



FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN AND  
FY 2020 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



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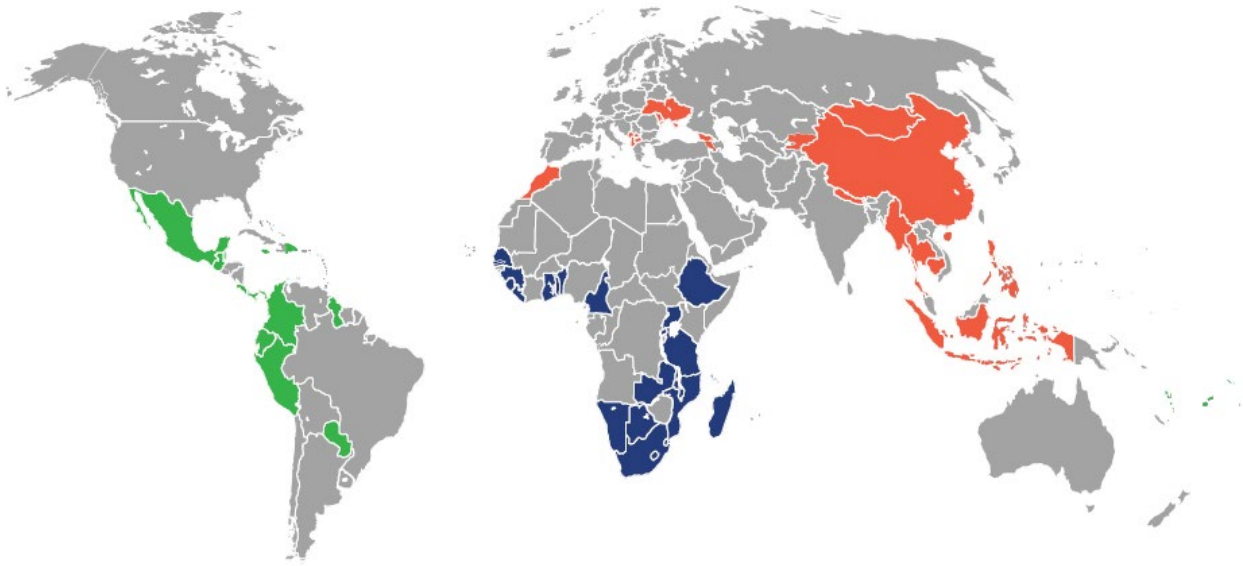
Promoting World Peace and Friendship Since 1961

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This report is available at [peacecorps.gov/docs](https://peacecorps.gov/docs).  
Comments or questions on this plan may be sent to [OSIRP@peacecorps.gov](mailto:OSIRP@peacecorps.gov) or to the mailing address above.



# WHERE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS SERVED IN FY2020



**Caribbean**

- Dominican Republic
- Eastern Caribbean:
  - Dominica
  - Grenada and Carriacou
  - St. Lucia
  - St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Jamaica

**Central and South America**

- Belize
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Mexico
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru

**Africa**

- Benin
- Botswana
- Cameroon
- Comoros
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- The Gambia
- Togo
- Uganda
- Zambia

**North Africa and the Middle East**

- Morocco

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

- Albania/Montenegro:
  - Albania
  - Montenegro
- Armenia
- Georgia
- Kosovo
- Kyrgyz Republic
- North Macedonia
- Moldova
- Ukraine

**Asia**

- Cambodia
- China
- Indonesia
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Philippines
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste

**Pacific Islands**

- Fiji
- Samoa
- Tonga
- Vanuatu

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*Due to COVID-19, Peace Corps temporarily suspended Volunteer operations at all Peace Corps posts in March 2020. China Volunteers evacuated in February 2020.*

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## Mission

To promote world peace and friendship through community-based development and cross-cultural understanding

Since its establishment in 1961, the Peace Corps has been guided by a mission of world peace and friendship. The agency exemplifies the best of our nation’s spirit by sending Americans to serve around the world, advancing development, and building cross-cultural understanding. Today, the Peace Corps continues to build strong relationships between our country and the people of our partner nations, while making a difference in overseas communities, in the lives of our Volunteers, and back home in the United States. More than 241,000<sup>1</sup> Volunteers have served in 143 countries since 1961. They have changed countless lives—including their own.

The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of its Volunteers. Rather than providing monetary assistance to countries, the agency sends Volunteers to share their skills and experience while living in local communities and working alongside local people. This day-to-day interaction gives Volunteers a unique perspective and the opportunity to address development challenges while strengthening mutual understanding and learning from, and with, their host communities.

Peace Corps Volunteers are the face of our nation in communities around the globe. They build positive perceptions of the United States and share American values with their communities. After Volunteers complete their service, they return to the United States with new skills, deep knowledge of other cultures, and long-lasting relationships. Returned Volunteers continue their service by promoting awareness of other cultures and global issues with friends, family, and the American people; maintaining relationships with colleagues and friends from the countries where they served; and sustaining their commitment to volunteerism and public service.

## Vision

To be a dynamic, forward-leaning champion for international service, defined by our energy, innovation, and development impact.

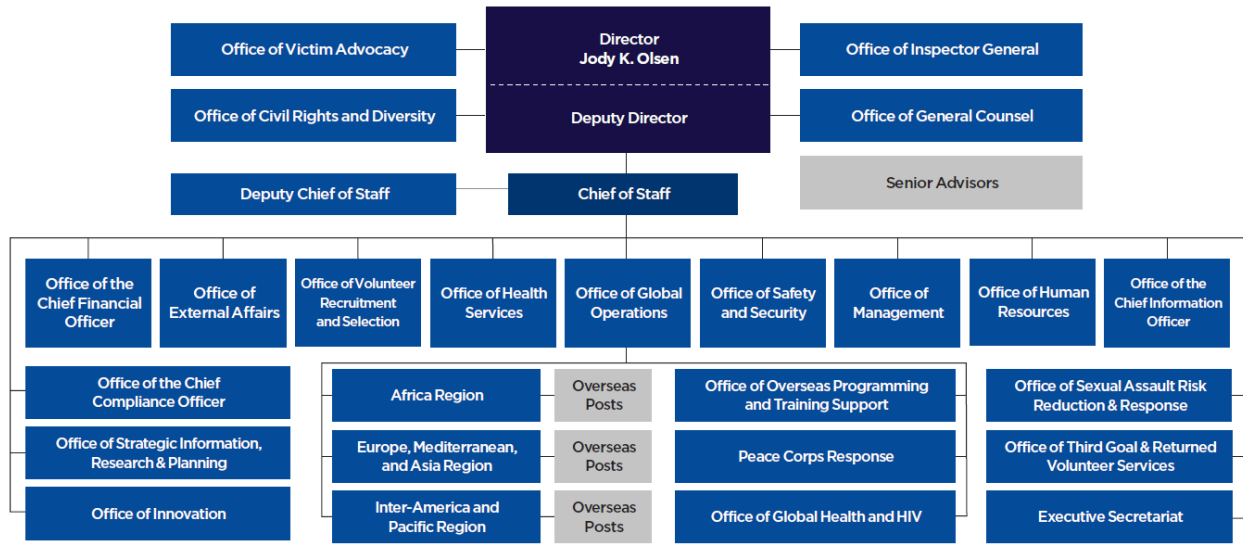
*“The Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in the world.”*

*Sargent Shriver  
Founding Director of the Peace Corps, 1961–66*

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<sup>1</sup> This includes the number of people who served in each post. A person who served in two posts is counted in both posts. The number is rounded to the nearest thousand.

# PEACE CORPS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## Core Values

The following core values shape and guide decisions at all levels in the agency and are part of the FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:

**Volunteer Well-Being:** The Peace Corps works to provide a safe, healthy, and productive service for every Volunteer. The safety, security, and physical and emotional health of Volunteers are the agency's top priorities.

**Quality and Impact:** The Peace Corps pursues quality improvements to strengthen its programs while maintaining a global presence.

**Commitment to National Service:** The Peace Corps seeks to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their country by volunteering their time abroad in the service of others and continuing that commitment to service once they return.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** The Peace Corps actively supports a culture of inclusion that embraces diversity—from the rich diversity of America to the incredible diversity of the countries in which Volunteers serve.

**Evidence-Based Decisions:** The Peace Corps uses high-quality data and evidence to focus resources on agency priorities, inform performance improvements both in the field and at headquarters, and promote institutional learning.

**Innovation:** The Peace Corps utilizes innovative approaches and technology to solve both persistent and emerging operational challenges and to advance local development.

## Plan Overview

The FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan lays out long-term goals and objectives designed to advance the Peace Corps’ mission. The annual performance plan identifies the strategies employed to accomplish these goals and objectives and the specific results the agency expects to achieve.

The combined FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan and FY 2020 Annual Performance Report includes the following components:

- **Strategic goals** reflect the broad, long-term outcomes the agency works toward to achieve the Peace Corps’ mission to promote world peace and friendship through community-based development and cross-cultural understanding.
- **Strategic objectives** break down the high-level strategic goals to express the specific focus areas the agency will prioritize to achieve the strategic goals.
- **Management objectives** communicate improvement priorities for functions that cut across the Peace Corps, such as human capital management, information technology, and financial stewardship.
- The **rationale** for each objective provides an overview of priority opportunities or issues to be addressed and the expected contribution of that objective to the agency’s strategic goals.
- **Strategies** articulate the broad course of action or unifying approach that indicates how actions lead to outcomes.
- **Performance goals** state levels of performance, or “targets,” to be accomplished within a specific time frame. In this plan, two types of performance goals are used. Use of each type depends on whether the goal should be measured quantitatively, or whether the goal relates to a new agency process being measured using milestones. In both cases, annual targets (either a milestone or a numeric target to be achieved) are set through FY 2020. When available, actual results are provided for prior years. The agency uses performance goals both to assess progress on strategic goals and objectives and to drive performance improvement. In conjunction with the budget formulation process, performance goals will be updated each year and included in the annual performance plan.
- **A lead** is identified for each objective and performance goal. The title of the lead individual and the name of the office in the lead role is noted. Although several offices or overseas posts may be responsible for the individual strategies that advance progress on objectives and performance goals, leads are given the convening authority to coordinate agency-wide efforts to develop, implement, and report on plans.

Appendices provide additional detail on the development of the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan and FY 2020 Annual Performance Report. Appendices include a summary of the



Peace Corps' performance management framework (Appendix A), a description of how evaluation and research informed the development of the plan (Appendix B), data verification and validation standards for the performance goal indicators (Appendix C), a summary of the stakeholder outreach conducted (Appendix D), a description of the agency's plans to return Peace Corps Volunteers to service following the global Volunteer evacuation (Appendix E), and a list of acronyms used throughout this document (Appendix F).

### **GPRM Modernization Act of 2010**

The President's Budget identifies lower-priority program activities, where applicable, as required under the GPRM (Government Performance and Results Act) Modernization Act, 31 U.S.C. 1115(b)(10). The public can access the volume at [whitehouse.gov/omb/budget](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget).

The Peace Corps has not been asked to contribute to the federal government's cross-agency priority goals. Per the GPRM Modernization Act of 2010, the contributions of those agencies required to report on cross-agency priority goals can be found at [performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov).

## Strategic Goals

The [Peace Corps Act](#) (1961) articulates three core goals that contribute to the Peace Corps' mission of world peace and friendship:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

These three core goals in the Peace Corps' legislation continue to serve as the foundation for the Peace Corps' approach to development and the three strategic goals that guide the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan:

### Strategic Goal 1: Building Local Capacity

*Advance local development by strengthening the capacity of local communities and individuals through the service of trained Volunteers.*

The Peace Corps' approach to development is local and community based. Peace Corps Volunteers work to strengthen the capacity of host country individuals, groups, and communities to advance local development outcomes. Volunteers engage in project work and train local partners in areas such as agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth in development. This focus on local capacity building helps ensure that the Volunteers' work is sustained long after their service is complete.

**Public Benefit:** Through Volunteers' capacity-building work, local communities and individuals strengthen the skills they need to address specific challenges. As a result, local conditions are improved around the globe, and the American people benefit from a more stable, prosperous, and peaceful world.

### Strategic Goal 2: Sharing America with the World

*Promote a better understanding of Americans through Volunteers who live and work within local communities.*

Volunteers promote a better understanding of Americans among local people through day-to-day interactions with their host families, counterparts<sup>2</sup>, friends, and others. Over the course of their two years of service, Volunteers share America with the world—dispelling myths about Americans and developing deep relationships with local people. Through this approach, Volunteers also learn more about local challenges, resources,

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<sup>2</sup> The Peace Corps assigns one or more “counterparts” to each Volunteer. Counterparts are the primary host community partners who aid Volunteers in community integration and work.

and conditions in their host countries. Over time, they build trust essential to project success.

**Public Benefit:** Volunteers are some of America's most effective goodwill ambassadors in communities where other development or cross-cultural exchange organizations are rarely present. As a result of sustained interactions with Volunteers, local individuals and communities gain a more complete understanding of the United States and become more willing to engage with Americans.

### **Strategic Goal 3: Bringing the World Back Home**

*Increase Americans' awareness and knowledge of other cultures and global issues through Volunteers who share their Peace Corps experiences and continue to serve upon their return.*

During their two years of service, Volunteers learn the languages, customs, traditions, and values of the people they live and work among. Volunteers bring the world back home by sharing their experiences with family, friends, and the American public during and after their service. They directly connect Americans with local individuals and communities both independently and through Peace Corps-supported programs. As a result, they deepen and enrich Americans' awareness and knowledge of other countries, cultures, and global issues. Long after they return from their assignments abroad, returned Volunteers continue their service by promoting a better understanding of other cultures, encouraging and supporting volunteerism, and engaging in public service.

**Public Benefit:** Sustained interaction between Americans and people in communities around the world engenders mutual understanding and trust which, in turn, increases respect and promotes human dignity in world affairs. Additionally, through their overseas experiences, Volunteers develop language, intercultural, technical, and entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for today's competitive job market. They bring these skills with them to their work in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, where they share their global experiences and perspectives with colleagues, friends, and family. This, in turn, helps build a more competitive U.S. workforce.

## Strategic and Management Objectives

The four strategic objectives and two management objectives identified in this plan constitute the roadmap for advancing the Peace Corps mission and strategic goals. Strategic and management objectives are the primary units of analysis for assessing the agency's performance. These are measured through specific, time-bound performance goals.

