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Government Insights

Deploying the whole of government

How to structure successful multi-agency international programs

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Introduction

Think of our nation's biggest challenges: unemployment and poverty, public health, climate change and more. Hard experience tells us none of them can be "solved" in any meaningful way by a federal agency or even by the entire federal government. They *all* require efforts coordinated among multiple levels of government as well as private enterprise, nonprofits and community organizations.

We've previously discussed how to build multi-sector, problem-solving ecosystems to tackle the big issues. In this study, we'll focus on how US government actors can work across agencies and sectors to help address challenges. Our approach is called *whole of government (WoG)*—a comprehensive way to assemble resources and expertise from multiple agencies and groups to address problems with interrelated social, economic and political causes. The approach plays to comparative advantage and maximizes resources.

With sprawling, complex problems, however, progress depends on some capabilities that are in themselves challenging to put in place. The WoG approach requires us to comprehend the shifting dynamics within the team of problem-solvers, coordinate their responses and provide the resources they need.

Now more than ever, the US needs a flexible and adaptable whole-of-government formula.

In drawing on several case studies of successful WoG methods—the Marshall Plan, the humanitarian response to Kosovo and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—we identify five guiding principles:

1. **Clearly define a leader for the effort.** Clarity and consensus on leadership minimizes conflicts.
2. **Clearly define the problem.** The leader should provide strategic guidance to all parties but *also* must articulate a common understanding of the problem.
3. **Identify and mobilize the right actors.** Avoid having "too many cooks in the kitchen"; resist the temptation to include *all* players, but instead identify and mobilize the *right* actors, the ones essential for your project.
4. **Ensure consistent and predictable funding.** The organizational structure should be complemented by funding that allows for confident long-term planning.
5. **Coordinate efforts with other domestic and international partners.** The global economic and political ecosystem is more complex than ever, with states and non-state actors alike demanding a voice. Many countries are only now emerging as donors, while philanthropic institutions can wield an incredible amount of influence on global and national policies. The ability of a single nation or a small group of nations to drive a global agenda has faded significantly.

In the following case studies, we examine the actors and infrastructure that facilitated examples of interagency and public/private cooperation. We then consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, and offer recommendations useful for the successful deployment of any WoG approach. While our focus is limited to international economic and development assistance, the general principles involved certainly may be applicable to domestic issues as well.

Case study #1: The Marshall Plan

In 1948, the US provided $12 billion ($138 billion in 2016 dollars) for the Marshall Plan, the effort spearheaded by US General George C. Marshall to support Europe's recovery from the war and prevent the spread of communism by rebuilding and modernizing industries and mitigating trade barriers.[i]

This iconic program influenced a number of subsequent initiatives. In 1999, for example, Congress aimed to replicate its scale and success with the AIDS Marshall Plan Fund for Africa Act. Politicians and journalists have called for similar Marshall Plan-inspired action for education[ii], American cities[iii] and disaster relief[iv]. The Marshall Plan thus is often thought of as the gold standard for whole-of-government delivery of aid.[v]

Despite our admiration for the Marshall Plan, though, we struggle to replicate it in the 21st century. This challenge prompts a series of questions: what conditions in 1948 allowed Marshall and his contemporaries to deploy the WoG approach so successfully? Can these conditions be adapted to modern government? And what steps can agencies and individuals take to improve the probability of success?

The challenge: Post-war devastation

World War II left much of Europe in ruins, facing unprecedented humanitarian crises and the threat of communism. After the war, the US arguably was the only major power remaining with stable leadership and ample resources.[vi] The revival of Western Europe was aided through a whole-of-government approach led by the US with active collaboration from participating nations. The Marshall Plan provided a solution in which these countries, "through their own individual and concerted efforts, [would] become independent of extraordinary outside economic assistance."[vii]

The US response

On April 3, 1948, President Harry S Truman signed the Economic Cooperation Act

> …to promote world peace and the general welfare national interest and foreign policy of the United States through economic financial and other measures necessary to the maintenance of conditions abroad in which free institutions may survive and [be] consistent with the maintenance of the strength and stability of the United States.[viii]

