



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

## MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FINAL REPORT FOR FEED THE FUTURE FOOD SECURITY SERVICE CENTER (FSSC)

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## **DISCLAIMER**

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# ABSTRACT

The Food Security Service Center (FSSC) is a five-year activity implemented by Social Impact (SI) in support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Food Security (BFS). Through the FSSC, SI provides consultancy services to Feed the Future countries and to BFS home offices. The FSSC evaluation assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of FSSC's operations and how well its services filled technical skills gaps at requesting organizations. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach consisting of: a document review; key informant interviews and a web-based survey with key FSSC stakeholders; analysis of the FSSC consultants' technical order logs and Statements of Work; and analysis of consultant feedback forms. The FSSC successfully completed 157 consultancy assignments that filled critical short-term skills gaps at USAID Missions and BFS. Demand for FSSC services evolved organically according to the needs of requesting organizations but was focused on technical assistance in inclusive agricultural systems, sustainable productive agricultural practices, consumption of nutritious and safe diets, proactive risk reduction, and access to markets and trade. Technical services provided by FSSC consultants included, in order of importance: project design; expert assessment and analysis; cross-cutting technical support services; strategic planning; monitoring, learning and evaluation; communications; and technical writing. SI support to consultants is efficient, effective, responsive, and flexible, and both requesting organizations and consultants are highly satisfied with the FSSC. FSSC has not encountered significant operational challenges and is a success by all metrics. Only incremental adjustments are required to enhance its operations moving forward.

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# ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
BFS	Bureau for Food Security
CO	Contracting Officer
CC-IR	Cross-Cutting Intermediate Result
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CV	Curricula Vitae
EOI	Expression of Interest
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
FSSC	Food Security Service Center
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
ICT	Information, Communication, and Technology
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Results
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LOE	Level of Effort
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ME&A	Mendez England & Associates
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PEEL	Program Evaluation for Effectiveness and Learning
POC	Point of Contact
RFA	Request for Application
RFP	Request for Proposal
SI	Social Impact
SOW	Statement of Work
TO	Technical Order
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WBS	Web-Based Survey

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

This Executive Summary presents an overview of primary findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the performance evaluation of the Food Security Service Center (FSSC). The FSSC was launched in October 2013 with the goal of assisting the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Food Security (BFS) in furthering effective, efficient, and sustainable implementation of its Feed the Future Initiative.

The FSSC performance evaluation covered the activity period from inception through August 4, 2017. The purpose of the evaluation was to measure efficiency and effectiveness of FSSC operations in delivering services and assess how well services and consultants the FSSC provided filled gaps in requested technical skills. The evaluation also served to make evidence-based recommendations to inform decision-making for program enhancement and future USAID programming. An external evaluation team (ET) assembled by ME&A, under the Program Evaluation for Effectiveness and Learning (PEEL) Task Order conducted the evaluation between August and October of 2017.

The primary audiences for the evaluation include USAID, BFS, FSSC staff, and Social Impact (SI), the implementing partner (IP). USAID and BFS will use the evaluation results to inform programming decisions in food security support, while SI may use the results to adjust FSSC's implementation for the remaining life of the activity. Secondary audiences for the evaluation include regional Missions and the Feed the Future Programming Office in Washington, D.C., which will use results to determine how this type of activity could better assist them in meeting their future needs.

## EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation seeks to answer the five key evaluation questions (EQs) and related sub-questions found in the Summary Results Matrix. To answer these EQs and sub-questions, the evaluation used a mixed-methods data collection approach consisting of the following qualitative and quantitative methods: document review; 32 key informant interviews (KIIs) with three FSSC former and current Contracting Officers Representative (CORs), two SI staff, 10 requesting organization primary points of contact (POCs), and 17 FSSC consultants; web-based survey (WBS) answered by 38 POCs and 93 consultants; analysis of the FSSC consultant technical order log; and analysis of the FSSC consultant feedback forms. The evaluation involved a number of methodological limitations. These included participant, respondent or interviewer biases and subjective assignment of Statements of Work (SOWs) into technical sectors and technical service areas.

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary findings, conclusions and recommendations are summarized in the following matrix. Conclusions presented in the matrix are often the result of multiple findings, while recommendations are often the result of multiple findings and conclusions.

## SUMMARY RESULTS MATRIX

Findings	Conclusions
<b>EQ 1: To what extent is FSSC meeting its intended goals and objectives?</b>	
The FSSC has successfully fielded qualified consultants in both Feed the Future and non-Feed the Future countries.	The FSSC is meeting its goal of enhancing support for the design and implementation of Feed the Future programs. FSSC consultants have played key roles helping Missions and BFS home offices address technical skills gaps as well as design and implement Feed the Future programs and improve the continuity of those programs. FSSC accomplished this by fielding qualified and skilled consultants.
FSSC consultants have played key roles in helping Missions and BFS home offices implement and improve the design, performance, and continuity of their Feed the Future programs.	
Requesting organizations are satisfied with FSSC consultants who are highly qualified and do, on the whole, excellent work.	
<b>EQ 1a: In what technical sector(s) has the FSSC been most engaged and why?</b>	
The current typology used by SI to assign FSSC technical orders (TOs) into technical sectors is too broad to be practical. Using the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Results Framework Intermediate Results (IRs) and Cross-Cutting IRs (CC-IRs) to define technical sectors, 44.3 percent of consultancy SOWs fell under GFSS Objective 1 (inclusive and sustainable agricultural led economic growth), 11.6 percent fell under Objective 2 (strengthened resilience), and 12.8 percent fell under Objective 3 (improved nutrition). Another 21.8 percent of SOWs could not be assigned to any IR or CC-IR because their objectives were either unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs.	<p>FSSC SOWs address predominantly the GFSS objective related to inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth and to a much lesser extent the objectives related to improved nutrition and improved resilience. Specific technical sectors most served by FSSC consultancies include improved agricultural systems; improved agricultural markets and trade; increased agricultural productivity, particularly through climate smart approaches; improved proactive resilience; improved nutrition; and gender equity and empowerment.</p> <p>The demand for FSSC services: 1) reflects the specific technical needs of requesting organizations; 2) has developed organically since the mechanism's inception; and 3) has not been influenced either positively or negatively by the availability of consultant technical skills or focus areas.</p> <p>Driving the demand for FSSC services at Missions and BFS offices is the need for technical assistance in project design, project strategic planning, and expert analyses and, to a lesser extent, the need for technical assistance in M&amp;E, technical aspects of project or activity implementation, and project management. Overall, the most important factor determining the extent and structure of demand for FSSC's consultancies that is amenable to influence by BFS or the FSSC implementer is creating awareness of the mechanism among Missions and BFS offices, and an understanding of its uses and its benefits.</p>
About 20 percent of SOWs fell under GFSS IR1 (strengthened inclusive agricultural systems) followed in order by 13.5 percent under IR4 (increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate smart approaches), 10.9 percent under IR7 (improved nutrition), 9.6 percent under IR5 (improved proactive resilience), 9.0 percent under IR2 (strengthened markets and trade), 3.8 percent under IR8 (increased use of direct nutrition interventions), 2.6 percent under IR9 (improved hygiene), and 1.3 percent under IR3 (increased employment and entrepreneurship) and IR6 (improved adaptation to shocks and stresses).	
In terms of CC-IRs, 7.7 percent of SOWs fell under CC-IR3 (increased gender equality and empowerment), followed by 5.1 percent under CC-IR5 (more effective governance, policy, and institutions), 3.2 percent under CC-IR4 (increased youth empowerment and livelihoods), 1.9 percent under CC-IR1 (strengthened global commitment to food security) and CC-IR6 (improved human, organizational, and system performance), and 1.3 percent under CC-IR2 (improved climate risk and natural resource management).	
Demand for FSSC consultancies has evolved organically and is driven largely by word-of mouth absent marketing efforts by BFS or SI.	
The availability of skilled consultants has acted neither as a constraint nor as a facilitator of demand for FSSC consultancy services.	



Findings	Conclusions
<b>EQ 1b: Is the FSSC filling gaps in technical skills experienced by Country Missions?</b>	
<p>Project design was the most frequently requested technical skill in FSSC SOWs at 22.4 percent, followed by expert assessment and analysis at 16.7 percent; cross-cutting technical support services at 13.5 percent; strategic planning at 12.2 percent; monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) at 11.5 percent; communications at 10.9 percent; technical writing at 9.0 percent; and project management and support services at 3.8 percent.</p>	<p>The most frequently requested technical skill in FSSC SOWs is project design followed by a reasonably tight clustering of requested skills that include expert assessment and analysis, cross-cutting technical support services, strategic planning, MEL, communications, and technical writing.</p>
<p>The system for classifying consultant skills in the SI consultant database mixes technical sectors and technical skills, which makes comparison between the supply of technical skills and the demand for technical skills difficult. Rough comparisons suggest some potential mismatches between supply and demand.</p>	<p>There exist potential mismatches between the technical skills requested in FSSC SOWs and the technical skills reflected in SI's consultant database. Further investigation (beyond the scope of this evaluation) is needed to determine the extent of the mismatch (or correspondence) given the conceptual limitations in the skills typology used in SI's consultant database.</p>
<p>FSSC consultancies successfully fulfilled the technical requirements of the consultancy SOW, thereby filling what technical gaps existed that necessitated the FSSC consultancy request. However, the technical skills gaps filled by FSSC consultancies were, for the most part, short-term gaps related to the specific consultancy assignment as opposed to long-term technical skills gaps, which typically remained after the conclusion of consultancy assignment.</p>	<p>The FSSC has been effective in filling important short-term gaps in requesting organizations' technical skills; however, long-term technical skills gaps typically remain in requesting organizations at the conclusion of the consultancy assignments.</p>
<p>FSSC consultancy assignments have addressed core functions of requesting organizations—thus helping them to improve their organizational performance—while requesting organizations are adopting recommendations made by FSSC consultants.</p>	
<b>EQ 1c: Is FSSC contributing to capacity building at USAID Feed the Future Missions and with implementing partners?</b>	
<p>With few exceptions, FSSC consultant services were designed to provide technical assistance in specific areas in which Mission or BFS technical capacity was lacking rather than to augment Mission capacity.</p>	<p>Capacity building occurred informally as an indirect result of the consultancy via the informal transfer of knowledge and skills to Mission or BFS staff as a product of mentoring or working together on a day-to-day basis in the technical skills areas covered by the consultancy.</p>
<b>EQ 2: To what extent are the FSSC services and Technical Order deliverables under the four technical services areas meeting Operating Units' needs and expectations?</b>	
<p>Of the four broad technical services categories specified in SI's contract - support services, expert analyses, capacity building, bridge or pilot projects - FSSC consultancy services fell overwhelmingly under expert analyses and support services.</p>	<p>The bulk of FSSC consultancy assignments fell under support services and expert analyses, with few capacity building, bridge, or pilot projects.</p>
<p>The FSSC has supported a single bridge project and zero pilot projects due to lack of demand for these types of projects in turn abetted by a lack of promotional efforts and the confusion about them.</p>	<p>Categorizing consultancies by SI's technical services areas is of limited managerial value because currently they are defined too broadly and there are significant differences in how stakeholders categorize them.</p>

Findings	Conclusions
<b>EQ 2a: Is the FSSC engaging consultants with the right mix of knowledge and experience to successfully complete each assignment in a timely manner?</b>	
The experiences and skills of FSSC consultants matched requesters' needs, while consultants possessed advanced technical skills and were receptive, responsive to feedback, and knowledgeable.	FSSC consultants are highly qualified and do excellent work.
The FSSC is a quick and efficient mechanism for sourcing consultants; its speed and efficiency are its primary defining characteristics.	FSSC consultants' experience and skills match the needs of requesting organizations.
<b>EQ 2b: Is Social Impact responding to the requests of the Feed the Future Missions in a timely and efficient manner? For example, in terms of recruiting and hiring, making travel arrangements, doing country visas, and time allocated inside the country, etc.?</b>	
The FSSC consultant onboarding process—from the creation of the SOW to the fielding of consultants—is fast and efficient, far more so than alternative contracting mechanisms. Requesting organizations chose to use the FSSC because they saw it as the fastest, easiest, and least bureaucratic option for fielding short or medium-term consultants.	SI provides, on the whole, excellent administrative and logistical support to FSSC consultants.  In dealing with the FSSC consultants, SI is fast, reliable, responsive, and flexible, and goes out of its way when necessary to meet consultants' needs.
SI provides efficient and timely administrative and logistical support to FSSC consultants, is responsive to their needs, and is flexible in providing for them. SOWs negotiated by SI are clear and accurately describe the work performed by FSSC consultants.	The LOE allotted in the SOWs is appropriate for the work required.
The level of effort (LOE) specified in consultancy SOWs is appropriate.	
<b>EQ 2c: How are FSSC consultant services being utilized?</b>	
One hundred and forty-nine (149) FSSC consultants have undertaken 157 consultancy assignments, including 81 assignments at 29 country or regional Missions, 75 assignments at BFS Washington, and 1 assignment at both, for an average of one assignment per consultant and 81.4 days of LOE.	The demand for FSSC services at USAID Missions and BFS home offices is fueled largely by BFS and word-of-mouth, as SI is prohibited from marketing the FSSC to prospective users.
The number of FSSC consultancy assignments—including the distribution between Missions and BFS Washington and their LOE—has not shown consistent patterns from 2014-2017.	No notable trends emerge in examining FSSC usage patterns from inception to the present, with the number of consultancies moving up or down from year to year with the yearly change ranging from small to relatively large.
The plurality of FSSC consultancy assignments has been in East and West Africa; overall the regional distribution of assignments has ebbed and flowed over time without notable patterns.	

Findings	Conclusions
<b>EQ 2d: What reasons or challenges (if any) hindered FSSC in providing services?</b>	
Stakeholders are strongly satisfied with all aspects of the FSSC and could not identify any systemic challenges, gaps, or weaknesses with it. There exists disagreement among stakeholders about whether the FSSC should: 1) make enhanced efforts to recruit and field local consultants to fulfill USAID's broader goal of developing the capacity of local systems; and 2) seek to target Missions more actively relative to BFS home offices.	The FSSC has encountered challenges, but none that reflect systemic problems in FSSC design or implementation.
<b>EQ 3: What have been the strengths of the FSSC's Operational approach in providing technical assistance?</b>	
The FSSC has successfully created a unique and agile contracting mechanism for short- and medium-term consulting assignments. Its greatest strengths are its efficiency, speed, service orientation, and ability to source high-quality consultants.	FSSC is a unique, agile, and efficient contracting mechanism for fielding technical experts with USAID Missions and BFS home offices. SI staff members are service-oriented, responsive, reliable, and flexible.
<b>EQ 3a: To what extent have ICT solutions been utilized to serve client needs effectively?</b>	
SI's database of consultants is an effective tool for finding and fielding experts who possess a wide range of technical skills demanded by USAID Missions and BFS home offices. In the large majority of cases, SI is able to source multiple curricula vitae (CVs) with the required technical qualifications and is rarely required to go outside of the database to source consultants. When it does go outside the database, it has still managed in all cases to find qualified candidates, who are then subsequently added to the database.	SI has created and maintains a database of approximately 400 consultants possessing a wide range of technical skills from which it is able to source the large majority of consultancy requests from USAID Missions and BFS home offices.
<b>EQ 4: How effective has the relationship between the FSSC, Operating Units, and the COR/Activity Manager been since the inception of the project? What does each stakeholder see as critical for maintaining an effective relationship? How have stakeholders resolved challenges?</b>	
The relationship between the four primary FSSC stakeholder groups (COR, SI, POCs, and consultants) is harmonious and effective.	Relationships between the four primary FSSC stakeholders are harmonious and productive, and absent of significant challenges. The FSSC's existing administrative structure works well and is efficient; there is no demand among stakeholders to make significant changes to it.  No systemic challenges exist within the FSSC that adversely affect the relationships among its primary stakeholders. The efficient and effective operation of the FSSC is key to maintaining effective relationships and high levels of satisfaction among stakeholders in the future.
FSSC stakeholders are satisfied with the existing administrative structure and express little demand to change it.	
Consultants are satisfied with their relationship with SI.	
Challenges with the existing stakeholder relationships are largely limited to inevitable personality conflicts.	
Continued quality service delivery is the key to maintaining effective relationships between FSSC stakeholders.	

Findings	Conclusions
<b>EQ 4a: How responsive has the FSSC been to Operating Unit and COR/Activity Manager requests?</b>	
The COR and requesting organizations are satisfied with FSSC services, noting in particular SI's quickness and efficiency in fielding consultants, support for consultants' administrative and logistical needs, quality of consultants provided, and quality of work done by consultants.	SI is responsive to requests from the COR and requesting organizations and is also responsive to the administrative and logistical needs of consultants. SI provides quick, responsive, flexible, and high-quality services to the COR, requesting organizations, and consultants.
<b>EQ 4b: What has FSSC learned in fulfilling Operating Unit and the COR/Activity Manager requests? Has the adoption of these lessons improved effectiveness and efficiency?</b>	
<p>Lessons learned include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An extensive database of qualified consultants should be an integral component of a contracting mechanism like the FSSC.</li> <li>• Importance of responding quickly to requests for consultancy services.</li> <li>• Importance of good recruiters to build the consultant database.</li> <li>• Importance of quick, responsive, and flexible backup support to consultants.</li> <li>• Importance of a systematic approach to collect feedback from requesters on consultant performance.</li> <li>• Potential value of conducting direct marketing of the FSSC to potential users in the future.</li> <li>• Need to develop a TO classification typology that is detailed and of use to information users, particularly BFS and FSSC's implementing organization.</li> </ul>	<p>In implementing the FSSC, SI has learned and internalized a set of lessons, which contribute to the FSSC's high levels of efficiency and effectiveness. These lessons include: the importance of creating, maintaining, and refining a comprehensive consultant database, which is supported by a dedicated, and well-resourced recruitment team; responding rapidly to all COR requests; providing quick, responsive, and flexible backup support to consultants; and acquiring feedback on consultant performance via direct interactions between the implementing and requesting organizations.</p> <p>Adoption of lessons learned by SI has improved the FSSC's efficiency and effectiveness.</p>
<b>EQ 4c: How satisfied are Feed the Future Country Mission staff with FSSC services?</b>	
Requesting organizations are satisfied with FSSC services, including their overall quality and the quality of the consultants' working relationship, communication, qualifications, deliverables, and receptiveness.	The COR is highly satisfied with the quality of services provided by SI. FSSC consultants deliver these quality services in a responsive and timely manner, which contributes to high levels of satisfaction among requesting organizations, the large majority of which would work with the FSSC and with their specific consultant(s) again.
Requesting organizations would work with the FSSC again in the future.	
<b>EQ 5: To what extent have consultants been satisfied with FSSC onboarding, monitoring and closeout procedures?</b>	
All FSSC consultants that were interviewed said that they are satisfied with the support and services they receive from SI.	Consultants are satisfied with their overall FSSC experience in addition to the FSSC's onboarding processes, administrative and logistical services, and monitoring processes to the extent that the large majority would work with the FSSC again.
The large majority of consultants are satisfied with their FSSC consultancy and would work with the FSSC again in the future.	
<b>EQ 5a: Where have consultants faced challenges in working with FSSC?</b>	
Consultants faced few challenges working with the FSSC, none of which represents a systemic problem with the project.	Consultants have faced few challenges working with the FSSC, most of which are minor in nature and/or outside the control of the FSSC.
<b>Recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The follow-on to the FSSC mechanism should include a requirement that the implementing organization develop a set of typologies for classifying TOs by technical sectors and technical skill areas that provide information useful to BFS and FSSC's implementing organization on trends in the supply of and demand for consultancy services.</li> </ul>	

Findings	Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BFS should maintain the basic administrative structure of the FSSC, along with divisions of responsibility and lines of communication, both in the current mechanism and in any follow-on mechanism. The demand for making significant changes to the existing administrative structure, outside of marketing FSSC services, is not strong, thus any changes made in this regard (e.g., increasing SI's flexibility to communicate directly with requesting organizations) need only be incremental in nature leaving the basic administrative structure intact.</li> <li>• BFS should consider allowing SI (as well as future FSSC implementing organizations) to market the FSSC to Missions, BFS home offices, or other potential users. Allowing SI to engage in direct marketing activities would help the mechanism to target priority focus areas, countries, or regions more effectively, smoothen demand over time, clear up lingering confusion about the mechanism, and better match demand to supply (e.g., SI's absorptive capacity). There exist a number of options for marketing the FSSC that avoid imposing an excessive information burden on Mission or BFS staff.</li> <li>• BFS should decide whether it wants to continue to offer capacity building services and bridge or pilot projects and, if it does, it should make efforts to publicize them or otherwise educate potential users about them.</li> <li>• BFS should determine whether it is an institutional priority to target USAID Missions for FSSC consultancy services relative to BFS home offices and, if so, it needs a targeting strategy to achieve this objective.</li> <li>• BFS should determine whether it is a strategic priority to put greater emphasis on recruiting and fielding local consultants where it makes sense to do so. If it is priority, it needs a strategy to address it.</li> <li>• The follow-on mechanism to the FSSC should include an explicit responsibility for the implementing organization to develop and implement a formal methodology for collecting feedback on consultants from requesting organizations.</li> </ul>	

# I.0 EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

## I.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The Food Security Service Center (FSSC) began in October 2013 with the goal of assisting the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Food Security (BFS) to effectively, efficiently, and sustainably advance Feed the Future program implementation. Implemented by Social Impact (SI), FSSC was established to inform, accelerate, and amplify BFS' implementation of Feed the Future programming.

The purpose of the FSSC performance evaluation is to measure how efficient and effective FSSC operations are in delivering services and assess how well the expert services provided by the FSSC and its consultants filled gaps in requested technical skills. The evaluation also provides evidence to inform future decision-making. [See Annex A for a copy of the evaluation's Expression of Interest (EOI)]. The evaluation covered the period from activity inception through August 4, 2017 and was conducted between August and October 2017.

The primary audience for the evaluation includes the USAID and BFS teams, FSSC staff, and SI. USAID and BFS will use the evaluation results to inform their programming decisions in food security support. SI will use the results to adjust FSSC's implementation during the remaining performance period. The secondary audience includes country and regional Missions and USAID operating units. These entities will use the evaluation results to determine how this type of contracting mechanism could better assist them in meeting their future needs.