### **Strategic Objective 1: Sustainable Change**

*Foster positive individual, organizational, and community change through Volunteer and stakeholder engagement, collaborative community relationships, the mobilization of local resources, skill building, and cultural exchange.*

### **Strategic Objective 2: Volunteer Effectiveness**

*Equip Volunteers to be technically and culturally competent professionals who collaborate with partners to support community-driven solutions by establishing an environment conducive to achieving the three strategic goals of the Peace Corps.*

### **Strategic Objective 3: Volunteer Resilience**

*Optimize the ability of Volunteers to successfully navigate the challenges of service, from recruitment to close of service, through a systematic approach to setting expectations, building skills, and supporting Volunteers, staff, and partners.*

### **Strategic Objective 4: Building Leaders of Tomorrow**

*Strengthen American communities and organizations by enabling returned Volunteers to reinvest the skills and abilities gained during service.*

### **Management Objective 5: Foundational Business Management**

*Continuously improve the agency's core infrastructure, including the cost-effectiveness, speed, ease-of-use, and quality of business services.*

### **Management Objective 6: Organizational Risk Management**

*Identify and proactively address risks and opportunities through systematic, evidence-based decision making.*

## Strategic Objective 1: Sustainable Change

*Foster positive individual, organizational, and community change through Volunteer and stakeholder engagement, collaborative community relationships, the mobilization of local resources, skill-building, and cultural exchange.*

**Rationale:** The Peace Corps' strength lies in the promotion of individual, community, and organizational development through effective engagement in local partnerships, evidence-based programs, and the intercultural exchange of knowledge, skills, experiences, and values. Volunteers serve as catalysts for local capacity building through participatory and inclusive development processes that focus on relationships and communities' existing assets, institutions, and resources. Volunteers and program staff working with local counterparts, partner agencies, and government entities are also seen as catalysts for increasing engagement and interaction with individuals and organizations with common objectives. In the long run, successful engagement not only leverages resources and knowledge but also strengthens local ownership and the sustainability of development efforts. In the short term, priority areas in this strategic objective include improving program outcomes and evidence-based decision making.

### Strategies:

- Increase the capacity of posts and headquarters offices to access and synthesize multiple data sources for evidence-based planning and management decisions.
- Develop an approach and tools for gathering quantitative and qualitative data on host country partners' assessment of the Peace Corps' contributions to local development priorities that are outlined in logical project frameworks (LPFs) and designed to facilitate sustainable change in local organizations and communities.<sup>3</sup>
- Identify priority programmatic and operational themes to explore the Peace Corps' impact and effectiveness.

**Strategic Objective Lead:** Associate Director for Global Operations

### FY 2020 Progress Update

All three strategies identified above remain relevant in supporting the overall goal of Strategic Objective 1: fostering positive individual, organizational, and community change. Through continuous internal and external data collection and analysis, the agency can better inform decision making on programs and processes that will further advance sustainable change objectives. For example, as a result of the global evacuation, the agency has developed a comprehensive process to continuously collect data on medical, security, programmatic, administrative, and logistics criteria. This data informs strategic decisions about when and where to return Volunteers. Using data to

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<sup>3</sup> LPFs are expected to be rolled out for all projects by FY 2021 as a systematic foundation for evidence-based program design, implementation, and evaluation.



think creatively about alternative forms of Volunteer service helps the agency leverage technology to allow continued connectivity during the global pandemic and beyond. Based on lessons learned and these data, host country partners are also making arrangements to safely and effectively receive Volunteers again. This evidence-based planning and data-driven decision making will help ensure that when Volunteers return to service, they have the greatest potential for successfully fulfilling sustainable change objectives.

The global evacuation of Volunteers half-way through the year directly impacted the agency's ability to contribute to sustainable change at the individual, organization, and community levels in FY 2020. Volunteer reporting in FY 2020 represented less than six months of activities. Because targets for advancing community-based results were designed to measure a full year of reporting, the global service interruption meant the agency did not meet its targets in this area. However, program staff at posts continue to engage with local counterparts and partner agencies to monitor opportunities and challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. When conditions allow for their return, Volunteers will be able to continue addressing the most critical community needs.

The situation did not affect the agency's ability to conduct studies assessing the Peace Corps' impact on sustainable change. In fact, the agency was able to exceed its FY 2020 target by completing one study on language learning and initiating three additional studies. Due to the unexpected and unprecedented decision to temporarily suspend all Volunteer operations worldwide, the Peace Corps shifted its focus and conducted an After-Action Review documenting the series of events that transpired. This review represents a real learning opportunity that should help inform future emergency decision making. These evidence-based, data-driven initiatives and preparedness activities strengthen the Peace Corps' ability to further sustainable change when it is safe for Volunteers to return to service.

<b>Performance Goal 1.1: Advance Community-Based Results</b>						
<i>Increase the percentage of projects with documented achievements in community-based development by FY 2022.</i>						
<b>Indicator 1:</b> Increase achievements on the selected set of 19 standard indicators.						
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	80%	85%	87%	89%	90%
Results <sup>4</sup>	75%	76%	86%	80%	76%	56%
<b>Indicator 2:</b> Increase achievements of projects that use LPFs.						
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets					Baseline data collection	Baseline data collection
Results <sup>5</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA	Baseline data collected: 71%	Baseline data collected: 28%

In FY 2014, the Peace Corps developed this performance goal to systematically measure the agency’s global development impact using data from the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) and each project’s framework of goals, objectives, activities, and indicators. The concept underpinning this performance goal is that the percentage of projects with documented results in the VRT provides evidence of Volunteers’ contributions to community-based development. This work is captured using a set of 19 standard indicators. The selected indicators measure changes in specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that resulted from project activities across all six of the Peace Corps’ sectors—Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth Development. This metric was used in the Strategic Plan for FY 2014–2018 as well as the current plan for FY 2018–2022.

The Peace Corps’ new global initiative for strengthening programming, training, and evaluation (PT&E) was tested and finalized in FY 2017 and began being rolled out more broadly in FY 2018. When fully implemented, this initiative will ensure that the Peace Corps has integrated PT&E systems that maximize the impact of Volunteers. This effort involves transitioning to industry-standard templates for project design, strengthening links between project design and Volunteer training, and simplifying Volunteers’ reporting of their achievements.

<sup>4</sup> These results are based on all data received for the fiscal year reporting by November 30, 2017; November 27, 2018; November 22, 2019; and September 4, 2020, respectively. As part of the agency’s multi-year plan to transition projects to the new LPFs under Indicator 2, the number of projects reported under Indicator 1 will decrease each year.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the baseline data collected, the percentage of projects that had documented achievements in FY 2019 and FY 2020 was 71 and 28, respectively.

The centerpiece of PT&E alignment is the new project design document, the Logical Project Framework (LPF). The LPF consists of two templates. The first is a logic model that articulates the project goals, objectives, and anticipated community benefits (outcomes). The activities in the LPF reflect both the Peace Corps' niche and evidence-based practices. The second template is a plan for monitoring, reporting, and assessment of project progress that defines indicators, data collection tools, and standardized measurement strategies. Each sector's Logical Project Framework and supporting materials reflect what Volunteers do to effect change.

Posts adapt these reference materials to design project frameworks that are tailored to local contexts. Posts also draw on the reference materials to strengthen identification of sites and partner organizations, training, and reporting. Their project frameworks describe Volunteers' expected contributions to host community, organization, and government development goals. The calculations for this performance goal will be revised over time using a streamlined set of evidence-based standard indicators for the projects that have begun using these new logical project framework materials.

Beginning in 2019—as the new project frameworks are entered into the VRT and new cohorts of Volunteers are trained on their use—a new baseline will be constructed to transition from the current set of 19 standard sector indicators to a revised set of indicators from the PT&E guidance. This transition will happen progressively from FY 2019 to FY 2022 with the posts that are implementing new PT&E frameworks reporting on the new set of indicators while posts that are still in the process of changing their frameworks continue reporting against the current set of 19 indicators. By FY 2021, it is anticipated that projects in the vast majority of posts will have been developed using the new frameworks, and the current performance goal indicator will be discontinued. Indicator 2 was developed in FY 2019 for this performance goal and added as an update to the FY 2020 Annual Performance Plan with the publication of the FY 2021 Annual Performance Plan.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The agency did not meet FY 2020 targets for Performance Goal 1.1, Indicators 1 and 2. This was expected due to the global evacuation of Volunteers and Trainees in FY 2020, which resulted in less than half a year of Volunteer activities being reported against targets designed for the full fiscal year and intakes arriving throughout the year.

For Indicator 1, 56 percent of the projects which use the 19 selected indicators passed the two thresholds used for measuring achievement (i.e., the percent of assigned Volunteers reporting, and the percent of the post's annual target met). The biggest challenge was meeting the threshold for the percentage of assigned Volunteers reporting. This may be due to posts phasing out older project frameworks under Indicator 1 to transition to the new LPFs under Indicator 2. Posts also did not receive all reporting forms from Volunteers because of the global evacuation. As a result, in FY 2020, fewer than half of evacuated Volunteers inputted quantitative project results into the VRT, which would have informed performance results for this indicator.

Additionally, the number of projects measured under Indicator 1 declined by 28 percent from FY 2019 to FY 2020 as more of these projects transitioned to the new LPFs (see Performance Goal 2.5). This added more volatility and uncertainty to the agency's ability to meet the Indicator 1 target. With fewer projects, a few outliers have the ability to disproportionately affect the aggregate result. Nevertheless, FY 2020 will be the last year Indicator 1 is used as the agency transitions all projects to LPFs.

For Indicator 2, 28 percent of the new LPFs passed the thresholds used to measure achievement for the baseline. This data was collected from approximately 1,413 Volunteers who reported on 67 new LPFs up until the global evacuation in FY 2020, compared to 1,400 Volunteers who reported on 45 new LPFs in FY 2019. FY 2020 was set to be the second and last year for baseline data collection for Indicator 2. However, due to the global evacuation and the resulting gap in Volunteer activities and results in FY 2020, the agency was not able to collect a full year of baseline data. As soon as more LPFs are endorsed and additional posts begin training incoming Volunteers to report on them, the agency will be better able to assess its impact on sustainable change through these reported results.



(Left) Returned Volunteer, Darlene Moreno, is a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teacher. Moreno is shown here teaching English to a classroom of primary students in the Armavir region of Armenia. (Right) Returned Volunteer, Bailey Rosen, works with her counterpart on a reforestation project in Panama.



(Left) Returned Volunteer, Leah McManus, teaches a basic yoga class to a group of adolescents in Guyana as part of Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World). Camp GLOW is a week-long empowerment camp for young women. (Right) Returned Volunteer, Chelsea Milko, and her Ugandan host organization, Radio Pacis, developed a community health project called “No More Malaria!: Radio Village Outreach”.

**Goal Leads:** Chiefs of Programming and Training (Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region)

**Data Source:** VRT reporting against post project frameworks

**Calculations: Indicator 1:** The number of projects that meet the two thresholds for a documented achievement on at least one of the selected standard sector indicators used for this goal divided by the number of projects that use one or more of the 19 selected indicators. The two thresholds are: At least 25 percent of the Volunteers assigned to the selected projects must report some results, and the combined total of all Volunteer results must be at least 25 percent of the annual target for the project. **Indicator 2:** The number of projects that meet the threshold for documented achievements divided by the number of PT&E projects that meet the criteria for inclusion. The threshold for achievement is that the project results that assigned Volunteers reported meet or exceed half of the annual targets on at least half of the indicators in that project’s framework.



<b>Performance Goal 1.2: Assess the Peace Corps' Impact</b>				
<i>Conduct one thematic study per fiscal year of a broad component of the Peace Corps' programming to assess its effectiveness and impact.</i>				
	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	List of proposed topics, tools, and approach developed	First study conducted Second study planned	Two studies initiated
Results	NA	List of proposed topics, tools, and approach developed	Two studies completed: Community Integration and Site Management <sup>6</sup>	Language study completed; three studies initiated

Between 2008 and 2012, the Peace Corps conducted 24 [impact studies](#) on individual host country projects. These studies were conducted retrospectively by interviewing counterparts, beneficiaries, host country families, and stakeholders. In contrast to this earlier effort, this performance goal will focus on one programming or operational topic that is common across a range of Peace Corps countries and is identified as a priority by the Office of Global Operations and the senior leadership in the agency. Topics for annual impact studies are developed in consultation with stakeholder offices and advisory groups so that the findings are of maximum relevance for continuous improvement in the agency. These annual impact studies will assess the impact of evidence-based practices and programs globally and identify opportunities to strengthen programs or improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. The findings from these studies will be widely disseminated in order to promote learning and consolidate best practices across the agency.

The studies will be conducted using a combination of desk reviews, existing administrative data from the VRT, and other materials that are related to the topic of the study. Possible topics include programs (e.g., girls' education, youth camps, malaria prevention, HIV/AIDS awareness, and/or Peace Corps' contributions to sustainable change in its host country programs) or operational topics (e.g., best practices in site development, working with local counterparts, and global and local partnerships; and/or mechanisms to engage communities in productive, collaborative, and inclusive relationships that foster development and strengthen cultural exchange).

In FY 2020, one study which focused on the use of technology in language learning was completed and is described in the progress update. A second FY 2020 study which focuses on understanding attrition between the time when applicants are invited to serve and when they enter on duty was initiated. The continuation of this study has been postponed to FY 2021 due to staff turnover and unforeseen events created by the global COVID-19 pandemic. A third study focusing on factors that contribute to building

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<sup>6</sup> The site management study also fulfills the FY 2019 target for Performance Goal 2.4: Implement an Improved Site Management System.

successful relationships with counterparts was also begun in FY 2020 and is scheduled to be completed in FY 2021.

As a result of the pandemic, the Peace Corps made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend its operations globally and evacuate Volunteers and Trainees to the United States. The Peace Corps is capturing the lessons learned from this unprecedented experience as a fourth study. This study will highlight policies, processes, and procedures that worked and will identify opportunities for further improvement. The study is scheduled to be completed in the first half of FY 2021.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The FY 2020 target for the performance goal was met. Three studies were initiated, and one was completed during FY 2020. The agency initiated an additional study beyond the original target due to unforeseen events that the COVID-19 pandemic caused.

A language learning study that assessed language materials available to Volunteers on Peace Corps' online learning system—LearningSpace—was completed in the summer of 2020. The study provides the Peace Corps with a better understanding of how posts are using web-based language learning across the 30-month learning continuum in LearningSpace and identifies promising practices that may be scaled across the Peace Corps to improve Volunteer language learning.

After the completion of the Language Learning study, a study was initiated on Volunteer relationship building with counterparts. This study will aim to gather and produce evidence to inform Peace Corps guidance and actions at post—by post leadership, Volunteers, and counterparts themselves—to increase the likelihood that Volunteers will build successful relationships with their counterparts. The study was put on hold during the third and fourth quarters of FY 2020 as the agency shifted resources to focus on an agency After Action Review of the global evacuation of Volunteers and Trainees necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of the pandemic, the Peace Corps made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend Volunteer operations globally on March 15, 2020 and evacuate all Volunteers and Trainees to the United States. To capture the lessons learned from this unprecedented experience, the Peace Corps is conducting an After-Action Review. The After-Action Review is identifying policies, processes, and procedures that worked and opportunities for further improvement. It documents the Peace Corps' response to the pandemic from early January when the world and the Peace Corps first became aware of COVID-19 until all Volunteers were safely returned home and returned Volunteer support services related to the global evacuation concluded. The review is focusing on the tasks and goals the agency achieved and documenting the important lessons learned from all participants to preserve what worked well and make recommendations for changes that can inform how the agency responds to future emergencies and how to strengthen programs for when Volunteers return.