The act's route to approval saw considerable debate about the program's organizational structure and its relationship with the State Department and the federal government as a whole.[ix]

Congress ultimately established a semi-independent Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) led by a presidentially appointed, executive-level administrator and a special representative to Europe with ambassadorial rank. The ECA was intentionally temporary, an "autoextinguishing" measure intended to prevent permanent entanglements. Each of 16 participating nations received a special mission to assist with ECA operations.[x]

On the European side, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was created for administrative representation, business continuity and liaison on matters pertaining to the Marshall Plan.[xi] The OEEC also served to facilitate cooperation and revive trade among member nations.[xii]

The plan set forth four goals: to increase production, expand foreign trade, enhance internal financial stability and improve European economic cooperation. Within several years of the Marshall Plan's implementation, Western Europe was on a rapid road to recovery. Each of the four goals was largely met: industrial production rose to 25 percent above prewar figures, while the participating nations' collective gross national products rose by 32 percent.[xiii] Inflation, budget deficits and unemployment all fell. Trade with the US rose measurably, while intra-European trade rose by about 80 percent between 1948 and 1952.[xiv]

The aid provided by the Marshall Plan amounted to just 2 percent of Western Europe's national income from 1948 to 1951, yet it was absolutely critical to Europe's rebirth.[xv] Several factors significantly contributed to its success: relative autonomy from existing bureaucratic structures, a lean internal structure and shared definitions of mission and objectives.

Key takeaways

Adaptability

Participants and later historians of the Marshall Plan applauded the organization for its flexibility. US Diplomat Harlan Cleveland and ambassador to NATO said he didn't view the ECA as a *plan* at all, because of "frequent course corrections during its lifetime," and regarded it rather as a "brilliant series of improvisations."[xvi] The early decision to create the ECA as a largely autonomous organization, separate from existing bureaucratic processes and procedures, allowed this flexibility. ECA could make decisions on the ground and respond quickly to operational needs.

The newly created ECA had the authority "to utilize the services and facilities of any department, agency or establishment of the Government."[xvii] Aside from the Export-Import Bank, the authorizing legislation didn't name specific US agencies, leaving their involvement to the discretion of ECA leadership. Formal interagency coordination was managed through the National Advisory Council on Monetary & Financial Affairs, a Cabinet-level council originally created to gain the support of Congress and the financial community for the Bretton Woodsxviii agreements.[xix]

Sharply defined lines of responsibility

While having the entire US government at its disposal, the ECA benefited from its small size. Overseas mission staff teams were kept lean, averaging 30 experts in each country. While maintaining close communication with leadership, the missions had considerable autonomy, as they were separate from the State Department and had in-country authority second only to the US ambassador.[xx] The ECA's special representative to Europe and the mission chiefs were directly accountable only to the ECA director in Washington.[xxi] These clear lines of responsibility helped enable rapid decision-making, although the ECA was still hampered by interagency rivalry at times, particularly between missions and embassies.[xxii]

Autonomy in funding decisions
With the passage of the 1948 Foreign Assistance Act, Congress authorized the spending of no more than $4.3 billion annually on the Marshall Plan through June 30, 1952.[xxiii] With each annual appropriation, the ECA was granted a high degree of autonomy in establishing its funding priorities and allocations across nations and target sectors. Its decisions were based on requests from the OEEC, but not determined by them.

Shared goals
The Marshall Plan was built on a foundation of shared interests and a collective sense of accountability. Before establishing the in-country missions, the State Department negotiated bilateral agreements with each of the participating nations. These agreements specified the purpose of the Marshall Plan and operational details such as procedures for sharing information, treatment of local currencies and the intended duration of each mission.[xxiv]

This allowed the US and participating nations to collaborate in pursuing common goals. That said, consensus on the plan's objectives wasn't absolute, with some internal dissent on priorities. A leader at the Athens mission, for instance, criticized the plan for focusing too little on social goals such as lowering unemployment and raising standards of living.[xxv]

The enthusiasm with which the plan's goals were pursued was attributable in part to the personalities behind it. State Department Director of Policy Planning George Kennan, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, European Recovery Program Supervisor Averell Harriman, ECA Director Paul Hoffman and others embraced the Marshall Plan as a crucial effort to contain the spread of Communism.[xxvi] Some also argued for Europe's economic reconstruction as a way to create larger markets for US exports. While the rationales varied, the embrace and advocacy of the Marshall Plan by key political figures of the day helped to generate momentum and political capital.

