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Co-Creation and Co-Design: WHICH TO USE WHEN?



Photo by Leigh Rawles/USAID

Co-creation and co-design are similar, both involve engaging those stakeholders close to the problem. The difference between the two design approaches center on USAID's role in the process. In co-creation, USAID generally takes a less central role, while in co-design, it maintains its central decision-making authority.

DEFINITIONS

Co-Creation

Co-creation is an intentional design approach. It aims to foster innovative approaches to problems through a participatory process. Co-creation's goal is to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. Co-creation is distinct from other collaborative or participatory practices because it involves sharing power and/or decision making. Co-creation is transparent, time-limited, and organized. It can be used to address a specific problem, challenge, question, or to gain further insight on a topic of interest. Co-creation focuses on generating a specific outcome. Co-creation is NOT limited to the procurement process, CAN be used in acquisition or assistance, and CAN be deployed throughout the Program Cycle or planning activities such as the CDCS process. Co-creation associated with a procurement process may occur with clearly outlined intent and purpose leading up to and at the pre-award phase.

Co-Design

Co-design is a collaborative process that utilizes collective brainstorming and problem solving techniques to develop appropriate and suitable solutions. Co-design does NOT involve the sharing of power or decision-making. If used during a procurement process, USAID usually convenes apparently successful partners to analyze, inform, and finalize a program description or statement of work. Co-design is not limited to the procurement process and may occur in settings to explore ideas for future planning, overcoming programming obstacles or challenges, or related to an existing funding mechanism.

Co-Creation & Co-Design Examples

This document summarizes four examples of co-creation and co-design events.



CO-CREATION ACTIVITY RELATED TO A PROCUREMENT

USAID/Haiti Improved Health Service Delivery: New Project Design

Activity Type: APS under the New Partnerships Initiative

Duration & Format of the Co-Creation: Virtual. One half-day industry day; two-hour pre-workshop orientation; three half-day workshop sessions over three consecutive days



The Haiti Health Service Delivery Co-Creation Workshop was for an Annual Program Statement (APS) under the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) aimed at collectively exploring systemic barriers to linking health service delivery and health system strengthening approaches to overcome barriers to improved maternal, infant, and child health outcomes. The co-creation also sought to strengthen applications for funding, and establish new partnerships with participants and/or local institutions.

The co-creation process was held virtually and consisted of a two-hour orientation session held several days before the workshop, followed by three half-day co-creation workshop sessions over consecutive days. The co-creation process was preceded by a virtual industry day where USAID introduced the program and solicitation and answered questions. All sessions were held in French with simultaneous interpretation in English, supporting inclusion of local partners, Ministry and government officials, as well as USAID Washington DC-based team members who preferred to speak in English.

USAID Haiti selected five consortia to participate in the co-creation. The co-creation workshop had a strong focus on creating an enabling and trusting environment for open communication between the consortia.

Intended outcomes of the co-creation included:

- Developing strategies on how to redesign submitted concepts to address the use of critical resources to expand access to PHC services (with a focus on geography and population diversity)
- Improved trust in a shared environment and new opportunities for organizations to establish partnerships

CO-DESIGN ACTIVITY RELATED TO A PROCUREMENT



USAID/Africa Bureau: YALI Co-Creation

Activity Type: APS (with one Apparently Successful Applicant)

Duration & Format of the Co-Creation: Hybrid, Five day workshop

USAID sought a partner to support the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) in creating an Africa-wide, African-led institution to bring a broader approach to YALI. USAID identified Arizona State University (ASU) as the apparently successful applicant (ASA) following a solicitation.

To ensure Arizona State University had the adequate context and understanding to design an activity that supports the transition to a YALI Africa entity, a co-creation activity was designed and facilitated to determine how to best strengthen YALI Africa into a functional, stand-alone umbrella organization by the end of the award.

An interactive five-day hybrid co-design workshop was designed that convened the ASA, YALI alumni, Regional Leadership Centers, and the USAID team. The five workshop sessions were each a half-day and convened the Washington DC-based USAID team in-person, with YALI alumni, ASU and other stakeholders from throughout Africa joining virtually. The co-design allowed stakeholders to brainstorm, discuss, and share feedback on critical processes and milestones required to successfully transition to an Africa-led YALI, enhancing student experience and growing the program's impact.

Specific intended outcomes of the workshop included:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all key stakeholders
- New ideas regarding effective monitoring and evaluation strategies, ensuring the data collected will support management's adaptive learning process
- A plan for the consolidation of fiduciary responsibilities under one YALI Africa
- Suggestions for utilizing digital technology to facilitate operations and program coordination for YALI Africa

CO-CREATION ACTIVITY NOT RELATED TO PROCUREMENT

USAID/Ukraine Cybersecurity for Critical Infrastructure in Ukraine Activity

Activity Type: Joint work planning

Duration & Format of the Co-Creation: Virtual; two weeks with a mix of plenary sessions and small working groups



The USAID Cybersecurity for Critical Infrastructure in Ukraine Activity (USAID/Cybersecurity or the Activity) was the result of a productive co-creation process to design and implement a comprehensive approach to strengthen cybersecurity in Ukraine, particularly as related to critical infrastructure protection. A co-creation activity was facilitated to engage in joint work planning across the consortium and drive alignment and expectations for FY 2022. Specific intended outcomes included:

- Final FY2022 workplan
- Identification of key actions to improve communication and collaboration within the consortium

The virtual co-creation occurred over two weeks, beginning with a half day session to review process and ground stakeholders in program updates, assess the progress of team collaboration and success factors, and enhance team cohesion and camaraderie.

Following the opening session, two large plenary sessions and 16 small group working sessions of varying lengths (all were less than a half-day each) were facilitated to develop FY2022 work plans for each component of the project, including expected outcomes, indicators, and acceleration plans (given delays in the early phases of implementation).

The closing session was a half-day virtual session for participants to share and finalize component plans for FY2022, align on beneficiary outcomes, increase the coordination of communication with external stakeholders, and discuss the team dynamics and target improvement efforts.

CO-DESIGN ACTIVITY **NOT** RELATED TO PROCUREMENT

USAID Population & Reproductive Health Family Planning & Demand Creation Learning Exchange

Activity Type: Learning Exchange

Duration & Format of the Co-Creation: Virtual; three-day workshop



USAID has invested in family planning and reproductive health around the world for nearly five decades. As the Population and Reproductive Health (PRH) team prepared to review its current global learning agenda, they decided to pause and seek the input of other key stakeholders in the sector. The team sought to push its own thinking in defining ‘demand creation’ in relation to family planning and related health and socio-behavioral outcomes.

The facilitator worked with the PRH team to conduct a brief stakeholder mapping, issue invitations and design a virtual three-day co-design workshop to revise its learning agenda. The facilitator worked to create an enabling environment where other donors, implementing partners, and family planning (FP) stakeholders felt comfortable sharing honest, and often differing, opinions with the USAID team. The facilitator achieved this through pre-workshop one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, coaching USAID on its opening remarks, and employing engaging activities that communicated an open and honest tone for the meeting.

The intended outcomes of the workshop included:

- An expanded definition of ‘demand creation’ in relation to FP and related health and socio-behavioral outcomes
- Prioritized learning questions and evidence gaps in FP and behavior change research for potential inclusion in the PRH global learning agenda



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Questions regarding this guidance should be sent to PDTandME@usaid.gov.

To learn more about Co-creation, refer to the PDT site and listing of training courses:

[PDT Co-creation Guidance](#) and [PDT Learning Catalog](#)