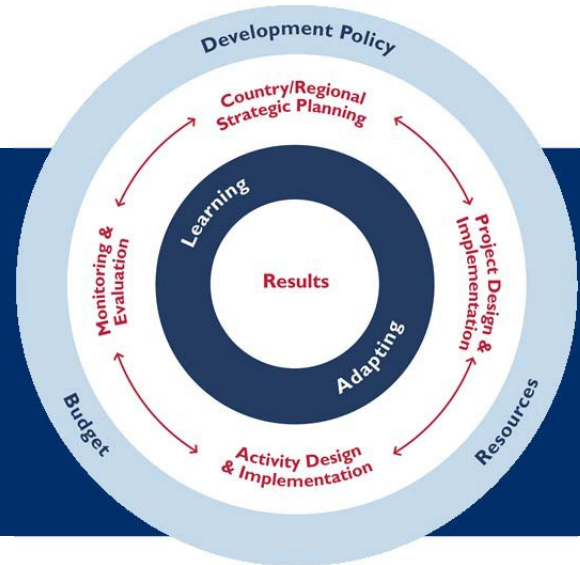


PROGRAM CYCLE

How-To Note: Integrating the Journey to Self-Reliance into the Strategy-Level Portfolio Review



This resource describes how to integrate the Journey to Self-Reliance into the strategy-level portfolio review.

How-To Notes provide guidelines and practical advice to USAID staff and partners related to the Program Cycle. This note was produced by the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL).

Introduction

This How-To Note provides guidance on how to integrate the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) into the strategy-level portfolio review. It is intended to supplement [ADS 201.3.2.18](#) and USAID's [How-To Note on Strategy Level Portfolio Reviews](#). The primary audience includes program officers, monitoring and evaluation specialists, learning advisors, and technical officers involved in conducting a portfolio review. This note complements a set of other materials related to portfolio reviews that can be found [here](#).

Options for Integrating J2SR Into Portfolio Reviews

The recommended steps for conducting a strategy-level portfolio review fall into three phases: preparation, conducting the portfolio review, and follow-up. The [How-to Note on Strategy-Level Portfolio Reviews](#) outlines these steps in detail. This How-to Note summarizes various options for integrating J2SR into the existing process, and should be adapted as appropriate based on the Mission's own priorities and needs. *We recommend reviewing both How-to Notes as you prepare for your portfolio review.*

I. Preparation- Integrating J2SR into Planning for the Portfolio Review

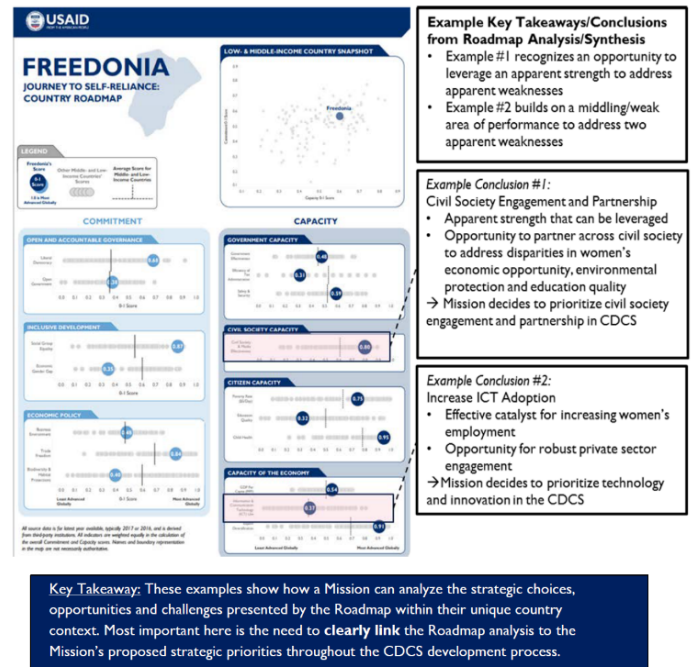
I.1 REVIEW AND UNDERSTAND J2SR GUIDANCE

A consolidated list of self-reliance guidance and policies can be found [here](#). It is important to build the capacity of staff members responsible for integrating J2SR on-the-ground by following the process below. Staff should be familiar with their [Country Roadmap](#) as well as any additional evidence as it pertains to the metrics or overall J2SR approach.

I.2 ANALYZE J2SR COUNTRY ROADMAP AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The Roadmap anchors how the Mission thinks about self-reliance in a given country and the country's trajectory on the Journey to Self-Reliance. This informs the strategic choices a Mission proposes as it begins to reorient how it engages with a country to advance self-reliance. At the strategic planning level, USAID's Country Roadmaps do two things:

- Provide a snapshot of how a country is performing on the overall journey (i.e. the scatterplot), based on the dimensions of [capacity and commitment](#).
- Provide a framework for understanding a country's relative strengths and challenges, using the seven sub-dimensions and seventeen metrics. These can serve as proxies for wider systemic issues and entry points for further analysis. For additional information about the sub-dimensions and metrics, see the [Country Roadmap Methodology Guide](#).



