TOOLS FOR INNOVATION PROGRAMMING

Acceleration Toolkit
About the USAID U.S. Global Development Lab

USAID’s legacy of developing and implementing innovative breakthroughs—from the seeds of the green revolution, to microfinance and oral rehydration therapy—has saved lives, created economic opportunity, and advanced human development. For the first time in history, we have the scientific and technological tools to put an end to extreme poverty and its most devastating consequences within the next two decades.

Building on the belief that science, technology, innovation and partnership can accelerate development impact faster, cheaper, and more sustainably, USAID established the U.S. Global Development Lab (The Lab) in April 2014. The Lab is designed to experiment and test new ideas, models, interventions, and approaches and to accelerate the ones that work across the Agency and in Missions around the world.

The Lab’s mission is twofold:

• To produce breakthrough development innovations by sourcing, testing, and scaling proven solutions to reach hundreds of millions of people.
• To accelerate the transformation of the development enterprise by opening development to people everywhere with good ideas, promoting new and deepening existing partnerships, bringing data and evidence to bear, and harnessing scientific and technological advances.

To learn more about The Lab, visit: www.usaid.gov/GlobalDevLab

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The USAID Tools for Innovation Programming were written and developed by Rebecca Askin, of Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI). The tools offer insights, processes, and guidance based on USAID’s experiences designing and implementing open innovation programs in The Lab and technical bureaus in USAID/Washington.

This collection of tools was informed by in-depth interviews and discussions with the champions and the managers of the following USAID programs: Securing Water for Food: A Grand Challenge for Development; All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development; Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development; Powering Agriculture: A Grand Challenge for Development; Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN); and Development Innovation Ventures (DIV).

Recognition and thanks the following individuals in The Lab who gave ideas, contributions, and comments during the drafting process: Dave Ferguson, Lanakila McMahan, Seema Patel, Lynlee Tanner Stapleton, Maurice Kent, Jarah Meador, Grace Hoerner, Chad Dear, Wes Day, Tony Bloome, Karen Clune, Marissa Leffler, Wendy Taylor, Ticora Jones, Michelle Jones, Jeffrey Haeni, Jeremy Foster, Jami Rodger, Sara Cardelle, Matt Corso, and Alexis Bonnell.

Special thanks to DAI’s Meredith Perry, primary author of the Prize Toolkit and Platform Toolkit; Nathan Wyeth, primary author of the Acceleration Toolkit; and Lorin Kavanaugh-Ulku, primary author of the Communications Toolkit.

Thanks also to Kristi Ragan, Nora Brown, Nick Brown, Lauren Yang, Carol Chanick, Pierce McManus, Bryan Gerhart, Tamara Stanton, and Ilirjana Dana-Tahmazi of the DAI team, all of whom read versions of these tools and made helpful contributions to their development.
The U.S. Global Development Lab’s overall objective is to harness the power of science, technology, innovation, and partnerships (STIP) to source and scale breakthrough innovations that achieve foreign policy and development goals. The support USAID provides for these innovations in the form of funding, technical assistance, and new connections is intended to help develop, test, and iterate faster, better, and cheaper. This is called “acceleration” and the goal is to accelerate failure and subsequent pivoting or accelerate success and potential for wide scale growth and adoption.

This Toolkit lays out strategies and options for incorporating acceleration activities alongside award funding to help innovations progress along their pathway to growth. This document explains and offers guidance on:

- **Supporting Innovators**: Identifying characteristics of innovations and conducting needs-finding to understand the range of barriers that innovators face to reach success in their endeavors.

- **Structuring Grants Management**: Preparing for the unpredictable, building trust, making strategic choices about resources, and segmenting innovator cohorts.

- **Range of Acceleration Options**: Identifying acceleration activities that can be matched to innovator needs and identifying acceleration partners who can help implement these activities.

**WHAT IS ACCELERATION?**

**Acceleration** is about equipping high-potential innovators with the strategies, knowledge, capacities, relationships, and other tools to achieve their goals. When done well, acceleration support enables innovators to achieve goals faster, to make rapid course corrections when failure is encountered, and to build on success to grow their innovation further.

Awardees of USAID’s innovation programs are developing and testing new innovations, whether as a venture or a new program within established organizations. Deploying new innovations can be an unpredictable and long
process but if these efforts do not achieve a certain level of success with their initial grant funding or start-up capital, they may cease to exist or may not be able to take their innovations and learning forward. Acceleration is thus a way to help ensure that innovations move quickly along the optimal path, whether they fail or succeed.

Potential acceleration activities and support for awardees through a USAID innovation program include:

- Funding through grant or prize award
- Capacity building and training opportunities
- Market research and demand assessment
- Start-up support for early stage innovations
- Opportunities for product testing and consumer feedback for rapid iteration
- PR and communications support
- Facilitated networking and connections to peers, corporates, mentors and technical experts
- Evidence gathering and impact assessments for making the case to new investors or customers
- Access to investors and investor networks

In the last few years, USAID has experimented in providing acceleration support for innovators using many different approaches under these open innovation programs and initiatives:

*Development Innovation Ventures (DIV)* incentivizes innovators to leverage impact analysis to test and refine innovations. [www.usaid.gov/div](http://www.usaid.gov/div)

*LAUNCH* experiments with network driven acceleration through forums and mentor councils. [www.launch.org/](http://www.launch.org/)

*Higher Education Solution Network (HESN)* provides a variety of acceleration services through the university labs including prototype testing, independent product evaluation, and virtual acceleration, networking, and mentoring. [www.usaid.gov/hesn](http://www.usaid.gov/hesn)

*Saving Lives at Birth (SL@B)* Grand Challenges for Development (GCD) piloted a scaling strategy workshop for innovators in partnership with the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA).

*Powering Agriculture* Grand Challenges for Development (GCD) implemented an acceleration forum that convened experts with ground-level experience to provide scaling advice and facilitate mentor relationships.

*Securing Water for Food (SWFF)* Grand Challenges for Development (GCD) has a technical assistance facility to provide acceleration support to awardees to help them reach their implementation goals and milestones.
MOVING ALONG THE PATHWAY TO SCALE

USAID’s programs source and support innovations at varying stages, from development to initial piloting, to early adoption, to transition to scale, to global adoption. Most program portfolios are composed of awards for innovations in the early stages of development and initial piloting, followed by the early adoption stage, and a small percent at the transition to scale stage. The goals for growth and scale vary from stage to stage and acceleration support should be designed to match accordingly.

For program awardees with an innovation at the development stage, implementation is focused on early ideation and prototyping to test technical efficacy of a product or approach. With the goal of progressing from development on to proof of concept and initial piloting, the awardee is unlikely to be ready for a full suite of acceleration activities.

For program awardees with an innovation at the early adoption stage, implementation is focused on establishing evidence of impact, growing distribution, or deploying the innovation. In this case, targeted acceleration support can play an essential role to help an awardee prepare for, manage, and succeed at a rapid pace.