In addition, a third study was initiated during the fourth quarter of FY 2020. This study aims to identify the characteristics of Peace Corps applicants who are invited to serve but then subsequently withdraw from consideration for service before starting their 27-month service. The study focuses on Invitees who did not enter on duty due to reasons other than not meeting medical or legal requirements, based on an analysis of historical data. The aim of this study is to provide Peace Corps leaders with easy-to-understand, actionable information that could inform decision making around attrition between when people are invited to serve and before they enter on duty. This will help the agency determine what steps it can take to retain well-qualified candidates who can further the Peace Corps' sustainable change goals.

**Goal Leads:** *Associate Director in the Office of Global Operations and Director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning*

**Data Source:** *Agency records and administrative data*

**Calculation:** *Completion of the milestones listed above*

## Strategic Objective 2: Volunteer Effectiveness

*Equip Volunteers to be technically and culturally competent professionals who collaborate with partners to support community-driven solutions by establishing an environment conducive to achieving the three strategic goals of the Peace Corps.*

**Rationale:** Achievement of the agency's three goals is contingent on establishing an enabling environment conducive to effective Volunteer service. This requires targeted and strategic support from the agency, including developing staff capacity, designing and managing projects with an evidence-based approach, and using a systematic approach to site management. It also includes facilitating Volunteer learning; ensuring the integration of comprehensive intercultural competence, diversity, and inclusion (ICD&I) into all agency operations; and engaging and supporting host country partners in their roles.

### Strategies

- Develop a competency-based overseas staff learning strategy, focused on programming, training, and evaluation (PT&E) staff that differentiates and targets resources for each phase of the employee lifecycle: onboarding (forming), norming, informing (field experts), and off-boarding.
- Develop a competency-based Volunteer learning strategy that differentiates and targets learning and development resources with an emphasis on technical, ICD&I, and language training for each phase of the Volunteer lifecycle (applicant, invitee, Peace Corps Trainee, Volunteer, and returned Peace Corps Volunteer) and includes the creation of guidance and standards for the pre-departure environment.
- Conduct post-level case studies to identify best practices in site and partner identification, preparation, and support. Utilize the findings to enhance site identification and monitoring guidance and to develop simple site assessment tools that enable staff to better place Volunteers with communities and partners that have the greatest potential to achieve development outcomes.
- Operationalize programming, training and evaluation processes and tools (PT&E Alignment) for project design and management so that all posts have logical project frameworks (LPFs) that articulate training, implementation plans, and the expected contributions of the Volunteers to local development goals.
- Develop and implement a project-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy and mobile data system to facilitate the real-time reporting and monitoring of Volunteer activities, outputs and outcomes.

**Strategic Objective Lead:** Associate Director for Global Operations

### FY 2020 Progress Update

The five strategies identified above continue to be necessary for establishing an enabling environment conducive to effective Volunteer service. Significant progress was

made toward all of these strategies in FY 2020 despite the pandemic's impact on global operations.

The agency completed important steps in developing the competency-based learning strategies for staff and Volunteers in FY 2020, including identifying learning resources for the competencies and mapping them to the different proficiency levels within each competency. The content for both staff and Volunteer learning strategies is currently on an interim IT platform and is scheduled to be organized in a final location by the end of FY 2021. The agency expects to complete development of the learning strategies described in Performance Goals 2.1 and 2.2 and to begin implementation by the end of FY 2021.

In FY 2020, the agency's language specialists also continued to support posts in the development of robust language learning programs, in particular leveraging the results of a Language and LearningSpace Study conducted this year and supporting implementation of the competency-based Volunteer learning model, described in Performance Goal 2.2, as a tool to guide training and ensure Volunteers gain the language skills necessary to perform their required work assignments during service.

In FY 2020, the agency also incorporated results from three studies to enhance and improve site management guidance and decisions at the regional and post levels. Study findings were disseminated and discussed with posts to ensure an inclusive and effective process. These improvements will ultimately help ensure that Volunteers are placed in sites that will be most conducive to improving development outcomes.

Additionally, major steps in conceptualization and development of the mobile data reporting system for Volunteers were achieved in FY 2020. The agency decided to combine two separate but related reporting systems into one, resulting in greater efficiency, increased data quality, and a better user experience. The development team has been working steadily since January to build the system with input from a broad range of stakeholders. The system is scheduled to be completed by the end of FY 2021 for Volunteer use in FY 2022.



<b>Performance Goal 2.1: Optimize Staff Performance</b>				
<i>Establish a competency-based learning strategy for overseas PT&amp;E staff that supports targeted professional development throughout the employee lifecycle by the end of FY 2020.</i>				
	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY2020
Targets	-	Competencies developed	Competencies developed Resource plan developed Sequencing and mapping completed User interface on IT platform completed	Resource plan completed Sequencing and mapping completed Content on IT platform uploaded and organized
Results	NA	Language, training, and ICD&I competencies developed	Programming and evaluation competencies developed	Resource plan, sequencing, and mapping completed. Content on IT platform uploaded but needs greater organization

This performance goal targets capacity building for overseas programming, training, and evaluation (PT&E) staff in core and technical competencies that support and enhance Volunteer effectiveness. This performance goal will be achieved in a series of phases:

- Phase 1: Develop competencies in language, training, and intercultural diversity, equity and inclusion (ICD&I) in FY 2018. Additional competencies in programming and evaluation will be developed in FY 2019.
- Phase 2: Identify, refine, develop, and align resources—including resources that help staff support Volunteers in building their resiliency. Map the resources to the competencies that have been defined.
- Phase 3: Sequence and map learning and development resources to the employee lifecycle, beginning with onboarding.
- Phase 4: Roll-out staff competencies and learning and development resources on an integrated and navigable IT platform that supports staff professional development.
- Phase 5: Build the capacity of staff to use learned competencies in their work and to continue their professional development using the related resources.
- Phase 6: Update the performance goal to measure increased effectiveness among staff who have participated in skills building.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The progress on this performance goal in FY 2020 is slightly below target. Of the three phases planned for completion this year, the first two (resource plan, and sequencing and mapping) are complete and the third phase (content on IT platform) is partially complete. The agency expects to finish resource organization in their final IT platform destination by the end of FY 2021.

Learning resources are identified for the PT&E staff competencies and are mapped to the different proficiency levels within each competency. Currently, these are available on a Peace Corps SharePoint site that is being used as the collaborative workplace for this performance goal. In FY 2021, the competencies and their associated learning resources will be moved to a more permanent, integrated set of IT platforms so that all staff can easily access them.

Work on this performance goal involves staff across numerous posts and Peace Corps headquarters offices. The targets set for this strategic objective were ambitious, and the availability of key staff needed to complete the work this year was constrained by various factors including the agency's global evacuation of Volunteers due to the worldwide pandemic. After the global evacuation, post staff prioritized planning and preparing for re-entry. Peace Corps headquarters staff who led the development and organization of learning resources were in many cases the same staff who are responsible for supporting the transition of post projects to the LPFs (Performance Goal 2.5), an agency priority. All staff have worked creatively to continue their collaborative efforts virtually during teleworking, which has required additional time.

**Goal Lead:** *Director of the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support*

**Data Source:** *Agency records and administrative data*

**Calculation:** *Completion of the milestones listed above*

**Performance Goal 2.2: Optimize Volunteer Performance**

*Establish a competency-based Volunteer learning strategy that supports capacity building throughout the Volunteer lifecycle by the end of FY 2020.*

	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Competencies developed	Global core competencies developed Resource plan developed Sequencing and mapping completed	Resource plan completed Sequencing and mapping completed
Results	NA	Technical competencies developed	Global core competencies developed	Resource plan, sequencing, and mapping completed

This performance goal targets capacity building at all phases of Volunteer service in core and technical competencies in order to ensure Volunteers’ effectiveness and accountability. This performance goal will be achieved in a series of phases:

- Phase 1: Develop technical competencies in FY 2018. Additional competencies in the “global core” (which includes competencies related to resilience and adjustment challenges) will be developed in FY 2019.
- Phase 2: Identify, refine, develop and align resources that are mapped to the competencies.
- Phase 3: Sequence and map learning and development resources related to language acquisition, sector, and global core to the appropriate phases of the Volunteer lifecycle, beginning with the pre-departure environment.
- Phase 4: Establish a standardized approach, guidance, and content for the pre-departure environment.
- Phase 5: Roll-out Volunteer competencies and learning and development resources on an integrated and navigable IT platform that supports Volunteer learning.
- Phase 6: Build the capacity of Volunteers to use the learned competencies and related resources during their service.
- Phase 7: Update the performance goal to measure increased effectiveness among Volunteers who have participated in skills building.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The FY 2020 target for this performance goal was met with the two phases planned for this year completed—resource plan, and sequencing and mapping. Specialists across relevant Peace Corps headquarters offices responsible for Volunteer training content created resource action plans that identify learning resources for each competency and recommended sequencing within the content area. The agency anticipates organizing the content on an easily accessible IT platform next year. Updates to existing resources and development of new resources to fill identified gaps are expected to continue in a prioritized manner in the coming years.

Similar to Performance Goal 2.1, work on this performance goal involves staff from numerous posts and Peace Corps headquarters offices, and the availability of key staff needed to complete the work this year was constrained by various factors including the global evacuation. Nevertheless, staff across the agency showed dedication and flexibility in meeting this year's targets.

Additionally, a significant new development this year was the formation of the Volunteer Learning Steering Committee by the Office of Global Operations to serve as the governance structure for the Volunteer global core competencies that apply to all Volunteers. The Volunteer Learning Steering Committee, comprised of staff from relevant Peace Corps headquarters offices responsible for global core competencies, will provide the critical oversight and ongoing management needed for each Peace Corps post to have clarity on the global core competencies and the related guidance and standards.



*(Left) Returned Volunteer, Devon Colegrove, served in Guatemala in the agriculture sector by working closely with the local Ministry of Agriculture. On this day, Devon and his counterpart are reviewing the progress of a local greenhouse where they're working with a youth group to grow tomatoes for commercial sale. (Right) Returned Volunteer, Luma Kofele, works alongside his counterpart in Moldova.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

**Data Source:** Agency records and administrative data

**Calculation:** Completion of the milestones listed above



**Performance Goal 2.3: Improve Language Learning***Increase the percentage of Volunteers tested at close of service (COS) who achieve the “advanced” level or above on the language proficiency interview (LPI).***Indicator 1:** Increase the percentage of Volunteers tested at COS who achieve the “Advanced” level or above in Level 1 and 2 languages.

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	84%	85%	85%
Results <sup>7</sup>	81%	82%	82%	82%	86% <sup>8</sup>	86% <sup>9</sup>

**Indicator 2:** Increase the percentage of Volunteers tested at COS who achieve the “Advanced” level or above in Level 3 and 4 languages.

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	39%	40%	42%
Results <sup>7</sup>	46%	38%	38%	38%	44% <sup>8</sup>	43% <sup>9</sup>

Developing local language skills is critical to the Volunteers’ ability to integrate into their communities; work effectively toward the Peace Corps’ Strategic Goals One, Two and Three; and maintain their safety and security. An increase in the percentage of Volunteers who achieve the advanced level of language proficiency indicates that the agency is supporting effective language training and independent language learning throughout the service of the Volunteers.

The language ability of the Volunteers is measured through the LPI, administered by agency-certified language testers. The language proficiency interview includes four proficiency levels based on guidelines from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. At the Advanced level, Volunteers should be able to perform the functions required in most projects such as training, co-planning, or facilitating technical activities.

Volunteers are taught and tested in key language(s) spoken at their site. Measuring language ability at mid-service and close of service allows posts to assess the efficacy

<sup>7</sup> Results prior to FY 2019 are not comparable to later years due to changes in measurement.

<sup>8</sup> These results include Volunteers (20 for Levels 1-2 languages, and 11 for Levels 3-4 languages) who tested at the “Advanced” level during their service and were thus not re-tested at COS.

<sup>9</sup> These results include Volunteers (25 for Levels 1-2 languages, and 16 for Levels 3-4 languages) who tested at the “Advanced” level during their service and were thus not re-tested at COS. Due to the global evacuation of Volunteers, results do not include Volunteers who COS’d in March 2020 or later. Results also do not include Volunteers who COS’d in China in February 2020 or later, as these Volunteers were evacuated one month prior to the global evacuation. Thus, the sample size is less representative and much smaller than in prior years.

of their language-learning programs and determine the types of activities that Volunteers can reasonably be expected to perform in the local language(s). This indicator continues to be particularly important as posts design and implement new strategies for language learning throughout service that are consistent with their project frameworks.

Advanced proficiency in a language that is classified as a Level 3 or Level 4 in terms of difficulty is more challenging and time-consuming than developing that level of proficiency in languages classified at Level 1 or 2. Over time, the proportion of Volunteers serving in posts with more difficult languages has increased steadily from 51 percent of the Volunteers tested in FY 2015 to 57 percent of those tested in FY 2018. Thus, this performance goal has been revised from the goal used in the FY 2014–2018 Strategic Plan to take into account the larger numbers of Volunteers being tested in more languages where it is more difficult to achieve advanced proficiency. For this reason, two separate indicators for language skills were established for agency performance reporting in FY 2018 and beyond.

Additional contextual factors may be considered in the future for this performance goal such as the fact that some Volunteers may learn more than one language during the course of their service. As the Peace Corps further refines language learning expectations in light of the posts' PT&E alignment efforts, this performance goal may be further updated.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

FY 2020 language proficiency interview results slightly exceeded the targets set for both groups of languages for Volunteers who COS'd from October 1, 2019 to February 29, 2020 (or for Volunteers who were serving in China and COS'd through January 31, 2020). The global evacuation meant a near simultaneous COS for all Volunteers and most could not complete a COS LPI before ending their service. Although LPI testing was conducted during and after the global evacuation, it occurred under circumstances that were not comparable to previous testing. Under normal circumstances, Volunteers are tested after completing a full two years of service. After the global evacuation, some posts tested evacuated Volunteers regardless of the number of months of service they had completed. Therefore, these data are not included as part of the FY 2020 results. Due to the shortened LPI testing period, results are based on 693 Volunteers compared to 2,128 Volunteers in FY 2019.