The following provides a three step approach for analyzing J2SR roadmaps as part of preparing for a strategy-level portfolio review.

- **Analyze the Country Roadmap.** Reviewing the current Country Roadmap is a good starting point, particularly if the Mission has not recently analyzed its Country Roadmap as a part of strategy development. Engage staff from across the Mission and leverage their expertise to better understand the levels of capacity and commitment in-country using the Roadmap sub-dimensions and metrics. Try to understand the underlying drivers that might influence individual metrics or the country's overall trajectory. Key questions to ask during this step include:
 - If / how has the country's overall Journey to Self-Reliance profile changed since the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) was originally developed?
 - Do the key takeaways from the Roadmap that informed the original CDCS priorities still apply?
 - If there have been significant changes based on the Roadmap, and the country context more broadly, should the Mission consider any changes to its strategic approach?

The Technical Note, [Applying the CDCS to the CDCS](#), provides guidance for conducting this type of analysis in the context of the CDCS, but many of the guiding principles and action steps can also be applied to the strategy-level portfolio review process.

- **Analyze secondary metrics.** The Roadmap metrics are high level; additional data sources and analyses can help shed light on the underlying self-reliance story. The purpose of focused analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of the Roadmap metrics in a specific country context and, where appropriate, identify complementary data - including qualitative resources - that can be used to more accurately interpret them. USAID has created a [secondary metrics compendium](#)

that provides a wide array of additional metrics and related information that can further inform analytical and decision-making processes. These data can be used to help unpack the Roadmap metrics, triangulate data pertaining to specific issues, and may surface new underlying issues pertaining to self-reliance. Missions are also encouraged to draw insights from supplementary data available in-country, including analyses conducted by the Mission or other donors.

- **Identify opportunities and constraints that emerge from the Roadmap.** The portfolio review is a good time for the Mission to consider opportunities presented by the Roadmap as well as practical constraints. The Mission may want to identify the most significant roadblocks related to strengths and challenges presented by the Roadmap (e.g., earmarks, hard political realities, interagency mechanics) and articulate potential corresponding adjustments to strategic choices. Articulating constraints helps us be explicit about our priorities, weigh potential tradeoffs, and identify where flexibility may be possible.

I.3 ANALYZE AND/OR MAP HOST COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PRIORITIES TO USAID PROGRAMS

J2SR is based on the idea that each country should lead its own development process. This requires Missions to consider how to strengthen engagement with partner governments. The portfolio review is an opportunity to consider how USAID's program supports host country objectives and priorities. Consider where USAID and partner government priorities align, as well as any changes in partner government priorities that might have implications for USAID programming. Also discuss any areas where our priorities are not aligned.

I.4 ANALYZE DATA THROUGH A J2SR LENS

The process of reviewing, analyzing, and presenting data is an important part of ensuring that portfolio reviews are evidence based. Missions should examine relevant performance monitoring data under each Development Objective (DO) (including any higher-level indicators in the Performance Management (PMP)), and consider the implications for J2SR. In particular, identify what we can learn from the data we already collect, as well as from relevant data collected by partners and local organizations, about how USAID projects are strengthening capacity and commitment. This could include looking for evidence of changes in capacity and commitment within local partner organizations, at the community level or at other levels of the system, as appropriate. Throughout the process, it is important to identify knowledge gaps that will require future data collection, analysis, or research to inform decision making. As you do so, review how these emerging knowledge gaps relate to your existing theory of change and [learning agenda](#) and how they may relate to the broader [Self-Reliance Learning Agenda](#).

Consider the following options for using various sources of data to build the Mission's understanding of progress towards self-reliance.

- **Understand context.** USAID encourages the use of context indicators given that USAID program interventions have to consider how they affect (and are affected by) larger systems. J2SR Roadmap and secondary metrics can provide a framework for analyzing other context indicators, understanding performance data, and for considering how USAID's strategy relates and responds to that context.

- **Analyze progress.** When reviewing performance data, consider how it helps the Mission understand progress or setbacks toward building capacity and commitment in line with strategic priorities. Missions should determine if projects are on track to achieve Intermediate Results (IRs) and advance DOs by examining relevant performance monitoring data under each DO based on monitoring plans described in the Mission-wide PMP. This may include data for IRs and project purpose performance indicators. Evaluations, assessments, and other sources of data - including data sources and analyses provided by partners - may help to contextualize performance monitoring data alongside J2SR metrics. Remember, Roadmap metrics are not performance indicators. Instead they should inform how local capacity and commitment are understood within the strategy.

