. p 372

Although the amounts have fluctuated over the years, the current PASA for each agency yield the following numbers of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, overhead rates, and additional researching funding rates:

*Table 1: USDA PASA Contract Specifications as of January 2020*

|  | ARS | FAS | U.S. Forest Service |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Appointment Term Length** | 4 years | 4 years | 4 years |
| **Number of Funded FTEs** | 17 | 109 | 25 |
| **Overhead Rate** | 11.1% | 18% | 19% |
| **Additional Funding Rate** | 15% | N/A | N/A |

*Source: ARS, FAS, U.S. Forest Service*

### *ARS PASA*

In 2002, ARS and USAID agreed to develop a PASA to provide a small group of technical experts to USAID. By comparison, USAID's PASA with the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has provided as many as 200 PASA Employees spread across many departments at USAID. In keeping with USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS), which outlines the Agency's operational policies, a PASA is used when:

- "USAID direct-hire staff are not available; and
- The Participating Agency[7] has facilities and resources that are particularly or uniquely suitable for technical assistance, are not competitive with private enterprise, and can be made available without unduly interfering with domestic programs."[8]

Leveraging the strategic connections between the well-being and profitability of U.S. agriculture and the global engagement of U.S. scientists, the PASA was designed to strengthen the relationship between ARS and USAID. Specifically created in USDA's Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area, and embraced by the Office of the Chief Scientist, this PASA served to meet some of USAID's technical needs. In addition to strengthening the relationship between agencies engaged in research and development, the PASA also served as a national security tool, often engaging in issues abroad to be better prepared when a disease or pest reached the nation's shores.

In addition to the intentionally small cohort of ARS PASA Employees, the ARS PASA differs from other USDA PASAs regarding its overhead and collaborative research funding costs. Compared to other USDA PASAs, ARS receives only 11.1 percent in indirect overhead costs. However, ARS

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[7] A Participating Agency is an agency contracting with USAID to provide necessary services. Examples include ARS, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), and the U.S. Forest Service.
[8] ADS Chapter 306, p. 17

receives collaborative research funding (CRF) equaling 15 percent of the total projected salary and benefits, travel funding, and performance bonuses. In FY 2018, ARS received $555,955 for CRF.[9]

Additionally, until 2018, the ARS PASA included additional funding listed as Collaborative Research Funding/Feed the Future (FtF) Initiative. ARS participated in USAID's FtF Initiative to end global hunger and address global food security challenges. As part of ARS' collaboration with USAID for FtF, the PASA provided a mechanism through which ARS received additional research funding. While USAID still administers the FtF Initiative, this specific funding to ARS was discontinued in 2018 and is no longer part of the ARS PASA.

## *ARS PASA Staffing*

The study team identified two primary types of employees involved with the PASA, each with somewhat different functions and experiences while engaged in the PASA. For this reason, the study team distinguishes between these two groups using the terms "PASA Employees" and "CRF Researchers." Both are described in further detail below.

In summary, PASA Employees are formally ARS employees, but in practice function as USAID employees because, in part, they are embedded in USAID, rather than in ARS. The second type of involvement with the PASA are CRF Researchers. Unlike FAS and U.S. Forest Service PASA programs, the ARS PASA provides CRF funding to support projects of joint domestic and international significance led by ARS researchers and scientists. To distinguish these researchers and scientists from PASA Employees, this white paper refers to these ARS staff members as CRF Researchers.

The PASA Agreement also provides a budget line item for OIRP to provide administrative services for short-term consultancies with the Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF). CRDF consultants provide technical or knowledge expertise. These short-term work assignments can be as short as several weeks and up to one year to start, with the option for a second year if necessary. After receiving the resumes and statements of work from USAID, OIRP reviews and approves CRDF consultants, pending available funding. OIRP also serves to confirm payment for these services via the PASA. CRDF consultants are not considered ARS employees and thus are not covered in this white paper in as much detail as PASA Employees.

*PASA Employees*

PASA Employees are hired for 13-month term appointments, with the potential to extend up to 4 years. In some cases, a fifth year extension is made to allow completion of existing projects. As such, they are temporary employees who are eligible to reapply for a new PASA position at the completion of their term. While not all positions were filled at the time of this white paper, the agreement provides funding for salaries and benefits for 18 total full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. At present, PASA Employees are attached to USAID or ARS as follows:

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[9] "USAID-ARS PASA Budget FY 2017-2018", USDA, Tab F

> **Bureau for Food Security (BFS)**
>
> - Office of Agriculture Research and Policy - 12 FTE
> - Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management – 1 FTE
> - Office of the Assistant Administrator – 2 FTE
>
> **Africa Bureau**
>
> - AFR/SD Staff Pattern – 1 FTE
>
> **ARS**
>
> - Program Support – 2 FTE

While PASA Employees are embedded within USAID offices, they formally remain ARS employees throughout their four-year term employment. As outlined in the PASA agreement, ARS completes all stages of hiring for PASA Employees including drafting vacancy announcements, reviewing and interviewing applicants, and determining the recommended candidates for selection. ARS also initiates and completes the security clearance process for PASA hires. Additionally, throughout their employment, PASA Employees regularly interact with ARS for:

- Onboarding procedures, including security clearances;
- Badge renewals;
- Performance reviews;
- Spot and performance-based awards processing;
- Expenditure reporting and budgeting;
- Leave approvals;
- Coordination of travel arrangements;
- CRF technical management;
- PASA term extension requests, up to four years, and
- Optional fifth-year PASA term extension requests.

