

As the world faces growing challenges that threaten America's interests and people, the U.S. must advance, not retreat, from its global leadership. U.S. international assistance is critical to making America stronger, safer, more prosperous, and achieving U.S. national security, economic, and humanitarian objectives overseas.

SBAIC (Small Business Association for International Companies) is proud to offer our vision for this challenge. We are an association of over 150 American small businesses who serve the U.S. Government by implementing its international assistance programs. Our insights and recommendations derive from our direct experience implementing these programs over many years as owners and managers of American small businesses.

Four principles drive effective international assistance:

- Alignment with U.S. security, foreign policy, economic, and humanitarian objectives
- Highly competent implementation
- Providing the U.S. with good value for money committed and spent
- Private sector driven

U.S. international assistance is not charity. It is the use of U.S. taxpayer funds to achieve outcomes important to the American people. We know from experience that great progress is made in developing countries – just as it is here in the U.S. – when driven by the private sector. Likewise, international assistance must both catalyze the private sector in developing countries and be supported by U.S. private sector implementing partners. As the engine of the U.S. economy, American small businesses are especially well suited for this challenge.

“**Small businesses power our economy from the ground up, driving innovation and building products that keep America strong, competitive, and secure.**”

– President Trump

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

To assure alignment with U.S. policy, harness innovation by expanding the U.S. industrial base, and fully tap the power of the private sector, SBAIC members recommend:



Design international assistance programs that support U.S. national and economic security, and humanitarian objectives

For example, these programs would:

- Reduce the spread of disease globally, reduce the likelihood of global pandemics, and increase the stability of geo-strategically important countries.
- Strengthen the economies of the U.S. and our allies, expand trade opportunities for U.S. companies (including in critical minerals), create in-country jobs to reduce migration pressures, and counter China's Belt and Road Initiative, among other malign influences.
- Strengthen public, private, and civil institutions in geo-strategically important countries.
- Provide aid to desperate people during humanitarian and natural disasters.
- Support the ability of the U.S. Government to broker favorable deals and architect wins.



Put the private sector at the center of international assistance

U.S. international assistance should leverage America's private sector interests by creating opportunities for trade, investment, and collaboration for U.S. businesses in developing countries. Wherever appropriate, the U.S. Government should draw upon the expertise of the American private sector to implement its international assistance programs.

Developing country private sectors should be priority counterparts for U.S. international assistance, building their capacity and expanding their resources to tackle their country's most pressing challenges. American small businesses are most appropriately sized to help developing country small businesses become growth engines and conduits for US investments and exports.



Select experienced leadership and staff in adequate numbers

Competence starts at the top. U.S. international assistance leaders must align closely with U.S. objectives for international assistance, have deep experience in such programming, and manifest strong management abilities. To oversee international assistance programs globally, the U.S. needs a cadre of U.S. Government personnel with experience in varied technical areas and regions, and in sufficient numbers to accomplish international assistance missions that spans multiple countries, sectors, and policy objectives.



Use procurement processes that expand the industrial base and secure the supply chain

U.S. international assistance has overly devolved to a handful of large organizations, creating overwhelming barriers to entry, even to those offering equally, if not better, solutions and personnel. We must ensure that results of Federal procurement processes reflect the innovation and cost effectiveness that are American hallmarks.

This requires procurement evaluation criteria that don't disfavor smaller or newer partners, and training for contracting officers and technical evaluation committees to guard against inadvertently preference for larger organizations and known brands. Priorities in President Trump's April 15, 2025, Executive Order (EO) 14275, titled "On Restoring Common Sense to Federal Procurement," should be quickly applied to international assistance, e.g., making opportunities and requirements readily accessible and understandable, easing the burden of doing business with the Federal Government, especially for smaller entities newer to its government procurement, and transparently tracking and reporting procurement results.



Implement a robust small business set-aside program

Small business set-asides were initiated in the Federal procurement processes in the 1970s to recognize the key role small business companies play as the engine of the U.S. economy. These efforts have helped counter market consolidation in Federal procurement while bringing increased competition, innovation, and cost efficacy in line with President Trump's EO 14275 on procurement reform. In reforming international assistance, we must ensure that the requirements for set-asides at the prime contract level (at just under 25%) and for subcontracting are fully met.



Primacy of American Small Business

99.7% of all American businesses are small businesses.

SBAIC member companies have personnel in 41 states.

Small businesses represent the best of American ingenuity, values, and problem-solving, deepening U.S. economic power through job creation, inclusive technology, and sustainable enterprise.

American small businesses supporting U.S. international assistance deliver innovation, efficiency, and expertise to improve lives abroad and achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives, while creating jobs and spurring economic growth across the U.S. However, American small businesses implement just under 15% of all U.S. international assistance contracts.

SBAIC is a dynamic community of highly reliable and nimble U.S. small businesses at the heart of America's private sector.

“ We must make it easier for small businesses, non-traditional vendors & innovative companies to do business with the federal government. By growing & diversifying our industrial base, we don't just foster competition, we also build resilience into our supply chains, promote innovation & enhance national security by ensuring that the U.S. is never overly dependent on limited sources of supply. ”

- Kevin Rhodes, Nominee, Admin. for Federal Procurement Policy, OMB