



The Peace Corps
Strategic Plan | FY 2014-2018
and Annual Performance Plan | FY 2016



Mission

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

Since its establishment in 1961, the Peace Corps has been guided by a mission of world peace and friendship. The agency exemplifies the best of the American spirit by making it possible for Americans to serve—advancing development and building cross-cultural understanding around the world. Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps is making a difference in the overseas communities it serves, in the lives of its Volunteers, and back home in the United States. More than 215,000 Volunteers have served in 140 countries since 1961.

The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of the Volunteers, both during and after their term of service. Rather than providing monetary assistance to countries, the agency sends Volunteers to share their skills and experience while living and working alongside local individuals and communities. This day-to-day interaction provides Volunteers with a unique perspective and the opportunity to partner with local communities to address their development challenges and to strengthen mutual understanding. After Volunteers complete their service, they return to the United States with new sets of skills, deep knowledge about different 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 public, maintaining relationships with colleagues and friends from the countries in which they served, and demonstrating a sustained commitment to volunteerism and public service.

Core Values

The FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan reflects the core values that shape and guide decisions at all levels in the agency:

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

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

Commitment to National Service: The Peace Corps seeks to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their country by volunteering their time in the service of others.

Diversity and Inclusion: The Peace Corps actively supports a culture of inclusion that builds on the strengths of the diversity of the American public and of the countries in which we serve.

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

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

*“The United States will join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades by connecting more people to the global economy; by empowering women; by giving our young and brightest minds new **opportunities to serve**, and helping communities to feed, and power, and educate themselves; by saving the world’s children from preventable deaths; and by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation, which is within our reach.”*

*President Barack Obama
2013 State of the Union Address*

Plan Overview

The FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious vision for the Peace Corps over the next five years. The Strategic Plan strengthens recent far-reaching reforms, focuses on addressing decades-old challenges, and leverages promising opportunities to increase the impact of Volunteers and improve operations.

The Strategic Plan includes the long-range goals and objectives designed to advance the Peace Corps mission. The accompanying FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan lays out the strategies and activities the agency will utilize to accomplish these goals and objectives as well as the specific results the agency expects to achieve over time.

The FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan include the following components:

Strategic Goals reflect the broad, long-term outcomes the agency works toward to achieve the Peace Corps mission of world peace and friendship.

Strategic Objectives break down the high-level strategic goals to express the specific focus areas the agency will prioritize in order to achieve the strategic goals.

Strategies and Activities include the actions the agency intends to take to meet agency goals and objectives.

Performance Goals state a quantitative level of performance, or “target,” to be accomplished within a specific timeframe. In the plan, annual targets are set for FY 2016, and some initial targets are set for future years. Initial targets will be revised in future annual performance plans. Targets and actual results are provided for prior years when available. The agency uses performance goals to both drive performance improvement and to assess progress on strategic goals and objectives. Performance goals are updated each year in the annual performance plan in conjunction with the budget formulation process.

Lead Offices are identified for each performance goal. While several offices or overseas posts may be responsible for the individual strategies and activities that advance progress on performance goals, lead offices are given the convening authority to coordinate agencywide efforts to develop, implement, and report on plans to achieve each performance goal within a specific timeframe.

Appendices provide additional detail on the development of the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan. Appendices include a summary of the Peace Corps’ performance management framework (Appendix A), a description of how evaluation and research informed the development of the plans (Appendix B), data validation and verification standards for the performance goals and indicators (Appendix C), and a summary of the stakeholder outreach conducted (Appendix D).

GPRA Modernization Act of 2010

The President’s Budget identifies lower-priority program activities, where applicable, as required under the GPRA Modernization Act, 31 U.S.C. 1115(b)(10). The public can access the volume at: <http://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 <http://www.performance.gov>.

Strategic Goals

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

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

These three core goals continue to serve as the foundation for the Peace Corps' approach to development and the three strategic goals that guide the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan:

Strategic Goal 1: Building Local Capacity

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

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

Public Benefit: Through Volunteers' capacity-building work, local individuals and communities strengthen the skills they need to address their specific challenges. As a result, local conditions are improved, 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, friends, and others. Over the course of their two years of service, Volunteers share America with the world—dispelling myths about Americans and developing deep relationships with local people. Through this approach, Volunteers also learn more about local community strengths and challenges and build trust with local partners, strengthening their project work.

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

Strategic Goal 3: Bringing the World Back Home

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

During their two years of service, Volunteers learn the languages, customs, traditions, and values of the people with whom they live and work. Volunteers bring the world back home by sharing their experiences with family, friends, and the American public during and after their service. They directly connect Americans with local individuals and communities both independently and through Peace Corps-supported programs. As a result, they deepen and enrich Americans' awareness and knowledge of other countries, cultures, and global issues. Long after they return from their overseas assignments, 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 other peoples engenders mutual understanding and trust, increasing respect and human dignity in world affairs at home and abroad. Additionally, through their overseas experiences, Volunteers develop language, intercultural, technical, and entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for jobs in the 21st century. They bring these skills with them to their work in both the public and private sectors, sharing their global experiences and outlook with their colleagues, friends, and family. This, in turn, helps to build a more competitive U.S. workforce.

Strategic Objectives

The 11 strategic objectives identified in this plan constitute the roadmap for advancing the Peace Corps mission and strategic goals. Strategic objectives serve as the primary unit of analysis for assessing how the agency is performing and are measured through specific, time-bound performance goals. The table below indicates how each of the strategic objectives supports each strategic goal.

Relationship between Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Goal 1: Building Local Capacity	Strategic Goal 2: Sharing America with the World	Strategic Goal 3: Bringing the World Back Home
1. Volunteer Well-Being	●	●	●
2. Service Opportunity of Choice	●	●	●
3. Development Impact	●	●	
4. Cross-Cultural Understanding	●	●	●
5. Continuation of Service			●
6. Diversity and Inclusion	●	●	●
7. Site Development	●	●	
8. Train-Up	●	●	
9. High-Performing Learning Organization	●	●	●
10. Global Connectivity	●	●	●
11. Measurement for Results	●	●	●

Strategic Objective 1: Volunteer Well-Being

Enhance the safety, security, and health of Volunteers through rigorous prevention and response systems and high-quality medical and mental health services (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of the Volunteers—the most important strategic asset of the agency. Volunteers dedicate themselves to serving their country in local communities where the health-care infrastructure and security environments often differ from those of the United States. Further, Volunteers may experience a range of emotions as they address the complexities of development work and encounter unique stressors associated with living and working in local communities. Attention to the well-being of Volunteers and supporting their resiliency allows them to focus on their assignment and helps to ensure that they return home safely and in good health. Volunteer well-being is the shared responsibility of staff and Volunteers.