Aid recipients as partners
The Marshall Plan allowed each mission to tailor its assistance to the recipient nation's unique needs, and with its involvement. In Austria, for example, the recovery strategy was executed in three stages: direct aid, consisting of food and raw materials in the first year; reconstruction and industrial support beginning in 1948; and export and tourism support through 1953.[xxvii] ECA employees tailored implementation to specific local needs.

Given that the Marshall Plan addressed 16 nations that had been in varying stages of development before the war, and faced distinctive postwar challenges and opportunities, the flexibility granted to mission teams was critical. To draw a modern-day parallel, a successful democracy promotion campaign in post-Arab Spring Tunisia may not work in Libya. Large-scale WoG efforts should strive for an effective balance between adaptability and firm leadership.

Although international economic and political structures have evolved since the end of World War II, many guiding principles of the ECA could be adapted to modern efforts relying on government, business and community and nonprofit players. These include:

- An adaptable structure that streamlines processes and minimizes the number of superfluous actors;
- Sharply defined lines of responsibility and communication;

- Autonomy in funding decisions;
- Shared goals and metrics for success; and
- The involvement of aid recipients as equal actors.

Although several decades would elapse before its policies became generally recognized as best practices, the Marshall Plan exemplifies the power of a system in which aid recipients themselves play key roles in determining their success.

Case study #2: Kosovo

The challenge: A postwar humanitarian crisis

In spring 1999, NATO conducted an intensive 78-day air bombing campaign in Kosovo to drive back the Yugoslav army. A damage assessment conducted in July 1999 by a European Commission Task Force estimated that 58 percent of homes in 1,300 villages had been damaged. The report placed a $1.2 billion price tag on repairs for housing alone, with an additional $43.9 million needed for other facilities.[xxviii]

Meanwhile, more than a million Kosovo Albanians fled their homes in an area of roughly 2 million people, prompting the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) to label it "one of the most complex and intensely political refugee emergencies in history."[xxix] The scale of the humanitarian and reconstruction effort resulted in a whole-of-government approach both internationally and within the US government.

Funding

On June 10, 1999, the UN issued Resolution 1244, establishing the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Various national aid agencies swung into action. Between two donor conferences in 1999, 13 nations as well as the World Bank and European Commission (EC) pledged a combined $1.5 billion.

While the total volume of aid committed met UN goals, donors directed funds to various sectors without aligning them with UNMIK requests, possibly because they preferred to rely on their own experts. One underfunded area was UNMIK's own administrative budget, which included salaries for civil servants, teachers and police as well as funding for basic government services.[xxx]

With funding largely in place, international attention turned to reconstruction. Resolution 1244 required the reconstruction effort to be organized into four "pillars": civil administration; humanitarian assistance; democratization and institution-building; and reconstruction and economic development. Four international organizations received responsibility for one pillar each (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Resolution 1244's Four Pillars: Responsibilities

UNMIK	Civil Administration
UNHCR	Humanitarian Assistance
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	Democratization and Institution-Building
European Commission	Reconstruction and Economic Development

Each organization was responsible for revenue associated with its activities, eliminating the likelihood of fights concerning funding. To fund the reconstruction and economic development pillar, for example, the EC opted to employ bilateral funding and contracting mechanisms with the US taking the lead.[xxxi]

The right actors in the right role

The UN's Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Kosovo filled the central coordinator role, with authority for all four pillars. The clear division of responsibilities across pillars helped duplication of effort and increased accountability. Yet the arrangement was somewhat inflexible. According to one analysis:

> ...the UN for instance has taken on the role of basic governance and yet the organization does not have many people on staff who actually have experience in governing countries meaning that many positions were staffed by UN bureaucrats poorly skilled for their jobs.[xxxii]

Thus, while the separation of roles among organizations reduces redundancy, care should be taken to align assignments with organizational strengths and to encourage cross-organizational knowledge sharing.