The PASA also provides two program support positions at the General Schedule (GS)-7 and GS-9 levels whose jobs descriptions is as follows:

> "The purpose of the work is to provide administrative support to the OIRP programs and projects. The work of the incumbent impacts the accuracy, reliability, acceptability, and timeliness with which OIRP' s work is accomplished. In many cases, the work impacts both the effectiveness of OIRP and the image within the international communities both within United States and foreign countries."[10]

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[10] "Phase IV PASA Agreement", USDA, October 1st 2018.

For the last few years, these two positions remained vacant, leaving the administrative duties of these positions to be redistributed among non-PASA OIRP employees including Program Support Assistants and International Affairs Specialists. These non-PASA OIRP employees provide administrative support to PASA Employees in addition to their assigned duties. As of March 2020 ARS filled the GS-7 administrative support position, leaving only the GS-9 position vacant.

*CRF Researchers*

In contrast to PASA Employees, CRF Researchers are ARS scientists involved with projects that receive collaborative research funding from USAID through the ARS PASA. CRF Researchers are connected with CRF funding by OIRP staff who seek to, "engage strategic international partnerships that can enhance the productivity, effectiveness, and impact of ARS National Programs, as well as further the goals of the United States government."[11] OIRP provides administrative assistance to CRF Researchers as it relates to financial management and project updates, as CRF Researchers send quarterly and yearly project updates to both USAID and ARS OIRP for review. Currently, CRF Researchers work across four CRF projects. Two additional projects on wheat blast and grain legumes have recently concluded. As of the writing of this white paper, CRF supports the following projects.

- Goat Improvement Project
- Whitefly Project
- Fall Armyworm Project
- East Coast Fever Project

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[11] "About ARS: OIRP", ARS, accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.ars.usda.gov/office-of-international-research-programs/oirp/

# Section 3: PASA Evaluation

Using evaluative criteria described in Section 1, this section provides an assessment of the current PASA based upon the five separate criteria developed in consultation with ARS. After each criterion is explained, the study team provides observations supporting the assessment of each criterion.

## Criterion 1: Meets the Goals Established by the Initial PASA

### *Goals*

When initially developed in 2002, the PASA had three principal goals: (1) develop strategic connections between the well-being and profitability of U.S. agriculture and the global engagement of U.S. scientists; (2) create a nimbler[12] programmatic relationship between USAID and ARS; and (3) use collaborative research funding (CRF) as targeted contributions to international efforts for mutual benefit for researchers in the United States.

### *Observations*

ARS PASA Employees remain a small cohort of technical experts in agriculture-related sciences, selected by USAID in consultation with ARS employees who understand the specialized skills required for these positions. Assigned primarily to the USAID's Bureau for Food Security (BFS), PASA Employees engage in agricultural research. Yet, despite being hired by ARS, most PASA Employees acknowledge using the PASA term position as a mechanism to work at USAID. They largely view themselves as USAID employees and, as such, often see the PASA simply as a hiring mechanism rather than as a vehicle to enhance partnerships that connect each individual personally with both USAID and ARS.

Despite these perceptions, there is a view among PASA Employees that USAID and ARS should be collaborating more regularly. Currently, communication is reported as episodic and inconsistent between ARS and USAID, limited to Human Resources (HR) and basic administrative functions. As such, they observe that there is insufficient communication between the two agencies via the PASA which hinders such a partnership. Beyond the PASA Employees' engagement with ARS for their HR and travel needs, the study team's research does not indicate that PASA Employees systematically engage in intentional collaboration with ARS, nor do they consider the ARS mission as deliberately guiding their regular job duties at USAID. Instead, they tend to focus on the USAID mission exclusively.

Despite the current lack of collaboration and communication between ARS and USAID, it is important to note that greater inter-agency engagement through the PASA program has occurred in the past. Examples of previous efforts to more closely link ARS and USAID include invitations to PASA Employees to come to ARS to create consistent interactions, invitations to ARS functions

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[12] A nimbler programmatic relationship between USAID and ARS would allow a more agile development of programs of joint significance that can more quickly respond to both urgent international and domestic agricultural issues.

and events, and communication of overseas opportunities for ARS researchers. However, these efforts have waned over the last few years.

In contrast, CRF projects, supported by PASA funding and focused on topics of joint significance for both agencies, remain a key component of the PASA program. Since its inception in 2002, CRF has remained the same percent as described above in Section 2. However, given changes in overall funding levels for the PASA, the total funding support allotted to these projects per year can fluctuate (see Criterion 4, Table 2). In spite of the inconsistent funding, CRF Researchers strongly support their opportunity to engage in research with international partners. These projects improve ARS' knowledge of international agricultural conditions, therefore serving to increase domestic food security. Moreover, exposure to international science issues provides opportunities for CRF Researchers to broaden an understanding on how they can apply their work in the U.S., and provides opportunities to test their models (e.g., application to smaller farms that may be more common to some foreign countries).

