The board of directors of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) met via teleconference on May 4, 2021. Board Chair Eddy Arriola was joined by members Kelly Ryan, Jack Vaughn, and Luis A. Viada. Advisory Council Chair Ambassador Watson also participated in the teleconference. IAF President and Chief Executive Officer Paloma Adams-Allen was joined by members of the management team, including, Lesley Duncan, chief operating officer; Daniel Friedman, managing director for government and external affairs; Marko Dolan, interim managing director for programs; Gaby Boyer, interim deputy managing director for programs; Raquel Gomes, managing director for learning and impact; Aswathi Zachariah, general counsel; Marcia Cota, partnerships advisor; Amber Forbes, senior advisor; and Karen Vargas, board liaison.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Arriola congratulated the IAF management team for their continued good work managing the agency amid the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple crises facing the Hemisphere, and the Administration transition. He also thanked his fellow board colleagues for staying active and engaged. The Sunshine Act rules for the meeting were provided by the IAF’s general counsel, Aswathi Zachariah, and Arriola called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. No members of the public were present.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the Nov. 09, 2020 board meeting were approved and adopted by a unanimous voice vote.

III. PRESIDENT’S REMARKS

The IAF President and CEO Paloma Adams-Allen provided opening remarks on the state of the IAF, which focused on three areas: (1) People; (2) Funding; and (3) Engagement.

People. Adams-Allen recapped the IAF’s staffing numbers, noting that the agency is now up to 49 full time equivalents (FTEs) from 45 last year, and that we added a contractor based in Barbados to support our portfolio in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean region. She also provided toplines from the 2020 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM FEVS) results, reporting that the IAF has high morale and employee satisfaction. She further noted that 100 percent of survey respondents agreed the agency is successful in accomplishing its mission and 93 percent reported that they recognize how their work advances agency goals. The IAF’s Employee Engagement Index rose to 77 percent (up from 70 percent last year) surpassing the government-wide average of 72 percent. Additional high marks included:

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1 The IAF had an 84 percent response rate in the FY20 OPM FEVS.
• **Leaders Lead** up to 81% (from 70%) well ahead of government-wide average of 62%
• **Global Satisfaction** up to 79% (from 65%) surpassing government-wide average of 69%
• **Workforce Representation** 80% of respondents feel their supervisor is committed to a workforce representative of all segments of society (up 20 points from last year)

The 2020 OPM FEVS underscored a persistent challenge reported by IAF employees with respect to “reasonableness of workload” with only 51 percent of respondents citing that their workload is reasonable. Adams-Allen noted that the management team continues to provide resources to help alleviate workloads including by hiring additional staff and affording flexibility as appropriate. Furthermore, the agency supports internal opportunities for growth, promotion, and details, of note the IAF is (1) shifting the junior program assistant position from a term limited status to a permanent status with growth potential that builds on grants management skills; (2) posting at least three positions that internal candidates have the opportunity to apply for; and (3) arranging for IAF staff to participate in relevant detail opportunities, including the latest call from the Department of Health and Human Services to support the efforts to process and support unaccompanied children crossing the U.S. southern border.

**Funding.** In fiscal year 2021 (FY21), the IAF is managing a total budget of $47.4 million, which includes a $38 million appropriation plus carryover and recovered funds from last fiscal year. In addition, the IAF is still holding $10 million in Social Progress Trust Fund monies. The President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Discretionary Funding Request to Congress will likely include a $38 million level funding request for the IAF. We are currently preparing our Congressional Budget Justification and other materials to accompany the President’s Budget Request. We are also fielding dozens of appropriations related briefing requests and have been informed that Representative Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, plans to lead an appropriation letter calling for $50 million funding for the IAF.

**Engagement.** The IAF is participating in several interagency working groups to support and advance whole-government priorities, including on (1) addressing root causes of irregular migration in North and Central America; (2) global food security strategy; (3) women’s empowerment; (4) responding to the Venezuela crisis; (5) partnership engagement; and (6) advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We also expect coordination related to the Summit of the Americas process to ramp up in the future.