A key consideration in international WoG efforts is the appropriate involvement of local powerbrokers. As Kate Thompson, former chief of party for a USAID-funded economic growth reconstruction project, has noted in speaking of the international efforts to rebuild Kosovo: "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go *far*, go together."[xxxiii] While it may be more expedient in the short term to rely on international expertise, the inclusion of local actors in the WoG strategy can help support long-term viability and transition to self-government.

Common leadership and purpose

UN Resolution 1244 served as a common mission statement for all parties involved. A 2001 report attributed a strong collaborative relationship between the UN and European Union to "the umbrella of a single UN-mandated mission."[xxxiv] In November 1999, the EC and World Bank published a joint roadmap entitled "Programme for Reconstruction and Recovery in Kosovo" that articulated needs and priorities and provided actors with a shared understanding of the facts.[xxxv]

As reconstruction progressed, however, leadership and purpose grew inconsistent:

> ...several donors, faced with the task of developing longer term programmes to begin implementation in 2000, noted a lack of strategic guidance for this longer term from UNMIK and a lack of high quality information about specific interventions and other donors' plans. Coordination of donors in specific sectors was better but did not extend to all sectors. It was led sometimes by UNMIK, sometimes by lead donors and sometimes by specialised UN agencies.[xxxvi]

This variability can be traced in large part to the individuals filling key roles. From July 1999 through January 2001, the role of UN special representative was filled by the French politician Bernard Kouchner, whose hands-on management style generated a high degree of cross-pillar communication. He met with the heads of government ministries, each of which was co-lead by a Kosovar and international, initially on a daily and later on a weekly basis. His successor, Hans Hækkerup, was judged by some to be less effective at generating cohesive action, meeting regularly only with the pillar leads rather than Ministers.[xxxvii]

While crucial to success, then, a shared mission statement may not be sufficient. It should be accompanied by hands-on leadership that translates the mission statement into reality.

The US response

Interagency efforts in the US began several months before the bombing campaign began. They generally functioned under the oversight of the National Security Council (NSC): "...planning efforts were directed by the NSC's Deputies Committee and monitored by an interagency Kosovo Executive Committee."[xxxviii] The first executive committee (ExComm), co-chaired by the State Department and NSC, met from October 1998 through March 1999.

This interagency coordination helped the government to be proactive in its response, but the effort was not without flaws. A "lessons learned" document released by the State Department in January 2000 indicated that excluding a humanitarian sub-group, formed by the department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, from key military planning left the US caught off-guard by the initial wave of refugees.[xxxix]

A single, authoritative voice

A week after the bombing started, the White House formed a Kosovo Coordination Council (KCC) to focus on the humanitarian response, comprising representatives of the Department of Defense (DOD), State Department, US Agency for International Development (USAID) and NSC. The "lessons learned" report notes that the KCC wasn't a proactive policy response, but rather a reaction to media criticism.

Despite this, the KCC proved to be a valuable forum for interagency coordination: it provided a single, authoritative voice to articulate US policy to other donors and international organizations and improved information sharing between the represented agencies. In addition, the decision to send a senior USAID representative to Kosovo for the KCC improved coordination with UN, NATO and NGO partners.[xl] Ultimately, the organization's weaknesses derived from the ad hoc nature of its creation: the KCC had no role in policy formulation and lacked follow-through.

Key takeaways

The whole-of-government approaches employed in the post-war reconstruction of Kosovo offer several guiding principles. In the last few decades, the US has found itself acting alongside other international and bilateral efforts,[xli] to assemble multinational military forces (in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya) and to coordinate development and reconstruction strategies. In such cases, the US faces the challenge of engaging in two concurrent WoG initiatives, one internal, the other external. Thus it becomes crucial for the US to provide a unified voice rather than the conflicting plans and goals of a series of separate agencies.

