



PROGRAM CYCLE RESOURCE

USAID EVALUATION AND MONITORING TERMS

Derived from Automated Directives System (ADS) Series 201

Evaluation Terms

I. The Basics	
Evaluation	The systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of strategies, projects, and activities conducted as a basis for judgments to improve effectiveness and timed to inform decisions about current and future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment or an informal review of strategies, projects, or activities.
Assessment	A forward-looking process that may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform strategic planning or project design, or an informal review of a strategy, project, or activity. It is distinct from evaluation.
II. Types of Evaluations at USAID	
i. Categorized by Questions and Method	
Impact Evaluation	Evaluations that measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention. They are based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change. Impact evaluations in which comparisons are made between beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured.
Performance Evaluation	Evaluations that focus on descriptive, normative, and/or cause-and-effect questions that may include, but are not limited to: what a particular strategy, project, or activity has achieved; how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; contribution of USAID assistance to the results achieved; possible unintended outcomes from USAID assistance; and other questions pertinent to strategy, project or activity design management, and operational decision making. Performance evaluations encompass a broad range of evaluation methods; they often incorporate before/after comparisons but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual.
ii. Categorized by Relationship to USAID	
External Evaluation	Evaluations that are both: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commissioned by USAID or others, rather than by the implementing partner responsible for the activities being evaluated, and 2. Have a team leader who is an independent expert from outside the Agency with no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. External evaluations may include USAID staff members, but none may serve as team leader. An evaluation with a team leader from USAID/Washington is not an external evaluation. An evaluation contracted through a subcontract of the implementing partner is not an external evaluation.
Internal Evaluation	Evaluations that are either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducted or commissioned by an implementing partner—or consortium of implementing partner and evaluator—concerning their own activity (an implementer internal evaluation); or 2. Commissioned by USAID in which the evaluation team leader is a USAID staff member (a USAID internal evaluation).

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<i>ii. Categorized by Requirement</i>	
Required Evaluation	<p>An evaluation for which completion fulfills a requirement. Required evaluations must be external and managed, in most cases, by Program Office staff. Per (ADS 201.3.5.13), required evaluations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement 1: Each Mission and Washington OU that manages program funds and designs and implements projects as described in ADS 201.3.3 must conduct at least one evaluation per project. The evaluation may address the project as a whole, a single activity or intervention, a set of activities or interventions within the project, questions related to the project that were identified in the PMP or Project MEL Plan, or cross-cutting issues within the project. • Requirement 2: Each Mission and Washington OU must conduct an impact evaluation, if feasible, of any new, untested approach that is anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through U.S. Government foreign assistance or other funding sources (i.e., a pilot intervention). Pilot interventions should be identified during project or activity design, and the impact evaluation should be integrated into the design of the project or activity. If it is not feasible to effectively undertake an impact evaluation, the Mission or Washington OU must conduct a performance evaluation and document why an impact evaluation was not feasible. An evaluation of a pilot intervention may count as one of the evaluations required under Requirement 1. • Requirement 3: Each Mission must conduct at least one “whole-of-project” performance evaluation within their CDCS timeframe. Whole-of-project performance evaluations examine an entire project, including all its constituent activities and progress toward the achievement of the Project Purpose. A whole-of-project evaluation may count as one of the evaluations required under Requirement 1. <p>For additional guidance, please see the Deciding to Evaluate During Project Design resource available in the Evaluation Toolkit.</p>
Non-required Evaluation	<p>An evaluation for which completion does not fulfill the “One Evaluation per Project” requirement, the “Pilot intervention” requirement, or the “Whole-of-Project” requirement (ADS 201.3.5.13). Missions and Washington OUs may conduct non-required evaluations for learning or management purposes as needed at any point in implementation of the strategy, project, or activity. As evaluations, they still must meet all procedural, reporting, and quality standards stipulated in ADS Chapter 201. Non-required evaluations may be impact or performance, internal or external.</p>
<i>iv. Categorized by Timing</i>	
Mid-term Evaluation	<p>Evaluations that occur before the end of a strategy, project, or activity. USAID evaluation policy does not distinguish between mid-term and final evaluations, and there are no requirements for one that are different from the other. Typically, ‘mid-term’ evaluations are timed to inform decisions about the management of that strategy, project, or activity.</p>
Final Evaluation	<p>Evaluations that occur toward the end of a strategy, project, or activity. USAID evaluation policy does not distinguish between mid-term and final evaluations, and there are no requirements for one that are different from the other. Typically, these are timed to inform decisions about follow-on or new strategies, projects or activities, and/or to understand and document the performance of what is being evaluated, and any learning associated with it.</p>
Ex-post Evaluation	<p>Evaluations that occur after direct implementation of a strategy, project, or activity is completed. Typically, they are timed to inform the evidence base about the sustainability of a particular approach or model.</p>

