



**FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN  
AND FY 2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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# FY 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN AND FY 2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

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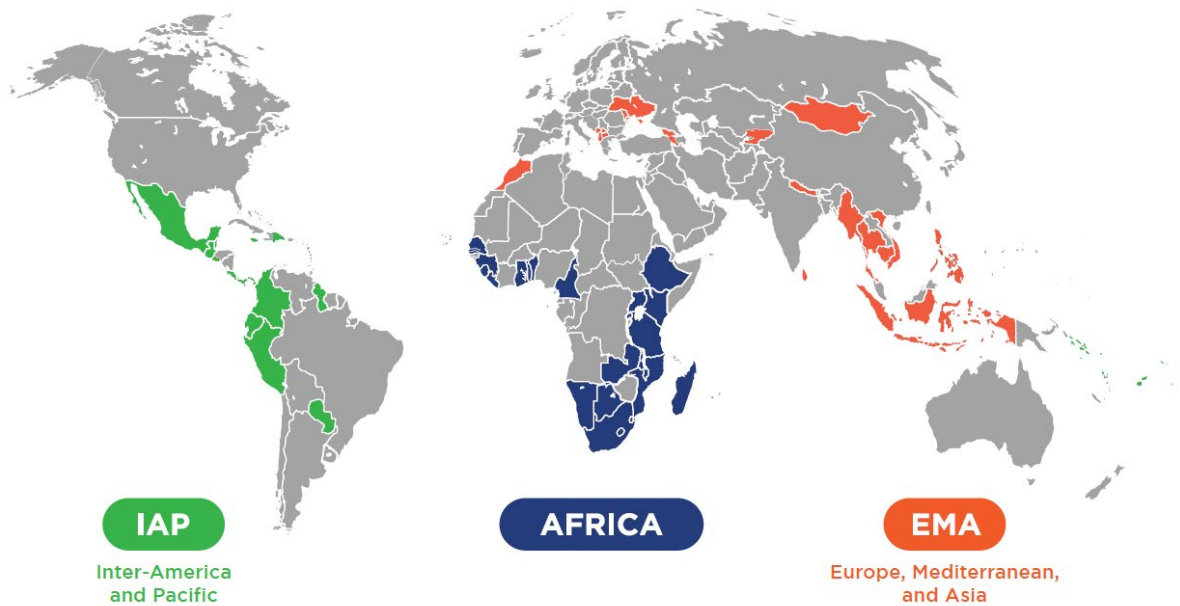
Promoting World Peace and Friendship Since 1961

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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.



## PEACE CORPS COUNTRIES



### 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\*  
 El Salvador  
 Guatemala\*  
 Guyana\*  
 Mexico\*  
 Panama  
 Paraguay\*  
 Peru\*

### Africa

Benin  
 Botswana\*  
 Cameroon\*  
 Comoros  
 Eswatini\*  
 Ethiopia\*  
 Ghana  
 Guinea\*  
 Kenya\*  
 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  
 Indonesia  
 Mongolia  
 Myanmar  
 Nepal\*  
 Philippines\*  
 Sri Lanka\*  
 Thailand  
 Timor-Leste  
 Viet Nam

### Pacific Islands

Fiji  
 Samoa  
 Solomon Islands  
 Tonga  
 Vanuatu

\* Indicates a Peace Corps post that has participated in the Virtual Service Pilot.

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Peace Corps temporarily suspended operations at all Peace Corps posts in March 2020 and all Volunteers were evacuated and returned to the United States. During FY2023, Volunteers will serve, or depart for service, in many of the countries in which Volunteers served previously. Please note that at the time of the global evacuation in March 2020, El Salvador, Kenya, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam did not have Volunteers.*

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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 its mission to promote 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. The Peace Corps continues to build strong relationships between our people and the people of our partner nations while contributing to positive change in overseas communities and back home in the United States. More than 241,000<sup>1</sup> Volunteers have served in 143 countries since 1961.

The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of its Volunteers. Rather than providing foreign aid or other economic assistance, the agency sends Volunteers to share their skills and experiences 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.

Peace Corps Volunteers are the face of our nation in communities around the globe. They build positive perceptions of the United States by working directly with members of 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. They maintain relationships with colleagues and friends from the countries where they served and continue their commitment to volunteerism and public service in the United States.

## Vision

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

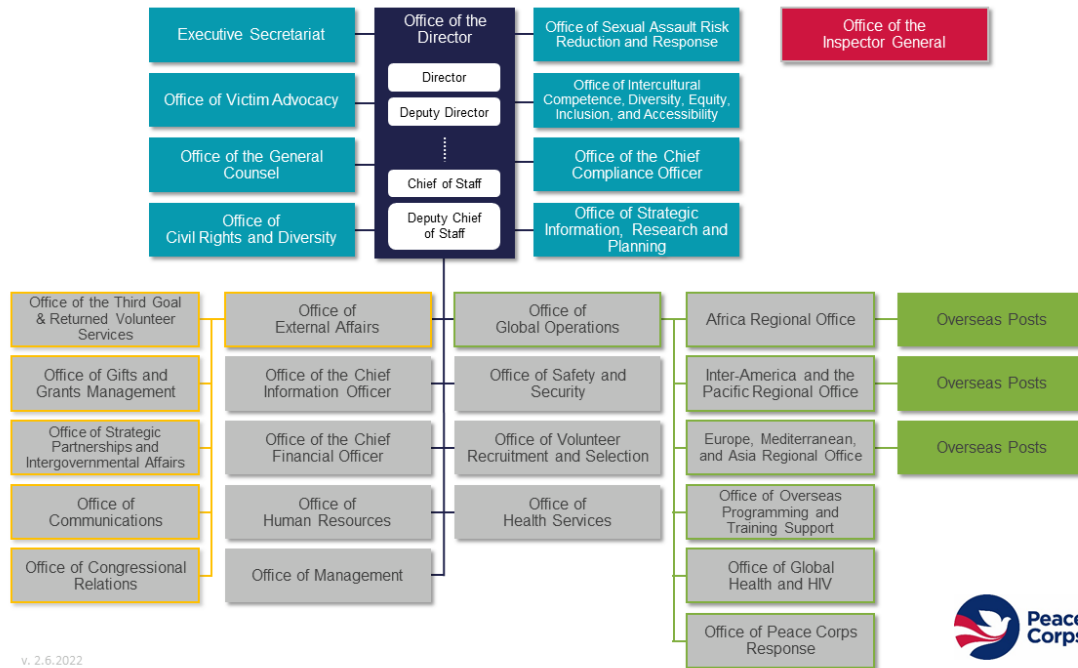
*"The Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in the world."*

*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. Volunteers' safety, security, and physical and emotional health 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 in the field and at headquarters, and promote institutional learning.

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

## Plan Overview

The FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan sets long-term goals and objectives to advance the Peace Corps’ mission. The annual performance plan identifies strategies to accomplish these goals and objectives and outlines targeted results.

The combined FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan and FY 2021 Annual Performance Report includes the following components:

- **Strategic goals** are broad, long-term outcomes the agency works toward to achieve its mission.
- **Strategic objectives** identify 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 opportunities or issues to be addressed and the contribution of each objective to strategic goals.
- **Strategies** identify specific actions and articulate the broad course of action or unifying approach that indicates how actions lead to outcomes.
- **Performance goals** set “targets” to be accomplished within a specific time frame. Annual targets (either a milestone or a numeric target to be achieved) are set through FY 2022. When available, actual results for prior years are provided. The agency uses performance goals to assess progress on strategic goals and objectives and drive performance improvement. Performance goals will be updated each year and included in the annual performance plan in conjunction with the budget formulation process.
- **A lead** is identified for each objective and performance goal. The title and office of the lead individual are noted. More than one office or overseas post may be responsible for the individual strategies that advance progress on objectives and performance goals. However, leads are given the convening authority to coordinate agency-wide efforts to develop, implement, and report on plans.

Additional details on the development of the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan and FY 2021 Annual Performance Report are included in the appendices. A summary of the Peace Corps’ performance management framework is found in Appendix A. Appendix B includes a description of how evaluation and research informed the plan’s development. Data verification and validation standards for the performance goal indicators are in Appendix C. Appendix D includes a summary of the stakeholder outreach conducted. A description of the agency’s innovations in returning Peace Corps Volunteers to service following the global Volunteer evacuation was added as a new Appendix E since the



Strategic Plan was published. Appendix F includes a list of acronyms used throughout this document.

### **GPRA Modernization Act of 2010**

The President's Budget identifies activities, where applicable, as required under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) 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 GPRA 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](#) of 1961 articulates three core goals that contribute to the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace and friendship:

1. "To help the peoples of [interested] countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower"
2. "To help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served"
3. "[To help promote] a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people"

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 partner with host country individuals, groups, and communities to advance development. Volunteers engage in project work and facilitate participatory development with local partners in areas such as agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth in development. This focus on developing transferrable skills helps ensure that the Volunteers' work is sustained long after their service is complete.

**Public Benefit:** Through Volunteers' participatory development work, local communities and individuals develop transferrable skills to address specific challenges and opportunities. 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—sharing facts about and experiences of Americans and developing deep relationships with community members. Through this approach, Volunteers also learn more about

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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.

local challenges, opportunities, resources, and conditions in their host countries. Over time, they develop trusting partnerships 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 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. 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

This plan's four strategic objectives and two management objectives 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 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 agency processes and associated impediments to success in a common format to allow for prioritization of agency efforts toward achieving its 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.*

**Rationale:** The Peace Corps' strength lies in promoting 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 developing transferrable skills locally 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 catalysts for increasing engagement and interaction with individuals and organizations with common objectives. In the long run, successful engagement leverages resources and knowledge and 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<sup>3</sup> 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 outlined in logical project frameworks (LPFs) and designed to facilitate sustainable change in local organizations and communities.<sup>4</sup>
- Identify priority programmatic and operational themes to explore the Peace Corps' impact and effectiveness.

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

### FY 2021 Progress Update

All three strategies above remained relevant in supporting the overall goal of Strategic Objective 1: Sustainable 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, in the aftermath of the global evacuation of Volunteers and in preparation for returning

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<sup>3</sup> "Posts" are the principal offices responsible for managing day-to-day operations within host countries. In some cases, multiple countries may be administered from a single post to economize on overhead costs.

