

# INTRODUCING USAID AND MEETING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

## OVERVIEW

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In order to engage the private sector in Global Development Alliances (GDAs), USAID Missions and Washington Operating Units have to meet with private sector organizations and introduce them to USAID. This outreach can happen in a number of different ways:

- Informal introductions at a business networking or social event
- Formal introductory meeting with a company
- Private sector outreach event hosted at USAID
- Presentation to private sector organizations like the American Chamber of Commerce, etc.

USAID must take a different approach to potential private sector partners than it does with traditional implementing and government partners. To appeal to the private sector, you often have to “sell” USAID’s value. For example, instead of telling the private sector how your program is helping to improve the health of a community, you can describe how your program will improve the health of the company’s workers, thereby increasing productivity. Pitching the business value of USAID’s programs is more likely to attract the interest and resources of the private sector.

ODP/PSA has prepared the following tools and guidance to ensure that you get the most out of your initial meetings with the private sector.

## INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

You never know when or where you will meet with a representative from the private sector. It is a good idea to prepare a 60 second “elevator speech” to describe USAID, your office’s programs and focus, and the agency’s value to the private sector. An example speech is:

“USAID is part of the US government providing social and economic development and humanitarian assistance to developing countries. In X country we have programs that are improving the quality and yields of tomatoes, rice, and corn, working to decrease malaria infections, increase the skills of the local workforce, and improve the policy environment for business.”

Customize your elevator speech to fit your Mission or Operating Unit; making sure to avoid acronyms and “development speak” and to present our programs in a way that anyone can understand them.

## **GUIDANCE FOR THE FIRST ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Once you have decided which private sector organizations to target for a GDA (see “Incorporating GDAs into Strategy [link] and “Identifying and Prioritizing Potential Partners” [link] for more information) you will need to arrange and prepare for your first exploratory meeting.

Companies are busy and action-oriented. It is important that the first meetings are structured and yield concrete next steps. The goals of the initial meeting are to:

1. Quickly introduce USAID
2. Learn about the company and its business challenges and goals
3. Identify some potential areas for partnership

### **Research the Organization before the Meeting**

You must do some initial research before you convene the first meeting. This research will help you prepare the right questions and begin to identify potential areas of mutual interest. It also shows that USAID is serious about partnering. Here are some core research questions to investigate before the meeting:

- What is the potential partner’s business? Where are they operating?
- How long have they been operating in the country/region?
- Do they have consumers or suppliers in country?
- Do they have a corporate social responsibility program? If so, what is the focus?
- Do they have any major business challenges?
- Are any of their challenges related to the Mission’s programs? (ex. lack of skilled workforce = education)
- Collect information on GDAs that have addressed similar challenges or who have previously worked with the partner

Potential sources of this information are: company website, annual reports, local and international press coverage, US Embassy’s Commercial Service or Economic Office, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

### **Convene the Meeting**

Generally, initial meetings follow a general agenda:

1. Short introductions
2. Discussion and identification of common challenges/efforts
3. Identification of potential areas of partnership
4. Next steps

Here are some general guidelines on how to run your meeting with a potential private sector partner.

- Keep the presentation of USAID *very* brief. Spend more time learning about the company and then bring in additional details of USAID's work as they are relevant.
- Explain that partnerships are a new approach for USAID. Instead of providing assistance, USAID is looking for private sector partners who can contribute skills, expertise, market access, funding, and other resources to a joint program.
- Avoid all acronyms! Remember, you are talking to people who may have never heard of USAID or "international development".
- Based on your research before the meeting, focus on the USAID programs that would be of most interest/benefit to the company.
- Don't start the conversation by asking for a cash contribution for a USAID program that needs more funding.
- Jointly identify the opportunity, don't just "pitch" USAID programs.
- Ask lots of questions, it will help direct your to potential common areas of interest:
  - What are the company's biggest business challenges? These are often related to development challenges and can reveal some of the potential common interests.
  - Has the company worked with USAID, NGOs or others on development programs?
  - How is the company structured? Is it centralized or decentralized? Who will make decisions related to a partnership with USAID?
  - What are the company's long-term business goals?
  - Identify some common areas of interest. Are there easy opportunities for partnership or would it take significant or change in scope to make a partnership work?
- Discuss USAID's ability to convene key government, NGO and private sector players together.
- Emphasize USAID's technical expertise, local knowledge and local partners.
- Evaluate the use of PowerPoint. PowerPoint can set a formal tone to a meeting when an informal conversation may be more appropriate. In addition, many presenters tend to talk longer and give more detail than is necessary when working from a PowerPoint.
- Leave them with marketing materials. You don't want to overwhelm the individual you are meeting with. Stick to one-pagers and short, non-jargon materials. ODP/PSA has created a short flyer for the private sector focused on GDAs.