## I.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The FSSC evaluation answers the five evaluation questions (EQs) and the related sub-questions listed below. The sub-questions represent a pared down list of sub-questions from the BFS-approved Evaluation Protocol. In planning the evaluation fieldwork, and in light of information learned via interviews with the FSSC Contracting Officers Representative (CORs) and SI management team, the Evaluation Team (ET) determined that certain sub-questions were either redundant, irrelevant, or could not feasibly be answered given the evaluation methodology. Annex C provides a summary and rationale of which sub-questions were dropped or added. The final, revised set of EQs includes those listed below.

- 1. To what extent is FSSC meeting its intended goals and objectives?**
  - a. In what technical sector(s) has FSSC been most engaged (nutrition, gender, ag. productivity) and why (i.e., is this due to demand for services or skills availability)?
  - b. Is the FSSC filling gaps in technical skills experienced by the Country Missions?
  - c. Is FSSC contributing to capacity building at USAID Feed the Future Missions and with implementing partners?
- 2. To what extent are FSSC services and technical order (TO) deliverables under the four technical service areas (i.e., support services, expert analyses, capacity building, bridge and pilot support) meeting Operating Units' needs and expectations?**
  - a. Is the FSSC engaging consultants with the right mix of knowledge and experience to complete each assignment successfully and promptly?

- b. Is SI responding to the requests of the Feed the Future Missions in a timely and efficient manner? E.g., questions about recruiting and hiring, making travel arrangements, doing country visits, time allocated inside the country, etc.
  - c. How are FSSC consultant services being utilized?
  - d. What reasons or challenges (if any) hindered FSSC in providing services?
- 3. What have been the strengths of the FSSC’s operational approach in providing technical assistance?**
- a. To what extent have information, communication, and technology (ICT) solutions been utilized to serve client needs effectively (recruitment, consultant database, etc.)?
- 4. How effective has the relationship been between FSSC, Operating Units, and the COR/Activity Manager since the inception of the project? What does each stakeholder see as critical for maintaining an effective relationship? How have stakeholders resolved challenges?**
- a. How responsive has the FSSC been to Operating Unit and COR/Activity Manager requests?
  - b. What has FSSC learned in fulfilling Operating Unit and the COR/Activity Manager requests? Has the adoption of these lessons improved effectiveness and efficiency?
  - c. How satisfied are Feed the Future country Mission staff with FSSC services?
- 5. To what extent have consultants been satisfied with FSSC onboarding, monitoring, and close out procedures?**
- a. Where have consultants faced challenges in working with FSSC?

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

FSSC is a five-year activity with \$26,606,513 in funding. The mechanism started in October 2013 and is expected to end in September 2018. FSSC supports BFS by providing a broad range of integrated and knowledge-driven technical services via technical consultancies to Feed the Future focus and aligned Missions, BFS, USAID/Washington Operating Units, and host country counterparts.

To reduce hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and food insecurity, Feed the Future invests in food security and agricultural development activities focusing on smallholder farmers, particularly women. Feed the Future supports key stakeholders—governments, donors, the private sector, and civil society in Feed the Future focus countries.<sup>1</sup> Feed the Future also supports USAID Missions in aligned countries<sup>2</sup> to develop their agriculture sectors. This support spurs economic growth, which increases income and reduces hunger, poverty, and undernutrition.

FSSC technical services areas fall under one of four broad categories—program design and management support services, expert analyses, capacity building, and support for bridging or small-scale pilot projects. Figure 1, below, presents a stylized depiction of the FSSC’s operational process. When a Feed the Future country Mission, BFS, or another USAID Operating Unit requires a specialist(s) to support its program(s), it sends an EOI to the FSSC COR. The COR conducts an initial approval review and, upon approving the request, forwards

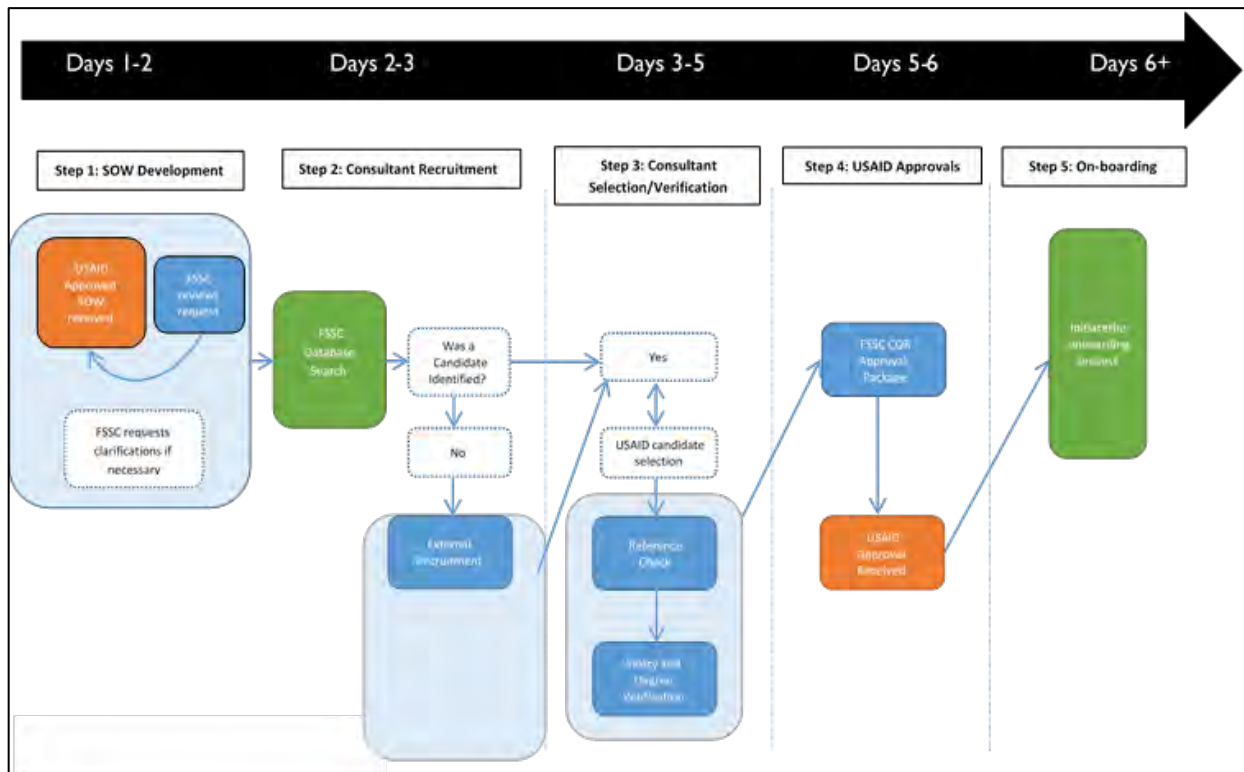
<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

<sup>2</sup> Aligned countries do not have a Feed the Future country strategy but are nevertheless aligned with Feed the Future owing to their agricultural development priorities. There are 11 aligned countries: Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Yemen and Zimbabwe.



it to SI. SI searches its database of approximately 400 consultants and selects a set of three or more experts whose skills match the Statement of Work (SOW) requirements. Then the COR sends each consultants' curricula vitae (CV) to the requesting organization for review. If SI cannot find qualified consultants in its database, it recruits candidates via its network of international development professionals or through social media platforms such as Devex or LinkedIn. If SI recruits consultants from outside the database, SI then adds them to the database.

**Figure 1: FSSC Operational Process<sup>3</sup>**



When the requesting organization receives the CVs, they select the desired candidate. Next, SI negotiates a contract with the consultant. Once the contract is agreed to, SI hires the consultant for the assignment. On occasion, for longer-term assignments, SI may hire the consultant as a part-time employee and provide benefits. Once SI hires the consultant, he/she is introduced to the Point of Contact (POC) at the requesting organization and begins work at the designated site. If the requester is a Mission, the consultant typically travels to the relevant country to undertake the assignment. If the requester is a BFS home office, the consultant may either work at BFS offices in Washington D.C. or from his/her home—with possible, occasional visits to the relevant BFS office or sites outside the United States.

FSSC operates with a set of operational principles that include lines of communication and division of responsibilities. Its operation includes four primary stakeholders—SI, the COR, the consultant, and the requesting organization. Interactions among the four actors are compartmentalized in line with each stakeholder's responsibilities. As the contract executing agency, SI interacts with the COR and the consultant. In its oversight role, the COR interacts

<sup>3</sup> Bureau for Food Security Service Center (FSSC), Annual Report October 2015 – September 2016, Work Flow p. 9.



with SI and the requesting organization. The requesting organization interacts with the COR and consultant. Finally, the consultant interacts with SI and the requesting organization.

For the most part, the different stakeholders adhere to the prescribed communication compartmentalization. However, the mechanism’s design does provide flexibility when necessary—in cases where SI needs to follow-up directly with the requesting organization to resolve critical or time-sensitive issues. The responsibilities and lines of communication for each of the four stakeholders under the FSSC are summarized in Table I.

**Table I: Responsibilities and Lines of Communication for FSSC Actors**

Stakeholder	Responsibility	Lines of Communication
SI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts consultant searches</li> <li>Submits consultant CVs to requester for review</li> <li>Executes contract with consultant</li> <li>Prepares project budgets</li> <li>Provides consultant administrative and logistical support (e.g., travel, lodging, visa, invoice payment and expense reimbursement)</li> <li>Monitors consultant’s performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COR</li> <li>Consultant</li> </ul>
USAID (COR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews and approves consultancy SOW and budget<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Tracks FSSC utilization</li> <li>Conducts general oversight of FSSC operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SI</li> <li>Requester</li> </ul>
Requesting Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submits request for consultancy</li> <li>Reviews consultant CVs and selects consultant</li> <li>Manages consultant’s work during assignment</li> <li>Approves consultant’s deliverables</li> <li>Submits consultant feedback form to SI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COR</li> <li>Consultant</li> </ul>
Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs consultancy assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SI</li> <li>Requester</li> </ul>

SI monitors consultant performance via three mechanisms. The first are the activity reports that consultants submit each month with their payment invoice and the assignment report at the end of the consultancy. The second are consultant feedback forms submitted by the requesting organization at the end of the consultancy. Lastly, there are regular check-in emails and calls to the consultant.

## 3.0 EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

### 3.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, which combined primary quantitative and qualitative data collection methods with secondary data sources, including a review of program documents and SI’s TO log. Specific data collection methods used included the following:<sup>5</sup>

- Document reviews

<sup>4</sup> As used in this report, the term “consultancy” refers to a specific technical order filled by the FSSC and not to the individual consultant filling the technical order, which may involve two or more consultants.

<sup>5</sup> The list of data collection methods proposed in the FSSC Evaluation Protocol also included in-depth FSSC case studies. The original ET Leader, however, dropped out of the evaluation just prior to the start of the data collection, and owing to the amount of time already passed

- Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- Web-Based Survey (WBS)
- Analysis of SI's consultant TO log
- Analysis of SI's consultant feedback forms
- Review of consultancy SOWs

Each data collection method is described below:

**Document Review:** The ET reviewed a number of documents produced by or about the FSSC, including Program Annual Reports, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports, and Request for Proposal (RFP). See Annex B for a bibliography of documents reviewed for the evaluation.

**Key Informant Interviews:** The ET conducted 32 KIIs with individuals who represented the four primary FSSC stakeholder groups: FSSC management team at SI (N=2); BFS CORs past and present<sup>6</sup> (N=3); POCs at Missions and BFS offices in Washington, D.C. (N=10); and consultants (N=17).

To create the POC sampling frame, the ET reviewed each consultancy assignment completed from 2014-2017 from which it identified the POC(s). To create the consultant sampling frame, the ET extracted the names of consultants who completed assignments found in SI's TO log. Then, using purposive sampling methods, the ET selected a set of POCs and consultants to whom it sent an email invitation to participate in the KIIs. For both POCs and consultants, the ET sought a more or less equal mixture of consultancies at USAID Missions and at the BFS home offices, male and female POCs and consultants, and assignments initiated during 2014 - 2017. For assignments completed at Missions, the ET also looked at geographic representation across different Feed the Future regions. Finally, the ET sought to achieve a representative mix of consultants who had completed one or more consultancy assignments.

Due to low response rates to the initial email invitation, the ET sent out two additional email invitations to a new set of 10 POCs and consultants, each using the same selection criteria. Overall, the ET sent out email requests to 45 POCs and 37 consultants. In the end, the ET interviewed 10 POCs and 17 consultants who responded to the email invitations and agreed to be interviewed. Table 2, below, summarizes the number of people interviewed from each stakeholder group. The ET conducted all interviews via telephone or Skype. Annex E provides a complete list of people interviewed. Copies of the KII discussion guides used for each of the four groups of stakeholders are presented in Annex I.

**Table 2: KIIs Completed by Stakeholder Group**

Stakeholders	Number Invited	Number Declined	Number Not Responding	Number Interviewed	Completion Rate
SI	2	0	0	2	100%
CORs	3	0	0	3	100%
POCs	45	3	32	10	22.2%
Consultants	37	9	9	17	45.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36.8%</b>

since the start of the evaluation process and limited remaining LOE for the ET, the team made the decision to drop the case studies from the evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> Since its inception, the FSSC has had five CORs. So as to preserve the anonymity of respondents in reporting the evaluation findings, the report refers to "the COR" to identify one or more of the CORs who made a particular statement or observation.

**Web-Based Surveys:** The ET designed and administered two WBSs using the SurveyMonkey platform. One survey questionnaire was designed for consultants who had completed assignments with the FSSC and one for POCs from requesting organizations at USAID Missions and BFS offices in Washington, D.C. The surveys asked questions about the respondents' experience with and observations of the FSSC and their interactions with relevant FSSC stakeholders. Overall, the ET sent email invitations to 123 POCs and 160 consultants, asking them to respond to the survey. Table 3 shows that 44 POCs and 107 consultants responded to the survey, with a response rate of 35.8 percent and 73.1 percent, respectively. Thirty-eight (38) POCs and 93 consultants completed the survey—a respective completion rate of 30.9 percent and 58.1 percent. (See Annexes F and G for copies of the POC and consultant survey questionnaires and Annex H for the demographic characteristics of survey respondents).

**Table 3: Surveys Completed by Stakeholder Group**

Stakeholders	Number Invitations	Number Respondents	Response Rate	Number Completed	Completion Rate
POCs	123	44	35.8%	38	30.9%
Consultants	160	107	73.1%	93	58.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>53.4%</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>46.3%</b>

**Analysis of Consultant TO Log:** SI maintains a TO log of all initiated consultancy assignments. SI provided the log to the ET for analysis. The TO log contained the consultants' names, type, requesting organization country, consultancy purpose, consultancy start and end dates, and the consultancy level of effort (LOE). The TO log analyzed by the ET covers the period from the project inception in October 2013 through August 4, 2017. A total of 157 TOs including completed (N=129), on-going (N=23), and initiated (N=5) consultancy assignments were analyzed. Another 35 consultancy assignments were withdrawn.

**Analysis of Consultant Feedback Forms:** The ET analyzed 50 consultant feedback forms submitted to SI by requesting organizations. The 50 consultant feedback forms represent 30 percent of all consultancy assignments completed under the FSSC from activity inception through August 4, 2017.

**Review of Consultancy SOWs:** The ET reviewed the SOWs for 156 of the 157 completed, on-going or initiated FSSC consultancy assignments, covering 2014 (N=39), 2015 (N=43), 2016 (N=41), and 2017 (N=33). These constituted the entire set of consultancy SOWs made available to the ET by SI.

## 3.2 DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

### Quantitative Data Analysis

The ET computed descriptions and frequencies of the WBS and consultant TO log data using MS Excel and SPSS.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

The ET typed summary versions of all 32 KIs into MS Word and analyzed the summaries using the qualitative data analysis program NVIVO. NVIVO uses an iterative descriptive approach to identify both emergent themes and unique but important ideas.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

The evaluation involved a number of methodological limitations, including those described below.

**Selection Bias:** Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods used in the evaluation suffered from selection bias, which stemmed primarily from the following:

- The use of WBSs, which may have limited participation of POCs and consultants in countries where Internet access is poor. WBSs, moreover, often suffer from low response rates, as was the case for the POC survey in this evaluation.
- Relying on emails by the ET to contact and invite people to participate in the KIIs and WBSs. Staff turnover at USAID Missions and BFS offices in Washington D.C. is high, and email addresses change, so this method of initiating contact with potential KII and survey respondents resulted in an unknown, but likely significant, number of missed contacts. Turnover and altered email addresses seem also to have been the case among POCs—as evidenced by their low response rate to email invitations to participate in the KIIs and WBS.
- Although SI sends consultant feedback forms to all POCs, the response rate by POCs is relatively low (albeit improving). To date, SI has received 70 responses, 50 of which were available for analysis for this evaluation. There is the potential that the responses received by SI and analyzed for this report are not representative of the actual experiences and attitudes of requesting organizations. Regardless, SI reports that 94 percent of consultant feedback forms received are positive.

**Respondent and/or Interviewer Bias:** Potential biases among key informants remain a risk, although the ET used best practices to mitigate them. This is particularly true with regards to qualitative data collection methods, which rely heavily on respondent perceptions and interviewer interpretation. The desire to attract follow-on programming among certain types of respondents is one source of bias. More generally, both KII respondents and ET members have biases that must be recognized and considered when analyzing KII responses. The evaluation compensated for this limitation through systemic data analysis that synthesized multiple data sources and used well-established and credible data analysis methods, which were supported by advanced data analysis software.

**Subjective Perceptions of Key Informants Interviewed:** The ET was not able to verify perceptions and anecdotes cited by key informants in interviews. The evaluation methodology compensated for this limitation by triangulating the data generated from multiple sources.

**Subjective Nature of SOW Classification Method:** SI's typology for classifying SOWs proved to be too broad and ultimately not useful to BFS for answering EQs 1a and 1b. After consulting with BFS, the ET elected to re-classify the SOWs into technical sectors, using the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Intermediate Results (IRs) and Cross-Cutting Intermediate Results (CC-IRs) and into technical skills areas based on the ET's analysis of 156 SOWs. The process of re-classifying the SOWs, however, involved a good deal of subjective judgment by the ET, which should be kept in mind when reading the relevant sections of this report.

### 3.4 EVALUATION TEAM

The ET consisted of two members, a Team Leader and a Team Evaluator. The original Team Leader, responsible for developing the Evaluation Protocol and initial drafts of the KII and WBS

instruments, dropped out and was replaced by Dr. Gary Woller of ME&A. Dr. Woller revised the KII and WBS instruments, conducted the KIIs, prepared summaries of the KII results, analyzed the WBS and consultant TO log data, and contributed to the Final Evaluation Report.

Carina Bleuer, Research Analyst, provided the input into the Evaluation Protocol and KII and WBS instrument design, analyzed the KII summaries and consultant feedback forms, and contributed to the Final Evaluation Report.

Patrick Sullivan at ME&A programmed the WBS instruments on the Survey Monkey Platform.

Finally, current FSSC COR Katie Hauser provided valuable assistance by providing names and contact information for POCs and sending out invitations to participate in the KIIs and WBS and letters of introduction to POCs and consultants.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

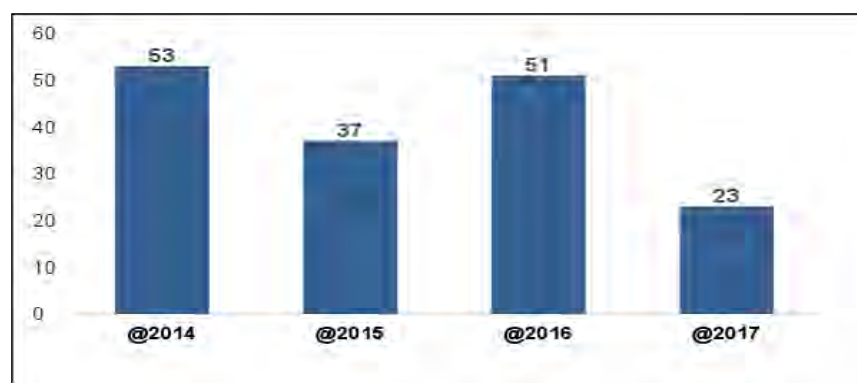
### 4.1 EQ 1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE FSSC MEETING ITS INTENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES?

#### FINDINGS

FSSC has successfully fielded qualified consultants in both Feed the Future and non-Feed the Future countries. As of August 4, 2017, the FSSC TO log shows that since activity inception, FSSC has fielded 154<sup>7</sup> consultants for 164 assignments across all 19 of the Feed the Future-focus countries, three Feed the Future aligned countries, and seven non-Feed the Future countries, in addition to USAID/BFS office, Washington, DC. In all but a few assignments, the FSSC fielded qualified consultants from its consultant database (the majority of cases) or via its network of international development professionals, recruiting websites, or social media.

Figure 2 shows the number of FSSC consultancies fielded by SI by year (2014 through August 4, 2017). The results show that the overall request for consultancies was highest in 2014 (N=53), decreased in 2015 (N=37), increased in 2016 (N=51), and totaled 23 through August 4, 2017.

**Figure 2: Number of FSSC Consultancies by Year**



<sup>7</sup> Several of the FSSC consultants have completed two or more consultancy assignments. If double, triple, etc. counting is used, the number is 205 consultants who have completed 164 consultancy assignments.

POCs and consultants participating in KIsIls agreed that FSSC’s consultants have made important contributions to helping Missions and BFS home offices design and implement Feed the Future programs and improve the design, performance, and continuity of those programs. Consultants provided critical assistance across multiple technical sectors and technical skills areas.

With a single exception in the KIsIls, POCs expressed strong satisfaction with the FSSC consultant’s work. According to these KIsIls, consultants were highly qualified and did excellent work. They also reported that the consultants were receptive, responsive to feedback, and knowledgeable about USAID procedures and systems. POCs described the consultants’ work as valuable and of high quality. They also indicated that consultants had valuable networks, good research synthesis, and excellent data analysis skills. For their part, consultants generally felt that their work provided value to the requesting organizations.