## *Evaluation*

After analyzing documentary research and interviews with relevant stakeholders, the study team determines that the current ARS PASA **meets** goals established by the initial PASA.

# Criteria 2 and 3: Meets the Strategic Goals of USDA and ARS

The PASA serves as one way to contribute to a number of strategic goals through the 15 percent CRF and the work of PASA Employees. Given the inherent parallel structure and meshing of both USDA and ARS Strategic Goals, the study team combines our evaluation of both criteria.

## *USDA Goals*

ARS contributes to the broad USDA mission of "do right and feed everyone" through its unique international expertise and capacities for coalition building.[13] After consultation with ARS, a number of strategic goals and objectives were selected to guide the performance of the PASA. A short description of the relevant strategic goals and objectives is offered below:

Objective 2.3 "Protect Agricultural Health by Preventing and Mitigating the Spread of Agricultural Pests and Disease": ARS contributes to research on the eradication or control of livestock and plant diseases and represents USDA in international and interagency forums on biosecurity and biological threat reduction.[14]

Objective 3.2 "Prevent or Resolve Barriers to Trade that Hinder U.S. Food and Agricultural Exports": ARS works to prevent or resolve trade barriers through fostering a worldwide network of agricultural contributors and scientists to establish transparent, science-based standards for

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[13] U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022. Washington, D.C. May 2018. https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-strategic-plan-2018-2022.pdf p.2
[14] Ibid p.20

U.S. agricultural products.[15] ARS works to prevent or resolve trade barriers through fostering a worldwide network of agricultural contributors and scientists to establish transparent, science-based standards for U.S. agricultural products.[16]

Objective 3.3: "Build Demand in Developing Countries Through Trade Capacity Building":
ARS works to build trade capacity in developing countries through scientific exchange programs, facilitate new product and technology research, and create long term international relationships.[17]

Strategic Goal 5: "Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands Through Technology and Research": ARS strengthens the stewardship of private lands through supporting international research collaborations into land management practices, connecting researchers to partners in foreign countries with different growing conditions, and manage efforts by OBCL (Overseas Biological Control Laboratories) to identify and test enemies to invasion weeds and insects.[18] ARS strengthens the stewardship of private lands through supporting international research collaborations into land management practices, connecting researchers to partners in foreign countries with different growing conditions, and manage efforts by OBCL (Overseas Biological Control Laboratories) to identify and test enemies to invasion weeds and insects.[19]

Objective 6.2: "Ensure Lands and Watersheds are Sustainable, Healthy, and Productive":
ARS manages efforts of OBCL to combat invasive insects and weeds, supports research on rangeland management, and facilitates ARS collaborations with international partners that promote healthy watersheds.[20]

Strategic Goal 7 "Provide All Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply":
ARS provides international exposure to U.S. scientists to work on pests and diseases that threaten U.S. and global agriculture that they otherwise would not have access to. Through research and collaboration, USDA programs are better equipped with the information, tools, and technologies about the causes of foodborne illness and its prevention.[21] ARS provides international exposure to U.S. scientists to work on pests and diseases that threaten U.S. and global agriculture that they otherwise would not have access to. Through research and collaboration, USDA programs are better equipped with the information, tools, and technologies about the causes of foodborne illness and its prevention.[22]

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[15] Ibid p.27
[16] Ibid p.27
[17] Ibid p. 30
[18] Ibid p. 39
[19] Ibid p. 39
[20] Ibid p. 47
[21] Ibid p. 53
[22] Ibid p. 53

### *ARS Goals*

As part of ARS, OIRP contributes to the broad mission of "deliver[ing] scientific solutions to national and global agricultural challenges" through its unique international expertise and capacities for coalition building.[23] International collaboration between scientists encourages the sharing of research and solutions with the ultimate goal of ensuring safe and reliable production of food and agriculture products.[24] Specific criteria for this goal include managing international partnerships to address critical needs of U.S. agriculture, managing overseas biological control laboratories, networking with other U.S. government agencies and the international community, and communicating ARS achievements in research collaborations.[25]

### *Observations*

Outcomes connected with the PASA meet expectations with regards to the USDA and ARS goals in two main areas that overlap the many supporting goals: increasing international scientific collaboration and providing greater security for the U.S. and global food systems from potential threats. USDA strategic goals and objectives 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 5, and 6 have collaborative elements that stipulate the PASA should enhance scientific collaboration abroad. USDA objectives 6.2 and 7 stipulate that the PASA ensures the security of U.S. food systems from international threats. The goals and objectives stipulated by ARS also encourage increasing scientific collaboration and greater food system security.

By encouraging networking with international scientists, CRF Researchers and PASA Employees contribute to coalitions of scientists. After reviewing publications from CRF Researchers, the majority of current research project papers were accredited to both U.S. researchers and their international counterparts. Likewise, interviewees acknowledge the shared work with coalition partners and valued their counterpart's insights and specimen access that would otherwise be unavailable domestically.

Critical food system security needs are addressed through CRF funding and PASA Employee work that targets potential future pests and diseases. As noted above, the current CRF portfolio contains projects that address noxious agriculture agents that are at risk of entering the U.S. After speaking with CRF Researchers and PASA Employees, the utility of this research area connecting with U.S. agricultural imperatives is affirmed.

