3.3 **Innovator support**

Powering Agriculture continued to provide various types of support to both Innovator cohorts in order to enhance the chances of the successful deployment of their clean energy solutions.

3.3.1 **Implementation Support**

Powering Agriculture continued to use the Powering Agriculture Support Task Order (PASTO), which is implemented by USAID contractor, Tetra Tech, to provide a variety of support, including:

- implementation assistance such as feedback on milestones, guidance on M&E
- assistance with compliance with USAID policies and procedures including award modification
- templates/manuals/guides for Innovators’ use
- Promotion of Innovator progress on the website, on social media (Facebook and Twitter), at conferences, and to the media
- Site visits to two innovators working in 3 countries to verify progress and interview beneficiaries

3.3.2 **Business Acceleration Support**

Powering Agriculture continued to provide customized and individually-tailored acceleration support to the Innovators through the structured program called the Powering Agriculture Xcelerator - PAX. This support is provided by VentureWell, in association with Investors’ Circle, under the PASTO contract. The program provides:

- **Portfolio managers**: Assigned portfolio managers implement customized work plans developed based on ongoing innovator specific needs assessment. Regular check-ins with innovators are conducted in order to provide advice, feedback, and suggested action items. Technical Assistance is provided with the end goal of developing and validating a business model and bringing the innovation to market sustainably.

  - **Ongoing innovator-specific needs assessment**: Assessments are based on regular check-in discussions with portfolio managers, an internal scorecard tracking system, periodic survey of innovators, observations from in-person workshops, and collaboration with USAID and fellow PASTO supporters.

  - **Peer mentoring through cohort groupings**: This is comprised of individual connections among innovators, as well as webinars addressing topics relevant to sub-groups.

  - **Investor-readiness assessment and coaching**: Funding needs and strategy are determined, along with identification of and introductions to potential funders.

The goal of the support is to develop and sustain the innovations in the marketplace to realize lasting impact. Because the innovators are pursuing different business models in different regions and are at different points of the innovation life cycle, the individual support is a critical component of the program’s success.

Through PAX, innovators received the following over the reporting period.

- Training on industry best practices from experts through three PAX-organized webinars on branding, sales, and product development.
- 79 instances of assistance on business issues
• 66 referrals/linkages/partnerships/connections

See Figures 3.10 and 3.11 for the breakdowns of the type of support.

In-country technical assistance was also provided to one Innovator to conduct a landscape analysis and identify potential distribution partners for their product.

**FIGURE 3.10 INSTANCES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

- FUNDRAISING STRATEGY: 23%
- BUSINESS MODEL: 19%
- PRODUCT MANAGEMENT: 8%
- PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: 14%
- PARTNERSHIPS: 7%
- LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS: 10%
- CUSTOMER DISCOVERY AND PRODUCTION-MARKET KIT: 10%
- HUMAN RESOURCES: 9%

**FIGURE 3.11 INTRODUCTIONS AND REFERRALS**

- LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS: 64%
- FUNDERS: 21%
- MENTORS: 11%
- TALENT: 4%
Innovator feedback on PAX: A survey was conducted of the Powering Agriculture innovators to provide feedback on the value of the PAX support over the year. In open-ended survey responses, many participants highlighted the personalized support they received from portfolio managers as having positively impacted their team’s progress. Specifically, respondents appreciated how portfolio managers “answered specific questions” and served “as a knowledgeable sounding board to talk through various strategic decisions.” The topics discussed in calls with portfolio managers that were most relevant to respondents were “feedback on fundraising strategy” and “review of investor materials.” With the exception of “human resources” all topics were deemed “very” or “extremely relevant” by at least three participants, indicating the diverse needs of participants and the importance of tailored support. Innovators reported a multitude of ways in which their innovations benefitted from check-in calls with portfolio managers, including furthering their understanding of business models and fundraising strategies, and identifying potential partners.

Specific examples of how PAX services positively impacted innovators strategy:

“Great support on organizational strategy, fundraising and approaching investors and partners. Investor deck review was also very helpful as well as fundraising overview.”

“The PAX team provided valuable assistance whilst we were developing the business plan, company overview materials, and pitch deck.”

“Understanding how the PAEGC grants contribute to an “overall” goal has been invaluable to devise the implementation strategy.”

Comments have been edited for clarity.
How relevant were the following topics discussed during your check-in calls with your PAX portfolio manager?

### TABLE 3.2 RELEVANT PAX TOPICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Not Relevant</th>
<th>Slightly Relevant</th>
<th>Somewhat Relevant</th>
<th>Very Relevant</th>
<th>Extremely Relevant</th>
<th>Did Not Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer discovery and developing a business model</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources including hiring, job descriptions</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape analysis (understanding stakeholders and potential partners)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on product development and project management</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on fundraising strategy</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of investor materials (deck, business plan, financials)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How valuable were the following types of support provided by PAX?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Extremely Valuable</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular check-in calls with your PAX portfolio manager</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Networking
Since respondents entered the PAX program two years ago, about two-thirds (63%) reported exchanging knowledge or ideas with other PAX innovators, planning to collaborate, or collaborating with them. In open-ended responses, two participants noted that PAX helped them connect with potential partners and investors rather than with other PAX innovators, noting “PAX had introduced us to a number of potential investors” and “They assisted with making connections with relevant potential partners in Bangladesh.”

3.3.3 Gender Support
Powering Agriculture continued to use PASTO to provide on-demand technical support to strengthen gender integration into innovators’ projects. In FY2017, a total of nine innovators made use of the gender integration support available to them.

- 4 instances were phone consultations,
- 3 instances were requests for resources and materials to support a specific activity,
- 1 instance was to provide technical support to integrate gender into a baseline survey, and
- 1 instance was to plan for an in-person technical support visit.

Due to innovators’ time constraints and the nature of gender integration as an on-demand activity, fewer innovators utilized this service than the number that could potentially benefit from support. However, some innovators utilized gender integration support in 2016 during planning or baseline survey implementation, and were implementing these planned gender integration activities in 2017 without need of additional assistance.

In addition to introductions and referrals as depicted in Figure 3.11 on page 73, Powering Agriculture has also facilitated collaboration among the innovators through the in-person events, pairing of innovators with complementary experiences, using one innovator’s experience to educate the other.