Strategies and Activities:

- Finalize implementation of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 and ensure its reforms continue to guide agency policy and practice
- Periodically evaluate individual experiences with health care and safety and security support
- Implement regionally approved safety and security standards for site selection and monitoring
- Train staff who interact with Volunteers on methods for mentoring, developing, and supporting Volunteers
- Improve the recruitment, retention, and support of Peace Corps medical staff
- Assess the effects of Volunteer health and safety on Volunteers' productivity at work
- Encourage a comprehensive approach to Volunteer support through agencywide initiatives such as the Sexual Assault Risk-Reduction and Response program
- Provide ongoing medical education and administrative support for Peace Corps medical officers
- Expand mental and emotional health support to provide Volunteers with the tools to cope with the challenges of service
- Establish a data management system to track critical safety and security recommendations by posts and headquarters offices
- Monitor the effectiveness of Volunteers' training related to safety, security, and health and make necessary adjustments
- Collaborate with other governmental and nongovernmental agencies on projects to improve Volunteer health outcomes

External Factors: Volunteers encounter a broad range of social and environmental conditions during their service. As a result, safety, security, and medical risks are an inherent part of Volunteer service.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 1.1: Increase Volunteer Satisfaction with Safety and Security Support

Increase the percentage of Volunteers “satisfied” or “very satisfied”¹ with safety and security support to 82 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	--	76%	78%	80%	82%
Result ²	73%	68%	71%	84%				

¹Includes the top two positive response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

The agency employs a rigorous Volunteer safety and security program to reduce risk and to respond to crime and security incidents. Volunteer satisfaction with safety and security support is a direct measure of the efficacy of the agency’s safety and security prevention and response systems. The agency also monitors other indicators, including incidents of serious crime against Volunteers, to inform strategies to safeguard the well-being of Volunteers. The agency expects to identify new performance goals in FY 2017 that will provide additional tools to measure and advance the agency’s Volunteer safety and security program.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Offices: Office of Safety and Security, Office of Global Operations

Performance Goal 1.2: Reduce Volunteer Dissatisfaction with Medical and Mental Health Support

Reduce the percentage of Volunteers “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”¹ with medical and mental health support to 7.0 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	8.2%	7.2%	7.0%
Result ²	7.0%	7.4%	9.2%	8.6%		

¹Includes the bottom two negative response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the AVS in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

Health-care research suggests a strong relationship between patient satisfaction with health care and improved health outcomes. Ensuring the percentage of Volunteers who are unsatisfied with medical and mental health support does not exceed 7.0 percent will place the Peace Corps on par with the highest-performing U.S.-based health-care providers.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Office: Office of Health Services

Strategic Objective 2: Service Opportunity of Choice

Position the Peace Corps as the top choice for talented Americans interested in service by reaching a new generation of potential Volunteers and streamlining the application process (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: Increasing the quantity and quality of Volunteer applications is essential in order to position the agency to provide development assistance responsive to local community needs and to promote cross-cultural understanding between the United States and other countries through the work of skilled Volunteers.

Strategies and Activities:

- Modify business processes and the application platform to allow individuals to apply to specific countries, sectors, and/or departure months to improve transparency and to better account for applicant preferences
- Implement a waitlist system to ensure posts' requests for Volunteers are filled each year
- Establish quarterly application deadlines to pool and rank candidates and select the most qualified and competitive individuals for service
- Conduct market research to better understand the goals, preferences, key motivators, and deterrents of core prospects (18- to 26-year-olds), future prospects (15- to 17-year-olds), and their primary influencers (such as family and friends)
- Invest in a national public relations and marketing campaign to build awareness of the Peace Corps among core prospects
- Improve tools for communicating service opportunities to prospective Volunteers, including redesigning the Peace Corps website and developing additional content for mobile devices
- Utilize the Peace Corps Response program to fill requests for highly skilled and experienced Volunteers
- Implement proactive recruitment strategies to encourage individuals interested in service to apply to the Peace Corps
- Fully implement applicant rating and Volunteer assessment tools
- Redesign the framework utilized by overseas posts to request Volunteers, currently the Assignment Area system, to align with Focus In/Train Up programming
- Leverage strategic interagency, university, and public-private partnerships to increase the number of Volunteers serving annually and pilot new service models
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms implemented to improve the application, assessment, and placement processes

External Factors: The Peace Corps must be a viable and attractive service opportunity in an environment in which talented Americans have an increasingly wide array of service opportunity options.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 2.1: Volunteer Requests Met

Field 100 percent of the Volunteers requested by overseas posts each year

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	95%	95%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Result	97%	97%	90%	98%				

The ultimate outcome for the Service Opportunity of Choice objective is for the agency to fully meet overseas posts' requests for skilled Volunteers. This performance goal is a direct outcome measure.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 2.2: Increase Service Opportunities

Increase the number of Volunteers serving annually to 10,000 by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	7,600	8,200	8,800	9,400	10,000
Result	9,095	8,073	7,209	6,818				

Per the Peace Corps Act, "it is the policy of the United States and a purpose of the Peace Corps to maintain, to the maximum extent appropriate and consistent with programmatic and fiscal considerations, a Volunteer corps of at least 10,000 individuals." Based upon available funding, building and maintaining an even larger Volunteer population would ensure more Americans have the opportunity to serve—a high priority for the agency.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (PCVDBMS/HRMS)

Lead Office: Office of Global Operations

Performance Goal 2.3: Increase Applications

Increase applications for Volunteer service to 25,000 by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	20,000	22,000	23,000	24,000	25,000
Result ¹	12,206	10,091	10,118	17,336				

¹The definition of an application for Volunteer service was modified in FY 2014; results for FY 2011–13 are reported using the previous definition. The agency received 15,404 applications in FY 2014 as measured by the previous definition. Under the new definition, an “application” occurs when a qualified U.S. citizen submits a completed application for either the two-year Peace Corps Volunteer program or the short-term Peace Corps Response program. The previous definition did not include Peace Corps Response and required that individuals submit both an application and a health history form. Under the new definition, the agency received 19,151 applications in FY 2014. For comparison to the FY 2014 target, only applications from the two-year program (17,336) are reported in FY 2014. Targets for fiscal years 2015 and beyond are set based on this new definition, which includes applications from both the two-year program and the Peace Corps Response program.

An increase in the number of applications for Peace Corps service is a clear indication of the competitiveness of the Peace Corps as a service opportunity of choice.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 2.4: Reduce Time from Application to Invitation

Reduce the average time from application to invitation to no more than 3 months by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	5 months	4 months	3 months
Result	10 months	11 months	6 months ¹	7 months		

¹In FY 2013, the application and medical review processes were modified; invitations are now offered prior to medical clearance. This resulted in a reduction of the average time from application to invitation.

Prior to the reforms to the application process in FY 2014, the time required to go through the application process was much longer than other service opportunities and has been cited as a major deterrent by prospective applicants.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Strategic Objective 3: Development Impact

Advance community-based development by strengthening the capacity of local individuals and communities, focusing on highly effective technical interventions, and leveraging strategic partnerships (Supports Strategic Goals 1 and 2)

Rationale: The Peace Corps delivers development assistance to interested host countries through the work of its Volunteers. In conducting their work, Volunteers utilize effective technical interventions to share their skills and experience with local individuals and communities and work collaboratively to strengthen local capacity to address development challenges. In addition, the Peace Corps partners with other U.S. government, nongovernmental, and private sector development partners to leverage resources, knowledge, and skills to expand the reach of programs and to enhance Volunteers' impact.