#### **4.1.1 EQ 1.a: In what technical sector(s) has the FSSC been most engaged (nutrition, gender, ag. productivity) and why (i.e., is this due to demand for services or skills availability)?**

While the SI TO Log assigns TOs to different technical sectors, these technical sectors are too broad to be practical for answering EQ 1.a. The ET decided, in consultation with BFS, that defining “technical sectors” as the nine IRs and six CC-IRs belonging to the GFSS Results Framework is appropriate for answering EQ 1.a. The nine GFSS IRs fall under the three GFSS objectives—inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population, especially among women and children—while the six CC-IRs cut across the three GFSS objectives.<sup>8</sup>

To answer EQ 1.a, the ET reviewed each of the 156 SOWs provided by SI and, based on the SOW’s objective, assigned each SOW to one or more of the GFSS IRs or CC-IRs.<sup>9</sup> (The criteria the ET used to assign the SOWs to the IRs and CC-IRs are described in Annex J.) In addition to the nine IRs and six CC-IRs, the ET created a “Not Applicable” category for the SOWs that could not be assigned to an IR or CC-IR because their objectives were either unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs.

Table 4 lists the number and percentage of SOWs assigned to each IR and CC-IR falling under each of the three GFSS objectives. Note that the number and percentage of SOWs assigned to each IR and CC-IR in Table 4 include SOWs that were assigned to two or more IRs and/or CC-IRs (double counting) and thus the values in the “N” and “%” columns pertain to the number of SOWs assigned to that category. For example, five SOWs were assigned to both improved nutrition and gender and are counted as five SOWs for IR7 and five SOWs for CC-IR3 in Table 4. This explains why summing the values in the two columns produces totals bigger than 156 and 100 percent of SOWs. A more detailed breakdown of the SOWs assigned to each IR and CC-IR that does not include double counting is provided in Annex K.

Results show that for each of the three GFSS objectives, 69 (44.3 percent) of the SOWs were assigned to Objective 1, 32 (20.5 percent) were assigned to Objective 2, and 20 (12.8 percent) were assigned to Objective 3. (Given that IR4 falls under both Objectives 1 and 2, the number and percentage of SOWs falling under Objective 2 is larger than presented in Table 4. The ET elected, however, to maintain the format used in the GFSS and place IR4 under Objective 1.)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017-2011, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> The findings for EQ 1.a and EQ 1.b are based on the review of the 156 SOWs in the ET’s possession and thus diverge from the findings presented for other EQs that are based on the entire FSSC TO log.



Results at the IRs and CC-IRs show that three IRs accounted for 10 percent or more of the SOWs (Table 4). They included IR1 with 34 SOWs (21.8 percent), IR 4 with 21 SOWs (13.5 percent), and IR7 with 17 SOWs (10.9 percent). SOWs that could not be assigned to any IR or CC-IR accounted for 34 SOWs. Of the unassigned 34 SOWs, twenty-one (13.5 percent) had unclear objectives and thirteen (8.3 percent) had objectives that cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs.

Another three IRs and CC-IRs accounted for between 5-10 percent of SOWs, including IR5 with 15 SOWs (9.6 percent), IR2 with 14 SOWs (9.0 percent), and CC-IR3 with 12 SOWs (7.7 percent). The number of SOWs assigned to the remaining IRs and CC-IRs ranged from eight (CC-IR5) and six (IR8) at the high end, five (CC-IR4) and four (IR9) in the middle, and three (CC-IR1, CC-IR6) and two (IR3, IR6, CC-IR2) at the low end.

**Table 4: Number and Percentage of SOWs Assigned to GFSS IRs and CC-IRs (Technical Sectors) (N=156)**

Technical Sector	N	%
<b>Objective 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth</b>		
IR1: Strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable	34	21.8%
IR2: Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade	14	9.0%
IR3: Increased employment and entrepreneurship	2	1.3%
IR4: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches <sup>10</sup>	21	13.5%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>44.3%</b>
<b>Objective 2: Strengthened Resilience among People and Systems</b>		
IR5: Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management	15	9.6%
IR6: Improved adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses	2	1.3%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11.6%</b>
<b>Objective 3: A Well-Nourished Population, Especially among Women and Children</b>		
IR7: Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets	17	10.9%
IR8: Increased use of direct nutrition intervention and services	6	3.8%
IR9: More hygienic household and community environments	4	2.6%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12.8%</b>
<b>Cross-Cutting IRs</b>		
CC-IR1: Strengthened global commitment to investing in food security	3	1.9%
CC-IR2: Improved climate risk, land, marine, and their natural resource management	2	1.3%
CC-IR3: Increased gender equality and female empowerment	12	7.7%
CC-IR4: Increased youth empowerment and livelihoods	5	3.2%
CC-IR5: More effective governance, policy, and institutions	8	5.1%
CC-IR6: Improved human, organizational, and system performance	3	1.9%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
NA-SOW objectives were unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs	34	21.8%

Table 5, below, shows the distribution of SOWs across the GFSS IRs and CC-IRs and indicates whether the USAID Mission or BFS offices in Washington, D.C. requested the consultancy. As indicated, Missions requested more consultancies that covered each of the three GFSS objectives, while BFS home offices requested more consultancies that cut across the GFSS IRs—with a notable difference in the number of requested consultancies that covered gender integration (CC-IR3). In terms of IRs, BFS home offices and USAID Missions requested approximately the same number of consultancies covering IR1, IR2, IR4, IR6, and IR7, while

<sup>10</sup> IR4 also falls under GFSS Objective 2.

Missions tended to request a moderately larger number of consultancies covering IR2, IR5, IR8, and IR9.

**Table 5: Number of SOW IRs and CC-IRs (Technical Sectors) by Type of Requesting Organization (N=156)**

Technical Sector	BFS	Mission	BFS & Mission
<b>Objective 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth</b>			
IR1: Strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable	18	16	0
IR2: Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade	4	10	0
IR3: Increased employment and entrepreneurship	1	1	0
IR4: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches	11	10	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Objective 2: Strengthened Resilience among People and Systems</b>			
IR5: Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management	5	10	0
IR6: Improved adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses	1	1	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Objective 3: A Well-Nourished Population, Especially among Women and Children</b>			
IR7: Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets	9	8	0
IR8: Increased use of direct nutrition intervention and services	1	5	0
IR9: More hygienic household and community environments	0	4	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cross-Cutting IRs</b>			
CC-IR1: Strengthened global commitment to investing in food security	3	0	0
CC-IR2: Improved climate risk, land, marine, and their natural resource management	0	2	0
CC-IR3: Increased gender equality and female empowerment	9	3	0
CC-IR4: Increased youth empowerment and livelihoods	2	2	0
CC-IR5: More effective governance, policy, and institutions	5	3	0
CC-IR6: Improved human, organizational, and system performance	3	0	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
NA-SOW objectives were unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs	14	19	1

Finally, Table 6, below, unpacks the year-by-year distribution of SOWs across the GFSS IRs and CC-IRs from 2014 through August 4, 2017. The table shows a general downward trend in the number of SOWs falling under each of the three GFSS objectives through year-end 2016. The exceptions are SOWs falling under Objective 2 and SOWs that could not be assigned to an IR or CC-IR because their objectives were either unclear or covered multiple IRs and/or CC-IRs. This category increased from 2014 to 2016. Among the individual IRs and CC-IRs, notable declines that occurred from 2014-2016 include IR1 and IR4 and, to a lesser extent, IR7 and CC-IR3. IRs and CC-IRs showing a notable increase from 2014-2016 include IR2, IR5 and, to a lesser extent, CC-IR5. The rest of IRs and CC-IRs either remained the same over this period or increased or decreased by a marginal amount. Results in 2017 through August 4 suggest, more or less, that the pattern seen from 2014-2016 continued—with the possible exceptions of IR2, IR5, IR7, and CC-IR3.



**Table 6: Number of SOW IRs and CC-IRs (Technical Sectors) by Year (N=156)**

Technical Sector	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Jan-Aug 4)
<b>Objective 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth</b>				
IR1: Strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable	13	8	7	6
IR2: Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade	2	6	6	0
IR3: Increased employment and entrepreneurship	0	1	1	0
IR4: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches	11	4	3	3
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Objective 2: Strengthened Resilience among People and Systems</b>				
IR5: Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management	0	6	6	3
IR6: Improved adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses	0	0	0	2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Objective 3: A Well-Nourished Population, Especially among Women and Children</b>				
IR7: Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets	5	5	2	5
IR8: Increased use of direct nutrition intervention and services	3	2	0	1
IR9: More hygienic household and community environments	2	2	0	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Cross-Cutting IRs</b>				
CC-IR1: Strengthened global commitment to investing in food security	2	1	0	0
CC-IR2: Improved climate risk, land, marine, and their natural resource management	1	0	0	1
CC-IR3: Increased gender equality and female empowerment	5	0	2	5
CC-IR4: Increased youth empowerment and livelihoods	2	0	2	1
CC-IR5: More effective governance, policy, and institutions	1	2	4	1
CC-IR6: Improved human, organizational, and system performance	1	1	0	1
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
NA-SOW objectives were unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs	5	9	11	9

The COR and SI indicated that demand for the mechanism is increasing and awareness has been strong among Missions and BFS Operating Units. Coupled with questions about the new administration’s budget priorities, however, the federal government’s hiring freeze in February 2017 introduced budget uncertainties at Missions and raised questions of allowable expenditures. As noted by the COR, “*The new Administration introduced budget uncertainty and a hiring freeze, so Missions are at a point where they don’t really know what they have funding wise and what they are able to do.*” Whether these uncertainties contribute to a drop in the demand for FSSC consultancies remains to be seen. (The number of consultancies totaled 34 through August 4, 2017 compared to 41 in 2016, 43 in 2015, and 39 in 2014.)

With regards to why the demand for FSSC services has taken the form it has, both the COR and SI emphasized that the FSSC is a “*demand-driven*” mechanism; neither have intervened overtly in its operations to influence the structure and direction of demand among potential users. In fact, BFS has discouraged SI from marketing FSSC services to potential users. This stems from, among other things, the desire to minimize the number of communications flowing from contractors to Mission staff.

#### 4.1.2 EQ 1.b: Is the FSSC filling gaps in technical skills experienced by Country Missions?

In answering EQ 1b, it is useful first to examine how the FSSC consultancy assignments break down by technical skill areas. During a preliminary review of the 156 SOWs, the ET created a typology of eight technical skill areas—project design; expert assessment and analysis; cross-cutting technical support services; strategic planning; monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL); communications; technical writing; and project management and support services. Next, during a second in-depth review of the 156 SOWs, the ET assigned each of the SOWs to one of the eight technical skill areas. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 7. The criteria the ET used to assign the SOWs to the technical skill areas are described in Annex J.

Table 7 illustrates that project design was the most frequently requested technical skill accounting for 35 (22.4 percent) of the 156 SOWs. Another five technical skills accounted for between 10-20 percent of SOWs and included expert assessment and analysis (16.7 percent), cross-cutting technical support services (13.5 percent), strategic planning (12.2 percent), MEL (11.5 percent), and communications (10.9 percent). Bringing up the rear are SOWs requesting technical skills in technical writing (9.0 percent) and project management and support services (3.8 percent).

**Table 7: Number and Percentage of SOWs Assigned to Technical Skill Areas (N=156)**

Technical Service Area	N	%
Project design	35	22.4%
Expert assessment and analysis	26	16.7%
Cross-cutting technical support services	21	13.5%
Strategic planning	19	12.2%
MEL	18	11.5%
Communications	17	10.9%
Technical writing	14	9.0%
Project management and support services	6	3.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>

The ET next examined whether the technical skills requested in the SOWs differed by whether the requesting organization was BFS home office in Washington, D.C. or a USAID Mission. Table 8 reveals important differences in the types of technical skills requested by the two types of requesting organizations. USAID Missions were more likely to request technical skills in project design, expert assessment and analysis, and strategic planning, whereas BFS home offices were more likely to request cross-cutting technical skills in addition to technical skills in MEL and communications.

**Table 8: Number of SOW Technical Skill Areas by Type of Requesting Organization (N=156)**

Technical Service Area	BFS	USAID Missions	Both
Project design	5	30	0
Expert assessment and analysis	9	16	1
Cross-Cutting Technical Support Services	13	8	0
Strategic planning	7	12	0

Technical Service Area	BFS	USAID Missions	Both
MEL	14	4	0
Communications	14	3	0
Technical writing	8	6	0
Project management and support services	4	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 9 shows how the technical skills requested in SOWs changed from 2014 through August 4, 2017. Requests for project design skills spiked sharply in 2015 but fell in 2016—although levels stayed above those seen in 2014. Other technical skills that increased between 2014 and 2016 include expert assessment and analysis, communications and technical writing. Technical skills that decreased over the same period include cross-cutting technical support services, strategic planning, MEL, and project management and support services. So far, results in 2017 suggest that 2016 values for all technical skill areas (except expert assessment and analysis and communications) will be maintained or rise.

**Table 9: Number of SOW Technical Service Areas by Year (N=156)**

Technical Service Area	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Jan-Aug 4)
Project design	2	17	9	7
Expert assessment and analysis	7	6	10	3
Cross-cutting technical support services	5	6	4	6
Strategic planning	9	5	3	2
MEL	9	2	2	5
Communications	2	4	8	3
Technical writing	2	3	4	5
Project management and support services	3	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>33</b>

Based on information that SI provided to the ET, Table 10, below, shows the breakdown of consultants' technical skills in SI's consultant database. Unfortunately, the technical skills typology SI used differs from the typology the ET used. The difference is particularly evident in the fact that SI's typology cuts across technical sectors and technical skills, while the ET believes that these are conceptually distinct categories. Nonetheless, some comparisons shed light on the match between the SI consultant database and the technical sectors and technical skills covered by the 156 SOWs analyzed for this evaluation.

**Table 10: Composition of Technical Skills in the FSSC Consultant Database (N=400)**

Technical Specialty	Percentage
Agriculture Specialists	24.8%
Project Management/Design	14.2%
Agricultural Economics	11.6%
M&E Specialist/Data Analyst	7.8%
Climate Smart/Resilience	6.2%
Strategic Communications Specialists	5.9%

Technical Specialty	Percentage
Nutrition/Health	5.7%
Capacity Building	5.7%
Policy Analysis & Legislation Drafting	4.1%
Private Sector Development/Financial Inclusion	3.4%
Expert Analyses	2.6%
Cost-Benefit Analysis	1.5%
Political Economic Analysis	1.0%
Youth	0.7%

If the SI technical skills categories related to agriculture and private sector development are assumed to correspond roughly to IR1, IR2, and IR3 in the GFSS Results Framework, these account for 39.8 percent of consultants in SI's consultant database compared to 32.1 percent of SOWs. Next, if the SI technical skills categories of policy analysis and legislation drafting, expert analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and political economic analysis are assumed to correspond with the ET's expert assessment and analysis technical skills category, these account for 9.2 percent of consultants (compared to 16.7 percent of SOWs). If the SI technical skills category of climate smart/resilience is assumed to correspond roughly to IR4, IR5, and IR6, these account for 6.2 percent of consultants compared to 24.4 percent of SOWs.

Other comparisons require fewer assumptions. For example, 14.2 percent of consultants in the SI consultant database have technical skills in project design compared to 22.4 percent of SOWs, 5.7 percent of consultants have a technical skill in nutrition/health compared to 12.8 percent of SOWs, 7.8 percent of consultants have a technical skill in M&E compared to 11.5 percent of SOWs, 5.9 percent of consultants have a technical skill in communications compared to 10.9 percent of SOWs, 0.7 percent of consultants have a technical skill in youth compared to 3.2 percent of SOWs, and 5.7 percent of consultants have a technical skill in capacity building compared to 1.9 percent of SOWs.

The above comparisons are rough approximations at best (e.g., there is probably considerable overlap between agricultural economics in the SI typology and expert assessment and analysis in the ET typology) but point to potential mismatches of consultant technical skills in the SI consultant database and the technical skills and technical sectors covered by TO SOWs. Determining the precise extent of this mismatch (or alternatively the extent of their correspondence) requires additional analysis beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Nonetheless, according to SI, it has successfully fielded consultants for each approved consultancy request, either from its consultant database or from its network of international development professionals. At the same time, when organizations request FSSC services, they are not aware of whether qualified consultants are available for the assignment. Thus, the availability of skilled consultants has not been a constraint or a facilitator of demand for FSSC consultancy services.

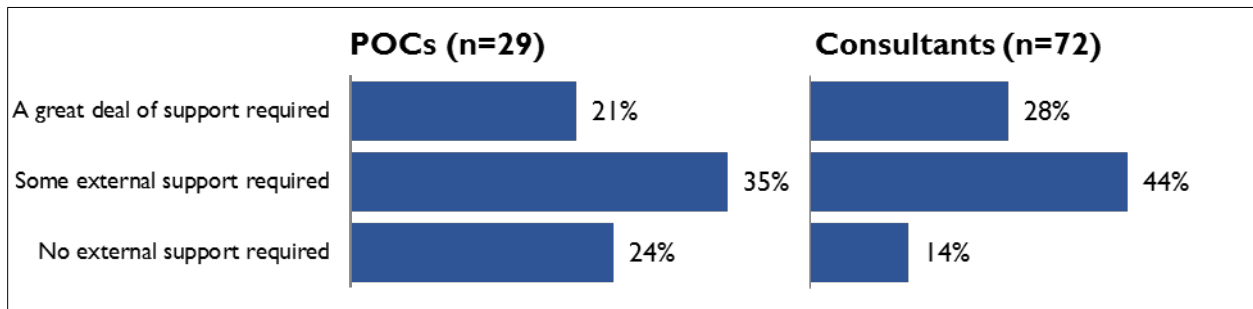
Both KII and survey results confirm that FSSC consultancies successfully filled technical skills gaps at Missions and BFS Operating Units. Evidence for this is consistent across all relevant data sources (KIIs, WBS, and consultant feedback forms) and is manifested in the high levels of satisfaction reported by requesting organizations in all aspects of the consultancy assignments (see particularly the findings for EQ 4a and 4c below). In the KIIs, POCs universally agreed that the consultancy assignment fulfilled the technical requirements of the SOW, thereby filling what

technical gaps existed that necessitated the consultancy in the first place. The following quote is illustrative of this finding:

*“The consultants’ help was pivotal; they contributed about 50 percent to the final product. They helped us take basic analysis and experience and test assumptions, verify strategy and articulate a Theory of Change. We had done past stakeholder mapping, past evaluations, etc., but we needed outside perspective to help us verify that we were on target in the next generation of analysis and where we were going. They gave us more depth to draw on their global experiences, in addition to the body of literature, and they took all of this and synthesized and articulated it into a procurement document.” – POC*

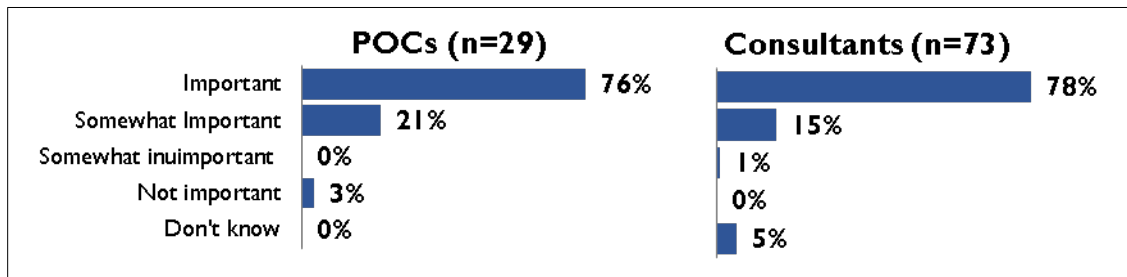
This finding, however, requires the caveat that the technical skills gaps filled by FSSC consultancies were, for the most part, short-term gaps related to the specific consultancy assignment as opposed to long-term technical skills gaps, which typically remained after the conclusion of consultancy assignment. As seen in Figure 3, only 24 percent of the 29 POCs and 14 percent of consultants said that the requesting organization required no further technical support at the end of the consultancy. In contrast, some or a great deal of additional technical support was required in 56 percent of cases according to POCs and in 72 percent of cases according to consultants indicating that moderate to substantial skills gaps remained in the majority of cases.

**Figure 3: Level of Technical Support Still Required at Requesting Organizations at the Conclusion of the FSSC Consultancy (N=29/72)**



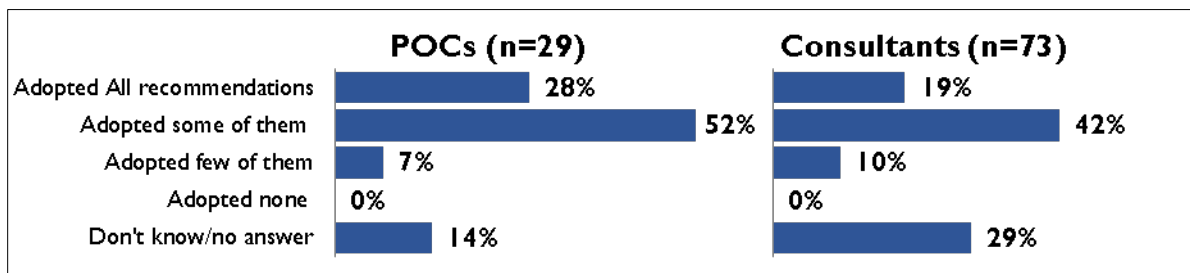
Another metric providing a sense of the extent to which the FSSC consulting assignments filled existing technical skills gaps (or improved the requesting organizations’ performance) is shown in Figure 4, which indicates that FSSC consulting services were important in helping requesting organizations carry out their core functions, achieve their intended results, or achieve sustainability—as suggested by 76 percent of the 29 POCs, and 78 percent of the 73 consultants that responded. Another 21 percent of POCs and 15 percent of consultants said that the assignments were somewhat important for the same purposes. Thus, over 90 percent of respondents in both groups agreed that the FSSC consultancies were either important or somewhat important in enhancing the requesting organization’s performance.

**Figure 4: Contribution of FSSC Consultancies to Requesting Organizations Core Functions, Intended Results or Sustainability (N=29/73)**



Yet another way to measure the FSSC’s effectiveness in filling the requesting organization’s technical skills gaps is to look at how often the requesting organizations adopted the consultants’ recommendations. According to Figure 5, below, 19 percent of respondent consultants said that requesting organizations adopted all of their recommendations, while another 42 percent said that the requesting organizations adopted some of their recommendations—an overall total of 61 percent. In contrast, 28 percent of POCs said that the requesters adopted all of the consultants’ recommendations, and 52 percent said that they adopted some of the consultants’ recommendations for an overall total of 80 percent.

