

EVALUATION RESOURCE

POST-EVALUATION ACTION PLANS: GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATES

Introduction

Automated Directives System (ADS 201) underscores the significance of evaluation as a performance management tool that can provide evidence-informed decision-making. Specifically, ADS 201.3.5.18(A), Responding to Evaluation Findings, states:

“To help ensure that institutional learning takes place and evaluation findings are used to improve development outcomes, Mission and Washington OUs must develop a post-evaluation action plan upon completion of an evaluation. The following steps must be taken to develop the post-evaluation action plan:

- Review the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations systematically.
- Determine and document whether the Mission or Washington OU accepts/supports each conclusion or recommendation.
- Identify any management or other program actions needed based on the evaluation findings, conclusions, or recommendations. This may include changes to strategy, projects, activities, or other planning frameworks.
- Assign responsibility and the time frame for completion of each set of actions.
- Document the expected actions based on the evaluation, responsibilities, time frames, and completion of actions in a post-evaluation action plan.”

This guidance describes the responsibilities and steps in preparing Post-Evaluation Action Plans as described above. This guidance, and the attached templates, are designed for USAID management (e.g., Contracting Officer’s Representatives [CORs], Activity Managers, Technical Officers, etc.) to support a common process across USAID for responding to evaluations. This guidance does not take the place of a Mission Order on Evaluation, and USAID staff members are encouraged to consult their Mission Order to determine if there are specific procedures for their particular mission.

Prepare the management response

Prior to the finalization of the evaluation report, it is advisable for USAID to review the findings and discuss possible recommendations internally and with the evaluation team. Beginning the first stages of a management response before the finalization of the evaluation report allows the external evaluators to develop recommendations with the Mission involved in implementing management responses as part of drafting the report.

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Upon completion of an evaluation report, the Program Office will lead relevant Mission staff through the process of responding to evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The Program Office and the relevant Technical Office(s) should review the evaluation report and consider how to respond to it. The particular individuals involved in such a review may vary, but should at least involve the COR(s)/Agreement Officer's Representative(s) (AOR) of the activity or activities being evaluated and the COR of the evaluation. Additional participation by the relevant Technical Office directors, the Program Office director, and their staff can help ensure sufficient internal support for the management response. For high-profile evaluations, mission leadership may also need to be involved in the management response. In addition, USAID staff and external stakeholders—particularly the implementing partners who were subject to the evaluation—should be consulted for their perspectives.

A sample Management Response template is included at the end of this document. The Management Response template focuses on recommendations from evaluations, but missions may choose to widen the focus to include report conclusions or narrow it to include only major recommendations. The template indicates whether the mission (or other operating unit) accepts, partially accepts, or rejects the recommendations stated in the evaluation report. When rejecting or partially accepting a recommendation, it provides space to document reasons as to why a particular recommendation is not accepted and to show amendments made to a partially accepted recommendation.

There are often very good reasons to reject evaluation recommendations, and missions/offices should not hesitate to initiate a robust discussion of the merits of individual evaluation recommendations. For example: external evaluators may be unaware of particular opportunities and constraints of USAID internal processes in making their recommendations; the evaluation conclusion that the recommendations seek to address may be poorly supported by the evaluation findings; or a recommendation may involve questionable assumptions about the transferability of good practices in distant contexts to the mission's own operating environment. Evidence from evaluations should ideally inform decision-making, but evidence alone does not dictate decisions.

In cases where mission management disagrees with evaluation conclusions and recommendations and wishes to publicly state those differences, the mission should draft an evaluation Statement of Difference to be appended to the evaluation report, as described [here](#).

Create a Post-Evaluation Action Plan

Based upon the decisions made in the management response, the Program Office and relevant Technical Office(s) should identify any management or program actions needed and assign responsibility and the timelines for completion of each set of actions completed. These management or program actions may be based on accepted recommendations explicitly suggested in the evaluation report, or they may be additional actions deemed appropriate by management based on evidence, findings, or conclusions in the evaluation report. If the actions necessitate revisions to the joint country assistance strategy, USAID CDCS, results framework, or project design, then these should be noted in the Plan. A sample Post-Evaluation Action Plan template is attached to help facilitate this process.

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The Post-Evaluation Action Plan contains the following key elements:

- **Management and program actions needed:** Planned actions intended to achieve expected results that address needs identified in the evaluation or by appropriate stakeholders based on the evaluation evidence.
- **Reason for action:** Intended to document why the action has been deemed necessary. For instance, it may be based on a recommendation from the evaluation report that was accepted or partially accepted during the management response.
- **Individual responsible for completing action:** Specifies who will take the lead in ensuring the action is addressed in the manner laid out in the Action Plan.
- **Budget (if applicable):** Funds required to implement the planned action. Note that many recommendations will not have budgetary implications.
- **Date:** Indicates the date by which the action is expected to be completed.
- **Status:** A classification of the status of each action: (1) implementation not yet begun; (2) implementation underway; or (3) action completed.

Review the Action Plan

The Program Office and relevant Technical Office(s) should review the completed Post-Evaluation Action Plan to ensure that all relevant parties agree to the assigned responsibilities in the Plan. The Action Plan should then be saved somewhere that is accessible to USAID staff members and used as a regular reference point as recommendations are implemented.

Follow-up

The Post-Evaluation Action Plan should periodically be reviewed to determine if progress has been made on each of the actions in the Plan. Updates to the status can be described in the last column of the Plan. At the times specified in the deadlines established in the Action Plan, or at regular periodic intervals, the relevant Technical Office staff should meet with the Program Office to assess progress on each action in the Plan. If appropriate, joint discussions with relevant stakeholders should be organized to report on progress or to convene to identify solutions as roadblocks occur. During Portfolio Reviews, the status of Action Plans for evaluation findings, and their use in respective decisions, will be discussed and documented.

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Post-Evaluation Management Response Template

Evaluation Title:

Evaluation Completion Date:

Date of Management Response:

Evaluation Recommendation	Management Response : <i>Accept / Partially Accept / Reject</i>	If not accepted, give reasons for rejection or, if partially accepted, describe any amendments
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

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Post-Evaluation Action Plan Template

Evaluation Title:

Evaluation Completion Date:

Date of Management Response:

No.	Management and Program Actions Needed	Reason for Action	Individual Responsible for Completing Action	Budget Allocated (if applicable)	Date for Completion of Action	Status of Actions (as of date)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						