Strategies and Activities:

- Fully implement standardized technical training to ensure Volunteers have the skills required to meet community needs
- Periodically monitor community need through Project Advisory Committees to ensure project activities address local development challenges appropriately
- Expand counterpart training opportunities to provide counterparts and community members with tools to work effectively with Volunteers and to strengthen the capacity of host country individuals and communities
- Improve Volunteer training on working with communities and host country partners
- Engage with agency strategic partners to provide Volunteers with technical training, tools, and resources
- Provide monitoring and evaluation training to staff and Volunteers, including the use of the redesigned Volunteer Reporting Tool
- Develop post standards on the frequency and quality of feedback provided to Volunteers

External Factors: Measuring the precise impact of Volunteers in a complex development space presents unique challenges.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 3.1: Advance Community-Based Development Outcomes

Increase the percentage of projects with documented gains in community-based development outcomes to 80 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	--	80%
Result	--	--	--	76%		

Volunteer projects and activities are designed and executed alongside local partners. An increase in the percentage of projects with documented gains suggests that Volunteers are contributing to community-based development.

Data Source: *Volunteer Reporting Tool*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 3.2: Strengthen Local Capacity

Increase the percentage of projects with documented gains in the capacity of host country individuals

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	--	No target set; Baseline data collection
Result	--	--	--	--		

Volunteers strengthen local capacity by working closely with community partners through all phases of their project activities. This goal measures the increase in the capacity of local individuals, including counterparts—Volunteers’ primary community partners.

Data Source: *Global Counterpart Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 3.3: Improve Feedback to Volunteers

Increase the percentage of Volunteers “satisfied” or “very satisfied”¹ with the timeliness and quality of the feedback provided on their work to 68 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	40%	59%	62%	65%	68%
Result ²	39%	33%	38%	55%				

¹Includes the top two positive response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the AVS in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

Volunteers live and work in local communities that are often long distances away from Peace Corps staff. When Volunteers receive timely, high-quality feedback on their work from staff via email, text messages, phone calls, responses to the Volunteer Reporting Tool, or other mechanisms, they are able to benefit from the experience and advice of staff, share successes, and address challenges. This interaction contributes to the ability of Volunteers to achieve their project outcomes.

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Strategic Objective 4: Cross-Cultural Understanding

Build a deeper mutual understanding of other cultures by developing long-lasting connections between American and host country individuals and communities (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: Volunteers advance cultural understanding between the United States and the communities where they serve by living and working in local communities and by sharing their experiences with family, friends, and the American public during their service and when they return to the United States. In this way, Volunteers create a cultural window that enables American and host country individuals and communities to have meaningful conversations, develop strong relationships, and sustain their interactions.

Strategies and Activities:

- Develop intercultural competency training and tools for Volunteers and staff
- Encourage currently serving and returned Volunteers to leverage new technology, including social media, to facilitate communication between Americans and host country individuals and communities
- Train Volunteers on managing cultural differences during their service
- Redesign the Coverdell World Wise Schools Correspondence Match program to allow Volunteers to independently identify their own matches prior to departure and expand educator access to information based on their curriculum needs

External Factors: The world is interconnected today in ways vastly different from when the Peace Corps was founded in 1961. There are new opportunities to utilize modern communication tools and technologies to better connect Americans and people in the countries where Volunteers serve both during and after a Volunteer's service.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 4.1: Greater Understanding of Americans

Increase the percentage of counterparts who report a greater understanding of Americans after working with a Volunteer to 95 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	--	95%
Result ¹	--	--	--	94%		

¹The FY 2014 result represents responses from a low percentage of Volunteer counterparts (approximately 25 percent). While FY 2014 results are not globally representative, information gathered from other sources, including the Host Country Impact Studies conducted by the agency from 2008–12 (www.peacecorps.gov/open), provides sufficient evidence to set targets for this performance goal for FY 2015 and beyond.

Counterparts regularly work closely with Volunteers. Counterparts' increased understanding of Americans as a result of sustained day-to-day interactions with Volunteers indicates a successful partnership for building cultural understanding between the United States and the countries where Volunteers serve.

Data Source: *Global Counterpart Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 4.2: Increase Cross-Cultural Connections

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report they facilitated direct interactions between American and host country individuals and communities to 62 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	60%	62%
Result	--	--	--	57%		

When Volunteers actively build strong connections between the United States and host countries, they are promoting mutual cultural understanding.

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

Lead Offices: *Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support; Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services*

Strategic Objective 5: Continuation of Service

Support returned Volunteers' continuation of service by fostering a vibrant alumni network, providing tools and resources to ease their transition after service, and offering opportunities for them to share their experiences (Supports Strategic Goal 3)

Rationale: More than 215,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers since 1961—a significant “domestic dividend” of skilled and dedicated individuals who continue serving the American public and the overseas communities where they lived and worked long after they return home. Much of the returned Peace Corps Volunteer community’s work to advance the Peace Corps mission takes place through returned Volunteer groups or the actions of individual returned Volunteers—independent of the agency. However, by providing tools and resources to Volunteers to ease their transition after service, such as career services and best practices for sharing their experiences and promoting service, the Peace Corps is positioning returned Volunteers to be active contributors to the agency’s Third Goal efforts. The Peace Corps also encourages returned Volunteers to share their experiences with family, friends, and the public; build and maintain connections between Americans and host country individuals and communities; and recruit the next generation of Volunteers. Notably, a significant number of returned Volunteers continue their service as international development or foreign policy specialists.

Strategies and Activities:

- Leverage email, social media, and other online tools to communicate more effectively with returned Volunteers
- Improve the quantity and quality of returned Volunteer contact information by developing a contact database where individuals can easily update their information
- Collect regular feedback from returned Volunteers through a survey to track their professional and academic progress and inform the development of tools to help them continue their service throughout their careers
- Expand returned Volunteer career services across the United States by centralizing tools and resources available to returned Volunteers through an expanded and easily accessible online job portal
- Develop a system for tracking and evaluating the results of returned Volunteer career services
- Establish a competitive internship program where exceptional returned Volunteers can compete for year-long positions within the agency and with its strategic partners
- Actively promote the non-competitive eligibility status of returned Volunteers at federal agencies for expedited hiring
- Develop a “Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services” curriculum to be included during close-of-service training for currently serving Volunteers
- Engage the American public through strong partnerships with businesses, schools, and government agencies to provide communication platforms for returned Volunteers, increase public understanding of other cultures, and generate a commitment to public service and community development
- Support the development of independent Volunteer alumni groups by providing materials on the promotion of the Third Goal and encouraging returned Volunteers to participate in such groups

External Factors: Much of the returned Volunteer community’s contribution to the agency’s Third Goal occurs organically and outside the control of the Peace Corps. The agency will explore opportunities to build upon the returned Volunteer community’s continuing efforts to advance the Peace Corps mission.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 5.1: Support Returned Volunteer Career Transition

Increase the number of returned Volunteers who access Peace Corps’ career services to 3,000 by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	2,500	2,750	3,000
Result	--	--	--	2,649		

The agency provides returned Volunteers with top-notch career services, seminars, and transition tools upon returning from service. Providing the career and personal development tools necessary for returned Volunteers’ success in both professional and service opportunities will ease their transition upon returning home and facilitate an environment where they can share their experiences and promote volunteerism and public service.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Office: Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

Performance Goal 5.2: Increase Returned Volunteer Engagement

Increase the number of returned Volunteers who participate in agency-supported Third Goal activities to 16,000 by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	8,000	10,000	12,000	14,000	16,000
Result	--	--	--	9,754				

The agency facilitates a wide array of activities to provide returned Volunteers with opportunities to share their experiences, including Coverdell World Wise Schools Speakers Match, recruitment events, and Peace Corps Week. The agency also develops materials for returned Volunteers to independently conduct Third Goal activities.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Office: Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services

Strategic Objective 6: Diversity and Inclusion

Actively recruit, support, and retain a diverse workforce and Volunteer corps and build an inclusive culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: Volunteers serve as cultural ambassadors in the local communities where they live and work. To promote a better understanding of America, it is critical that Volunteers represent the rich diversity of the U.S. population. In addition, since many staff are drawn from the pool of returned Volunteers, the diversity of the Volunteer corps contributes to building a more diverse workforce. To harness the unique perspectives of a diverse workforce and Volunteer corps, the agency will foster an inclusive organizational culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness.