**Figure 5: Requesting Organizations’ Adoption of Consultants’ Recommendations (N=29/73)**



**4.1.3 EQ 1.c: Were the consultant services designed to augment Mission capacity and program quality? How did they achieve those goals/aims?**

KII respondents consistently reported that consultancy assignments rarely involved any formal capacity building or knowledge transfer. According to KII respondents, when capacity building *has* occurred, it has largely been the result of an informal transfer of knowledge or skills from the consultant to Mission or BFS staff. Generally, this knowledge transfer would happen through mentoring or working together on a day-to-day basis. Only one consultant interviewed indicated that her work involved formal capacity building which, in her case, was to enable the Mission to monitor, evaluate, and interpret data related to Feed the Future reporting indicators. This qualitative finding is supported by the SOW analysis, which found that only three (1.9 percent) of SOWs involved formal capacity building (CC-IR6). This finding stands in contrast to the survey results reported in Figure 6, in which 38 percent of POCs and 47 percent of consultants said that the consultancy involved capacity building. It is important to note, however, that the survey question did not distinguish between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ capacity building. This distinction was clearly emphasized by KII respondents who frequently noted that their assignment involved some kind of informal capacity development via their day-to-day interactions with individuals in the assisted organizations, as the following quotes illustrate:

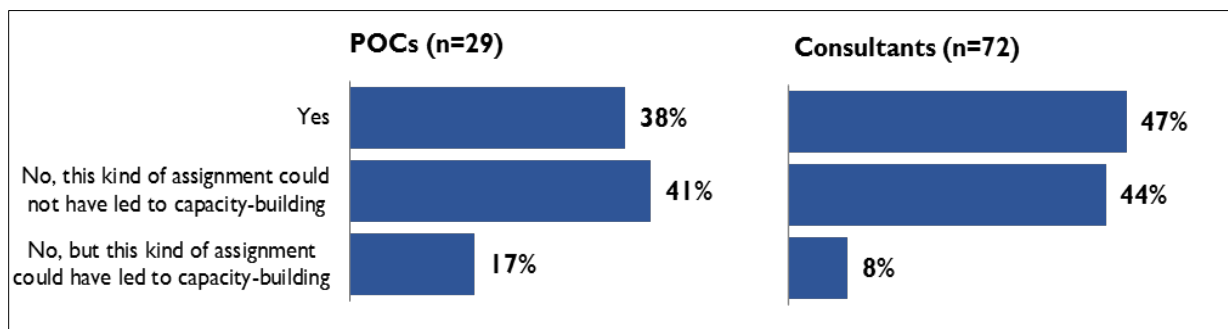
*“The assignment did not include capacity building. But by the virtue of this kind of short-term assignment, they did lots of informal technical capacity building. The process itself builds capacity, but it was not an overt component.” – POC*

*“There was maybe a bit of capacity development . . . but this was a result of the work, and there was no formal capacity development.” – POC*

*“None of the assignments for which we’ve hired consultants have involved much direct capacity building. They have been focused mostly on project work, so any capacity building that takes place would be indirect rather than direct.” – POC*

This distinction between direct (formal) and indirect (informal) capacity building likely accounts for at least a portion of the discrepancy between the TO log and KIIIs with the WBS results in terms of the relative importance of capacity building in the FSSC consultancies.

**Figure 6: FSSC Consultancies that Involved a Capacity Building Focus (N=29/72)**



## CONCLUSIONS

**EQ I:** The FSSC is meeting its goal of enhancing support for the design and implementation of Feed the Future programs. FSSC’s consultants have played key roles helping Missions and BFS home offices address technical skills gaps, design and implement Feed the Future programs, and improve program continuity. FSSC accomplished this by fielding qualified consultants who, on the whole, did excellent work.

**EQ Ia:** The majority of FSSC SOWs fell under the GFSS objective of “Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth” (Objective 1). This was followed at considerable distance by SOWs falling under the GFSS objectives of “A Well-Nourished Population, Especially among Women and Children” (Objective 3), and “Strengthened Resilience among People and Systems” (Objective 2). In terms of specific technical sectors (defined here as GFSS IRs and CC-IRs), relatively prominent sectors (those with approximately 10 percent or more of SOWs) include “strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable” (IR1), “strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade” (IR2), “increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches” (IR4), “improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management” (IR5), “increased consumption of nutrition and safe diets” (IR7), and “increased gender equality and female empowerment” (CC-IR3). SOWs that could not be assigned to any technical sector because their objectives were either unclear or cut across multiple IRs or CC-IRs, also comprised a significant percentage of FSSC SOWs.

Broadly, USAID Missions request more consultancies relative to BFS home offices covering the IRs falling under the three GFSS objectives, while BFS home offices request more consultancies relative to Missions cutting across the IRs, including particularly those related to gender equality and empowerment. Missions also tend to request more consultancies related to trade and



market linkages, proactive resilience interventions, direct nutrition interventions and services, and hygiene.

The number of SOWs covering the GFSS objectives and individual IRs and CC-IRs have demonstrated a general downward trend from 2014-2016, although the trend is mostly a moderate to small one and shows a good deal of variation. The partial year results for 2017 suggest a more or less continuance of this pattern.

The current classification system used by SI is too broad to be of significant use for conducting analysis and monitoring of the FSSC consultancies according to technical sectors, while acknowledging that creating such a classification system was not part of SI's mandate. A better, more useful classification system is required if tracking the technical sectors of FSSC consultancies is desired for the future.

The demand for FSSC services reflects the specific technical needs of requesting organizations as they have developed organically since the mechanism's inception in the absence of proactive marketing efforts by the COR or SI and has not been positively or negatively influenced by the availability of consultant technical skills or focus areas.

Taking all the above into account, together with the widely acknowledged benefits offered by the FSSC relative to other contracting mechanisms and the widespread satisfaction with FSSC services expressed by requesting organizations (see the findings for EQ 4a and 4c), suggest the conclusion that the most important factor determining the extent and structure of FSSC demand, aside from requesting organizations' specific technical needs, and which is amenable to activity intervention, is awareness of the mechanism among Missions and BFS offices and an understanding of its uses and its benefits. Presumably, proactive marketing efforts by the COR and/or SI would increase both awareness and understanding of the FSSC among Missions and BFS offices, and thus demand for FSSC services subject to the specific needs of the requesting organizations, unless the FSSC targets specific types of organizations and/or specific types of technical sectors as part of its marketing efforts.

**EQ 1b:** The most frequently requested technical skill in FSSC SOWs is project design at around 20 percent of SOWs. After this, however, there is a reasonably tight clustering of requested technical skills ranging from around 10-17 percent of SOWs that include, in order, expert assessment and analysis, cross-cutting technical support services, strategic planning, MEL, communications, and technical writing. Relatively few SOWs request technical skills in project management and support services.

SI uses a technical skill typology in its consultant database that cuts across the technical sectors (EQ 1a) and technical skills (EQ 1b) identified in this evaluation thus making comparisons of the demand for technical skills, as determined by the SOW analysis, to its supply, as determined by the SI consultant database, difficult. Nonetheless, a rough comparison between the two highlights a number of potential mismatches that suggest in turn both a need to conduct further analysis (beyond the scope of this evaluation) to determine the degree of the match/mismatch between them and to take actions to better align them, including developing a harmonized typology to facilitate on-going monitoring of supply and demand characteristics for FSSC consultancies.

The FSSC is filling important short-term gaps in requesting organizations' technical skills, while long-term technical skills gaps typically remain in requesting organizations at the conclusion of the consultancy assignments. Thus, FSSC's consulting services are an effective means for



Missions and BFS home offices to fill the specific short-term technical skills gaps addressed by the consultancy assignment but are not an effective means for filling long-term technical skills gaps in the relevant technical areas.

**EQ 1c:** With few exceptions, FSSC’s consultant services were not designed formally to augment Mission capacity but were rather designed to provide technical assistance in specific technical sectors and technical skill areas in which the Mission’s or BFS’s technical capacity was lacking. To the extent capacity building occurred, it was an indirect result of the consultancy. It occurred via the informal transfer of knowledge and skills to Mission or BFS staff as a product of mentoring or working together on a day-to-day basis in the technical areas covered by the consultancy.

#### 4.2 EQ 2: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE FSSC SERVICES AND TECHNICAL ORDER DELIVERABLES UNDER THE FOUR TECHNICAL SERVICES AREAS MEETING OPERATING UNITS’ NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS?

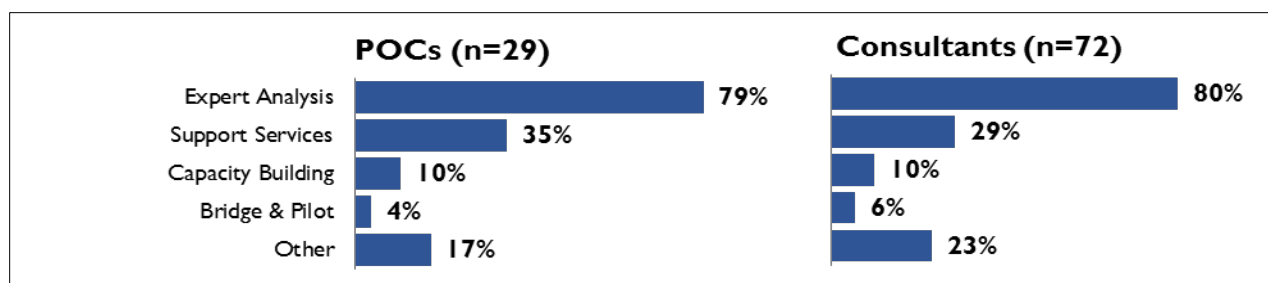
### FINDINGS

EQ 2 refers to the four broad technical service areas (expert analyses, program support services, capacity building, and bridge/pilot projects) that are specified in SI’s contract (awarded in 2013). According to SI, these four broad technical services, particularly expert analyses and support services, are too broad to be meaningful in any practical sense. Thus, in lieu of reporting TOs corresponding to the four technical service areas, SI has elected to categorize and report TOs corresponding to the six Feed the Future technical focus areas of inclusive agricultural sector growth, gender integration, improved nutrition, private sector engagement, research and capacity building, and resilience.

For the purposes of this evaluation, however, the ET, in consultation with BFS, elected not to use the Feed the Future technical focus areas to categorize TOs, opting instead to categorize them by technical sectors using the GFSS Results Framework (Section 4.1.1) and technical skills areas (Section 4.1.2), which were seen as conceptually distinct categories that provided more useful information about the demand for FSSC consultancy services.

Notwithstanding, the WBS asked POCs and consultants to indicate which of the four broad technical service areas the relevant consultancy addressed. Their replies are shown in Figure 7. (Note that multiple responses were possible for this survey question.)

**Figure 7: FSSC Consultancy Technical Service Areas (N=29/72)**



Around 80 percent of both POCs and consultants surveyed said that their FSSC consultancies fell under expert analysis, followed in order by support services (35 percent and 29 percent, respectively), other (17 percent and 23 percent), capacity building (10 percent each), and bridge and pilot projects (4 percent and 6 percent).

Of note in Figure 7 is that survey respondents reported a larger number of bridge and pilot projects than the single bridge and pilot project reported in the TO log. This discrepancy is likely due to the use of different criteria invoked by the survey respondents in defining what falls under each technical service area.

The original FSSC contract included a provision for bridge and pilot projects; however, there have been very few to no requests for these projects. Since its inception, the FSSC has supported only one bridge project (in Guatemala) and no pilot projects. Stakeholders offered a few possible explanations for the lack of pilot and bridge projects. First, there is a lack of demand for these types of projects at USAID Missions. Second, Missions are not aware that the FSSC supports these types of projects. Third, Missions do not understand how such projects operate. In any case, and in light of the low demand for pilot and bridge projects, in February 2017, BFS reallocated the LOE in the FSSC SOW from bridge and pilot projects to technical assistance projects.

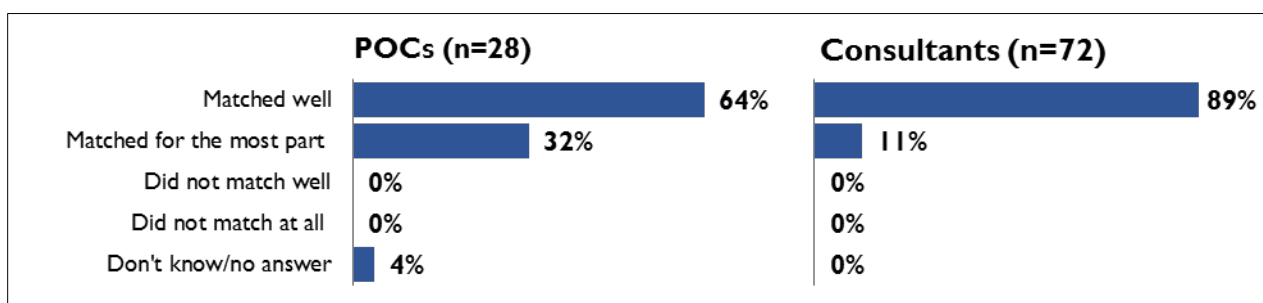
#### 4.2.1 EQ 2a: Is the FSSC engaging consultants with the right mix of knowledge and experience to successfully complete each assignment in a timely manner?

Nearly all POCs interviewed indicated that the consultants they hired through the FSSC were highly qualified and did excellent work. They reported that the consultants were technically skilled, receptive, responsive to feedback, and knowledgeable about USAID procedures and systems.

*“I was very impressed with his skills and experience and his ability to plug in and do the work. He read copious reports and was able to summarize the reports and come up with results frameworks that could inform the backbone of the different projects he helped design.” – POC*

FSSC consultants’ experience and skills matched the needs of requesting organizations. Turning to the survey results, 89 percent of consultants said that their experience and skills matched the requesters’ needs well (Figure 8), and another 14 percent said that, for the most part, they matched the requester’s needs. By comparison, 64 percent of POCs said that the consultants’ experience and skills matched their needs well, and another 32 percent said that for the most part, consultant’s experience and skills matched their needs.

**Figure 8: Match Between Consultants’ Skills and Experience and the Requesting Organizations’ Needs (N=28/72)**



In the consultant feedback forms, requesting organizations wrote that consultants were skilled, experienced, knowledgeable, professional, productive, responsive to suggestions, easy or enjoyable to work with, proactive in their efforts, and provided high-quality deliverables on time. There were only two negative comments in the feedback forms. One said that the consultant had other personal priorities, and the other said that the consultant did not have the required skills to complete the work undertaken.

*“Outstanding job.... brought up to date key expertise to a complex task; made practical suggestions, very customer focused.” – Consultant Feedback Form*

*“The scope of work... was extremely ambitious and the timeframe for the completion of the report was very limited. Nevertheless, the comprehensive report that the team prepared clearly reflected considerable dedication to quality and thoroughness. We understand that the team worked on overdrive to produce the report within the established deadline. The report was well written and insightful and will serve as an excellent foundation for the subsequent drafting of the strategy itself by the Mission in the coming months.” – Consultant Feedback Form*

#### **4.2.2 EQ 2b: Is SI responding to the requests of the Feed the Future Missions in a timely and efficient manner? For example, in terms of recruiting and hiring, making travel arrangements, doing country visas, and time allocated inside the country, etc.**

All POCs reported that SI is fast, efficient, and responsive and that the FSSC is unique in its ability to quickly source consultants without the requester having to go through a long bureaucratic process. According to POCs, the average time to field a consultant was two weeks, which is much faster than other recruiting mechanisms. Consultants who were interviewed overwhelmingly concurred with the POCs that the FSSC fields consultants in a timely and efficient manner.

*“Compared to other contracting mechanisms we’ve used, this was by far faster and more efficient.” – POC*

*“The FSSC’s primary value is sourcing consultants quickly, this is their role and they played it well.” – POC*

*“We were specifically looking for the easiest, fastest and cheapest way to contract with consultants to undertake this work, and the FSSC appeared to offer this, which is why we selected it.” – POC*

Slightly less than one-half of the POCs interviewed said that they elected to use FSSC because it was the easiest, least bureaucratic, and quickest option to field consultants for short-term assignments. Other POCs used the FSSC because they already knew about it, BFS recommended it, or because BFS shared a portion of the consultant’s cost.

As mentioned above, knowledge of the FSSC is transmitted among Missions and BFS offices in Washington primarily through word-of-mouth. The COR and a number of POCs noted that the FSSC is well-known in the Missions and, particularly, at the BFS offices in Washington, D.C. Based on utilization figures to date, stakeholders largely assume that both awareness of and demand for FSSC consultancies is high. It is worth noting, however, that no one is able to pinpoint precisely how aware BFS and Mission staff are of the FSSC. The evaluation methodology did not permit such a measurement, and thus any assertions about the level of awareness and demand are based on anecdotes, not hard data.

As the executing and contracting agency for the FSSC, SI takes care of all the consultants’ administrative and logistical needs, such as travel arrangements, hotels, visas, invoices, and expense reimbursements, which has saved requesting organizations a great deal of time and effort. In interviews, consultants nearly uniformly praised SI for how it handled the administrative and logistical end of the contracting and consultancy process, including its efficiency and timeliness, its responsiveness to consultants’ questions and concerns, and its

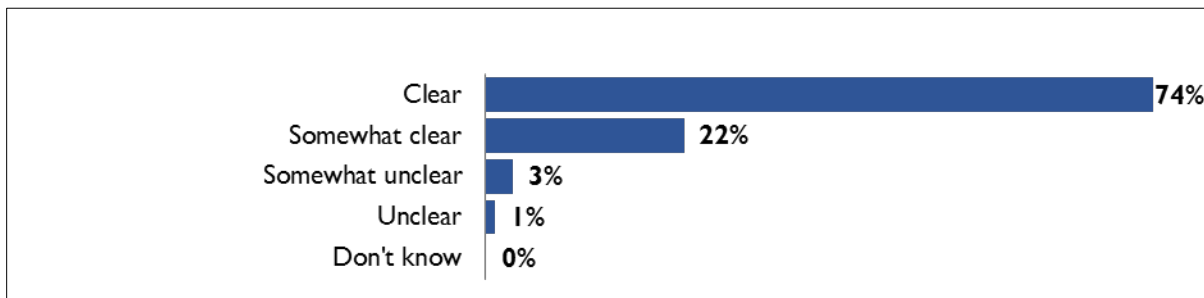
flexibility. Consultants identified a number of cases in which SI went to significant lengths to see that their needs were addressed.

*“SI has been top notch. I have not had any problems with them. They are responsive and have very good communication. Their help on logistics was also very good. In one case, I lost my visa, and SI paid the cost for me to get a new visa, including the cost to travel by taxi in Europe to the consulate in Germany to get a new one.” – Consultant*

Two additional measures of SI’s performance are the appropriateness of the consultant SOWs and the timeliness of the consultants’ assistance to requesting organizations. In the first case, although SI does not draft the SOW (this is the job of the requester with COR feedback), it is responsible for negotiating and agreeing on the SOW with the consultants. If the SOW turns out to be inappropriate, either due to a mismatch between the consultant’s skills and the requester’s needs or because the LOE is insufficient to complete the task, SI is ultimately responsible as the contracting agency.

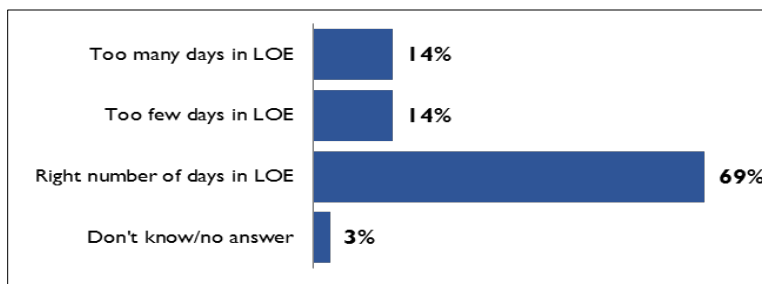
Nearly three-quarters of consultants responding to the WBS said that the SOWs were clear and accurately described the work performed (Figure 9), and another 22 percent said that the SOWs were somewhat clear. A similar percentage of consultants further said that the actual assignments either matched (69 percent) or somewhat matched (26.0 percent) the SOW.

**Figure 9: Clarity and Accuracy of Consultancy SOWs (N=73)**



In interviews, both consultants and POCs indicated that, with a few exceptions, the LOE in the consultancy SOWs was appropriate for the work performed. This finding is confirmed in the survey responses from POCs in Figure 10 where we see that over two-thirds (69.0 percent) reported that the LOE in the SOW was about right to complete the assignment, while another 14 percent of POCs either said that the LOE included more days than were needed or included fewer days than were needed.

**Figure 10: Sufficiency of the LOE in Consultancy SOWs (N=29)**



### 4.2.3 EQ 2c: How are FSSC consultant services being utilized?

According to the SI TO log, as of August 4, 2017, the FSSC had completed 129 consultancy assignments, had initiated five new assignments, had 23 consultancies in process, and had withdrawn from 35 consultancy assignments (Table 11).<sup>11</sup> A total of 149 FSSC consultants have undertaken their assignments at 29 country Missions—including all 19 Feed the Future focus countries, three of 11 aligned countries<sup>12</sup> and seven non-Feed the Future countries<sup>13</sup>— 75 assignments with BFS in Washington, D.C. and one assignment in both (Washington, D.C. and Afghanistan). (See Annex D for a list of assignments performed by country and region.)

**Table 11: Number of FSSC Consulting Assignments**

Status	Number	Percentage
Closed	129	67.2%
In Process	23	12.0%
Initiated	5	2.6%
Withdrawn	35	18.2%
Total	192	100%

Of the 149 consultants used by the FSSC, 121 have undertaken one consulting assignment, 17 have undertaken two assignments, six have undertaken three assignments, three have undertaken four assignments, and one each has undertaken six and nine assignments for an overall average of 1.0 assignment per consultant (Table 12).

**Table 12: Number of FSSC Consultants Used**

Outcome	Number	Percentage
Number	149	100.0%
Number with 1 Assignment	121	81.2%
Number with 2 Assignments	17	11.4%
Number with 3 Assignments	6	4.0%
Number with 4 Assignments	3	2.7%
Number with 6 Assignments	1	0.1%
Number with 10 assignments	1	0.1%
Average number of Assignments	1.0	NA

When the bridge/pilot project in Guatemala is included, the consultancy LOEs ranged from a low of two days to a high of 1,381 days, for an average LOE of 81.4 days and a median LOE of 57 days (Table 13). When the bridge/pilot project is excluded, the LOE ranges from 2-259 days for an average LOE of 73.4 days and a median LOE of 54 days.