Furthermore, the IAF continues to track, monitor, and respond to the Executive Orders (EO) and Presidential Memoranda issued by the Biden-Harris Administration. We are also collaborating with agencies across the federal government to maximize information-sharing to prepare deliverables under relevant executive orders, including:

1. EO 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government;

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2 The IAF’s FY21 budget includes $9.4 million in carryforward and recovered funds from FY20, plus a $38 million appropriation.
3 In April, new House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) chair Representative Greg Meeks (D-NY) and senior HFAC member Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) put forward a congressional letter supporting a total of $50 million in funding for the IAF in FY22: a base appropriation of $40 million, along with a $10 million interagency transfer for work in the Caribbean, Haiti, Colombia, and with Venezuelan migrants. The letter was signed by 26 members of Congress representing both parties.
(2) EO 13988, Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation;
(3) Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World; and
(4) Memorandum on Revitalizing America’s Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships.

Moreover, members of IAF management team are participating in ongoing government-wide discussions to keep abreast of the evolving guidance vis-à-vis returning to physical work spaces. We continue to track the latest local orders and public safety recommendations and engage with staff to ensure our eventual Return to the Office Plan (RTTOP) is informed by the latest guidance and recommendations. We anticipate these efforts to intensify in the coming months. And all the while, we continue to explore and implement best practices for working from home, remote work processes, staff morale, and virtual grantmaking, portfolio management including verification and auditing.

Adams-Allen invited Daniel Friedman, managing director for external and government affairs, to brief on a new congressional initiative to promote meaningful, direct exchange of knowledge between U.S.-based Native American and Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous communities. He noted that Congress designated $500,000 in the FY21 Appropriations Bill for the IAF to advance this work. To this end the IAF created a cross-office working group to further the initiative’s goals and propose a work plan and timeline. We anticipate partnering with other agencies to advance the work particularly those with experience working with Native American communities in the United States. The IAF is currently consulting stakeholders, including current and former grantee partners who represent Indigenous communities, and are similarly engaging in consultations with Native American tribal nations in the United States.

A brief question and answer session ensued where members asked clarifying questions. In response to a question from Board Member Kelly Ryan, Adams-Allen provided a brief overview of the IAF’s engagement in the Interagency Policy Committee on Modernizing and Expanding Federal Government Partnership Engagement. Noting that she and P3 Advisor Marcia Cota had recently briefed the National Security Council’s (NSC) Director of Partnership and Global Engagement Jim Thompson. The Board congratulated the IAF’s terrific work and expressed support for how the management team is addressing the various pressures on the agency (from responding to multiple crises to navigating an Administration transition).

IV. MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATES

Next, the management team provided updates on the status of IAF grantmaking, launching the next strategic planning process, and operations.

A. Programs
Marko Dolan, interim managing director for programs, noted that contextually FY21 looks much like FY20 in that the region continues to be ravaged by (1) struggling economies, (2) the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and (3) the shrinking space for civil society. The IAF program’s team posture remains unchanged, with all travel temporarily paused for DC and field-based staff. As such, we continue to implement an all-encompassing virtual approach for grantmaking and portfolio management. The streamlined digital process and the time gained from not traveling this year, has resulted in a significant decrease in the average number of days it takes for grants and amendments to existing grants to move through our internal review and approval cycle, which in turn has accelerated disbursements to grantee organizations. While we appreciate that we have gained efficiencies and have not sacrificed quality with this virtual approach, we are cognizant of some persistent challenges: (1) the amount of time and energy redirected to coordination and tasks that have replaced more efficient in-person meetings (vetting, pre-selection, etc.); (2) poor connectivity in remote areas or underserved communities where we concentrate our work; and (3) loss of in-person touch/interaction, which is particularly hard given our high-touch model.

Dolan provided a status report on the IAF’s current grant portfolio and pipeline. The IAF’s active portfolio of grants stands at 334 projects in 26 countries, valued at USD$233.6 million of which $103.9 million is IAF funding and $129.7 million is additional counterpart mobilized by grantees for their projects. Foundation representatives are currently reviewing over 500 proposals received since the start of the fiscal year and are on pace to fund approximately 200 new grants and amendments to grants in FY21. He also shared an infographic detailing the number and dollar value of funding actions initiated, under review, and awarded.