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III. Evaluation Planning	
Mission-wide Evaluation Plan in the PMP	<p>Identifies, summarizes, and tracks all evaluations as they are planned across the Mission and over the entire Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) timeframe by Development Objective (DO). Evaluation plans must include the following information for each planned evaluation, as it becomes available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the strategy/project/activity to be evaluated, • evaluation purpose and expected use, • evaluation type (performance or impact), • possible evaluation questions, • whether it is external or internal, • whether it fulfills an evaluation requirement or is a non-required evaluation, • estimated budget, • planned start date, and • estimated completion date. <p>The Evaluation Plan is a required component of the Mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP). It should be updated following approval of Project and Activity MEL plans. The Mission must ensure that information from the evaluation plan in the PMP is included in the Evaluation Registry.</p>
Project Evaluation Plan	<p>The evaluation portion of a Project Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan is developed during project design and included as an annex to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD). It must also identify and describe any evaluations that will be conducted to fulfill evaluation requirements described in ADS 201.3.5.13. In developing the project evaluation plan, Missions should consider not only evaluations of individual activities, but also evaluations salient to overall project management. Such evaluations may address, for instance: the project's theory of change; issues that cut across activities; local ownership and sustainability of results achieved after the end of projects or activities; and the extent to which projects or supportive activities have transformed gender norms and reduced gender gaps for men and women across diverse groups.</p>
Activity Evaluation Plan	<p>The evaluation portion of an Activity MEL Plan, submitted by the implementer. In the case of partner government agreements, the Plan is often included as part of the direct agreement with the government.</p> <p>Key components of the Activity Evaluation Plan typically include plans for collaborating on any external evaluations planned by USAID or any proposed internal evaluations to be conducted by the implementer.</p>
Evaluation Registry	<p>The Evaluation Registry is the Agency's system of record for all planned, ongoing and completed evaluations and associated data about those evaluations. The Registry includes information drawn from the evaluation plan in the PMP on evaluations completed during the previous fiscal year; and any ongoing and planned evaluations for the current fiscal year, and up to three years out.</p> <p>The Evaluation Registry is updated by USAID operating units in the FACTS Info Next Gen system. As of October 2017, the Registry will be open for updates at any time, with a required reporting and data validation period timed to happen with the annual Performance Plan and Report each year.</p>

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Performance Management

I. The Basics	
Performance Management	The systematic process of planning, collecting, analyzing, and using performance monitoring data and evaluations to track progress, influence decision-making, and improve results. Performance management activities are described at the Mission level in the Mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP). Performance management is one aspect of the larger process of continuous learning and adaptive management.
Performance Plan and Report (PPR)	The Performance Plan and Report (PPR) is an annual data call for performance information to all Operating Units (OUs) in USAID and the Department of State (DoS) that implement foreign assistance programs.
Standard Indicator	Standard indicators have several origins stemming from different Agencies, initiatives, and offices. Standard indicators are developed and used to enable consistent collection of comparable indicator data from multiple operating units at once. All standard indicators have indicator reference sheets that include precise definition and critical information to facilitate the collection and then aggregation of data across the Agency or other cross-sections of interest. Standard definitions cannot be edited. Standard Foreign Assistance (F) indicators are collected via the PPR.
Activity Oversight	The day-to-day assessment of contractor and grantee performance by a Contracting Officer's Representative/Agreement Officer's Representative (COR/AOR) or others through site visits, stakeholder meetings, and the verification of implementer inputs, outputs, and deliverables.
II. Planning for Performance Management	
Performance Management Plan (PMP)	A Mission-wide tool to plan and manage the process of monitoring strategic progress, project performance, programmatic assumptions and operational context; evaluating performance and impact; and learning from evidence in order to inform decision-making, resource allocation, and adaptation at the strategy level.
Project MEL Plan	A plan that describes how the Project Team intends to collect, organize, analyze, or apply learning gained from monitoring and evaluation data and other sources. The Project MEL Plan must be developed during the project design process and updated during project implementation.
Activity MEL Plan	A plan that describes how USAID and its partner(s) will jointly manage an activity by stating how monitoring data will be collected, analyzed, and reported; how implementers will actively engage with any evaluations conducted; and how information gathered from monitoring and evaluation efforts will be used for learning purposes.