**Table 13: LOE and Number of Days of FSSC Consulting Assignments**

Outcome	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
LOE (w/Bridge/Pilot)	81.4	57	2	1,381
LOE (w/o Bridge/Pilot)	73.4	54	2	259

A question of interest is whether the pattern of consultancy assignments has changed over the life of the FSSC. As seen in Table 14, the number of consultancy assignments peaked at 43 in 2015 and 2016, reached a low of 39 in 2014, and totaled 34 through August 4, 2017. The share

<sup>11</sup> Since August 4, the FSSC has initiated seven additional consultancy assignments, five during Fiscal Year 2017 and two during Fiscal Year 2018. These are not included in the analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria.

<sup>13</sup> Afghanistan, Benin, Guinea, India, Sierra Leone, Thailand, and Ukraine.

of assignments at Missions versus BFS offices in Washington, D.C. has likewise varied over the life of the FSSC, from 43.6 percent in 2014 to 69.8 percent in 2015, 46.3 percent in 2016, and 44.1 percent so far in 2017. Overall, the split between consultancy assignments conducted at Missions or at BFS home offices is close to 50-50 (52 percent vs. 48 percent).<sup>14</sup> The average LOE has shown greater stability beginning at 53.2 days in 2014 but settling in at between 80-90 days in 2015-2017 if the bridge and pilot project is excluded.

**Table 14: Evolution and Number of Consultancy Assignments 2014-2017**

Outcome	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Number of Assignments	39	43	41	34	157
Assignments in Missions	17	30	19	15	81
Assignments in D.C.	22	12	22	19	75
Assignments in Mission & D.C.	0	1	0	0	1
Average LOE (w/ Bridge/Pilot)	53.2	114.3	86.2	82.6	81.4
Average LOE (w/o Bridge/Pilot)	53.2	79.1	86.2	82.6	73.4

Stakeholders at BFS and SI were divided on whether they felt comfortable with the distribution of consultancies between USAID Missions and BFS home offices in Washington, D.C. Some prefer to see more consultancies at USAID Missions than BFS home offices, citing the need to build local technical capacity, while others were more indifferent to the distribution and content to let demand patterns determine the distribution between the two.

In terms of the distribution of consultancy assignments by region, Table 15 shows the number and percentage of assignments from 2014 through August 4, 2017 in the following regions (not including assignments in Washington, D.C.): East Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, Horn of Africa, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, former USSR, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The results in Table 15 do not show notable patterns, although a few things do stand out. First, East Africa is the region with by far the most consultancies, with a relatively steady stream of assignments going there over from 2014-2016. Next with the most consultancies is West Africa. There was also a surge in consultancies in the Horn of Africa in 2015—all in Ethiopia—falling back down to zero in 2016 and 2017.

**Table 15: Distribution of Consultancy Assignments by Region 2014-2017**

Region	2014	2015	2016	2017 Jan-Aug 4	Total
East Africa <sup>15</sup>	5	8	7	2	22
West Africa <sup>16</sup>	2	3	3	5	13
Southern Africa <sup>17</sup>	3	1	1	2	7
Central Africa <sup>18</sup>	0	1	0	0	1
Horn of Africa <sup>19</sup>	0	5	0	0	5
Southwest Asia <sup>20</sup>	0	3	2	2	7

<sup>14</sup> BFS “home office” consultancy assignments include also assignments completed at the consultant’s place of residence and assignments commissioned by BFS in Washington, D.C. that involve travel either to D.C. or to the field.

<sup>15</sup> Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and East Africa Regional.

<sup>16</sup> Benin, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and West Africa Regional.

<sup>17</sup> Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zambia.

<sup>18</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo.

<sup>19</sup> Ethiopia.

<sup>20</sup> Bangladesh, India, and Nepal.

Region	2014	2015	2016	2017 Jan-Aug 4	Total
Southeast Asia <sup>21</sup>	3	2	3	0	8
Central Asia <sup>22</sup>	1	2	2	0	5
Former USSR <sup>23</sup>	2	3	0	0	5
LAC <sup>24</sup>	1	2	1	4	8

#### 4.2.4 EQ 2d: What reasons or challenges (if any) hindered FSSC in providing services?

Stakeholders are strongly satisfied with all aspects of the FSSC. KII participants struggled to identify challenges hindering FSSC’s implementation or areas where they thought the FSSC could be improved. On the whole, KII participants were strongly satisfied with the FSSC, SI’s performance, the nature of the assignments, and the consultants’ performance. Any challenge or issue respondents cited was identified by, at most, a handful of respondents. This indicates that no particular issue represents a systemic challenge, gap, or weakness with the FSSC. Those that were mentioned are described below in order of most mentioned to least mentioned.

**Difficulties and delays securing consultants’ security clearance:** The most frequently cited challenge, which is outside of FSSC’s control, was the difficulty involved in getting the consultants their security clearances and access to resources within the Missions and BFS headquarters. Because clearance and resource access were necessary for consultants to undertake the assignment, access to both caused delays. For example, once SI submitted the required paperwork to the COR on approval of the consultancy, there were delays getting consultants past the security check and approved to access BFS headquarters facilities and the USAID intranet.

**High overhead for services:** According to the COR and POCs, SI charges a relatively high overhead for its services—both in absolute terms and relative to other contracting mechanisms. The COR indicated that, on a few occasions, Missions have complained that the cost was too high.

**Low daily rate:** SI’s contract stipulates a formula when negotiating daily rates for consultants. To control costs and ensure contract compliance, SI follows this formula strictly and has only requested Contracting Officer (CO) approval to offer rates outside the formula four times. A number of consultants noted that the daily rate they received under the FSSC was lower than what they could earn through other contracting mechanisms or from other contractors.

**Inappropriate LOE:** The requesting organization specifies the LOE needed for the assignment. Further, SI asks all consultants to confirm that the LOE is adequate before submitting them as potential candidates for the assignment. Nonetheless, during KIIs four consultants and two POCs noted that the LOE was either too short or too long. This sentiment was echoed by 8 of 29 POC survey respondents. The COR confirmed that there have been isolated issues related to insufficient LOEs for certain assignments.

**Lack of clear communication:** A few consultants indicated that at certain points during the consultancy the communication process broke down between them and SI or the requesting organization. For example, one consultant claims he was not told that his 50 percent daily rate

<sup>21</sup> Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand.

<sup>22</sup> Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

<sup>23</sup> Ukraine.

<sup>24</sup> Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras.



pay bump was due to the security situation in Kenya, even though SI's contracting protocol requires it to provide a security briefing to consultants before beginning the assignment.

In another case, a consultant complained that there was no opportunity to clarify her available start date, and thus the Mission expected her to arrive in the country earlier than she could. It should be noted, however, that the assignment start date is clearly stated on each consultant's contract, which is signed by the consultant, while the assignment start date also appears on the final budget approved by the requesting organization.

**Inconsistent feedback from requesting organizations:** Relatively few requesting organizations complete and return the consultant feedback form to SI. Initially, the COR was responsible for collecting the consultant feedback forms, but the response rate was so low that SI assumed responsibility for this task, which increased the response rate to about 30 percent.

Neither SI nor BFS possesses any leverage to induce requesters to complete and submit the consultant feedback forms. Given the demand-driven nature of the mechanism and the aim to maximize its utilization, neither SI nor BFS is anxious to make funding or participation contingent on completing and submitting the consultant feedback forms or other forms of feedback. On rare occasions, the COR also receives informal feedback from the requesting organizations, but this typically occurs when the requesting organization is pleased with the consultancy.

**Turnover among SI staff and the COR:** Three consultants cited issues with turnover either among SI staff or the COR, which meant that they had to interact with several different points of contacts at SI and USAID/BFS during their assignment. However, none found this to be a serious challenge and it did not materially affect their experience with the FSSC or the quality of the service they received from SI.

**Finding and managing local consultants:** Approximately 10 percent of the consultants in the FSSC consultant database are local (or host country national) consultants. The majority are expatriate technical experts from developed countries. A few challenges arise with regards to local consultants. The first is finding and recruiting qualified local consultants—including local consultants with experience working on USAID projects. The second challenge is that managing local consultants, particularly those without USAID experience, can require more time and effort than managing expatriate consultants. A third challenge is that sourcing local consultants typically takes longer, which lengthens the FSSC timeline.

Stakeholders have different opinions about recruiting and fielding local consultants. To some, using local expertise is consistent with USAID's broader goal of empowering local systems and local talent, and should be encouraged. To others, it is a question of demand. The FSSC Consultant Database attempts to reflect USAID demand. For example, if past SOWs requested 40 percent project design experts, the consultant database should include 40 percent of consultants with that expertise. There have been very few requests for local consultants. Thus, if there were more demand for local consultants, then the argument is that more effort would be made to recruit and field them. In the absence of such demand there is no need to make special efforts to recruit or field local talent.

Stakeholders agree that any effort to field local consultants should be situational. For example, none proposes imposing a local consultant quota in the database or suggests that the FSSC should go out of its way to find and propose local consultants when not specifically requested.



Whether the FSSC should place priority on recruiting or proposing local consultants is another matter, and there is no clear consensus among interviewed stakeholders.

**Policy against doing evaluations:** To date, FSSC has not provided consultants to support Missions or BFS in conducting evaluations. This is a function of two factors. First, USAID had previously interpreted SI's contract to prohibit the FSSC from supporting evaluations, even though such a prohibition is not explicitly written into the FSSC's contract. This remains an issue of CO interpretation and is not set policy. Second, there have been few to no requests for FSSC evaluation assistance to date.

## CONCLUSIONS

**EQ 2:** The bulk of FSSC consultancy assignments fell under the broad FSSC technical service areas of expert analysis and, to a lesser extent, support services. There were few capacity building consultancies, one bridge project, and no pilot projects. Categorizing consultancies by such broad technical service areas, however, is of limited managerial value because expert analysis and support services are defined too broadly and ambiguously, effectively making them catchall categories.

**EQ 2a:** The experiences and skills of the FSSC's consultants fielded by SI largely matched the needs of the requesting organizations. The FSSC consultants possessed advanced technical skills and were receptive, responsive to feedback, and knowledgeable about USAID procedures and systems. The FSSC is a quick and efficient mechanism for sourcing short- to medium-term technical assistance, both in absolute terms and relative to other contracting mechanisms. Perhaps more than any of its other characteristics, the FSSC is distinctive for the speed and efficiency with which it finds, contracts, and fields technical experts to provide short- to medium-term technical assistance to USAID Missions and BFS home offices.

**EQ 2b:** SI provides, on the whole, excellent administrative and logistical support to FSSC consultants. In dealing with the FSSC consultants, SI is fast, reliable, responsive, flexible, and goes out of its way when necessary to meet the consultants' needs. The SOWs that SI negotiates with consultants (although originally drafted by requesting organizations and reviewed by the COR) are clear and accurately describe the actual work performed. The LOE allotted in the SOWs is, for the most part, appropriate for the work required.

**EQ 2c:** The demand for FSSC services at USAID Missions and BFS home offices is fueled largely by word-of-mouth. The BFS has discouraged SI from marketing the FSSC to prospective users. No notable trends emerged in FSSC usage patterns from activity inception in 2013 through the time of the evaluation.

**EQ 2d:** None of the challenges the FSSC has encountered reflect systemic problems in FSSC's design or SI's implementation of the mechanism. In some cases, the challenges are outside of SI's control and none are widely noted by stakeholders.

Stakeholders agree that qualified local consultants should be proposed if they are in the database or if the requesting organization specifically requests. However, they disagree on whether the FSSC should enhance efforts to recruit and field local consultants to fulfill USAID's broader goal of developing the capacity of local systems. There is also disagreement among stakeholders about whether FSSC's consultancies should actively target Missions more than BFS home offices given that, to date, half of all consultancies have been at BFS home offices.

### 4.3 EQ 3: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE STRENGTHS OF THE FSSC'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH IN PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

#### FINDINGS

All participants consistently identified four primary strengths of FSSC's operational approach: speed, efficiency, service orientation and consultant quality.

**Speed:** The majority of interviewees from all stakeholder groups said they were impressed with how quickly the process of fielding consultants was, from start to finish, and how unique this was to the FSSC. According to POCs, the average time to field a consultant was two weeks, which they consistently pointed out is much quicker than other contracting mechanisms.

*"I thought it was great, efficient and flexible mechanism for getting someone on the ground to help at the Mission who knows what he/she is doing, who has credibility, knowledge and relationships. I give it a thumb up." – POC*

*"The FSSC's primary value is sourcing consultants quickly; this is their role and they played it well. The consultant was very impressive and very successful. The scope of work that he worked on was appropriate as was the level of effort, and we were pleased that SI gave us an option of hiring a very qualified consultant who did a great job." – POC*

*"There isn't another type of contracting mechanism similar to this, at least that we knew about, where we could quickly source consultants for short-term assignments without going through a longer bureaucratic process." – POC*

**Efficiency:** Two-thirds of interviewees reported that the FSSC process of fielding a consultant was straightforward, efficient, and not burdensome. They indicated that other mechanisms are much more bureaucratic, complex, and onerous. Invoices were processed quickly, onboarding processes were smooth, and documents were detailed and easy to follow.

**Quality of consultants:** SI is typically able to field consultants in a wide range of technical areas directly from its database. This indicates the wide range of skills and expertise found there. According to POCs, FSSC invariably provided them with a list of quality CVs from which they were able to choose a qualified consultant(s) for the assignment, and who did excellent work. POCs consistently reported that consultants were technically skilled, receptive, responsive to feedback, and knowledgeable about USAID procedures and systems.

**Service-orientation:** All respondents in both groups described the FSSC as strongly service-oriented. SI was responsive and quick to resolve issues as they arose, and efficiently and reliably took care of all the logistics involved in fielding consultants, including travel arrangements and visas. This efficiency saved Missions and consultants' substantial time and effort. Lastly, SI was flexible in meeting consultants' logistic and other needs.

*"I live in Phnom Penh, and I had to get a visa, so I sent it to SI in Washington, and they turned it around and got it back to me in eight days. That was pretty phenomenal." – Consultant*

#### 4.3.1 EQ 3a: To what extent have ICT solutions been utilized to serve client needs effectively (recruitment, consultant database, etc.)?

SI actively recruits to add to its database consultants who possess a wide range of technical skills pertaining to key technical focus areas found in Table 4. SI further monitors trends in the utilization of the FSSC services to determine which focus areas to emphasize when recruiting consultants for the database.

SI and the COR reported that the majority of the time SI is able to find a consultant with the desired qualifications in its database. In those rare cases where SI must recruit consultants from outside the database, it invariably is able to field a qualified consultant. Currently, SI has about 400 consultants in its database, of which 300 have filled out a profile and 154 have received assignments.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**EQ3:** FSSC is a unique, agile, and efficient contracting mechanism for fielding technical experts to carry out short- to medium-term consultancy assignments with USAID Missions and BFS home offices. SI staff members are service-oriented, responsive, reliable, and flexible.

**EQ3a:** SI's database of consultants is an effective tool for finding and fielding consultants who possess a wide range of technical skills demanded by USAID Missions and BFS home offices. SI is continually updating the database and is preparing to hand it over to BFS at the FSSC's conclusion. The value of the database is evident in that in the large majority of cases, SI is able to source multiple CVs with the required technical qualifications and is rarely required to go outside of the database. In all cases when it is required to go outside the database, SI has managed to find qualified candidates who are then added to the database.

### **4.4 EQ 4: HOW EFFECTIVE HAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FSSC, OPERATING UNITS, AND THE COR/ACTIVITY MANAGER BEEN SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE PROJECT? WHAT DOES EACH STAKEHOLDER SEE AS CRITICAL FOR MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP? HOW HAVE STAKEHOLDERS RESOLVED CHALLENGES?**

## **FINDINGS**

As described above, FSSC is structured so that each of the FSSC's four primary stakeholders communicates directly with only two of the other three stakeholders. To date, this organizational structure has worked well and has facilitated a harmonious and effective working relationship between the four key stakeholder groups. Stakeholders are largely satisfied with this administrative structure. The primary advantage is that it streamlines the communication process and reduces the volume of communication each stakeholder receives. In addition, each stakeholder knows precisely with whom he/she is to work, which limits confusion and coordination.

The FSSC's stakeholders are satisfied with the existing administrative structure and express little demand for change. Both SI and the COR said that initially they thought it would be more efficient to allow SI to deal directly with the requesting organizations and vice versa; however, both have come to appreciate the advantages of the current administrative structure. Now they see no compelling reason to change it. It bears noting that the COR has granted SI the flexibility to initiate direct communication with requesting organizations on a case-by-case basis necessary.

Notwithstanding this case-by-case flexibility, SI would like greater flexibility to undertake direct marketing activities with Missions and BFS offices, which current BFS policy discourages. In addition to marketing, stakeholders at BFS and SI would consider adjusting the administrative structure to allow for increased flexibility for SI to communicate directly with requesting organizations under a limited set of circumstance—but this stops well short of implementing significant changes to the current administrative structure.

Notably, when asked what improvements they would recommend for the FSSC, no more than a couple of interviewees from all stakeholder groups spontaneously recommended allowing SI to communicate directly with the requesting organizations. Again, however, the recommendations were not to make material changes to the existing administrative structure (given that the interviewees were largely satisfied with it) but to make incremental changes by giving SI greater case-by-case flexibility to communicate directly with requesting organizations to improve communication efficiency in those situations.

Consultants are satisfied with their relationship with SI. They reported having minimal contact with SI during their assignments. Where there was contact, it was limited to administrative issues like filling out invoices, timesheets, and periodic check-ins to see how the assignment was progressing. In general, consultants were satisfied with this arrangement. Only four of the consultants interviewed expressed dissatisfaction, which included the feeling that there was a general lack of oversight from SI during the assignment, unnecessary confusion caused about the consultant's available start date, and a failure to communicate information about security risks in the assignment country. Even in these cases, however, the consultants expressed overall satisfaction with SI's performance.

Stakeholders struggled to identify significant challenges related to the nature or quality of stakeholder relationships. The most frequently mentioned challenges largely had to do with the types of personality conflicts that inevitably arise in any type of organizational structure. No challenges indicating systemic problems within the FSSC or with the relationships between its primary stakeholder groups were identified.

According to those stakeholders interviewed, the key to maintaining effective relationships among stakeholders is ensuring that each stakeholder fulfills its role within the FSSC's administrative structure with efficiency, responsiveness, and effectiveness. The fast, responsive, and quality service delivery by the COR, SI, and consultants contributed to high levels of satisfaction among all FSSC stakeholders which, in turn, contributed to harmonious and productive relationships between them.

#### **4.4.1 EQ 4a: How responsive has the FSSC been to Operating Unit and COR/Activity Manager requests?**

The COR and all POCs interviewed were satisfied with the FSSC's services, and felt the FSSC is a good mechanism for sourcing short and medium-term consultants quickly and efficiently. The POCs noted that the FSSC is uniquely able to source consultants quickly without having to go through a long bureaucratic process. They appreciated that SI took care of consultants' administrative and logistical needs, while two POCs mentioned they appreciated the cost-sharing mechanism available to them from BFS through the FSSC.

All but two POCs interviewed agreed that the FSSC was able to provide them with highly qualified consultants who were technically trained and did excellent work. One of the POCs who disagreed felt that the consultant was unreliable and did not communicate his availability effectively; however, this POC was still satisfied overall with the FSSC and would use it again in the future.

#### **4.4.2 EQ 4b: What has the FSSC learned in fulfilling Operating Unit and the COR/Activity Manager requests? Has the adoption of these lessons improved effectiveness and efficiency?**

The COR and SI identified the following lessons learned:

**An extensive database of qualified consultants is an integral component of a contracting mechanism like the FSSC.** The FSSC's extensive consultant database has been integral to its ability to field consultants quickly. The value of the consultant database lies not only in the number of consultants there, but also in the extensive range of technical specialties covered. The quality, coverage, and quantity of consultants are important features of the database.

**It is important to respond quickly to requests for consultancy services.** The success of the FSSC, or similar contracting mechanisms, depends on being able to respond quickly to requests for consultancy services. As discussed above, the factor that distinguishes the FSSC from most other contracting mechanisms and give it an advantage, is the speed with which it fields consultants.

**Good recruiters play an essential role in building the consultant database.** As the consultant database is a primary operational tool and a primary deliverable for the FSSC, building and managing the database is a primary task for the FSSC implementer. Building and managing the database requires a competent and incentivized recruitment team backed by appropriate institutional and budgetary support.

**Providing quick, responsive and flexible backup support to consultants facilitates quality service provision.** SI seeks to provide its consultants quick, responsive, and flexible backup support. This facilitates and enhances the quality of their work and increases consultants' and requesting organizations' satisfaction with the FSSC. For the consultants' part, their administrative and logistical needs are dealt with largely in the background, which allows them to focus on their work with minimal distractions.

**Getting consultant feedback from requesting organizations is important, but it requires a systematic approach.** Given the fact that SI does not, as a general policy, interact directly with requesting organizations, the consultant feedback form is its primary source of feedback on consultant performance. SI took over the process of collecting the forms from the COR because of the initial low collection rate. Since then, the collection rate has increased to about 30 percent of consultancies completed.

To achieve and maintain a high response rate, the following are important: 1) responsibility for collecting the forms should be assigned to the activity's executing agency rather than kept internally within BFS, as the former is more capable of providing the focused attention to the collection process than the latter; and 2) collecting the forms requires a consistently implemented systematic process or form collection is likely to slip through the cracks. This lesson learned applies more generally to any process of gathering feedback from different activity stakeholders.

**Direct marketing of the FSSC to potential users should be considered for the future.** As mentioned above, SI is discouraged from promoting the FSSC to Missions, BFS and other potential users. While demand for FSSC's consultant services has been reasonably robust to date (aside from the negative effect of the federal government hiring freeze and the Mission strategic planning process), it could have been higher.

