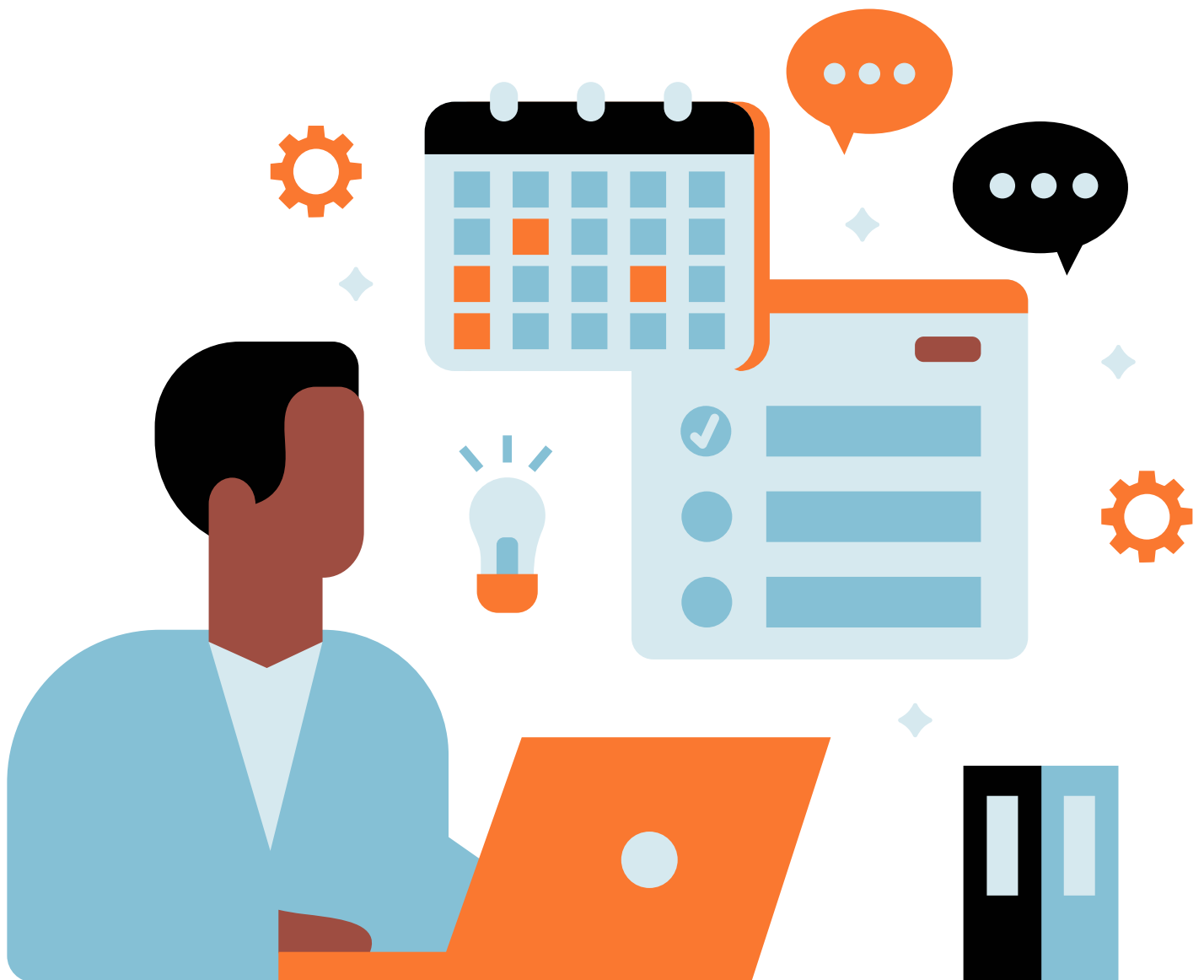


YOUR GUIDE TO BEING CHIEF OF PARTY



WHAT'S THE JOB?