Next, Gaby Boyer, interim deputy director for programs, briefed on the IAF Partnership for Disaster Recovery and Resilience, which kicked off in February to support the medium-term recovery and long-term resilience efforts led by local organizations operating in communities most severely impacted by Hurricanes Eta and Iota. The IAF has already provided $1.56 million to 18 grantees in Honduras and Nicaragua for disaster recovery activities. The IAF also invited other development organizations to join us as partners for phase two of the partnership when we will issue a joint call for proposals to extend support to new community-led and civil society organizations. To date, Tinker Foundation, the Mott Foundation, and International Community Foundation have expressed interest in joining and negotiations are in progress with other foundations in Mexico, Guatemala, and the United States.

Board members congratulated the IAF’s program team for their excellent work and applauded their efforts with the new partnership. There was a short break before returning to the next topic.

**B. Strategic Plan Process**

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4 Initiated - technical review and due diligence vetting of proposals (98 funding actions / $17.47M); In Review - funding actions undergoing reviews and approvals (35 funding actions / $53M); Awarded - funding actions that have been approved and obligated (55 funding actions / $6.77M).
Raquel Gomes, managing director for learning and impact, noted that the IAF’s current Strategic Plan runs through FY22 and that we are kicking off the process for the next five-year (2023 - 2027) Strategic Plan. In September, we will present the IAF’s new Strategic Goals and FY23 Annual Performance Goals alongside our budget submission. To start, we are examining the context and USG priorities in the region and their implications for our work and plan. Headlines from the region point to the pandemic exacerbating poverty, inequality, and gender violence; populist governments closing spaces for civil society; and more frequent natural disasters washing away years of investments. And when we look at the Administration’s priorities for international development, we see three themes rising to the top: (1) combating climate change; (2) revitalizing democratic values; and (3) addressing root causes of irregular migration in Central America. Given the transnational challenges facing the region, our new Strategic Plan will likely need to explicitly address community responses to COVID, chronic violence, climate change, and closing spaces for civil society, all of which reinforce and are reinforced by persistent/rising inequities.

Gomes shared how the IAF will engage the Board in developing the new Strategic Plan, highlighting key touchpoints for board engagement:

- May (today) - share the emerging context
- July - share draft Strategic Goals for feedback and thoughts
- Early September - share Strategic Goals and Annual Performance Plan for review and approval

Board member, Lou Viada, stated the importance of assessing the agency’s strengths and opportunities for continued improvement in strategic planning and inquired as to whether the agency would conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Gomes noted that various teams in the agency are currently conducting SWOT analyses and that we look forward to sharing those results and engaging in further discussion with the Board in the forthcoming months. Chief Operating Officer Lesley Duncan added that the Board conducted a SWOT analysis during the last strategic planning process (2015) and that she would share that background as a basis for the upcoming discussion. Later in the meeting, Viada added that it would be helpful to have a mapping of IAF internal and external stakeholders and about the possibility of engaging in a poll to understand their perceptions about what the agency does very well and where the growth opportunities exist for us.

C. Operations

Duncan briefed on the IAF’s return to office planning. She reiterated that IAF staff remain in mandatory telework status with maximum flexibility and that there has been no official international travel since March 2020. Moreover, members of the management team are participating in ongoing government-wide discussions to keep abreast of the evolving official guidance vis-à-vis returning to physical work spaces. The IAF is also tracking the latest local orders and public safety recommendations from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that will impact telework flexibilities, reopening of businesses, and return to workplaces. She further noted that the IAF is engaging with staff to
ensure our eventual Return to the Office Plan (RTTOP) is informed not only by the latest guidance and recommendations but also takes into account staff feedback.