There are several ways of promoting FSSC's services without making marketing trips, incurring additional expenses, or burdening Mission and BFS staff with excessive market messages. Possibilities for this include allowing SI to discuss the FSSC during routine BFS phone meetings with Missions, such as quarterly conference calls; placing a description of FSSC on internal

communication platforms like Developedia and MyUSAID; including information about the FSSC in routine electronic communications with Mission or BFS staff; or making short presentations to target audiences during regular meetings. Key to such approaches is a light touch—grafting concise marketing messages onto already scheduled or routine communications or events and imposing little incremental information burden on the target audiences.

Along these lines, SI believes that it has yet to reach its absorptive capacity in terms of managing a workflow of consultancy assignments. Specifically, it estimates that at any point it is managing 25-35 TOs but, with current resources, has the capacity to manage between 40 and 45 TOs.

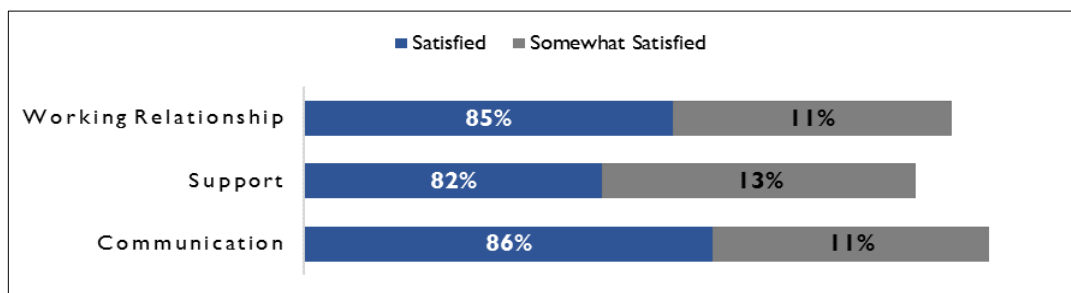
**A more detailed and useful TO classification typology is required to monitor trends in consultancy supply and demand.** The current TO classification typology used by SI is insufficient to track trends in the supply of and demand for FSSC consultancies. A more detailed classification typology is required that is useful for primary information users, particularly BFS and the mechanism’s implementing organization.

**Adoption of lessons learned has improved effectiveness and efficiency.** While not all of the lessons learned are relevant to the FSSC’s efficiency and effectiveness, many are, including: the construction and continual refinement of a large and diversified consultant database serviced by a core of dedicated recruitment staff; SI’s quick response to all requests for consultancies; and SI’s quick, responsive, and flexible backup support to consultants. SI is conscious of how these attributes make the FSSC more efficient and effective. Evidence indicates that SI institutionalized these attributes which, in turn, improved the FSSC’s effectiveness and efficiency.

#### 4.4.3 EQ 4c: How satisfied are the Feed the Future country Mission staff with FSSC services?

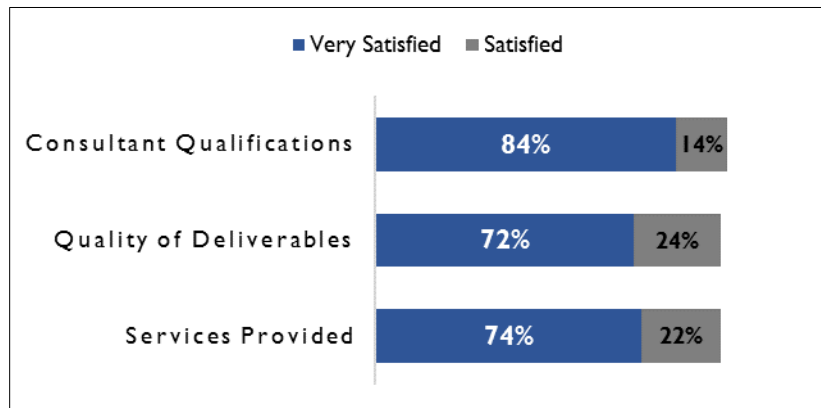
Over 90 percent of POCs were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with aspects of their interactions with the FSSC consultants, including the quality of their communication, working relationship, and support (Figure 11, below). The percentage of POCs who were satisfied with the overall quality of the consultant services was lower—although still high—at 62 percent, with another 28 percent (not shown) who were somewhat satisfied, for a total of 90 percent.

**Figure 11: POCs’ Satisfaction with FSSC Consultant Services (N=29)**



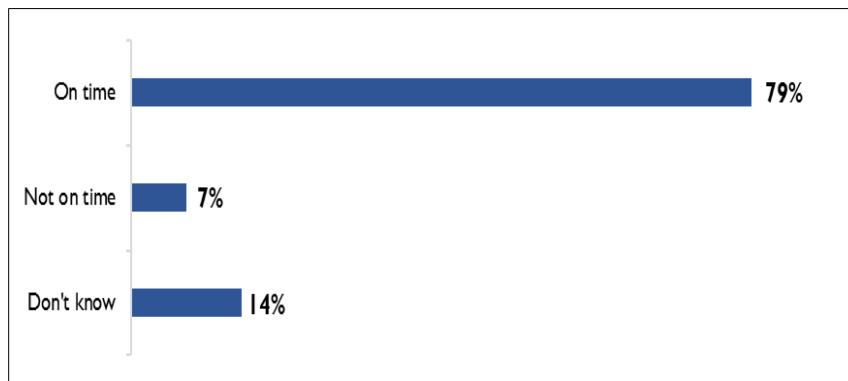
The results of the POC survey find confirmation in the 50 consultant feedback forms analyzed for this evaluation. As seen in Figure 12, 72-84 percent of the requesting organizations were very satisfied, and another 14-24 percent were satisfied with the services and quality of deliverables provided by their FSSC consultants and with the consultants’ qualifications.

**Figure 12: Requesting Organizations' Satisfaction with FSSC Consulting Services (Consultant Feedback Forms) (N=50)**



In KII, requesting organizations described deliverables as being timely, useful, and comprehensive. At the same time, requesting organizations said that the consultants were receptive to the advice, information, and assistance the requesting organization provided. The survey results support these qualitative findings. As seen in Figure 13, 80 percent of POCs affirmed that the consultants completed their assignment on time. This is compared to 7 percent who said they did not, and 14 percent who said they did not know. Another 93 percent of POCs agreed that the consultants were receptive to the requesting organization’s advice, information, and assistance.

**Figure 13: Organizations' Satisfaction with Consultants' Timeliness and Receptivity (N=29)**



*“Given the time constraints, she managed to meet with a lot of partners, read a lot of documents and synthesize them into a focused product as well as complete a PowerPoint. All this led to approval in record time of our concept paper.” – POC*

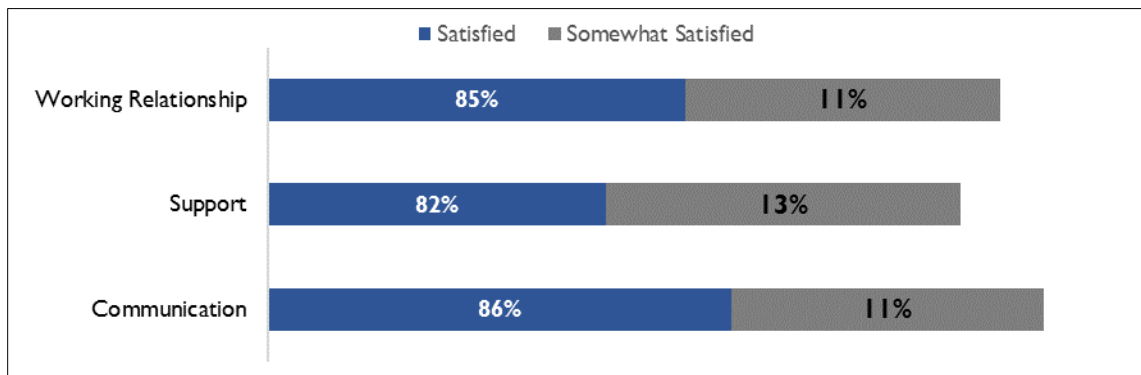
*“The strategy ... drafted was markedly better than virtually any other consultant document I had read, an impression noted by others. It reflected comprehensive thought and inquiry. It was also based on thorough economic analysis, yet efficiently explained for broader audiences. It was an enjoyable read – no small achievement for a technical paper.” – POC*

For their part, consultants reported similarly high levels of satisfaction with their relationships with the requesting organizations. As seen in Figure 14, over 80 percent of consultants were satisfied with this relationship, with the level of support the requesting organization provided,



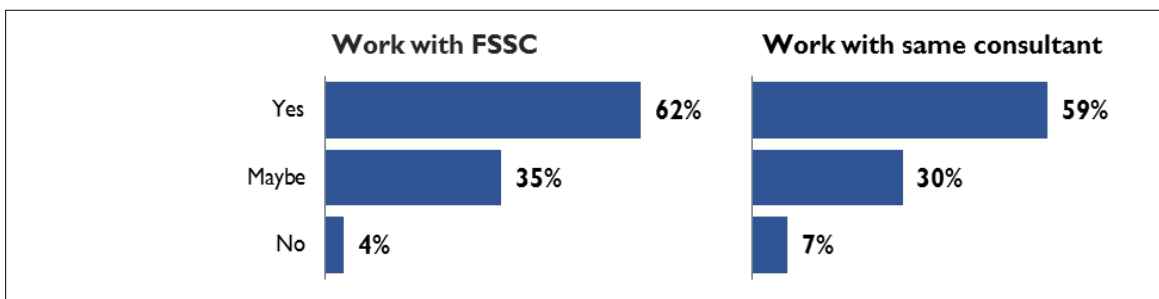
and with the quality of communication with the requesting organization. Another 11-13 percent of consultants were somewhat satisfied with each of the preceding.

**Figure 14: Consultants’ Satisfaction with the Requesting Organization (N=73)**



Most of the POCs and consultants interviewed said that they would work with FSSC consultants again in the future. The survey results in Figure 15 show that 62 percent of POCs would work with the FSSC again. Another 35 percent might work with the FSSC again. The answer changed slightly when POCs were asked whether they would use the same consultant(s) again in the future. In this case, 59 percent said yes, and 30 percent said maybe.

**Figure 15: POCs That Would Use the FSSC in Future (N=29)**



## CONCLUSIONS

**EQ 4:** Relationships between all four primary FSSC stakeholders are harmonious and productive, there are no significant challenges affecting the way FSSC operates. The FSSC’s existing administrative structure works well and allows the mechanism to operate efficiently, including sourcing well-qualified and experienced consultants who provide targeted consultancy services to requesting organizations. While there are ways to improve the FSSC’s administrative structure at the margins, there is no real demand among stakeholders to make significant changes—most are satisfied with the existing structure.

No systemic challenges exist within the FSSC that adversely affect the relationships among its primary stakeholder groups. Challenges that do exist are largely interpersonal issues not negatively reflective of any of the primary stakeholder groups’ performance. The efficient and effective operation of the FSSC, including how different stakeholders play their roles within it, have been key to maintaining good relationships and high levels of satisfaction among stakeholders, and they remain key to the continuance of this trend.

**EQ 4a:** SI is responsive to requests coming from the COR and requesting organizations (in the latter case via the COR), and it is responsive to the administrative and logistical needs of

consultants. Overall, SI provides a set of services to the other FSSC stakeholders that are quick, responsive, flexible, and of highly professional quality.

**EQ 4b:** In implementing the FSSC, SI has learned and internalized a set of lessons that have contributed to the high levels of efficiency and effectiveness achieved by the mechanism. Lessons include the importance of creating, maintaining, and refining a comprehensive consultant database supported by a dedicated and well-resourced recruitment team that responds rapidly to the COR's requests and provides quick, responsive, and flexible backup support to consultants. Another lesson learned is the need for a TO classification typology that is both detailed and useful for primary information users. A final lesson learned is the importance of acquiring feedback on consultant performance via direct interactions between the implementing and requesting organizations.

**EQ 4c:** Requesting organizations—including Feed the Future country Mission staff and BFS home office staff—are highly satisfied with the qualifications and quality of their FSSC consultants, including the consultants' receptiveness, communication skills, and their working relationship with the requesting organizations. Similarly, requesting organizations are highly satisfied with the quality of the technical services provided by their FSSC's consultants and find them to be timely, useful, and comprehensive. The large majority of requesting organizations would work with, or consider working with, the FSSC and specific FSSC consultant(s) again.

#### **4.5 EQ 5: TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE CONSULTANTS BEEN SATISFIED WITH FSSC ONBOARDING MONITORING, AND CLOSE OUT PROCEDURES?**

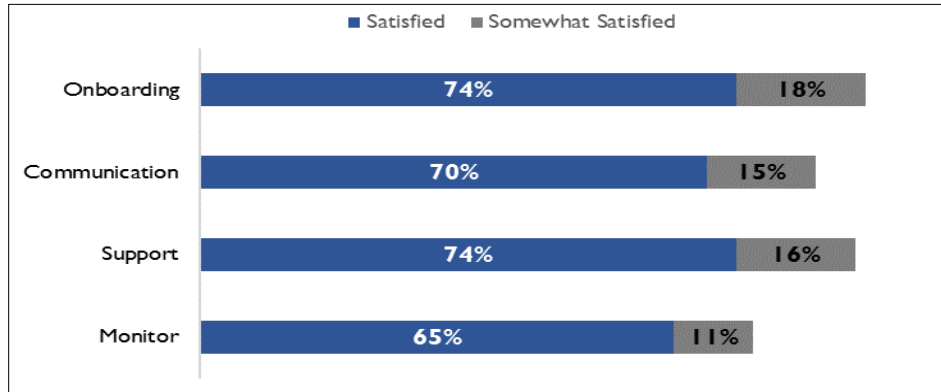
##### **FINDINGS**

The consultant survey asked a series of questions about consultant satisfaction with the services provided by SI. As seen in Figure 16, somewhere in the range of two-thirds to three-fourths of consultants were satisfied with SI in terms of its onboarding process, communications, support provided, and performance monitoring. Another 11-18 percent were somewhat satisfied with those same aspects of SI.

Note that the lower satisfaction score given to SI's monitoring performance in Figure 16 is perhaps understandable given that SI does not do much to monitor consultants' performance besides requiring them to submit monthly activity reports with their monthly invoices and performing occasional check-in emails and phone calls with consultants.

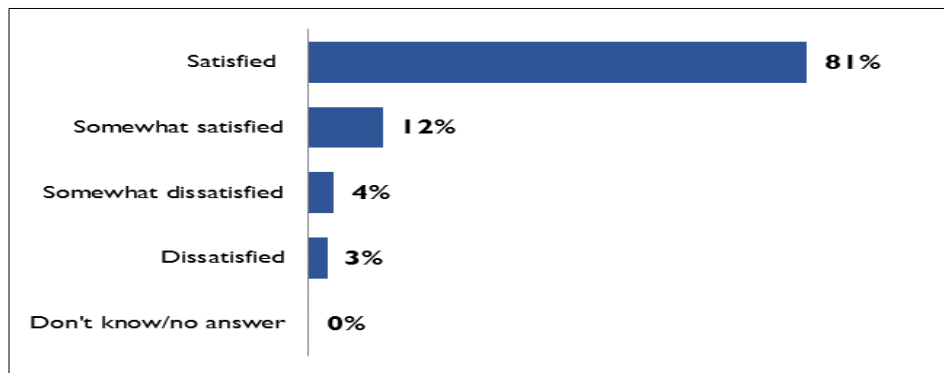
In general, SI prefers to be relatively hands-off once an assignment begins. It considers the consultants it works with to be "highly-seasoned" and, therefore, believes that they do not require much oversight. SI tends to get involved directly with consultants when problems arise but, even then, only regarding the administrative matters (e.g., logistics) falling under its contractually assigned duties. Thus, of the items in Figure 16, monitoring is easily the least visible of SI's services from the consultants' perspective.

**Figure 16: Consultants' Satisfaction with Social Impact (N=73)**



The large majority of consultants are satisfied with their FSSC consultancy. Over 81 percent of consultants expressed overall satisfaction with their FSSC consultancy, while another 12 percent said that they were somewhat satisfied (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Consultants' Overall Satisfaction with Their FSSC Consultancy (N=73)**



The large majority of consultants would work with the FSSC again in the future. All of the consultants interviewed, and 85 percent of the consultants responding to the survey said that they would work with the FSSC again in the future (Figure 18). Ten (10) percent of survey respondents said they might work with the FSSC again, and 6 percent said that they would not work with the FSSC again. Again, this finding is indicative of high levels of satisfaction among FSSC consultants, not only with SI, but also with their overall experience with the FSSC.

**Figure 18: Consultants That Would Work with The FSSC in the Future (N=73)**



#### 4.5.1 EQ 5a: Where have consultants faced challenges in working with FSSC?

Section 4b describes the challenges consultants faced working with the FSSC in response to EQ

2d. These challenges include: turnover among COR and SI staff, lack of clear communication from either SI or the requesting organization, inappropriate (too much or too little) LOE, relatively low daily rates, and delays getting security clearance at Missions and BFS. Again, no more than a handful of consultants mentioned any one of these challenges, and no challenge represents a systemic problem related to the FSSC or the FSSC administrative structure.

## CONCLUSIONS

**EQ5:** Consultants are highly satisfied with FSSC's onboarding processes and with the administrative and logistical services it provides consultants. They are largely satisfied with FSSC's monitoring processes. Consultants, moreover, are highly satisfied with their overall FSSC experience, and the large majority would work with the FSSC again in the future.

**EQ5a:** Consultants have faced few challenges working with the FSSC most of which are minor in nature and/or outside the control of the FSSC and none of which represent a systemic problem with the FSSC.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the findings and conclusions presented above, the ET offers BFS and SI the following recommendations to consider as ways to adjust FSSC's implementation for the remaining life of the activity, and to inform BFS' future programming decisions in food security support.

- FSSC should refine its reporting classification typology so as to better facilitate the monitoring and analysis of the demand for and supply of consultancies by technical sectors and technical skill areas. SI's current typology for assigning TOs into technical sectors is too broad to be of much practical use, and its typology for classifying consultants' technical skills is conceptually flawed in that it mixes technical sectors and technical skill areas. (The ET acknowledges that creating such typologies was not part of SI's contractual mandate.) BFS needs a coherent and conceptually clear set of typologies to associate TOs and consultants with technical sectors and technical skill areas. Defining technical sectors as GFSS IRs and CC-IRs, which was used in this report, is one possible typology, but others potentially exist. The follow-on mechanism to the FSSC should thus include a requirement that the implementing organization develop suitable classification typologies that convey useful information to BFS and the implementing organization demand and supply trends for FSSC consultancies according to both technical sectors and technical skill areas.
- In both the current mechanism, and any follow-on mechanism, BFS should maintain the basic administrative structure of the FSSC, including the existing division of responsibility and lines of communication. Certain stakeholders prefer to increase the flexibility of the current administrative structure to allow more direct interaction between SI and requesting organizations. However, there is no strong demand for making significant changes to the existing administrative structure, and any changes made should be incremental and leave the basic structure intact.
- BFS should consider allowing SI (or, more generally, the FSSC implementing organization) to market the FSSC to Missions, BFS home offices, and other potential users. Discouraging SI from marketing the FSSC is understandable (particularly in order to minimize contractor solicitations to Missions and BFS offices), but there are good reasons to reconsider this

policy. Marketing the FSSC would allow BFS to target the Feed the Future focus areas, countries, or regions more precisely. Moreover, SI has not reached its absorptive capacity and can accommodate a higher level of demand, while marketing services could help counteract periods of low demand and even out demand over time or target specific technical sectors or technical skills areas more effectively.

- BFS should decide whether to continue to offer capacity building services and bridge or pilot projects. If it does, it should publicize them or otherwise educate potential users about them.
- BFS should determine whether it is an institutional priority to target USAID Missions for FSSC consultancy services relative to BFS home offices. The current (approximate) 50/50 split between consultancies at Missions and BFS home offices is acceptable if one is either indifferent to the mix or views them as more or less equal priorities. However, if there exists an institutional priority for Missions over BFS home offices, then BFS needs a targeting strategy to achieve this objective.
- BFS should determine whether it is an institutional priority to recruit and field local consultants. If it is an institutional priority, then BFS needs a recruitment and deployment strategy to achieve this objective.
- The follow-on mechanism to the FSSC should include an explicit responsibility for the implementing organization to develop and implement a formal methodology for collecting feedback on consultants from requesting organizations. Although SI has taken on this role under the current FSSC, this role was not formalized until well into the FSSC life cycle, and much potentially useful information was lost. BFS should further investigate potential, unobtrusive methods for incentivizing the requesting organizations to provide this feedback. This might be an occasion, for example, where encouraging more interaction between the implementing and requesting organizations makes sense.

# ANNEXES

**ANNEX A: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**



**PEEL TECHNICAL ORDER**  
**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**A) Identifying Information**

1. Project/Activity Title: Food Security Service Center (FSSC)
2. Award Number: OAA-C-13-00126
3. Award Dates: 10/1/2014 – 9/30/2018
4. Project/Activity Funding: \$26,606,513.50
5. Implementing Organization(s): Social Impact
6. Project/Activity COR/AOR: Kristopher Gorham – COR, Sarah Polaski – A/COR

**B) Development Context**

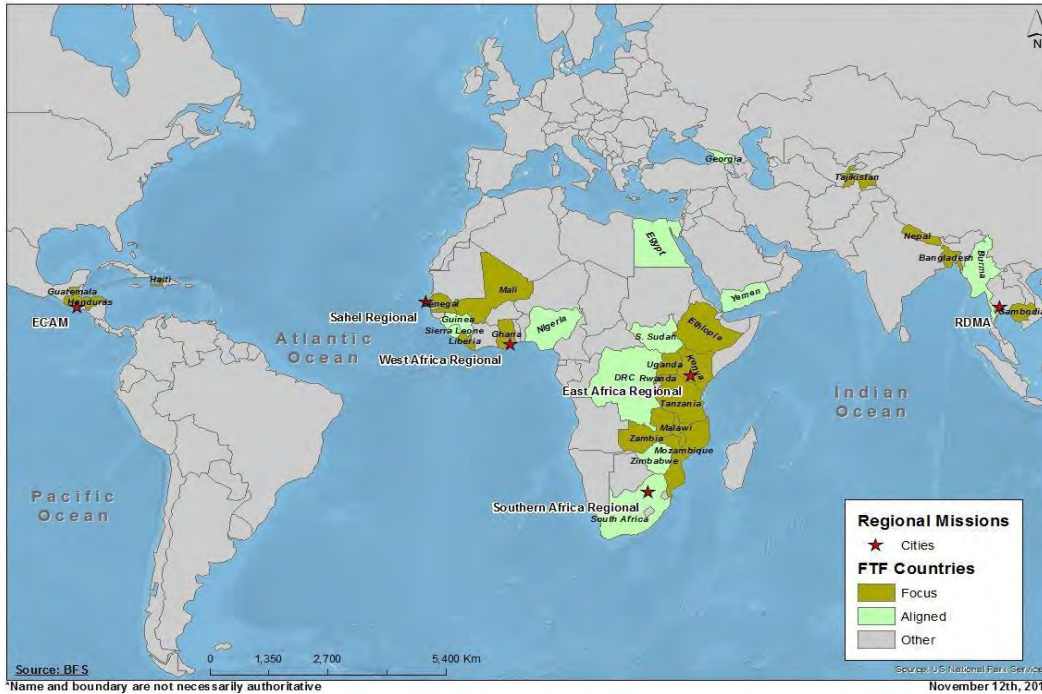
**a. Problem or Opportunity Addressed by the Project/Activity Being Evaluated**

Feed the Future (Feed the Future), the U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative, renews our commitment to invest in sustainably reducing hunger and poverty worldwide. As the lead, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Food Security (BFS) is tasked with the responsibility for the U.S. Government of carrying out the President’s vision to sustainably reduce global hunger and poverty.

