



The Peace Corps
Strategic Plan | FY 2014–2018
and Annual Performance Plan | FY 2014–2015



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Where Volunteers Serve

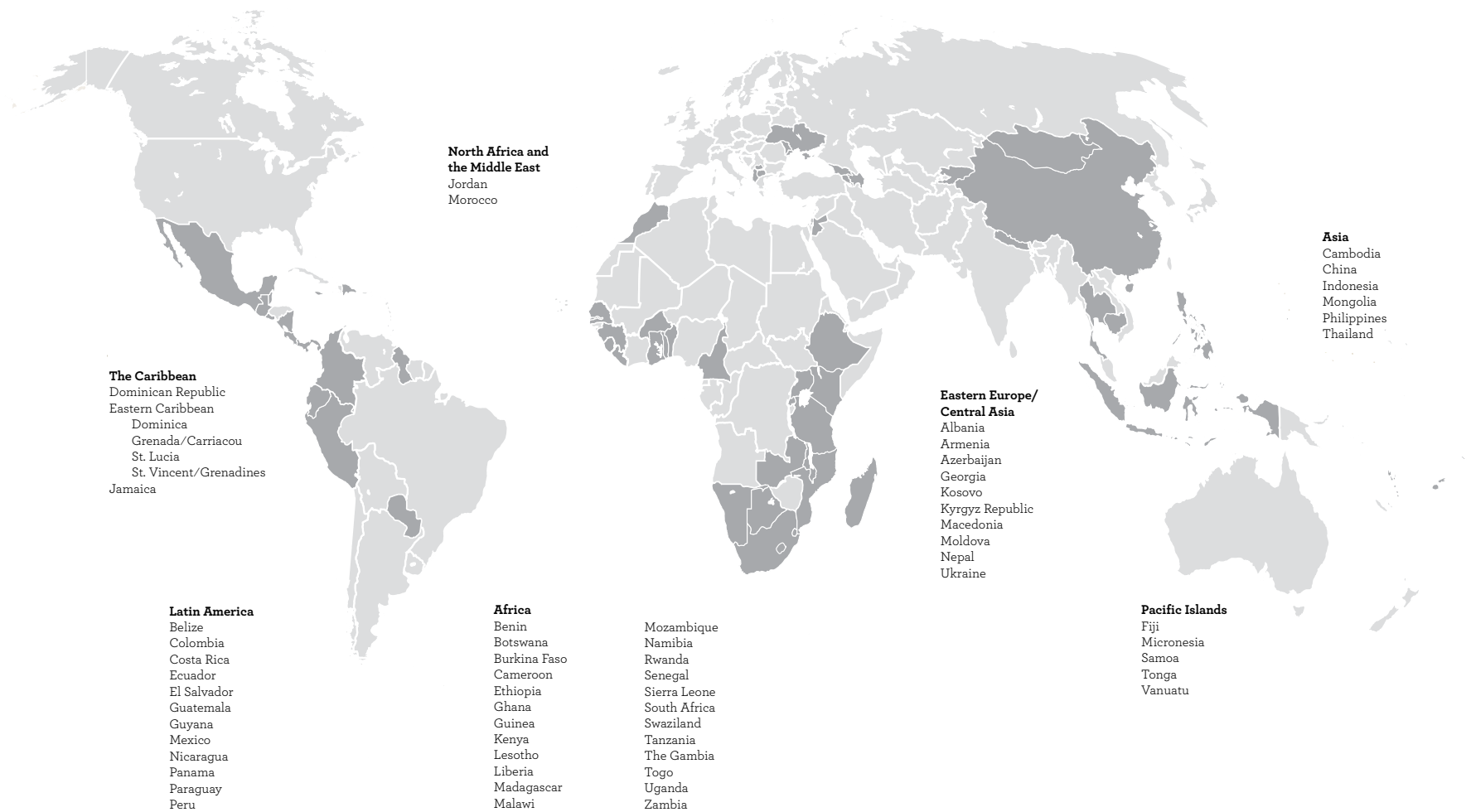


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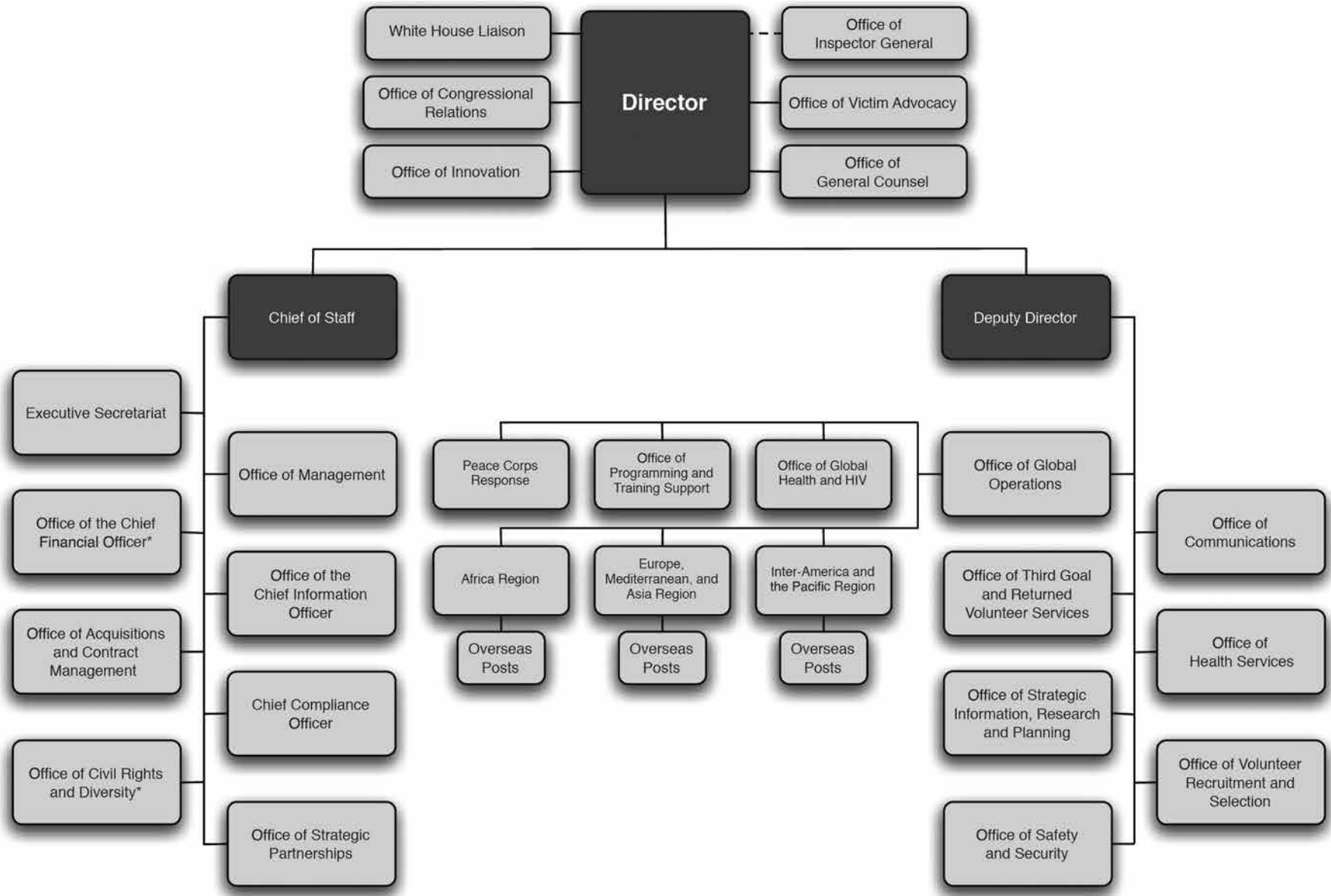
Mission

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

Since its establishment in 1961, the Peace Corps has been guided by a mission of world peace and friendship. The agency exemplifies the best of the American spirit by making it possible for Americans to serve—advancing development and building cross-cultural understanding around the world. Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps is making a difference in the overseas communities it serves, in the lives of its Volunteers, and back home in the United States. More than 215,000 Volunteers have served in 139 countries since 1961.

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

Peace Corps Organizational Chart



Core Values

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*President Barack Obama
2013 State of the Union Address*

Plan Overview

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

The Strategic Plan includes the long-range goals and objectives designed to advance the Peace Corps mission. The accompanying FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan lays out the strategies and activities the agency will utilize to accomplish these goals and objectives as well as the specific results the agency expects to achieve over time.

The FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and FY 2014/2015 Annual Performance Plan include the following components:

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

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

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

Performance Goals state a quantitative level of performance, or “target,” to be accomplished within a specific timeframe. In the plan, annual targets are set for FY 2014 and FY 2015, and some initial targets are set for future years. Initial targets will be revised in future annual performance plans. Targets and actual results are provided for prior years when available. The agency uses performance goals to both drive performance improvement and to assess progress on strategic goals and objectives. Performance goals are updated each year in the annual performance plan in conjunction with the budget formulation process.

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

Appendices provide additional detail on the development of the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan and FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan. Appendices include a summary of the Peace Corps’ performance management framework (Appendix A), a description of how evaluation and research informed the development of the plans (Appendix B), data validation and verification standards for the performance goals and indicators (Appendix C), and a summary of the stakeholder outreach conducted (Appendix D).

GPRA Modernization Act of 2010

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

The Peace Corps has not been asked to contribute to the federal government’s cross-agency priority goals. Per the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, the contributions of those agencies required to report on cross-agency priority goals can be found at <http://www.performance.gov>.

Strategic Goals

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

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

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

Strategic Goal 1: Building Local Capacity

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

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

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

Strategic Goal 2: Sharing America with the World

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

Volunteers promote a better understanding of Americans among local people through day-to-day interactions with their host families, counterparts, friends, and others. Over the course of their two years of service, Volunteers share America with the world—dispelling myths about Americans and developing deep relationships with local people. Through this approach, Volunteers also learn more about local community strengths and challenges and build trust with local partners, strengthening their project work.

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

Strategic Goal 3: Bringing the World Back Home

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

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

Public Benefit: Sustained interaction between Americans and other peoples engenders mutual understanding and trust, increasing respect and human dignity in world affairs at home and abroad. Additionally, through their overseas experiences, Volunteers develop language, intercultural, technical, and entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for jobs in the 21st century. They bring these skills with them to their work in both the public and private sectors, sharing their global experiences and outlook with their colleagues, friends, and family. This, in turn, helps to build a more competitive U.S. workforce.

Strategic Objectives

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

Relationship between Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

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

Strategic Objective 1: Volunteer Well-Being

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

- Finalize implementation of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 and ensure its reforms continue to guide agency policy and practice
- Periodically evaluate individual experiences with healthcare and safety and security support
- Define and implement regionally-approved safety and security standards for site selection and monitoring
- Train staff who interact with Volunteers on methods for mentoring, developing, and supporting Volunteers
- Assess the effects of Volunteer health and safety on Volunteers' productivity at work
- Encourage a comprehensive approach to Volunteer support through agencywide initiatives such as the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program
- Expand mental and emotional health support to provide Volunteers with the tools to cope with the challenges of service
- Establish a data management system to track critical safety and security recommendations by posts and headquarters offices

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 1.1: Implement Critical Safety and Security Recommendations

Increase the percentage of critical Volunteer safety and security recommendations implemented by the agreed upon time to 90 percent by FY 2015

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Targets	--	--	--	88%	90%
Results	79%	75%	84%		

Peace Corps safety and security officers develop recommendations for improvement based on reviews of posts' safety and security systems. The timely implementation of these critical recommendations indicates improvement to Volunteer safety and security systems.

Data Source: *Peace Corps administrative records*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 1.2: Volunteer Satisfaction with Medical and Mental Health Support

Reduce the percentage of Volunteers “minimally” or “not at all” satisfied¹ with medical and mental health support to 7.0 percent by FY 2016

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	8.2%	7.2%	7.0%
Results	7.0%	7.4%	9.2%			

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

¹*Includes the bottom two negative responses on a five-point scale*

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Health Services*

Strategic Objective 2: Service Opportunity of Choice

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 2.1: Volunteer Requests Met

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	95%	95%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Results	97%	97%	90%					

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 2.2: Increase Service Opportunities

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	7,600	8,200	8,800	9,400	10,000
Results	9,095	8,073	7,209					

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (PCVDBMS/HRMS)

Lead Office: Office of Global Operations

Performance Goal 2.3: Increase Applications

Increase applications for Volunteer service to 22,000 by FY 2015

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Targets	--	--	--	20,000	22,000
Results	12,206	10,091	10,118		

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Offices: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 2.4: Reduce Time from Application to Invitation

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	5 months	4 months	3 months
Results	10 months	11 months	6 months ¹			

The time currently required to go through the application process is much longer than other service opportunities and has been cited as a major deterrent by prospective applicants.