Monitoring Terms

I. The Basics	
Performance Monitoring	The ongoing and systematic collection of performance indicator data and other quantitative or qualitative information to reveal whether implementation is on track and whether expected results are being achieved. Performance monitoring includes monitoring the quantity, quality, and timeliness of activity outputs within the control of USAID or its implementers, as well as the monitoring of project and strategic outcomes that are expected to result from the combination of these outputs and other factors. Performance monitoring continues throughout strategies, projects, and activities.

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Monitoring Terms

Context Monitoring	The systematic collection of information about conditions and external factors relevant to the implementation and performance of an OU's strategy, projects, and activities. Context monitoring includes the monitoring of local conditions that may directly affect implementation and performance (such as non-USAID programming operating within the same sector as USAID programming) or external factors that may indirectly affect implementation and performance (such as macro-economic, social, or political conditions).
Complementary Monitoring	Additional monitoring approaches to complement performance and context monitoring in situations where results are difficult to predict due to dynamic contexts or unclear cause-and-effect relationships, including complexity-aware approaches.
II. Kinds of Indicators	
Indicator	A quantifiable measure of a characteristic or condition of people, institutions, systems, or processes that may change over time. Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative.
Performance Indicator	Means to monitor expected outputs and outcomes of strategies, projects, or activities based on a Mission's Results Framework or a project's or activity's logic model. Performance indicators are the basis for observing progress and measuring actual results compared to expected results. Performance indicators help answer the extent to which a Mission or Washington OU is progressing toward its objective(s), but alone cannot tell a Mission or Washington OU why such progress is or is not being made.
Context Indicator	A means to monitor factors outside the control of USAID that have the potential to affect the achievement of expected results. Context indicators may be tracked at any level of a Results Framework or logic model. Context indicators may be used to track country/regional context; programmatic assumptions of strategies, projects, and activities; and operational context. Context indicators do not directly measure the results of USAID activities.
Gender-sensitive indicator	Indicators that point out to what extent and in what ways development programs and projects achieved results related to gender equality and whether/how reducing gaps between males/females and empowering women leads to better project/development outcomes.
III. Types of Indicator Values	
Baseline	The value of an indicator before major implementation actions of USAID-supported strategies, projects, or activities. Baseline data enable the tracking of changes that occurred during the project or the activity with the resources allocated to that project or activity.
Target	Specific, planned level of result to be achieved within a specific timeframe with a given level of resources.
Indicator Actual	The actual value of an indicator achieved within an explicit timeframe.
Indicator Disaggregate	Indicator data broken out by key categories of interest (such as demographic characteristics).

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Monitoring Terms (continued)

III. Indicator Management	
Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS)	<p>A PIRS stores the indicator reference information, promoting data quality and consistency across Missions and Washington OUs. USAID PIRS include the following reference information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The precise definition of the indicator and unit of measure; • Its link to the Results Framework or project or activity logic model; • Whether and how the data must be disaggregated (by sex, age, or other category); • Data source and method of data collection, construction, and/or analysis; • Data type (e.g. integer, decimal, percentage, proportion/ratio, or currency); • Reporting frequency; • Known data quality limitations relative to the five standards of data quality; • Date of last Data Quality Assessment (DQA) and name of the DQA reviewer; • Responsible office and individual for collection and analysis; and • Any changes to the indicator reference data over time.
Context Indicator Reference Sheet (CIRS)	Similar to that of a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) stores context indicator reference information.
Indicator tracking table	A storage system (in table or information system format) for performance indicator data. These data include baseline values, the baseline timeframe, targets, and actual values, and may also include narrative fields for describing a rationale for each target and deviations from a target. A Mission may also include context indicator data and other monitoring measurements in a tracking table or information system.