Through the provision of a broad, integrated, and knowledge-driven suite of expert technical services, the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) Service Center (Service Center/FSSC) Contract complements existing BFS support to provide USAID Missions, USAID/Washington, other USG operating units, and host country counterparts, targeted support to move the President’s agenda forward. The contract enables BFS to provide short- and longer-term expertise for state-of-the-art food security support services and analyses; capacity building, and expert analysis and integration of crosscutting issues that are critical to the success of Feed the Future and also provide a mechanism for bridge programming and pilot innovations.

**b. Target Areas and Groups**

The project is designed to strengthen Feed the Future programming in Washington and in Feed the Future Focus, Aligned, and Regional Missions (see map).



### C) Intended Results of the Project/Activity Being Evaluated

The FSSC addresses Feed the Future programmatic issues related to improving food security, including: agricultural development (including value chains, inputs, etc.), gender integration, improved nutrition, climate smart agriculture, policy and building resilience. Technical support enhances Feed the Future program impact and ensures programmatic continuity during transition to longer-term project implementation while innovative pilots demonstrate best practices for improving food security.

### D) Approach and Implementation

The FSSC provides a broad range of integrated and knowledge-driven technical services to Feed the Future focus and aligned Missions, host countries (through capacity building), and BFS, including: 1) state-of-the-art food security support services with a focus on program and project design and management; 2) expert analyses; 3) capacity building, and 4) bridging support and/or small scale pilots. Please see two supplementary materials for additional information about FSSC including the FSSC program brochure and FY 2016 FSSC Annual Report.

## II. EVALUATION RATIONALE

### A) Evaluation Purpose

This **mid-term evaluation** will help to inform potential contract modifications to improve project effectiveness. It will also be used as a “lessons learned” document to inform potential new awards that may have similar service components.

### B) Audience and Intended Uses

The audience of the evaluation report will be the USAID/BFS FSSC staff, specifically the COR team and the implementing partner. An Executive Summary and recommendations

will be provided to the BFS Country Strategy and Implementation (CSI) Office Director. USAID will use the report to make changes to its current strategy of providing support to the central level and to share lessons learned with other stakeholders. Additionally, the implementing partner and its subcontractors will learn about their strengths and weaknesses and adjust project implementation accordingly for the remainder of the life of project. It is expected that the Regional Missions and the Feed the Future Programming Office in D.C. will have the opportunity to discuss how the FSSC project assisted them and how this type of project could better assist them in the future to meet needs.

## **C) Evaluation Questions**

### **I. Accountability**

1. To what extent is the FSSC meeting its intended goals and objectives?
  - a. What technical sector has the FSSC been most engaged and why (i.e. nutrition, gender, ag. productivity)?
2. To what extent are FSSC services and Technical order deliverables under the four technical service areas (i.e. support services, expert analyses, capacity building, bridge and pilot support) meeting Operating Unit's needs and expectations?
  - a. Is the FSSC engaging consultants with the right mix of knowledge and experience to successfully complete each assignment in a timely manner?

### **II. Operations**

1. What have been the strengths of the FSSC's operational approach in providing technical assistance?
  - a. To what extent have ICT solutions been utilized to serve client needs effectively (recruitment, consultant database, etc.)?

### **III. Customer Service**

1. How effective has the relationship between the FSSC, Operating Units, and the COR/Activity Manager been since the inception of the project? What does each stakeholder see as critical for maintaining an effective relationship? How have stakeholders resolved challenges?
  - a. How responsive has the FSSC been to Operating Unit and COR/Activity Manager requests?
  - b. What challenges has the FSSC faced in fulfilling Operating Unit and the COR/Activity Manager requests?
2. To what extent have consultants been satisfied with FSSC on boarding, monitoring, and closeout procedures?
  - a. Where have consultants faced challenges in working with the FSSC?

## **Recommendations**

1. What potential solutions exist to increase efficiency of the FSSC while reducing the workload of the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR)?

2. What lessons learned can be gleaned from the FSSC project for future implementation of service contracts?
  - a. How can the FSSC experience be used to better predict and understand Feed the Future short- and longer-term staffing/support/expertise needs?
  - b. Are there other needs (in D.C. or at Missions) that the FSSC should aim to address in the future?
3. How can learning from individual FSSC assignments be aggregated to contribute to broader knowledge sharing or capacity building efforts?

### **III. TIMEFRAME & TRAVEL**

#### **A) Timeframe**

March 1, 2017 – May 31, 2017

#### **B) Travel**

No travel anticipated.

### **IV. DELIVERABLES & DESIGN**

#### **A) Deliverables**

As specified in the PEEL contract

### **V. TEAM COMPOSITION**

Two members: an evaluation advisor and a technical advisor.

#### **Advisor team member (LOE: 35 Days):**

The FSSC Advisor Team Member should have a post graduate degree in a development field, monitoring and evaluation, or a relevant discipline. S/he should have at least 10 years' experience in organizational development and/or managing consultant or recruitment programs. The candidate would also have demonstrated the following: a) the capacity to conduct program evaluation; b) an understanding of USAID's foreign assistance goals, and its particular objectives related to agricultural development and food security, and c) the ability to analyze issues and formulate concrete recommendations orally and in writing.

#### **Technical team member (LOE: 35 Days):**

The FSSC Technical Team Member should have a post graduate degree in a development field, preferably related to agriculture. S/he should have at least 5 years' experience with capacity building and organizational development in developing countries. The candidate would also have demonstrated the following: a) the capacity to conduct program evaluation; b) experience in effectively conducting outreach and dissemination to development practitioners and/or the private sector, and c) the ability to analyze issues and formulate concrete recommendations orally and in writing.

## **ANNEX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. FSSC, Annual Report: October 2013-September 2014, November 2014.
2. FSSC, Annual Report: October 2014-September 2015, November 2015.
3. FSSC, Annual Report: October 2015-September 2016, December 2016.
4. FSSC, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, March 2014.
5. FSSC, Standard Operating Procedure: Recruitment for Paid Consultants, Volunteers and USG Employees for Short- and Long-Term Technical Assistance, April 2014.
6. USAID, Request for Proposals for Bureau for Food Security Service Center, April 2013.
7. USAID Office of Acquisition and Assistance, Award/Contract, September 2013.

**ANNEX C: SUB-QUESTIONS DROPPED FROM THE EVALUATION AND REASON FOR DROPPING THEM**



<b>Sub-Question Dropped from Original List of Sub-Questions</b>	<b>Reason for Dropping</b>
1d: Were the consultant services designed to augment Mission capacity and program quality? How did they achieve those goals /aims?	This sub-question was considered redundant to original sub-question 1e: Is FSSC contributing to capacity building at USAID Feed the Future Missions and with their implementing partners?
2c: Are there any gaps where FSSC could improve services to meet Missions' needs?	This sub-question was considered redundant to original sub-question 2d: What reasons or challenges (if any) hindered FSSC in providing services?
2e: What reasons or challenges caused requests not to be approved by the COR?	There are been no requests that have not been approved by the COR.
2f: What reasons or challenges caused projects to be withdrawn?	While projects were withdrawn, the reasons had little to nothing to do with the FSSC and thus not relevant to it.
2c: Which ICT solutions has SI developed to manage FSSC projects?	Aside from the consultant database, which is covered extensively in sub-question 3b, there were no other ICT solutions of note relevant to the FSSC.
3d: To what extent to SI and its consultants work with the staff of Feed the Future country Missions?	SI does not work with country Missions and only interacts directly with the COR and consultants. Thus, this question is not relevant.
3e: To what extent are the Feed the Future country Missions aware of the FSSC program?	The evaluation methodology does not allow the measurement of this sub-question.
5b: What changes have been introduced to improve the implementation efficiency of FSSC assignments?	No changes of note were introduced to the FSSC to improve implementation efficiency.
<b>Sub-Question Added</b>	<b>Reason for Adding</b>
2c: How are FSSC consultant services being utilized?	Added so as to report consultancy utilization statistics from the consultant technical order log.

**ANNEX D: COUNTRIES WHERE FSSC CONSULTANTS HAVE WORKED**

Country	Number of Assignments	Region	Type of Country
Afghanistan	3	Central Asia	Non-Feed the Future
Bangladesh	4	Southwest Asia	Feed the Future Focus
Benin	1	West Africa	Non-Feed the Future
Burma	1	Southeast Asia	Feed the Future Aligned
Cambodia	6	Southeast Asia	Feed the Future Focus
Democratic Republic of Congo	1	Central Africa	Feed the Future Aligned
East Africa Regional	4	East Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Ethiopia	6	Horn of Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Guatemala	1	LAC	Feed the Future Focus
Haiti	5	LAC	Feed the Future Focus
Honduras	2	LAC	Feed the Future Focus
India	1	Southwest Asia	Non-Feed the Future
Kenya	10	East Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Liberia	1	West Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Malawi	4	Southern Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Mozambique	1	Southern Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Nepal	2	Southwest Asia	Feed the Future Focus
Nigeria	2	West Africa	Feed the Future Aligned
Rwanda	4	East Africa	Feed the Future Focus
S. Africa	1	Southern Africa	Non-Feed the Future
Senegal	5	West Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Sierra Leone	1	West Africa	Non-Feed the Future
Tajikistan	1	Central Asia	Feed the Future Focus
Tanzania	2	East Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Thailand	1	Southeast Asia	Non-Feed the Future
Uganda	2	East Africa	Feed the Future Focus

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Assignments</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Type of Country</b>
Ukraine	5	Former USSR	Non-Feed the Future
Washington, D.C.	75	N/A	N/A
Washington, D.C./Afghanistan	1	Central Asia	Non-Feed the Future
West Africa Regional (Includes Ghana & Mali)	2	West Africa	Feed the Future Focus
Zambia	1	Southern Africa	Feed the Future Focus
<b>Total Assignment/Countries</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>Total Feed the Future Focus Countries</b>			<b>19</b>
<b>Total Feed the Future Aligned Countries</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Total Non-Feed the Future Countries</b>			<b>7</b>

**ANNEX E: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

<b>Position/Location of Consultancy</b>
<b>BFS</b>
COR (Current)
COR (Former)
COR (Former)
<b>FSSC/Social Impact</b>
Chief of Party
Deputy Chief of Party
<b>Points of Contact</b>
USAID Thailand
USAID Rwanda
USAID India
USAID Bangladesh
USAID Guatemala
USAID Nigeria
USAID/Bureau for Food Security
OAG Senior Agricultural Advisor
BFS/ARP and BFS/CSI
BFS/CSI
<b>Consultants</b>
Kenya, BFS
BFS
East Africa
BFS
Sierra Leone, Zambia, East Africa
BFS
Sierra Leone
BFS
BFS
Ukraine
BFS, BFS
BFS, BFS
Sierra Leone, BFS
Kenya, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, BFS
Guinea-Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, Senegal
BFS
BFS

**ANNEX F: POINT OF CONTACT WBS QUESTIONNAIRE**



## FSSC Evaluation Introduction Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

The USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) Food Security Service Center (FSSC) is undergoing a performance evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of FSSC operations in delivering services. Its findings will inform USAID in its decision-making and lead to recommendations for current and future activities.

The FSSC performance evaluation is being conducted under the Feed the Future Global Program Evaluation for Effectiveness and Learning (PEEL) contract managed by Mendez England & Associates (ME&A). You have been identified as someone who has served as a USAID Point of Contact for one or more FSSC consultants since 2014. As such, we are writing to ask you to complete a brief on-line survey about your experience working with the FSSC and the FSSC consultant(s). The survey should take you no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information you provide in the survey or any in-depth interview will be kept completely confidential. You may access the survey by clicking on the link below. If clicking on the link does not work, you can also cut the link and paste it into your web browser.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WZVNTKW>

For more information on this evaluation, you may contact Catherine Maldonado, BFS Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, at [cmaldonado@usaid.gov](mailto:cmaldonado@usaid.gov), or Gary Woller, Lead FSSC Evaluator for ME&A, at [gwoller@engl.com](mailto:gwoller@engl.com).

Sincerely,

This survey asks a series of questions about your experience working with consultants contracted by the USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) Food Security Service Center (FSSC), which is implemented by Social Impact. Your answers will be used to inform USAID programming decisions, both related to improving the FSSC and USAID’s future food security support services.

Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that you have read the above information and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Agree → Go to A.1 Screening Questions

Disagree → END

**Screening Question:**

A.1 Since 2014, have you worked with consultants contracted by the FSSC?

Yes -----→ Go to Q1.

No -----→ Go to A.2

Don’t know/No answer -----→ Go to A.2

A.2. Have you heard of the FSSC?

Yes

No -----→ Go to A4.

Don’t know/No answer -----→ Go to A4

A.3 Did you know that FSSC provides services and technical support USAID agencies, County Missions, host country counterparts and other entities working in the area of food security?

Yes

No

A.4. Would you like to know more about the services and technical support that FSSC can provide?

Yes

No

You can find more information about the FSSC by clicking [here](#) or by writing to Social Impact at the following email address: [info@socialimpact.com](mailto:info@socialimpact.com).

**End Thank you for taking part in this survey.**

Q1. Which of the following best describes your organization?

- Bureau of Food Security
- USAID Mission
- USAID Washington
- Other USAID operating agency
- Host country counterpart
- Other please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/No answer

Q2. On how many assignments have you worked with FSSC consultants since 2014?

- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three
- Don't know/No answer

**If you have worked with FSSC consultants on more than one assignment since 2014, please answer the following questions based on the most recent assignment.**

Q3. Where did you work with the FSSC consultant? *Select all that apply.*

- Washington, D.C.
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Guatemala
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mozambique
- Nepal
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Tajikistan

- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Other please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. In what year did you work with the FSSC consultant? (If the consulting assignment extended over more than one year, indicate the year in which it began.)

- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- Don't know/No answer

Q5. How long was the FSSC consulting assignment? **If the assignment is ongoing, please indicate the expected duration.**

- Less than one month
- 1 to less than 3 months
- 3 to less than 6 months
- 6 to less than 12 months
- More than 12 months
- Don't know/No answer

Q6. What were the technical service areas of the FSSC consulting assignment? *Select all that apply.*

- Support services
- Expert analysis
- Capacity building
- Bridge and pilot support
- Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/No answer

Q7. What were the focus areas of the FSSC consulting assignment? *Select all that apply.*

- Gender integration

- Inclusive agriculture sector growth
- Improved nutrition
- Private sector engagement
- Climate-smart development
- Research
- Capacity Building
- Policy
- Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/No answer

Q8. How many consultants provided the consulting services?

- One
- Two
- Three or more
- Don't know/No answer

Q9. How important were the technical and other assistance provided by the consultant(s) to your team's performance? For example, how important was it in terms of your team's ability to carry out its core functions, achieve its intended results, achieve sustainability, etc.?

- Important
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Not important
- Don't know/No answer

Q10. How would you rate the quality of your communication with the consultant(s)?

- Good
- Somewhat good
- Somewhat bad
- Bad
- Don't know/No answer

- Q11. How would you rate your working relationship with the consultant(s)?
- Good
  - Somewhat good
  - Somewhat bad
  - Bad
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q12. How receptive were the consultant(s) to the advice, information and other assistance that you provided them?
- Receptive
  - Somewhat receptive
  - Somewhat unreceptive
  - Unreceptive
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q13. To what extent did your team adopt the consultant(s)' advice or recommendations?
- Adopted all of them
  - Adopted some of them
  - Adopted few of them
  - Adopted none or almost none of them
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q14. Did the consultant services build capacity among your team?
- Yes
  - No, this kind of assignment could not have led to capacity building
  - No, but this kind of assignment could have led to capacity building
  - Don't know/No answer
- Please explain (if answered No)
- Q15. In your opinion, will your team require additional external technical or other support in the areas where you received the FSSC consulting services?
- Yes, a great deal
  - Yes, some

- No
  - Don't know/No answer
- Please explain

Q16. How would you rate the quality of your communication with the FSSC/Social Impact for this assignment?

- Good
- Somewhat good
- Somewhat bad
- Bad
- Don't know/No answer

Q17. To what extent did the experience and skills of the consultant(s) match your needs for this assignment?

- Matched well
- Matched for the most part
- Did not match well
- Did not match at all
- Don't know/No answer

Q18. To what extent did the consulting services you received fulfill your needs for this assignment?

- Fulfilled well
- Fulfilled for the most part
- Did not fulfill well
- Did not fulfill at all
- Don't know/No answer

Q19. Please rate your satisfaction with the overall quality of the services provided by the FSSC consultant(s).

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied

- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Don't know/No answer

Q20. Please rate your satisfaction with the quality of deliverables provided by the FSSC consultant(s).

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Don't know/No answer

Q21. Did the consultant(s) perform the assignment on schedule within the requested timeframe?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/No answer

Q22. Would you use the same consultant(s) in the future for other assignments?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Don't know/No answer

Please explain (if answered No)

Q23. Would you use FSSC consulting services in the future for other assignments?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Don't know/No answer

Please explain (if answered No)



Q24. Please provide your suggestions for improving the services and support provided by the FSSC.

Q25. Please provide any additional comments and additional information about your experience with FSSC that you wish to share with us.

Q26. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to answer

**Thank you for taking part in this survey.**

**ANNEX G: POINT OF CONTACT WBS QUESTIONNAIRE**

## FSSC Evaluation Introduction Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

The USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) Food Security Service Center (FSSC) is undergoing a performance evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of FSSC operations in delivering services. Its findings will inform USAID in its decision-making and lead to recommendations for current and future activities.

The FSSC performance evaluation is being conducted under the Feed the Future Global Program Evaluation for Effectiveness and Learning (PEEL) contract managed by Mendez England & Associates (ME&A). You have been identified as a consultant who has completed one or more consulting assignments with the FSSC since 2014. As such, we are writing to ask you to complete a brief on-line survey about your experience working with the FSSC. The survey should take you no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information you provide in the survey or any in-depth interview will be kept completely confidential. You may access the survey by clicking on the link below. If clicking on the link does not work, you can also cut the link and paste it into your web browser.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VV6RY8VX>

Somebody from ME&A may also follow-up with you to ask if you would be willing to participate in an approximately one-hour telephone interview to discuss your experience with the FSSC at greater length. Although your participation in the survey and any in-depth interview is completely voluntary, we appreciate your participation, as it is crucial for the success of this evaluation.

For more information on this evaluation, you may contact Catherine Maldonado, BFS Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (*contact information*), or Gary Woller, Lead FSSC Evaluator for ME&A. (*contact information*).

Sincerely,

This survey asks a series of questions about your experience as a consultant for the USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) Food Security Service Center (FSSC), which is implemented by Social Impact. Your answers will be used to inform USAID programming decisions, both related to improving the FSSC and USAID's future food security support services.

Your responses to the survey will be kept strictly confidential. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that you have read the above information and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

- Agree → Go to A.1 Screening Questions
- Disagree → END

**Screening Question:**

A.1 Have you worked on a consulting assignment for the Food Security Service Center (FSSC)?

- Yes -----→ Go to Q1
- No -----→ Go to A.2
- Don't know/No answer -----→ Go to A.2

A.2 Has Social Impact ever contacted you about a possible consulting assignment with the FSSC?

- Yes -----→ Go to A.3
- No -----→ END
- Don't know/No answer → END

A.3 What happened after Social Impact contacted you about a possible consulting assignment with the FSSC?

- I decided not to do the assignment
- Social Impact decided not to hire me
- The assignment was cancelled
- Don't know/No answer
- Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**End Thank you for taking part in this survey.**

Q1. Since 2014, on how many FSSC assignments have you worked?

- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three

**If you have worked on more than one FSSC assignment since 2014, please answer the following questions based on your most recent assignment.**

Q2. Which of the following best describes the client (e.g., activity, project, organization, operating unit, etc.) you assisted for your FSSC consulting assignment?

- Bureau of Food Security
- USAID Mission
- USAID Washington
- Other USAID operating unit
- Host country counterpart
- Other please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/No answer

Q3. In what year did you work on your FSSC consulting assignment? (If the assignment extended over more than one year, indicate the year in which it began.)

- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- Don't know/No answer

Q4. In which locations did you undertake your FSSC consulting assignment? *Select all that apply.*

- Washington, D.C.
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Guatemala

- Haiti
- Honduras
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mozambique
- Nepal
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Tajikistan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Other please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Q5. How long was the FSSC consulting assignment? **If your assignment is ongoing, please indicate the expected duration.**

- Less than one month
- 1 to less than 3 months
- 3 to less than 6 months
- 6 to less than 12 months
- More than 12 months
- Don't know/No answer

Q6. What were the technical service areas of your FSSC consulting assignment? *Select all that apply.*

- Support services
- Expert analysis
- Capacity building
- Bridge and pilot support
- Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/No answer

- Q7. What were the focus areas of your FSSC consulting assignment? *Select all that apply.*
- Gender integration
  - Inclusive agriculture sector growth
  - Improved nutrition
  - Private sector engagement
  - Climate-smart development
  - Research
  - Capacity Building
  - Policy
  - Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q8. How closely did your assignment end up matching the Scope of Work?
- Matched well
  - Matched for the most part
  - Did not match very well
  - Did not match at all
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q9. How clear were your duties, expectations, deliverables, etc. for this consulting assignment?
- Clear
  - Somewhat clear
  - Somewhat unclear
  - Unclear
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q10. How important were the technical and other assistance you provided to the client? For example, how important was it in terms of the client's ability to carry out its core functions, achieve its intended results, achieve sustainability, etc.?
- Important
  - Somewhat important
  - Somewhat unimportant

- Unimportant
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q11. How would you rate the quality of your communication with the client for this assignment?
- Good
  - Somewhat good
  - Somewhat bad
  - Bad
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q12. How satisfied were you with the support you received from the client to carry out this assignment?
- Satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Somewhat dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q13. How would you rate your working relationship with the client for this assignment?
- Good
  - Somewhat good
  - Somewhat bad
  - Bad
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q14. To what extent did the client adopt your advice or recommendations?
- Adopted all of them
  - Adopted most of them
  - Adopted some of them
  - Adopted few or none of them
  - Don't know/No answer
- Q15. Did your consultant services build capacity among the client's staff?



