

The USAID-State merger – sensible, strategic, or stupid? By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 11 Apr 2025

A HALF-BAKED PLAN?



I often wonder if we're still going to call it USAID once the agency is folded into the State Department. After all, the Trump administration **wants to “abolish” USAID as an independent entity**. And barring some unforeseen congressional uprising or judicial upset, odds are the subsummation is a done deal.

But is it a smart deal? A stupid one? Or simply a rushed deal, albeit with some strategic value?

A recent Devex Pro briefing [tangled with these questions](#) following the [administration's release of its plan](#) to merge USAID's functions and programs into the State Department. Among other things, USAID's bureaus for humanitarian assistance and global health would be **“realigned” to relevant State Department entities** — and all other [USAID](#) programs that duplicate the work of the State Department will be eliminated.

While providing some long-sought-after answers, the plan also raised a slew of concerns and questions.

For one thing, opponents argue that **diplomacy and development are different skill sets**. In fact, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 made it clear that USAID needed more independence from the [State Department](#).

“The functions of the two organizations of diplomacy and development were so different,

and having people in the same office created tensions, lots of disagreements, and inability for each to do their operations properly that they ended that experiment,” says panelist George Ingram of the [Brookings Institution](#).

Others, though, see the rationale behind the move but **question its implementation**.

Richard Crespin, a senior associate at the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) and CEO of CollaborateUp, says many in the Trump administration felt like foreign policy and foreign assistance were out of sync — and they needed to be brought back into alignment to serve America’s interests. But he adds that the “how” of the merger has yet to be formulated.

“It was overly simplistic,” says Marcia Wong, the former deputy assistant administrator of USAID’s humanitarian assistance bureau, of the plan. “I don't know if that gives me any better confidence that this quote, merger — or what I call subsuming — of USAID is going to be a well-thought-through and executed process.”

It also begs the question whether this “merger” is ultimately **just a front to eliminate U.S. foreign assistance entirely**, my colleague Elissa Miolene writes.

“We don’t know what they’re going to do with these programs that have been canceled and whether or not any of them are going to be revived or re-competed,” says Ingram. “There’s just no indication as to what the plan is.”

Read: [USAID's merger with the State Department — the pros, cons, and questions](#)