When the goal is to reach scale, distribution and deployment must achieve extraordinary growth rates for a sustained period of time. For example, achieving a 10% growth rate annually over ten years for a small enterprise may be considered a dramatic success for a USAID enterprise development program, more than doubling the size of the business during that time. By contrast, for a USAID innovation program with an awardee piloting an innovation in a market for the very first time, perhaps starting with only dozens or hundreds of beneficiaries or end-users, the growth rate from this pilot stage must be much higher in order to reach large numbers of people. If the goal is to achieve delivery of a new essential service to hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people, starting at a pilot level of 100 beneficiaries and achieving 10% growth for the same period of time will result in minimal penetration relative to solving a global development barrier. For an innovation to reach even 50,000 people, on average distribution must double each year for ten years (see Figure 1: Year on Year Growth). While it is more feasible to achieve rapid growth from a small base and grow at a slower pace after that, it is critical to prepare the awardee to drive high growth in distribution of the innovation in order to reach globally-significant scale.

FIGURE 1: YEAR ON YEAR GROWTH
Supporting Innovations

INNOVATOR CHARACTERISTICS

While programs make awards to a diverse range of organizations and innovations at varying stages (illustrated in Figure 2: Stages of Innovation in Lab’s Programs’ Pipeline), there are characteristics that distinguish programs supporting experimental innovations from other types of development projects.

FIGURE 2: STAGES OF INNOVATION IN LAB PROGRAMS’ PIPELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIPELINE STAGE</th>
<th>STAGE DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1:</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>Initial Piloting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>Early Adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4:</td>
<td>Transition to Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5:</td>
<td>Global Adoption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Varying Forms

Programs will source and support innovations that may be developed and distributed by a range of organizations, including nonprofits, for-profits, startups, companies, governments, or partnerships between multiple organizations. The innovations themselves may take many forms, a new product, service, practice or business model, each of which will have different paths for growth and distribution depending on the customer and end user. As a result, no single acceleration program will fit all innovators. A menu of options for acceleration activities are explored in this document.

Unpredictable Path

The path from developing to deploying and then scaling the adoption or distribution of a new approach, business model, or technology can be long and is almost certain to be unpredictable. Distribution might scale through revenue-based growth, financed growth, franchising, licensing, strategic sale, joint ventures, spinning out new entities, or a combination of several of the above methods. Distribution could also be achieved in an open-IP (intellectual property) context by adoption by multiple players within a broader sector, or by donors and governments. It is not possible to anticipate at the outset the adaptations and shifts that must be made to successfully deploy an innovation in a developing country setting, let alone the factors necessary to scale its distribution.

Need to Learn from Failures

As innovations progress along an unpredictable path, attempted approaches will fail. This should be expected; organizations do best when recognizing failure quickly and maximizing learning so that new and better approaches can be implemented as rapidly as possible.
Under-Resourced Teams
Relative to organizations implementing well-understood and proven approaches, an awardee may lack the critical skill sets required to achieve the goal of scaling their innovation. This may be due to an innovator having specific technical expertise but not familiarity with business models, or vice versa; it may be because innovations are developed outside the markets in which they are deployed. This means, in application, that international innovators may not have significant local knowledge about the markets they wish to enter; or an innovator is an expert in the technology being deployed but lacks the business skills required to manage growth.

System Barriers
Many innovations are confronted by systemic challenges. These include breaking into new markets, working within established infrastructure and industry chain relationships, challenging incumbent competitors, modifying existing industry practices and supply chains, changing consumer behaviors, and overcoming barriers created by regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, USAID innovators frequently work in places with difficult business and financial environments, poor communications and transportation infrastructure, uncertain regulations, high levels of corruption and other challenges—the most difficult markets in the world in which to do business.

Enabling Environment for Your Innovation to Scale
Applicants to the Securing Water for Food (SWFF) GCD were asked to characterize the systems barriers to scale, the enabling environment for scale (not only legal and regulatory, but also social, behavioral, industrial, and environmental), and to identify elements that could eventually hinder uptake and adoption.

The responses were varied and fascinating. In no case did an applicant say that it had no significant barriers to overcome. Barriers included: competing with government subsidized equipment providers, difficulty enforcing contracts, shallow intellectual property protection, import substitution, unattractive foreign direct investment laws, potentially difficult social or cultural acceptance of a new product or service, laws that prohibit the use of satellites which limit global positioning system enabled technology, utility permitting requirements, land tenure, political instability, government subsidized utilities (electricity, water) that create market distortions, and severely outdated agricultural extension services. In all of these cases, USAID and its partners can play a role in helping overcome these key system challenges that could mean the difference between impact and failure for an innovation.

IDENTIFYING & ASSESSING AREAS OF NEED
Innovations follow a unique and unpredictable path from development to successful implementation but at any given stage their needs will likely fall into areas that can be anticipated and resourced. These include:

- Understanding intended markets and developing product-market fit
- Identifying and securing customers and/or users
- Building internal systems suitable for the innovation to scale
- Accessing finance or funding
- Building a quality team with technical, regulatory and business expertise
- Operationalizing manufacturing/production/development of products or projects and creating/identifying distribution channels as applicable
While the competition's application requirements should include highlights for an implementation plan, organizational strengths, and intended markets, USAID program teams should be prepared to proactively undertake needs-finding activities to discover weak spots that might pose risk to the success and growth of the innovation. Working with awardees, program teams can use needs assessments to determine what types of acceleration support activities might be most beneficial for the organizations, including:

- **Strategy and business model:** Identify and connect innovator with appropriate business experts to design flexible business model capable of attracting financing and steering growth. Work with and support innovator to identify potential pathways to growth, to set and achieve scale goals, and to align implementation approach.

- **Organizational Support:** Support innovator to attract and retain the right people for the job. This can include on-the-job training, management, financial and professional development training.

- **Access to experts and specialists:** Provide access to relevant experts/mentors/partners in technical, geographic, sector, cultural areas.

- **Prototyping, testing, iterating, refining:** Provide access to potential users and focus groups. Emphasize improved measurement and evaluation to inform next iteration of the innovation and on identifying feedback loops in design process.

- **End-user expertise:** Funding for an innovator to gather data on end-users. This can include community adaptation and integration, market research, user-centered design, product/service integration, maintenance and training.

- **Logistics-Production/Supply Chain/Distribution:** Funding for or encouraging an innovator to gather data on import and export, distribution, supply chain, local/nonlocal manufacturing, tariffs, last mile.

- **Access to finance:** Identify opportunities for additional funding (investment, grants, donations, revenue). This can also include evaluation experts to help make the case for the innovation’s potential impact.

- **PR/ Branding / Marketing:** Funding for or encouraging an innovator to communications experts, PR opportunities, media training, storytelling, marketing, driving demand, and increasing visibility.

Successfully evaluating the needs of an awardee, before, after, or throughout the course of the award funding requires that a program team gain the trust of the awardee in order to receive accurate information and be able ask the right questions to identify needs that may not have been anticipated or previously considered.
As part of the preparation for the Powering Agriculture GCD’s Development Exchange in November 2013, Further by Design, Second Muse, and DAI (the selected service providers) designed and organized the event. Needs-finding interviews were conducted in order to design an agenda that would address the needs of the cohort.

For the All Children Reading GCD’s Innovators Startup Workshop in February 2015, the USAID program team brought in DAI as a service provider to help design and implement the “acceleration support” portion of the workshop. DAI administered a needs-assessment survey in order to structure and develop customized content for the “Grantee Acceleration Support” portion of the agenda.

