



USAID
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ADS Chapter 401
USAID's Human Capital (HC)
Accountability System

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Functional Series 400 – Personnel

ADS 401 – USAID’s Human Capital (HC) Accountability System

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ADS 401 – USAID’s Human Capital (HC) Accountability System

401.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

This chapter provides the policy directives and required procedures that govern USAID’s human capital (HC) accountability system.

USAID’s mission is to create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community. The Agency’s current strategic framework, i.e., the Foreign Assistance Framework, is focused on implementing transformational diplomacy with the overarching goal of: “Helping to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”

USAID is committed to sound management of this mandate through human capital planning (aligned with the Agency’s strategic plan) and a rigorous HC accountability system that demonstrates results, promotes continuous improvement, and ensures adherence to the Federal **merit systems principles** and other laws. The HC Accountability System ensures that:

- USAID’s HC policies, programs, and practices support its mission;
- Its HC and human resources management (HRM) programs and practices are efficient, effective, and merit-based; and
- Its human resources (HR) authorities and flexibilities are used properly and effectively.

USAID’s strategic HC accountability system is linked directly to the Agency’s mission through its strategic plan, which includes one overarching HC strategic goal that is specifically defined through objectives and budget/performance requirements identified in the Agency HC strategic plan. The Performance Management Plan (PMP) portion of the Agency HC strategic plan, plus the Program Compliance and Assessment Plan (PCAP) and Accountability System policy, establish the HC accountability framework and activities that USAID uses to assess its success in meeting HC goals and objectives that are critical to mission accomplishment. These plans also ensure that HRM processes and operations comply with Federal merit system principles and all other legal and regulatory requirements.

The four phases of the HC accountability system are:

1. Planning – develop, document, and resource the HC accountability system;
2. Implementation – conduct HC accountability system assessment activities;
3. Evaluation – analyze and report HC accountability system results; and,

4. Continuous Improvement – implement improvements and corrective actions by updating/altering the HC strategic plan, HR policies, programs and processes, and/or the HC accountability system.

This cycle of accountability activities/processes ensures that strategic HC goals and HR outcomes are aligned with the Agency's strategic objectives, performance expectations, and results that Agency executives, managers, supervisors, and employees are accountable for achieving. By establishing procedures and measures to monitor and evaluate the results of its HC/HRM policies, programs, and practices, in addition to analyzing compliance with Federal merit system principles, the HC accountability system allows for the identification and oversight of necessary improvements to HC/HRM policies, programs and practices.

401.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

- a. The responsibility for effective, efficient, and compliant human capital management is shared by **the Administrator, the Assistant Administrators, heads of Bureaus/Offices, the Chief Human Capital Officer (the CHCO, who is also the Director, Office of Human Resources), managers, supervisors, and human capital practitioners/human resources specialists.** They all are accountable for achieving human capital management results through establishing and implementing human capital policies, programs, practices, and operations in support of USAID's mission that are effective, efficient, and in compliance with all pertinent laws and regulations.
- b. While ultimate responsibility for the HC Accountability System rests with the Administrator (A/USAID), the primary leadership role for this activity is assigned to the **CHCO/Director, M/HR.**
- c. **Senior Agency management** has the central role of promoting human capital management at the Agency-level to ensure that appropriate resources are included in the Agency's budget and that clear expectations for appropriately managing and supervising employees are set for all managers and supervisors across the Agency, whether in the field or at headquarters. All managers are accountable for effective implementation of HC goals and overall HC/HR management.
- d. **Human capital practitioners, including Administrative Management Staffs (AMS),** are accountable for efficient and effective HC/HRM in support of the Agency's mission and in accordance with merit system principles.
- e. The **Office of Personnel Management (OPM)** is the Federal agency responsible for the **Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF)** (<http://www.opm/hcaaf> resources center/).

f. All managers, including all Assistant Administrators (AAs) and heads of Bureaus/Offices and all other organizational units which have delegated authority to make or recommend personnel decisions or actions, are responsible for ensuring full participation of their units with the directives of this chapter.

g. Acting on behalf of the CHCO, M/HR/PPIM/P, the Senior Advisor for Strategic Workforce Planning is the HC Accountability Program Manager who oversees the HC Accountability System activities on a daily, operational basis and develops the Accountability Plan.

h. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audits the Agency's HC Strategic Plan, at its discretion.