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Offices: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection; Office of Health Services

Strategic Objective 3: Development Impact

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

- Complete the revisions of project frameworks to focus Volunteer activity on highly-effective technical interventions
- Fully implement standardized technical training to ensure Volunteers have the skills required to meet community needs
- Periodically monitor community need through Project Advisory Committees to ensure project activities address local development challenges appropriately
- Expand counterpart training opportunities to provide counterparts and community members with tools to work effectively with Volunteers and to strengthen the capacity of host country individuals and communities
- Improve Volunteer training on working with communities and host country partners
- Engage with agency strategic partners to provide Volunteers with technical training, tools, and mentoring

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 3.1: Advance Community-Based Development Outcomes

Increase the percentage of projects with documented gains on community-based development outcomes

- Improved farming techniques or farm management practices (Agriculture)
- Improved organizational management practices and new business development (Community and Economic Development)
- Improved TEFL practices and proficiency (Education)
- Improved environmental management practices and understanding of environmental issues (Environment)

- Improved health practices through key behavioral changes (Health)
- Improvement in demonstrated life skills and leadership among youth (Youth in Development)

	FY 2014
Targets:	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Sources: *Volunteer Reporting Tool*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 3.2: Strengthen Local Capacity

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

	FY 2014
Targets:	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Sources: *Global Counterpart Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Performance Goal 3.3: Improve Feedback to Volunteers

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report “considerable” or “exceptional”¹ satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of the feedback provided on their work to 56 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	40%	44%	48%	52%	56%
Results ²	39%	33%	38%					

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

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

² FY 2011-13 results are from a proxy measure from the Annual Volunteer Survey: “How satisfied are you with the following support provided by in-country Peace Corps staff: Feedback on my work reports”

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Global Operations*

Strategic Objective 4: Cross-Cultural Understanding

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

- Assess intercultural competence at multiple points during Volunteer service
- Encourage currently-serving and returned Volunteers to leverage new technology, including social media, to facilitate communication between Americans and local individuals and communities
- Train Volunteers on managing cultural differences during their service
- Redesign the Coverdell World Wise Schools - Correspondence Match program to allow Volunteers to independently identify their own matches prior to departure and expand educator access to information based on their curriculum needs
- Expand the redesigned Coverdell World Wise Schools - Speakers Match program

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 4.1: Greater Understanding of Americans

Increase the percentage of counterparts who report a greater understanding of Americans after working with a Volunteer

Targets:	FY 2014
	No target set; Baseline data collection

Counterparts regularly work closely with Volunteers. If counterparts increase their understanding of Americans as a result of sustained day-to-day interactions with Volunteers, it is an indicator of the success of the primary mechanism the agency utilizes to build cultural understanding between the United States and the countries where Volunteers serve.

Data Source: Global Counterpart Survey

Lead Office: Office of Global Operations

Performance Goal 4.2: Increase Cross-Cultural Connections

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report they facilitated direct interactions between American and host country individuals and communities

Targets:	FY 2014
	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

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

Strategic Objective 5: Continuation of Service

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 5.1: Support RPCV Career Transition

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	2,500	2,750	3,000
Results	--	--	--			

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

Data Source: *Peace Corps administrative records*

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

Performance Goal 5.2: Increase RPCV Engagement

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	8,000	10,000	12,000	14,000	16,000
Results	--	--	--					