The Securing Water for Food GCD outsourced acceleration support by designing a Technical Assistance Facility. The Kaizen Company is running the TA Facility and one of the first steps in scoping acceleration services for awardees was a needs-assessment survey.

All three of these needs finding tools are provided as examples in the Resources section.

Structuring Grant Management

**DEFINE SUCCESS BUT BE FLEXIBLE**

Innovation program awards are intended to be catalytic to support innovations that break new ground in their sectors or geographies. The results they obtain will often go in unanticipated directions and for this reason grants management should be dynamic and responsive to these shifts. A flexible approach to grant management on USAID’s part will help ensure that innovators are supported as their path evolves and that innovators are incentivized to pursue success, not just a rigid project plan.

For example, if a team implements a pilot and then adjusts their approach based on what they learn, their timeline or goals for the second pilot may change, the number of people their innovation aims to impact may change, or the product and approach may change all together. If done well, such an adjustment should be viewed as a success towards the long-term goal of identifying and applying the best possible approach for the innovation rather than as a failure to achieve project milestones as expeditiously as possible.

**BE PREPARED TO FOLLOW AN UNPREDICTABLE PATH**

Innovators are trying new approaches and business models when they first start out and may not know what they will need in order to succeed and what they are lacking (in terms of knowledge, technical expertise, and other resources). This is not for lack of preparation but because the process of entering new markets, finding the routes for success or scale, and then adapting a product to fit evolving consumer demands is unpredictable. After going through acceleration activities like needs assessments, strategy workshops, or peer learning, awardees may change their strategic plans, drop old priorities, and adopt new ones.

As a result, ongoing needs-assessments are essential and plans to address these needs should not be expected to remain static. Delivering the most helpful resources to an innovator may involve co-discovering what their needs are and this interaction requires a close relationship. Grant management should be structured to enable check-ins on needs. For example, an organization may identify a new need after running a pilot and determining that they need a new manufacturing partner, a new technical expert, or a different kind of implementing partner at the community level.
Designing Award Agreements that Align with Acceleration Activities
In most cases, awardees and the Agreement Officer from the USAID program team will set award terms (or “grant agreement”) based on what was proposed at the application stage. Consistent across the Lab’s innovation programs and across each program’s award terms is the inclusion of a work plan (based on the original application proposal), M&E plan (often co-developed by the Grant Manager and the awardee), and reports (e.g. quarterly, annual, final) as deliverables. When time and bandwidth allows, Grant Managers have been able to engage awardees in developing indicators and milestones to be written into the grant agreement that will help both USAID and the awardee track their progress along their planned development pathway. This level of technical discussion directly creates benefits later during implementation of the innovation. Examples of dynamic engagement between USAID and awardee include: changing planned activities based on successes and failures, changing the timing or size of disbursement of award funds based on actual progress according to milestones, and making sure that acceleration activities align with awardees’ implementation plans and milestones.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

BUILDING TRUST TO FOLLOW THIS PATH TOGETHER
Listening to the results of commissioned research, technical advice, or other inputs may require the innovator or organizational leader to undertake changes in their implementation approach. This cannot be achieved without the innovator having a high level of trust in the source of the information and a commitment to be receptive to input. If this willingness is absent, technical assistance will be underutilized or will not result in positive effects.

Whether conducted directly by USAID or through a third party service provider, program teams should carefully consider how they will structure grant management relationships to maximize continuity and opportunities for relationship-building with awardees.

If the USAID program team is proactive and experienced in setting award terms for open innovation programs, it may conduct preliminary acceleration activity development alongside finalizing award terms. As USAID program teams learn what works and what can be improved upon from round to round, many teams have found that running these processes concurrently offers major benefits, though it requires advanced careful planning.

The SL@B GCD required innovators to propose milestones in the application stage because this created an opportunity to revisit the milestones and implementation plan after winners were selected and as award terms were set. Since the negotiation of milestones necessary for grant management can be time consuming and requires multiple rounds of edits, SL@B creatively wrote the first milestone into the award agreement. The first milestone was the development of a workplan and an M&E plan which would further define the performance benchmarks required to achieve subsequent milestones. Their approach takes time because of the back-and-forth with innovators over suggestions for the workplan and M&E plan, but the payoff is well-designed milestones and deliverables that both USAID and innovators can use to track and report progress.

SL@B worked with the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA), their selected acceleration services provider, to hold a workshop for each new cohort of innovators. The workshop started with a pre-workshop needs assessment survey to identify areas of need (e.g., writing job descriptions, business planning acumen, and IP and regulatory issues) to be addressed during the workshop and post-workshop through webinars or mentorship pairings. While the
Making Strategic Choices About Resources

Effective grant management requires using limited resources effectively through ongoing check-ins to reevaluate strategy and needs. It may also require that acceleration support is provided solely or primarily for those innovators who are able to achieve milestones and show the most potential for growth and scale. Making strategic choices about resource use is complicated because the route to achieving milestones will involve both successes and failures and it may not be as simple as directing acceleration support only to those organizations that implement exactly as planned.

Applying the following filters will be helpful for making resource choices:

- **Is the organization receptive to receiving acceleration support?** In needs-finding interviews, does it seem that they actively want to pursue skills training, relationships with advisors, and new partnerships?

- **Is the organization making progress that will enable them to benefit from acceleration,** such that they can shift to the next stage of their work successfully (i.e., from prototype to pilot, from pilot to distribution, from distribution to scale-up)?

- **Is the organization committed to their goal beyond the life of the award,** such that organizational capacity-building will continue to advance or enable an innovation to be distributed more broadly by the innovator or other organizations?

- **Are the needs of the organization the same as others in their cohort?** Would group-oriented acceleration programs be relevant for them? If needs are dissimilar and vary across the cohort, consider options for individual support.

- **Is the organization getting similar services from other sources,** such as an existing board or mentor network or an existing relationship with accelerator?
**Grouping.** It may be cost-efficient to deliver acceleration services in a group format. However, within a single cohort, innovators are likely to vary widely in their capacities and intended direction. A “lowest common denominator” level of support may not meaningfully advance the needs of organizations/innovators that are already well resourced. Careful consideration must be given to directing resources so that they can be most effective for the recipient organization/innovator.

**Timing.** Programs conduct acceleration programs at different times. When activities take place soon after awards are made, this creates the obvious advantage of equipping innovators with tools and capacities early on. However, there is also advantage in timing acceleration support for later in the life of the grant award or even at the end of the grant term in order to prepare innovators for success and/or attracting follow-on funding or financing.

**Securing Water for Food’s use of Performance-Based Milestones**

Some program teams have determined that a performance-based milestones approach enables them to provide acceleration resources to innovations that show the most success; thus, ensuring that the program funds the innovators who deliver results. This approach requires choosing appropriate milestones that will accurately reflect an awardee’s progress and ability to put subsequent funding to good use.

The caveat is that innovators do not always want acceleration support because they feel it distracts or diverts attention from their existing implementation plans. If your program has a cohort of innovations with this attitude, they may view a performance-based milestones approach as USAID trying to make them “eat their vegetables.” In these cases, it is essential that milestones are clearly articulated to align with an innovator’s ability to make progress in their implementation plan and goals.