<sup>4</sup> LPFs are a systematic foundation for evidence-based program design, implementation, and evaluation.



Volunteers to service,<sup>5</sup> 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 to service. Using data to think creatively about alternative forms of engagement, such as the Virtual Service Pilot,<sup>6</sup> helps the agency leverage technology to allow continued connectivity during the global pandemic and beyond. Host country partners are also arranging to receive Volunteers again safely and effectively. This evidence-based planning and data-driven decision-making will help ensure that when Volunteers return to service abroad, they have the greatest potential for successfully fulfilling sustainable change objectives.

The global evacuation of Volunteers in FY 2020 directly impacted the agency's ability to contribute to sustainable change at the individual, organization, and community levels in FY 2021. The target for advancing community-based results was set in FY 2020 and assumes a full year of reporting from Volunteers in service; however, there were no Volunteers serving at posts during the entirety of FY 2021. Throughout the year, Virtual Service Pilot Participants who donated their time and staff at posts worked with counterparts, communities, and partner agencies to contribute to project goals and COVID-19 relief and recovery. Community-based development impact is central to the Peace Corps' mission, and the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan will continue to track results in this area under the new Strategic Objective 3: Deliver Quality.

Due to the absence of Volunteers in the field, no LPFs were used to collect data on sustainable change in FY 2021. However, the agency made great advancements in its data reporting and monitoring system by completing Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG). The VRG is an online product that Volunteers and staff will use to seamlessly plan, manage, and share information about programmatic activities and their results—including activities funded by small grants.

During FY 2021, the agency also developed a multi-year evaluation agenda to be carried out in conjunction with the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. In addition, the agency conducted three studies this year that assess the Peace Corps' impact on sustainable change. Combined, these activities strengthen the agency's ability to further data-informed decision making to achieve sustainable change as Volunteers return to service.

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<sup>5</sup> In March 2020, the Peace Corps evacuated all Volunteers worldwide due to the global COVID-19 pandemic (see Appendix E).

<sup>6</sup> The Peace Corps launched a Virtual Service Pilot (VSP) program in FY 2021 during the global COVID-19 pandemic. As private citizens, VSP participants can donate voluntary services to the agency and engage virtually to support requests from interested host country partners.

<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>7</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	FY 2021
Targets					Baseline data collection	Baseline data collection	Baseline data collection
Results <sup>8</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA	Baseline data collected: 71%	Baseline data collected: 28%	No additional baseline data collected

In FY 2014, the Peace Corps developed this performance goal to systematically measure the agency's global development impact using Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) data 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 in Indicator 1 by 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 in Development. This metric was used in the Strategic Plan for FY 2014–2018 and in the FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan.

The Peace Corps' 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. This initiative, when fully implemented, will ensure that the Peace Corps has integrated PT&E systems that maximize Volunteer impact. 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>7</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>8</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 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 reflect both the Peace Corps' niche and evidence-based practices. The second template is a plan for monitoring, reporting, and assessing project progress that defines evidence-based indicators, data collection tools, and standardized measurement strategies. Each sector's LPF and supporting materials reflect what Volunteers do to effect change.

Posts adapt these reference materials to design project frameworks that are tailored to their local context. 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. These frameworks also define annual targets that each post will review and refine as they gain experience implementing the projects.

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 is being developed to transition agency reporting from 19 standard sector indicators (Indicator 1) to a holistic review of the full suite of indicators that posts have selected for use in their projects (Indicator 2). The criteria for including projects in Indicator 2 calculations will be that they have an endorsed LPF (as described in Performance Goal 2.5) and trained Volunteers who have had sufficient time in their communities by the end of the fiscal year to begin effecting change and reporting results.

The transition to Indicator 2 will enable the agency to evaluate project-level achievements more clearly across a range of Volunteer activities related to developing transferrable skills; improving knowledge, skills, and behaviors among project participants; and other priorities identified by posts. This transition will happen progressively beginning in FY 2019 with the posts implementing new PT&E frameworks reporting on their new indicators. Results for projects in posts still changing their frameworks will continue being analyzed using Indicator 1. By the end of FY 2021, most projects will have been developed using the new frameworks and Indicator 1 will be discontinued.

## **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency retired Performance Goal 1.1, Indicator 1 in FY 2020, transitioning agency reporting to LPFs outlined in Indicator 2. The agency was unable to meet the FY 2021 target for Indicator 2, however, because there were no Volunteers in countries of service in FY 2021. The evacuation and subsequent delays in the expected return timeline meant no Volunteer activities were reported against targets designed for the full fiscal year with the expectation that intakes would arrive throughout the year.

The success threshold for Indicator 2 relies on the accuracy of project-level indicator targets set by posts. Based on the accuracy of the baseline data collected in FY 2020,

ongoing training and support to post staff establishing these targets is necessary, especially in the shifting context of COVID-19. Preliminary results from the less than half year of implementation of LPFs in FY 2020 also suggested that noting the number of Volunteers reporting is important in representing achievements but should not be included in the calculation of the indicator. This is to account for contextual differences in activity implementation due to Volunteer site placements and locally-defined priorities.

After the finalization and endorsement of most Peace Corps projects, the first years of implementation prompt some slight updates to the project structure and emerging partnerships require shifts in the monitoring and evaluation plan. A flexible approach to add or modify indicators and targets as part of the normal project monitoring process allows for calculating the performance indicator as written and responding to local needs for relevant data. Additional baseline years will be needed to determine a reasonable achievement rate moving forward.



*Left: Returned Volunteer Liliana Cruz worked closely with three extension agents from the local Ministry of Agriculture in Guatemala, promoting adult learning strategies to support connecting extension agents' technical expertise with the communities where they work. Right: A returned Volunteer co-facilitated a math class in English with a primary school teacher in Rwanda.*

**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	FY 2021
Targets	-	List of proposed topics, tools, and approach developed	First study conducted  Second study planned	Two studies initiated	FY 2020 studies completed
Results	NA	List of proposed topics, tools, and approach developed	Two studies completed: Community Integration and Site Management <sup>9</sup>	Language study completed; three studies initiated	Three studies and the agency's evaluation agenda completed

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 (OGO) and senior leadership in the agency. Topics for annual impact studies are developed in consultation with stakeholder offices and advisory groups so that 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 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, annual Volunteer surveys, interviews with staff in Peace Corps' posts, and other materials related to the study topic. Possible topics identified for this Strategic Plan 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 strategic 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 focuses on the use of technology in language learning was completed. A second FY 2020 study which focuses on understanding attrition between

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<sup>9</sup> The site management study also fulfills the FY 2019 target for Performance Goal 2.4: Implement an Improved Site Management System.



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.

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 will be completed in the first half of FY 2021.

## **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency not only met but surpassed the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. Three studies were completed, including an after-action review of the global evacuation, an analysis of the causes of Invitee attrition, and a study of the impact of mid-service testing on Volunteer language proficiency interview (LPI) scores. The agency also completed an overhaul of its method for developing an evaluation agenda.

After the global evacuation, the agency conducted an after-action review of the events to capture the lessons learned from this unprecedented experience. The report summarized results from staff interviews at headquarters as well as an analysis of the 2020 Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Survey, the 2020 Host Country Staff Survey, and the posts' after-action review of the global evacuation. The report also documented the series of agency events during the global evacuation, recorded the important lessons learned, and suggested recommendations for changes that may inform how the agency responds to future emergencies.

An Invitee attrition study was also completed in the third quarter of FY 2021 to help the agency better understand why Peace Corps Invitees would withdraw applications between accepting the invitation to serve and departing for service. Based on historical data, the study focused on qualitative characteristics and relevant experience that may affect Invitees' decisions to depart the U.S. to serve. The findings indicate that promoting a diversity of motivations for service and rethinking the role of language skills in assessing individual intercultural competence could improve strategies and practices in retaining Invitees prior to departure.

Through statistical analysis, the Peace Corps also found that additional language proficiency testing is correlated with improved learning outcomes while considering multiple external factors such as language difficulty, training hours, and type of work. The agency will integrate this finding into its language instruction approach when Volunteers return overseas.

In collaboration with the Office of Global Operations (OGO), the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) also sought input from all offices to

establish a multi-year evaluation agenda.<sup>10</sup> OSIRP and OGO facilitated an iterative, collaborative process to identify and set evaluation priorities. OSIRP and OGO reviewed the information collected from stakeholders and developed a list of questions that, when answered, generate the most relevant and inclusive insights into Peace Corps policies and practices. Having a multi-year evaluation agenda that was developed with wide stakeholder input will more effectively serve the agency's needs to use data to inform strategic decisions.



*Returned Peace Corps Response Volunteer Charles J. Reilly III conducted a GIS workshop on data collection and visualization of land use maps with faculty members at Cagayan State University- Lal-lo in the Philippines. As a result of this training, professors can incorporate learned skills into their own teaching and research practices for cacao production and disease control.*

**Goal Leads:** Associate Director for Global Operations and Director of OSIRP

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

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

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<sup>10</sup> More information on evaluation (learning) agendas can be found in [The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) ("Evidence Act"), signed into law on January 14, 2019, which emphasizes collaboration and coordination to advance data and evidence-building functions in the Federal Government, and [OMB's M-19-23](#) implementation guidance memorandum.

## 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)<sup>11</sup> 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, Trainee, Volunteer, and returned 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 develop simple site assessment tools that enable staff to more easily place Volunteers with communities and partners that have the greatest potential to achieve development outcomes.
- Operationalize PT&E 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 expected Volunteer contributions to local development goals.
- Develop and implement a project-level monitoring and evaluation 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

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<sup>11</sup> When this Strategic Plan was developed, “diversity and inclusion” (D&I) was widely accepted nomenclature used externally. The Peace Corps internally added “intercultural competence” (IC) due to its global operating environment (ICD&I). Since then, there have been significant advancements and changes in the discipline, both federally and across industries, to include “equity” (E) and “accessibility” (A). The Peace Corps now internally refers to the discipline as ICDEIA.