Obtaining clear results and value is a point of frustration for PASA Employees in both ARS and the U.S. Forest Service because the research is based on prevention, and success occurs when downside risk is successfully managed. Viewed in a similar way as risk management, the direct value of research - and its ability to prevent future outbreaks - is difficult to evaluate. Accounting

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[23] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. 2018-2020 Strategic Plan – Transforming Agriculture. Washington, D.C. 2018 https://www.ars.usda.gov/ARSUserFiles/00000000/Plans/2018-2020%20ARS%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf p. 5
[24] Ibid. p. 46
[25] Ibid. p.

for this irregularity, most ARS scientists affirm that that the research produces a reliable safeguard to future threats.

## *Evaluation*

The study team determines that the current ARS PASA **meets** the strategic goals of both USDA and ARS.

# Criterion 4: Assess Financial Viability of the PASA Program

Evaluating financial viability of the PASA Program created challenges for the study team given the limited amount of accurate financial information available to place the pieces, connected specifically with the PASA Program, within the broader context of the ARS' financial portfolio. At the outset of the evaluation, the study team sought to determine if administering the PASA Program was a net drain, or provides a surplus, with respect to financial resources to ARS.

ARS provided a variety of PASA Agreement documents primarily from FY2012-2018 which provided some measures of the Program's financial impact. Table 2 shows the relatively steady rate of CRF, and collaborative research/Feed the Future Initiative[26] funding for the seven most recent fiscal years. Additionally, while the number of funded PASA Employee positions has varied from as few as 18 to as many as 26, the small technical cohort remains true to the original intention of the PASA to limit PASA Employees to a small number of highly skilled experts. Beyond the data provided in Table 2, the study team did not have additional supporting documents to analyze in order to validate financial viability.

*Table 2. PASA Program Collaborative Research Funding and Funded Staff Positions FY 2012-2018*

| | **CRF 15%** | **Collaborative Research/Feed the Future Initiative[27]** | **# of Funded Positions[28]** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **FY2012** | $561,312 | $3,000,000 | 23 |
| **FY2013** | No Cost Extension from FY 2012 | No Cost Extension from FY 2012 | No Cost Extension from FY 2012 |
| **FY2013-14** | $499,525 | $2,500,000 | 25 |
| **FY2014-15** | $498,756 | $2,000,000 | 21 |
| **FY2015-16** | $514,739 | $2,200,000 | 22 |
| **FY2016-17** | $649,448 | $1,990,000 | 26 |
| **FY2017-18** | $555,955 | $200,000 | 18 |

*Source: ARS*

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[26] "Feed the Future", USAID, accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.feedthefuture.gov/
[27] Collaborative Research/Feed the Future (FtF) Initiative Funding supports joint project between ARS and USAID with most funding provided to FtF to end global hunger.
[28] Some funded positions remain vacant.

When considering positions funded by the PASA Agreement, the study team notes that at least one of the two administrative support positions (see Section 2) has been vacant since FY 2012 with both administrative support positions vacant since FY 2017. Beginning March 2020, one administrative support position has been filled. As such, the administrative support functions have been distributed among other non-PASA Employees within OIRP. Currently, OIRP does not calculate a breakdown of their employees' salaries based on the time spent administering specific programs. While this measure of financial impact could inform ARS about the viability of the PASA Program, the study team could not determine the financial cost of using non-PASA Employees to support the administration of the PASA Program.

In addition to financial documents, the study team analyzed interview responses to evaluate the financial viability of the PASA Program. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with various ARS employees indicate that there are no obvious financial challenges associated with the Program.

### *Evaluation*

Given the lack of precise financial data, the study team is cautious in making a definitive assessment of the financial viability of the PASA program. While there are no apparent financial data that provide an empirical basis to either show losses or surpluses associated with the PASA Program, several interviewees express the view that the PASA likely **meets** expectations of Criterion 4. Despite the lack of data, the study team concurs with this view.

## Criterion 5: Meets the Goals of USAID Strategic Plan

The study team determined that USAID's strategic plan contains three strategic objectives relevant to the evaluation of the PASA Program. These strategic objectives were not jointly selected with USAID as the study team was unable to coordinate with the appropriate individuals who might identify which strategic objectives are achieved by the PASA Program. However, using the strategic objectives listed below, the study team evaluated whether the PASA Program meets the goals of USAID's strategic plan using interviews and documentary research.

- Strategic Objective 3.1: Transition nations from assistance recipients to enduring diplomatic, economic, and security partners
- Strategic Objective 3.3: Increase partnerships with the private sector and civil-society organizations to mobilize support and resources and shape foreign public opinion
- Strategic Objective 3.4: Project American values and leadership by preventing the spread of disease and providing humanitarian relief

Housed in the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) at USAID, PASA Employees act as technical experts to support the efforts of the BFS in its "FtF initiative to combat hunger, poverty and malnutrition."[29] With specialties spanning a wide swath of agriculture research including, agriculture education, plant pathology, plant genomes, and food safety, these PASA Employees provide unique skill sets that strengthen partnerships with the international community. In

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[29] "Who We Are", USAID, Bureau for Food Security, accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-food-security

addition to their scientific backgrounds, these PASA Employees remain committed to USAID's mission of international development.