The four-pillar, siloed approach employed by the international community in post-war Kosovo proved generally effective. UNMIK provided clear leadership much if not all of the time. But communicating information and priorities to donors in a consistent manner proved challenging.

The US approach had clear leadership but failed to incorporate all the right voices across domestic agencies, most notably those of humanitarian representatives. KCC provided a partial remedy, offering valuable consensus and information-sharing on humanitarian matters.

Case study #3: PEPFAR

The challenge: Continent-wide Pandemic

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was launched in 2003 to combat a worldwide public health crisis. Africa suffered from the AIDS outbreak most intensely because antiretroviral therapies were generally unavailable and nations lacked the infrastructure needed to prevent the disease and treat and care for those infected. Nearly a third of the populations of some sub-Saharan countries were infected with the virus and more than 20 million died. AIDS decimated an entire generation, producing 14 million orphaned and vulnerable children.[xlii]

The US response

President George W. Bush introduced PEPFAR on May 27, 2003, making the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history.[xliii] PEPFAR is a complex and multifaceted initiative that attempts to navigate the unique cultural, social, economic and political landscapes of each partner country while providing HIV and other health programs. Since its launch, the program has fought HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in the world's hardest-hit areas. Annual funding for PEPFAR rose from $2.3 billion in fiscal 2004 to $6.8 billion in fiscal 2015,[xliv] and the program maintains strong bipartisan support.

Many contributors, one goal

PEPFAR focuses primarily on delivering HIV prevention, care and treatment services to beneficiaries in partner countries and indirectly addresses support issues (such as building capacity, providing technical assistance and advising government policy). Its services are a shared responsibility of the recipient nation, the US and other donor nations, community and faith-based organizations, the private sector, foundations, multilateral organizations and HIV/AIDS patients themselves.[xlv]

To support its activities, PEPFAR employs a WoG approach involving multiple federal agencies including the State Department, USAID, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DOD, the Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services and the Peace Corps.[xlvi] PEPFAR can take advantage of the unique expertise and experience of each partner agency, such as USAID's adoption of the CDC's grants management processes to handle large numbers of PEPFAR grants.[xlvii]

Key takeaways

PEPFAR included a diverse community of public health actors; a concerted approach to performance management grounded in shared metrics; and effective funding mandates. Yet the fact that money alone cannot achieve PEPFAR's aims makes partners outside US government especially important. Many host governments played an active role in coordinating donor funding and addressing gaps.

PEPFAR also has demonstrated the ability to refocus its policies and programming to reflect changes in funding as well as in the epidemiology of the disease. A major strength is its emphasis on operations research and the use of data and evidence to drive decision-making. PEPFAR has shown a willingness to push an agenda aimed at shared responsibility and sustainability, reflecting an awareness that participating nations will have to assume much of the costs in the future.

Infrastructure and coordination

PEPFAR's founding legislation created the Office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC), headed by a presidential appointee with ambassadorial rank who reports directly to the Secretary of State.[xlviii] As with the Marshall Plan's ECA, PEPFAR's overseas operations are housed within US diplomatic missions, a structural arrangement giving PEPFAR access to preexisting infrastructure and reduced startup costs.

PEPFAR involves multiple federal agencies that oversee and manage PEPFAR-supported programs both at headquarters and in partner countries.[xlix] Interviewees familiar with day-to-day PEPFAR operations agree that the in-country PEPFAR coordination structure, as well as the structure linking headquarters to national programs, was clearly communicated to all parties and operates effectively.

Such clarity was only gained over time, however; USAID Mission Director for Mali, Tanzania and Liberia Pamela White has stated that distinct and defined roles for each agency emerged slowly.[l] Eventually, roles were assigned largely based on in-house capabilities rather than resources.

