

Defunded Aid Programs Are Asked by Trump Administration to Prove Their Value, on a Scale of 1 to 5. By [Stephanie Nolen](#), *New York Times*, March 6, 2025

A week after terminating thousands of contracts, the administration has sent questionnaires to those programs asking how their work benefits the U.S. national interest.

Last week, the Trump administration terminated nearly all of the United States' foreign aid contracts after telling a federal court that its review of aid programs had concluded, and it had shut down those found not to be in the national interest.

But over the last few days, many of those same programs have received a questionnaire asking them for the first time to detail what their projects do (or did) and how that work aligns with national interests.

The survey, obtained by The New York Times, is titled "Foreign Assistance Review." Some agencies received it with instructions stating that data collected will "support the next stage of the administration's foreign assistance review." The deadlines given for returning the surveys range from March 7 to March 17.

Many of the projects under scrutiny have already fired their staff and closed their doors, because they have received no federal funds since the review process ostensibly began. President Trump issued an executive order freezing aid on Jan. 20, pending a review. Within some organizations, there are no staff members left to complete the survey.

The distribution of the survey is the latest twist in an eight-week-long roller coaster ride for aid organizations. The chaos began with a stop-work order for employees and contractors of the United States Agency for International Development and a freezing of all funds, including reimbursements for hundreds of millions of dollars already spent. That was followed by a process allowing organizations that provided lifesaving medical treatment and food aid to seek a waiver allowing them to continue their work. Then came terminations, last Wednesday, of more than 5,000 projects and programs. Since then, some projects have been told they were fully restored, and others that they are restored only to the terms of their original waiver, which runs out next month. Almost none have seen any of the funds they are owed unfrozen.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) that the administration must heed a lower court's order to release frozen foreign aid. However, that ruling came after thousands of projects had already been bankrupted by the eight-week-long freeze. The new questionnaire had been sent to many organizations before the Supreme Court ruling. The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

"This whole process is baffling: first we were asked to restart lifesaving programs, but we haven't been given money to do it, and now we're being asked to review programs which were, in theory, previously reviewed and already terminated," said Christy Delafield, a

spokeswoman for FHI 360, an organization providing health and humanitarian aid in 60 countries.

The new surveys ask grant recipients — including thousands of emergency food aid, malaria control and tuberculosis treatment projects — more than 25 questions on how their projects contribute to U.S. national interests. It also provides a checklist that includes some of the Trump administration’s top political goals, including stopping illegal immigration and defending “against gender ideology.”

It allows answers of up to 150 characters (about 35 words), and awards from 1 to 5 points based on how well a project serves each goal.

Among the survey questions, quoted verbatim below:

- Can you confirm that this is not a DEI project and that there are no DEI elements of that project?
- Can you confirm this is not a climate or “environmental justice” project or include such elements?
- How much does this project directly impact efforts to counter malign influence, including China?
- What impact does this project have on limiting the flow of fentanyl, synthetic drugs, and precursor chemicals into the U. S.?
- Does this project directly impact efforts to strengthen U.S. supply chains or secure rare earth minerals?
- Does this project directly contribute to limiting illegal immigration or strengthening U.S. border security?

In a sworn statement on Feb. 26 responding to a lawsuit filed by aid organizations, Peter Marocco, the State Department official who has been overseeing the cuts to U.S.A.I.D., stated that “the process for individually reviewing each outstanding U.S.A.I.D. obligation has concluded” and that Secretary of State Marco Rubio had “now made a final decision with respect to each award.” He indicated that approximately 297 State Department contracts (rather than grants) were still to be reviewed.

In a March 5 filing, the government said it had “nearly completed an individualized review of existing contracts and grants” and that “nearly all” of the State Department and U.S.A.I.D.’s foreign aid funding had been “individually reviewed.”

In a report on compliance with a court order submitted March 6, the government said that “most of” the contracts “have been individually reviewed.”

David A. Super, a professor of law at Georgetown University, said that by repeatedly saying they had conducted an individualized review when there was little evidence they had done so, state department staff members were “exposing themselves to contempt of court and their attorneys to serious consequences.”

While it was not a requirement that the review involved collecting information from grant recipients, by sending out this questionnaire, the government has implied that it does require the information, he added.

“Here they are saying that to know whether your activities support the foreign policy of the United States, we need to know these things, but we didn’t know these things when we performed our review,” he said.

The survey was sent to projects that were funded through 32 different U.S.A.I.D. divisions, including the Bureau of Global Health, the Bureau for Food Security, the Office of the Chief Economist and the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance. Karoun Demirjian contributed reporting.

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