

Integrated Country Strategy

TUNISIA

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Twelve years after its 2011 revolution, Tunisia faces significant questions surrounding its democratic path amid political upheaval and economic uncertainty. Ensuring the preservation of democratic institutions in the immediate term and the ability of these institutions to deliver results for the Tunisian people in the long term are in the direct interest of the United States.

During the years covered by this Integrated Country Strategy, we will encourage Tunisia's return to a system of checks and balances, wherein the presidency, an elected parliament, and an independent judiciary together ensure a functioning government that protects human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will also encourage the government to enact necessary economic reforms to advance inclusive growth. Tunisia will continue to face persistent security threats caused by regional instability, the potential return of Tunisians from foreign conflict zones, and domestic terrorism. Accordingly, our three Mission Goals center on progress in those fields.

Goal one addresses the efficacy and development of Tunisia's democratic institutions. A large majority of Tunisians supported President Saied's upending of the political system and consolidation of power on and since July 25, 2021, because ineffective institutions had led them to question whether democracy truly improved their quality of life. Efforts to increase citizen understanding of, and advocacy for, the ability to exercise their rights will balance the need to improve government institutions' efficacy and responsiveness. Support to the media, civil society, and the public will empower citizens and groups to advocate for policies that address public needs and call out abuses of power. Assistance to government institutions, where appropriate, will focus on improving practices so that they can better serve the Tunisian people and better inform the public about their work. Presidential elections are expected to take place in 2024 and will be an important indicator of Tunisia's location on the democratic path.

Goal two relates to sustainable, inclusive economic growth. There is a significant correlation between the economic health of the country and people's faith in the government and the value of democracy. Our plan attempts to address the drivers of economic inequality, with an

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emphasis on improving the conditions for private sector-led growth, supporting small and medium enterprises, and discouraging investments that threaten Tunisia's long-term information, economic, and data network security. We will continue to prioritize work on the investment climate and ensuring fair opportunities for U.S. companies. In addition, we will aim to advance climate change priorities, and promote equitable access to clean energy innovations.

Goal three focuses on the security sector. Tunisia has made significant progress in improving military capacity to contain terrorist threats over the past five years. However, now Tunisian law enforcement and criminal justice institutions are grappling with an unprecedented influx of irregular migrants while suffering from a public trust deficit, so our engagement and assistance in this area will focus on promoting greater accountability, transparency, reduction of corruption, and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. We will advocate for the prioritization of Tunisian security forces' partnerships with the United States and avoidance of partnerships that undermine Tunisia's sovereignty and regional stability. Counterterrorism and military assistance will continue to support the dismantling of domestic violent extremist organizations, securing Tunisia's land and sea borders, and facilitating Tunisia's participation in regional and UN security missions.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Tunisia strengthens democratic institutions and increases citizen confidence in government responsiveness.

- Mission Objective 1.1: Tunisian government institutions uphold human rights,
 strengthen the rule of law, and expose and prosecute corruption.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Tunisian citizens and civil society understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system. (USAID CDCS)
- Mission Objective 1.3: Tunisian citizens, particularly youth, women, and other
 geographically marginalized populations, have equal access to government services and
 fully benefit from economic development.

Mission Goal 2: Tunisia stabilizes government finances and allows the private sector to generate inclusive growth.

- Mission Objective 2.1: Accelerated private sector development and investment climate improvements catalyze incremental policy reforms and create investment and trade opportunities for the United States and Tunisia.
- Mission Objective 2.2: Tunisia's public and private infrastructure development avoids
 long-term partnerships that threaten Tunisia's economic, data, and information network
 security.
- Mission Objective 2.3: Tunisia's private and public sectors mitigate the economic impact
 of climate change, invest in clean energy, reduce emissions, address water shortages,
 and advance growth with sustainable development solutions. (USAID CDCS)

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Mission Goal 3: Tunisian security forces prioritize public safety and security, public trust, and human rights, and continue to counter terrorism and irregular migration.