For specific roles and responsibilities by each phase, see [USAID HC Accountability System Roles and Responsibilities by Phase](#).

401.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

This section contains the Agency's official policy directives and required procedures for the Agency's HC accountability system.

401.3.1 Objectives (Purpose and Scope) of the HC Accountability System

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

The purpose of the HC accountability system is to ensure effective and efficient HC management (HCM) in support of USAID's strategic plan and consistent with merit systems principles.

The scope is Agency-wide and the system oversees the operations of HC/HRM programs (both Civil Service and Foreign Service) to assess results and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The system contributes to Agency performance by monitoring and evaluating the results of HC/HRM policies, programs, and activities, by analyzing compliance with merit system principles, and by identifying and monitoring necessary improvements.

401.3.2 Human Capital Accountability at USAID

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

In 2001, USAID, in response to the President's Management Agenda, moved HC management to the forefront of the Agency's transformation agenda and made M/HR a strategic partner with a permanent seat at the Agency's strategic planning table. HC activities and investments are now fully integrated into the strategic planning and budget processes.

The CHCO (M/HR/OD) has special statutory authority to “advise and assist” the Administrator and other Agency officials in carrying out the Agency’s responsibilities for selecting, developing, training, and managing a high quality, productive workforce, in accordance with Federal merit system principles ([5 U.S.C. 2301 \(b\)](#) and [5 U.S.C. 1401 \(a\)](#)). In accordance with the CHCO Act of 2002 (i.e., the Homeland Security Act of 2002, [P. L. 107-296](#)) and [5 U.S.C. 305](#), the CHCO carries out functions authorized in [5 U.S.C. 1402](#), including aligning the Agency’s human resources policies and programs with USAID’s mission, strategic goals, and performance outcomes.

The CHCO (M/HR/OD) oversees the development of the HC goals and objectives and the development and updating of the HC Strategic Plan; and determines results measures; creates budgets necessary for adequate resource operations; and tracks and evaluates results and takes corrective actions. The CHCO provides leadership and direction (including developing and implementing the HC Accountability Plan and preparing the Annual Accountability Report) and:

- The Administrator (A/USAID) oversees the overall establishment of HC goals and objectives and supporting budgets (i.e., signs off on final resource allocations).
- The Business Transformation Executive Committee (BTEC) monitors the assessment of goals and objectives and helps the CHCO set annual ones as part of the Agency’s overall management transformation agenda.
- The Agency’s employee performance management systems provide the mechanism for holding executives, managers, supervisors, and employees accountable.
- Bureau/Office Heads and Directors of overseas offices (including all Missions) ensure that :
 - All their managers and supervisors are fully and currently informed concerning HC/HRM goals and objectives approved by the Administrator; and
 - Responsibilities assigned to their organization for developing or implementing pertinent support action/evaluation plans are met within established timeframes.

Maintaining a rigorous continuous improvement process requires coordination among key management entities: the CHCO/Director, M/HR, all USAID Bureau/Office heads, and M/HR senior staff. This coordination will be accomplished through the Agency strategic planning and budget process and various Agency activities, such as the monthly AMS meeting with M/HR, ad hoc taskforces, management assessment activities, and the like.