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

Data Source: *Peace Corps administrative records*

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

Strategic Objective 6: Diversity and Inclusion

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

- Develop a marketing and communications strategy to increase the diversity of the Peace Corps Volunteer and staff applicant pools
- Collaborate with local and regional groups aligned with under-represented populations to increase applications
- Support and monitor the implementation of the initiative to allow same-sex couples to serve together as Peace Corps Volunteers
- Develop a system for field staff to recommend returned Peace Corps Volunteers who can serve as recruiters for under-represented populations
- Engage the RPCV community in recruiting under-represented populations
- Identify, support, and implement strategic partnerships to support the Peace Corps' diversity recruitment efforts
- Develop a mentoring program to connect recently returned Volunteers with current Peace Corps applicants to improve applicant retention
- Monitor applicant drop-out rates by race/ethnicity, sex, age, and other demographic elements to identify potential barriers
- Develop change agents to build an inclusive culture at all levels
- Support Employee Resource Groups to help recruit, retain, and support staff
- Provide tools and training for staff to increase their awareness and empower them to prevent the types of discrimination and harassment issues that can occur within a multicultural environment
- Identify and mitigate economic barriers to Volunteer service
- Review and revise the eligibility standards for Volunteer service, including medical status eligibility standards, to ensure that applicants are not evaluated on the basis of any factor that is not relevant to the ability to serve effectively

External Factors: As the Peace Corps primarily attracts recent college graduates, efforts to increase the diversity of the Volunteer population are dependent in part on the diversity of individuals completing an

undergraduate degree. Similarly, staff diversity is influenced by the diversity of both the Volunteer population and the U.S. workforce. Additionally, the lack of a commercial student loan deferment option makes it difficult for those with commercial student loan debt to serve.

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 6.1: Increase Applicant Diversity

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	32%	34%	35%
Results	26%	27%	30%			

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (DOVE/PCVDBMS)

Lead Office: Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Performance Goal 6.2: Build an Open and Inclusive Organizational Culture

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets ²	--	--	--	85%	88%	90%
Results	--	--	--			

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

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

² FY 2014-16 targets apply to U.S. direct hire staff. Targets for Volunteers and host country national staff will be identified once baseline data has been collected through the addition of new Annual Volunteer Survey questions and the new Host Country National Staff Survey in FY 2014.

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

Lead Office: Office of Civil Rights and Diversity

Strategic Objective 7: Site Development

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 7.1: Improve Site Development

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report “considerable” or “exceptional”¹ satisfaction with site selection and preparation to 60 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	44%	48%	52%	56%	60%
Results ²	42%	41%	42%					

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

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

²FY 2011-2013 results are from a proxy measure from the Annual Volunteer Survey: “How satisfied are you with the following support provided by in-country Peace Corps staff: Site selection/preparation”

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

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

Performance Goal 7.2: Improve Counterpart Selection and Preparation

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report their assigned counterpart met their needs for community integration and project work support to a “considerable” or “exceptional”¹ degree to 48 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	34%	38%	42%	46%	48%
Results ²	31%	32%	32%					

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

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

²FY 2011-13 results are from a proxy measure from Annual Volunteer Survey question “When you arrived at your community, how prepared for your arrival were the host country individuals with whom you would be working?”

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

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

Strategic Objective 8: Train-Up

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 8.1: Improve Language Learning

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%
Results	--	--	--					

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (VIDA)

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

Performance Goal 8.2: Increase Effectiveness of Technical Training

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report that their technical training prepared them to work at their site to a “considerable” or “exceptional”¹ degree to 60 percent by FY 2018

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	52%	54%	56%	58%	60%
Results	44%	44%	50%					

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

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

Data Source: Annual Volunteer Survey

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

Strategic Objective 9: High-Performing Learning Organization

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 9.1: Improve Staff Training

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	54%	56%	58%	60%	62%
Results ²	50%	50%	57%					

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

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

²FY 2011-13 results only include responses from U.S. direct hire staff in the Employee Viewpoint Survey; they do not include host country national staff.

Data Sources: Employee Viewpoint Survey and Host Country National Staff Survey

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

Performance Goal 9.2: Increase Staff Tenure

Increase the average tenure of U.S. direct hire staff

	FY 2014
Targets:	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Source: Peace Corps database (NFC)

Lead Office: Office of Human Resources Management

Strategic Objective 10: Global Connectivity

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 10.1: Develop an Integrated Technology Platform

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Targets	--	--	--	10%	30%	50%	70%	100%
Results	--	--	--					

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

Data Source: *Peace Corps administrative records*

Lead Office: *Office of the Chief Information Officer*

Performance Goal 10.2: Facilitate Knowledge Sharing

Increase the percentage of Volunteers who report that they use the digital materials provided by the Peace Corps in their work

	FY 2014
Targets:	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Source: *Annual Volunteer Survey*

Lead Office: *Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support*

Strategic Objective 11: Measurement for Results

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

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

Strategies and Activities:

