

MCC board approves projects, terminates others at much-anticipated meeting. By Adva Saldinger, Devex, 22 Aug 2025

The first board meeting of the Trump administration brought some answers about the agency's fate. The MCC board also approved the list of countries that meet the criteria to be considered for MCC assistance. The Millennium Challenge Corporation's board held its first meeting of the Trump administration on Thursday, where it voted on the proposed terminations of some of the agency's programs and approved new projects.

All eyes were on the much-anticipated meeting where administration officials would weigh in on the fate of the agency and its programs after months of questions about its future.

"MCC is an important tool to advance President Trump's America First policy agenda," Christopher Landau, deputy secretary of state and acting chair of MCC's board, said in a statement after the meeting. "With a focus on return on investment, an evidence-based approach, and a strict five-year implementation timeline, MCC ensures U.S. taxpayer dollars advance U.S. interests."

Landau's comments signal that the Trump administration sees value in the agency, a different message than what MCC staff received in April when they were told that the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, had informed senior leadership about a significant reduction in the agency's programs and staff. The news sparked fears that it would be shuttered, but a behind-the-scenes campaign seemed to stall that effort, according to sources.

When the foreign aid review was completed last month, the agency survived, but more than half of its programs were recommended for termination. Staff at the agency were informed at the end of the foreign assistance review that programs in Cape Verde, Gambia, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, the Philippines, Senegal, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, and Zambia would be recommended for termination.

Thursday's meeting was the board's opportunity to weigh in on those recommendations. The board seems to have terminated some programs, though it is unclear which ones. In a statement, MCC said it would announce additional information related to those actions after the required congressional notifications.

The board also conducted some new business. It selected Fiji, "a close ally and partner on shared priorities" that "represents an emerging economic hub for American businesses," as eligible to develop a compact, the large grants that the agency provides, according to a statement. It approved Tonga for a threshold program — a smaller grant program aimed at helping countries that don't yet pass MCC's stringent scorecard to be eligible for its compacts. The investments "underscore the United States' enduring commitment to the Pacific," the statement from MCC said.

This signals that MCC will take on new projects in addition to continuing existing initiatives. And while they are aligned with U.S. strategic interests, "let's hope they don't come at the expense of MCC programs that advance our strategic interests in Africa and Southeast Asia," Nancy Lee, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, told Devex.

The board also approved the list of countries that meet the criteria to be considered for MCC assistance and discussed the selection criteria and methodology report, which outlines how MCC evaluates country policy performance in its country eligibility determinations.