401.3.3 Intent and Desired Outcomes of the HC Accountability System

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

The following objectives describe the intent and desired outcomes for the HC accountability system:

- Ensure that HC goals and programs are aligned with and support USAID's mission (strategic plan).
- Ensure that HC planning is guided by data-driven, results-oriented processes, and documents an approach that periodically analyzes HC data to assess results or progress toward goal achievement.
- Ensure that managers and HR practitioners are held accountable for their HC decisions and actions.
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of HRM policies, programs, and practices Agency-wide.
- Ensure that HC/HRM programs, policies, and practices adhere to merit system principles and other pertinent laws and regulations.
- Conduct periodic Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) audits and cyclical HRM reviews to verify and validate the level of Agency-wide performance in HC/HRM and merit system compliance.
- Implement a plan for addressing issues or problems identified during accountability audits and other accountability activities.
- Make appropriate changes to the HC Strategic Plan and activities and/or make any necessary changes to the Accountability System.

To meet these objectives, the CHCO conducts accountability activities that document the extent to which HC goals and objectives are being met, consistent with balanced measures (strategic alignment, program effectiveness, process efficiency, and merit system compliance). The CHCO and agency senior leadership use the results of the accountability activities to drive continuous improvement in HC initiatives, HRM programs, and HR processes.

M/HR provides much of the infrastructure for the accountability system (with assistance from the Administrative Management Staffs (AMS), as needed), as well as staff support and advisory services. USAID's senior leadership establishes accountability as a priority that is essential for continuous improvement of HC results in support of accomplishing USAID's mission. (See [USAID HC Accountability System Roles and Responsibilities by Phase](#).)

401.3.4 General Operation of the HC Accountability System

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

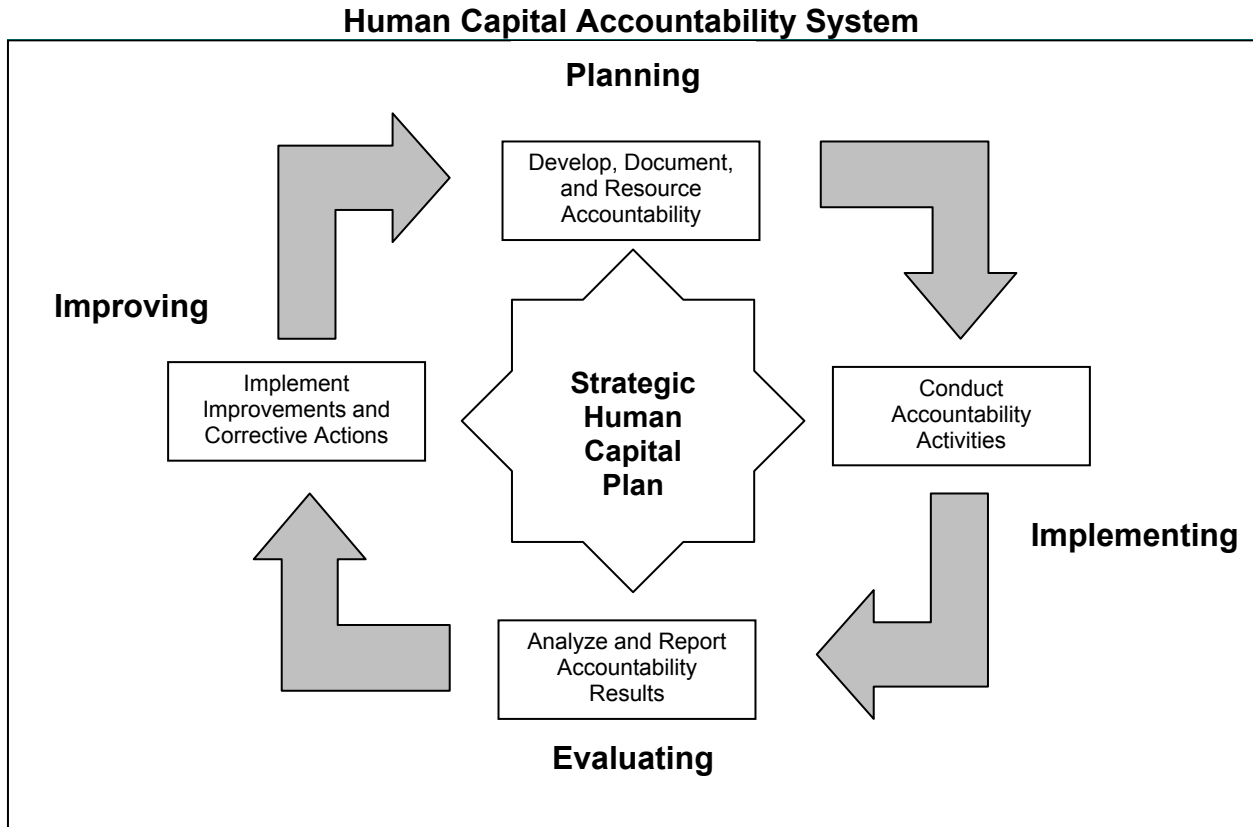
There are four phases of the HC Accountability System: planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. The Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF) establishes and defines the five HC systems that together provide the model for Federal HC management (HCM).