From 2010 to 2018, the PASA Agreement also contained FtF funding supporting USAID's objectives to provide humanitarian relief and increase partnerships abroad. Since 2018, FtF funding has been removed from the PASA Agreement, but funding for CRF Researchers remains intact. These projects, which currently include both animal and plant research, seek to reduce diseases that devastate crop yields, negatively impact healthy livestock, and potentially lead to instability in developing areas. By supporting food security abroad, it can be argued that America's food security is strengthened domestically.

## *Evaluation*

With the consideration that the above strategic objectives were selected by the study team without confirmation by relevant authorities at USAID, and after analyzing documentary research and interviews with relevant stakeholders, the study team determines that the current ARS PASA **meets** the goals of the USAID Strategic Plan.

PASA Evaluation Summary**:**

**Criterion 1: Meets the Goals Established by the Initial PASA - Meets**

**Criteria 2 and 3: Meets the Strategic Goals of USDA and ARS - Meets**

**Criterion 4: Assess Financial Viability of the PASA Program - Meets**

**Criterion 5: Meets the Goals of USAID Strategic Plan – Meets**

# Section 4 Improving Administrative Services

Knowing how important administrative services can be for mission facing staff members, the study team sought to understand whether challenges exist in the area of administrative services provided by ARS staff to employees engaged in the PASA Program. In this section, the study team reviews the challenges reported during research, and offers recommendations on how ARS might enhance administrative services to better support the PASA program. The study team outlines the current state of the administrative services provided in both parts of the PASA program—the CRF Researchers and PASA Employees—before providing several recommendations to enhance overall performance. While ARS is responsible for PASA administrative services, PASA program success also depends on engagement from USAID. The recommendations offered in this section reflect the necessity of a robust mutual engagement between the two agencies that should involve frequent communication between them as global challenges create new need for scientific expertise.

As discussed in [Section 3 Criteria 4](#), the ARS administrative staff members currently assisting CRF Researchers and PASA Employees are currently not funded by the PASA Agreement because the two dedicated administrative support positions provided through the Agreement have remained unfilled by ARS for several years. The ARS employees who currently provide PASA administrative support services do so in addition to the broad range of administrative support work they provide for all other ARS programs.

Administrative services encompass many different topics that are important to employees. However, for the purposes of this white paper, the study team finds that there are three administrative services that are of concern for ARS employees engaged in the PASA: poor efficiency of travel booking; duplicative USDA and USAID training programs; and the lack of staff capacity in administrative support role.

The study team also found that the two types of ARS employees engaging with the PASA have different experiences with administrative service delivery. CRF Researchers generally view administrative services positively, while PASA Employees have a demonstrably different experience, often facing significant challenges that can detract from work intended to address USDA and ARS goals. Given the different experiences, the study team presents the research by addressing the two types of ARS employees that are described in [Section 2](#) separately.

## Challenges of Administrative Services

### *CRF Researchers*

Administrative services support is provided to CRF Researchers through a variety of ways, including project performance monitoring; and providing financial management of CRF projects. ARS Program Analyst, Program Support Assistant, and International Affairs Specialist are the primary positions providing administrative support to CRF Researchers. The administrative services staff of ARS also provide the financial management knowledge to guide researchers through the grant request and delivery process while ensuring payment invoices are submitted and paid to laboratories. It is a duty to keep accurate and up-to-date records of project status and financial information.

As part of project performance monitoring, International Affairs Specialists collect quarterly and annual progress reports on CRF research projects and ensure the timely submission of project documents. Likewise, they are responsible for serving as the point of contact for questions about the funding process and communication between scientists and administrative staff in laboratories.

*Observations*

CRF Researchers express overall satisfaction with the depth of financial management knowledge and the attentiveness of support staff members especially when compared to administrative support services provided by other sources. Likewise, CRF Researchers reported that ARS was attentive with feedback during quarterly and annual progress reporting. Their experiences with arranging travel are described in neutral terms, other than to note that large time inefficiencies were also common across other federal agencies and, as such, experiences booking travel were characteristic of their previous experiences.

## PASA Employees

PASA Employees interact with the same ARS employees as do CRF Researchers to receive administrative support. Performance-related administrative functions include sharing IDP templates with PASA Employees, receiving performance updates, and tracking required training. Likewise, ARS monitors the PASA Employees' time and attendance through timesheets and organizes travel arrangements. ARS employees are also responsible for applying for PASA Employee security clearances and entry badges for both USAID and USDA. Finally, ARS employees are responsible for the financial management of PASA Employees. In this role, they upload funding agreements, receipts, and information into a database and monitor budgets to encourage fiscal integrity.