## **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The five strategies identified above were necessary for establishing an environment conducive to effective Volunteer service. Despite the pandemic's ongoing impact on global Volunteer operations, the agency made considerable progress implementing many of these strategies in FY 2021. The most significant achievement was the successful launch of the Volunteer Competency Model in March 2021. The Model codifies learning, performance, and assessment for Volunteers throughout their service. The agency's language specialists also supported posts to develop language learning programs that address the linguistic requirements of the technical and core competencies Volunteers need for successful service.

To further strengthen project management and planning, the agency endorsed 25 more projects in LPFs that address community-defined priorities through evidence-based activities. At the end of FY 2021, the agency completed the Volunteer mobile data reporting systems on schedule. Volunteers and staff will use Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG) to seamlessly plan, manage, and share information about programmatic activities and their results—including activities funded by small grants. Volunteers access VRG through a Volunteer portal that is available in real-time online through any modern browser. The agency will conduct training and support for posts to begin using the system throughout 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 2022.</i>					
	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY2020	FY 2021
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	Staff capacity in competencies built
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	Staff capacity in competencies built

This performance goal targets capacity building for overseas 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 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: Develop transferrable skills among 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 2021 Progress Update

The agency met the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. The agency conducted several staff development efforts in FY 2021 to strengthen PT&E staff capacity (phase 5) in the following competencies: ICD&I, language training, training design, project review and design, participatory analysis, and Volunteer support. In the absence of Volunteers serving in-country due to the global pandemic, the agency engaged hundreds of PT&E staff in virtual synchronous and asynchronous training and learning opportunities that directly support systems and processes that contribute to Volunteer effectiveness. To improve Volunteer training, staff developed skills to: design and administer e-learning courses for Volunteers in the agency learning management system; design a 27-month continuum of learning and assessment to develop the Volunteer competencies required for effective service; and certify as language testers to administer the language proficiency interview (LPI) to Volunteers, according to American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards. To improve Volunteer programming, staff strengthened the skills needed to collaborate with host country partners to develop projects that address host country development goals using standard processes, customizable resources, and integrated approaches and tools for participatory analysis of post PT&E practices.

The Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) intentionally delayed the integration of PT&E staff competencies and learning resources for two reasons: to shift resources to direct capacity development efforts of PT&E staff while there are no Volunteers in the field, and to complement the new agency onboarding program, which is scheduled to launch in the second quarter of FY 2022.

The commitment to developing transferrable skills among staff is continuous and ongoing. Headquarters and posts have made a significant effort to adapt training formats and modify content for virtual and blended learning to facilitate learning for staff working remotely because of the global pandemic. Investing in efforts to develop transferrable skills among PT&E staff during the period covered in this strategic plan will facilitate the agency's achievement of performance goals in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan related to expanding programming and training options and advancing community-based development outcomes.

**Goal Lead:** Director of OPATS

**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 2022.*

	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-	Competencies developed	Global core competencies developed Resource plan developed Sequencing and mapping completed	Resource plan completed Sequencing and mapping completed	Content on IT platform uploaded and organized Guidance and resources to support Volunteer capacity building developed
Results	NA	Technical competencies developed	Global core competencies developed	Resource plan, sequencing, and mapping completed Pre-departure environment standards and guidance established <sup>12</sup>	Content on IT platform uploaded and organized Guidance and resources to support Volunteer capacity building developed

This performance goal targets the development of transferrable skills at all phases of Volunteer service in core and technical competencies to ensure Volunteers' effectiveness and accountability. This performance goal will be achieved in a series of phases:

- Phase 1: Develop technical competencies and additional competencies in the "global core" (which includes competencies related to resilience and adjustment challenges).
- 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.

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<sup>12</sup> The agency completed this step in FY 2020, but it was not previously reported.

- Phase 4: Establish a standardized approach, guidance, and content for the pre-departure environment which allows for competencies to be introduced earlier in the Volunteer lifecycle.
- Phase 5: Roll-out Volunteer competencies and learning and development resources on an integrated and navigable IT platform that supports Volunteer learning.
- Phase 6: Develop Volunteers' transferrable skills 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 2021 Progress Update

The agency met the FY 2021 target for this performance goal by completing the two phases planned for the year – “content on IT platform uploaded and organized”, and “guidance and resources to support Volunteer capacity building developed”. OPATS introduced the Volunteer Competency Model, a competency-based learning strategy, through a series of global orientation sessions and recorded webinars. The office offered six region-specific multi-day workshops to prepare teams with staff at each post to facilitate the training design and assessment process to implement the competency-based learning strategy. Posts have begun the process and many posts plan to complete it prior to two-year Volunteers' return to service. All posts are expected to use the Volunteer Competency Model to train, assess, and manage Volunteer performance by no later than the second quarter of FY 2024. The agency also developed an indicator and set targets for post implementation of the Volunteer Competency Model in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.



*Left: A returned Volunteer facilitated an impromptu dance, an important cultural practice, as part of a support group and peer educator training for people living with HIV/AIDS in Ghana. Right: A returned Volunteer in the Youth in Development sector led an exercise class for girls in Armenia.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of OPATS

**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	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	84%	85%	85%	85%
Results <sup>13</sup>	81%	82%	82%	82%	86% <sup>14</sup>	86% <sup>15</sup>	N/A <sup>16</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	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	39%	40%	42%	42%
Results <sup>13</sup>	46%	38%	38%	38%	44% <sup>14</sup>	43% <sup>15</sup>	N/A <sup>16</sup>

Developing local language skills is critical to 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 Volunteer service.

Volunteer language ability is measured through an LPI which is administered by agency-certified language testers. The LPI includes four proficiency levels based on ACTFL guidelines: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. At the Advanced level, Volunteers should be able to perform 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 sites. Measuring language ability at mid-service and COS allows posts to assess the efficacy of their language-learning programs and determine the types of activities that Volunteers can

<sup>13</sup> Results prior to FY 2019 are not comparable to later years due to changes in measurement.

<sup>14</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>15</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.

<sup>16</sup> LPI testing was not conducted during FY 2021 because no Volunteers were serving abroad.

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 Volunteers tested in 2015 to 57 percent of those tested in 2018. Thus, this performance goal has been revised from the goal used in the FY 2014–2018 Strategic Plan to consider the larger numbers of Volunteers being tested in more languages where it is more difficult to achieve advanced proficiency. For this reason, the agency established two separate indicators for language skills for performance reporting in FY 2018 and beyond.

One additional contextual factor impacting this performance goal is the fact that some Volunteers may receive training in more than one language during their service. For example, some Volunteers may find they need to use one language while working on their primary assignment in their communities and another language while traveling to municipal hubs for grocery shopping or other personal matters. As a result, these Volunteers may experience more difficulty achieving advanced proficiency in each language. Considering this context, the Peace Corps is further refining language learning expectations and evaluations.

Furthermore, the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to the evacuation of Volunteers from all posts for the first time in the history of the Peace Corps. Plans began in the late spring of 2020 to determine how best to return Volunteers to service in FY 2021. The agency will begin returning Volunteers to Peace Corps service starting with a subset of posts as global conditions and operational needs allow. This will mean the variations in language difficulty by post will likely shift the LPI results, either toward or away from more difficult languages. The extent of this shift will be reported in FY 2021.

### **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency was unable to meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. Although expected, LPI testing was not conducted during FY 2021 because the Peace Corps had to delay the return of Volunteers to service abroad in light of the changing COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Therefore, there are no data this year for the performance goal.

However, the agency was able to make language learning improvements in other ways. In FY 2021, OPATS successfully piloted a virtual blended learning LPI tester certification course for post staff in Senegal, Belize, and Morocco. This innovation provides a valid and cost-effective virtual alternative to in-person LPI certification training for testers. It will also assist posts when they resume Volunteer language training and testing.



Given that LPI data primarily comes from two-year Volunteers who are closing their service, the agency will not likely have comparative LPI data before the second quarter of FY 2024. However, the agency was able to make significant improvements to data collection and integration in VIDA<sup>17</sup> in FY 2020 and FY 2021. These improvements will allow OPATS to proceed with monitoring the success of the Volunteer Competency Model's language component through a prescribed training design and assessment process that is being integrated into all posts' PT&E alignment in FY 2022-2024. Agency monitoring of training design and assessment will continue as part of Performance Goal 1.6 in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.



*Left: Returned Volunteer Matthew Jordan worked with a high school student on a national science fair project in Mozambique. Right: A returned Volunteer in Panama worked with community members on food production and harvesting.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of OPATS

**Data Source:** Peace Corps databases (VIDA 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.

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<sup>17</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 began using a data collection tool on SharePoint to report this data.

**Performance Goal 2.4: Implement an Improved Site Management System**

*Define, design, and implement a comprehensive site management system by the end of FY 2021.*

	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
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	Orient staff in all posts to the updated site management guidance
Results	NA	Scope of work and hypothesis defined	Research completed	Guidance enhanced	Post staff oriented to updated site management guidance

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 the posts with the most and least success using the parameters defined in Phase 1.
- Phase 4: Enhance existing site management guidance for each region based on findings from the operational research conducted in Phases 1-3.
- Phase 5: Develop an integrated and navigable technology platform (VIDA) to capture and manage critical site management data. Facilitate post staffs' use of this data to identify sites with shared programmatic goals and committed partners with whom Volunteers can work.
- Phase 6: Orient staff in all posts to revisions to their region's site management guidance at regional conferences and in regular communications.

**FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency met the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. Over the course of this strategic plan, the agency completed a large and comprehensive study of site management activities and developed a report that included several recommendations across the site identification and site management processes. All three regions, HQ, and post stakeholders then reviewed these recommendations and provided input. After the review, the agency rolled out improvements to the site management process by inserting them into site management guidance and orienting post staff to the changes.

The Peace Corps will continue to focus on and advance the agency's comprehensive site management process at posts and its supporting IT systems as part of the agency's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Specifically, site management is one of several business practices the agency seeks to standardize for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of post operations.

**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	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	35% of projects	68% of projects	84% of projects	100% of projects
Results <sup>18</sup>	NA	4% of projects	21% of projects	54% of projects	83% of projects	99% 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 "PT&E alignment" will ensure that Volunteers have meaningful work that contributes to development outcomes. PT&E alignment uses agency lessons learned 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 FY 2017, the agency field-tested the new approach and sector resource packages at 15 participating posts. The process of developing new project frameworks began in FY 2017. This process culminates when the regional offices complete their final review of post plans and endorse the project frameworks.