- Mission Objective 3.1: Tunisian law enforcement institutions respect human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law for the benefit of the Tunisian people and to protect the safety and security of United States citizens living in and visiting Tunisia.
- Mission Objective 3.2: Tunisian security forces prioritize partnerships with the United States and avoid partnerships that undermine Tunisia's sovereignty and regional stability.
- Mission Objective 3.3: Tunisia continues to prioritize the dismantling of domestic violent extremist organizations, securing Tunisia's air, land and maritime borders, its development as a regional training hub, and participation in regional / UN security operations.

Management Objective 1: Provide robust, appropriate, and safe and secure mission facilities to support staff growth and meet all mission objectives.

Management Objective 2: Deliver superior shared administrative support services that reflect best practices and emphasize client satisfaction, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, innovation, stability, and support for U.S. strategic interests and long-term goals in Tunisia while responding to changes in the local environment.

Management Objective 3: Strengthen our mission workforce, enhance workplace satisfaction, and restore resilience within the mission community by grounding professional development, mission-wide recruitment efforts, and community-integration events in principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Tunisia strengthens democratic institutions and increases citizen confidence in government responsiveness.

Description | President Saied's "freezing" of Parliament and consolidation of power since July 25, 2021, followed a period wherein Tunisians increasingly questioned whether democracy truly improved their quality of life. Entrenched bureaucracy, conflicting and unimplemented laws across sectors, and a largely ineffective parliament have stunted the development of democratic institutions and increased public distrust. The long-term success of Tunisia's democracy depends on institutions that can demonstrably respond to citizens' needs, an effective system of checks and balances, and a transparent and fair judicial system. This includes the establishment and/or strengthening of critical institutions and a dedicated effort to advance human rights, counter corruption, improve government transparency and accountability, and ensure judicial independence. Political parties, a vibrant civil society and a free press must freely and effectively contribute to the formulation and implementation of responsive policies. Free and fair national and local elections are an important component, but only the starting point for a well-developed democracy. This goal corresponds to Bureau Goal 4: Advance accountable and responsive governance through strengthening democratic principles and fundamental freedoms.

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Objective 1.1 | Tunisian government institutions uphold human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and expose and prosecute corruption.

- Justification | The Tunisian people broadly believe corruption is rampant across the
 public and private sectors. Government practices that remove opportunities for
 personal enrichment and provide transparent prosecutions will increase citizens' trust.
 At the same time, government institutions must demonstrate a commitment to
 protecting fundamental rights, particularly for the most vulnerable citizens. Changes to
 existing laws should only come after vigorous debate and public input and should be
 subject to independent judicial review.
- Linkages | NEA-USAID/ME JRS Objective 1.2; 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
 Guidance (INSSG), the 2020 U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, and
 JSP Objective 1.4
- Risks | The resumption of parliament and the return to a system of checks and balances
 are necessary for Tunisia to return to a credible democratic system. Should these steps
 not take place, the long-term success of Tunisia's democratic system will be in doubt.

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Objective 1.2 | Tunisian citizens and civil society understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system. (USAID CDCS)

- Justification | A vibrant civil society and free, independent, and responsible media are critical to the success of a participatory democratic system. The Tunisian people should understand, advocate for, and exercise their rights to ensure that all rights are properly protected. Newly established rights recognized or established in the post-revolution constitution still require some legislation and attention to be fully implemented. If civil society, media, and the general public do not understand these rights and the mechanisms necessary to protect them, citizens will be unable to hold elected officials accountable. Lack of full citizen awareness of such issues could also lead to democratic backsliding by government officials or others whose power or wealth may be lessened by the full exercise of a rights- and rule of law-based democracy.
- Linkages | Bureau Objective 4.2: Enable independent civil society to adapt, freely operate, represent diverse communities, and hold governments accountable. Bureau Objective 4.3: Strengthen independent, safe, diverse, and free media. Bureau Objective 4.4: Advance respect for human rights and promote access to justice, including for marginalized populations, women, and youth.
- **Risks** | Shrinking space for civil society activism or free debate would severely hamper citizen engagement and efforts to hold government officials and others accountable.