### **Next Steps**

- Arrange a follow-up meeting to discuss any specific partnership possibilities that emerged during the initial meeting.
- Brief relevant USAID staff and implementers and invite them to the next meeting.
- Begin due diligence research on the company.

## PRIVATE SECTOR FORUMS

Missions have held private sector roundtables or forums to introduce USAID to many private sector organizations or to convene a group of private sector organizations to discuss a specific development challenge. This is great way to build awareness of USAID and identify potential resource partners for USAID. The Development Outreach Coordinator (DOC) at the Missions and the Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) staff at USAID/Washington are a great resource for these types of events and should be consulted during the planning stage.

A simple agenda for this event is:

**8:30 – 9:00:** Arrival and check-in

**9:00 - 9:15:** Opening and welcome from the Ambassador

**9:15 – 9:25:** Introduction of private sector and USAID attendees

**9:25 – 9:50:** Quick presentation by the Mission Director or Program Office of the Mission or Operating Unit's objectives, brief program overview and current challenges

**9:50 – 10:10:** Q&A (You can add break-out session on topics such as health, agriculture, etc. if needed/appropriate)

**10:10 – 11:00:** Networking reception

Below are some *suggestions* gathered from USAID Missions that have hosted private sector forums in the past.

### Pre-event Planning

- Determine day and time
- Identify and reserve a venue. Consider hosting the meeting outside of USAID as the time it takes for attendees to go through security can frustrate attendees and lead to delays.
- Prepare list of private sector invitees in coordination with team leaders, EG office, embassy commercial office (AmCham). Make sure that you are targeting non-traditional private sector partners. This is your opportunity to engage new actors.
- Send speaking request to the Ambassador to open the event and to the Mission Director/Program Officer to MC event.
- Identify representatives from each office of the Mission or Operating Unit to ensure that interested private sector partners have appropriate contacts to speak with.
- Send invitations to the private sector at least three weeks in advance. ODP/PSA has created a template invitation that you can use.
- Coordinate with DOC and team leaders all materials to be handed out to private sector (fact sheets, publications, GDA Outreach brochure). When meeting with the private sector, you should always have:
  - A nice USAID folder
  - Success stories of other alliances (can be printed out from GDA website)

- Copy of GDA's private sector outreach piece (available in hard copy through Washington or download from the GDA website).

### **Organizing Presenters**

- Assist/coordinate with preparation of talking points for Mission Director and Ambassador.
- Identify one individual to present a summary of USAID programs with an emphasis on any areas the Mission or Operating Unit is targeting for GDAs. The total presentation from USAID should take no longer than 25 minutes.
- Remind USAID participants to bring extra business cards.

### **Logistics**

- Prepare a sign up sheet with names, organizations, titles, phone numbers and email addresses
- Prepare name tags
- Prepare table tent listing each SO for group break-out discussions (if required)
- Determine room layout
- Determine and order audio visual equipment (only if necessary, but keep Power Point presentations to a minimum)
- Determine translation, videotaping, photographer, audio recording, (optional)
- Select a catering option. You will want to have beverages and snacks to facilitate networking after the presentation.
- Secure branding signage. Arrange for proper posting of flags, logos (U.S. host/honored country, USAID)

### **Post-Event**

- Send thank you email to all who attended
- Evaluate reach and impact of event (consider hosting on a regular basis including different cities)
- Distribute list of attendees to appropriate Mission officers
- Identify key potential partners to engage in a follow-up one-on-one meeting

### **USAID/GHANA'S PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM**

In 2009, USAID/Ghana convened a private sector forum. The objectives were tri-fold; 1) introduce USAID programs to potential private sector partners, 2) develop an opportunity to speak with the potential partners and 3) have a presentation and a cocktail hour for networking. There was an invite list of more than 60 private sector potential and former partners. The list was composed of persons identified by representatives from each USAID sector. The timeline for planning the event was approximately six weeks. It was stated that the event could be planned in as short a timeline as four weeks. The forum structure was a fifteen minute presentation and then networking for the remainder of the time. In actuality, the presentation was thirty minutes due to several presenters. The Ambassador also gave a short speech in which succinctly captured USAID's message to the private sector. There were also informational handouts distributed throughout the forum. As a follow up, letters were sent with additional information about Ghana's alliances and GDAs in general and the contact information for the Regional Alliance Builders was included.