## FY 2021 Progress Update

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<sup>18</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 2021 result includes all projects that were active up until the global evacuation starting February 2020 for China and March 2020 for all other posts, as well as projects in Kenya and Sri Lanka, which were expected to re-open in FY 2021.

The agency was just short of meeting the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. The agency set annual targets for the number of post projects using 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 25 new projects were endorsed during this fiscal year, bringing the total number of projects to 138. At the end of FY 2021, 99 percent of the 139 active Peace Corps projects were using the new LPF, which is one percentage point from the FY 2021 target of 100 percent of projects endorsed. The remaining project was delayed due to setbacks at the post related to the global pandemic. The project is scheduled to be endorsed in FY 2022.



*Left: A returned Volunteer posed with his counterpart in front of a wood-fired fuel-efficient cookstove they built for a boarding school in the region to prevent deforestation in Uganda. Right: A returned Volunteer co-facilitated a workshop for basic level health care providers in Vanuatu.*

**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. FY 2020 results were based on 135 projects. The FY 2021 results include three endorsed projects in Kenya and one endorsed project in Sri Lanka, which were scheduled to re-open in FY 2021. Thus, results are based on a total of 139 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:** Since its inception in 1961, optimizing Volunteers' natural resilience has been part of the Peace Corps' approach to development. Recent developments in the field of resilience, stress management, and 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 Volunteers' ability 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 messages targeted 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, using simulation and experiential learning techniques where appropriate.<sup>19</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 post staff's ability 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.

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

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<sup>19</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.

## FY 2021 Progress Update

Volunteer resilience is closely aligned with clarity on service expectations. The agency looked at critical areas system-wide to identify and diminish any gaps between applicant and Invitee expectations and the realities of Volunteer service. ICD&I, for example, is an important factor to consider in relation to Volunteer resilience. Research shows that long-term immersion in unfamiliar environments can create stress because of the uncertainty presented by differing cultural norms and values. Understanding appropriate and effective behavior in a new context, as well as the values that inform those behaviors, can help mitigate stress and improve adjustment.

The development of digital content assisted in the adjustment of Invitee expectations. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Offices of Communications and Volunteer Recruitment and Selection partnered to strengthen engagement with campus communicators and carried out a campaign to promote awareness of the countries where Volunteers serve. As the pandemic unfolded, an increased emphasis was placed on communications to Generation Z<sup>20</sup> on the realities of service and resilience required for successful service and employing service stories that illustrated Volunteer resilience considering the pandemic, evacuations, and ongoing conversations about race and equality.

These efforts continued through FY 2021, when an interim “bridge” campaign was developed to continue to reach out to Generation Z, acknowledging the impact of the pandemic—“a year filled with the unexpected”—and that Volunteers would return to service in a changed world. Recruitment marketing proved challenging due to the impact of changing pandemic-related conditions on Peace Corps’ return to service timeline. Despite the uncertainty, the agency used this opportunity to test different campaign landing pages for the website and learn more about digital media channels and messaging to Generation Z. The Peace Corps will be able to use this information as a base for setting and communicating expectations for future Volunteer recruitment.

At the same time, an intense focus was placed on Volunteer well-being and broadened sources of support. The resilience pilot report was completed, and the results briefed to stakeholders and leadership. The four evidence-based resilience skills from the pilot were incorporated into the Volunteer global core competencies. Resilience training for returning Volunteers was also disseminated. Additional resources, such as Be Well, an online site with 24/7 accessible resources, were also developed to support Volunteer well-being. Agency-level initiatives are now incorporated into the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, including: a Well-Being Tele-Coaching program, a roll-out of online resilience training, and an initiative to strengthen systems of behavioral health communication, processes, and capacity for care transitions (e.g., sexual assault, medical evacuation, service entry/exit) throughout the Volunteer lifecycle.

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<sup>20</sup> This population includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012.



The agency has also been able to increase staff capacity and build systems related to ICD&I. Related guidance and considerations have been incorporated into country re-entry documents and administrative management control surveys. The agency is continuing to build on Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidance by providing benchmarks to uncover and remove ICD&I barriers within the Peace Corps workforce and Volunteer corps with a particular focus on Volunteers who have been historically underrepresented. These new benchmarks will enable the agency to measure adjustments across core business practices. This effort—coupled with the ICD&I vision and framework completed in FY 2018—will enable Volunteers, staff, and other stakeholders to name common dynamics that affect Volunteers' resilience and collaborate to find effective and appropriate ways to support them.

**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 2022.*

	FY 2015-FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
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	Reaching Generation “Z” and communicating new challenges of service
Results	NA	Headquarters analysis underway; post analysis to be conducted in FY 2019 <sup>21</sup>	Resiliency content and standards developed	New content approved and disseminated	Reaching Generation “Z” with an interim campaign produced during COVID-19

After revamping marketing and simplifying 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 15,000–20,000 applications in a typical year. Furthermore, prospective Volunteers are now moving from application to service in the shortest time in decades. They are exposed to more information about Peace Corps service than past generations of Volunteers through social media. 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: Conduct research on Volunteer readiness when entering service.

**FY 2021 Progress Update**

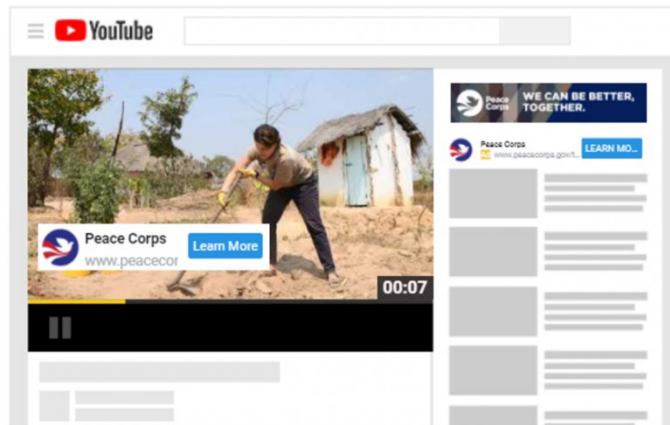
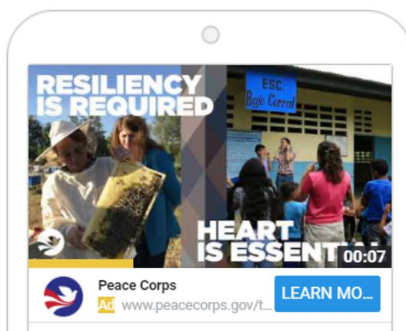

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<sup>21</sup> Post analysis was not conducted in FY 2019 due to shifting targets.

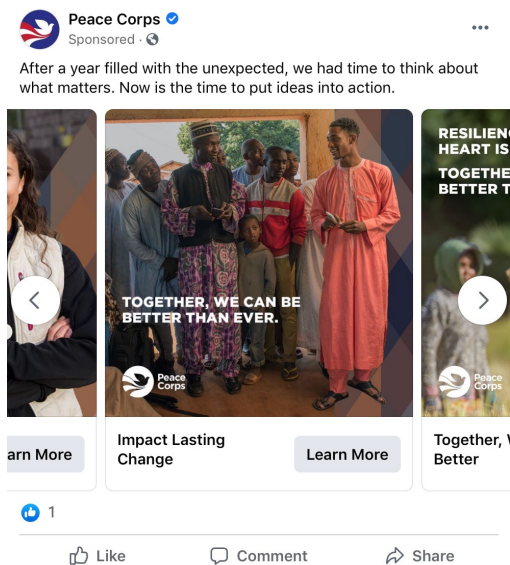
The agency met the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. Recruitment marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic proved challenging due to dynamic conditions around the world which impacted Peace Corps' return to service timeline. However, the Peace Corps developed an interim "bridge" campaign to continue reaching out to Generation Z. The agency acknowledged the impact of the pandemic as "[a year filled with the unexpected](#)" and noted that Volunteers will be returning to service in a changed world. This integrated campaign employed upper funnel awareness tactics (e.g., YouTube, Snapchat) to raise awareness about the Peace Corps and the resiliency required for service.

Additionally, the Peace Corps leveraged its website as a critical communication vehicle with a specifically dedicated campaign landing page, which tested different messaging. The agency also updated the companion webpage, [Peace Corps Service During COVID-19](#), to include detailed information about return processes, risks related to service, and frequently asked questions that agency subject matter experts answer on video. These experts provided direct, credible responses to set expectations using short videos, the preferred format for conveying information to younger audiences like Generation Z.