*Observations*

After conducting interviews, PASA Employees highlight significant deficits in the administrative process. By and large, however, the administrative services are viewed in need of significant improvement. For most PASA Employees, the travel scheduling process is a key area in need of improvement. Over the last few years, the PASA Program has experienced a reduction in institutional administrative capacity with PASA administrative support vacancies. Additionally, the process that splits decision-making across USAID, FAS, and ARS results in significant roadblocks with no dedicated staff available to expedite the process. The response times for urgent flights have been reportedly slower in the last few years and have resulted in missed opportunities for PASA Employees to attend important meetings. There is both a lack of knowledge about when to appropriately complete price change forms[30] and a poor organizational ability when booking steps are inefficient. On the whole, these symptoms appear to be correlated with the inability to fill the vacant administrative support function. As a result, other administrative service employees

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[30] Price change forms are used when actual flight costs differ from the estimated flight costs.

in ARS have been delegated increased responsibility without a corresponding adjustment in job description.

PASA Employees also reference an additional challenge created by the need for PASA Employees to complete separate authorizations and training programs to satisfy requirements of both USDA and USAID. Rather than file for one security clearance and entry badge, ARS employees are tasked with applying for security clearances and entry badges at both agencies and must navigate both sets of requirements. PASA Employees say the wait time for security clearances and entry badges can last anywhere from months to a year, and the delay can significantly disrupt their work.

## Recommendations

In order to enhance PASA Employee experience, the study team provides the following three recommendations:

1) Improve travel processes through a multifaceted approach to increase communication and understanding of role responsibility. As PASA Employees are required to make frequent international travel, ARS should encourage a flexible travel process that reflects the international nature of PASA work.

- As the authority over government travel passports is held in FAS, ARS should advocate for transfer of this authority to USAID. If transitioning this process to USAID is not possible, ARS should seek the authority to issue passports to PASA Employees in order to streamline the travel process by removing the redundant communication and wait time with FAS.
- Given USAID's expertise in travel booking, ARS should advocate that USAID assume this responsibility from ARS.
- Onboard new ARS administrative staff with all relevant travel booking system information. This information should direct administrative professionals where to enter data for portals and create process checklists of required documents needed before reaching out to other agencies.
- Encourage PASA Employees to submit requests for travel four to six weeks in advance, following applicable ARS Standard Operating Procedures. Given the current process ARS employees are required to complete for travel, timely submission from PASA Employees is needed for the different steps to finish. In addition, PASA Employees should submit pre- and post-trip reports with sufficient detail for ARS to understand trip justifications and objectives.

2) Currently, PASA Employees are required to undergo the full training required by USDA and USAID. ARS should coordinate with USAID to reduce unnecessary duplicative workloads by working with USAID to determine which training programs are duplicates and removing them from required training for PASA Employees. Through meeting with USAID, ARS can agree to remove training requirements that are present in both USDA and USAID. Some duplicative training is necessary because USAID or USDA Standard Operating Procedures or different countries cultural contexts require an adjusted curriculum. Courses like ethics, technology security, or sexual harassment training, which are important, but may have significant duplicative material, should be streamlined to ease workloads.

3) While process improvements can help address the efficiency of a variety of pain points, the departure of previous staff and the inability to hire long-term replacements has compounded the problem. ARS needs to increase administrative staff capacity by hiring the additional full-time equivalent (FTE) role funded by the current PASA Agreement. The study team acknowledges that ARS has filled one GS-7 position as of March 2020 and are currently attempting to fill the second position, but want to reinforce the necessity of these two administrative support positions. Historically, the hiring and retaining of temporary administrative support staff proved to be challenging for ARS. Given the difficulty in filling these roles, USAID should explore increasing the General Schedule (GS) classification to attract more qualified candidates. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) determines the GS classification based on a combination of education and experience. Raising the GS grades from GS-7 to GS 9 and GS-9 to GS-11 should lead to more qualified applicants and the subsequent salary increase may result in greater new hire retention.

# Appendix A: Study Team and Expert Advisory Group Biographies

**Academy Study Team**

**Brenna Isman**, *Director of Academy Studies* – Ms. Isman accepted her initial appointment with the Academy in 2008. She currently provides oversight for all Academy's studies. Ms. Isman recently served as the Project Director for the Academy's project that assisted a financial oversight board in developing and implementing its strategic plan. She also directed the Academy's statutorily required assessments of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's use of its Advisory Council and the Environmental Protection Agency's practices for determining the affordability of regulatory mandates, as well as the Academy's organizational study of the U.S. State Department's Office of Inspector General. Her prior consulting experience includes both public and private sector clients in the areas of communication strategy, performance management, and organizational development. Prior to joining the Academy, Ms. Isman was a Senior Consultant for the Ambit Group and a Consultant with Mercer Human Resource Consulting facilitating effective organizational change and process improvement. Ms. Isman holds a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from American University and a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Human Resource Management from the University of Delaware.

**Roger Kodat**, *Senior Project Director* – Mr. Kodat has led more than 25 projects for the Academy. He brings twenty years of commercial and investment banking experience with JPMorgan Chase, and six years of senior level federal government experience at the Department of the Treasury. Appointed by President George W. Bush in 2001 to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury, he was responsible for Federal Financial Policy. Some of his tasks at Treasury included policy formulation for the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act; rule making and oversight of Federal loan and loan guarantee programs; and management of the Federal Financing Bank (a $32 billion bank at that time). Mr. Kodat holds a BS in Education from Northwestern University and both an MBA in Finance and Masters of Arts (MA) in Political Science from Indiana University.