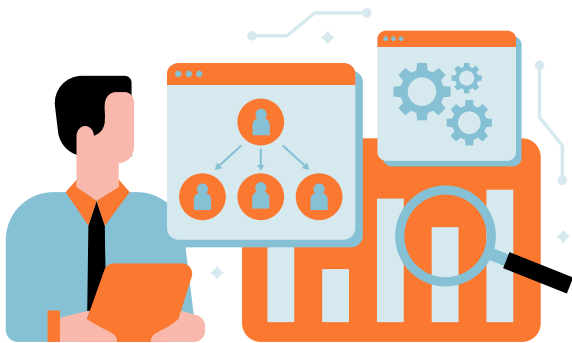
A chief of party, or COP, is the most senior member of key personnel for USAID-funded projects. It's essentially a fancy word for a project director.

This is effectively a CEO or director role. The chief of party is responsible for the delivery of the project as well as the team and finances throughout the project's lifespan – which can be anything between three and five years. This person is the contact for program managers and donors, stakeholders, and technical teams during that time.

Focusing on localization, USAID encourages organizations to consider local candidates, however, oftentimes, this is a role filled by an international staff member who will then need to spend a significant amount of time in the project country.

An organization often prefers a COP candidate based on their experience in managing similar sized projects in terms of monetary value.

WHAT SKILLS ARE NEEDED?



“You really need people with technical and management skills but [who also] understand the communities, people who have empathy. – Kimberly Mahling, chief of party based in Senegal.”

Preferred COP candidates typically have a combination of technical know-how pertaining to the particular project area and in financial management, but certain soft skills are also essential to truly succeeding in the role.



Management & leadership

Being approachable and motivational are key qualities a COP needs because of working with so many teams and individuals. You have to make sure that your team is confident and comfortable coming to you.



Communication

Being able to communicate effectively with various stakeholders and actors is key for many development roles, and vital for COPs, especially in terms of project management and implementation.



Understanding local context

“You can have the best people, with the best skills, but ... if they have no connection with the people they work [with] if they cannot relate to the situation in the field, they fail completely,” said Hervil Cherubin, country director for Haiti at Heifer International.



Organization & time management

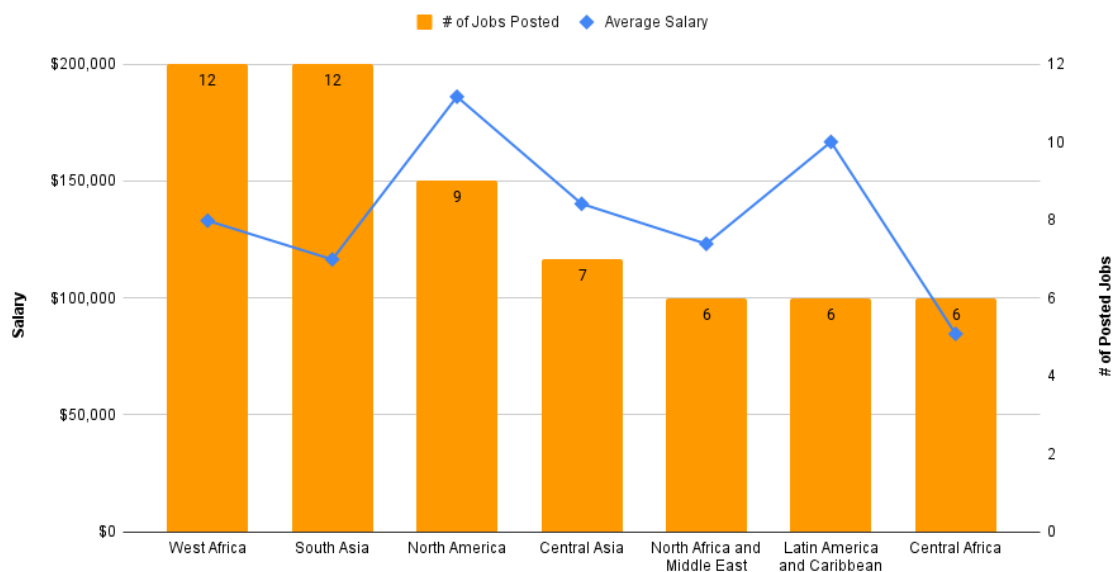
Stakeholders often go to COPs with problems that are urgent, so “you have to be very pragmatic,” and “make sure the team is also cautious about time management,” advised veteran COP Tewodros Yeshiwork.