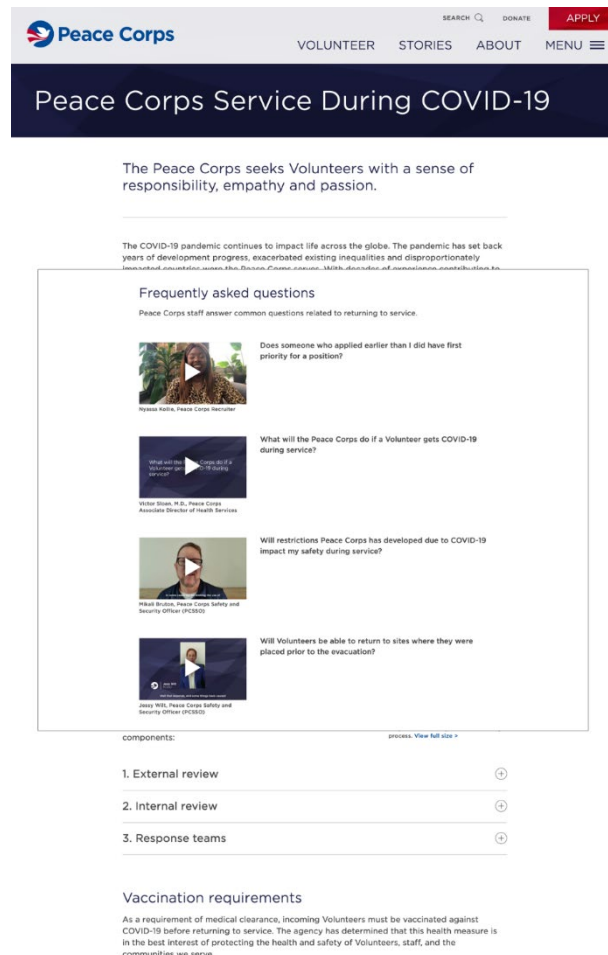
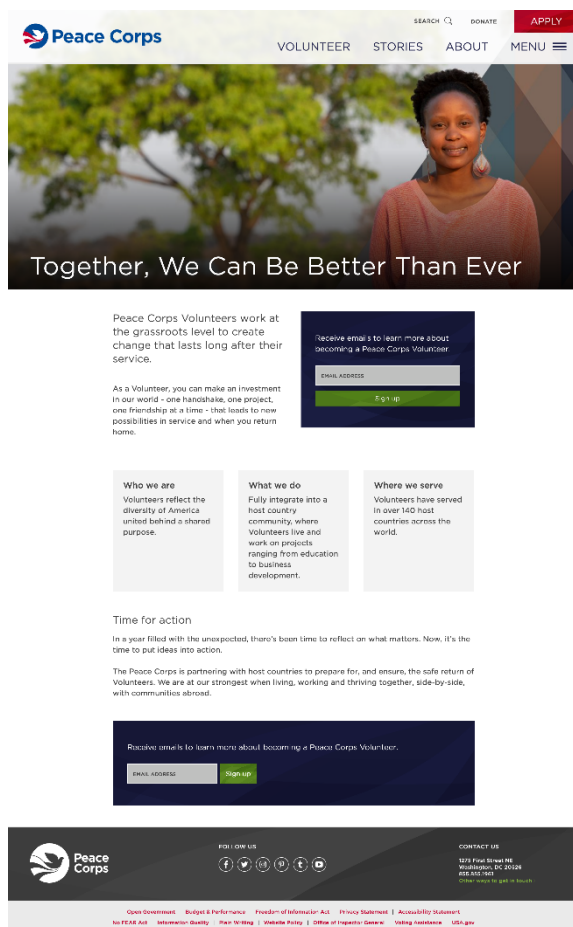
The Peace Corps took a monumental step toward improving its communications with the next generation of Volunteers by dedicating funds for a new multi-media campaign. The agency awarded a new blanket purchase agreement to secure an advertising agency for a five-year commitment. This new agency will be instrumental as the agency moves into a new phase of advertising research, creative development, and media exposure. This will be pivotal as the Peace Corps reimagines service to meet host country needs moving forward.



"Peace Corps Together" video on YouTube.



Digital Advertising Campaign



*Examples of a campaign landing page used for testing and the COVID-19 landing page on peacecorps.gov*

**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>22</sup>

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets				6.2 cases per 100 VT years	6.0 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>23</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>24</sup>	N/A <sup>25</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	FY 2021
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	Resource list of ICD&I best practices across core business functions developed and distributed to regions
Results	NA	Vision completed; benchmarks under development	Management Directive 715 (MD-715) completed	Reflection questions developed	Survey of current practices gathered

<sup>22</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, 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>23</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>24</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.

<sup>25</sup> There were no Volunteers in the field from which to gather data.



**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	FY 2021
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	Modules disseminated to posts
Results	NA	Modules completed	19% of posts completed review	20% of posts completed review	Modules disseminated to posts

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

While the Office of Health Services strives to maintain the rate of care-seeking at 6.0 cases per 100 VT years, supporting Volunteers and PCMOs better will require taking additional measures. These measures will include increasing the capacity of PCMOs to respond to Volunteer adjustment and pre-clinical concerns via the provision or development of a suite of evidence-based, online interventions that enable Volunteers to address any issues independently or with limited PCMO assistance. In addition, the Office of Health Services will assess countries in which Volunteers’ annual utilization of PCMOs for adjustment difficulties varies significantly from the norm. These posts will be compared with management and survey data assessing post resilience and diversity to identify and target regions and countries that need enhanced mechanisms for support.

The agency also recognizes that individual Volunteers may encounter unique stressors that further add to adjustment challenges. The same conditions in a host country may be experienced differently by individual Volunteers because of the interplay between their demographic characteristics, identity, education, prior life experiences, and the social and cultural complexities of development work at their sites. The agency has begun exploring ways to capture the extent to which Volunteers’ experiences differ by common demographic characteristics. Data collected from Volunteers will be used to determine whether adjustment challenges are experienced more acutely by specific demographic groups. If so, awareness can be raised about the unique challenges they face being accepted into their communities so a broader range of support is available.

The Peace Corps continues to develop training to enhance Volunteers’ innate resilience by building life skills that focus on effective problem solving, social connectedness and empathy, emotional balance and flexibility, and mental strength. 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 reconstructed, and promotes adaptation, adjustment, and acculturation.

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 ICD&I. Posts that have conducted ICD&I training report that it is an effective approach.

To further this work organizationally, senior staff in the agency collaborated to analyze its status against benchmarks recognized by external experts in the field of ICD&I. The agency seeks to make progress on two fronts using both existing tools like the MD-715, which measures equal employment opportunity compliance and by developing new, agency-specific ICD&I benchmarks and reflection questions within the AMCS, a tool that posts use for their annual integrated planning and budgeting efforts. In this way, the ICD&I actions are integrated into core agency business processes, maximizing their effectiveness and sustainability to ensure that all Volunteers are receiving equitable support and that staff feel prepared to handle these complexities.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

- Phase 1: Create guidance for skill-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 and Volunteers. 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 2021 Progress Update**

The agency did not meet the FY 2021 target for Indicator 1 of this performance goal. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are no real time data for FY 2021 on Volunteer care-seeking for pre-clinical adjustment problems from PCMOs. However, from FY 2018-2020, there was a significant increase in the number of cases of pre-clinical adjustment problems per 100 VT years. Further, Annual Volunteer Survey data revealed a trend towards decreased Volunteer satisfaction with the emotional support provided by post staff from FY 2016-2019. These data informed a major effort to develop early interventions for Volunteer well-being. The end goal was to strengthen Volunteers' ability to cope, and staff capacity to support them. Projects included the "Be Well" online support site, a recognition and support behavioral health section of the Volunteer Health Handbook, new country entry psychosocial policy and procedures, mitigation and readiness training for staff, re-entry training for Volunteers, and Peer Support Network restart guidance and training.

A Well-Being Tele-Coaching pilot for Volunteers who need assistance was also developed through a multi-office workgroup and approved by leadership. The pilot will be rolled out to every post as Volunteers return. The pilot will respond to the needs of the largest and youngest Volunteer cohort, with fast access, mobile contact, diverse coaches, and one-on-one delivery to address early and anticipated increased Volunteer concerns. This program is now a performance goal included in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

For Indicator 2, the agency did not meet the FY 2021 target. The agency partially completed the targeted steps by distributing a survey via the annual budgeting process to identify promising ICD&I adjustments related to core business practices. The purpose was to assess how posts have integrated ICD&I concepts into core business practices, to understand the extent to which this has occurred and where further support is needed, to compare against best practices and external research, as applicable, and to use the information to inform the agency on how to best scale efforts. The survey results highlighted the fact that practices varied widely by country context and level. Given the uneven findings, more time and attention are necessary to determine which practices to highlight. There is also a much longer change management process that will be needed to effectively incorporate these adjustments. As a result, elements of this effort will be carried forward into the next strategic plan.

The FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan will build on this performance goal's work by focusing on providing more time, research, and structure to outlining ICD&I best practices in the form of benchmarks, setting up structures to assist in embedding these practices, and creating an organizational culture that will ensure successful adoption of these practices. The resulting measures will contribute to Volunteer resilience and equitable practices for other stakeholders.

For Indicator 3 of this performance goal, the agency met the FY 2021 target. The agency completed a multi-year pilot with post staff at 20 percent of posts on Volunteer evidence-based resilience training for when they return to service. This pilot was a collaboration with 12 posts across all three regions and over 500 Volunteer participants. The in-person training was comprised of four 90-minute sessions: emotional agility, flexible thinking, effective problem-solving, and social connection and empathy. However, the pilot data collection phase was prematurely terminated due to the global evacuation. At the start of FY 2021, the resilience training material was incorporated into abbreviated modules for anticipated re-entry and then twice revised to meet the changing COVID-19 requirements. The pilot findings confirmed 1) the applicability of the resilience content to the Peace Corps environment, 2) Volunteer acceptance of the training, 3) Volunteer preference for delivery in the first half of service, and 4) Volunteer perception of increased resilience skills. The report findings were socialized with key stakeholders across the agency with a final briefing delivered on May 4 at the FY 2021 quarter two performance review meeting. The four resilience competencies are now part of "exemplify commitment to service and resilience" in the global core competencies for Volunteers.

The study results and feedback also informed the current training redesign into online micro-learning modules for remote Volunteer life skill learning to strengthen Volunteer resilience once they return to service. The development of these modules will involve internal and external stakeholder focus group engagement. This development will provide flexible delivery options – online, in-person, blended – to posts and address the emergent learning preferences of the largest and youngest Volunteer cohort moving forward.



*Left: Returned Volunteer Brianna Gibson walked with community members in Tanzania. Right: A returned Volunteer learned how to play the drums in the historical town of San Basilio de Palenque, Bolivar, Colombia. Volunteers spend their first few months of service learning about the culture of their host countries and communities.*

**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, the Volunteer Medical Record, 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 and effective returned Volunteer communication strategy, and gathering and strategically analyzing existing data on the Peace Corps’ 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 returned Volunteers to successfully translate those competencies into marketable skills after service.
- Monitor the distribution of employment opportunities for returned Volunteers across sectors (public and private) 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 deliver 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 manage returned Volunteer contact data efficiently.

**Strategic Objective Lead:** Director of the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services (3GL)

### FY 2021 Progress Update

Strategic Objective 4 was significantly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting absence of Volunteers in the field, and the associated disruptions to normal activities in the United States. As a result, only one performance goal successfully met its FY 2021 target.