The agency's language specialists continue to provide guidance, resources, and training to support posts in developing robust language learning programs, including in-person, virtual, and self-directed learning strategies. In particular, a Language and LearningSpace Study (discussed in Performance Goal 1.2) revealed how posts use digital learning environments to contribute to the Volunteer language learning experience. The agency will leverage the wide-ranging approaches identified in the study to facilitate cross-post best practice exchanges. Additionally, the new competency model, described in Performance Goal 2.2, will serve as a tool to guide training and to

ensure Volunteers gain the language skills necessary to perform their required work assignments during service. The agency expects that these initiatives will assist in maintaining high levels of Volunteer proficiency in local languages.

**Goal Lead:** Director of the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

**Data Source:** Peace Corps databases (VIDA<sup>10</sup> and SharePoint)

**Calculations: Indicator 1:** The number of Volunteers who achieved an Advanced or Superior level score on their LPI for Levels 1 and 2 languages at COS divided by the number of Volunteers who were tested at COS. **Indicator 2:** The number of Volunteers who achieved an Advanced or Superior level score on their LPI for Levels 3 and 4 languages at COS divided by the number of Volunteers who were tested at COS.

<b>Performance Goal 2.4: Implement an Improved Site Management System</b> <i>Define, design, and implement a comprehensive site management system by the end of FY 2021.</i>				
	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Parameters and hypothesis defined Data collection tools developed	Structured interviews and case studies conducted in selected posts	Existing site management guidance enhanced with research findings
Results	NA	Scope of work and hypothesis defined	Research completed	Guidance enhanced

This performance goal establishes an improved and comprehensive site management system based on evidence-based guidance and tools. The system will foster an enabling environment for Volunteers, communities, and partners to address mutually-defined development priorities. The improved site management system will be completed using a phased approach:

- Phase 1: Use existing data to define parameters for successful site management.
- Phase 2: Develop tools such as structured interview questionnaires to collect and analyze data.
- Phase 3: Conduct structured interviews and case studies on site management practices at selected posts to compare and contrast the posts with the most and least success using the parameters defined in Phase 1.
- Phase 4: Enhance existing site management guidance based on findings from the operational research conducted in Phases 1-3.
- Phase 5: Develop guidance and tools for staff to use in the site management process to identify sites with shared programmatic goals and committed partners with whom the Volunteers can work.

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<sup>10</sup> The Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA) tool allows posts to manage data on Volunteers, sites, and Emergency Action Plans. Beginning in FY 2019, posts use a data collection tool on SharePoint to report this data.

Phase 6: Develop an integrated and navigable technology platform to capture and manage critical site management data.

Phase 7: Build the capacity of staff to implement guidance and tools.

### FY 2020 Progress Update

The FY 2020 target for this performance goal was met for all three regions. The agency held a series of roundtable discussions to review and explore the outcomes and recommendations from the studies with post staff. The agency hosted seven virtual calls with representatives from 55 posts. The roundtables focused on three completed studies, including a study focusing on site management. The primary focus of the consultations was to gather feedback on the study recommendations, find out how the recommendations are already being applied, and discuss options to further strengthen the implementation of the recommended practices going forward.

Following the roundtable discussions, regions worked to incorporate feedback and effective practices named in the studies and roundtable discussions in their respective site management guidance and post level discussions. Regions continue to work with post staff as new agency recommendations come to light to determine how best to incorporate the lessons and recommendations into existing site management guidance at the post level.

**Goal Leads:** Deputy Director of the Office of Global Operations

**Data Source:** Agency administrative records

**Calculation:** Completion of the milestones listed above

<b>Performance Goal 2.5: Strengthen Project Planning and Management</b>					
<i>Develop logical project frameworks (LPFs) for all projects using programming, training, and evaluation (PT&amp;E) alignment processes and tools by FY 2021.</i>					
	FY 2015 - FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	35% of projects	68% of projects	84% of projects
Results <sup>11</sup>	NA	4% of projects	21% of projects	54% of projects	83% of projects

This performance goal is designed to implement an improved, integrated project planning and management system that addresses community-defined priorities through evidence-based activities. The project frameworks that are developed as an integral part of the updated project planning process known as “Programming, Training, and

<sup>11</sup> The total number of active projects included in the calculation of these results varies from year to year due to posts beginning and ending projects and suspending programs. The FY 2020 result includes all projects that were active up until the global evacuation starting February 2020 for China and March 2020 for all other posts.

Evaluation (PT&E) Alignment” will ensure that Volunteers have meaningful work that contributes to development outcomes. PT&E Alignment uses the lessons learned by the agency over recent years as it has focused its programs in six sectors and supported post staff in designing, implementing, and evaluating high-quality programming and training for Volunteers. The PT&E alignment process was launched with the development of “anchor activities,” resource packages, and related guidance, tools, and templates for each sector to support posts in designing projects using LPFs. In FY 2016 and 2017, the agency field-tested the new approach and sector resource packages at 15 participating posts. The process of developing new LPFs began in FY 2017. This process culminates when the regional offices complete their final review of post plans and endorse the LPFs.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

Significant progress has been made on this performance goal, just short of this year’s target. The agency set annual targets for the number of post projects using the new LPFs that are expected to be endorsed by regional offices, with the overall goal of reaching 100 percent of all projects by the end of FY 2021. A total of 39 new projects were endorsed during this fiscal year, bringing the total number of endorsed projects to 114. At the end of FY 2020, 83 percent of the 136 Peace Corps projects that were active up until the global evacuation were using the new LPF, which is one percentage point from the FY 2020 target of 84 percent of projects endorsed.

The agency continues to make steady, sustained progress towards reaching the ultimate goal of LPFs for all projects by the end of FY 2021. Staff have become more proficient in using the new tools and processes that support project design. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the global evacuation and subsequent shift to one hundred percent virtual technical assistance and telework with limited bandwidth in some countries, the agency endorsed almost the same number of projects in FY 2020 as in FY 2019. Although the total number of projects endorsed to date is slightly short of the FY 2020 target, it is expected that the FY 2021 target of 100 percent endorsed is achievable.

**Goal Leads:** *Chiefs of Programming and Training (Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region)*

**Data Source:** *Administrative records*

**Calculation:** *Number of projects with an endorsed project framework divided by the number of projects. The targets and results expressed above for FY 2017-FY 2018 are based on a global total of 142 projects that are being developed or refreshed using the agency’s PT&E process. In FY 2019, with the suspension of programming in Nicaragua, the denominator decreased to 138 projects. For FY 2020, the number of projects shifted due to the closing of the post in China, planning for Volunteers entering service in Sri Lanka as the country re-opens from its FY 2006 closure, and changes to sector projects in Mongolia and Cambodia. Thus, results are based on 135 projects.*

## Strategic Objective 3: Volunteer Resilience

*Optimize the ability of Volunteers to successfully navigate the challenges of service, from recruitment to close of service, through a systematic approach to setting expectations, building skills, and supporting Volunteers, staff, and partners.*

**Rationale:** Optimizing Volunteers' natural resilience has been part of the Peace Corps' approach to development since its inception in 1961. Recent developments in the field of resilience, stress-management, intercultural competence, diversity, and inclusion (ICD&I) point to the need to review and revise the agency's approach to enhancing resilience. Volunteers encounter unique stressors associated with living and working abroad, and integrating into host communities. These stressors may be experienced differently by individual Volunteers depending on their prior life experiences, identity, education, or other factors as well as the social and cultural complexities of development work at their sites. Delineating a systematic and comprehensive approach to setting expectations and building resilience skills—one that includes staff, in-country partners, and Volunteers who support each other—will increase the ability of Volunteers to successfully navigate the challenges of service, from recruitment to close of service (COS) and life beyond the Peace Corps.

### Strategies

- Promote a suite of standardized products to inform core expectations, such as short videos, digital content, job descriptions, and post communications.
- Analyze the existing applicant interview questions, job descriptions, and country pages, including sections related to expectations of service and adaptation strategies; modify or update as needed to strengthen message targeting to prospective applicants.
- Identify methods and opportunities to inform resilience skill building at posts that is integrated with properly sequenced ICD&I coaching and other training; use simulation and experiential learning techniques where appropriate.<sup>12</sup>
- Identify external research findings on resilience and incorporate the most relevant findings into Volunteer and staff skill building to enhance the Volunteer-support environment.
- Enhance the ability of post staff to address individual Volunteer adjustment challenges and/or resilience gaps.
- Advance a common understanding of Volunteer adjustment and resilience and its critical contributing factors across all elements of the agency engaged in Volunteer support, including the development of materials and activities for counterparts and host families.
- Build ICD&I concepts, actions, and tools into core agency business processes.

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<sup>12</sup> One example of experiential learning is to let Trainees experience a cultural setting where a shared value like respect is shown through different behaviors than the ones to which they are accustomed.



## **Strategic Objective Lead:** Associate Director of the Office of Health Services

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

COVID-19's impact on the Peace Corps in the second quarter of FY 2020 and the global evacuation underscored the importance of the agency's foresight in developing resilience as a strategic objective. The leads in each respective area adapted the context of their work to meet COVID-19/post-COVID-19 needs while retaining fidelity to the resilience strategies outlined above. The benefits of strategic planning and including resilience as an agency-wide initiative prior to the pandemic were realized when the newly field-piloted resilience modules were rapidly adapted and deployed to meet the needs of evacuating Volunteers. The resilience modules were contextualized to address Volunteer readjustment to the U.S. and their ability to manage stressors associated with the pandemic. Shortly after the global evacuation, the agency made these modules available to all evacuated Volunteers on the agency's LearningSpace online training platform and promoted them through a media blast. The modules have also been re-developed and deployed for re-entry training for returning Volunteers to address expectations of service, coping with pandemic stress, and resilience skill-building for re-entry challenges.

Resilience has been a central theme in agency communications since content publishing resumed more frequently during the second half of FY 2020. The Offices of Communications and Volunteer Recruitment and Selection have partnered to develop and prepare new content that focuses on Volunteer recruitment and reinstatement and illuminates the steps taken to return Volunteers to the field. These offices also strengthened engagement with campus communicators and carried out a campaign to promote awareness of the countries where Volunteers serve. In addition, efforts continue to help the American public—especially Generation Z—understand the benefits and realities of Peace Corps service. The agency is sharing stories illustrating Volunteer resilience in light of the pandemic, evacuations, and ongoing conversations about race and equality.

Because daily operations-related work has lightened, the global evacuation has provided an opportunity for headquarters staff to work closely (but remotely) with staff at posts. The agency has been able to increase staff capacity and build systems related to ICD&I. To support posts as they prepare for Volunteers to return to service and global Volunteer operations fully resume, ICD&I-related guidance and considerations have been incorporated into the Country Re-entry Guide<sup>13</sup> and the FY 2020 Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS)<sup>14</sup>. The plan is for additional questions to be included in future AMCS surveys to support posts in their planning and implementation of relevant policies, outreach, and programming and training efforts.

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<sup>13</sup> The Country Re-Entry Guide (CREG) provides posts with comprehensive guidance as they plan and prepare for Volunteer re-entry, with a primary emphasis on mitigating global COVID-19 pandemic risks.

<sup>14</sup> The AMCS is a tool that posts use for their annual integrated planning and budgeting efforts.

**Performance Goal 3.1: Establish Realistic Expectations of Service**

*Ensure that all agency messaging is focused and consistent on internal and external platforms throughout the applicant lifecycle to establish realistic expectations of service by FY 2020.*

	FY 2015-FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Analysis of current messaging from headquarters and post conducted	New resiliency content and adjustment standards developed	New content for recruiters and stakeholders approved and disseminated
Results	NA	Headquarters analysis underway; post analysis to be conducted in FY 2019 <sup>15</sup>	Resiliency content and standards developed	New content approved and disseminated

After revamping its marketing and simplifying its online application and screening processes in 2014, the Peace Corps increased the number of applications from around 10,000 in FY 2013 to a peak of nearly 24,000 in FY 2016. The agency continues to receive approximately 20,000 applications a year. Furthermore, prospective Volunteers are now moving from application to service in the shortest time in decades. Through social media they are exposed to more information about Peace Corps service than past generations of Volunteers. Some of this information is created or curated by the Peace Corps, but much of it is not. The agency requires additional processes that help candidates, invitees, Trainees, and, ultimately, Volunteers prepare for the rigors of service by setting appropriate expectations.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

- Phase 1: Conduct an analysis of current messaging from headquarters that addresses resiliency as it relates to expectations of service.
- Phase 2: Conduct an analysis of current pre-departure messaging from posts.
- Phase 3: Create and disseminate agency content, standards, and messaging on challenges to expect during Peace Corps service.
- Phase 4: Review existing trainings in the agency's learning management system (LearningSpace), updating and creating content where needed.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

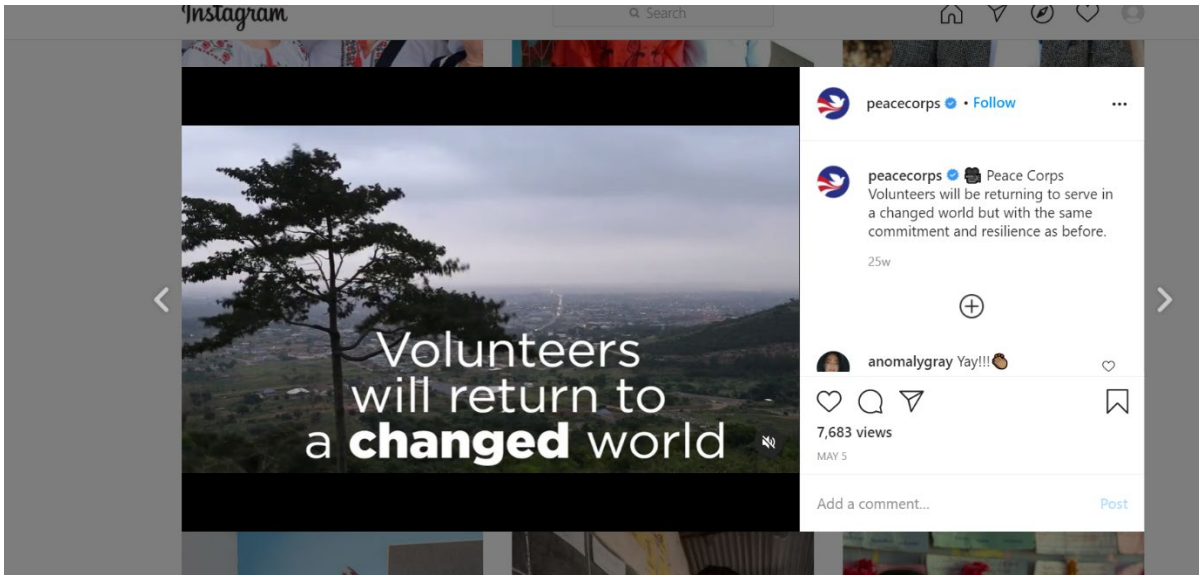
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<sup>15</sup> Post analysis was not conducted in FY 2019 due to shifting targets.

