



# USAID Urban Policy: Lessons After Five Years of Implementation



## EVENT SUMMARY

**Where: 1129 20th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C.**

**When: Thursday, August 8, 2019 | 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM**

### Moderator

**[Chris Milligan](#)** | *Counselor, USAID*

### Speakers

**[Rebecca Lawrence](#)** | *Technical Lead for the Urban Policy Implementation Assessment, USAID*

**[Kevin Nelson](#)** | *Urban Team Lead, Office of Land and Urban, USAID*

**[Jeff Szuchman](#)** | *Deputy Director, Office of Policy, Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning USAID*

To see event photos, please click [here](#).





## Event Description

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Today, over 4 billion people around the world – more than half the global population – live in cities. By 2050, with the urban population more than doubling its current size, nearly 7 of 10 people in the world will live in cities. USAID’s “[Sustainable Service Delivery in an Increasingly Urbanized World](#)” Policy (the Urban Policy) was launched in 2013 in order to “promote sustainable service delivery that brings large-scale benefits to urban residents.” The Urban Policy was the first Agency-wide urban guidance since the 1998 Making Cities Work: USAID’s Urban Strategy, and built on USAID’s 50-year history of urban programs. What has been the impact of the 2013 USAID Urban Policy on the Agency’s processes and programs over the last five years? What lessons can one draw from that Urban Policy experience? What are the implications of these findings for USAID’s approach to urban challenges in the future?

The SID-Washington Infrastructure & Urban Development Workgroup invites you to a public discussion of the recent [ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF USAID’S URBAN POLICY](#) commissioned by the Agency’s Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning. The assessment drew on semi-structured interviews with over 70 USAID staff and implementing partners, survey responses from over 100 USAID staff in Washington and the field, as well as in-depth analyses of program cycle documents. Rebecca Lawrence, the principal author of the report, will present the findings and conclusions.

[Chris Milligan](#), Counselor to the Agency, reflected on the context for the current Urban Policy, and there was a USAID panel discussion of the report featuring the Deputy Director of the Office of Policy Jeff Szuchman, the Urban Team leader Kevin Nelson, and Rebecca Lawrence. We invited attendees to join in an open discussion with the USAID representatives on the past, present and future of Urban Policy in the Agency.

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## Key Takeaways

### 1 Assessment of the Implementation of USAID’s Urban Policy

Rebecca Lawrence (USAID) summarized USAID’s Sustainable Urban Services Delivery Policy (i.e. the “Urban Policy”) and its assessment. The Urban Policy was released in 2013, aiming to bring large-scale benefits to urban residents through sustainable service delivery. The four development principles outlined in the Policy are (1) political and financial stability, (2) accountable, pro-poor service delivery, (3) public-private collaboration, and (4) municipal resilience. Five years after the implementation, an assessment team was assembled to collect and report research on their findings surrounding the current state of the Policy. Some of the key findings include:

- Awareness and familiarity with the Urban Policy is low. USAID is eager to learn more about urban issues.
- There still is a perceived institutional bias for rural development within USAID.
- Few urban assessments were conducted and few recommendations were applied.
- Cross-sector collaboration on urban issues seems to be rising.
- Lack of funding is still seen as a top constraint.
- The principles of urban programs (strengthening market orientation, local-level democratic governance transparency and accountability, and municipal resilience) are grounded in good development practice.
- Leadership support will be pivotal to the future mainstreaming of urban policy.
- USAID should prepare for accelerating urbanization, disaster preparation, and the increasing amount of GDP generated in cities.



# Key Takeaways

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## 2 The Opportunity of Urbanization

Chris Milligan (USAID) opened the event by discussing the tremendous amount of opportunity that comes with the rise of urbanization. Milligan mentioned that developing a strong urban policy is the first step in the process, but it is important to also ensure that the policy is working. By conducting this assessment and releasing it to the public, USAID is creating a space for the conversation surrounding best practices for urban policies. It is important not only for USAID to learn about its own policy, but for others to engage in it as well. This provides opportunities for national and local governments to learn more, take advantage of the opportunities that come with urbanization, and work towards increasing urban resilience. Milligan also noted the challenges that can arise with urbanization, such as the often unplanned and unequal growth of urban areas. However, USAID is committed to strategic and inclusive urban growth, and as demonstrated in the assessment surveys, is eager to continue learning about and developing the Urban Policy.

## 3 Lessons Learned from the Policy

In the discussion surrounding analysis of the Policy and conclusions drawn from USAID's research, Jeff Szuchman (USAID) mentioned that it is not enough just to have a policy. USAID needs leadership support, and voices to speak to staff and others outside of USAID. There are also people that want to get involved in USAID's Urban Policy work, and these dedicated individuals should be given the opportunity to partner with the agency. There is a wealth of knowledge in Washington, D.C., into which USAID is aiming to tap. This means restructuring how USAID functions as a partner, and tapping into the tools, guidance, and training materials in Washington that can be translated to the field.

Kevin Nelson (USAID) addressed some of the main questions that arise when trying to implement policy. What is the best avenue for supporting urban programming with USAID? What are the relationships between headquarters and missions? What are the commonalities in terms of demand around urban service delivery? It is evident that more technical support and resources are needed to address these questions. Nelson also discussed the possibilities of entering the urban policy arena through other entry points. By addressing other issues in urban service delivery, engaging many different sectors in the field, and continuously opening this dialogue, USAID's systems-based approach will be continuously strengthened.

Visit <https://urban-links.org/assessment-of-the-implementation-of-usaids-urban-policy/> to read the full Assessment of the Implementation of USAID's Urban Policy.