However, despite the pandemic’s significant challenges, the agency took substantive steps toward building a stronger pipeline for continued Volunteer service. Returned

Volunteers consistently demonstrated a willingness to dedicate their time and effort to a range of service activities, including through new opportunities the Peace Corps provided, and the agency found new and impactful ways to highlight returned Volunteers' continued impact and leadership following service. Through honoring a diverse set of awardees for the [Franklin H. Williams Award](#) and the [Lillian Carter Award](#), and through events featuring returned Volunteers working in philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and intercultural competence, diversity, and inclusion (ICD&I) efforts, the agency demonstrated how continued service leads to both personal and professional success for returned Volunteers.

In the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, the Peace Corps intends to take several important steps to build upon the foundation established as part of this strategic objective. Additional work is planned to improve and further clarify the linkages between the new Volunteer competencies and the skills required by public and private sector employers. This work will not only help support returned Volunteers seeking employment, but it will also help returned Volunteers become confident leaders who embrace and put to full use the range of knowledge, skills, and global perspectives gained as a Volunteer.

During this period, 3GL tested and implemented new approaches to engaging returned Volunteers and worked to improve the underlying systems and processes for managing returned Volunteers' information. These efforts included developing new skills and capacity for executing virtual events; refinement of the strategy for returned Volunteer outreach and engagement; and improving efficiency through expanded use of the agency's Customer Relationship Management system. These efforts have improved the Peace Corps' capacity to engage returned Volunteers across a range of activities during the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.



**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 2022.*

	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
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)	Templates and related user guidance and training reviewed and approved
Results	NA	Competency structure completed	Methodology developed	Templates developed	Templates and related user guidance and training reviewed and approved

During Peace Corps service, powerful learning experiences provide practical opportunities to develop leadership skills and intercultural competencies. During service, the competencies gained 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 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 posts' project frameworks and reported in the Volunteer Reporting Tool (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 Volunteers have demonstrated leadership and intercultural competencies.

The Description of Service (DOS) is the agency record that documents Volunteer achievements during service. Peace Corps Manual Section (MS) 285 sets out the policy and procedures for documenting service and provides a sample DOS that posts can provide to Volunteers. This template—and other tools for documenting skills that Volunteers gained—will be updated and developed to align with the new logical project frameworks (LPFs) and competencies outlined in Strategic Objective 2. It will include information that summarizes the activities a Volunteer reported in the VRT. Developing these new tools requires collaboration with the Office of Global Operations (OGO), the Field Advisory Board, and the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). Any new Volunteer training relating to the DOS will be submitted to the Volunteer Learning Steering Committee (VLSC).<sup>26</sup> Once stakeholders approve the templates and related user guidance and training materials, they will be distributed to all posts. These revisions to the DOS will help highlight the skills Volunteers have gained through their service that employers seek.

## **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The Peace Corps fully met the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. The Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services (3GL) collaborated with OPATS on a series of events with post staff to review the proposed updates to the DOS document. These sessions were used to validate assumptions and ensure that the document met both agency requirements and returned Volunteer needs. The final DOS template and supporting collateral materials were presented to the VLSC and approved in September 2021.

In support of this performance goal, 3GL and OPATS created a new framework for planning, reporting, monitoring, and evaluating Goal 2 and 3 activities. This framework, and the associated training, will cultivate better Volunteer understanding of how the

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<sup>26</sup> This Committee ensures that the Peace Corps develops a balanced training plan that considers requirements for Invitees, Trainees, and Volunteers. The Committee may consider a range of options including revisions, replacements, combinations, and/or changes in training approaches before making recommendations to the Director for incorporation into agency policy. The Committee will also delineate clear guidelines for determining what is mandatory and what is optional within the Volunteer training portfolio.

Goal 2 and 3 activities they undertake during service are linked to the development of highly valued intercultural competency skills.

In the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, 3GL and OPATS intend to socialize the new Goal 2 and 3 frameworks further, develop additional supporting materials, and train the impacted Peace Corps staff. 3GL also plans to develop crosswalks between the newly established Volunteer competencies and the skills required for positions in public and private sector organizations.



*Left: A returned Volunteer in the Community Economic Development sector collaborated with a counterpart in the Dominican Republic. Right: A returned Volunteer in the Youth in Development sector led a yoga class for adolescent girls in Albania.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of 3GL

**Data Source:** Agency administrative records.

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

**Performance Goal 4.2: Continuation of Service**

*Increase the number of opportunities for returned Volunteers to engage in continued service to 3,000 by FY 2022.*

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	2,500	2,500	2,600	2,700
Results	2,250	2,300	2,230 <sup>27</sup>	2,153	2,742	2,046	1,277

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 and cross-cultural learning opportunities. The agency is committed to cultivating and expanding opportunities for returned Volunteers to reengage with the mission (e.g., Peace Corps Response,<sup>28</sup> the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program,<sup>29</sup> and the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools<sup>30</sup> [WWS]) and to share their experiences.

**FY 2021 Progress Update**

The Peace Corps did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. The FY 2021 results were less than half the year-end target, representing a total of 1,277 opportunities for returned Volunteers to engage in continued service. Of the 1,277 opportunities, 220 were from WWS, 980 were from Paul D. Coverdell Fellows, and 77 were opportunities posted by Peace Corps Response.

The global COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the number of service opportunities available for returned Volunteers as defined by this performance goal. Disruptions to school operations in the U.S. substantially impacted returned Volunteer participation in WWS and the suspension of Peace Corps Response programs abroad further limited the number of opportunities for continued service available for returned Volunteers.

Despite the challenges the pandemic posed, the Peace Corps identified several new opportunities for returned Volunteers to serve domestically and virtually. As part of Peace Corps’ second ever domestic Volunteer deployment, the agency partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at FEMA’s request in support of COVID-19 vaccination efforts and information and awareness campaigns in

<sup>27</sup> This number reflects what was reported in prior years. However, due to improved calculations, the FY 2017 result should be 1,831 instead.

<sup>28</sup> Peace Corps Response is another pathway to Peace Corps service where returned Volunteers and other experienced professionals undertake short-term, high-impact assignments.

<sup>29</sup> The Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program is a graduate fellowship program that offers financial assistance to returned Volunteers.

<sup>30</sup> The Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS) program is dedicated to promoting global learning by providing educational resources based on the Peace Corps Volunteer experience.

underserved communities across the United States. As part of this effort, 158 returned Volunteers were deployed.

The Peace Corps introduced the Virtual Service Pilot (VSP), which provided a new opportunity for returned Volunteers to donate their time to work with organizations in Peace Corps countries. This pilot program is currently in its third phase and has expanded into a six-month rotation for pilot participants. In FY 2021, there was a total of 230 participants donating their time to engage in virtual activities in 27 countries.

As part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, the expansion of post-Volunteer service opportunities remains a priority. 3GL, in collaboration with other agency partners, will highlight post-Peace Corps volunteer and service opportunities more consistently for Volunteers during their service and will expand the information about service opportunities presented to Volunteers at the close of service (COS) conference.



*Left: A returned Peace Corps Response Volunteer communicated in sign language with deaf students in Guyana. Right: A Domestic Deployment Volunteer welcomed community members in the U.S. to receive COVID-19 vaccines.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of 3GL

**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 Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) Portal to 75 percent by FY 2022.*

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	45%	50%	60%	70%
Results	N/A	43%	38%	32%	49%	73%	N/A

The agency can better serve returned Volunteers by developing a streamlined mechanism for returned Volunteers 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 returned Volunteers, streamlined access to services, a more user-friendly experience, and standardization of all agency outreach to the returned Volunteer community. Additionally, centralizing services and communication with returned Volunteers will increase efficiency and reduce the administrative burden on Peace Corps staff providing these services as well as other offices that rely on this information for core business functions.

**FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency was unable to meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. No Volunteers completed service during FY 2021, therefore, it was not possible to measure the percentage of recently returned Volunteers, or those who completed service in the past 12 months, accessing the RPCV Portal.

Without a supply of newly returning Volunteers, 3GL instead focused its efforts on growing previously returned Volunteer usage of the RPCV Portal. 3GL executed a range of strategies to increase engagement with returned Volunteers, including resumption of the agency-level award programs; establishment of a virtual series of RPCV Thought Leader events; development of country of service-based outreach; and expansion and diversification of returned Volunteer email marketing. As a direct result of this work and ongoing processing of customer service requests from returned Volunteers, 4,678 new RPCV Portal creation requests were received during the previous 12-month period.

Although this focus area is not included in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, 3GL continues to work with the agency's Volunteer Learning Steering Committee (VLSC) to prioritize the integration of the RPCV Portal into the new Volunteer Lifecycle Portal. By integrating RPCV Portal functionality with the Volunteer reporting system, there will be a



much more seamless transition for Volunteers completing their service and it will be much easier for Volunteers to access and request support following service.

**Goal Lead:** Director of 3GL

**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	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	-	5,600	5,700	5,800
Results <sup>31</sup>	N/A	5,512	5,803	5,190	4,954	3,655	0
<b>Indicator 2:</b> Number of participants <sup>32</sup> reported in PCPP projects, WWS/Speakers Match Program, and VRT activities.							
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-	-	-	-	70,000	73,000	75,000
Results <sup>33</sup>	N/A	38,274	29,847	65,993	91,862	44,726	24,133

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 that Volunteers and returned Volunteers carry out, but the agency has not made a sustained effort to compile and analyze this data. This performance goal reflects a renewed commitment to capturing and reporting this information to demonstrate fulfillment of the Third Goal mandate to stakeholders. Several types of data

<sup>31</sup> FY 2016 results are not comparable to later years due to gaps in available data.

<sup>32</sup> See calculations section below for definition.

<sup>33</sup> FY 2016 and FY 2017 results are not comparable to later years due to gaps in available data.

are used including numbers of Volunteers and participants from the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) projects,<sup>34</sup> Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS)/Speakers Match Program, and Third Goal activities reported in the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT).

## FY 2021 Progress Update

The agency did not meet the FY 2021 targets for either indicator in this performance goal as both are heavily dependent on activity and reporting by Volunteers in the field. In FY 2021, there were no Volunteers to participate in Third Goal activities (Indicator 1) and there was a total of 24,133 participants (Indicator 2) in Third Goal activities as defined by this performance goal. Of the Indicator 2 total, 11,503 participants attended a WWS/Speakers Match Program event and 12,630 attended Peace Corps recruitment events that included returned Volunteer participation.