PEPFAR participation has extended beyond federal agencies to include donor nations, civil society and multilateral institutions. In 2014 alone, private-sector partners contributed more than $250 million to PEPFAR, increasing its scale and impact.[li]

Communication and buy-in

To ensure effective collaboration, OGAC instructed PEPFAR mission teams to align and harmonize their planning processes with national planning for HIV/AIDS response. Mission teams must consult with partner-country governments for approval of their strategic direction.[lii] In many nations, PEPFAR mission teams meet regularly with host-country representatives. Bilateral collaboration and alignment have improved steadily over time.

Carleene Dei, a former USAID mission director for West Africa, Southern Africa and Haiti, says that such communication was the key to achieving consensus; by working together daily, representatives of various agencies and governments built shared respect and greatly improved their effectiveness.[liii]

Challenges

Despite its well-conceived organizational structure, PEPFAR's scope and large number of actors created challenges, including:

- *Inadequate clarity* concerning appropriate services, allowable activities and efforts in emerging areas of program emphasis, such as country ownership, capacity building, health systems improvements and new models of implementation.[liv]
- *Slow guidance* from OGAC due to the need for input and consensus from multiple US agencies and technical working groups. While the process was designed to ensure thorough vetting, it can be time-consuming.[lv]
- *"One-size-fits-all" approaches* to guidance did not fit all national programs, due to special circumstances in individual nations or an inability to adapt to local culture and standards.[lvi]

- Concerns regarding the *sustainability* of PEPFAR's results, if and when the program scales back its operations, as revealed in an evaluation by the Institute of Medicine. An inadequate focus on capacity building in local health systems can endanger the sustainability of results.[lvii]
- *Duplication and discord* among agencies due to the absence of a strategic map and a clear definition of roles for each. Prevention efforts in particular, while key, haven't always been coordinated effectively.[lviii]
- *Time-consuming obstacles* to consensus and alignment across international boundaries.
- *Dependence* on partner federal agencies. PEPFAR's inability to directly contract for certain services and analyses has been seen as an ongoing impediment.[lix]

Often, a whole-of-government effort lasts mere months following a crisis or disaster. PEPFAR's lifespan—more than a decade, at this writing—can offer important organizational lessons. Collaboration has improved through the gradual accumulation of experienced coordinators, staff and partners, better defined position descriptions and a hiring process coordinated by interagency teams. Staff continue to grapple with finding the right balance between centralized authority at headquarters and decision-making power on the part of in-country mission teams. [lx] This learning process is critical to successful WoG initiatives.

Knowledge management

PEPFAR's success is due in large part to the development of a comprehensive knowledge management framework, including a program monitoring and evaluation strategy, a prioritized and targeted research portfolio and systems for knowledge dissemination.[lxi] For example, the program monitoring system tracks activities and program results; PEPFAR uses these data to drive program activities, make evidence-informed interventions and modify programs as needed.[lxii] PEPFAR's reporting requirements, moreover, yield other benefits: Dei notes that the development of monitoring and evaluation plans allows various actors to meet and share information, while annual global/regional meetings become forums for the discussion of challenges and lessons learned.[lxiii]

PEPFAR's rigorous reporting requirements track each initiative's progress against predefined metrics and benchmarks. Problem areas identified are corrected promptly, a key requirement for coordinating the efforts of multiple actors in pursuit of mutual objectives.

Funding

The United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003 authorized up to $15 billion in funding for PEPFAR from fiscal 2004 through 2008.[lxiv] In 2008, Congress reauthorized PEPFAR for five more fiscal years, providing up to $48 billion in additional funding,[lxv] although the program's annual budget remains dependent on the federal budgeting process.

While PEPFAR's operations are decentralized, its funding is very much centralized.[lxvi] More than 80 percent of PEPFAR funding ($5.67 billion of $6.81 billion in fiscal 2016) is appropriated directly to OGAC, although most is eventually transferred to other federal agencies. In 2015, smaller amounts were channeled directly to USAID ($570 million), the National Institutes of Health ($431 million), CDC ($128 million), and DOD ($8 million),[lxvii] based on their respective areas of expertise. All PEPFAR funding is distributed according to an interagency Country Operating Plan overseen and led by OGAC. OGAC's leaders helps ensure that funds are transferred to the appropriate agencies and partners.