The FY 2020 target was met despite challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak and the global evacuation. Staff from the Offices of Communications and Volunteer Recruitment and Selection produced new content focused on Volunteer resilience and realistic expectations of service throughout the year. Immediately following the global evacuation, content focused on logistics, health and safety, and post-service support for evacuees. At that time, the agency's usual promotion of stories, photos, and videos documenting the Volunteer experience was put on hold and agency social media platforms remained quiet for several weeks, only publishing frequently asked questions and answers for evacuated Volunteers. However, the agency was able to resume publishing content more frequently to tell the story of life in the Peace Corps in the second half of FY 2020.

The agency was successful with staying in touch with returned Volunteers and staff to secure content. For example, the Peace Corps began a series of questions and answers with posts and colleagues at headquarters to illuminate returned Volunteer experiences with a special focus on diversity and inclusion and the global evacuation.

Importantly, communications staff completed work on a new digital asset management system, which provides Peace Corps recruiters with resources to communicate the challenges and rewards of service. Staff also enhanced the efficiency of the stories submission landing page at [peacecorps.gov](https://peacecorps.gov) and created a new inbox and blog tracker to manage Volunteer and returned Volunteer content. Press Relations and the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection's Public Affairs staff continued regular engagement with members of the press throughout the year, placing stories demonstrating Volunteer resilience after the global evacuation in local and national newspapers, campus publications, and radio and television broadcasts.



(Above) The Peace Corps shared a video on Instagram called, “Peace Corps Everlasting,” affirming the agency’s commitment to returning to the field.



Home > Stories



By Peace Corps  
SEPT. 21, 2020

From serving as role models to engaging in secondary projects, Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Peace Corps Volunteers often bring valuable perspectives and skills to their host communities.

(Above) Peacecorps.gov publishes stories by current and returned Volunteers and Peace Corps staff.



*Part of establishing realistic expectations of service is demonstrating the range of work and living environments where Volunteers are placed. (Left) Returned Volunteer, Monica Gangwar, is shown demonstrating computer technology to a student in Nepal. (Right) Jessica Mazzoni is a returned Community Health Improvement Project (CHIP) Volunteer of the Luapula Province of Zambia. She is teaching people from her village and villagers up to 14 km away about double digging to improve the soil and crop yield.*

**Goal Leads:** Associate Director of Volunteer Recruitment Services and Director of the Office of Communications

**Data Sources:** The Peace Corps website

**Calculation:** Completion of the milestones listed above

**Performance Goal 3.2: Increase Management of Adjustment Challenges Outside the Clinical Environment**

*Increase the range of individuals from whom Volunteers can seek support when facing adjustment challenges during service.*

**Indicator 1:** Decrease and maintain the Volunteer/Trainee (VT) rate of care seeking from Peace Corps medical officers (PCMOs) for adjustment difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets				6.2 cases per 100 VT years	6.0 cases per 100 VT years	6.0 cases per 100 VT years
Results	NA	6.7 cases per 100 VT years <sup>17</sup>	6.4 cases per 100 VT years	6.3 cases per 100 VT years	7.2 cases per 100 VT years	8.5 cases per 100 VT years <sup>18</sup>

**Indicator 2:** Fully develop an ICD&I framework to build staff, Volunteer, and partner capacity to support Volunteer adjustment and resilience.

	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Agency vision and strategy developed  Peace Corps' status against key ICD&I benchmarks analyzed	Peace Corps' status advanced by one level on selected ICD&I benchmarks	ICD&I benchmarks and/or reflection questions within the Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS) developed
Results	NA	Vision completed; benchmarks under development	Management Directive 715 (MD-715) completed	Reflection questions developed

<sup>16</sup> An “adjustment difficulty” is defined as managing a new situation (related to work, living situation, culture, etc.) that requires support from the PCMO, such as empathetic interactions and minor skill building. This does not rise to the level of diagnosable concern in that it does not impact functioning in a detrimental way, has not been present for a significant period of time, and does not require treatment from a licensed mental health provider. Rates are calculated using VT years to account for the number of Volunteers and the length of time they served.

<sup>17</sup> The FY 2016 rate relies on data reported through PCMEDICS, the Volunteer Medical Record, from January-September 2016 only; data prior to January 2016 was unavailable or was not comparable to later months due to changes in the criteria for coding cases as “adjustment difficulty.”

<sup>18</sup> This calculation represents a partial fiscal year of data due to the global evacuation of Volunteers. Therefore, the result is based on only five and a half months of data and does not factor in variations in cases reported at different months during the year. It is possible that reported cases fluctuate over different months of the fiscal year and these fluctuations would not be captured in this partial dataset.



**Indicator 3:** Develop resilience resources to build staff, Volunteer, and partner capacity to support Volunteer adjustment and resilience.

	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Evidence-based training modules field tested and finalized	10% of posts completed review of modules and incorporated materials into their training programs	20% of posts representing all regions completed review of modules and incorporated materials into training programs
Results	NA	Modules completed	19% of posts completed review	20% of posts completed review

Volunteers face a number of challenges as they learn to navigate the rigors of service. As a result, they reach out to staff—including Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs)—for emotional support. While PCMOs are well-equipped to handle Volunteer’s medical needs, other host country staff, Volunteer peer groups, counterparts, or other partners may be better situated to assist Volunteers in managing the inevitable adjustment difficulties that come with service, but they need the appropriate skills and resources to do so.

Given that a major element of resilience relates to cultural adjustment, Volunteers can be supported to enhance their own resilience through training that builds upon a framework of intercultural competence, diversity, and inclusion (ICD&I). Posts that have conducted ICD&I training report that it is an effective approach. To further this work, the agency developed an ICD&I vision and strategy based on analysis of the agency’s status against the benchmarks recognized by external experts in the field of ICD&I. The agency will seek to make progress by developing ICD&I benchmarks or reflection questions within the Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS), a tool that is used by posts for their annual integrated planning and budgeting efforts. In this way, the ICD&I actions are integrated into a core agency business process, maximizing their effectiveness and sustainability.

In addition to the integration of ICD&I into core agency processes, the Peace Corps continues to develop training materials to enhance Volunteers’ innate resilience by building life skills that promote adaptation, adjustment, and acculturation. This training helps them better withstand the challenges that are inherent in adapting to a new cultural and linguistic environment where many of their support systems are not present or need to be constructed anew. The training considers skills such as effective problem

solving, social connectedness and empathy, emotional balance and flexibility, and building mental strength.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

- Phase 1: Create guidance for skills building and resources to optimize the use of Volunteer leaders, peer support networks, affinity groups, post staff, and diversity committees at post so that Volunteers have other non-medical resources available to them.
- Phase 2: Communicate the new guidance, resources, and tools at Peace Corps headquarters and plan for roll out to posts.
- Phase 3: Roll out the new guidance, resources and tools for posts to review and incorporate into their business processes and training for staff as well as Volunteers.

In parallel with these developments, the agency will also explore ways to formulate a new Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) question to measure the extent to which Volunteers seek support from non-medical staff for adjustment challenges. This data will be analyzed across demographic groups to see if adjustment challenges are experienced more acutely by different groups and whether they perceive that Peace Corps staff and systems are positioned to support these adjustment challenges appropriately. This new data may lead to additional ways to refine staff capacity and/or standard operations in order to increase the range of individuals from whom Volunteers can seek support when facing adjustment challenges during service.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The FY 2020 target for Indicator 1 was not met. Due to the global evacuation in March 2020, the agency was only able to collect five months, as opposed to a full year, of data on this indicator. Therefore, it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions regarding the results for such a short timeframe. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made in supporting a stepped model of care, supporting Volunteer empowerment and self-management of their behavioral health. At the Continuing Medical Education Conference in FY 2020, PCMOs were trained in providing assisted self-management for Volunteers with behavioral health concerns. A workspace site containing self-management resources for use with Volunteers has also been curated and updated for efficient PCMO use.

Additionally, the agency conducted a study to determine if any posts varied significantly in terms of Volunteer PCMO care-seeking for adjustment and, if so, if there were Annual Volunteer Survey<sup>19</sup> (AVS) responses that might explain these variations. The agency conducted an extensive analysis of the FY 2017–FY 2019 data to identify countries whose results varied significantly from the mean of 6.0 cases per 100 Volunteer years (rate of adjustment care-seeking with a PCMO). Eight countries were identified. The

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<sup>19</sup> The AVS is a confidential, voluntary online survey of all currently serving, two-year Volunteers. It is explained in greater detail in Appendix C.

rate of care-seeking with the PCMO for Volunteer adjustment was then compared with AVS responses during the same time period. In cases where there may be an association between results, the agency plans to conduct targeted follow-up with those posts.

For Indicator 2, the FY 2020 target was met. The agency added ICD&I reflection questions to the AMCS and will consider including additional questions in future versions, as appropriate, to further reflect changing conditions and support posts' operations. Additionally, ICD&I-related guidance and considerations have been incorporated into the Country Re-Entry Guide as Volunteer management of COVID-19-related perceptions and challenges during their service adds to the increased need for resilience.

For Indicator 3, the FY 2020 target was met. As part of a resilience pilot, 20 percent of posts—representing all regions—completed their review of modules and incorporated materials into training programs. However, the pilot was cut short due to the global evacuation. A final report on the pilot is nearing completion and the results will be used to further inform agency resiliency training efforts. Such efforts include determining the optimal timing and sequencing of resiliency training with other training and across other job functions; determining the profile of staff best equipped to train, support, and assess Volunteer resilience competencies; and determining how posts can reinforce resilience skills through other learning experiences along the continuum of service and address the intersection of resilience and ICD&I skills (i.e., what does emotional agility look like across cultures and different norms for managing emotions).

Resilience competencies have also been included in the agency core training competencies, including emotional agility, flexible thinking, problem solving, social connection, and empathy. In the beginning of the fiscal year, training modules aiming to build these competencies were piloted in person with groups of Volunteers. During the global evacuation, the modules were quickly converted to remote training with voice-overs on LearningSpace and were contextualized to meet evacuated Volunteer needs as they adapted to their sudden return home during a pandemic. The modules have now been adapted a second time to meet Volunteer training needs as Volunteers re-enter service in a COVID-19/post-COVID-19 environment. Staff will receive training on these modules as well, so they can help support Volunteers. The versatility and relevance of the evidence-based content from the resilience pilot modules in the COVID-19 pandemic environment is an important product related to this indicator.



*A couple of ways Volunteers can better manage adjustment challenges outside of the clinical environment is through training and expanding their support networks. (Left) Returned Volunteer Diane Glover facilitates a technical session on conflict management during In-Service Training for fellow Volunteers in the Philippines. (Right) Returned Volunteer Jennifer Odom connects with a fellow Volunteer via Volunteer-to-Volunteer support.*

**Goal Leads:** Regional Directors (Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region), Associate Director of the Office of Health Services, and Chief Diversity Officer

**Data Sources:** PCMEDICS and post administrative data

**Calculations:** **Indicator 1:** Incidents of adjustment difficulty (or other behavioral health epidemiological codes) divided by VT years; **Indicator 2:** Completion of milestones listed above; **Indicator 3:** FY 2018: Completion of milestones listed above. FY 2019 and beyond: Number of posts that incorporate the modules for building resilience into their training programs divided by the number of posts with two-year Volunteers.

## Strategic Objective 4: Building Leaders of Tomorrow

*Strengthen American communities and organizations by enabling returned Volunteers to reinvest the skills and abilities gained during service.*

**Rationale:** Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) constitute a significant “domestic dividend” of skilled and dedicated individuals. Volunteers return to America with a unique and diverse set of highly marketable skills, including leadership, language, technical, intercultural, and entrepreneurial skills that contribute to a more competitive U.S. workforce. In addition, returned Volunteers often use their intercultural knowledge and experience to continue their service at home by engaging in public service, supporting volunteerism, and promoting a better understanding of other cultures. This strategic objective directly supports Strategic Goals Two and Three. Priority areas within this strategic objective focus on streamlining returned Volunteer services to ensure operational efficiency; interoffice collaboration; a coordinated, effective RPCV communication strategy; and gathering and strategically analyzing existing data on the Third Goal.

### Strategies

- Identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained during Volunteer service, particularly those related to leadership and intercultural competence. Develop training and tools that enable RPCVs to successfully translate those competencies into marketable skills after service.
- Monitor the distribution of employment opportunities for RPCVs across sectors (public and private) in order to maximize the diversity of available options.
- Integrate a virtual and user-friendly career resource center into existing platforms, such as the RPCV portal and [peacecorps.gov](https://peacecorps.gov) website, to reduce staff administrative burden and to deliver career services efficiently.
- Promote civic engagement and cross-cultural exchange in U.S. communities by centralizing online resources and raising awareness of opportunities for returned Volunteers.
- Strengthen business procedures to efficiently manage RPCV contact data.

**Strategic Objective Lead:** Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

### FY 2020 Progress Update

FY 2020 saw an unprecedented level of collaboration and coordination by Peace Corps staff in support of returned Volunteers. Building on a strong foundation established over the past several years, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services collaborated with staff and offices across the agency to expand and accelerate support for returned Volunteers, including the nearly 6,900 Volunteers and Trainees evacuated from their posts as a result of the global pandemic. The increased level of intra-agency collaboration has been sustained and enhanced following the global evacuation and

numerous steps have been taken to codify these enhancements in how the agency provides support for returned Volunteers.

One of the most impactful advances made this year was the increased capacity for virtual support of, and engagement with, returned Volunteers. By leveraging improved access to virtual meeting software and updating existing processes to allow for higher capacity virtual events, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services was able to partner with Peace Corps' Office of Human Resources and numerous Human Capital Offices across the federal government to facilitate over 60 webinars assisting returned Volunteers with their career transition upon return to the United States. Virtual support to returned Volunteers was also improved through expanded LearningSpace availability. Previously, access to this system was limited to active Volunteers and staff; however, by granting temporary access to returned Volunteers, a critical channel for information and training was opened at no additional cost to the agency.

This year, the Peace Corps also made significant progress in developing a methodology allowing the agency to systematically capture quantitative and qualitative data, perform relevant analysis, and tell the story of the Peace Corps' "domestic dividend". Using methodology derived in part from the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services will be able to translate the language, intercultural, technical, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills that Volunteers developed into an improved understanding of how returned Volunteers help contribute important skillsets to the workplace and serve as accomplished leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in the United States.

The global evacuation pushed the agency to develop positive, creative, and impactful solutions for supporting returned Volunteers; however, it also negatively impacted the ability to successfully meet several of the Performance Goals in Strategic Objective 4: Building Leaders of Tomorrow. Many of the opportunities to connect with audiences in the United States are reliant on having active Volunteers in the field. This challenge was further compounded by the severe disruption to normal operations for middle and high school students, a key target audience for several of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services' speakers programs.