Strategies and Activities:

- Develop a marketing, communications, and outreach strategy to increase the diversity of the Peace Corps Volunteer and staff applicant pools
- Collaborate with local and regional groups aligned with underrepresented populations to increase applications
- Identify and mitigate economic barriers to Volunteer service
- Support and monitor the implementation of the same-sex couples initiative, which allows same-sex couples to serve together as Peace Corps Volunteers
- Develop a system for field staff to recommend returned Peace Corps Volunteers who can serve as recruiters for underrepresented populations
- Engage the returned Volunteer community in recruiting underrepresented populations
- Identify, support, and implement strategic partnerships to support the Peace Corps' diversity recruitment efforts
- Develop and implement annual diversity recruitment strategies for each regional recruitment office
- Monitor applicant drop-out rates by race/ethnicity, sex, age, and other demographic elements to identify potential barriers
- Support employee resource groups to help recruit, retain, and support staff
- Provide tools and training for staff to increase their awareness and empower them to prevent the types of discrimination and harassment issues that can occur within a diverse environment
- Review and revise the eligibility standards for Volunteer service, including medical status eligibility standards, to ensure that applicants are not evaluated on the basis of any factor that is not relevant to the ability to serve effectively
- Develop an agencywide Diversity Governance Council to provide guidance and feedback on the development and implementation of Peace Corps policies and initiatives and to address systemic issues and concerns related to diversity and inclusion

External Factors: As the Peace Corps primarily attracts recent college graduates, efforts to increase the diversity of the Volunteer population are dependent in part on the diversity of individuals completing an undergraduate degree. Similarly, staff diversity is influenced by the diversity of both the Volunteer population and the U.S. workforce. Additionally, the lack of a commercial student loan deferment option makes it difficult for those with commercial student loan debt to serve.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 6.1: Increase Applicant Diversity

Increase applications for Volunteer service from individuals of minority racial and ethnic groups to 35 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	32%	34%	35%
Result	26%	27%	30%	33%		

Increasing the number of applications from individuals of minority racial and ethnic groups—who are traditionally underrepresented in the Peace Corps—will result in a Volunteer population that more accurately reflects the diversity of America.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 6.2: Build an Open and Inclusive Organizational Culture

Increase the percentage of Peace Corps Volunteers, U.S. direct hire staff, and host country national staff who “agree” or “strongly agree”¹ that the agency has an open and inclusive organizational culture to 90 percent by FY 2016

		FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target ²		--	--	--	85%	88%	90%
Result	U.S. direct hire staff	--	--	--	88%		
	Host country staff	--	--	--	89%		
	Volunteers	--	--	--	80%		

¹Includes the top two positive responses on a five-point balanced scale.

²The FY 2014 target only applies to U.S. direct hire staff and was based on an estimate derived from contextual information from the Employee Viewpoint Survey. Based on the collection of baseline data from host country staff and Volunteers through the Host Country Staff Survey and Annual Volunteer Survey, respectively (shaded in gray), targets for FY 2015 and beyond apply to all three groups.

The Peace Corps’ level of inclusivity can be largely determined by analyzing the perceptions of Volunteers and staff regarding openness and inclusion in the organization with respect to race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity/expression. This will provide a direct outcome measure that can be evaluated in detail to measure how all groups perceive the agency’s culture of inclusion and to what extent employees feel valued and productive.

Data Sources: Annual Volunteer Survey, Employee Viewpoint Survey, and Host Country Staff Survey

Lead Office: Office of Civil Rights and Diversity

Strategic Objective 7: Site Development

Establish an environment conducive to Volunteer success through an integrated approach to developing effective projects, preparing work sites, and successfully collaborating with local partners (Supports Strategic Goals 1 and 2)

Rationale: Before a Volunteer arrives in his or her country of service, the Peace Corps works to ensure that he or she will have meaningful work opportunities that meet the development needs of the local community and that there are local partners interested in working alongside the Volunteer. The agency also verifies that each work site can support the Volunteer's safety, security, and medical and mental health needs. This foundation allows each Volunteer to focus on building relationships and strengthening local capacity both when he or she arrives in the community, and throughout service.

Strategies and Activities:

- Develop and implement post-specific site development criteria, policies, and procedures and standardize specific criteria agencywide where appropriate
- Improve the staff-to-Volunteer ratio to provide more staff capacity for site development and to meet Volunteer support requirements
- Identify, prepare, and train host families, host agencies, and counterparts on how to live and work effectively with Volunteers, including setting clear expectations regarding the role of the Volunteer
- Establish well-defined and meaningful work opportunities for Volunteers by selecting sites with well-documented needs
- Assign Volunteers to sites where there is a good match between the Volunteers' skills and experience and the needs of local communities
- Utilize Project Advisory Committees to regularly monitor projects to ensure they address local development needs
- Develop a mobile technology solution to track and document the effective selection, documentation, and preparation of sites

External Factors: Each host country and individual community provides unique infrastructure and cultural challenges that limit the agency's ability to apply common site development standards uniformly across all posts.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 7.1: Improve Site Development

Increase the percentage of Volunteers “satisfied” or “very satisfied”¹ with site selection and preparation to 68 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	44%	62%	64%	66%	68%
Result ²	42%	41%	42%	59%				

¹Includes the top two response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the AVS in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

The agency has a responsibility to develop an environment for Volunteers’ success by ensuring that sites are effectively selected and prepared for their arrival.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Offices: Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region

Performance Goal 7.2: Improve Counterpart Selection and Preparation

Increase the percentage of Volunteers “satisfied” or “very satisfied”¹ with the community integration and project work support provided by their assigned counterpart to 61 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	34%	55%	57%	59%	61%
Result ²	31%	32%	32%	53%				

¹Includes the top two response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the AVS in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

While Volunteers work with a variety of local partners throughout their service, the Peace Corps selects and assigns local counterparts to Volunteers when they first arrive at their sites to help connect them to their communities and to serve as resources for their project work. Volunteers reporting that they received adequate support from their assigned counterpart indicates that posts are properly selecting and preparing local partners as a part of the site development process.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Offices: Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region

Strategic Objective 8: Train-Up

Develop a highly effective Volunteer corps through a continuum of learning throughout service (Supports Strategic Goals 1 and 2)

Rationale: High-quality training is central to the success of Volunteers. The Peace Corps invests in technical training to ensure that Volunteers have the necessary skills to draw upon, contribute to, and support local capacity-building efforts. Training also focuses on building Volunteers’ language skills and cultural acuity to ensure success in their technical work and to facilitate cultural integration and mutual understanding. Providing a continuum of learning throughout service ensures that Volunteers receive the tools and support they need at key milestones throughout their service.