I.5 CONDUCT A J2SR WORKSHOP (OR A SERIES OF J2SR WORKING SESSIONS)

The Mission (or a DO team) can conduct a J2SR workshop (or a series of working sessions) as part of preparation to provide staff with time and space to learn from one another, engage with J2SR concepts and ideas, and identify the team's own priorities around J2SR. FSN leadership is key to local ownership, and should be strongly encouraged throughout the preparation process, including during planning and follow-through. Also be sure to include Support Office staff in this process. Everyone brings different perspectives and expertise to supporting self-reliance, and all of these perspectives are needed in order to achieve our goal. One way of approaching this is to create a steering committee with members from all technical and support offices. Encourage knowledge sharing across the Mission by supporting committee members to act as points of contact for their teams. The questions in Annex I can help teams consider how to integrate J2SR into their work.

I.6 WIDEN THE CIRCLE- INCORPORATE THE PERSPECTIVES OF PARTNERS AND OTHER LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Fostering self-reliance requires particular focus on working with local partners to support commitment and capacity for local problem solving. As part of the portfolio review, Missions should consider opportunities for incorporating the perspectives of various stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries, implementing partners, other local partners and stakeholders including civil society organizations or local government) on larger strategic issues and/or program performance. Inviting the perspectives of a range of stakeholders into a portfolio review can result in the identification of new knowledge gaps and a broader view of systemic results related to building capacity and commitment. It may also reveal important distinctions in how different stakeholders understand and interpret evidence of progress.

2. Conducting a Portfolio Review that Incorporates J2SR

2.1 SELECT KEY J2SR QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE REVIEW

USAID's How-to Note, [Strategy-Level Portfolio Reviews](#), identifies specific issues to address as part of a strategy-level portfolio review¹. Annex I overlays J2SR-focused questions onto the existing question structure. This list of questions provides a starting point; Missions are encouraged to adapt these questions as needed.

¹ USAID, How-to Note: Strategy-Level Portfolio Reviews, page 2

2.2 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO DIVERSIFY THE PARTNER BASE

USAID is committed to forging new partnerships, leveraging private resources and tapping into innovative solutions as a part of an overall strategy to support self-reliance. This requires thinking differently about how to engage both existing and potential partners. The portfolio review provides an important moment to pause and consider whether there might be new or emergent opportunities to diversify the partner base in order to meet strategic objectives. DO teams can review the structure of existing programs and draw on analysis (such as private sector mapping or local systems mapping) to consider implications for how the strategy is implemented, as well as how to leverage a broader array of resources to achieve self-reliance outcomes.

2.3 CONSIDER WHETHER A JOINT PORTFOLIO REVIEW IS APPROPRIATE

Several Missions have successfully conducted joint portfolio reviews with the host country government to establish a shared vision, review performance, share data, and chart a forward path. As Missions begin to rethink relationships with partner governments (and encourage greater host country contributions, including analyses), new opportunities emerge to actively engage country governments as partners. This approach may be particularly appealing as countries move to higher levels of capacity and commitment or where a transition is anticipated. Annex I identifies questions that help to reflect how USAID might consider redefining the relationship.

3. Follow-Up Actions and Documenting Outcomes

3.1 CREATE AN ACTION PLAN AROUND J2SR

If the objectives for the portfolio review are designed to integrate J2SR into Mission strategy and implementation, then ensuring follow-up and action is a critical step. The Program Office plays a key role in preparing an action plan to summarize final decisions and actions resulting from the review. The action plan is the basis for adaptive management and will inform future portfolio reviews or CDCS development (depending on where the Mission is in the Program Cycle). The Program Office should consider how the Mission will check in on progress and monitor the completion of actions in order to meaningfully integrate self-reliance into the Mission's ongoing work.

Annex I. Applying a J2SR Lens to Portfolio Reviews

USAID's How-to Note, [Strategy-Level Portfolio Reviews](#), identifies specific issues to address as part of a strategy-level portfolio review. The following questions are designed to support the Mission in applying a J2SR lens to portfolio reviews. They can be used for a variety of purposes, including: reviewing existing analyses, preparing agendas, or for the identification of gaps and deciding where to focus preparation efforts. Missions are encouraged to adapt these questions as needed.