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Objective 1.3 | Tunisian citizens, particularly youth, women, and geographically marginalized populations have equal access to government services and fully benefit from economic development.

- Justification | More than a decade after the revolution, democratic transition in Tunisia remains fragile. Broadly held public perceptions of lack of representation and opportunity, regional development disparities, political and social exclusion, inequitable public investment, and public sector corruption have fueled frustration and generated disillusionment with the benefits of democratic governance, especially among young people. Improving the relationship between Tunisians and their civic and government institutions is essential to fully consolidate democratic transition and reach a point of irreversibility. If the citizen-government relationship fails to produce outcomes that are considered effective or legitimate, there is a higher risk of instability and impeded development. Additional risks affecting this objective relate to political instability, the lack of political will to enact necessary reforms, and the security threats related to regional crises. This objective is built on the premise that effective governance systems foster constructive engagement through collaboration between state institutions and citizens, and that a cohesive society is a necessary foundation for democratization. This Mission Objective, therefore, will support the development of transparent and accountable governance systems, as well as encourage social cohesion and community resilience in disaffected and/or marginalized communities.
- **Linkages** | Bureau Objective 4.2: Enable independent civil society to adapt, freely operate, represent diverse communities, and hold governments accountable. Bureau Objective 4.3: Strengthen independent, safe, diverse, and free media. Bureau Objective 4.4: Advance respect for human rights and promote access to justice, including for marginalized populations, women, and youth.
- Risks | Economic instability and the political crisis have increased the risks of the government's failure to provide basic services and opportunities. Local governance institutions are also not equipped with sufficient authority, resources, and capabilities to meet the diverse needs of their populations.

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Mission Goal 2 | Tunisia stabilizes government finances and allows the private sector to generate inclusive growth.

Description | Enhanced economic stability and private sector growth meet shared U.S.-Tunisian objectives of greater economic opportunities and are linked to greater political empowerment. A growing private sector facilitates and encourages economic and fiscal reforms that lay a sustainable path for Tunisia's economic and political stability.

Objective 2.1 Accelerated private sector development and investment climate improvements catalyze incremental policy reforms and create investment and trade opportunities for the United States and Tunisia. (USAID CDCS DO1)

- Justification | Private sector-led growth will give the government the fiscal breathing room necessary for policy reforms. A competitive business environment, less crowded by state-owned enterprises, unleashes the private sector's potential for growth and tackles the pressing issue of high and rising unemployment. In parallel, direct support for vulnerable businesses and entrepreneurs accelerates growth, trade, and investment to facilitate job creation and income growth. A lower energy deficit decreases the government's subsidy burden, mitigates the current-account deficit, slows the depletion of foreign-exchange reserves, lessens downward pressure on the dinar, and reduces inflation. Attracting new U.S. investors to Tunisia will further support these aims while also generating new U.S. export opportunities and increasing the use of trusted U.S. services and technologies.
- Linkages | NSS, JRS/FBS (Opportunities: Economic Growth; Cross-Cutting Strategic Priorities: Gender and DEIA; Threats: Economic Growth), JSP Objectives 2.1 (Economic Governance), 2.2 (Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth), 2.3 (Technological Leadership and U.S. Competitiveness), 3.3 (Combatting Corruption)

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• Risks | Failure to address required reforms could result in unsustainable public debt and increased social and political instability, including demonstrations and strikes. These could stall the reform process and reduce investment and economic activity, exacerbating unemployment. Similarly, failure to increase private sector employment opportunities could lead to even higher unemployment, continued growth of the bloated public sector to accommodate jobseekers, and/or increased risk of political instability due to economic discontent.

Objective 2.2 | Tunisia's public and private infrastructure development avoids long-term partnerships that threaten Tunisia's economic, data, and information network security.