([http://www.opm/hcaaf/resource center/](http://www.opm/hcaaf/resource_center/))

USAID's HC accountability system focuses on the following key HCM implementation systems identified in the HCAAF:

- **Talent Management** –A system that addresses **competency gaps**, particularly in mission-critical occupations, by implementing and maintaining programs designed to attract, acquire, develop, promote, and retain quality talent.
- **Results-Oriented Performance Culture** –A system that promotes a diverse, high-performing workforce by implementing and maintaining effective performance management systems and awards programs.
- **Leadership and Knowledge Management** –A system that ensures continuity of leadership by identifying and addressing potential gaps in effective leadership, and implements and maintains programs that capture the organizational knowledge and promotes continuous learning.

The following diagram illustrates how USAID integrates the various components of the HC accountability system in order to achieve optimum results in managing its HC. It has the HC Strategic Plan in the center with the four phases of the HC Accountability System at twelve, three, six and nine o'clock positions around the center. Arrows demonstrate that the four phases make up an unbroken cycle. Phase 1 is Planning – develop, document, and resource accountability. Phase 2 is Implementing – conduct accountability activities. Phase 3 is Evaluating – analyze and report accountability results), and Phase 4 is Improving – implement improvements and corrective actions.



The HC accountability system provides a consistent means to measure, monitor, and analyze Agency performance on all aspects of HCM, which must support mission accomplishment and be effective, efficient and in compliance with Federal merit system principles.

The centerpiece of the USAID's HC accountability system is the HC Strategic Plan that establishes:

- An Agency-wide vision that guides HC planning and investments activities;
- HC strategic objectives and outcomes, aligned with the HCAAF, that link directly to the Agency's strategic plan and support mission accomplishment; and
- A process for including HC activities and investments in the Agency's annual strategic planning and budget.

The USAID HC Strategic Plan includes a results framework, a performance management plan (PMP), which is the first part of the two-part HC Accountability Plan (AP). (The AP covers the implementing and evaluation (program assessment) phases, and is an essential part of the HC accountability system.)

While the HC Strategic Plan is a five-year plan, its performance management plan (PMP) reflects activities carried out over a short period –often in a single fiscal year. The PMP contains metrics and data collection strategy (e.g., results from surveys, hiring timeframes, etc.) as well as a reporting schedule, and is tied directly to the results framework, which has near-term, mid-term, and long-term goals and objectives.

The Accountability Plan (AP) is the PMP and the Program Compliance and Assessment Plan (PCAP). The PCAP includes both programmatic assessment and transactional audits. The PCAP uses, in addition to on-site audit work, workforce surveys, data/trend analyses, metrics, and measures that relate to evaluating program effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance (i.e., with applicable laws, rules, regulations, Agency policy and Agency procedures).

It includes a multi-year audit schedule. The audits are designed to measure:

- Compliance with merit system principles and other applicable laws, rules, regulations, and procedures, including Agency policy and procedures;
- Strategic alignment of HRM goals/objectives; and
- HRM effectiveness, the extent to which programs achieve the desired outcomes; and program efficiency, the degree of efficiency in HRM service delivery.