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

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

Performance Goals

Performance Goal 11.1: Conduct Baselines

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	50%	75%	100%
Results	--	--	--			

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

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

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

Performance Goal 11.2: Increase Evidence-Based Decisions

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

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Targets	--	--	--	50%	75%	100%
Results	--	--	--			

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

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

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

Performance Goal 11.3: Using Evidence to Encourage Innovation

Increase the percentage of posts and headquarters offices that conduct structured pilots to test new approaches to advance programmatic goals and/or address management challenges

	FY 2014
Targets:	No target set; Baseline data collection

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

Data Source: Peace Corps administrative records

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

Appendix A: Performance Management System

The goals, objectives, and strategies included in the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan and FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan guide the Peace Corps' efforts to advance its mission. The Peace Corps' performance management system is rooted in an inclusive and participatory culture where staff and Volunteers at all levels are invested in improving the agency.

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

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

- **Integrated Planning and Budget System (IPBS).** Through the IPBS, headquarters offices and overseas posts develop strategic and operational plans to ensure their activities are aligned with and advance the agency's strategic goals. IPBS plans are developed during the agency's budget formulation process; budgets are informed by the resource requirements of the IPBS plans. Through the IPBS, the agency is working to better link performance and budgeting processes to ensure decision makers have the appropriate information to inform program, policy, and budget decisions.
- **Country Portfolio Review.** Each year, the agency conducts a comprehensive review of active and potential Peace Corps posts based on external and internal data. The Country Portfolio Review informs decisions about new country entries, country graduations (closures), and the allocation of Volunteers and other resources.
- **Quarterly strategic plan performance review sessions.** Key officials from across the agency, including senior leadership, review performance data at the end of each quarter to share best practices and develop strategies to meet performance targets when areas for improvement are identified. A performance spotlight is identified during each quarterly meeting to highlight a particularly noteworthy use of data in program, policy, or budget decisions.
- **Annual strategic review.** Beginning in 2014, the agency will conduct an annual strategic review to assess the progress made on achieving the strategic objectives in the Strategic Plan. This exercise will engage Peace Corps' senior leadership in a comprehensive performance review that will serve to inform annual planning and budget formulation, help set performance improvement areas for the year, and identify potential evaluation topics to better understand the effectiveness of agency activities.

Appendix B: Evaluation and Research

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

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

The use of evidence in the development of agency goals

The agency employed an evidence-based approach throughout the process of selecting the goals and objectives in the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan and FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan. The agency developed or utilized evidence to inform the process through the following activities:

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

Future plans

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

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

Future plans for developing new sources of evidence include the following:

- **Global Counterpart Survey.** The Global Counterpart Survey will be fielded annually to Volunteers' counterparts to gather feedback on the impact of Volunteers on local development outcomes and building a better understanding of Americans. As the survey will be conducted annually and across all Peace Corps posts and sectors, the Global Counterpart Survey will provide the agency with timely and actionable information on the impact of Volunteers directly from the individuals that work and interact with Volunteers most frequently. The agency initiated a pilot for surveying local counterparts at 14 posts in FY 2013 to determine the most appropriate survey methodology. After analysis of the pilot is complete, the Peace Corps will launch the Global Counterpart Survey in FY 2014.
- **Host Country National Staff Survey.** While the majority of U.S. direct hire staff domestically and abroad are limited to five-year appointments, host country national staff are often employed for many years and thus constitute the institutional memory at overseas posts. However, the Peace Corps has not conducted a regular survey to collect the viewpoints of these critical staff. In FY 2014, the agency will pilot a Host Country National Staff Survey, modeled on the Employee Viewpoint Survey administered to federal government employees annually. Upon successful completion of the pilot, the agency will field the survey globally on an annual basis. The agency anticipates receiving data from the survey that will help inform how best to foster an inclusive and satisfying work environment and support the professional development of host country national staff.
- **Annual agencywide evaluation agenda.** Each year, the Peace Corps will develop an agency-level evaluation agenda based on the results of the annual strategic review, the identification of topics through the quarterly strategic plan performance review process, and agency priorities and interests. Anticipated evaluation topics include a process evaluation of the new business processes for Volunteer recruitment, performance evaluations on agency performance goals where insufficient progress has been made, and a usage study of Volunteer project monitoring tools such as the Volunteer Reporting Tool. The annual agencywide evaluation agenda will produce evidence about the effectiveness of agency operations.
- **Impact evaluations.** In FY 2014, the agency plans to collect and compile baseline data prior to the arrival of Volunteers in Kosovo. This represents a rare opportunity to collect baseline data in a country that has never before hosted Peace Corps Volunteers. When coupled with endline data collected after host country individuals and communities have interacted with Volunteers for a sustained period of time, this