The SWFF GCD adopted this approach for allocating both funding and acceleration support. For SWFF, milestones for later-stage innovations focused on growth and scale:

- **Attracting distribution partners that will enable an innovation to scale.** This can be measured in terms of total distribution as well as number of markets and number of partners.

- **Securing external financial resources.** This can be measured by a ratio of USAID resources to other new funding secured, which could also include grants and prizes, debt, equity, revenue growth or in-kind support from external sources.

- **Directly measuring the number of consumers/beneficiaries reached by the innovation.**

While later-stage innovations might have quantitative milestones, milestones for earlier-stage innovations often take the form of a benchmark. Benchmarks could include: successfully reaching the development of functional prototypes, securing local market partnerships for initial pilots, or successfully demonstrating field-level operations. Upon reaching appropriate milestones or benchmarks, innovators can access additional tranches of funding and access acceleration support.
SEGMENTING THE COHORT

Segmenting a cohort of innovators can help inform choices about acceleration activities. While the variations among innovators make creating a single taxonomy extremely difficult, asking certain questions will help teams to group cohorts by key functional needs, technical specialties, and/or stage of innovation. Combined with needs-finding, segmenting will help you identify commonalities around which acceleration services can be designed.

Cohort segmentation can be achieved by asking questions based on distinguishing factors about innovators. For example:

- What is the target geography for implementation?
- What stage of development (prototype, pilot, distribution, scale) do they want their innovation to achieve through implementation of the award?
- What is the nature of their innovation (technology, product, service, business model, distribution financing)?
- What is their “customer” type (end user, business, government)?
- Are they for-profit, not-for-profit, or a hybrid structure?
- Are they intending to create a sustainable distribution model?
- What challenges are they facing, such as securing IP or identifying end-user financing?

Sharing Cohort Segmentation and Needs Summaries

When program teams decide to hold some form of an acceleration workshop for innovators, it is helpful to devote part of the agenda to sharing summaries of the cohort’s basic biographical information and identified areas of needs. This helps innovators to gain an understanding of their peers and how they are similar to or different from each other. Segmentation can also be used to give mentors and advisors a sense of innovators’ work and priority needs. Having this sense allows mentors/advisors to hone in on important areas of need and opportunities while addressing topics that the innovator believes they have already figured out but in fact need additional support.

Relevant areas of segmentation include: whether target country markets had been selected, whether operating partners have been selected, whether they are seeking commercial investment, and how well-developed their intended business model is. Figure 3: Innovator Summaries for Cohort Segmentation shows the structure for how this information can be organized to create summary sheets for each innovator.

FIGURE 3: INNOVATOR SUMMARIES FOR COHORT SEGMENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INNOVATOR SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Stage</strong> Start-up, revenue stage, or clear path to revenue, with staff, intellectual property, a business plan in place, and clear market focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Model</strong> In flux, and are seeking counsel here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations &amp; Partnerships: Global Markets</strong> Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations &amp; Partnerships: Regional Markets</strong> Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations &amp; Partnerships: Regional Markets</strong> Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations &amp; Partnerships: Global Markets</strong> Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial Funding</strong> Seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Entity</strong> Non-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Capacity</strong> Business strategy, Manufacturing/Production, Marketing &amp; Communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using a different approach, the All Children Reading GCD team hosted a four-day “Innovators Startup” event and devoted a half day to discussing acceleration activities. This portion of the agenda centered on creating a common understanding of what acceleration is and on helping innovators understand how acceleration activities can and should be incorporated into their implementation plans. The starting point for this dialogue was a discussion about the innovators’ needs-assessments survey results. Figure 4: Identified Priority Needs of Innovator Cohort presents the survey results across the thirteen categories of support services.

**FIGURE 4: IDENTIFIED PRIORITY NEEDS OF INNOVATOR COHORT**
Range of Acceleration Activities

Acceleration activities should be delivered in whatever combination best responds to the focus of a given cohort of innovators and their identified needs. Table 1: Menu of Programmatic Elements for Acceleration Activities is based on a composite of USAID experience with programs, including: LAUNCH, Powering Agriculture GCD, All Children Reading GCD, and Saving Lives at Birth GCD. This menu should be viewed as a starting point for activities, not as a complete list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENT</th>
<th>PRO</th>
<th>CON</th>
<th>HOW TO DELIVER</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convening and Facilitating Events</td>
<td>Enable access to large pools of expertise and business opportunities quickly, helping innovators access sectors and institutions they do not otherwise know.</td>
<td>Hit-on-miss process that may not deliver concrete value to innovators if a group of convened organizations does not result in a new partnership, customer, funder, etc.</td>
<td>Convene or facilitate events for networking, mentoring, and industry relationships. When possible target regional or national level events.</td>
<td>• Draw on networks of program teams to maximize advisor engagement. • Use as opportunity for partner engagement. • Recommend strong focus on advisors with field/ground-level experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Building and Training</td>
<td>Can target identified needs and deliver concrete suggestions to help innovators overcome barriers, or succeed in an industry-specific situation.</td>
<td>Receiving instruction may not necessarily create the capacity or resources within an organization to carry out the intended activity.</td>
<td>In concert with an existing event or at a purpose-planned event, via webinar when there is verified interest from innovators.</td>
<td>• Consider industry/sector specific skills/situations that general accelerators may not cover unless a custom workshop is created. • Consider who from the innovator organization is best to target for participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Learning</td>
<td>Can enable practical, nuts-and-bolts knowledge sharing and comparative problem-solving.</td>
<td>If innovators are spread out in terms of activity/stage/geography there may be low relatability between them. There may be competitive dynamics that preclude open sharing of organizational practices or strategies.</td>
<td>In concert with an existing event, via web/phone after personal relationships are established.</td>
<td>• Peer learning may work best when unstructured beyond trust-building exercises. • Partnerships between innovators may seem exciting but early-stage efforts are high-risk so may not be reliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Can provide targeted, in-depth assistance geared entirely to the needs of an individual innovator. This can expand capacity for tasks such as market research and strategy development while innovators focus on near-term execution.</td>
<td>Receiving assistance from top experts may be very costly. It may be impossible to provide assistance to innovators on a group basis.</td>
<td>Delivered via individual engagements remotely or on-site. Short term or long-term engagement is based on task and resource availability. Delivered to groups of innovators, if possible.</td>
<td>• Field/ground-level experience and/or experience in start-ups or new ventures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Obtaining Follow-On Funding</td>
<td>Can provide targeted, in-depth assistance geared entirely to the needs of an individual innovator.</td>
<td>While fundraising is necessary, inherent concern is that focus on fundraising will divert from revenue generation and/or implementation of projects.</td>
<td>Delivered via individual engagements remotely or on-site, depending on focus and needs. Short-term or long-term based on task and resource availability.</td>
<td>• Facilitated networking events may provide forum to engage funders/investors or intermediaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying the needs of a cohort of awardees will help determine the best types of acceleration services to offer. Table 2: Matching Needs with Acceleration Activity Options presents examples of the kinds of activities that may respond best to innovator needs. Conducting a similar analysis will help your team identify the kinds of acceleration activities necessary for your innovator cohorts.