While dedicated funding for PEPFAR is crucial, its partners can face challenges in channeling money in a steady and timely way. Disbursement and contracting delays often create bottlenecks.[lxviii] Even so, PEPFAR continues to manage large sums of money across multiple US government agencies and partners with remarkable effectiveness.

Results

As of September 30, 2015, PEPFAR had:

- Supported life-saving antiretroviral treatment for 9.5 million people;[lxix]
- Provided care and support to more than 5.5 million orphans and vulnerable children in fiscal 2015 alone;[lxx]
- Financed training for more than 190,000 new health care workers;[lxxi] and
- Supported HIV testing and counseling for more than 68.2 million people, including 14.7 million pregnant women.[lxxii]

PEPFAR's use of WoG methods validates the notion that coordinated approaches, deploying the comparative strengths and capabilities of multiple agencies and partners, can deliver results far exceeding those of a single agency.

Success factors for a whole-of government approach

Our study of these three WoG efforts yielded several guiding principles for operations in today's difficult operating environment, in which bureaucratic and budgetary complexity is arguably greater than ever before.

1. Adopt an ecosystem approach with a clearly defined leader.

Today's challenges call for a fluid and adaptable ecosystem approach, able to incorporate or remove players as the shared mission evolves, and supported by technology that facilitates communication and interaction.

Yet the complex interdependency that characterizes successful ecosystems requires a single acknowledged leader. It may be that the same ecosystem is activated on multiple occasions, with leadership and follow-on roles shifting to meet the problem at hand. The presence of an agreed-upon leader, however, is essential to provide strategic direction, resolve disputes, evaluate progress towards top-level goals and initiate course changes as needed.

The process used to identify the ecosystem leader will likely vary according to circumstances. When a particular entity, whether an agency or individual, initiates the ecosystem, continued leadership by that entity offers logical continuity. When a WoG approach is mandated by a higher authority not intimately involved in execution, however, lines of leadership may be less clear, as with projects initiated by Executive Orders. In such cases, it's particularly important for actors to reach early consensus on leadership.

2. Clearly define the problem

Equally important is consensus on the *definition* of the problem and its root causes, to ensure tight coordination. Various ecosystem members offer different comparative advantages, expertise and priorities, and this diversity is precisely what makes the WoG approach robust. Without a clear consensus on definitions and priorities, however, ecosystem members can waste time and effort without achieving their full potential.

The job of the leader to secure buy-in on the nature and definition of the problem. And while mission statements can be useful, a shared understanding of root causes and consensus on the most effective strategies is far more important.

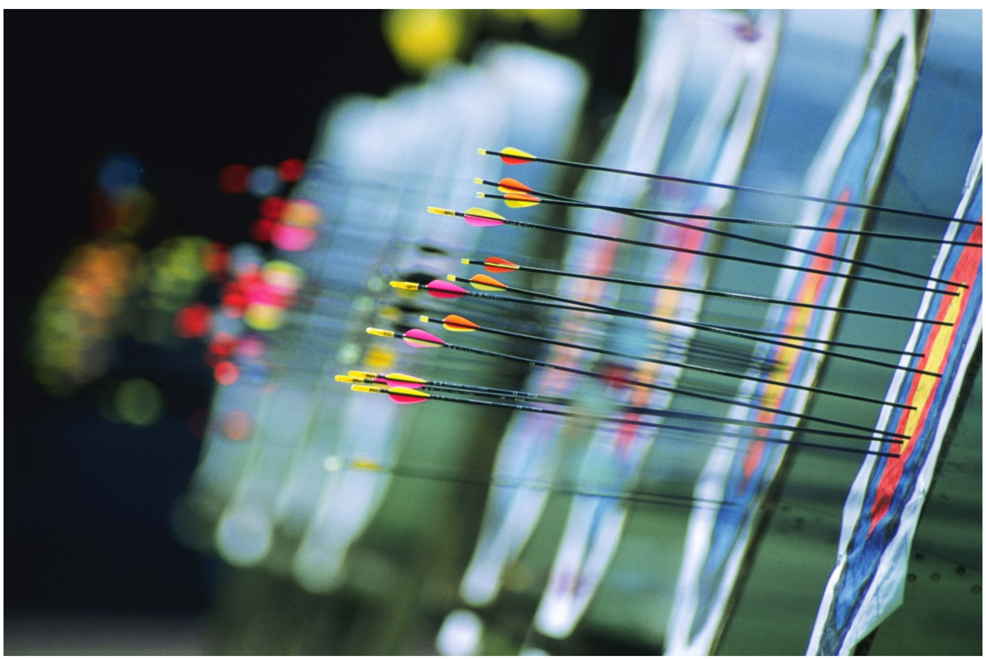
The Kosovo case study offers a good example. Post-war Kosovo faced no shortage of challenges: shattered governmental institutions, a devastated economy, endless refugees needing shelter and an undetermined legal status in relationship to Serbia. UNMIK's four-pillar approach, with different international actors responsible for each, articulated an overarching goal (a restored Kosovo capable of moving toward self-sufficiency) and four sub-goals to achieve that aim. Individual donor projects fell under one pillar or another, but the organizational scheme helped to ensure that all actors pursued the same major objective.[lxxiii]