baseline data collection effort will allow the agency to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation on the effect of Volunteers on local development outcomes and building a better understanding of Americans. The agency plans to conduct similar baseline data collection activities in other new country entries and when posts introduce a new Volunteer sector. The agency will also conduct structured pilots to test new approaches to increasing the impact of Volunteers and to solving management challenges.

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

Appendix C: Data Validation and Verification

The performance data included in the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan and FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan are based on reliable and valid data that are complete as of the submission of this document.

Data collection and reporting consistency is ensured by the use of detailed performance goal data reference sheets which include operational definitions, data sources, and a comprehensive methodology for measuring each performance goal. The agency ensures the data are complete and accurate through oversight and review by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning. The major data sources for performance goals in the FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan and FY 2014-15 Annual Performance Plan are detailed below.

Annual Volunteer Survey

The Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) is an anonymous, voluntary survey of all currently serving Volunteers. This comprehensive survey provides direct feedback from the Volunteers regarding agency activities and is a key data source informing performance improvement. A consistently high response rate from Volunteers (92 percent in FY 2013) minimizes total survey error. The survey is not, however, administered to a random sample of Volunteers and—as with other non-randomized surveys—is therefore subject to non-response bias.

The demographic profile of the survey respondents is consistently representative of the Volunteer population on key characteristics: age, sex, race, ethnicity, level of education, and status as a Volunteer. Since FY 2012, the AVS has been administered exclusively online. Responses to all AVS questions are directly provided by the Volunteers and housed in an external, electronic survey database. To ensure data quality, rigorous data cleaning procedures are applied to the dataset prior to analysis. Analyzed data are used to inform agency management about the Volunteers' perspectives on key issues. The high response rate from Volunteers and the data verification and validation measures ensure the high level of AVS data accuracy needed for its intended use.

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

Peace Corps databases

The agency maintains several databases to collect Volunteer and program information. Only authorized staff who have been properly trained can access key systems, maintaining data integrity and ensuring that the data entry methodology is followed. Regular reconciliation processes between agency units enable users to verify and test performance data to isolate and correct data entry or transfer errors. Internal, automated system processes also ensure data are appropriately transferred among different applications. The required level of accuracy to provide current and historical information about programs and Volunteers is high and is met through rigorous database rules and business processes.

Peace Corps administrative records

The agency collects data annually from headquarters offices and overseas posts that rely on administrative records that do not exist in a centrally-managed database. Data requested from all headquarters office and overseas posts are collected through online survey software and responses are housed in an external, electronic survey database. To ensure data quality, rigorous data cleaning procedures are applied to the dataset prior to analysis. Leaders from all overseas posts and headquarters offices are required to complete the survey. The survey is designed with clear logic and data validation rules to minimize data entry error. The data are independently reviewed and anomalies are addressed and corrected to improve data quality. Other data are collected from specific headquarters offices individually.

As these administrative records do not have the benefit of the verification and validation standards executed in Peace Corps database systems, the agency's ability to ensure a high level of accuracy for the data is limited. To compensate for this limitation, the agency develops data collection tools associated with each applicable performance goal to ensure that respondents are fully aware of data collection procedures and that they collect data consistently throughout the year.

Employee Viewpoint Survey

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

The demographic profile of survey respondents is consistently representative of the U.S. direct hire staff population. A high response rate ensures the voices of a significant number of staff are heard each year. The survey is administered electronically, and questions are modeled on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey fielded each year governmentwide by the Office of Personnel Management.

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

Data sources in development

Several new data sources are in development in FY 2014, including the Global Counterpart Survey, the Host Country National Staff Survey, and the Volunteer Reporting Tool. Detailed validation and verification standards will be included in future Annual Performance Plans as these data sources are fully developed.

Appendix D: Stakeholder Engagement

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

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

Congressional consultation

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

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