Next, Karen Vargas, executive assistant and board liaison, provided highlights from a recent staff poll. She noted that when asked about comfort levels working from home, 95 percent of IAF staff reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable and zero percent reported any discomfort with that arrangement. Moreover, IAF staff are about evenly split with respect to readiness to transition back to the office — 42 percent saying they are somewhat or ready versus 44 percent being somewhat or very hesitant to transition and the remaining 15 percent being unsure or not ready to disclose. Vargas further noted that IAF staff gave the management team a thumbs up for supporting staff morale, particularly through effective communication and team building activities. Staff reported that their main concerns with returning to the office include the availability and safety of public transit and loss of work-from-home flexibilities. Staff also report being unsettled about (1) adapting to new worksite protocols; (2) heighten risk of infection or transmission in public spaces; (3) and having to adjust to new configurations to balance work and home responsibilities. Duncan added that the agency has not set a date for returning to the office but that we continue to monitor the evolving situation in the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia and are preparing accordingly. Board Secretary Jack Vaughn inquired about a government-wide policy for return to office, to which, General Counsel responded that OPM is in the process of putting together government-wide guidance with expected release in early Summer. She also noted that in this effort OPM is engaging with various agencies and different sectors of the workforce as they consider major factors including (1) returning the workforce to the workplace and (2) future of work, particularly considering hybrid models.

Relatedly, Duncan shared that the agency is beginning to think through new lease options given that our current lease is set to expire April 2022. She shared that the IAF is negotiating a new short term lease with the current landlord to enable our occupancy until April 2023 with an additional year option until 2024. The IAF would solicit anew for a lease broker to help review and facilitate options for a new office lease after April 2022.

The Board opted to continue with the next agenda item rather than taking a break at this point.

V. DISCUSSION

To preserve the IAF’s ability to maintain a nimble decision-making process while also leveraging the Board’s expertise and guidance, staff put forth a memorandum outlining the areas in which the IAF President/CEO shall seek Board approval versus request guidance and insight from the Board as part of the decision-making process. Adams-Allen further noted that the goal in pulling

5 IAF management shared the poll “Planning for a Safe and Healthy Return to the Office” on April 5, 2021 and responses were accepted through April 15, 2021, 43 staff participated in sharing their
6 Staff: Lesley Duncan, Chief Operating Officer; Aswathi Zachariah, General Counsel
7 Staff recommendation for general areas that should require Board approval (as included in the April 2021 memorandum): (1) Agency strategic plan (every 5-years), (2) Capital Expenditures greater than $50,000, (3) Non-grant programmatic engagements (e.g. impact investments) with an IAF investment greater than $500,000, and (4) Major procurement actions (e.g. agency lease,
together this memorandum was to provide clarity and added that formal approval happens when the Board conducts in person voting or notional voting on a matter. She further explained that the Board currently provides guidance and feedback into agency processes via formal and informal meetings, phone calls, email consultations etc.

During the discussion, board members expressed the importance of continuing to build-in time for consultations with the Board — adding that the management team has done this very well to date—and conveyed their appreciation for the thoughtful layout of notational votes. There was also a brief discussion on whether the agency lease and macroprogramming priorities should require formal board approval. Adams-Allen and Zachariah explained that the agency lease would likely fall under major procurements and that programming priorities are considered in the strategic planning process — both areas that require formal board approvals. Moreover the Board would provide input and guidance into those decisions during board meetings and consultations, which to date have served the team well and that we believe is the prudent approach. Board members voiced their agreement and satisfaction with the response.

The Board requested that specific language be added to the memorandum to clarify what is meant by ‘formal approval’ and asked that the document be recirculated with inputs reflecting the discussion during the meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Arriola thanked the management team and without any new business to discuss, Arriola adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

major systems updates, etc.). General areas in which the President/CEO will engage the Board for consultation, but formal Board approval is not required: (1) Final agency operating plan, (2) litigation strategy, (3) congressional matters, (4) institutional matters, (5) certain employee matters, (6) regulatory/compliance matters, (7) macro programming priorities, (8) specific grant matters, (9) other matters to include interagency or executive branch discussion or negotiations, major donor conversations, public announcements, etc.