3. Identify and mobilize the right actors

One thing that can undermine a WoG effort is the inclusion of all possibly relevant players, which can result in cacophony rather than consensus. Such a team, moreover, could lend itself to wasteful duplication or a diffusion of authority and responsibilities that leads to inaction. The key lies in having the *right* players and tools—not simply the right agencies, but the right offices, bureaus and individuals. The optimal ecosystem team is *lean*, featuring only the actors that possess necessary tools to achieve the mission.

It is also important for different players to understand how other entities operate—their strengths, legal structures, etc.—to minimize conflicts. In the case of PEPFAR grants management, USAID had an inspector general and oversight by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. CDC didn't have the same level of oversight, giving it more leeway in operations; this became a source of contention.[lxxiv]

One viable compromise is to create an advisory committee representing a greater number of entities than the smaller, action-oriented core team. This approach can ensure buy-in from relevant entities on the periphery without reducing efficiency.



4. Ensure consistent, predictable funding

At the Global Chiefs of Mission Conference in March 2015, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter strongly endorsed the need for a WoG approach to modern challenges, but stressed that “we can’t just theorize and strategize. We have to *invest* in a whole-of-government way.”[lxxv]

Money alone isn’t sufficient. To minimize competition for resources and ensure smooth operations, funding should be consistent and predictable. A Congressional mandate such as PEPFAR’s can help generate this predictability. In addition, the creation a “one-stop-shop” to disperse funding across the federal government—the role OGAC played—promotes collaboration between ecosystem partners and minimizes duplication of effort.

5. Adopt a careful approach to coordination with domestic and international partners

Although implementing agencies coordinated closely with local governments during the Marshall Plan, the US was the sole donor. As seen in the Kosovo and PEPFAR examples, the modern international economic and development arena involves cross-donor coordination, including public, multilateral and private-sector organizations. Similarly, meaningful engagement with domestic partners is critical for long-term sustainability. While the entry of new donor nations and philanthropic entities brings the promise of increased funds, it also presents additional challenges in coordination and minimizing duplicated effort.

A new Marshall Plan?

Modern whole-of-government approaches are both more necessary and more challenging due to the massive bureaucracy that characterize relationships within and among federal agencies. Calls for a modern-day Marshall Plan, unfortunately, hearken back to a much simpler era.

The world is different, but so too is the federal government. In 1948, the first year of the Marshall Plan, federal civilian agencies employed 698,000. By 2014, that number had doubled, to nearly 1.4 million.[lxxvi] Meanwhile, modern technology offers capabilities that can enable collaboration—or paralyze its users with email and data series, hindering decision-making and action.

Two characteristics of the Marshall Plan, however, remain highly relevant today, if harder to achieve: flexibility and adaptability. These seem to defy a formulaic approach. Through our study of historic efforts, in this paper we have discerned a series of guiding principles that may not guarantee success, but certainly improve the odds.

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