**Table 2: Matching Needs with Programmatic Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVENING &amp; FACILITATING EVENTS</th>
<th>SKILLS BUILDING &amp; TRAINING</th>
<th>PEER LEARNING</th>
<th>TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE</th>
<th>SUPPORT FOR OBTAINING FOLLOW-ON FUNDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a robust organizational or business strategy</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting technical, commercial, or operational talent</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing follow-on funding.</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing technical or commercial knowledge.</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing support or expertise for manufacturing or scale-up.</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding markets / users.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking product design or refinement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Involve Partners in Acceleration**

Program partners will engage in different ways but all partners can have a role in acceleration activities. Acceleration activities provide opportunities to involve partners in new ways, to deepen USAID’s relationship with the partner; and to increase partners’ participation in the program and with innovators. Partners are often relevant for acceleration activities because they can provide:

- Internal expertise that is relevant to the needs of innovators;
- Access to additional networks;
- Opportunities for follow-on funding; and
- Local presence in geographies relevant for innovators.
Consult Step 2 Secure Partners and Funding to better understand the roles partners can play in helping USAID design and provider acceleration support and activities.

CONVENING AND FACILITATING EVENTS

As awardees pilot or grow new innovations in difficult environments, they will likely focus heavily on near-term needs of implementation. Awardees may find it challenging or outside their skill set to commit the necessary time and resources to building the relationships, knowledge base, and industry perspective that may be critical to the success of their innovation in the future. For this reason, convening innovators with potential long-term partners is a strong value add role for USAID and partners to undertake if there is interest and commitment from an innovator.

The Participants Matter
Pay close attention to the awardees’ representatives when your program convenes events, training sessions, and workshops; the individuals who represent the awardee organization matter greatly. The purpose of these events is meaningful discussion of core business/technology/organizational challenges. The people who attend should be those with the relevant knowledge and organizational authority to learn from, contribute to, and make strategic decisions based on discussions.

Convening can take many forms, but it should be approached with the following in mind:

- **Pay close attention to the representatives of awardees.** The purpose of a convening event is a meaningful discussion of core business/technology/organizational challenges. The people who represent awardees should be those with the relevant knowledge and organizational authority to learn from, contribute to and make strategic decisions based on discussions.

- **The best basis for organizational partnerships is likely through personal relationships.** Convening events with the goal of venture-formation among potential partners, advisors, investors or others should focus on the opportunity to build personal relationships that can yield longer-term organizational partnerships in the future.

- Introductions and networking can have high returns overall, but only a fraction of introductions will result in real benefit for new ventures.

- New technologies may not be ready for certain forms of partnerships or investment at the point of receiving the award, but ongoing personal relationships will lay the groundwork for partnerships when an appropriate stage is reached.

USAID has an exceptional ability to convene actors in the markets and systems in which new innovations must succeed and this can enable innovators to access people and resources that they could not otherwise reach. Partnerships may include:

- Corporations that can serve as manufactures/suppliers, customers, distributors, partners or acquirers of an innovator’s technology.

- Organizations with ground-level market knowledge, including USAID Mission staff and implementing partners from relevant markets, U.S. and local government agencies, and local business stakeholders.
• Organizations with expertise in the logistics and legal/regulatory challenges of local and international operations.
• Technical experts from academia, design firms or others with the ability to offer detailed feedback on product/service design.
• Investors, lenders, and funders with focus in a particular sector.
• Partners for end-user financing.

**Acceleration through Convening: LAUNCH Forum**

As part of the LAUNCH program, selected innovators take part in a Forum that brings together representatives of the Founding Partners (USAID, NASA, U.S. Department of State, and Nike) and a selection of approximately 30 advisors with experience and positions in government, corporations, investment, academia and nonprofits. The forum takes place over two days and is geared towards group discussions about the key challenges that innovators face. The goal is to develop relationships and obtain specific commitments by advisors to help innovators advance.

**The Format.** The unique partnership behind LAUNCH creates an opportunity to tap into an especially broad network of potential advisors. Because many of the innovations are very early stage, broad strategy discussions and potential partnerships can be valuable to the development process.

**The Advisors.** The selection of advisors is based on identified needs of the innovators and ensuring that key resources are represented (legal/regulatory, investment, industry experts, and corporate partners). Leadership from each of the partners draw on their own personal networks to support this effort and their personal engagement in issuing and following up on invitations is crucial to securing advisor participation.

**The Event.** The LAUNCH Forum was held at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in order to increase participant excitement about participating with a unique set of actors and differentiate this event from others. Travel costs are borne by advisors, not paid by LAUNCH. Travel costs are so structured in order to ensure that advisors attend based on genuine excitement to contribute ideas, introductions and resources; and that meeting LAUNCH innovators and fellow advisors fulfills advisors’ own priorities. Short presentations by innovators set the stage for discussion; and by identifying the top 2-3 challenges innovators face presentations can also match advisors to innovators. Over two days, each innovator meets with each advisor by rotating through roundtables called “Impact Rotations.” Each Impact Rotation has a facilitator to guide the discussion towards concrete commitments and a note-taker to record what advisors commit to do to support the innovators. After the Forum, targeted follow-up is done to ensure that advisors follow through on the commitments offered to innovators, such as advice, introductions, or a direct ongoing relationship as a mentor or advisor.
**Acceleration through Convening: Powering Agriculture Accelerator Workshop**

The Powering Agriculture GCD team borrowed the concept of an acceleration convening from the LAUNCH Program to create its own two-day workshop focused on pairing innovators with advisors from the GCD partners external organizations.

**The Format.** The Accelerator Workshop was held over two days in Washington, D.C. at the time of the 2013 Powering Agriculture Development Exchange. It was held off-site at a location chosen to cultivate creative discussion, with flexible space for conversation and access to natural light, and auditorium space for comfortable, high-quality presentations.

**The Advisors.** Advisors were invited on the basis of self-identified needs of innovators. As with the LAUNCH Forum, travel costs were borne by advisors. Advisors represented corporate, investor, government, NGO and academic institutions.

**The Event.** Prior to the workshop, storytelling experts and graphic designers provided innovators with individualized coaching, narrative development and materials design to hone their workshop presentations. Each innovator group then delivered a five minute pitch presentation that focused on their innovation and the key challenges they face. Roundtables were designed to foster interaction between each innovator and advisor through facilitated discussion. Note-takers recorded commitments made by advisors and following the event, designated facilitators helped innovators distil their best ideas and prioritize resources offered by advisors. Facilitators were then responsible for coordinating initial follow-up between advisors and innovators.

**USAID’s Role.** The USAID Powering Agriculture team participated in the event as mentors, as did representatives of the GCD Founding Partners. This enabled the program sponsors to interact in a structured but open setting with the innovators, while also enabling them to observe the interaction between innovators and advisors in order to inform USAID’s subsequent acceleration support activities.