Strategies and Activities:

- Continue to evaluate and refine the training materials developed through the Focus-In/Train-Up strategy
- Develop and implement a global Volunteer continuum of learning for the six project sectors that emphasizes self-directed learning, utilizes coaching and mentoring, fosters communities of practice, and includes individual learning plans for Volunteers
- Establish terminal learning objectives and measure Volunteer’s progress toward achieving them throughout service, including at the end of pre-service training and close of service
- Share training and language-learning materials through an online knowledge-sharing platform
- Develop formal training certificates and exam processes to document the training received by Volunteers and the expertise and proficiency levels achieved
- Implement mandatory close-of-service language testing and encourage posts to administer language exams to Volunteers at mid-service
- Pilot new approaches to the content, sequencing, and design of Volunteer training

External Factors: An increase in critical safety and security training content reduces the amount of time that can be spent on technical and language training. Additionally, trainers at some posts are temporary hires, and the retention of these experienced trainers year-to-year is challenging.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 8.1: Improve Language Learning

Increase the percentage of Volunteers tested at close of service who achieve the “advanced” level or above on the language proficiency interview to 70 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%
Result	--	--	--	63%				

Developing local language skills is critical for Volunteers’ ability to integrate into their community, work effectively, and maintain their safety and security. An increase in the percentage of Volunteers who achieve a high level of language proficiency indicates the agency is providing effective language training and support throughout Volunteers’ service.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (VIDA)

Lead Offices: Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support; Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region

Performance Goal 8.2: Increase Effectiveness of Technical Training

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report that their technical training was “effective” or “very effective”¹ in preparing them to work at their site to 67 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	52%	64%	65%	66%	67%
Result ²	44%	44%	50%	63%				

¹Includes the top two positive response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²Due to the improvements to the AVS in FY 2014, including modifying the response scales and reducing the length of the questionnaire by half, results from FY 2011–13 (shaded in gray) may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. However, year-to-year comparison of results from FY 2014 and beyond will be possible. Additional information on the effects of the AVS changes on performance results is in Appendix C, Verification and Validation of Performance Data.

Effective technical training covers topics related to the work that Volunteers will conduct at their Volunteer site.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Offices: Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support; Africa Region; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region; Inter-America and the Pacific Region

Strategic Objective 9: High-Performing Learning Organization

Cultivate a high-performing learning organization by investing in professional development for staff, improving staff retention, and strengthening institutional memory (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: The unique law limiting the majority of U.S.-based and American overseas Peace Corps staff to five-year appointments results in a constant influx of fresh ideas and innovation. It also produces significant human capital and knowledge management challenges. At the same time, host country national staff often serve longer than American staff and have very different professional development needs. To successfully advance the Peace Corps mission, the agency must be a high-performing learning organization that invests in staff development, retains employees to the fullest extent of the law, and draws from a deep institutional memory to learn from its past and circulate best practices among Volunteers and staff.

Strategies and Activities:

- Initiate the development of a competency and skills assessment program for Peace Corps domestic and overseas staff
- Invest in an automated system to track training events to develop a more cost-effective training program
- Pursue legislative modifications to the five-year rule, which generally limits staff to five-year appointments
- Implement development of a leadership continuum for agency supervisors
- Work with agency supervisors to develop individual development plans for staff
- Review and standardize the onboarding process for all staff, including office/post-based orientation and training beyond new employee orientation
- Implement a mentoring and coaching program for all agency staff, including a component designed for host country national staff that focuses on effective strategies for advancing their careers and for working with Volunteers
- Encourage cross-training to provide coverage and continuity of operations
- Identify agencywide training requirements and costs to develop a disciplined training budget
- Establish a pool of trained staff with the requisite clearances who are prepared to fill vacancies if overseas staff in critical positions leave unexpectedly
- Modify policy to require the development of transition documents by departing staff during the off-boarding process
- Reduce prolonged overseas staffing vacancies at posts
- Improve the off-boarding process by collaborating with federal government employers to place staff with non-competitive eligibility
- Develop a strategy for improving the retention of training staff

- Experiment with providing year-round employment opportunities for temporary host country national staff in high-turnover positions
- Increase online training to expand learning opportunities for domestic and overseas staff
- Improve the efficiency of routine tasks by developing a repository of standard operating procedures and templates for post operations
- Modify agency policy to enable managers to provide employees with early notification regarding potential extensions to their term appointments to aid in retention

External Factors: The law that generally limits staff to five-year appointments produces significant transaction costs and creates challenges to building a high-performing learning organization.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 9.1: Improve Staff Training

Increase the percentage of staff satisfied¹ with the training they received to do their job to 62 percent by FY 2018

		FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target ²		--	--	--	54%	56%	58%	60%	62%
Result	U.S. direct hire staff	50%	50%	57%	55%				
	Host country staff	--	--	--	62%				

¹Includes the top two positive response options on a five-point balanced scale.

²The FY 2014 target only applies to U.S. direct hire staff and was based on actual results from the Employee Viewpoint Survey. Based on the collection of baseline data from host country staff through the Host Country Staff Survey (shaded in gray), targets for FY 2015 and beyond apply to both U.S. direct hire and host country staff.

An increase in staff satisfaction related to staff training indicates that staff are being provided the tools and training to do their job effectively and to develop professionally.

Data Sources: Employee Viewpoint Survey and Host Country Staff Survey

Lead Offices: Office of Human Resources Management, Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

Performance Goal 9.2: Increase Staff Tenure

Increase the average tenure of U.S. direct hire staff to 4 years by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	--	4 years
Result	--	3.3 years	4.1 years	3.7 years		

Due to the law that generally limits staff appointments to five years, the agency works to retain high-performing employees for as long as possible and to minimize staffing gaps.

Data Source: Peace Corps database (NFC)

Lead Office: Office of Human Resources Management

Strategic Objective 10: Global Connectivity

Enable seamless communication and collaboration for all Volunteers and staff by modernizing and integrating information technology systems and leveraging the innovation of Volunteers and staff in the field (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: Information technology (IT) is changing rapidly; often, Volunteers in the field and their local partners are using a broader spectrum of technologies than the Peace Corps can support. At the same time, the agency maintains several legacy applications to manage information at headquarters and overseas posts that no longer meet the evolving needs of the Peace Corps. The confluence of these factors produces inefficiencies in how Volunteers and staff communicate and collaborate, inhibiting the agency's ability to advance its mission. A globally connected agency, supported by a flexible IT system and invigorated by field-based experimentation and problem solving, will leverage modern technology to break down barriers to communication and collaboration.