The HC Annual Accountability Report sets the agenda for the continuous improvement stage. The M/HR Director (CHCO), in consultation with the Accountability System program manager, and M/HR senior staff, determines annually (generally in November) whether any parts of the AP need to be revised, based on the results of the previous fiscal year audits findings, PMP data, or changes in operations, such as the introduction of new technology or new programs.

401.3.5 Agency HC Accountability System Activities and Methodologies

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

USAID uses the following accountability activities and methodologies in the operation of its HC Accountability System:

- Data collection and analysis relevant to HC/HRM goals and related objectives, including government-wide metrics, employee perspective surveys (e.g., the A/USAID survey; the Federal Human Capital Survey), program evaluations, and information from the State/USAID Joint Management Council and any other relevant sources, and from audits done by the General Accountability Office (GAO) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG).
- Regular recurring audits of its Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) that include the following:

- An ad hoc team comprised of three staff from outside the agency (i.e., other Federal agencies) with current Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) certification and one or two staff from M/HR/PPIM/PP with current DEU certification to conduct on-site audits to assess program results and compliance with Federal merit system principles, law, rules, and regulations for three-to-five business days; and
 - A pre-site visit analysis of DE and related activities;
 - An entrance briefing with the Director, M/HR and staff;
 - A transactions/records review of DE selections and non-selections;
 - Interviews with selected officials and HR staff;
 - A review of DE policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and accountability program;
 - An exit debriefing with M/HR Director and staff;
 - A report of strengths, weaknesses, and required and recommended actions issued within 15 business days after completing the on-site audit; and
 - Closure of required and recommended actions within 60 business days after the report is issued.
- Regular recurring HC/HRM Reviews that include the following:
 - An ad hoc team of two to three people from outside M/HR and one or two from M/HR who have competencies in strategic HC and HRM programs and regulatory compliance. The team members may be employees of OIG, another Federal agency, or contractors, if deemed appropriate. The team will conduct an on-site audit (normally not more than five business days) to assess program results and compliance with Federal merit system principles, laws, rules and regulations;
 - A pre-onsite data analysis of the HRM area(s) under review;
 - An entrance briefing with the Director, M/HR and staff;
 - Interviews with senior leadership, managers, supervisors, employees, key program managers, union officials (if appropriate), which incorporate relevant HR data analyses and survey data;

- A transactions/records review relating to the three HCAAF implementation areas: Talent, Performance Culture, and Leadership and Knowledge Management;
- A review of HC documents relating to the three HCAAF implementation areas;
- A review of best practices literature, if available;
- An exit briefing with Director, M/HR and staff;
- A report of strengths and weaknesses with required and recommended actions issued within 30 business days after finishing the on-site audit; and
- Closure of required and recommended actions within 60 days after the audit report is issued.

The CHCO oversees the creation and implementation of the HC Accountability Plan (AP) that, in addition to collecting metrics demonstrating HC results, includes a compliance section covering HCM Talent, Performance Culture, and Leadership and Knowledge Management implementation systems. Part 2 of the AP, the Program Compliance and Assessment Plan (PCAP), identifies what and when audits and reviews will take place during the next three to four fiscal years. It focuses our efforts so that we carry out the above activities and methodologies in the most efficient and effective way and thus ensure the collection and verification of valid data relating to HC results. The AP, in toto, sets priorities, addressing known weaknesses/vulnerabilities or enhancements first (i.e., instituting all their necessary corrective/ improvement actions first). M/HR/PPIM, (specifically the Senior Advisor for Strategic Workforce Planning and the Workforce Planning Management analyst) is responsible for updating, monitoring, and tracking the plan.

All reviews and audits focus on using critical authorities effectively, efficiently, and in compliance with merit system principles and other laws and regulations. And the results from both the reviews, audits, and the HC metrics are used to correct any weaknesses/deficiencies found and to drive continuous improvements, as appropriate, to

- The HC Plan's goals and objectives;
- HR policies, programs, and processes; and
- The HC Accountability System.