- Justification | Tunisia's infrastructure faces serious deficiencies after years of neglect caused by corruption, public sector debt, and lack of sustained attention. Developing Tunisia's infrastructure will be critical to not only restore its soundness, but also help the country become more economically competitive and attract foreign investors. Done right, infrastructure development stands to be the backbone of the nation's future economic health as safe and secure physical infrastructure and networks will establish the technological foundation the country needs to communicate and trade with the rest of the world. A focus on quality, high standards including labor and environmental standards and data security will be critical to ensure Tunisia reaps the full benefits of such efforts and does not expose itself to negative social costs. Public-partnerships will be key to unlocking access to the financial and technological tools Tunisia needs to strengthen and develop its infrastructure. At the same time, it is critical that as Tunisia seeks to rapidly advance, it does so with partners that will facilitate the creation of trustworthy, secure networks that reassure investors and international partners that networks and systems are safe and secure.
- Linkages | NSS, JRS/FBS (Cross Cutting Strategic Priorities: International Competition
 with the PRC, Russia, and Iran; Threats: Economic Growth), JSP 2.3 (Technological
 Leadership and U.S. Competitiveness)

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Risks | Failure to choose trusted partners may not only impact infrastructure quality, but
the confidence of external actors, including the private sector, in the security of
networks. As a result, selecting the wrong partners could limit much needed foreign
investment.

Objective 2.3 | Tunisia's private and public sectors mitigate the economic impact of climate change, invest in clean energy, reduce emissions, address water shortages, and advance growth with sustainable development solutions. (USAID CDCS DO1)

- Justification | The shift to more sustainable and green technologies is a prerequisite of all nations to battle climate change. At the same time, for Tunisia, a shift away from hydrocarbon dependency that has caused an extreme strain on public finances and a move toward renewable energy sources offers significant economic benefits that will promote the growing use of renewable energies.
- Linkages | NSS, JRS/FBS (Cross-Cutting Strategic Priorities: Climate Change), JSP
 Objective 2.2.

Risks | Failure to pursue more sustainable solutions will continue. Tunisia's dependence on hydrocarbons, a subsidized, imported commodity that is currently a drain on public resources, could lead to increasing the deficit.

Mission Goal 3 | Tunisian security forces prioritize safety and security, public trust, and human rights while countering terrorism and irregular migration.

Description | Tunisia's security forces including the military, national police, and national guard have made significant strides since 2011, yet further progress is necessary to increase overall accountability, professionalism, and interoperability. The military has successfully enshrined a doctrine of political neutrality and is a professional and competent entity within the Tunisian government. In recent years, a strong bilateral security partnership has enhanced military capabilities and positioned Tunisia to support shared security objectives including stemming irregular migration, contributing to regional peacekeeping missions, and serving as a regional hub for sharing and exporting expertise. The national police and national guard have undertaken capacity building and reforms aimed at building a better and more responsive force with the aid of international partners. Improvements in law enforcement efforts, including respect for democratic principles and rights, are ongoing. Further engagement and assistance will hold security institutions to their stated commitments to reform and enshrine good policing practices as a way to reinforce broader democratic values in Tunisia.

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Objective 3.1: Tunisian law enforcement institutions respect human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law for the benefit of the Tunisian people and to protect the safety and security of United States citizens living in or visiting Tunisia.

- Justification | By strengthening institutional capacity, transparency, accountability, and
 oversight, Tunisians will be better protected under the law and have more confidence in
 their government. This protection will also benefit American citizens visiting or living in
 Tunisia.
- Linkages | NSS Pillar 3, JSP objectives 3.1 (Democracy and Governance) and 3.2 (Equity and Inclusion), INL Bureau Functional Strategy Goal 3 (Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems), the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace and Security and National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, INL-Tunisia Letter of Agreement, Joint Security Action Strategy. Consular Affairs Functional Bureau Strategy Goal 1.
- Risks | Further deterioration of economic conditions and a potential move away from democracy could strain government resources and undermine political will to reform the criminal justice system. Failure to achieve this objective could lead to a worsening of the security situation, a return to more authoritarian policing practices, and the loss of public trust in democracy and the rule of law. This loss of public trust will directly affect the experience of American citizens in Tunisia. To mitigate these risks, the Mission is developing a systematic approach toward conducting assessments, program design, evaluations, and monitoring of program performance. The Mission also ensures that assistance is not used for non-democratic purposes.