- Yes
  - No, this kind of assignment could not have led to capacity building
  - No, but this kind of assignment could have led to capacity building
- Please explain (if answered No)

Q16. In your opinion, does the client require additional external technical or other support in the areas where you assisted it?

- Yes, a great deal
  - Yes, some
  - No
  - Don't know/No answer
- Please explain

Q17. Overall, how satisfied do you think the client was with your consulting services?

- Satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Somewhat dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Don't know/No answer
- Please explain

Q18. How satisfied were you with the Social Impact/FSSC on boarding process?

- Satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Somewhat unsatisfied
  - Unsatisfied
  - Don't know/No answer
- Please explain

Q19. How would you rate the quality of your communication with Social Impact/FSSC for this assignment?

- Good
- Somewhat good

- Somewhat bad
- Bad
- Don't know/No answer  
Please explain

Q20. How satisfied were you with the support that you received from Social Impact/FSSC to carry out this assignment?

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Don't know/No answer  
Please explain

Q21. To what extent did your experience and skills match what was needed for this assignment?

- Matched well
- Matched for the most part
- Did not match well
- Did not match at all
- Don't know/No answer

Q22. To what extent did the consulting services you provided match the client's actual needs?

- Matched well
- Matched for the most part
- Did not match well
- Did not match at all
- Don't know/No answer

Q23. How satisfied were you with the process used by Social Impact/FSSC to monitor your work on the assignment?

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied

- Unsatisfied
- Don't know/No answer  
Please explain

Q24. How satisfied were you with the process used by Social Impact/FSSC to close out the assignment?

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Don't know/No answer  
Please explain

Q25. Overall, how satisfied were you with this consulting assignment?

- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Don't know/No answer  
Please explain

Q26. Would you agree to work on another FSSC assignment?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No  
Please explain (if answered No or Maybe)

Q27. What suggestions do you have for improving the services and support that the FSSC provides to its clients?

Q28. Please provide comments and additional information about your FSSC assignment that you wish to share with us.

Q29. How many years of work experience do you have?

- Less than 3 years

- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- Over 25 years

Q30. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree or higher

Q31. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

Q32. Which category below includes your age?

- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

Q33. Are you a former USAID employee?

- Yes

- No
- Prefer not to answer

**Thank you for taking part in this survey.**

## **ANNEX H: WEB-BASED SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

## Points of Contact (N=29)

### Organization

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
BFS	13	44.8%
USAID Mission	13	44.8%
USAID Washington	3	10.3%
Total	29	100%

### Number of FSSC Assignments at Organization

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
One	10	34.5%
Two	10	34.5%
Three	2	6.9%
More than three	7	21.1%
Total	29	100%

### Country of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Washington, D.C.	14	48.3%
Bangladesh	2	6.9%
Cambodia	3	10.3%
Ethiopia	1	3.5%
Haiti	1	3.5%
Kenya	3	10.3%
Malawi	2	6.9%
Rwanda	3	10.3%
Senegal	3	10.3%
Other	3	10.3%
Total	29	100%

### Year of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
2014	4	13.8%
2015	4	13.8%
2016	13	44.8%
2017	8	27.6%
Total	29	100%

### Length of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Less than one month	3	10.3%
1 to less than 3 months	10	24.5%
3 to less than 6 months	8	27.6%
6 to less than 12 months	8	27.6%
Total	29	100%

## Gender

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Male	9	53.6%
Female	15	32.1%
Prefer not to answer	4	14.3%
Total	28	100%

## Consultants (N=73)

### Number of FSSC Consultancy Assignments

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
One	45	62.5%
Two	14	19.4%
Three	8	11.1%
More than three	5	7.0%
Total	72	100%

### Year of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
2014	16	21.9%
2015	17	23.3%
2016	28	38.4%
2017	12	16.4%
Total	73	100%

### Country of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Washington, D.C.	36	49.3%
Bangladesh	2	2.7%
Cambodia	3	4.1%
Ethiopia	8	11.0%
Ghana	5	6.9%
Guatemala	3	4.1%
Haiti	3	5.1%
Honduras	2	2.7%
Kenya	12	16.4%
Liberia	1	1.4%
Malawi	5	6.9%
Mali	1	1.4%
Mozambique	1	1.4%
Nepal	6	8.2%
Rwanda	5	6.9%
Senegal	5	6.9%
Tajikistan	2	2.7%
Tanzania	4	5.5%
Uganda	3	4.1%
Zambia	2	2.7%
Other	18	24.7%
Total	73	100%



### Length of FSSC Consultancy Assignment

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Less than one month	10	13.7%
1 to less than 3 months	26	38.4%
3 to less than 6 months	11	15.1%
6 to less than 12 months	17	23.3%
More than 12 months	6	8.2%
Don't know	1	1.4%
Total	73	100%

### Years of Experience

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Less than 3 years	0	0.0%
3-5 years	1	1.4%
6-10 years	5	6.9%
11-15 years	3	4.1%
16-20 years	6	8.2%
21-25 years	10	13.7%
Over 25 years	48	65.8%
Total	73	100%

### Level of Schooling Completed

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	6	8.2%
Master's degree	36	49.3%
Doctorate degree or higher	31	42.5%
Total	73	100%

### Gender

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Male	45	61.6%
Female	28	38.4%
Total	73	100%

### Age

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
21-29	1	1.4%
30-39	6	8.2%
40-49	7	9.6%
50-59	19	26.0%
60 or older	40	54.8%
Total	73	100%

### Former USAID Employee

Number of Assignments	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	38.4%
No	45	61.6%
Total	73	100%

## **ANNEX I: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDES**

## **INTERVIEW GUIDES**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE: BFS/FSSC COR**

#### **Background information of Key Informant**

- Interviewee name:
- Date of interview:
- Start Time of Interview:
- End Time of Interview:

**Q1. What is the FSSC? What is its purpose?**

**Q2. How does the FSSC operate?**

**Q4. How has the FSSC performed?**

**Q3. How has Social Impact played its role in the FSSC?**

**Q5. What would you recommend to improve the FSSC?**

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOCIAL IMPACT**

### **Background information of Key Informant**

- Interviewee name:
- Date of interview:
- Start Time of Interview:
- End Time of Interview:

**Q1. What is the FSSC? What is its purpose?**

**Q2. How does the FSSC operate?**

**Q3. Where do consultants work?**

**Q4. What interactions do you have with consultants the assignment? What kind of follow-up do you do?**

**Q5. What would you recommend to improve the FSSC?**

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE: POINTS OF CONTACT**

### **Background information of Key Informant**

- Interviewee name:
- Date of interview:
- Start Time of Interview:
- End Time of Interview:

**Q1. Tell me how you came to work with the FSSC.**

- a) How did you find out about the FSSC?**
- b) Why did you choose the FSSC over other possible alternatives?**

**Q2. Describe the process that you followed when making the request for FSSC services and support.**

**Q3. Describe the service you received from the FSSC consultant.**

**Q4. What would you do to improve the FSSC?**

**Q5. Will you ask FSSC for further support and technical services in the future if needed?**

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE: CONSULTANTS**

### **Background information of Key Informant**

- Interviewee name:
- Date of interview:
- Start Time of Interview:
- End Time of Interview:

**Q1. Tell me how you came to work with the FSSC.**

**Q2. Describe the process that you followed when making the request for FSSC services and support.**

**Q3. Describe the consulting services you provided.**

**Q4. What is your view of the FSSC?**

**Q5. What would you do to improve the FSSC?**

**Q6. Would you do another assignment for the FSSC in the future?**

**Thank you very much for your time.**

**ANNEX J: CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNING SOWS INTO TECHNICAL SECTORS AND TECHNICAL SKILL AREAS**



## Technical Sectors

IR/CC-IR	Description	Assignment Criteria
<b>Objective 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth</b>		
IR1	Strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on strengthening the broader enabling environment, supporting efforts of small-scale producers and SMEs to better connect and participate in their respective value chains, and diversifying food production. Examples include: ag and food systems research, education, and extension; capacity development to private firms to improve performance; support to identify, adapt, and scale strategies and technologies; improving the business environment via strengthening government capacity to develop and enforce regulations; strengthening relationships within value chains; commercializing value chain functions; investing in digital technologies to improve market info and efficiency; increasing women, youth, and other marginalized groups' access to market resources; increasing access to finance, and strengthening government capacity to develop and manage the agriculture policy environment.
IR2	Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on strengthening small-scale producers' and SMEs' connections/linkages to local, regional, and international end markets, including by improving rural-urban linkages and the flow of people, information, and finances, and promoting countries' capacities for efficient markets and good market governance to participate international trade. Examples include: advancing efforts to improve market infrastructure; increasing access to infrastructure and services; capacity building for producer associations; linking agribusinesses to end markets; capacity building and technical assistance to support international food, animal, and plant health and safety standards, traceability, and regional standard harmonization; capacity building and technical assistance for organizations to increase availability of ag statistics and market analysis; implementing regional and multi-lateral agreements on technical barriers to trade, SPS standards, and trade facilitation; adopting biosafety laws and regulations, and advancing availability of timely market information.
IR3	Increased employment and entrepreneurship	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on activities aimed to equip small producers, SMES, and others with the ability to produce goods and services, add value to them, and generate jobs in the process. Examples include: lending facilities to improve access to finance for SMEs; vocational and technical training for agribusiness/SME managers and employees; analysis of potential for different activities to generate employment across and beyond value chains, particularly for women, landless workers, and rural/urban households without access to land and resources, and training in entrepreneurship, leadership, and workforce readiness, especially for youth and women.
IR4	Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches (also applies to Objective 2)	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on supporting producers' and policymakers' efforts to identify and adopt climate-smart approaches to food production, better confront the challenges posed by diseases and pests to food supplies, sustainably increasing ag productivity and incomes, adapting and building resilience to climate change, and reducing or removing ag greenhouse gas emissions. Examples include: developing more productive and resilient crops, aquaculture and animals; supporting local development of inputs systems, such as seeds, to provide affordable, locally relevant inputs; extension services for production and post-harvest practices; enhanced surveillance, detection, and timely response plant, animal, and foodborne diseases; utilization of climate services to construct evidence of climate change effects; research on and promotion of policies and production practices contributing to climate-smart approach, and access to irrigation systems and water management.

IR/CC-IR	Description	Assignment Criteria
<b>Objective 2: Strengthened Resilience among People and Systems</b>		
IR5	Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on strengthening resilience related to resources and strategies that enable individuals, households, communities, systems, and governments to anticipate, reduce, mitigate, and manage potential and realized risks. Examples include: strengthening capacity of communities and governments to reduce and manage disaster and other risks, including early warning and preparedness and policy actions; increasing access to and adoption of crops, livestock, hazard, etc. insurance products; increasing access to financial services to mitigate and manage risks; increasing asset accumulation and management; increasing access to and use of weather forecasting, hydraulic modeling and prediction, and early warning systems; strengthening formal and informal safety nets, and increasing use of climate-smart approaches and technologies.
IR6	Improved adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on strengthening resilience that is focused on resources and strategies that enable proactive and informed responses to realized risk, recovery to shocks and stresses that do not undermine current and future well-being, and adaptation to longer-term trends and changes in risk. Examples include: using climate smart approaches in IR 4; increasing access to and use of climate and other information to inform planning and investment; expanding and diversifying livelihood and economic opportunities, including those with different risk profiles; preparing men, women, and youth to take up new income opportunities in and outside of agriculture, including linked to migration; increasing confidence to adapt to changing risk environments through exposure to effective adaptation; strengthening formal and informal safety nets; improving human capital through investment in health, nutrition, education, and workforce development, and improving access to and management of communal natural resources.
<b>Objective 3: A Well-Nourished Population, Especially among Women and Children</b>		
IR7	Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on (supply side) increasing availability and expand commercial production of diverse and nutrient-rich plant and animal foods; support market actors, systems, and infrastructure to ensure availability, and (demand side) leverage strategies to increased demand for nutritious foods; promote importance of adequate diets for women and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices, and promote importance of healthy, balanced diets. Examples include: supporting nutrition-sensitive ag knowledge and info system services; promoting production of biofortified crops and food products; promoting good ag practices and food processing to prevent contamination and disease; building household and community capacity to preserve and process seasonal foods for year-round consumption; expanding sustainable early child development and school meal programs; promoting optimal infant and young child feeding; promoting women's empowered decision making and engaging men to support family nutrition; supporting nutrition research; improving regulatory and policy environment to increase availability of evidence-based info on food and dietary guidance systems, and providing support to strengthen national food safety regulatory frameworks to improve food safety.

IR/CC-IR	Description	Assignment Criteria
IR8	Increased use of direct nutrition intervention and services	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on interventions related to maternal and child nutritional status, particularly lactating women and children under two, including reducing stunting, wasting, and child deaths. Examples include: maternal micronutrient supplements; calcium supplementation to mothers; maternal balanced energy protein supplements; universal salt iodization; promoting breastfeeding; complementary feeding education in food secure populations and additional complementary food supplements for insecure populations; Vitamin A supplementation; preventative zinc supplements; management of moderate and severe acute malnutrition; multi-sectoral efforts to reduce anemia, and promoting dietary diversity.
IR9	More hygienic household and community environments	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on improving access to clean and safe drinking water, sanitation services, and overall hygiene (WASH), food and on promoting agriculture practices that are safe and environmentally sound as well as supportive of the efficient, sustained production of increased quantities of nutritious foods. Examples include: improving access to basic and safely managed water services; improving access to base and safely managed sanitation services; promoting safe food handling and handwashing; promoting safe storage and use of ag inputs; promoting construction of livestock housing; locating irrigation systems to prevent contamination of drinking water sources, and researching investments to better understand how hygienic environments affect nutritional status.
IR7	Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets	These are SOWs in which the technical services focus on (supply side) increasing availability and expand commercial production of diverse and nutrient-rich plant and animal foods; support market actors, systems, and infrastructure to ensure availability, and (demand side) leverage strategies to increased demand for nutritious foods; promote importance of adequate diets for women and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices, and promote importance of healthy, balanced diets. Examples include: supporting nutrition-sensitive ag knowledge and info system services; promoting production of biofortified crops and food products; promoting good ag practices and food processing to prevent contamination and disease; building household and community capacity to preserve and process seasonal foods for year-round consumption; expanding sustainable early child development and school meal programs; promoting optimal infant and young child feeding; promoting women's empowered decision making and engaging men to support family nutrition; supporting nutrition research; improving regulatory and policy environment to increase availability of evidence-based info on food and dietary guidance systems, and providing support to strengthen national food safety regulatory frameworks to improve food safety.
NA	Not Applicable	These are SOWs that did not specify any particular IR or cross-cutting IR and one(s) could not be reasonably inferred from the SOW content.
<b>Cross-Cutting IRs</b>		
CC-IRI	Strengthened global commitment to investing in food security	These are SOWs in which the technical services involve strengthening the global commitment to investing in food security through high-level, sustained diplomatic engagement with partner governments, multi-lateral institutions, and regional forums. Example include: exercising global leadership in multi-lateral forums; engaging with development partners and country governments bilaterally and through regional organizations; guiding and shaping the priorities and approaches of international organizations and networks, and financing and investment promotion mechanisms.

IR/CC-IR	Description	Assignment Criteria
CC-IR2	Improved climate risk, land, marine, and their natural resource management	These are SOWS in which the technical services involve integrating agricultural development system into existing wildlife and environmental conservation efforts in ways that help food insecure populations living in proximity to designated protected areas (e.g., national parks, wildlife areas, and marine protected areas) produce food without harming these ecosystems. Examples include: integrating improved practices and technologies that help advance food security and environmental conservation; enhancing climate resilience through practices the conserve water and increase water-holding soil capacity; managing crops, trees, livestock, aquaculture, and wild fish to sustain productivity, manage risk, and conserve key ecosystems and resources; advancing information systems for rural communities on integrating climate resilience objectives supporting food security; building capacity to manage agricultural production to sustain productivity and preserve ecosystem services; advancing approach to food security and integrate resilience and economic and environmental goals in global forums; fostering partnerships with private sector to respond to climate and weather-related impacts, and investing in environmentally sustainable and productivity enhancing technologies and applied science.
CC-IR3	Increased gender equality and female empowerment	These are SOWs in which the technical services involve engaging women, men, communities, and institutions to regularly identify and address gendered needs and barriers throughout design, implementation, and MEL and to promote women's large-scale, active participation in all components of food and agricultural systems and leverage women's and men's engagement in nutrition approaches. Examples include: helping women increase access to inputs, extension, services, skills, resource management capacity, networking, finance, etc.; designing and implementing gender-sensitive technologies, services, and marketing support; promoting positive norms and practices; promoting women's role and entrepreneurs and leaders; promoting tenure rights for women, small-scale producers, and communities; promoting women's leadership in decision-making and managing/governing land, marine, and natural resources; engaging men and women in practices to promote child nutrition, and identifying and addressing gender differentiated needs and roles.
CC-IR4	Increased youth empowerment and livelihoods	These are SOWs in which the technical services involve integrating youth issues, particularly adolescent girls and young women, into programming and policy. Example include: addressing barriers and risks that affect youth's participation in and benefits from ag production; providing ag education, extension, and applied research to build youth's technical skills; using technologies to engage youth, with emphasis on digital technologies; providing ag business development and entrepreneur skills training; developing youth-friendly nutrition services and programming, and developing business models and sources of capital to promote financial inclusion, business mentorships, and business advisory services.

<b>IR/CC-IR</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Assignment Criteria</b>
CC-IR5	More effective governance, policy, and institutions	These are SOWs in which the technical services involve strengthening governance, policy, and institutions at the global, regional, national, and local level and supporting the transformation of food and ag systems to scale and sustain investments and impact, with a focus on a prioritized policy agenda, institutional architecture, and mutual accountability. Examples include: building capacity for inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based dialogue among governments, civil society, and private sector; facilitating policy changes; strengthening land, marine, and resource tenure, rights, and systems; helping countries and regions to strengthen institutions and institutional processes in areas such as national agricultural, food security, and nutrition investment plans; building capacity to improve food safety policies, guidelines, and enforcement; building capacity for policy and data analysis in ministries, planning offices, and research institutions, and supporting country-owned accountability processes, including communication and collaboration, among local stakeholders.
CC-IR6	Improved human, organizational, and system performance	These are SOWs in which the technical services involve seeking to improve the capacity, capability, performance, and effectiveness of multiple actors across the system, including small-scale producers; producer cooperatives and association integrated extension; education, and research systems; financial institutions, and national and local governments. Examples include: strengthening organizational actors and building a critical mass of qualified people in relevant organizations; piloting and scaling capacity development tools; coaching and mentoring; peer-to-peer learning; custom training; shared accountability, risk, and responsibility with local partners; cash on delivery for benchmarked accomplishments; strategic partnering, and leadership development.

### Technical Skill Areas

<b>Technical Skill Area</b>	<b>Assignment Criteria</b>
Communications	These are SOWs in which the main task was to provide communications services, such as meeting/conference/round table preparation or facilitation, preparation of communications documents, producing after-event summaries/documents, facilitating communication between different groups, etc.
Crosscutting Technical Support Services	These are SOWs in which the consultant performed different tasks of a technical nature that cut across multiple technical service areas without a single, dominant technical service area.
Expert Assessment or Analysis	These are SOWs in which the main task was to undertake an assessment or analysis, including such things as cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analyses, desk reviews, document or literature reviews, studies, non-scientific research, data or information analyses or syntheses, etc.
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	These are SOWs in which the main task was to support BFS or Missions to design or implement MEL functions. Examples include: common Results Framework, performance monitoring process standard performance indicators, evaluation approach using impact and performance evaluations, learning agenda that prioritizes key evidence gaps, focus on strengthening target country data systems.
Project Design	These are SOWs in which the main task was to support the project/activity design process, such as producing a project appraisal document (PAD), solicitation, procurement, RFA, RFP, etc.
Program Management /Administrative Services	These are SOWs in which the main task was to perform management or administrative functions related to running a program, project, activity, initiative, etc., such as filling temporary gaps in management or administration or supporting existing management or administration.

<b>Technical Skill Area</b>	<b>Assignment Criteria</b>
Strategic Planning	These are SOWs in which the main task was to participate in strategic, business, financial, etc. planning activities related to informing future directions in Feed the Future or other USAID/BFS/Mission programming.
Technical Writing	These are SOWs in the main task was to write a document or documents. Although many SOWs involve the writing/preparation of documents, to qualify as a technical writing SOW, the document preparation must be the primary purpose/main focus of the SOW.

**ANNEX K: DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF SOW ASSIGNMENTS INTO GFSS IRS AND CC-IRS**

<b>IR/CC-IR</b>	<b>Number</b>
IR1	27
IR2	13
IR3	1
IR4	16
IR5	14
IR6	2
IR7	9
IR8	5
IR9	0
CC IR1	1
CC IR2	0
CC IR3	6
CC IR4	1
CC IR5	3
CC IR6	1
IR1, IR4	1
IR1, IR7	1
IR1, CC IR1	1
IR1, CC IR5	3
IR1, CC IR6	1
IR2, IR7, CC IR1	1
IR3, CC IR4	1
IR4, CC IR2	1
IR4, CC IR3, CC IR4	2
IR5, CC IR5	1
IR7, IR9	2
IR7, CC IR3	5
IR8, IR9	1
IR9, CC IR2	1
CC IR4, CC IR6	1
Not Applicable	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>