Strategies and Activities:

- Build modern tracking, analysis, and reporting applications that enable easy database maintenance, data integration, and data access
- Modernize the Peace Corps Intranet to improve information sharing among staff
- Create a consolidated Volunteer, returned Volunteer, and staff contact database to improve data quality and access to contact information
- Establish a clearly defined, transparent risk assessment strategy related to new information technology projects and archive decisions for reference
- Provide guidance, training, and access to staff on new methods of communication commonly used by Volunteers, such as social media, to facilitate communication and collaboration
- Design flexible systems, platforms, and processes to be compatible with evolving technology (e.g., mobile devices)
- Support the development of Volunteer-driven solutions, such as those from the Peace Corps Innovation Challenge and other crowd-sourcing activities, to improve how the agency uses technology to deliver on its mission
- Encourage the use of PCLive as the Peace Corps' knowledge-sharing platform for Volunteers and staff to manage project and administrative content and identify promising practices

External Factors: A major IT challenge for the Peace Corps is to utilize rapidly evolving technology, such as mobile technology, to increase communication and collaboration among Volunteers, posts, and headquarters while maintaining operational stability, security, and reliability in a complex operational and regulatory environment.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 10.1: Develop an Integrated Technology Platform

Retire all legacy applications and consolidate functions into an integrated platform by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Target	--	--	--	10%	30%	50%	70%	100%
Result	--	--	--	15%				

Through the Platform Modernization project, legacy applications will be retired and their functions consolidated into a common, integrated platform. The project will improve data quality and facilitate increased access to data to meet the evolving information needs of the agency.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer

Performance Goal 10.2: Facilitate Knowledge Sharing

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report that they use the digital materials provided by the Peace Corps in their work to 85 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	--	80%	85%
Result	--	--	--	77%		

With the spread of Internet and mobile technology to many of the communities where Volunteers serve, Volunteers can collaborate with peers across projects, communities, countries, and the world. Access to digital resources through knowledge-sharing platforms facilitates this collaboration by enabling both Volunteers and staff to store and search for specific project information. As a result, Volunteers and staff can build upon already successful projects and strategies. PCLive is the Peace Corps' primary knowledge and information exchange platform for Volunteers and staff.

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

Lead Office: Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

Strategic Objective 11: Measurement for Results

Advance the agency's ability to measure progress, improve performance, and demonstrate impact through integrated monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices (Supports Strategic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Rationale: Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices are conducted at all levels within the agency. A coherent, integrated approach that combines training, regular reviews of ongoing programs, the collection of baseline data, and well-documented pilots will provide staff with rigorous, high-quality data. That data can then be used to inform decision-making at both the program and agency level, identify promising practices, foster transparency, and advance performance improvement.

Strategies and Activities:

- Develop an agency-level evaluation agenda each fiscal year to lay out the priorities for further exploring major management and performance challenges
- Fully implement the agencywide Evaluation Framework to provide guidance to posts and headquarters offices on monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices, including piloting and experimentation parameters
- Provide monitoring, reporting, and evaluation training to Volunteers, overseas staff, and counterparts
- Develop the analytical skills of headquarters and overseas staff responsible for data analysis by modifying the requirements for key positions when recruiting for new positions or backfilling positions and by providing targeted training on analytical competencies
- Collect or construct baseline data prior to new country entries and the initiation of new projects to assess Volunteer impact
- Expand access to timely and high-quality data through the development of new data sources, the improvement of existing data sources, and the simplification of reports and products

External Factors: The federal government and the international development community have significantly expanded their emphasis on the use of research and evaluation for evidence-based decision making—supported by recent Executive Orders, the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, and directives from the Office of Management and Budget. Further, during a time of fiscal challenges, federal agencies are expected to clearly demonstrate the impact of their programs.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 11.1: Conduct Baselines

Increase the percentage of new country entries and new Volunteer project frameworks where baseline data has been collected or compiled to 100 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	50%	75%	100%
Result	--	--	--	0%		

Conducting baseline surveys or compiling baseline data from partner organizations, when combined with post-based intervention measurements, will allow the agency to demonstrate with confidence the impact of Volunteers on specific projects.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Offices: Office of Global Operations; Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning

Performance Goal 11.2: Increase Evidence-Based Decisions

Increase the percentage of posts and headquarters offices that demonstrate the use of evidence in program, policy, and/or budget decisions to 100 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Target	--	--	--	50%	75%	100%
Result	--	--	--	68%		

An increase in the use of evidence in decision-making will help posts and headquarters offices improve program performance and make more cost-effective decisions.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Office: Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning

Performance Goal 11.3: Using Evidence to Encourage Innovation

Increase the percentage of pilots conducted by posts and headquarters offices that include structured monitoring and assessment methods to 100 percent by FY 2017

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Target	--	--	--	--	50%	75%	100%
Result	--	--	--	--			

Pilot testing and experimentation encourages the development of innovative solutions to enhance the impact of the Volunteers and to address persistent and emerging operational challenges. The use of standard criteria and rigorous measurement will enable the agency to learn from these pilots and determine if the new approaches should be fully adopted.

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

Lead Office: Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning

Appendix A: Performance Management System

The goals, objectives, and strategies included in the FY 2014–18 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 deputy director serves as the chief operating officer and oversees the agency's performance management efforts. The Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) is responsible for strategic and performance planning and reporting and works closely with offices across the agency to collect and analyze data to improve agency operations. The director of OSIRP serves as the performance improvement officer for the agency. The agency actively participates in the federal government's Performance Improvement Council and the Small Agency Council's Performance Improvement Committee to contribute to and stay current with governmentwide performance improvement guidelines and best practices.

Several processes occur throughout the year to ensure activities align with the goals in the Strategic Plan: Evidence and data are available and used by agency leadership, managers, and staff to inform program, policy, and budget decisions and, opportunities for performance improvement are identified, tracked, and executed.

- **Integrated Planning and Budget System.** Through the Integrated Planning and Budget System (IPBS), headquarters offices and overseas posts develop strategic and operational plans to ensure their activities are aligned with and advance the agency's strategic goals. IPBS plans are developed during the agency's budget formulation process; budgets are informed by the resource requirements of the IPBS plans. Through the IPBS, the agency is working to better link performance and budgeting processes to ensure decision makers have the appropriate information to inform program, policy, and budget decisions.
- **Country Portfolio Review.** Each year, the agency conducts a comprehensive review of active and potential Peace Corps posts based on external and internal data. The Country Portfolio Review informs decisions about new country entries, country graduations (closures), and the allocation of Volunteers and other resources.
- **Quarterly Strategic Plan performance reviews.** Key officials from across the agency, including senior leadership, review performance data at the end of each quarter to share best practices and develop strategies to meet performance targets when areas for improvement are identified. A performance spotlight is identified during each quarterly meeting to highlight a particularly noteworthy use of data in program, policy, or budget decisions.
- **Annual strategic review.** Each year, the agency conducts an annual strategic review to assess the progress made on achieving the strategic objectives in the Strategic Plan. This exercise is based on IPBS submissions from every office and post and engages Peace Corps' senior leadership in a comprehensive performance review that informs annual planning and budget formulation, sets performance improvement areas for the year, and identifies potential evaluation topics to better understand the effectiveness of agency activities.

Appendix B: Evaluation and Research

The Peace Corps is deeply committed to performance improvement through the use of high-quality data and evidence. Evaluation and research activities are conducted at overseas posts and in a variety of headquarters offices to draw conclusions from existing evidence and to develop new sources of data to better understand performance challenges and improve operations.

Evaluations and other reporting are at www.peacecorps.gov/open/evaluations/. The Peace Corps Office of Inspector General also conducts a variety of audits and evaluations, which can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/about/leadership/inspgen/reports/.