Applying a J2SR Lens to Portfolio Reviews

Progress toward achievement of CDCS results and expectations

- *Reflecting on progress:* What has been learned over the course of the year about building the country's capacity and commitment? Based on evidence from implementation, what strengths and weaknesses have emerged? What are the implications for future strategy development?
- *Defining the Mission's J2SR Priorities:* Based on your analysis of the country Roadmap, what are the main priorities for USAID in supporting the Journey to Self-Reliance? Are any adjustments to the CDCS (i.e., the DOs, IRs, or theory of change) required?
- *Integrating J2SR Priorities:* A number of considerations need to be addressed in determining the Mission's strategic approach to supporting J2SR:
 - a. *Working with the host country government:* What is the nature of the overall relationship between the Mission and the host country government? What aspects of the relationship does the Mission propose to build on? Which aspects does it seek to redefine to ensure that the host government makes a demonstrated commitment to achieving development results? How does the Mission propose to achieve this shift (e.g., increasing use of policy reform requirements, cost-sharing, less traditional modalities)?
 - b. *Building on local ownership:* How does the strategy leverage local actors as co-designers, co-implementers, and co-owners of their own development outcomes? What role does civil society play to hold the government accountable for country commitment and capacity? How is that reflected in your current strategic approach? Looking ahead, are there opportunities to strengthen this approach?
 - c. *Leveraging private sector resources:* What is the role of the private sector in advancing the country's journey to self-reliance, and how might this align with or influence the Mission's work? How does the Mission engage and incentivize the private sector to achieve shared objectives? What other steps might the Mission take to foster enterprise-driven growth?
 - d. *Financing sustainable development solutions:* How does the strategy support the country's capacity and commitment to finance and resource its own development across all sectors? To what extent are country resources available to support the Mission's strategic approach? How can the Mission help increase country capacity to mobilize these resources, and build financial self-reliance?
 - e. *Diversifying the partner base:* Has the Mission identified the right strategic partners to advance self-reliance and share accountability for results? Are there opportunities to expand the partner base to include new and underutilized partners and/or leverage broader change?

The status of critical assumptions and changes in context, along with related implications for performance

- *Interpreting the context:* What changes have occurred in the context that have implications for USAID's strategy? How do these changes affect USAID's priorities? Are any adjustments required?
- *Reviewing critical assumptions:* Have any of our critical assumptions changed due to our focus on J2SR?
- What are the implications of the changes in context for adapting current programs and future strategy development?

Opportunities to adapt as a result of learning

- *Making adjustments:* Based on your discussions, are any adjustments to the CDCS (i.e., the DO/IR/sub-IR language, theory of change, or narrative) required?
- *Identifying knowledge gaps:* What does the available evidence (performance monitoring data, evaluations, assessments, third-party data, stakeholder consultation data, or studies) tell the Mission about the opportunities and challenges related to supporting the country's journey to self-reliance? Looking ahead to the next strategy, what information gaps need to be addressed to better support the journey to self-reliance?
- *Encouraging shared accountability:* How will the Mission engage with key partners to ground-truth USAID perspectives, ensure shared objectives, and support learning and action?
- *Sharing learning with a wider audience:* Has the Mission identified lessons or insights (or other monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities) that address the [Self Reliance Learning Agenda](#) questions and should be shared with the wider Agency?
- *Documenting and ensuring follow up:* How will the Mission ensure follow-up and track actions?

If a Mission is in the final year of the CDCS, undertaking a mid-course stocktaking, or planning to develop a new CDCS in the upcoming year, the portfolio review should assess (and document) cumulative achievements toward the DOs and IRs

- *Reflecting on the strategy to-date:* What has been learned over the course of the Mission's strategy *to-date* (as opposed to only reviewing the last six months to a year) about building the country's capacity and commitment? What strengths and weaknesses have emerged? What implications do these lessons have for future strategy development?

Annex 2. References and Additional Resources

The Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning is available to assist all Missions as they work to analyze their Roadmaps, and Missions are encouraged to reach out to the Journey to Self-Reliance Metrics Team at selfreliance@usaid.gov with questions about the Roadmap primary metrics and secondary data sources. The Metrics Team can provide the Mission with additional resources and direct technical assistance throughout the process of analyzing the roadmap to inform their strategic choices and priorities.

Missions are also encouraged to:

- Consult the [Self-Reliance Country Roadmap resources](#)
- Watch the [Country Roadmap Roll Out Webinar](#)
- Read the [Self-Reliance sector papers](#)
- Watch [webinar on the sector papers](#)
- Consult the [J2SR homepage on ProgramNet](#)

In addition, the following summarizes additional resources related to topics mentioned in this How-To Note.

- [Discussion Note: Integrating the Country's Journey to Self-Reliance \(J2SR\) into Project Design](#)
- [How-To Note: Strategy-Level Portfolio Review](#)
- [How-To-Note: CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking](#)
- How-To-Note: Integrating Self-Reliance into the Mid-Course Stocktaking (*forthcoming*)
- [Technical Note: Applying the Country Roadmap to the CDCS](#)
- [USAID, Acquisition and Assistance Strategy, December 2018](#)
- [USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance](#)
- [USAID Policy: Redefining Our Relationship with Partners Governments](#)
- [Implementing J2SR throughout the Program Cycle: A Quick Guide](#)