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Objective 3.2 | Tunisian security forces prioritize partnerships with the United States and avoid partnerships that undermine Tunisia's sovereignty and regional stability.

- Justification | Our strategic competitors seek to degrade U.S. access and influence in
 Tunisia and the broader Mediterranean region. They seek to use Foreign Military Sales
 (FMS) and security agreements to degrade Tunisian interoperability with U.S. and NATO
 partners and encourage defense agreements to exploit perceived seams in the U.S.Tunisia relationship. Tunisia is vulnerable to these overtures as they often come at
 greatly reduced pricing, a reality especially important given Tunisia's limited defense
 budget.
- Linkages | This mission objective links with the NSS in two instances. Page seven of the NSS discusses combatting "violent extremism and terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." Page 15 of the NSS states that In the Middle East, we will right-size our military presence to the level required to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other vital U.S. interests. This mission objective links with NEA-ME's Draft Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Bureau Goal 1: Modernize and revitalize U.S. alliances, partnerships, and multilateral cooperation to prevent, deter, and resolve conflicts, counter terrorism, and address regional security and stabilization challenges. It links with JRS Objective 1.1: Strengthen the capacity of regional partners, including women leaders and marginalized communities, to address modern-day security and stabilization challenges. It also links with JRS Objective 1.3: Strengthen and modernize partnerships to address global competition from the PRC and Russia, and influence from Iran.
- Risks | Without continued U.S. engagement, regional competitors are likely to gain
 greater access and influence with the Government of Tunisia. Over the long term, they
 may succeed in successfully degrading Tunisian interoperability with U.S. and NATO
 partners and undercutting U.S. regional security interests.

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Objective 3.3 | Tunisia continues to prioritize the dismantling of domestic violent extremist organizations, the security of its air, land and maritime borders, its development as a regional training hub, and its participation in regional / UN security missions.

- Justification | Terrorism remains a clear, present threat in the region with longer range concerns related to the return of Tunisians from foreign conflict zones and regional stability. Countering threats from domestic and regional terrorism elements remains a key priority for the United States. Strong and secure borders help limit the flow of illicit materiel and violent extremist elements in the region and helps contain Libyan instability. More broadly, Tunisia already serves as a key partner nation and hub exporting U.S.-developed security sector expertise. Continued utilization and development of this capability maximizes U.S. ROI of grant programs and extends the operational reach of the United States to denied access countries. In the context of United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (UN PKO), Tunisia is a valued democratic partner and provides an alternative to the oversized Chinese support to UN PKO, which is particularly important given the uncertainty of future levels of U.S. and Western assistance to Africa
- Linkages | This mission objective links with the Interim National Security Strategy (NSS) in two instances. Page seven of the NSS discusses combatting "violent extremism and terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." Page 15 of the NSS states that In the Middle East, we will right-size our military presence to the level required to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other vital U.S. interests. This mission objective links with NEA-ME's Draft Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Bureau Goal 1: Modernize and revitalize U.S. alliances, partnerships, and multilateral cooperation to prevent, deter, and resolve conflicts, counter terrorism, and address regional security and stabilization challenges. It links with JRS Objective 1.1: Strengthen the capacity of regional partners, including women leaders and marginalized communities, to address modern-day security and stabilization challenges. It also links with JRS Objective 1.3: Strengthen

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and modernize partnerships to address global competition from the PRC and Russia, and influence from Iran.

• Risks | Without continued support and cooperation on the terrorism front, there is a risk that violent extremist groups could regroup in Tunisia, especially along the Libyan border and western mountainous region along the Algerian border. Additionally, there are risks of diffusion of illicit weapons and other materials. Failure to support and/or grow Tunisian capabilities and support to UN PKO and limiting U.S.-Tunisian cooperation would open opportunities to regional U.S. competitors who will exploit perceived seams in the relationship. Additionally, limiting support would increase the strain on economic development at the cost of defense capability enhancement.

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Provide robust, appropriate, and safe and secure mission facilities to support staff growth and meet all mission objectives.