**Performance Goal 4.1: Cultivate Leadership Skills**

*Develop and share leadership and intercultural competency tools to support returned Volunteers as they transition from their service by FY 2020.*

	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Map created of leadership and intercultural competencies developed during service (model)	Methodology developed to link leadership and intercultural competencies to activities in the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT)	Templates and other tools developed for documenting competencies gained by Volunteers in their individual Description of Service (DOS)
Results	NA	Competency structure completed	Methodology developed	Templates developed

During Peace Corps service, powerful learning experiences provide practical opportunities to develop leadership skills and intercultural competencies. The competencies gained during service include participatory analysis, project design and management, coaching, and mentoring. These competencies enable Volunteers to be effective not only in their overseas communities and organizations, but also when they return home. Back home in the United States, returned Volunteers use competencies cultivated through Peace Corps service that contribute to a high-quality American workforce.

Competency assessment is critical to ensuring that the skills Volunteers acquire during service prepare them for success in the global workforce. The Peace Corps can strengthen its transition resources so that returned Volunteers are better able to articulate the foundational concepts of leadership and intercultural competence acquired during service when reentering the workforce or furthering their education. By making these transition resources available online and incorporating related curricula into regional and national programming efforts, the Peace Corps will be able to expand its reach to Volunteers regardless of their geographic location. Returned Volunteers continue to use and refine the competencies they gained abroad by reinvesting those skills back home in both their workplaces and communities.

Volunteers develop competencies during service by engaging in activities identified in the posts' project frameworks and reported in the VRT. Linking VRT activities to competency development clarifies how Volunteer activities enable posts to fulfill commitments to host countries. It also provides evidence to future employers of the ways in which Volunteers have demonstrated leadership and intercultural competencies. Options will be provided to posts to use the competencies as an incentive for Volunteers to more meaningfully engage in and report on VRT activities during their service.

The Description of Service (DOS) is the agency record that documents Volunteer achievements during service. The DOS can be adapted to include a standardized approach to documenting competencies gained by the Volunteers during their service. Strategies will be shared with post staff to facilitate the inclusion of information in the DOS, drawing on Volunteers' VRT reporting to document the acquisition of leadership and/or intercultural competency.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The target for FY 2020 was met. A key component to the DOS template development was a series of stakeholder feedback sessions, which the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services led with the assistance of the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support. These sessions served a critical role in validating previous assumptions and ensuring that the end product meets the needs of both the agency and the primary consumer of these documents, returned Volunteers.

The agency added coordination with the internal team leading development efforts for the new Volunteer and Grants reporting tool—an important component to the work this year. Although it will take several years to implement and roll out the full integration of DOS templates into this tool, significant long-term benefits will accrue as a result of this work, including improved standardization across posts and Volunteers, the ability to provide enhanced and consistent support and training, a reduction in the overall reporting and management burden for staff and Volunteers, and an ability to use system-derived automation to improve overall process efficiency. Initiating this work in FY 2020 was critical to ensuring that the required system enhancements can be added to the development roadmap for the DOS's underlying IT systems.



Returned Volunteer Amber Brown is shown teaching a class in Kosovo.

**Goal Lead:** Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

**Data Source:** Agency administrative records.

**Calculation:** Completion of the milestones listed above

<b>Performance Goal 4.2: Continuation of Service</b>						
<i>Increase the number of opportunities for returned Volunteers to engage in continued service to 3,000 by FY 2022.</i>						
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	2,500	2,500	2,600
Results	2,250	2,300	2,230 <sup>20</sup>	2,153	2,742	2,046

The Peace Corps is a conduit to a lifetime commitment to service. Volunteers return to the United States as “cultural ambassadors” and community leaders, equipped with a broadened sense of diversity and inclusion, service to others, and refined intercultural competencies. This enables them to engage diverse communities through volunteerism

<sup>20</sup> This number reflects what was reported in prior years. However, due to improved calculations, the FY 2017 result should be 1,831 instead.

and cross-cultural learning opportunities. The agency is committed to cultivating and expanding opportunities for returned Volunteers to reengage with the Peace Corps mission (e.g., Peace Corps Response and the Peace Corps Fellows Program) and to share their experience.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The results for FY 2020 were moderately below the target. School closures across the United States and the suspension of the Global Connections<sup>21</sup> and Peace Corps Response Programs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the agency's ability to meet its target. Of the total 2,046 opportunities, 564 were from Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools, 977 were from Paul D. Coverdell Fellows, and 505 were from Peace Corps Response.

The global evacuation has caused significant challenges that will affect this performance goal moving forward given its heavy reliance on the Global Connections and Peace Corps Response Programs. The Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services is coordinating with several offices, including the Office of Global Operations, to investigate and develop new approaches to meeting these objectives. This includes new opportunities for returned Volunteers to provide service virtually to host countries and counterparts. Additional work is also underway to develop new strategies for connecting returned Volunteers virtually to classrooms and students in the United States.

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<sup>21</sup> The Global Connections Program connects Volunteers and the communities where they serve with educators and learners in the U.S. It serves to enhance the Second and Third Goals of the Peace Corps in an intercultural exchange through 21<sup>st</sup>-Century curriculum and resources to promote global competence.





*Returned Volunteer Lawrence Kahn offered three talks on creating bridges of cross-cultural understanding to social studies students at a high school in Connecticut. A total of more than 150 students attended the talks, which were held in the school library.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

**Data Source:** Agency administrative records

**Calculation:** Number of opportunities for returned Volunteers per fiscal year

**Performance Goal 4.3: Consolidate Career and Transition Services for Returned Volunteers**

*Increase the percentage of recently returned Volunteers who access the RPCV Portal to 75 percent by FY 2022.*

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	45%	50%	60%
Results	NA	43%	38%	32%	49%	73%

The agency can better serve returned Volunteers by developing a streamlined mechanism for RPCVs to identify, request, and access career and transition services. Centralizing these services to one location (the online RPCV Portal) will achieve several improvements in efficiency, including consistent marketing to RPCVs, streamlined access to services, a more user-friendly experience, and the standardization of all agency outreach to the RPCV community. Additionally, centralizing services and communication with RPCVs will increase efficiency and reduce the administrative burden on Peace Corps staff providing these services as well as other offices that rely on returned Volunteer information for core business functions.

**FY 2020 Progress Update**

The target for FY 2020 was met. The role and importance of the RPCV Portal was significantly elevated this year as part of agency efforts to support evacuated Volunteers. The RPCV Portal was the main customer service platform for engaging with returned Volunteers and was essential in providing access to documents, information, and events supporting Volunteer transition. During FY 2020, a total of 3,290 returned Volunteers submitted requests for documentation via the RPCV Portal to support potential employment opportunities and access to Peace Corps-related employment and education benefits; the results were subsequently addressed by the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services.

In FY 2020, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services worked closely with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to establish short, medium, and long-term requirements and development priorities for the RPCV Portal. The Office has also developed a mechanism for engaging with other offices across the agency that provide support services for returned Volunteers so that all RPCV Portal-related development work can be identified, captured, and prioritized in a more organized and structured manner.

**Goal Lead:** Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

**Data Source:** RPCV Portal component of the agency data system

**Calculation:** Number of recently returned Volunteers and Peace Corps Response Volunteers who set up an RPCV Portal account divided by the number of recently returned Volunteers who have completed service in the past 12 months.

<b>Performance Goal 4.4: Fulfilling the Third Goal</b>						
<i>Identify and analyze existing internal and external sources of Third-Goal data.</i>						
<b>Indicator 1:</b> Number of Volunteers participating in Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) projects, Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS)/Speakers Match Program, and VRT activities.						
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	-	5,600	5,700
Results <sup>22</sup>	NA	5,512	5,803	5,190	4,954	3,655
<b>Indicator 2:</b> Number of participants reported in PCPP projects, WWS/Speakers Match Program, and VRT activities.						
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	-	70,000	73,000
Results <sup>23</sup>	NA	38,274	29,847	65,993	91,862	44,726

The agency’s Third Goal responsibility, as mandated by Section 2517 of the Peace Corps Act, states that the Director shall “...encourage, facilitate, and assist activities carried out by former Volunteers ... and the efforts of agencies, organizations, and other individuals to support or assist in former Volunteers’ carrying out such activities.” Various data sources, both internal and external to the agency, already record Third Goal activities carried out by Volunteers and RPCVs, but the agency has not made a sustained effort to compile and analyze this data. This new performance goal reflects a renewed commitment to capturing and reporting this information in order to demonstrate fulfillment of the Third Goal mandate to stakeholders.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

FY 2020 results did not meet the targets for both Indicators 1 and 2. The closure of many of the nation’s schools and the disruption in curricula experienced as part of the unplanned transition to virtual learning significantly impacted participation in the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS)/Speakers Match Program. This performance goal also relies heavily on data derived from Volunteer activities in the field and PCPP projects, all of which were terminated as a result of the global evacuation.

To address ongoing challenges the above externalities have posed, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services is following a three-pronged strategy. First,

<sup>22</sup> FY 2016 results are not comparable to later years due to gaps in available data.

<sup>23</sup> FY 2016 and FY 2017 results are not comparable to later years due to gaps in available data.



the Office is initiating a more proactive approach to solicit improved returned Volunteer reporting of Third-Goal activities. Second, a shift in marketing that will emphasize opportunities available via remote/virtual learning is underway. Third, the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services, along with the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Intergovernmental Affairs, is actively investigating the potential for new partnerships that will expand the reach, impact, and ability to collect data on returned Volunteer speaking opportunities with students across the United States.

**Goal Lead:** *Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services*

**Data Sources:** *Gift, Grants, and Management (PCPP); agency administrative records; VRT*

**Calculations:** **Indicator 1:** *The number of Volunteers participating in activities that correspond to the Third Goal including the PCPP, the WWS/Speakers Match Program, and Volunteers reporting Third-Goal activities in the VRT. Indicator 2:* *The number of participants in activities that correspond to the Third Goal, including people who become PCPP donors or attend the WWS/Speakers Match Program, and the number of community members in Volunteer-reported activities in the VRT.*

## Management Objective 5: Foundational Business Management

*Continuously improve the agency's core infrastructure, including the cost-effectiveness, speed, ease-of-use, and quality of business services.*

**Rationale:** The Peace Corps needs to improve the cost-effectiveness, speed, ease-of-use, and quality of its business services, and these efforts should be ongoing. Processes that work well should be kept; those that do not should be improved or discarded, and duplication should be eliminated. Decision makers should have access to the business intelligence they need when they need it. Agency financial, human capital, and technology resources should be used wisely according to established best practices and business requirements. As these efforts result in improved operational efficiency, the burden to domestic and overseas staff will be reduced. The ultimate outcome of this objective is the alignment of business services with the agency's strategic objectives.

### Strategies

- Improve the cost-effectiveness, speed, ease-of-use, and quality of the processes used to deliver business services to domestic and overseas staff and of the services delivered.
- Support good decision making by ensuring that agency leaders not only have access to timely, relevant, accurate, and easy-to-use business intelligence but are also held accountable for outcomes.
- Manage agency financial, human capital, and technology resources wisely by following best practices to meet (and strive to exceed) business requirements.

**Management Objective Leads:** Chief Human Capital Officer and Chief Information Officer

### FY 2020 Progress Update

In FY 2020, the Peace Corps' Office of Human Resources focused its efforts on workforce planning. Workforce planning is the foundation for managing the agency's human capital and aids in being able to hire qualified individuals who can further the agency's mission. The agency created a workforce planning team, which conducts in-depth data analysis that informs agency decision making on related matters. The Peace Corps has also consistently worked with office directors and senior leadership to align the workforce with strategic planning that prioritizes workforce requirements and decreases vacancy gaps. As a result, the agency has successfully decreased the number of vacant positions over the course of the fiscal year.

Additionally, the Office of Human Resources requested services from the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Human Resources Solutions Division to assist the agency in conducting a review of its current organizational performance and design, and to position management to assist in meeting its organizational and workforce needs. The OPM study outlines strategic and workforce planning recommendations and federal

government best practices to create efficiencies and streamline and improve agency processes. While there are numerous recommendations in the report, the Peace Corps will initially focus on two key areas of immediate importance: (1) Improving efficiencies in staff workload and workflow, and (2) increasing investments in career and staff development opportunities.

In FY 2020, the Office of Human Resources conducted additional focus groups with managers and supervisors to develop a roadmap to strengthening agency operations in staff development and workplace efficiencies. These focus groups revealed a need to invest in both a strategic workload analysis conducted by an objective third party, and a strategic review of the flexibilities that the Sam Farr and Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018 provides—specifically, exempting certain positions from the five-year term limit to mitigate human capital risks. These recommendations require ongoing discussions and approval from senior leadership, which has been delayed due to competing priorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic and global evacuation.

However, the Office of Human Resources successfully expanded its efforts in staff training and development. In FY 2020, the Office offered professional development courses such as New Intelligence Quotient Supervisor training, the American University Key Executive Leadership Program, Leadership Skills and Techniques, Leadership for Non-Managers, Contracting Officer Representative training, Human Resources Essentials, and Statement of Work Writing. Peace Corps staff who participated in the training sessions reported that the courses were aligned with Peace Corps business priorities and goals and were worthwhile investments in their career development.

**Performance Goal 5.1: Improve Decision Making with Better Access to Business Intelligence**

*Increase the percentage of offices that maintain dashboards containing a combination of operational, financial, human capital, and customer service metrics to 100 percent of selected offices by FY 2019.*

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	80%	100%	100%
Results	NA	NA	NA	75%	100%	100%

This performance goal helps ensure that timely, relevant, accurate, and easy-to-use business intelligence is available to decision makers, both at the office level and the director level. Office dashboards that contain operational, financial, human capital, and customer service metrics help focus attention on both the effectiveness and cost efficiency of decisions, while promoting better alignment of activities with agency strategic objectives.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The target for FY 2020 was met. Every associate director-level office has been reporting for over a year priority business metrics aligned with the agency's top priorities. Each office has identified key customers to whom it provides services and noted initiatives to improve these services. In addition, each office also reports three financial metrics and four human capital metrics.

The dashboards are updated on a quarterly schedule in conjunction with the agency's quarterly performance reviews. These balanced sets of measurements help provide senior decision-makers with access to timely, relevant, and accurate business information and focus attention on effectiveness, cost efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Beginning in FY 2020, the dashboards were made accessible to all Peace Corps staff on the agency's intranet. Now that the dashboards are firmly established, agency offices will continue assessing their performance as an iterative process. Offices will make adjustments as needed to further strategic plan goals and other high priorities. This performance goal has been accomplished and is now retired.