**Kate Connor**, *Research Analyst* – Ms. Connor joined the Academy in 2018 and has served on several Academy studies, including work for the Administrative Conference of the United States and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. Prior to joining the Academy, she served as a Public Policy and Government Relations Intern with the American Association of University Women and as an intern on the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget. Ms. Connor graduated from Georgetown University with a Master's in Public Policy. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science and a Master's in Teaching from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Allen Harris**, *Research Associate* – Mr. Harris joined the Academy in October 2019 as a Research Associate. Prior to joining the Academy, he had numerous internships including working at the Brookings Institute and the U.S.– Japan Bridging Foundation. Most recently Allen was working for an Impact Investor on projects including affordable housing in U.S. National Parks and bio-herbicide development in Kenya. Allen graduated from the University of St.

Andrews, Scotland, in 2018 earning an M.A., Honors in International Relations and Modern History.

**Expert Advisory Group**

**Doug Webster\*** – Former Chief Financial Officer, U.S. Department of Education; Senior Fellow, Center for Excellence in Public Leadership, George Washington University; Board Member, Pentagon Federal Credit Union; Treasurer, Board of Directors, Penfed Foundation. Former Director, Government to Government Risk Management, USAID; Principal, Cambio Consulting Group and Co-Founder & President, Association for Federal Enterprise Risk Management; Partner, Computer Sciences Corporation; Deputy Director, Business Transformation Agency, U.S. Department of Defense; Chief Financial Officer, U.S. Department of Labor; Senior Manager, Global Public Sector, Grant Thornton, LLP; Principal Finance and Management Advisor, Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraqi Ministry of Transportation- Baghdad; President, SCIRE Inc.; Project Manager, PeopleSoft Global Solutions, PEOPLESOFT; Director, Price Waterhouse Coopers, LLP; Principal, American Management Systems.

**Gregory Parham\*** – Former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Former positions with the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Acting Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Administration; Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Associate Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Deputy Administrator, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Business Services, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Chief Information Officer, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Associate Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer; Executive Director, Year 2000 Program Office; National Program Leader, Veterinary Medicine and Livestock Production, Cooperative State Research, Education & Extension Service; Agricultural Extension Specialist, Senior Information Resource Management Official, Extension Service; Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer, Branch Chief- Epidemiology, Food Safety and Inspection Service; Veterinary Medical Officer, Staff Epidemiologist, Food Safety and Inspection Service. Former Adjunct Associate Professor, Information and Telecommunications Studies, Graduate School, University College, University of Maryland; Senior Assistant Veterinarian, Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Public Health Service.

**Larry Byrne\*** – President, Byrne and Associates. Former Chief Information Officer and Assistant Administrator for Management, U.S. Agency for International Development; National Practice Director, Hay Group, Inc.; Director of Personnel Evaluation, U.S. Department of Energy; Assistant to the President for Personnel, Finance and Administration, The White House; Director, Personnel Systems and Payroll, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Executive Director, Inspector General's Office, U.S. Department of Energy.

**\*Academy Fellow**

# Appendix B: Spirit and Intent of the U.S. Department of Agriculture-USAID Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA)

*Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service*

## Historical Perspective

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) share a long-standing partnership dating back to 1950 when the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), USAID's predecessor, was created. Before that, USDA administered the agricultural training and technical assistance programs of President Truman's Point Four Program. Under the TCA, USDA led recruitment and management efforts for U.S. agricultural development programs. When all foreign economic development efforts were consolidated in a new International Cooperation Administration (ICA) in 1955, USDA's expertise and institutional resources were still critically needed. As a result, USDA and ICA cooperated in technical assistance, training, and information dissemination.

After passage of the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961* and the creation of USAID, a new General Agreement in 1966 laid the framework for cooperative relationships, with USAID recognizing "...the unique personnel resources, capabilities and experience of the Department." Through the Agreement, USAID further sought "...to enlist as fully and effectively as possible, on a partnership basis, the pertinent resources of the Department in planning, executing and evaluating those portions of the foreign assistance program in which it has special competence." To advance broad U.S. objectives, USDA recognized "...its responsibility, within its authority, to contribute toward U.S. foreign policy by participation in foreign assistance programs."

Still in force today as the basic instrument for ensuring effective, interagency cooperation, the Agreement is based on the premise of a *partnership* between USDA and USAID, emphasizing *joint planning, coordination, and consultation.* The Agreement is unlike a contract in which the Government is the customer and a private firm is the service provider. Instead, it established operational guidelines and a spirit of cooperation, linking institutional resources of two government agencies to achieve U.S. foreign assistance goals. The Agreement also affirmed new partnership mechanisms to access USDA's expertise under Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs) and Resources Support Services Agreements (RSSAs), although the latter are no longer used.

## USDA's Unique Capabilities

USAID may use the services of another U.S. Government agency or department to perform inherently governmental functions as defined in OMB Circular 1-76 or to provide technical services under the authority of 632b of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/306PASAs) PASAS are agreements with other federal agencies for specific services or support. Agreements may fall under either of the following types of services or support:

> • Activities tied to a specific goal to be performed within a definite time.

- Support services of an ongoing, general, professional nature that have a broad objective(s) but no specific nor readily measurable task(s) to be accomplished within a set time.