The use of evidence in the development of agency goals

The agency employed an evidence-based approach throughout the process of selecting the goals and objectives in the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan. The agency developed or utilized evidence to inform the process through the following activities:

- **Review of existing studies.** The agency reviewed more than 40 internal and external reports and studies—including the Comprehensive Agency Assessment, host country impact studies, and Peace Corps Office of Inspector General audits and evaluations—to identify recurring challenges facing the Peace Corps as well as promising opportunities for improvement.
- **In-depth interviews.** The agency conducted over 50 individual interviews with agency employees to identify common performance themes. The agency also held conversations with returned Volunteers and overseas staff during scheduled conferences.
- **Agency work groups.** The agency convened over a dozen working groups comprised of senior managers and technical specialists from headquarters offices, overseas posts, and regional recruitment offices. More than 100 employees applied their unique technical skills and personal experience with the Peace Corps to analyze existing data on performance challenges, identify and prioritize potential goals and objectives, and detail the strategies and activities needed to address agency challenges.
- **Fieldwork at overseas posts.** Staff conducted interviews, observed Volunteer and staff operations, and held focused discussions in Morocco, Senegal, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ukraine, and Panama to gather the perspectives of overseas U.S. direct hire and host country staff, Volunteers, and beneficiaries.
- **Analysis of existing Peace Corps data sources.** The agency utilized several internal data sources to develop agency goals. For example, the agency analyzed Annual Volunteer Survey data—such as data on safety and security, health care, the site development process, access to communication technology, and Volunteer counterparts—to develop performance goals and inform strategies and activities to advance agency goals. Administrative data on posts’ use of standard sector indicators were utilized to determine which measures would best demonstrate the development impact of Volunteers. The agency analyzed data from a counterpart survey pilot to determine performance goals related to Volunteers’ contribution to local development and to the promotion of a better understanding of Americans.

The development of new sources of evidence

The Peace Corps continues to expand its evaluation and research capabilities to satisfy a growing demand, both internally and externally, for evidence to support critical decisions and to better demonstrate the impact of the Volunteers and the effectiveness of agency operations. The agency's evaluation framework, finalized in FY 2013, provides the agency with a systematic framework for conducting evaluation and research activities across the agency. Strategic Objective 11 (Measurement for Results) in the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan further demonstrates the agency's focus on improving and expanding its monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices.

Efforts to enhance the use of existing data and to build the Peace Corps' evidence base will be supported by an increase in evaluation staff resources and improvements in the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation training and tools available to Volunteers and staff. New evidence will be used to inform agency decisions through the existing performance management processes detailed in Appendix A.

New sources of evidence include the following:

- **Global Counterpart Survey.** The Global Counterpart Survey was launched in FY 2014 to gather feedback on the impact of Volunteers on local development outcomes and building a better understanding of Americans from the perspective of Volunteers' primary work partners. The survey is administered continuously and throughout the year by overseas staff during regularly scheduled site visits. When fully implemented, the Global Counterpart Survey will provide the agency with timely and actionable information on the impact of Volunteers directly from the individuals that work and interact with Volunteers most frequently.
- **Host Country Staff Survey.** While the majority of U.S. direct hire staff domestically and abroad are limited to five-year appointments, host country national staff are often employed for many years and thus constitute the institutional memory at overseas posts. However, the Peace Corps has not conducted a regular survey to collect the viewpoints of these critical staff. In FY 2014, the agency initiated the Host Country Staff Survey, modeled on the Employee Viewpoint Survey administered to federal government employees annually. The survey provides data that informs the agency on how best to foster an inclusive and satisfying work environment and support the professional development of host country national staff.
- **Annual agencywide evaluation agenda.** Each year, the Peace Corps develops an agency-level evaluation agenda based on the results of the annual strategic review, the identification of topics through the quarterly strategic plan performance review process, and agency priorities and interests. Anticipated evaluation topics include an evaluation of the new business processes for Volunteer recruitment, performance evaluations on agency performance goals in which insufficient progress has been made, and a usage study of Volunteer project monitoring tools such as the Volunteer Reporting Tool. The annual agencywide evaluation agenda produces evidence about the effectiveness of agency operations.
- **Impact evaluations.** In FY 2014, the agency conducted a baseline data collection project in Kosovo. This represented a rare opportunity to collect baseline data in a country that has never before hosted Peace Corps Volunteers. When coupled with endline data collected after host country individuals and communities have interacted with Volunteers for a sustained period of time, this baseline data collection effort will allow the agency to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation on the effect of Volunteers on local development outcomes and building a better understanding of Americans. The agency plans to conduct

similar baseline data collection activities in other new country entries and when posts introduce a new Volunteer sector. The agency will also conduct structured pilots to test new approaches to increasing the impact of Volunteers and to solving management challenges.

- **Volunteer Reporting Tool.** Since FY 2008, Volunteers have been reporting on their activities electronically through the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). In conjunction with the wholesale revision of Volunteer project frameworks through the Focus-In/Train-Up strategy, a major redesign of the VRT was completed in FY 2014. The redesigned VRT includes an intuitive user interface, allows for the global aggregation of Volunteer activity data, and provides for better data quality. As a result of the improved VRT and revision of Volunteer project frameworks, Volunteers will be able to report on standard indicators for each sector that are consistent with and can contribute to the development indicators of the agency's strategic partners, such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and Feed the Future. When the redesigned VRT is fully implemented, more data will be collected on Volunteer activities and their outcomes which can be more easily monitored, analyzed, and reported to demonstrate the impact of Volunteers.

Appendix C: Verification and Validation of Performance Data

The performance data included in the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan are based on reliable and valid data that are complete as of the submission of this document.

Data collection and reporting consistency is ensured by the use of detailed performance goal data reference sheets which include operational definitions, data sources, and a comprehensive methodology for measuring each performance goal. The agency ensures the data are complete and accurate through oversight and review by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning. The major data sources for performance goals in the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan are detailed below.

Annual Volunteer Survey

The Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) is an anonymous, voluntary online survey of all currently serving 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.

The 2014 AVS was fielded from June 9–August 15, 2014, and 91 percent of Volunteers completed the survey. The high response rate from Volunteers minimizes total survey error at the global level. The survey is not, however, administered to a random sample of Volunteers. As with other non-randomized surveys, the AVS is subject to non-response bias.

The demographic profile of the survey respondents is representative of the Volunteer population on key characteristics: age, gender, length of stay in country, project sector, and status as a Volunteer. Responses to all AVS questions were directly provided by the Volunteers and housed in an external, electronic survey database. To ensure data quality, rigorous data cleaning procedures were applied to the dataset prior to analysis. Analyzed data were used to inform agency leadership about the Volunteers' perspectives on key issues. The high response rate from Volunteers and the data verification and validation measures utilized ensure the high level of AVS data accuracy needed for its intended use.

The AVS reflects the experiences and opinions of Volunteers at a fixed point in time and can be influenced by various factors, such as major external events or the ability to recall information. The agency takes into consideration both statistical and practical significance to account for variation in AVS results from year to year. Thus, nominal percentage point movements may not be practically meaningful or significant. In using AVS results, the agency reviews longer-term trends to account for normal, expected variations in responses.

The AVS questionnaire underwent a significant redesign in 2014 to improve data quality and strengthen respondent confidentiality. The questionnaire length was significantly reduced—from 105 questions in 2013 to 55 questions in 2014—in order to improve data quality and the survey-taking experience. A detailed analysis of previous years' data, matched with best practices from the survey research field, guided the redesign decisions. Questions that were highly correlated, that posed respondent confidentiality concerns, and that typical respondents would not have adequate knowledge to answer were excluded from this year's survey.