**Goal Lead:** *Director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning*

**Data Source:** *Agency administrative records*

**Calculation:** *Number of offices with dashboards that meet criteria divided by the number of offices selected for inclusion in this metric.*

**Performance Goal 5.2: Align Office Performance with the Strategic Plan**

*Increase the percentage of agency leaders who have metrics in their individual performance plans that are linked to at least one performance goal or objective in the strategic plan to 100 percent by the end of FY 2020.*

	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Individual performance plans developed and/or restructured to align with this goal	Performance plans aligned for 50% of senior leaders	Performance plans aligned for 100% of all Peace Corps employees
Results	NA	New performance management system under development	100% of performance plans for selected senior leaders aligned	100% of performance plans for all senior leaders aligned but not for all employees

Linking the individual performance plans of leaders to specific performance goals and objectives in the strategic plan will provide line-of-sight throughout the agency on how the actions of individual offices are tied to the agency’s overall strategic objectives. This will drive accountability and action on the business intelligence being utilized under Performance Goal 5.1. Additionally, it will build staff engagement through an increased understanding of how individual efforts align with agency goals. After plans are aligned, the Peace Corps will retire this performance goal. A new goal may then be identified based on the data available in the individual plans to further agency improvement efforts.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The target for FY 2020 was not met. All employees at the associate director level have had strategic metrics incorporated into their performance plans and will be assessed against these metrics in subsequent fiscal years. However, the agency did not align performance plans with the strategic plan for all Peace Corps employees because the Office of Human Resources did not have dedicated staff to socialize, draft, introduce, and explain this plan to the Senior Policy Council, client offices, managers, and supervisors to get buy-in at every level. The agency now has a policy team in place that can take those actions and collaborate with the Employee and Labor Relations team to ensure training is also built to support managers to successfully navigate a new tiered performance management system.

**Goal Lead:** Chief Human Capital Officer

**Data Source:** Human Resources records

**Calculation:** Number of managers and directors (and above) with performance plans that meet criteria divided by the number of managers (and above) selected for inclusion in this metric. The FY 2019 target includes only career staff. The FY 2020 target includes both career staff and political appointees.

**Performance Goal 5.3: Improve Human Capital Planning and Processes***Improve the agency's ability to strategically deploy its talent by strengthening advance planning and minimizing vacancy gaps by the end of FY 2021.***Indicator 1: Develop an agency-wide Human Capital Operating Plan.**

	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Plan drafted	Plan drafted	Plan finalized
Results	NA	Office-level planning underway	Agency-level planning underway	Agency-level planning underway

**Indicator 2: Decrease the average vacancy gap to 80 days.<sup>24</sup>**

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	-	-	100 days	90 days	80 days
Results	NA <sup>25</sup>	89 days <sup>26</sup>	132 days <sup>27</sup>	71 days <sup>28</sup>	111 days <sup>29</sup>	94 days

One of the most critical factors affecting the Peace Corps' ability to serve its Volunteers is its ability to maintain an engaged workforce, both domestically and abroad. Success depends on the agency's ability to strategically deploy talent—the right people in the right place at the right time. The development of a Human Capital Operating Plan should not only comply with OMB A-11 directives but should also drive increased focus on aligning operations with the agency's core mission and values. This includes filling vacancies in a timely manner, providing appropriate and targeted training, delivering world-class customer service to internal and external stakeholders, and espousing industry-leading practices in diversity, inclusion, and belongingness. After the Human Capital Operating Plan is in place, process improvements should lead to a decrease in the time it takes for vacancies to be filled. This is a critical human capital outcome for Peace Corps, as vacancy gaps are considered a major risk factor for both domestic and overseas operations. Vacancy gaps decrease the agency's knowledge management capabilities, decrease staff and Volunteer engagement and satisfaction, and complicate

<sup>24</sup> The percentage of employees hired within 80 days is consistent with the recommended time frames on the [hiring reform](#) published by OPM.

<sup>25</sup> Data from the former application system (Avue) is no longer accessible.

<sup>26</sup> Career Connector is the Peace Corps' job vacancy management system. It was utilized for the first time in January 2016; as a result, the FY 2016 data does not reflect the entire fiscal year.

<sup>27</sup> In FY 2017, the federal government hiring freeze impacted the agency's hiring process, resulting in delays in onboarding new staff until the freeze was lifted in August 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Reflects the vacancy gap for domestic vacancies only.

<sup>29</sup> The lapse in appropriations and furlough from December 2018 to late January 2019 impacted the agency's hiring process, resulting in delays in onboarding new staff.

project management. Achieving a reduction in the length of time of vacancy gaps indicates that human capital operations have been improved.

### **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The FY 2020 target for Indicator 1 was not met due to a shift in human capital priorities triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unexpected departure of the Chief Human Capital Officer. The agency is currently interviewing for a new Chief Human Capital Officer who will develop and implement a Human Capital Operating Plan in partnership with senior leadership once he/she is onboarded.

The FY 2020 target for Indicator 2 was not met either. Beginning in the second quarter of FY 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were numerous challenges to the agency's ability to meet the 80-day time-to-hire timeline. During this time, the Office of Human Resources experienced delays in applicants being able to schedule fingerprint and ID card appointments. Many General Services Administration sites where applicants make these arrangements were closed. This issue was further complicated by delays in the security clearance process, causing the time for applicants to onboard to be extended beyond normal timeframes. Additionally, the agency experienced challenges with candidates declining positions after initially accepting them or after receiving security clearances. In some cases, due to competing agency priorities, hiring managers were not able to make themselves available for interviews in a timely manner.

The Office of Human Resources is in the process of implementing many necessary changes, particularly in the area of hiring manager engagement and accountability. Processes have been established and there will be continuous improvements to the entire hiring process, including workforce planning, job analysis, and the interview process, to ensure there is consistency and standardization across the board. This will streamline and make hiring faster, and will also ensure that all parties are held accountable for the quality of the Peace Corps' hires.

**Goal Lead:** Chief Human Capital Officer

**Data Source:** Human Resources records

**Calculations:** **Indicator 1:** Completion of the milestones listed above. **Indicator 2:** Total number of days that domestic positions filled within the reporting period were vacant in Career Connector divided by the number of domestic positions filled within the reporting period.



**Performance Goal 5.4: Modernize Agency Information and Communications Capabilities**

*Increase the percentage of agency investment on new information and communications capabilities to 40 percent of all IT spending by the end of FY 2022.*

	FY 2015-FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Baseline data collection	Baseline data collection
Results <sup>30</sup>	NA	Baseline data collected	Baseline data collected

In the FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, under Strategic Objective 10, the Peace Corps set a performance goal to track the retirement of legacy applications. The agency then turned its attention to developing a flexible and secure network of strategically important IT systems using modern, cloud-based architecture and integration of systems for improved customer service to staff, Volunteers, and other stakeholders.

As technology changes over time, the cost of maintaining older systems increases. Newer technologies and delivery methods that focus on rapid, agile development, cloud-based storage, integrated architecture, and convergent platforms, are able to deliver a lower-cost solution to the agency while increasing both information availability and security.

In FY 2020, the agency shifted its modernization focus from merely counting the number of outdated systems to be retired to emphasizing strategic investments in net new information and communications capability. To this end, the agency is measuring the proportion of IT funds invested in modern, integrated information systems compared to spending to maintain outdated legacy systems. For this goal, which was added in the FY 2021 Annual Performance Plan as an update to the FY 2020 Annual Performance Plan, the agency will strive to meet, and eventually exceed, the average federal ratio of development, modernization, and enhancement (DME)<sup>31</sup> to operations and

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<sup>30</sup> In FY 2019, the agency collected preliminary baseline data on IT costs. During FY 2020, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer identified and analyzed all IT costs for the entire agency and categorized them using a methodology that was informed by Technology Business Management, or TBM—a value-management methodology to provide IT costs, consumption, and performance transparency.

<sup>31</sup> Costs for DME services are for projects and activities leading to new IT assets/systems and projects and activities that change or modify existing IT assets to substantively improve capability or performance, implement legislative or regulatory requirements, or meet an agency leadership request. For more information on these concepts, please refer to the website managed by OMB to government-wide IT spending: <https://itdashboard.gov>.

maintenance (O&M)<sup>32</sup> IT investment, currently measured at approximately 25 percent and 75 percent respectively across federal agencies. In preparation for launching this new goal, the agency worked to baseline its current DME:O&M ratio in FY 2020 and set targets for increasing the ratio.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The agency achieved its FY 2020 target for Performance Goal 5.4, successfully undergoing a comprehensive baseline review and analysis of IT spending. All IT spending was categorized into O&M and DME costs. The agency plans to continue refining this analysis of costs during the first quarter of FY 2021.

After identifying best practices for categorizing IT spending and reviewing past years' data, the analysis and categorization was focused on improving cost transparency, identifying the total cost of IT, and shaping demand for IT services. The Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer worked together to conduct the spending analysis and develop categories to track costs associated with program areas and the capabilities supported. Categorizing costs was the first step. One of the main immediate results was reshaping the IT governance process slightly—allowing for the agency Technical Advisory Board to have a complete picture of all agency IT costs and approve investments in IT capabilities rather than individual projects and/or procurements. The Technical Advisory Board will now have a more comprehensive and complete picture of Peace Corps IT spending, and will be poised to make more informed decisions and planning scenarios. The agency plans to continue this work in FY 2021 by further analyzing past spending and projecting future spending.

**Goal Lead:** Chief Information Officer

**Data Source:** Agency administrative records

**Calculations:** Percent of IT funds spent on DME / Percent of IT funds spent on O&M

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<sup>32</sup> Costs for O&M services are incurred in the phase of the development life cycle in which the asset is in operations and produces the same product or provides a repetitive service. This is also commonly referred to as "legacy" or "steady state."

## Management Objective 6: Organizational Risk Management

*Identify and proactively address risks and opportunities through systematic, evidence-based decision making.*

**Rationale:** This management objective focuses on advancing and sustaining the agency's mission and effectiveness through systematic decision making that proactively anticipates, identifies, and manages risks and finds opportunities to improve the efficient and effective use of Peace Corps resources at all levels of the organization. The scope of this objective includes the safety and security of staff, Volunteers, and facilities as well as the agency's credibility, emergency preparedness and response, risks to the IT infrastructure (cyber security), and financial risks. This objective is focused on creating a senior risk assessment team,<sup>33</sup> revising agency policy concerning risk management, training agency leadership on risk management, and incorporating risk management into agency wide assessments and planning.

### Strategies:

- Develop and implement an agency wide risk governance structure.
- Develop and implement an agency wide risk profile and office-level registers.

**Management Objective Leads:** Associate Director for Safety and Security; Director of Information Security, Policy, and Governance in the Office of the Chief Information Officer; Chief Compliance Officer

### FY 2020 Progress Update

Starting in early FY 2020, the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) secretariat developed a risk register development process. This process, an interview technique facilitating a collection of office-specific critical and mandatory functions along with associated risks, was initially used in developing the risk register for the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Also, during FY 2020, the process was used in developing risk registers for the Office of Safety and Security and the Office of Global Operations' Return to Service Working Group, which analyzes various factors in determining the order in which countries will resume Volunteer operations.

In addition to the risk register process, the secretariat developed an agency-wide risk framework across the eight aforementioned critical areas of agency operations listed in the rationale section. These categories are coupled with a risk consequence score of one to five, where one is insignificant and five means severe risk.

In February 2020, the agency convened its first ERMC meeting where the council members were briefed on their roles and responsibilities. In late May 2020, agency

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<sup>33</sup> The Senior Assessment Team was established by MS784 in 2007. This management objective will preserve that language for agency consistency.

senior leadership expanded the ERM secretariat from four to seven members to expedite the implementation of the agency-wide ERM solution and facilitate more timely achievement of ERM goals. A second ERMC meeting was held in August 2020 where the Council approved the risk register model as well as a template for an office-specific risk appetite statement, which describes the acceptable level of risk the agency is willing to accept for a given area of agency operations.

<b>Performance Goal 6.1: Establish an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Process</b>				
<i>Establish a repeatable process for ERM and incorporate the agency risk profile into decision making.</i>				
	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	Policy and procedures approved	Approval process for the new policy completed Agency risk profile produced	Agency risk profile produced
Results	NA	Policies and procedures drafted	ERMC Charter, By-Laws, and policy approved Agency risk profile in process	Risk profile partially completed

This goal seeks to facilitate risk management across the agency by developing a clear enterprise risk management (ERM) policy. This policy establishes a Risk Management Council (RMC) to facilitate implementation and ongoing oversight of the risk management program. The Council will develop an agency risk profile to capture operational risks and provide options for risk mitigation. This risk profile will provide a prioritized inventory of the most significant risks that have been identified in the office-level risk registers, informing forward-looking risk management strategies.

The agency expects to improve the effectiveness of risk management activities through staff training on risk management principles and the use and maintenance of risk registers. The milestone markers for this performance goal will allow the agency to track its progress toward creating a sustainable risk management environment.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

1. Obtain approval of agencywide Enterprise Risk Management policy.
2. Revise and approve related risk management policies.
3. Develop an agencywide enterprise risk profile.

## FY 2020 Progress Update

The Peace Corps was not able to meet the FY 2020 target for Performance Goal 6.1. While the agency made strong progress towards implementing an ERM solution, it was unable to produce the risk profile because an insufficient number of risk registers were completed. Turnover of key members of the ERM secretariat was the largest contributing factor to not meeting the target. However, the recent expansion of the secretariat from four to seven members will greatly increase the timeliness of hitting desired outcomes. Thus, the agency anticipates completing more office risk registers in the first quarter of FY 2021 to produce the risk profile later in the year.

**Goal Lead:** Chief Financial Officer

**Data Source:** Administrative records

**Calculation:** Completion of the milestones listed above

<b>Performance Goal 6.2: Strengthen Risk Registers</b>				
<i>All offices in the agency shall develop ERM assessments based on the agency risk profile by the end of FY 2020.</i>				
	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Targets	-	100% of office points of contact trained	100% of selected offices have developed active risk registers	Active risk registers developed for three additional offices
Results	NA	Training developed	Risk register is under development for the Office of the Chief Information Officer	Risk registers for two offices and one working group developed

Once agreement has been reached on the agency policy as described in Performance Goal 6.1 above, the focus of the agency's efforts will be to ensure that each office has a point of contact who has been trained on risk management and maintenance of office risk registers. The agency will then measure the percentage of offices that are using and maintaining their risk registers with up-to-date information and analysis. While the agency is committed to training staff from all offices in risk management principles, the FY 2019 target focuses on developing and supporting risk registers for selected offices with the greatest risks.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

1. Train staff on enterprise risk management.
2. Map business processes within each office.
3. Establish and communicate risk registers to the Risk Management Council.

## **FY 2020 Progress Update**

The ERM secretariat produced risk registers for two offices—the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of Safety and Security--and one working group—the Office of Global Operations' Return to Service Working Group. Turnover of key members of the ERM secretariat was the largest factor for not meeting the targeted goal. However, with the recent expansion of the secretariat from four members to seven, the agency anticipates making significant progress on risk register completion and ERM in general in FY 2021.