**The Value for Innovators.** Evaluations of Acceleration Workshop showed that almost all innovators found it very helpful. Most innovators developed 2-4 relationships with advisors that they expected to continue (e.g., in knowledge sharing or partnerships). Most innovators also heard 2-5 significant ideas from advisors to help them address their organization’s challenges. The innovators who did not find the workshop helpful felt that they were either (a) too far along in their work to find high-level ideas or business strategy advice from advisors to be helpful or (b) that advice was not oriented towards building an ongoing business and therefore wasn’t relevant for innovators with a later-stage innovation looking for advice and support to improve their business model.

**The Value for USAID.** The USAID team found that the event was successful in helping them assess or validate the quality of innovations and in identifying potential challenges and opportunities for scale. The team saw potential for using this methodology along multiple points of the program implementation process, starting from selection of winning applicants, to identifying awardees who are ready for acceleration support, all the way through to when an innovation is in the final stage of growth/scale and the innovator can “graduate” from USAID grant funding and support to take on other sources of capital.
SKILLS BUILDING & TRAINING

Depending on team composition, awardees may need support to grow their knowledge and experience to achieve success. Awardees may benefit from training as a cohort if they face similar challenges in a particular sector. Even when a cohort is composed of very different innovations there will still be common needs for knowledge and skills. For example:

- Entrepreneurship training particularly around technology, business model, or market pivots.
- Workshops examining customer behavior, market demand, purchasing strategies or sales cycles for particular sectors, or product development incorporating human-centered design.
- Expert knowledge and operational experience of working in country markets of specific importance to innovators.
- Case studies for approaching key legal and commercial challenges for operating internationally, such as intellectual property, regulations, global logistics, and local staffing/recruitment.
- Financing strategies for growth and deal-making.
- Strategies for developing corporate and government partnerships for distribution channels.
- Media trainings to help organizations broaden their public communications reach and effectiveness.

The more your team tailors workshop to meet innovator needs, the more valuable workshops will be for innovators.

Acceleration through Strategy Setting: Saving Lives at Birth NCIIA Workshops

The Saving Lives at Birth (SL@B) GCD has worked with the National Collegiate Innovators and Inventors Alliance (NCIIA) to conduct three-day workshops for multiple cohorts of awardees in the first year of the award cycle.

The Event. The main focus of these workshops is to help each innovator develop a strategy map and vision for allocating resources to reach intended goals. Much of the workshop delved into constructing a business model that covers development of the innovation and distribution of the innovation. The workshops provided a unique opportunity for innovators to explore these questions in greater depth than is typically possible in their day-to-day work. It also enabled USAID and awardees to solidify the relationships necessary to work together effectively over the course of the award.

NCIIA’s Role. NCIIA was selected as a partner because of their track record working with early stage innovators, particularly in academic settings where entrepreneurs are attempting to commercialize technology developed using grant or other non-dilutive capital. NCIIA was also receptive to USAID’s input for structuring the program to meet the particular needs of the innovators in a relatively low-cost way.

USAID’s Role. The SL@B team was initially hesitant to participate heavily in these workshops due to concerns that innovators would not discuss organizational challenges openly with USAID. Instead they found that innovators welcomed USAID’s perspective and thoughts on how to overcome the challenges faced in developing and deploying their innovations.
**PEER LEARNING**

Though some cohorts may have dissimilar innovations or innovators who are competitors, it is more likely that in developing and testing an innovation and tackling challenges in local markets, innovators will address different aspects of a very large problem and will have a great deal of knowledge to share with each other. Bringing innovators together for peer learning can be an effective acceleration activity with many different forms; they can be stand-alone events, integrated into events such as a Development Exchange, or part of an annual program event. When considering peer learning activities, involve innovators in your planning process so that these activities are relevant to innovator interests and needs, are timed to optimize participation, and are geographically feasible to travel to (if in-person).

*Online discussions should be viewed as a supplement, not a replacement, for in-person interaction. Personal relationships and trust built from in-person interaction will give innovators the confidence to share the challenges they are encountering and take peer advice on how to surmount them. Without this trust, online discussions are likely to remain at very superficial levels, if they generate any interaction at all.*

---

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Technical Assistance can be structured in any number of formats for variable durations. However, because this is such a high-touch form of support that requires significant resources, teams should carefully consider the following factors:

- on what basis it will be determined which innovators receive support;
- what type of services will be offered to address identified needs of innovators;
- by whom the services will be provided;
- how will these services be funded (e.g., paid for in full by USAID, cost-share between USAID and innovator, provided in-kind by the services provider); and
- how USAID will make these resources accessible to innovators.

**Working with Accelerators**

A growing number of organizations, known as accelerators, exist to provide acceleration services to new ventures in a cohort-based format. Accelerators that focus on different stages of ventures, geographies, and sectors can be engaged as program partners (offering their services in-kind) or as service providers (being paid for their services directly by the USAID program or by the innovators themselves). Accelerators offer a wide variety of services and have varying requirements for participation, so carefully consider who the best organizations are based on the goals of the USAID program and the needs of innovators. A program may design and implement acceleration activities by choosing to work with an existing accelerator in a number of ways. This could include:

- **Contracting an organization with acceleration expertise to design and implement the entirety of an acceleration program**, incorporating both events and long-term individualized support that is specifically geared towards a cohort of innovators.

- **Contracting an organization to provide specific program elements**, such as a workshop, based on their expertise and the needs of an innovator cohort.
• Linking individual innovators or groups within a cohort with accelerators based on their characteristics and needs. For example, within a given cohort some ventures might be best served by an in-market accelerator focused on for-profits in a specific geography, while others need support best provided by an accelerator in the U.S. that works with both for-profits and non-profits.

It may not be possible to find an existing accelerator that has services for some or all of the needs of your program-supported innovators. Also complicating matters, some accelerators run their own selection and due diligence processes and may not be willing or able to take in the cohort without additional review.

Program teams should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of potential accelerators before deciding who to work with on implementing all or part of the planned acceleration activities. Consider the following criteria:

• **Geography:** For what part(s) of the world is the Accelerator equipped to support organizations?
• **Model:** Is the Accelerator in-person, virtual, or both?
• **Sector:** Does the Accelerator specialize in a sector that is appropriate for this program/cohort of awardees?
• **Expertise:** Does the Accelerator specialize in or have comparative advantage in an area that relates to the needs of innovators, in terms of training modules or relationships to mentors and advisors?
• **Services:** Does the Accelerator provide training, mentorship, partnership brokerage, co-location, funding?
• **Stage:** Does the Accelerator work with organizations at the same stage of development as the cohort in question?
• **Nonprofit/For-Profit:** Does the Accelerator explicitly or implicitly focus on for-profit ventures or is it prepared to support any kind of organization?
• **Program Type/Duration:** Does the Accelerator’s specialized program/services align with the availability of innovators to participate and the duration of the program’s support to the innovator cohort?
• **Customization:** What degree of customization in services is the Accelerator willing to provide?

The fast growth of accelerators (both commercial and impact-oriented) means that the list of potential partners or implementers for USAID’s innovation programs is continually evolving. It will be critical to do an in-depth review of the services, capacities and networks that an acceleration partner brings to the table and identify potential gaps early on. A review of the sector conducted by the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs is included in the Resources section of this document.
SUPPORT INNOVATORS TO OBTAIN FOLLOW-ON FUNDING

USAID’s awards are intended to be catalytic in order to assist innovators in the difficult task of identifying sources of and obtaining follow-on funding. If an innovation is successfully achieving growth and moving towards scale, it is likely to require funding that is significantly larger than the initial award received from USAID. In many cases, obtaining funding of any kind will require demonstrating a business model that delivers, if not profit, then some level of revenue sustainability alongside grant funding. If an award is spent on a prototype or pilot without this requirement in mind, what is considered success in the eyes of USAID and the innovator may not actually open up opportunities for continued or follow-on funding from other sources.