MORE ADVICE: 9 TIPS FOR SUCCEEDING AS CHIEF OF PARTY

WHAT DOES IT PAY?

AVERAGE COP SALARY BY REGION AND JOBS POSTED

The average maximum chief of party salary in the top seven regions based on the number of positions posted on Devex by organizations from 2019 to 2023.



67%

Of COPs from the Devex community who earn at least \$130,000 annually.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT COP SALARIES

We analyzed 69 chief of party job postings where the salary was either shared publicly or privately with Devex by 42 organizations since 2019. Here are a few key findings.

- **\$135,840** – The average maximum annual salary offered for the jobs posted. The average minimum came to \$97,561.
- **44** – The number of countries where these positions were based. The top regions were West Africa and South Asia (17.4% each), followed by North America (13%) – whose nine positions had the highest average salary of any region at \$186,094.
- **\$275,000** – The highest maximum salary offered for the postings. This role was based in the United States with Abt Associates, advertised in December 2021.

[READ OUR FULL ANALYSIS OF COP SALARIES](#)

BEFORE YOU APPLY

There's a lot to consider about the COP recruitment process and what the role requires. Consult this checklist before you apply.

“Most organizations have one process for headquarter or home office consulting and then each field ... or country office may have its own procedure. —
Susanne Barsoum, founder and CEO of KeyLime International.”

01

Do you understand the project lifecycle?

Implementing organizations must hire COPs prior to receiving USAID funding. Should the bid be won, ideally, the nominated COP would still be available or else have to be quickly replaced.

[READ MORE](#)

02

Can you work in the country?

Once an organization has been awarded a project, recruiters will be able to commit to preferred COP candidates. But you'll only be considered if your work status is in line with the agreement made with USAID.

[READ MORE](#)

03

Are you a first-time candidate?

The stipulation of prior experience managing a similar size project can create roadblocks for first-time applicants. Still, if a project has already been approved by USAID, this may be less of an issue.

[READ MORE](#)

04

Can you manage stress and risk?

While USAID is pushing for local “leadership, ownership, decision making,” international staff are still often deployed, including to remote and potentially risky places.

[READ MORE](#)

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Learn more about what it's like being a chief of party from those who have served in the role.



What makes a great chief of party?

Devex spoke with four past and present chiefs of party on what makes a good leader for a development project and how the role has changed due to localization.

[WATCH THIS DIGITAL EVENT](#)



How to succeed as a chief of party

Far from a typical development job, former and current chiefs of party explain what it takes to be successful and effective in the role.

[READ MORE](#)



A challenging recruitment process

A unique system with its own requirements, experts share what makes the USAID chief of party system so difficult to navigate.

[READ MORE](#)

FIND CHIEF OF PARTY JOBS ON DEVEX

Search for current COP job openings from World Vision, Chemonics, DAI, and many more top global development organizations.

[!\[\]\(5abce1a84a655b073239ab33e1199487_img.jpg\) VIEW ALL CHIEF OF PARTY ROLES ON DEVEX.](#)



Are you a chief of party looking to stand out to recruiters on Dexex?

Our in-house recruitment specialists are currently compiling talent pools based on specific global development skill sets, including COPs, communications specialists, and many more.

Candidates can [update their Devex profiles](#) to be considered, and employers can [learn more here](#).

We hope you found this guide to being a chief of party helpful. For more career advice aimed toward global development professionals, [visit our Career Center](#).

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