Data Quality Terms

Data Quality Standards	<p>Criteria for determining the quality of performance monitoring data for evidence-based decision-making and credible reporting. The five standards of data quality are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Validity: Data should clearly and adequately represent the intended result. 2. Integrity: Data collected should have safeguards to minimize the risk of transcription error or data manipulation. 3. Precision: Data should have a sufficient level of detail to permit management decision making. 4. Reliability: Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes and analysis methods over time. 5. Timeliness: Data should be available at a useful frequency, should be current, and should be timely enough to influence management decision making.
Data Quality Assessment (DQA)	An examination of the quality of performance indicator data in light of the five standards of data quality (validity, integrity, precision, reliability, and timeliness) to ensure that decision-makers are fully aware of data strengths and weaknesses and the extent to which data can be relied upon when making management decisions and reporting.

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Strategy and Planning Terms

I. Types of Logical Models	
Results Framework	A graphical representation (typically supplemented by narrative) of the development hypothesis that includes the CDCS goal, DOs, intermediate results (IRs), and sub-IRs.
Logic Model	A graphic or visual depiction of a theory of change, illustrating the connection between what the project will do and what it hopes to achieve. There are a wide range of logic models, including but not limited to LogFrames, causal loop diagrams, stakeholder-based models, and Results Frameworks.
Logical Framework (LogFrame)	A type of logic model presented in a table format that provides a simplified depiction of how a project is to function in the form of a linear chain of cause and effect. It establishes the “if-then” (causal) relationships between the elements of a project: if the outputs are achieved (and the assumptions hold true), then certain outcomes (or sub-purposes) can be expected; if the outcomes are achieved (and the assumptions hold true), then the purpose can be expected.
Evidence	Body of facts or information that serve as the basis for programmatic and strategic decision making in the Program Cycle. Evidence can be derived from assessments, analyses, performance monitoring, and evaluations. It can be sourced from within USAID or externally and should result from systematic and analytic methodologies or from observations that are shared and analyzed.
II. Programming Hierarchy	
Project	A set of complementary activities, over an established timeline and budget, intended to achieve a discrete development result, often aligned with an Intermediate Result (IR) in the CDCS Results Framework. Taken together, a Mission’s suite of project designs provides the operational plans for achieving the objectives in its CDCS or other applicable strategic plan.
Activity	An activity carries out an intervention, or set of interventions, typically through a contract, grant, or agreement with another U.S. Government agency or with the partner country government. An activity also may be an intervention undertaken directly by Mission staff that contributes to a project, such as a policy dialogue. In most cases, multiple activities are needed to ensure the synergistic contributions necessary to achieve the project’s desired results.
III. Components of Logical Models	
Input	A resource, such as technical assistance, commodities, training, or provision of USAID staff, either operating expenses (OE) or program-funded, that is used to create an output.
Output	Produced as a direct result of inputs. They are the tangible, immediate, and intended products or consequences of an activity within USAID’s control or influence.
Outcome	The conditions of people, systems, or institutions that indicate progress or lack of progress toward achievement of project/program goals. Outcomes are any result higher than an output to which a given output contributes but for which it is not solely responsible. Outcomes may be intermediate or end outcomes, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, positive or negative, or direct or indirect.
Result	A significant and intended change in a development condition affecting people, systems, or institutions. Results are outputs and outcomes, including the Development Objective (DOs), Intermediate Result (IRs), sub-Intermediate Result (sub-IRs), Project Purpose, and project outcomes, as specified in a Mission’s CDCS or project logic model.

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Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Terms

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)	CLA involves strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management. CLA approaches to development include collaborating intentionally with stakeholders to share knowledge and reduce duplication of effort, learning systematically by drawing on evidence from a variety of sources and taking time to reflect on implementation, and applying learning by adapting intentionally.
Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Plan	A section of the Performance Management Plan (see PMP) that describes the Mission's approach to CLA, including planning for collaboration; identifying and addressing gaps in knowledge; planning to pause and reflect on progress; and resources for CLA.