- Justification | Mission compound space constraints are now the most urgent diplomatic platform issue to resolve at Embassy Tunis. Even with the estimated spring 2025 completion of an office space retrofit of the compound's Annex D office building, post has identified a long-term unmet need for office space totaling at least 46 desk positions, or closer to 80 desk positions if the Embassy continues to host the Libya External Office (LEO) on a longer-term (5-10 years) basis. In addition to office space, the mission also is in dire need of additional and larger meeting rooms for other support uses that are currently operating in spaces that are not up to security standards. In addition to space issues, the current chancery and four annexes are 20 years old, and many critical systems require replacement and numerous safety and security systems do not fully meet current standards.
- Linkages | This objective links to the 2022-2026 JSP Objective 4.3 to protect our personnel, information, and physical infrastructure. It also links to the COVID Mitigation Posture (CMP); OBO Functional Bureau Strategy (2018-2022); E.O. 14057 on Federal Sustainability (December 8, 2021); Greening Diplomacy Initiative; DOS Future of Work (FoW).
- Risks | Post could face catastrophic failure of a critical system. Post has already run out of available desk space for new employees despite continuing requests to fully staff several agencies' projected staffing needs to effectively manage and monitor foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement. Not meeting this objective could lead to ineffective staffing levels or unsafe conditions that risk efficient and effective achievement of mission objectives.

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Management Objective 2 | Deliver superior, forward-leaning shared administrative support services that reflect best practices and emphasize client satisfaction, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, innovation, stability, and support for U.S. strategic interests and long-term goals in Tunisia.

- Justification | The Embassy compound was inaugurated in 2002. The U.S.-Tunisia relationship has expanded dramatically in recent years, underpinned in large part by shared security, law enforcement and economic interests. However, the diplomatic platform resources required to support this deep-rooted and long-standing relationship have not grown at a corresponding rate. The shared administrative support services platform needs continued enhancements to better ensure meeting the demands of existing and incoming agencies space demands in its already outgrown the Embassy Compound. Creating efficiencies to existing efforts by utilizing new technologies and limiting waste through cost-savings initiatives will further ensure that resources are properly deployed.
- **Linkages** | JSP Strategic Objective 4.3, 4.2.
- Risks | The failure to meet this management objective risks the integrity of, and
 effective operations of, the management support platform. Support services need
 continued enhancement and staffing and resource adjustments to meet current and
 projected demands. A failure to further optimize through new positions, assets,
 facilities, and innovation, would necessarily impede its ability to effectively support
 Mission, Department, and U.S. interests in the region.

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Management Objective 3 | Strengthen our mission workforce, enhance workplace satisfaction, and restore resilience within the mission community by grounding professional development, mission-wide recruitment efforts, and community-integration events in principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

- Justification | The State Department, along with other U.S. government agencies, is making strides to help adopt a work culture that supports, empowers, and cares for our workforce so that federal government service is meaningful and rewarding, but sustainable and family friendly as well. This in part requires training and investments at Post to embrace teleworking tools and acquire the needed equipment and technology. Supervisors will need to adapt their leadership style to better manage remote work and maintain productivity. New challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, require creativity, innovation, and a more inclusive approach. Promotion of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) extends beyond holding events and discussions and requires concerted action in the form of workplans and policy recommendations in order to embed DEIA principles in a meaningful way. Mentoring, both informal and formal, at all levels of the organization is essential to promote equity. Supervisors have a role to play in modeling our values, setting the tone, identifying needs, and addressing gaps.
- Linkages | This objective links to the JSP 2022-2026 Strategic Objective 4.1 to build a
 diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce and the DOS DEIA Strategic Plan
 (Nov. 30, 2021).
- Risks | Failure to achieve this objective risks the Mission's ability to recruit and retain USDH and locally employed personnel and underutilize existing talent. To mitigate this risk the mission will identify and prioritize lines of efforts that contribute to the modernization of the workplace and is responsive to the needs of different groups within the workforce with a focus on holding supervisors and mid-level managers accountable in modeling Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) practices.

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