401.3.6 Reporting and Corrective/Improvement Actions

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

The following list details reporting and corrective/improvement actions responsibilities and the ratings definitions for deficiencies found and overall expected outcomes/measures for each assigned functional area under review:

- The Director, M/HR oversees the data collection for the Performance Management Plan (PMP) and ensures that analyses are conducted by the appropriate entities. The resulting analyses drive continuous improvement activities (e.g., process improvements, Management Reform Agenda).
- The Administrator, in conjunction with the AA/M and Director, M/HR, ensures that USAID's annual employee survey responses are analyzed against baselines and targets. Results are shared with employees, along with any planned followed up actions or activities.
- The Director, M/HR ensures timely completion of DEU audit reports –generally 15 business days after the completion of the on-site audit. The Deputy Director oversees the tracking of all specific audit recommendations.
- M/HR/PPIM/PP (specifically the Senior Advisor for Strategic Workforce Planning and the Workforce Planning Management analyst), in close consultations with the Deputy Director, M/HR, oversees the timely completion of the HC/HRM reports by the audit teams and the tracking of all specific recommendations generated by the audits to ensure their timely disposition.
- M/HR/PPIM/PP (specifically the Senior Advisor for Strategic Workforce Planning and the Workforce Planning Management analyst) is responsible for updating the PMP with data provided from the action officer or unit.
- Audit teams provide to the Director, M/HR, documented best practices that will result in greater effectiveness, efficiency and compliance. The Director, M/HR shares with the AA/M and other appropriate senior management the weaknesses/deficiencies found from these audits to determine whether the HC Strategic Plan (or the activities under the plan), and/or the HC Accountability System need to be changed.

- Audit reports include ratings assigned by the team based on the team findings, as follows:

Major Deficiency	Actions or patterns that represent systemic violations/inconsistencies of merit system principles and/or compliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, practices, and Agency policies and procedures.
Minor Deficiency	Actions normally attributable to lack of knowledge or misinterpretation of a particular law, rule, regulation or procedure, which have minimal impact on the HRM program.

- Audit teams also include in their reports ratings, as described below, for each assigned functional area under review according to indicators, expected outcomes, and measures.

Green (Acceptable)	The HRM program/function is operating in accordance with merit system principles, laws, rules, regulations, and Agency policy and procedures.
Yellow (Needs Improvement)	The HRM program/function needs improvement to ensure that minor deficiencies are corrected and brought into compliance with merit system principles, laws, rules, regulations and Agency policy and procedures. (Requires the creation of an action plan to correct deficiencies or to coordinate training activities, as required.)
Red (Unacceptable)	The HRM program/function is not operating in compliance with merit system principles, laws, rules, regulations, and Agency policy and procedures. Audit findings reports are provided to the appropriate senior management officials or responsible oversight agency (e.g., USAID’s Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of the Special Counsel, etc.)

- For unacceptable ratings, the Director, M/HR (CHCO), may take a wide range of actions including, but not limited to,
 - Temporary suspension of some or all delegated authorities,
 - Permanent suspension of some or all delegated authorities, or

- Establishment of intense and comprehensive training and development programs, consistent with available funding.
- For case violations involving potential **prohibited personnel practices**, audit teams refer them to the appropriate oversight agency. For systemic concerns, the audit team refers them to the Director M/HR (CHCO) for consideration of a Agency-wide action.
- M/HR/PPIM/PP, (specifically the Senior Advisor for Strategic Workforce Planning and the Workforce Planning Management analyst) under the direction of the Director of M/HR, coordinates all of the accountability information to inform the continuous improvement phase and prepares the annual HC Accountability Report, which the Administrator submits to the head of OPM. This annual report incorporates the findings from the accountability activities completed during the fiscal year and any actions taken to improve:
 - HC initiatives,
 - HRM programs/processes, and
 - The ability of the accountability system to produce results that drive continuous improvements.