Legislative authorities (i.e. the Farm Bill) provide USDA with access to technical resources through grants, cooperative and cost-reimbursable agreements and contracts. The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Office of Capacity Building and Development (OCBD) obtains personnel - including those with considerable, relevant experience in developing countries - for technical assistance activities from many sources: other USDA agencies, land grant colleges and universities, minority serving institutions, non- governmental organizations, international research institutions, U.S. universities, other government agencies, and private sector organizations. More than 100 colleges and universities exist within the nation's land grant university system. USDA's domestic and international network, one of the largest in the Executive Branch, provides FAS/OCBD with access to a very large pool of highly qualified professionals.

## Authority for PASAs

Authorized under Sections 621(a) and 632(b) of the *Foreign Assistance Act,* PASAs enable USAID officers to secure technical assistance in the field of education, health, housing, or agriculture by utilizing to the fullest extent practicable, the facilities and resources of the federal agency or agencies with primary responsibilities for domestic programs in those fields. In a later amendment, Section 621 stipulates that Participating Agency resources must be particularly or uniquely suitable for technical assistance; are not competitive with private enterprise; and can be made available without interfering with domestic programs.

Two additional authorities govern the use of PASAs. *The Economy Act* (38 U.S.C. § 701) requires both the Secretary of Agriculture to certify that assisting USAID is in the best interest of the government and USAID's Administrator to ascertain that "...the ordered goods or services cannot be provided as conveniently or as cheaply by a commercial enterprise." The Office of Management and Budget's *Circular A-76* also figures heavily in determining whether USDA or a private firm should provide technical assistance. Under *A-76*, USAID can enter into PASAs with USDA only if the following conditions are met:

- USDA resources and expertise are used for technical assistance;
- USDA can provide the technical assistance better than USAID, the private sector, or another federal agency, *i.e.* USDA must be *uniquely or particularly suitable* for furnishing services as required under Section621(a);
- USDA has a formal program for managing excess personnel capacity that allows staff to provide assistance under PASAs; and
- USDA services are not competitive with private enterprise.

Before USAID can get a PASA approved and issued through their system, a detailed justification must be provided on USDA's unique suitability and linkage to USDA Strategic Goals; all other *A-76* requirements must be met as well.

## Spirit and Intent of PASAs

USAID's *Automated Directive Systems (ADS) 306* defines PASAs as agreements with other federal

agencies for specific services or support tied to a specific project goal and performed within a definite time frame. The spirit and intent of PASAs are to strengthen the partnership between USAID and USDA by fully utilizing Departmental competence, resources, and experience while exchanging critical information and knowledge to benefit both agencies. To this end, PASA staff should have a clear understanding of USDA's unique capabilities as the United

States' largest source of technical expertise in agriculture, natural resources management, and other related areas. This includes familiarity with the mission of USDA's agencies, what they do domestically and internationally, and the key players.

USDA Headquarters staff should apprise PASA and USAID employees of Departmental activities that can enhance their work, and PASA staff should cooperate and interact with USDA employees having mutual interests. Sharing knowledge can positively impact U.S. agriculture and USDA goals, which can ultimately advance development efforts. As equal partners with USAID, USDA should use the depth and breadth of the Department's expertise and Land Grant Universities in joint planning, coordination and consultation to stay involved in discussions on development needs and the best way to fulfill them.

# Appendix C: Interviews

## *USAID*

- **Lapitan, Nora** – Division Chief for Research, USAID
- **Bertram, Robert** – Chief Scientist, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

## *USDA*

### APHIS

- **Shaqir, Ibrahim** – Associate Deputy Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA

### ARS

- **Herrera, Eileen** – Former Office of International Research Programs Deputy Director, ARS
- **Ling, Kai** – Research Plant Pathologist, ARS
- **Nagoshi, Rodney** – Research Geneticist, ARS
- **Norrington, Bryan** – Director, Office of International Research Programs, ARS
- **Rosen, Ben** – Research Biologist, ARS
- **Santos, Irlene** – International Affairs Specialist, Office of International Research Programs, ARS
- **Watson, Ingrid** – Deputy Director, Office of International Research Programs, ARS
- **Wells, Catherine** – Supervisory Human Resources Specialist, Administrative and Financial Management, ARS
- **Wintermantel, William** – Research Plant Pathologist, ARS
- **Witting, Marcella** – International Affairs Specialist, Office of International Research Programs, ARS
- **Wran, Tanya** – Administrative and Travel Support, Office of International Research Programs, ARS

### ARS-USAID PASA

- **Anderson, Jessica –** Senior Conflict Advisor, PASA USAID
- **Baquet, Zachary** – Lead, Learning Team, PASA USAID
- **Lopez, Josue** – Learning Team, PASA USAID
- **Mahmoud, Barakat** – Specialist, PASA USAID
- **Powell, Tracy –** Research Advisor, PASA USAID
- **Records, Angela** – Science Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, PASA USAID

### FAS

- **Guse, Brian** – Assistant Deputy Administrator, Office of Capacity Building and Development, FAS

### USFS

- **Moore, Dana -** Chief of Staff for International Programs, U.S. Forest Service

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