To reduce measurement error and follow best survey research practices, adjectival scales (unbalanced unipolar), which had been intended to measure attributes that are bipolar in nature, were changed to more accurate Likert scales (balanced bipolar) in 2014. Adjectival scales were first introduced in the Annual Volunteer Survey questionnaire in 2010; prior to that, survey questionnaires primarily consisted of visual analog scales with only the end points labeled. The change from unbalanced to balanced scales affected 18 questions in the 55-question instrument.

To strengthen respondent confidentiality, all demographic questions were moved to the end of the survey. This change allowed respondents to make an informed decision about disclosing their optional demographic data after having answered all of the substantive questions on the survey. Consequently, the data quality of survey responses to non-demographic questions was expected to improve.

Due to these improvements to the AVS, results from prior years may not be directly comparable to results in FY 2014 and future years. Changing from unbalanced to balanced scales has the effect of drawing respondents from an unbalanced center point into well-defined scale points on either side. While the agency is not able to quantify the effect of this change on the survey results, it is clear that FY 2014 results are consistently more positive than previous year results. This may be result of the 2014 redesign (including the modification of the response scales, improvements to respondent confidentiality, and the reduction of the length of the questionnaire) and/or the implementation of agency strategies to achieve performance goals.

Peace Corps databases

The agency maintains several database systems to collect Volunteer and program information. In order to maintain data integrity and ensure that the appropriate data entry methodology is followed, only authorized staff who have been properly trained can access key systems. Regular reconciliation processes among agency units enable users to verify and test performance data to isolate and correct data entry or transfer errors. Internal, automated system processes also ensure data is appropriately transferred among different applications. The required level of accuracy to provide current and historical information about programs and Volunteers is met through database rules and business processes. Where data limitations do exist, largely due to data-entry compliance in isolated systems, they are noted in the appropriate performance goal section.

Peace Corps administrative records

The agency collects data annually from headquarters offices and overseas posts that do not exist in a centrally managed database through an online data call (survey). Responses are housed in an external, electronic database. Data cleaning procedures are applied to the dataset prior to analysis. Staff in positions of leadership at all overseas posts and headquarters offices are required to complete the survey. The survey is designed with clear logic and data validation rules to minimize data entry error. The data are independently reviewed by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning and anomalies are addressed to improve data quality. Other data are collected from specific headquarters offices individually.

While these administrative records do not have the benefit of the verification and validation standards executed in Peace Corps database systems, the agency is able to ensure a high level of accuracy by working with individual offices and posts to develop reliable data collection and analysis procedures.

Employee Viewpoint Survey

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

The demographic profile of survey respondents is consistently representative of the U.S. direct hire staff. In 2014, 93 percent of employees completed the survey. The survey is administered electronically, and questions are modeled on 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 non-response bias. Additionally, the survey represents the views of employees at a fixed point in time and can be influenced by external factors. The agency accounts for these data limitations by drawing conclusions from multiyear trends and by comparing the results with those from other federal agencies.

Volunteer Reporting Tool

Volunteers report on their work and the progress they are making toward their project outcomes through the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). The VRT is also utilized to report on Volunteers' contributions to agency strategic partners, such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and Feed the Future.

Since the development of the first version of the VRT, the agency has made numerous enhancements to improve the user experience, reduce data entry errors, and improve reporting. Volunteer reports are submitted to overseas post staff through the VRT on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. Staff review all reports and work with Volunteers to verify data and correct anomalies prior to end-of-year analysis. The agency provides in-depth VRT training and support to Volunteers and staff to ensure data are collected, analyzed, and reported properly. The agency has also developed data collection tools for the project indicators related to performance goal 3.1 to standardize the methods that Volunteers use to collect data prior to entry into the VRT.

The primary data quality challenge that remains is ensuring an adequate percentage of Volunteers report on the project indicators related to performance goal 3.1. The agency is addressing this challenge by working with overseas posts to encourage higher reporting rates and by appropriately documenting and considering reporting rates when conducting analyses.

Global Counterpart Survey

The first Global Counterpart Survey was launched in FY 2014 and consists of a short interview of Volunteers' primary work partners administered by overseas staff. The 20-question survey is designed to provide information on the impact of Volunteers on local communities from the perspectives of the individuals with whom Volunteers work most closely. The survey is administered continuously throughout the year by overseas staff during regularly scheduled site visits.

Data quality challenges include potential interviewer error and ambiguity in the total survey population. The interviews are conducted by staff experienced in project fieldwork and counterpart communication but who may not have extensive survey interviewing and data collection experience. Issues of translation, variation in interview styles, and accuracy of coding may have unpredictable influences on the results. The agency is addressing this challenge by providing tools, training, and support to staff and by closely monitoring survey results to identify inconsistencies.

Determining the survey population is a challenge. There are multiple utilizations and interpretations of the title “counterpart” across the agency, which will influence the survey population. To address this, the agency has defined counterpart as the Volunteer’s primary work partner for his or her primary project. For the purposes of performance goals 3.2 and 4.1, it is assumed that each Volunteer will have one official counterpart. The agency will track survey responses and explore instances in which a post reports more counterparts than Volunteers who served during that time period.

Host Country Staff Survey

The first systematic, global survey of Peace Corps host country staff was launched in FY 2014. The Host Country Staff Survey is a short, confidential, voluntary survey designed to gather input from host country staff for two performance goals in the agency’s strategic plan. The survey was administered online from July 31 to September 2, 2014 and was completed by 37 percent of the total host country staff population. The survey included eight questions covering topics related to building an agency more inclusive of diversity and understanding staff training needs. In future years, the agency expects to expand the survey to include additional questions to more fully capture the perspectives of host country staff on a range of topics related to post operations and support.

The primary data quality challenge with the survey in FY 2014 was the development of the sampling frame. Identifying and contacting all host country staff proved difficult; some staff members in administrative or support positions did not have official email addresses. Due to this challenge, the sampling frame only consisted of the host country staff who could be reached via email (approximately 1,850 out of 2,900 staff). Of those reached, 58 percent of the host country staff responded to the survey. Additionally, lack of computer access, differing levels of familiarity with online survey tools, and limited English ability for some staff may have contributed to non-response bias. Moving forward, the agency will explore additional methods of survey administration, such as supplementing online surveying with paper surveys and developing questionnaires in additional languages, to facilitate the participation of more host country staff.

Appendix D: Stakeholder Engagement

The Peace Corps utilized a highly participatory and inclusive process to develop a strategic plan that includes input from a wide array of key stakeholders. The agency conducted dozens of meetings, interviews, and focused discussions with key headquarters and field-based staff, host country national staff, Volunteers, and beneficiaries to develop the goals, objectives, and strategies in the strategic plan. The agency also reached out to the returned Volunteer community and key strategic partners to ensure their inclusion in the consultative process.

The agency posted a preliminary draft of the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan on its public website from November 8–December 2, 2013, to collect feedback from returned Volunteers, the agency’s strategic partners, and the general public. The feedback from stakeholders was incorporated into the strategic plan as appropriate.

Congressional consultation

In September 2012, the agency conducted outreach to the appropriate Congressional committees based on the FY 2009–14 Strategic Plan. In October 2013, the draft FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan was sent to the Peace Corps’ authorizing, oversight, and appropriations committees for their review and comments. The agency engages in ongoing discussions with Congressional offices on issues of policy and budget importance and takes the views of Congress into consideration in its strategic planning.



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