401.3.7 Evaluation of the Accountability System

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

The Director, M/HR, oversees the evaluation of the HC accountability system by reviewing the results of the accountability activities in the aggregate, assessing the state of the strategic, Agency-wide HC and HRM, and directing any necessary follow-up actions and system improvements. The HC Accountability Program Manager, who functions independent of the chain of command, in coordination with key officials/organizations, collects the data that will help determine how well USAID has performance against specific measures and is responsible for writing the annual accountability report.

After completing the process for annually assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance of the accountability activities, the Director, M/HR, oversees the assessment of the results against the multi-year Accountability Plan. This assessment ensures that the following fiscal year's accountability activities address up-to-date goals and objectives with the most appropriate measures available to track mission alignment, effectiveness, efficiency and merit system compliance, and that all designated officials and organizations are meeting their accountability responsibilities. The purpose behind continuous monitoring of the HC Accountability System and the multi-year Accountability Plan is to improve HC business processes and outcomes to more effectively support USAID's accomplishment of its mission and to ensure that the accountability system itself is providing the expected information/data.

401.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

401.4.1 External Mandatory References

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

- a. [Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended](#)
- b. [Civil Service Rule X, as codified in 5 CFR 10](#)
- c. **5 CFR 250.3 (Proposed)**
- d. [5 U.S.C. 305](#)
- e. [Human Capital Accountability Framework](#)
- f. [5 U.S.C. 1103](#)
- g. [5 U.S.C. 1104](#)
- h. [5 U.S.C. 1401](#)
- i. [5 U.S.C. 2301](#)
- j. [5 U.S.C. 2302](#)
- k. [The Homeland Security Act of 2002 \(Pub. L. 107-296 – CHCO Act\)](#)

401.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date: 09/01/2006

- a. [ADS Series 400](#)
- b. [ADS 101](#)
- c. [Delegation of Authorities Table](#)
- d. **USAID Strategic Plan** [Note: This document is only available on the USAID Intranet. Please contact ads@usaid.gov if you need a copy].
- e. **USAID's Human Capital Strategic Plan** [Note: This document is only available on the USAID Intranet. Please contact ads@usaid.gov if you need a copy].
- f. [USAID Human Capital \(HC\) Accountability System Roles and Responsibilities by Phase \(Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement\)](#)

- g. **USAID Accountability Plan** [Note: This document is only available on the USAID Intranet. Please contact ads@usaid.gov if you need a copy].

401.4.3 Mandatory Forms
Effective Date: 09/01/2006

- a. [Annual Report Template](#)

401.5 ADDITIONAL HELP
Effective Date: 09/01/2006

401.5.1 Optional Forms
Effective Date: 09/01/2006

- a. **Audit/Evaluation Checklists** [Note: This document is only available on the USAID Intranet. Please contact ads@usaid.gov if you need a copy]

401.6 DEFINITIONS
Effective Date: 09/01/2006

The terms and definitions listed below have been incorporated into the ADS Glossary. See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

Competency Gaps

The gap identified by comparing the projected and actual availability of mission-critical competencies and projected and actual demand for the competencies. Identification of current or future gaps typically will include size, composition, and proficiency level of the current and desired workforce.

Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF)

The framework that establishes and defines the five human capital systems that provide the single, consistent definition of Federal human capital management.

Merit Systems Principles

Nine principles found in 5 U.S.C. 2301 by which Federal personnel management is to be implemented. These principles are the under girding of the entire Federal Human Capital management system. The Merit System evolved in America to ensure that selections for Federal jobs would be open, competitive, and free of political coercion.

Mission Critical Occupations

Occupations core to carrying the Agency's mission, i.e., those occupations without which mission-critical work cannot be completed.

Prohibited Personnel Practices

These 12 practices, found in 5 U.S.C. 2302 (and must be avoided), describe results of outcomes of poor management practices and should never occur. Managers are held accountable for making human resource decisions free of prohibited personnel practices.

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