3GL collaborated with the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection to improve the underlying IT systems supporting the Speakers Match Program. This work increased the agency's ability to establish better matches between educators and returned Volunteers and simultaneously improved Peace Corps recruiters' ability to identify returned Volunteers for recruitment events.

As part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, 3GL will intentionally prioritize its Third Goal outreach to underrepresented and underserved communities in the United States as part of a larger agency effort to advance equity.



*A returned Volunteer gave a presentation to second grade students in the U.S. and shared items from her service as part of a class curriculum on ancient Mali.*

**Goal Lead:** Director of 3GL

**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

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<sup>34</sup> PCPP is designed to empower communities, with the assistance of Peace Corps Volunteers, to identify and address local needs through small grant assistance.

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. These efforts should be ongoing. Processes that work well should be kept; those that do not work should be improved or discarded, and duplication eliminated. Decision-makers should have access to the business intelligence they need when they need it. The agency should use financial, human capital, and technology resources wisely and in accordance with established best practices and business requirements. These efforts improve operational efficiency and reduce the burden to domestic and overseas staff. The 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, transparency, 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 Lead:** Chief Human Capital Officer

### FY 2021 Progress Update

Although the Peace Corps did not meet its overall goals for this strategic objective, the agency continues to improve human capital, business intelligence, and IT processes to increase operational efficiency. The agency made significant improvements in workforce planning with its continuous focus on process improvement to ensure senior leadership and office directors can track current and future workforce gaps. Additionally, the Peace Corps improved agency decision making and human capital strategy execution through the creation of dashboards with easily accessible data and reports. The agency also enhanced its ability to identify the most valuable areas to invest IT money, strengthen its IT governance process, and improve IT spending transparency, which has provided better information to the Technology Advisory Board for more informed decision making.

Moving forward, the agency is dedicated to continuing to improve its foundational business management as part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and in overall day-to-day operations. For example, the Office of the Chief Information Officer continues to lay the groundwork for key IT improvements and there are several IT initiatives that will be included in the FY 2026-2026 Strategic Plan. There is also a new performance goal on performance management, which will focus on promoting collaboration and enhancing

collective effectiveness. In part, this will include creating and implementing a tiered performance management system that is results-orientated and holds staff accountable for goals and deliverables. Apart from the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, the agency will also continue using and improving on initiatives such as office dashboards to ensure that the agency business intelligence available to office- and director-level decision makers continues to be timely, relevant, accurate, and easy-to-use, which will ultimately improve the overall quality of business services.

<b>Performance Goal 5.2: Align Office Performance with the Strategic Plan</b> <i>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 2022.</i>					
	FY 2015- FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
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	Development, adoption, and implementation of a tiered performance management system that incorporates one or more agency strategic goals or objectives into performance standards
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	No progress made

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.

As the Peace Corps continues to evaluate its human capital policies and procedures, the Office of Human Resources' policy team is also examining OPM's recommendations to improve the Peace Corps' current pass/fail rating system for end-of-year employee performance ratings. The policy and employee relations teams are researching three-, four-, and five-tier rating systems, exploring updates to the current performance management manual section and procedures, and considering required training for supervisors. By engaging staff across offices, the agency expects to develop and implement a robust and effective performance management system.

### **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal due to unanticipated competing agency priorities with the COVID-19 pandemic and planning Volunteers' return to service abroad. However, this topic is included as part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The new performance goal will focus on promoting collaboration and enhancing collective effectiveness, which will include creating and



implementing a tiered performance management system that is results-orientated and holds staff accountable for goals and deliverables.

**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 2022.								
Indicator 1: Develop an agency-wide Human Capital Operating Plan.								
	FY 2015- FY 2017		FY 2018		FY 2019		FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-		Plan drafted		Plan drafted		Plan finalized	Plan implemented
Results	NA		Office-level planning underway		Agency-level planning underway		Agency-level planning underway	No progress made
Indicator 2: Decrease the average vacancy gap to 80 days. <sup>35</sup>								
	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	
Targets	-	-	-	100 days	90 days	80 days	80 days	
Results	NA <sup>36</sup>	89 days <sup>37</sup>	132 days <sup>38</sup>	71 days <sup>39</sup>	111 days <sup>40</sup>	94 days	117 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 Circular 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,

<sup>35</sup> The percentage of employees hired within 80 days is consistent with the recommended time frames on the [hiring reform](#) published by OPM.

<sup>36</sup> Data from the former application system (Avue) is no longer accessible.

<sup>37</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>38</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>39</sup> Reflects the vacancy gap for domestic vacancies only.

<sup>40</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.

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

## **FY 2021 Progress Update**

The agency did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. For Indicator 1, the agency was not able to develop an agency-wide Human Capital Operating Plan due to unanticipated competing priorities with the COVID-19 pandemic and planning Volunteers' return to service abroad. However, the agency plans to continue making progress toward achieving this target once a permanent Director and Chief Human Capital Officer are appointed.

The target for Indicator 2 was not met due to resource investments into the procurement and implementation of a new applicant tracking system. The expected full implementation of the new system and training for all users will be completed by December 31, 2021. Though the target was not met, the agency will continue to focus on meeting the time-to-hire goal of 80 days upon full implementation of the new applicant tracking system.

**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	FY 2021
Targets	-	Baseline data collection	Baseline data collection	40%
Results <sup>41</sup>	NA	Baseline data collected	Baseline data collected	21%

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, can deliver a lower-cost solution to the agency while increasing both information availability and security.

The agency will shift 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 will measure the proportion of IT funds invested in modern, integrated information systems compared to spending to maintain outdated legacy systems. For this goal, the agency will strive to meet, and eventually exceed, the average federal ratio of development, modernization, and enhancement (DME)<sup>42</sup> to operations and maintenance (O&M)<sup>43</sup> IT investment, currently measured at approximately 25 percent and 75 percent respectively. In preparation for launching this new goal, the agency will first baseline its current DME:O&M ratio before setting targets for increasing the ratio.

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<sup>41</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>42</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 the *Office of Management and Budget* to government-wide IT spending: <https://itdashboard.gov>.

<sup>43</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."

## FY 2021 Progress Update

The agency did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. Final financial analysis shows that agency DME spending for IT was twenty-one percent of total IT spending (or \$12.57 million of \$59.78 million). This is approximately the same level of DME spending as in previous years.

Several factors impacted the trajectory of DME spending, including constraints in the agency's ability to execute larger volumes of IT projects, procurements and acquisitions, a greater focus on executing key priorities with quality, and rethinking the composition of needed IT investments. In FY 2021, the agency canceled \$3.1 million in planned investments and deferred approximately \$13 million to FY 2022 or beyond. This was done to ensure quality execution of key investments and allow time to develop future investments more completely.

Although the agency did not meet the FY 2021 target, it continued to lay the groundwork for key IT improvements and enhanced its ability to identify the most valuable areas to invest IT money, strengthen its IT governance process, and improve IT spending transparency. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of the Chief Information Officer have collaborated to track costs in meaningful ways such as categorizing costs according to business-aligned program areas. Moving forward, the agency will scale back its planned IT investments to a more actionable level and will continue to partner across offices to improve future technology road maps that better inform investment planning.

**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*

## Management Objective 6: Organizational Risk Management

*Identify agency processes and associated impediments to success in a common format to allow for prioritization of agency efforts toward achieving its goals.*

**Rationale:** This 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. The scope of this objective includes the safety and security of staff, Volunteers, and facilities, and the agency's credibility, emergency preparedness, and response. It also includes mitigating financial risks and risks to IT infrastructure (cyber security). This objective is focused on creating an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Council, 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 to improve accountability and minimize interruptions and/or threats to the effectiveness of Peace Corps programs.

**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 2021 Progress Update

The agency was partially successful in meeting Management Objective 6. The agency identified strategies for incorporating ERM into governance structures and made progress in conducting risk interviews and compiling risk registers. In addition, the agency held several meetings and presentations focused on prioritizing ERM.

While ERM was not fully implemented into governance structures, the agency is in a good position to achieve full implementation in the coming fiscal years, and is focusing on ERM being part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. ERM was not fully implemented due to staff turnover and resource constraints. However, measures are currently in place to address these concerns going forward.

**Performance Goal 6.1: Maturation of the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Program**

*Establish a repeatable process for ERM and incorporate the agency risk profile into decision-making.*

	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Targets	-	Policy and procedures approved	Approval process for the new policy completed  Agency risk profile produced	Agency risk profile produced	ERM integrated into the agency governance structure
Results	NA	Policies and procedures drafted	ERMC Charter, By-Laws, and policy approved  Agency risk profile in process	Risk profile partially completed	Agency identified strategies toward implementation of ERM into governance structures

This goal seeks to facilitate risk management across the agency by developing a clear enterprise risk management (ERM) policy. This policy establishes an Enterprise Risk Management Council (ERMC) 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 agency-wide ERM policy.
2. Revise and approve related risk management policies.
3. Develop an agency risk profile.

**FY 2021 Progress Update**

The Peace Corps did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. The agency held ERM Council meetings and Secretariat meetings consistent with the ERM Manual Section and Council charter and by-laws focusing on strategies for incorporating ERM into governance. Additionally, the ERM secretariat conducted trainings across several offices, provided ERM program overview sessions with several new office



directors, and identified specific governance structures that could be updated to include ERM. The biggest obstacle to fully implementing ERM into governance structures was staff turnover and resource constraints. However, the agency has renewed its efforts toward full ERM implementation and resource constraints should not be a concern going forward.

**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 2022.</i>					
	FY 2015 - FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
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	100% of all offices have developed active risk registers
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	3 registers completed; 2 registers partially completed

Once an agreement has been reached on the agency policy as described in Performance Goal 6.1, the focus of the agency's efforts will be to ensure that each office has a point of contact who has been trained on ERM 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 2019-2020 targets focus on developing and supporting risk registers for the selected offices with the greatest risks. In FY 2019, the priority was the Office of the Chief Information Officer. In FY 2020, the focus will be on developing active risk registers for the Offices of Health Services, Safety and Security, and the Chief Financial Officer.

