Once more, Australian firms dominate the list of top private sector partners of the Australian Agency for International Development but the donor agency remains committed to enacting meaningful reforms to encourage a more diverse pool of bidders for its contracts.

According to AusAID, more international firms are competing for AusAID contracts, either on their own or in joint bids with Australian contractors, while more subcontracts have also been awarded to firms in developing countries.

While pursuing a more diverse bidding pool, AusAID is also evolving from contracting-type relationships to country systems that promote partnerships and ownership of the programs and projects among recipient countries. Nonetheless, private development consulting firms are still required to play a major role in policy development and program design, providing high-level management support, and results monitoring and evaluation, especially for large-scale projects.

Here are the top AusAID-funded private contractors, based on the list of contracts published by the Australian government. Only contracts valued at $100,000 Australian dollars ($98,450) and above and signed in 2012, or those not fully performed by December 31, 2012 are listed.

Coffey International Development

Founded: 1959
Group executive: Glen Simpson
Headquarters: Canberra, Australia
AusAID funding: AU$150,771,186
Focus areas: Economic growth, human development, environment and natural resources, governance and public sector management, security and justice, stabilization and recovery

In early 2000, Coffey International acquired SAGRIC International, a global development company owned by the South Australian government. Some of Coffey International’s recent strategic acquisitions include U.S.-based Management Systems International, which works extensively in the governance field, and U.K.-based Libra Advisory Group, which specializes in stabilization and recovery. It manages approximately 150 projects in more than 80 countries and has access to more than 1,500 development professionals globally.

Cardno Emerging Markets

Founded: 1945 (Cardno group emerged from the original Cardno & Davies)
Managing director and CEO: Andrew Buckley
Headquarters: Brisbane, Australia
AusAID funding: AU$452,486,031
Other donor clients: European Union, ADB, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Millennium Challenge Corp., DFID, USAID, World Bank
Focus areas: Physical and social infrastructure
Carmco Emerging Markets is a product of a merger among Carmco’s former international development units, ACIL, AgriSystems and Emerging Markets Group. It has 8,000 staff members working in over 200 offices on projects in 85 countries throughout the world.

GRM International

Founded: 1965 (as Gunn Rural Management)
Managing director: Kim Bridger
Headquarters: Brisbane, Australia
AusAID funding: AU$410,092,174


Focus areas: Agriculture and food security, economic growth and trade, education, governance and accountability, health

GRM International has managed more than 700 projects in more than 120 countries worldwide. It has more than 1,100 employees and its main offices are in Brisbane, Washington D.C., Dubai, London and Gurgaon. In 2011, it merged with Futures Group to create an international health and development firm.

SMEC

Founded: 1970
Managing director and CEO: Ross Hitt
Headquarters: Melbourne, Australia
AusAID funding: AU$207,828,913

Other donor clients: ADB, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, World Bank

Focus areas: Transport, water, geotechnics and tunnels, environment, urban development, hydropower and energy, government and advisory services, social development, mining, and oil and gas

SMEC has over 5,000 employees and an established network of more than 70 offices in Australia, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and North and South America. It has delivered projects in more than 80 countries. Its recent acquisitions include Brisbane City Enterprises (2009), EG2 Pakistan (2007), Davey Button Clark (2008), CEES Pakistan (2009), Lean and Hayward (2011), GMC Global (2012) and Vela VRE (2012).

URS Australia

Founded: 1984 (URS Corp.)
Managing director for Australia and New Zealand: Jim Mantle
Headquarters: Sydney, Australia
AusAID funding: AU$187,655,670

Other donor clients: AES, EU, Japan International Cooperation Agency, DBD, World Bank

Focus areas: Forestry; governance; stabilization; recovery and reconstruction; sustainable development

URS Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of the parent company URS Corp. It focuses on the Asia-Pacific region, offering project design and management services, including feasibility and design studies, independent reviews and evaluation of activities, and competency-based capacity building of people and organizations. URS Australia has 10 offices with more than 1,000 professionals within Australia.

Charles Kendall and Partners

Founded: 1946
Group Operations Director: Mark Kendall
Headquarters: London, UK
AUS AID funding: AU$77,095,353

Other donor clients: Millennium Challenge Corp., World Bank, EU, U.K. Government

Focus areas: Government and commercial procurement, export packing, freight, logistics and development aid consultancy

Charles Kendall and Partners is an end-to-end supply chain management group with experience in providing technical assistance, project management and consultancy support in around 100 countries.

Aurecon

Founded: 2009
Headquarters: Singapore
CEO: Paul Hardy
AUS AID funding: AU$113,072,813

Other donor clients: World Bank, EU, MCB, ADB, USAID

Focus areas: Construction, data and telecommunications, defense, energy, governance, international development assistance, manufacturing, property, resources, transport, water

Of the AusAID contracts awarded to Aurecon, contracts worth AU$96,550,097 were awarded to IDSS, an Australia-based wholly owned subsidiary of Aurecon since 2009.

Australring International

Founded: 2001
Headquarters: Adelaide, Australia
CEO: Kym Davis

Sinclair Knight Merz

Founded: 1984
Headquarters: Sydney, Australia
CEO: Santo Rizutto
AusAID funding: AU$45,522,716
Other donor clients: ADB, EU, JICA, NZAid, World Bank
Focus areas: Defense, energy, environment, industry, mining and metals, power, social infrastructure, transport, water

Sinclair Knight Merz is a projects firm that operates across Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. It employs some 7,500 staff members from more than 40 offices.

JTA International

Founded: 1999
Headquarters: Brisbane, Australia
CEO: Dr. Jane Thomason
AusAID funding: AU$25,300,000
Other donor clients: World Bank, ADB, World Health Organization, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Clinton Foundation and Secretariat for the Pacific Community.
Focus areas: International health, extractive industries, social sectors

On January 31, JTA International was acquired by Abt Associates to become Abt JTA.

Read more:

- Top AusAID contractors: A primer
- AusAID reform: What's at stake for implementers

Did we forget to include any major global development institution on this list? Let us know by placing your comment below. Join the Devex community and access more in-depth analysis, breaking news and business advice – and a host of other services – on international development, humanitarian aid and global health.