As the organization/innovator seeks to attract larger sums of money, the expectation that it can receive and effectively spend this money will dramatically increase. To enable organizations to credibly pursue and then effectively utilize follow-on funding, the USAID program’s acceleration activities and support should focus on the essential task of growing the revenue base and building organizational capacity (including financial management, operational management and M&E), not just on accessing funders and investors. This kind of technical assistance will enable awardees to use funds effectively and make better decisions about which types of funding and deal structures are most in line with their needs.

In summary, the USAID program’s award and acceleration support can help decrease the riskiness of outside follow-on investment by helping an organization prove a concept, demonstrate a prototype, or invest in solving systemic challenges outside the direct manageable control of the organization.
Resources & References

Resources

- Needs-Finding Interview from the Powering Agriculture GCD’s Development Exchange
- Needs-Assessment Survey from the All Children Reading Innovators Startup Workshop
- Needs-Assessment Survey from the Securing Water For Food Technical Assistance Facility Survey
- Segmenting A Cohort Of Innovators

References

- The Aspen Network for Development Entrepreneurs’ report “Bridging the “Pioneer Gap”: The Role of Accelerators in Launching High-Impact Enterprises” reviews the landscape of impact-focused ‘accelerator’ programs. This report also features a comprehensive listing of organizations providing acceleration services that may be relevant to USAID’s focus sectors and geographies.
- “From Blueprint to Scale,” written by Monitor Inclusive Markets, explores roles that grant capital can play in building enterprises that successful scale, and its broader role in impact investing.
- “Beyond the Pioneer,” written by Monitor Deloitte, focuses on strategies for scaling enterprises creating social impact.
Needs-finding Interview from the Powering Agriculture GCD’s Development Exchange

As part of the preparation for the Powering Agriculture GCD’s Development Exchange in November 2013, the service provider, selected by the UASID to organize and facilitate the event, conducted needs-finding interviews and designed an agenda to address the cohort’s needs, including in acceleration support.

All participating awardees were asked the following questions.

Tell us about your organization today:
- What is your innovation’s path to market/ distribution?
- Is it already being sold?
- Who are your customers/end users? What do they say about you?
- Tell us about the last/most important challenge you faced scaling up thus far:
- What people/resources came together to help you with this achievement?

Tell us about your future:
- Where do you want to be in the next 3 years?
- What challenges are ahead of you? What tactical leaps are approaching?
- What obstacles do you see to making these leaps?

What are your needs in the following functional areas?
- Financing
- Product/Service Design
- Production, Distribution & Operations
- Government Relations
- Communications
- Agriculture Specialists
- IT specialists
- Energy Specialists
- Local Market Acceptance
Needs-Assessment Survey from the All Children Reading Innovators Startup Workshop

For the All Children Reading Innovators Startup Workshop in February 2015, the USAID team brought in DAI as a service provider to help design and implement the “acceleration support” portion of the workshop. DAI administered a needs-assessment survey in order to structure and develop customized content for the “Grantee Acceleration Support” portion of the agenda.

All participating awardees were asked the following questions using the Google Forms tool.

Your Organization:

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. Where is your organization located?
3. What type of organization are you?
   • NGO/non-profit
   • Government
   • Private Sector Business/Social Enterprise
   • Academic
4. Do the primary leaders of the organization have prior business experience?
   • Yes
   • No
5. In three sentences or less, tell us about your organization.
6. Are you interested in acceleration support?
   • Yes
   • No
   • Unsure

Your Innovation:

1. What type of innovation do you have?
   • New technology
   • New application of existing technology
   • Business model
   • Partnership
2. At what stage is your innovation in the innovation pipeline
   • Early Ideation and Prototyping
   • Small-scale field testing
   • Implementation beyond the initial pilot
   • Wide-Scale Adoption
   • Global Adoption
3. What is your target market (in the next 5 years)?
   • Local
   • National
   • Regional
   • Global

4. Who are your targeted customers?
   • The private sector
   • Government
   • Civil society
   • International organization
   • A blend (please specify)

5. Who are the targeted end-users (are they the same as the customers)?
   • The private sector
   • Government
   • Civil society
   • International organization
   • A blend (please specify)

6. Is your innovation already being distributed to customers (i.e., on the market for sale)?
   • If so, to whom?

7. Are end-users benefitting from the innovation?
   • If so, how do they access your innovation?

8. Have you tested your innovation with end users to get feedback on usability and/or improve your innovation and increase adoption?
   • No testing has occurred
   • Some testing has occurred but more needs to be done to before another iteration of the product/service is developed.
   • Some testing has occurred leading to changes in offerings with resulting increase in adoption by users.
   • Significant testing of products/services has occurred leading to increased adoption by users.
   • Products/services have been thoroughly tested, there is adoption by users and corresponding behavior change.

Your assets and resources (current or needed):

1. What are your current sources of funding? (check all that apply)
   • Friends and family
   • Angel
   • Bridge
   • Series A
   • Series B
   • Public
RESOURCES

• In-kind support
• Debt/loans
• Revenue driven
• Grants
• Prize funds
• None
• Other (please specify)

2. What skills/expertise does the project team currently have?
3. What skills/expertise does your project team currently need?

4. Please prioritize your needs—particularly in the next 9 months—in the following functional areas (use numbers 1-12 to rank priorities, using each number only once; 1 being the highest priority, 12 being the lowest priority):
   • Product, model, or service refinement
   • Strategy
   • Staffing, management, and operations
   • Legal
   • Clients/sales/customer acquisition/local market acceptance
   • Government relations, policy & advocacy
   • PR/branding/marketing
   • Production and supply chain development
   • Financing and financial management
   • Technical area Specialists
   • IT specialists
   • Evaluation Specialists

5. Are the supplies and materials necessary for your innovation to grow locally available, available in the country/countries of implementation, and/or available in the region of implementation? (choose one)
   • Technology/materials/manufacturing not available outside of specialized location.
   • Technology/materials/manufacturing available locally.
   • Technology/materials/manufacturing available nationally.
   • (N/A) Innovation is not a technology and/or does not rely on outside resources.