**Goal Lead:** *Chief Compliance Officer in the Office of the Director*

**Data Source:** *Administrative records*

## Appendix A

### Performance Management System

The goals, objectives, and strategies included in the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan guide the Peace Corps' efforts to advance its mission. The Peace Corps' performance management system is rooted in an inclusive and participatory culture where staff and Volunteers at all levels are invested in improving the agency.

The Peace Corps Director oversees the agency's performance management efforts. The Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning is responsible for strategic planning and reporting. The Office works closely with other offices across the agency to collect and analyze data to improve agency operations. The Office's director serves as the performance improvement officer for the agency. The agency actively participates in the federal government's Performance Improvement Council to contribute to and stay current with government-wide performance improvement guidelines and best practices.

Several processes occur throughout the year to ensure that activities align with the goals in the strategic plan. For example, evidence and data are available and used by agency leadership, managers, and staff to inform program, policy, and budget decisions. In addition, opportunities for performance improvement are identified, tracked, and executed.

- **Annual Strategic Review:** Each year, the Peace Corps Director leads forward-looking meetings in collaboration with senior leadership from across the agency. The purpose is to discuss the development of the next Annual Performance Plan. Prior to these meetings, lead offices identify challenges, opportunities, and possible realignments in order to advance strategic objectives. Revisions to strategies and performance goals are incorporated into the following year's Annual Performance Plan. These annual meetings are a key opportunity for senior leadership to collaborate and determine long-term courses of action that will maximize organizational effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Country Portfolio Review:** The Country Portfolio Review is a comprehensive review of active and potential Peace Corps posts that is conducted by the agency using external and internal data. The review focuses on the safety, security, and medical care of Volunteers; host country engagement with the Peace Corps; host country needs; programming and training; post management and costs; and congruence with U.S. government development priorities. The review includes data from a variety of external sources, including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the U.S. Department of State, the World Health Organization, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the World Economic Forum, and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Internal data sources include administrative and financial data, post and headquarters' staff survey results, and results from the Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) and the Host



Country Staff Survey. Beginning in FY 2018, this data was also prepared as a Field Research Dataset for use by posts and headquarters offices to support operational planning and management.

- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Performance Reviews:** The Peace Corps utilizes quarterly reviews, which are chaired by the Peace Corps Director, as the primary mechanism for monitoring and assessing performance throughout the year. In preparation for each review, goal leads determine the status of each performance goal in the strategic plan based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. They provide a brief written summary of the progress-to-date, challenges, additional support that may be needed, and next steps to share with other senior agency staff. Then, during the quarterly reviews, key officials from across the agency discuss progress from the prior quarter and develop strategies to meet performance targets by the end of the fiscal year. This quarterly progress assessment allows the agency to focus efforts on performance goals facing the greatest need for collaboration and opportunity for improvement.

## Appendix B

### Evaluation and Research

The Peace Corps remains committed to performance improvement through the use of high-quality data and evidence. Using rigorous evidence-based methodologies, the agency conducts studies to assess the impact of program practices and identify opportunities to strengthen programs or improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. These efforts allow the agency to draw conclusions from existing evidence and to develop new sources of data to better understand performance challenges and improve operations. Evaluations, surveys, and other reporting can be found at: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/>. The Peace Corps Office of Inspector General also conducts a variety of audits and evaluations, which can be found at: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspector-general/reports>.

The Peace Corps continues to expand its evaluation and research capabilities to satisfy a growing demand, both internally and externally, for evidence to support critical decisions, demonstrate impact, and maximize operational efficiency. Strategic Objective 11 (Measurement for Results) in the FY 2014–2018 Strategic Plan strengthened the agency’s focus on evidence-based decision making, monitoring, and evaluation practices. Efforts to enhance the use of existing data and to build the Peace Corps’ evidence base are supported by the continued improvements in core agency resources that are outlined in Appendix C.

## Appendix C

### Verification and Validation of Performance Data

Detailed operational definitions, data sources, and a comprehensive methodology for measuring each performance goal support our data collection and reporting consistency. The agency ensures that data are clean, complete, and accurate. The Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning oversees and reviews all performance goals, focusing its efforts on continually improving data quality. The major data sources available to agency staff for assessing performance goals are detailed below.

#### Peace Corps Administrative Records and Databases

For some performance goals, the Peace Corps collects annual data on topics such as language proficiency interview (LPI) scores, project framework reviews, vacancy gaps, and risk registers from records maintained in headquarters offices and overseas posts. For others, the agency relies on centralized database systems to collect information on Volunteers, programs, health services, finances, and human resources. In order to maintain data integrity and ensure the appropriate data entry methodology is followed, only properly trained and authorized staff can access key systems. Routine reconciliation processes among agency units and internal, automated system checks enable users to verify performance data, isolate potential data entry errors, and correct discrepancies. To meet the required level of accuracy and provide current and historical information, the agency uses database rules and business processes on existing systems and incorporates ongoing modernization efforts led by the Office of the Chief Information Officer. Where data limitations do exist, they will be noted in the appropriate section.

#### Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT)

Since FY 2008, Volunteers have been reporting on their work and progress toward project outcomes through the VRT. Volunteer reports are submitted to overseas post staff through the VRT on a quarterly or semiannual basis. Staff review all reports and work with Volunteers to verify data and to correct anomalies prior to analyzing the results. VRT data are then used to report on Volunteers' contributions to agency strategic partners, such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Feed the Future.

Since the development of the first version of the VRT, the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support has led the agency's efforts to enhance the user experience, reduce data entry errors, and improve reporting. The agency provides in-depth VRT training and support to Volunteers and staff to ensure that data are collected, analyzed, and reported properly. The agency has also developed data collection tools to standardize the methods that Volunteers use to collect data.

The primary data quality challenges that remain are ensuring that posts have adequate time for data cleaning and that they set realistic yet ambitious targets. The agency is addressing these challenges by working with overseas posts to train Volunteers in monitoring and evaluation and to encourage Volunteers' reporting. It is also documenting and considering reporting rates when conducting analyses. The agency is also working to design the next generation of the VRT based on newer technology that will be easier to maintain, allow more mobile reporting by Volunteers, and provide more support for robust data analysis.

### **Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS)**

In accordance with the Kate Puzey Act mandate, as extended by the Sam Farr and Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act, the Peace Corps conducts the AVS, which is a confidential, voluntary online survey of all currently serving, two-year Volunteers. This comprehensive survey provides Volunteers' assessments of the effectiveness of Peace Corps training, in-country staff support, their personal health and safety, and their overall service experience.

While the AVS is typically completed each year by nine out of every ten Volunteers who have been in service for at least one month, it was not conducted in FY 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting global evacuation and close of service (COS) of all Volunteers. As a result, in FY 2020, the Peace Corps was unable to fulfill the Kate Puzey Act mandate to survey currently serving Volunteers. However, in June to July 2020, the agency conducted a special survey of the evacuated returned Volunteers that enabled them to provide feedback on agency operations.

The AVS is not administered to a random sample of Volunteers. Instead, it is sent to all Volunteers serving for at least 30 days at their sites (in FY 2020, a survey was sent to all Volunteers and Trainees who were evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Because of this, the results are subject to potential bias if the Volunteers who choose to respond have different viewpoints from those who choose not to respond. However, the high response rate and data verification and validation measures minimize total survey error at the global level.

AVS respondents reflect the Peace Corps' overall composition by gender, age, geographic location, and length of service. Volunteers directly provide responses to all AVS questions in an external survey database. To ensure data quality, rigorous data cleaning procedures are applied to the dataset prior to analysis. The results are then used to inform agency leadership about the Volunteers' perspectives on key issues.

The AVS reflects the experiences and opinions of Volunteers at a fixed point in time and can be influenced by various factors, such as major external events or the ability to recall information. The agency takes into consideration both statistical and practical significance to account for variation in AVS results from year to year. The agency also reviews long-term trends to account for response variations.

## **Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey**

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is administered to all U.S. direct hire staff annually. The survey measures the perceptions of employees and how effectively the agency manages its workforce. The agency uses the survey results to compare working conditions at the Peace Corps with other federal government agencies and identifies opportunities to improve workforce management.

The demographic profile of survey respondents is consistently representative of the U.S. direct hire staff. The survey is administered electronically, and most questions are identical to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey fielded each year across the federal government by the Office of Personnel Management.

The survey is not administered to a random sample of Peace Corps employees; as a result, the survey is subject to nonresponse bias. Additionally, the survey represents the views of employees at a fixed point in time and can be influenced by external factors. The agency accounts for these data limitations by drawing conclusions from multi-year trends and by comparing the results with those of other federal agencies.

## **Host Country Staff Survey**

This survey has been fielded every year since FY 2014 to systematically gather perspectives from host country staff. It is a short, confidential, voluntary survey designed to learn more about the agency's impact in the posts where it operates by gathering input from host country staff and assessing the rate of achievement of reaching Peace Corps Goals One and Two. The survey includes questions covering staff training, diversity and inclusion, contributions to the Peace Corps' goals, development impact, and job satisfaction. For the FY 2020 survey, a section was added to obtain feedback on the global evacuation.

The primary data quality challenge with this survey is the development of the sampling frame. Identifying and contacting all host country staff is difficult due to the fact that some staff members in administrative or support positions (e.g., drivers, janitors, and short-term staff) do not have official email addresses. Due to this challenge, the sampling frame consists of the host country staff who can be reached via email. Additionally, while the Host Country Staff Survey is offered in English, French, Spanish, and Russian, limited literacy in those languages, as well as other factors such as lack of computer access or familiarity with online survey tools for some staff, may contribute to nonresponse bias.

## Appendix D

### Stakeholder Engagement

#### Staff engagement in the development of agency goals

The Peace Corps developed or used a broad array of evidence to inform the process of developing the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan. This included activities with agency leadership and working groups.

- **Agency leadership:** The Peace Corps convened two meetings of senior leaders in FY 2017 to draft the initial elements of the strategic plan. These leaders reviewed the results from the FY 2016 Annual Strategic Review, input from posts, and other materials to develop the six strategic and management objectives in this plan. Once these initial topics were drafted, all Peace Corps staff in headquarters and the field were given an opportunity to provide input. That input showed broad agreement with the six strategic and management objectives.
- **Agency working groups:** The Peace Corps convened six working groups comprised of nearly 60 senior managers, technical specialists, and analysts from headquarters offices and overseas posts. These staff members applied their unique technical skills and personal experiences with the Peace Corps to analyze performance challenges, identify and prioritize potential goals and objectives, and detail the strategies and activities needed to address agency challenges and reach agency objectives.

#### External engagement

The Peace Corps provided the draft framework for this strategic plan to Congressional stakeholders concurrent with the September 11, 2017 submission of the draft plan to OMB. In addition, the draft FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan and FY 2020 Annual Performance Plan was posted on the agency’s open government website for one month from December 2017 to January 2018 to collect feedback from external stakeholders and the American people.

## Appendix E

### Global Evacuation and Volunteer Return to Service

On March 15, 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic quickly spread across the globe, the Peace Corps faced a challenge never before seen in the agency's history and made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend Volunteer operations at all Peace Corps posts. Nearly 6,900 Volunteers and Trainees were brought safely back to the United States from 62 countries<sup>34</sup> worldwide, and their service closed as a result of the evacuation. For the first time since 1961, no Peace Corps Volunteers were serving in the field. In the days following the evacuation, the agency quickly shifted gears into devoting an enormous amount of time and resources to supporting the recently evacuated Volunteers and Trainees and laying out a process to position the agency to resume Volunteer operations as soon as it is safe to do so.

To meet this challenge, the Peace Corps Director outlined a plan and vision for resuming Volunteer operations. The plan identified five goals that need to be reached in order to reestablish global presence. Those goals include:

1. Resuming overseas operations as soon as it is safe to do so
2. Recruiting and preparing applicants for service
3. Communicating effectively across internal and external audiences
4. Supporting and expanding Third-Goal opportunities for returned Volunteers
5. Maintaining strong continuity of operations as the agency works within current global limitations posed by the pandemic

In order to reach these goals, the Director created a COVID-19 Task Force that consisted of five theme-based working groups, each oriented to address one of the goals listed above. The working groups drew upon broad expertise and experience from across the agency. More than 140 staff members provided input, and these staff represented 18 offices from both headquarters and the field.

During the first few months after the global evacuation of Volunteers and Trainees, the Task Force focused exclusively on developing the tools, procedures, and guidance needed to resume operations abroad. As it completed these tasks, the Task Force gradually shifted its focus to more in-depth monitoring and evaluation of both domestic and global conditions related to the pandemic. In the remainder of FY 2020 and into FY 2021, the Task Force worked, and anticipates continuing to work, with internal and external stakeholders to collect and synthesize information helpful to determining when conditions will be conducive to resuming Volunteer service. The agency is working diligently and assessing opportunities to get Volunteers back to service and gradually

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<sup>34</sup> This number includes China and Mongolia, which started evacuating Volunteers prior to March 15, 2020.



expand to full Volunteer operations as soon as conditions permit. As always, the safety, security, and health of Volunteers will be the paramount consideration.

Looking beyond the Task Force, there are numerous lessons learned that will serve the agency long after the Task Force completes its work. Through this crisis and the agency's work, the Peace Corps has learned that the systems, procedures, and foundational elements of its operations have proven to be strong, resilient, and relevant in these incredibly challenging times. The agency was built on a strong foundation 60 years ago and that foundation continues to serve it well. Nevertheless, as the global COVID-19 pandemic has tested these systems in an unprecedented manner, the Peace Corps has learned valuable lessons it will use to strengthen operations and staff resiliency moving forward.



*Returned Volunteers are shown evacuating from Maseru Airport, Lesotho as part of the global evacuation in March 2020.*

## **Appendix F**

### **Acronyms**

AMCS – Administrative Management Control Survey  
AVS – Annual Volunteer Survey  
COS – Close of Service  
DME – Development, Modernization, and Enhancement  
DOS – Description of Service  
ERM – Enterprise Risk Management  
ERMC – Enterprise Risk Management Council  
FY – Fiscal Year  
GPRA – Government Performance and Results Act  
ICD&I – Intercultural Competence, Diversity, and Inclusion  
LPF – Logical Project Framework  
LPI – Language Proficiency Interview  
O&M – Operations and Maintenance  
OMB – Office of Management and Budget  
OPM – Office of Personnel Management  
PCMO – Peace Corps Medical Officer  
PCPP – Peace Corps Partnership Program  
PT&E – Programming, Training, and Evaluation  
RPCV – Returned Peace Corps Volunteer  
VIDA – Volunteer Information Database Application  
VRT – Volunteer Reporting Tool  
VT – Volunteer/Trainee  
WWS – World Wise Schools

*For comments and inquiries regarding this plan, please contact [OSIRP@peacecorps.gov](mailto:OSIRP@peacecorps.gov).*

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