Milestones for this performance goal include:

1. Train offices on enterprise risk management.
2. Map business processes within each office to inform development of the larger enterprise level register.
3. Establish and communicate risk registers to the ERMC, which will allow the agency to promote and implement principles on prioritizing agency resources and decision making in accordance with OMB Circular A-123.

## FY 2021 Progress Update

The Peace Corps did not meet the FY 2021 target for this performance goal. However, the agency successfully completed a formal risk register for one major office--the Office of the Chief Information Officer--in FY 2021, bringing the total number of complete risk registers to three.<sup>44</sup> The agency also conducted risk interviews with the Office of Management and Office of Health Services. Risk registers for these two offices have been partially completed. The principal reason for the shortcoming in fully implementing ERM and developing active risk registers across all offices was staff turnover and resource constraints. However, the agency has renewed its efforts towards full ERM implementation, including as part of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, and resource constraints should not be a concern going forward.

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

**Data Source:** *Administrative records*

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<sup>44</sup> The agency completed risk registers for the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of Safety and Security in FY 2020.

## Appendix A

### Performance Management System

The goals, objectives, and strategies 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 (OSIRP) facilitates strategic planning and reporting. OSIRP works closely with other offices across the agency to collect and analyze data to improve agency operations. The OSIRP director serves as the performance improvement officer for the agency. The Peace Corps 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 that ensure activities align with the goals in the strategic plan. For example, evidence and data are collected and analyzed so that agency leadership, managers, and staff can use them 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 and strategic objective leads collaborate with senior leadership from across the agency to facilitate forward-looking meetings to discuss developing the next Annual Performance Plan. Prior to these meetings, lead offices identify challenges, opportunities, and possible realignments 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 update 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. The agency uses external and internal data to conduct the Country Portfolio Review, which informs decisions on the number of Volunteers to place in each post and decisions on potential country exits or new country entries or reentries. The review focuses on Volunteer safety, security, and medical care; host country engagement with the Peace Corps; host country needs; programming and training; and post management and costs. The review incorporates 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. The data used for the Country Portfolio Review is also available for use by posts and headquarters offices in support of their operational planning and management.

- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Performance Reviews:** The Peace Corps utilizes quarterly reviews, 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 through both quantitative and qualitative analyses. They provide a brief written summary of the progress-to-date, challenges, additional support needed, and next steps. This summary is shared with other senior agency staff. 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 improving performance by using high-quality data and evidence. Using rigorous evidence-based methodologies, the agency conducts studies to assess program practices' impact and identify opportunities to strengthen programs or improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. These efforts allow the agency to use existing evidence to draw conclusions. When data gaps are identified, new sources of data that can improve operations and allow better understanding of performance opportunities are developed. 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. These can be found at: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspector-general/reports>.

Efforts to enhance the use of existing data and 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 the Peace Corps' data collection and reporting consistency. Further, the agency ensures that data is clean, complete, and accurate. OSIRP oversees and reviews all performance goals and focuses its efforts on continually improving data quality.

In FY 2021, the agency's Enterprise Data Governance Council started maintaining a data catalog to enable data discovery, transparency, and accountability. The data catalog tracks information on data asset owners, the intended use of the data, and how to access the data asset. The data catalog will further the agency's efforts to ensure data accuracy and reliability in measuring progress toward performance goals. It will also ensure the agency manages data more strategically.

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. Only properly trained and authorized staff can access key systems, which maintains data integrity and ensures that the appropriate data entry methodology is followed. 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. Ongoing modernization efforts, led by the Office of the Chief Information Officer, are also incorporated. Existing data limitations 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 were submitted to overseas post staff through the VRT on a reporting cycle (i.e., quarterly, per trimester, semi-annually) determined by each post. Post staff reviewed all submitted reports and worked with Volunteers to verify data and correct anomalies before analyzing the results. VRT data were then used to report on Volunteers' contributions to the Peace Corps' three goals and to agency strategic partners including inter-agency initiatives such as the



## President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Feed the Future (FTF/GFSS).

Since the first version of the VRT was developed, the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) 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 accurately and consistently. To improve the quality of data entered in the VRT, the agency has also developed a suite of standardized data collection tools and indicator reference sheets.

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 support post staff in ongoing monitoring and data quality checks. It is also documenting and considering reporting rates when conducting analyses. The agency is also working to design the next generation of the VRT, known as Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG). The VRG is based on newer technology that will be easier to maintain, allow Volunteers' real-time, mobile reporting, and provide more functionality 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.

Typically, ninety percent of Volunteers who have been in service for at least one month complete the AVS. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting global evacuation and close of service (COS) of all Volunteers, the Peace Corps was unable to survey currently serving Volunteers in FY 2020 and FY 2021. However, in June-July 2020, the agency conducted a special survey of the evacuated returned Volunteers and collected feedback on agency operations.

The AVS is not administered to a random sample of Volunteers. Instead, it is sent to all Volunteers who have served for at least 30 days at their sites.<sup>45</sup> 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.

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<sup>45</sup> In FY 2020, a survey was sent to all Volunteers and Trainees who were evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. Data quality is ensured through rigorous data cleaning procedures that 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, like external events or the ability to recall information. Because of this, the agency considers 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 annually to all U.S. direct-hire staff. The survey measures employee perception of 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 employee views 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 comparing the results with those of other federal agencies.

### **Host Country Staff Survey**

This survey has been fielded every year since FY 2014 to gather perspectives from host country staff systematically. It is a short, confidential, voluntary survey designed to learn more about the agency's impact at posts by gathering input from host country staff and assessing the achievement rate of reaching Peace Corps Goals one and two. The survey includes questions covering staff training, safety and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, contributions to the Peace Corps' goals, development impact, and job satisfaction. In FY 2021, a short section was added to assess staff perception on telework and planned Volunteer re-entry. Questions related to staff interaction with Volunteers were removed due to the lack of Volunteer field presence in FY 2021.

Development of the survey frame presents the primary data quality challenge for this survey. The survey frame consists of host country staff who can be reached via Peace Corps email. Additionally, while the Host Country Staff Survey is offered in English, French, Spanish, and Russian (the languages most used across Peace Corps host country staff), limited literacy in those languages among some staff and other factors like 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 FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan development. 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 FY 2016 Annual Strategic Review results, 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 Innovations in Return to Service

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared a global pandemic. On March 15, 2020, the Peace Corps Director made the difficult decision to evacuate all Volunteers and temporarily suspend Volunteer service at all posts. On March 16, 2020, the agency notified Congress of this decision.

Since the global evacuation, the Peace Corps has developed a robust re-entry strategy to return Volunteers to host countries as soon as the health and safety of Volunteers, staff, and host communities can be safeguarded. The strategy involves a comprehensive process for evaluating each Peace Corps post based on medical, security, programmatic, administrative, and logistical criteria that will allow the agency to determine when conditions are conducive to welcoming Volunteers back to service.

The Peace Corps' country re-entry strategy is based on the following guiding principles:

- Conditions at each post must allow for a safe, healthy, and productive service.
- Posts must have adequate plans in place to identify and mitigate risks associated with the ongoing presence of COVID-19 in their countries.
- While carrying out its mission, the agency will protect the health and safety of its staff, host country partners, and communities.
- The agency is committed to reinstating and re-enrolling as many evacuated returned Volunteers and Trainees as country conditions and programmatic needs allow.

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and evolving. Because of this, while preparing to resume Volunteer operations and after Volunteers are deployed, the agency will rely on its decades of experience in emergency response to continuously monitor conditions and make informed decisions. The extensive precautions the Peace Corps is taking as it returns to service overseas are designed to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of Volunteers, staff, and host communities. They are also designed to enable the agency to rise to the challenge of contributing to the global effort to support COVID-19 response and recovery.

Even while preparing for Volunteers to return to the field, the Peace Corps has developed new and innovative ways to contribute to the global fight against COVID-19. For example, during the summer of 2021—for the second time in the agency's history—the Peace Corps collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)<sup>46</sup>. This collaboration was part of a whole-of-government effort to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. From May to August 2021, the Peace Corps deployed

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<sup>46</sup> This collaboration was at FEMA's request and pursuant to FEMA's legal authority.

158 Peace Corps Response Volunteers in seven U.S. states to assist FEMA in its vaccine distribution efforts. These Volunteers helped to meet the administration's goal of an equitable vaccination campaign by applying cross-cultural experiences, language abilities, and adaptability honed during their service overseas.

Other innovations include Peace Corps' launch of a virtual service pilot (VSP) program in FY 2021. The VSP expands Americans' ability to serve their country as VSP Participants.<sup>47</sup> As private citizens, they can donate voluntary services to the agency and engage virtually to contribute and support requests from interested host country partners. The pilot program was developed in response to the expressed needs of host country partners, the interests of evacuated returned Volunteers, and the Peace Corps' desire to find innovative ways to continue living out the agency's mission and goals during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, in anticipation of Volunteers returning to service, Peace Corps post staff are working with host country partners to mitigate the harmful impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic sustainably. By adapting operating models and leveraging technology, field staff are developing transferrable skills for recovery and resilience in partnering host countries. In this way, they are laying a programmatic foundation on which Volunteers can continue to build.



*Domestic Deployment Volunteers registered a community member to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.*

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<sup>47</sup> These individuals are known as VSP Participants and not Peace Corps Volunteers.



## **Appendix F**

### **Acronyms**

3GL – Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services  
ACTFL - American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
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  
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency  
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  
OGO – Office of Global Operations  
OMB – Office of Management and Budget  
OPATS – Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support  
OPM – Office of Personnel Management  
OSIRP – Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning  
PCMO – Peace Corps Medical Officer  
PCPP – Peace Corps Partnership Program  
PT&E – Programing, Training, and Evaluation  
RPCV – Returned Peace Corps Volunteer  
VIDA – Volunteer Information Database Application  
VLSC – Volunteer Learning Steering Committee  
VRG – Volunteer Reporting and Grants  
VRT – Volunteer Reporting Tool  
VSP – Virtual Service Pilot  
VT – Volunteer/Trainee  
WHO – World Health Organization  
WWS – World Wise Schools

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