6. What partners are needed to get this innovation to scale? (Select all that apply.)
   • Corporations
   • Governments
   • Investment groups
   • Community organizations

7. Do you have access to acceleration and growth support outside of the ACR grant?
   • Yes
   • No

8. If yes, explain
Success and Challenges:

1. What does success look like to you over the life of your USAID grant?
2. Where do you want to be in the next 3 years as an organization?
3. How does the USAID grant help you get there?
4. Do you have a plan in place to scale your innovation?
   - No plan in place to scale innovation.
   - Initial plan in place to scale innovation (largely based on untested assumptions).
   - Early plan in place to scale innovation (some assumptions tested, evidence quantitative).
   - Mature plan in place to scale innovation (model used in multiple settings and analyses of data/ evidence exist).
   - Proven plan in place to scale innovation.
5. What is your pathway to scale?
6. Do you see your innovation scaling through:
   - Revenue-driven/growth
   - Investment-driven growth
   - Distributed IP (franchise/license, etc.)
   - Partnerships/acquisition/government adoption
7. How do local/national/international government policies or affect the adoption of your innovation?
   - Government policies or programs have created many barriers preventing the increased adoption of the innovation.
   - Government policies or programs provide little support to increase adoption of the innovation.
   - Government policies or programs provide some support to increase the adoption of the innovation.
   - Government policies or programs are beginning to create an enabling environment to increase adoption of the innovation.
   - Government policies or programs have created a strong enabling environment to increase adoption of the innovation.
8. What challenges are ahead of you?
9. What are the biggest risks of potential failure for this project?
Needs-Assessment Survey from the Securing Water for Food Technical Assistance Facility Survey

*1. What is the name of your organization?

*2. Do you want to receive support from the SWFF Technical Assistance Facility?
   - NO
   - YES

*3. Do you want SWFF to share your technical information with First Climate, a group that could potentially bring your organization money from water credits (similar to climate credits)?
   - YES
   - NO

*4. What does success look like to you over the life of your SWFF award?

*5. Who are the primary leaders of the organization? Do they have prior business experience?
SWFF TA Facility Survey

9. Who are the partners needed to get this innovation to scale (corporations, government agencies, investment groups)?

10. How far along is your plan to scale your innovation, (i.e. Is there evidence that your solution is viable now, or on a pathway to becoming viable in the future)?

- No plan in place to scale innovation.
- Initial plan in place to scale innovation (evidence largely anecdotal).
- Early plan in place to scale innovation (evidence quantitative).
- Mature plan in place to scale innovation (model used in multiple settings and meta-analyses exist).
- Proven plan in place to scale innovation.

If possible, please describe why you chose the answer above.
SWFF TA Facility Survey

*11. Do local/national/international policies or programs promote the adoption of your innovation?

- 0 - Local/national/international policies or programs have created many barriers preventing the increased adoption of the innovation.
- 1 - Local/national/international policies or programs provide little support to increase adoption of the innovation.
- 2 - Local/national/international policies or programs provide some support to increase the adoption of the innovation.
- 3 - Local/national/international policies or programs are beginning to create an enabling environment to increase adoption of the innovation.
- 4 - Local/national/international policies or programs have created a strong enabling environment to increase adoption of the innovation.

If possible, please describe why you chose the answer above.
12. What do you think is the absorptive capacity of your innovation? That is, what outside resources (suppliers of additive technology, materials/components, funds, etc) are necessary to bring your innovation to scale? Are those parts and materials locally available, available in the country(ies) of implementation, or available in the region of implementation?

- 0. Tech components/manufacturing not available outside of specialized location.
- 1. Tech components/manufacturing available regionally.
- 2. Tech components/manufacturing available nationally.
- 3. Tech components/manufacturing available locally in implementation country.
- N/A - Innovation is not a technology (Innovation business model, etc).

If possible, please describe why you chose the answer above.
13. Do you think it is possible to sell your product at a reasonable cost in order to get to scale?
- 0: Selling your product at a reasonable cost is highly unlikely given documented evidence.
- 1: Selling your product at a reasonable cost is possible given documented evidence.
- 2: Selling your product at a reasonable cost is probable given documented evidence.
- 3: Selling your product at a reasonable cost is already occurring.
If possible, please describe your answer above and provide documented evidence.

14. What is your target market?
16. What is the state of your existing customer user base, over the last year?

- [ ] 0 - Customer user base has declined.
- [ ] 1 - Customer user base has stayed the same.
- [ ] 2 - Customer user base has grown by at least 25%.
- [ ] 3 - Customer user base has grown by at least 60%.
- [ ] 4 - Customer user base has grown by over 75%.

If possible, please describe why you chose the answer above.
17. What is your current product/service offering?
   - 0: No testing of products/services has occurred and they remain as originally planned without any adaptations.
   - 1: Some testing of products/services has occurred but more needs to be done to understand user needs/behavior in order to lead to increased adoption.
   - 2: Some testing of products/services has occurred leading to changes in offerings with resulting slight increase in adoption by users.
   - 3: Significant testing of products/services has occurred leading to increasing adoption by users. More refinement of offerings needs to be done to capture more of the market.
   - 4: Products/services have been thoroughly tested, there is adoption by users and corresponding behavior change.
   If possible, please describe why you chose the answer above.

18. What are the biggest risks of potential failure for this project? When would you be expected to be faced with that?
15. What percentage of end-users and/or buyers in your target market can afford your innovation? (evidenced by willingness to pay and/or demonstrated uptake at innovator’s price point)

- 0: Not affordable for any end-users or buyers in the target market.
- 1: Affordable for 25% of end-users or buyers in the target market.
- 2: Affordable for 50% of end-users or buyers in the target market.
- 3: Affordable for 75% of end-users or buyers in the target market.
- 4: Affordable for 100% of end-users or buyers in the target market.

Please provide back-up documentation to support this claim.
Segmenting a Cohort of Innovators

In preparation for Powering Agriculture’s Development Exchange, the team mapped all the cohort innovators and their needs. The resulting map serves as both a communications and program planning tool, and serves as an example of how segmenting a cohort to identify key needs can be presented visually.

In this cohort segmentation map, innovators are grouped according to their main area of focus and tagged with color-coded, self-identified needs. Because innovators may fall into multiple buckets, a multi-layer classification system may be needed to accurately group innovators.

In the case of Powering Agriculture, multiple taxonomies/categories were used at different times and by different organizations engaged with the program. For example, innovators were grouped by industry segment (cold-chain, irrigation, agriculture processing, etc.) and in terms of whether their innovation was primarily centered on business model, technology, or demand generation.

Multiple, overlapping categorizations may make sense for certain purposes. For example, for a certain acceleration activity all innovators operating in Latin America may have common needs, while for another activity, a partially overlapping group of innovators using PV solar technology in their work may find an activity relevant. Nonetheless, it is recommended that segmenting be consistently organized to ensure coherence in organization and communication throughout the program.
SEGMENTING EXERCISE

The exercise conducted for Powering Agriculture can be replicated in a more simple fashion with tools such as a white board and colored post-it notes.

To be most helpful, the categorization used in a segmenting exercise should primarily reflect the needs and day-to-day realities of innovators. It should not just reflect the categories that are imposed by USAID structures, types of awards/contracts, or other external factors.

Segmenting the cohort should be based on which characteristics are most important for the success of the innovations. Examples for segmenting a cohort could include the following:

- What is their implementing geography?
- What stage of their product or service are they intending to reach during the award implementation period (i.e., prototype, pilot, distribution, scale)?
- What is the nature of their innovation (i.e., product, service, business model, distribution financing)?
- What is their “Customer” type (e.g., end user, business, government)?
- Are they for-profit, not-for-profit, or a hybrid structure?
- Are they intending to create a sustainable distribution model?
- Is the implementing organization a stand-alone organization, a program of a larger organization, or a partnership between multiple organizations?