ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

Evaluation

1. What additional resources exist to help a mission design an impact evaluation?

What additional resources exist to help a mission design an impact evaluation?

- World Bank. Impact Evaluation in Practice. Gertler, Paul J.; Martinez, Sebastian; Premand, Patrick; Rawlings, Laura B.; Vermeersch, Christel M. J. December 2010.
- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)
  o 3ie Impact evaluation Glossary
  o 3ie PowerPoint "What is impact evaluation, when and how should we use it, and how to go about it?"
  o 3ie PowerPoint "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental designs"
- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
- Innovations for Poverty Action
- Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit. NBER Technical Working Paper No. 333. E. Duflo, M. Kremer and R. Glennerster.
- Randomized Evaluations of Educational Programs in Developing Countries: Some Lessons. M. Kremer. *The American Economic Review.* 2003.

2. Is there a way to distinguish between various types of evaluations in the PPR?

Is there a way to distinguish between various types of evaluations in the PPR?

In the FY 2013 PPR Evaluation Registry, Missions must check a box to distinguish required vs. non-required evaluations. But at this time, there is no way to distinguish external from internal evaluations in the PPR Evaluation Registry, unless a Mission would like to do so in the evaluation title or narrative about "use."

3. What are parallel contracts for impact evaluation?

What are parallel contracts for impact evaluation?

A parallel contractual or grant agreement is established to hire an external evaluation team before or at the inception of an activity/IM that will undergo an impact evaluation. That contractual or grant agreement will include sufficient resources for baseline and end line data collection and data analysis. It should provide guidance and advice to the implementers on the use of experimental methods during activity implementation so that the impact evaluation can be undertaken.

4. How do we make sure that activity M&E plans are in line with the Project M&E plan?

How do we make sure that activity M&E plans are in line with the Project M&E plan?

Per ADS 203, at the activity/implementing mechanism level, implementers are expected to submit an activity M&E plan to USAID CORs/AORs within the first 90 days of an award and before major activity implementation actions begin. Consistent with revisions in ADS 300.3.4, all solicitations should include already-defined indicators that flow from a project's M&E Plan as outlined in the PAD. Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all activity M&E plans include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the project M&E plan and the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP) and Performance Plan and Report (PPR). This is best done during the project design stage. Activity M&E plans submitted to USAID should include only those indicators that the mission needs for project and activity

management, rather than the entire set of all indicators an implementer uses for its internal management purposes.

For some missions that currently have projects and activities that do not fit directly within the CDCS, or have initiatives that fall outside of their project Log Frames, there may be a transition period until indicators fully align with mission strategy. During this transition period, missions should continue collecting data for the indicators needed to manage or report on these activities. During the annual work-planning process with implementers, missions should consider which indicators may no longer be needed to save resources and time and use the opportunity to trim unnecessary indicators from the implementer's collection and reporting burden.

5. Is there any guidance on how the 5-10% of total program resources allocated for M&E should be calculated? Should 3% percent of program funds be allocated to evaluation?

Is there any guidance on how the 5-10% of total program resources allocated for M&E should be calculated? Should 3% percent of program funds be allocated to evaluation?
ADS 203 recommends that missions dedicate 5-10% of total program resources (across the entire Operating Unit) for monitoring and evaluation. This does not mean that every project be evaluated, or that three percent of every project's budget be set aside for evaluation. The actual costs of monitoring and evaluation may vary depending on operating environment and the specific types evaluations the mission plans to undertake. This 5-10% goal was established to ensure missions dedicate adequate resources to support effective performance monitoring and evaluation.

There is not explicit guidance on how resources allocated for mission-wide M&E should be calculated. Field operating units should use available data, reasonable estimates, and defensible decisions in their calculations. Given that M&E may occur through a number of different mechanisms, it is generally not recommended for missions to centralize their M&E budget. Mission-wide M&E can include individual awards as well as activities a mission is doing outside of awards, such as a mission-wide monitoring and/or evaluation support mechanisms.

6. Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?

Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?
The Evaluation Policy requires that all evaluation reports be submitted publicly to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) (dec.usaid.gov) within three months of their completion. There are very rare exceptions to this publicly-available requirement which are granted after a formal request is submitted to and approved by the Director of PPL's Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (PPL/LER). Without this approval, all evaluation reports must be submitted to the DEC and available for the public to view. If there are sensitive issues, Operating Units should have both a public version of the report and an SBU version of the report. In some situations, PPL/LER recommends that approval be sought for an SBU version only for a specific, limited time frame to allow time for sensitivities to decrease.

Exceptions to the public disclosure requirement are expected to be rare, must be requested and justified in writing, and should be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Disclosure would impair foreign assistance objectives.
2. Disclosure would involve releasing otherwise proprietary information owned by third parties.
3. Information disclosed could put individual safety at risk or release private personal information.
The few exceptions to public disclosure approved thus far have been on the basis of the safety and security of our partners. Even if an exception is granted by PPL/LER, the evaluation should be posted on the DEC as SBU so that it is at least available to USAID staff. Any mission seeking an exception should submit an action memo to PPL/LER from the mission director requesting the exception. An action memo template and further details about the criteria and process for seeking an exception can be found on ProgramNet here.

7. At what point in the program cycle should you plan for evaluation?

At what point in the program cycle should you plan for evaluation?
Evaluations should be timed so that their findings can inform decisions such as exercising option years, designing a follow on project, creating a country or sector strategic plan, or making a policy decision. This means starting the process to solicit an evaluation should begin at least 12 – 18 months in advance of a decision point to allow for sufficient time to: (1) draft a strong SOW that is shared with partners for input and vetted in-house prior to finalizing; (2) issue the solicitation and give partners several weeks to prepare and respond; (3) review proposals and select a finalist; (4) award the contract; and (5) for the evaluation team to conduct the evaluation using high-quality methods to generate evidence and draft a subsequent report with recommendations based on findings.

8. Who can participate in evaluation teams?

Who can participate in evaluation teams?
For required evaluations (i.e. those of large projects or pilot activities), the evaluation team leader should always be an independent expert from outside of USAID and with no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. The outside expert may come from another U.S. Government Agency not involved in project implementation, or be engaged through a contractual mechanism. To the extent possible, evaluation specialists with appropriate expertise from partner countries, but not involved in project implementation, will lead and/or be included in evaluation teams.

In cases where OU management determines that appropriate expertise exists within the Agency, and that engaging USAID staff in an evaluation will facilitate institutional learning, the evaluation team may be predominantly composed of USAID staff, though the evaluation team lead must still be external to USAID. In these cases, in addition to potentially using staff from that OU, OUs are encouraged to invite staff from other countries to participate, especially Foreign Service Nationals who have significant technical expertise, and new Foreign Service Officers who have joined under the Development Leadership Initiative. PPL/LER will keep a roster of USAID staff who have completed the Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists course and who are looking for practicum opportunities to share with OUs looking for potential evaluation team members.

9. Is the PPR Evaluation Registry being used to set USAID Forward targets and determine actuals?

Is the PPR Evaluation Registry being used to set USAID Forward targets and determine actuals?
Yes. A new section of the FY2013 PPR will track USAID Forward targets and actuals. For evaluations, the data will be pre-populated. For example, the FY2013 USAID Forward evaluation target will be calculated using data entered into the previous year's PPR Evaluation Registry for planned and ongoing evaluations, and FY2013 actuals will use this year's Evaluation Registry to count the number of evaluations completed.   More information will be included in the FY2013 PPR Guidance. Note that in FY 2012, the Evaluation Registry had a USAID Forward "check box" option for each evaluation, but that has been discontinued as all evaluations now count toward USAID Forward targets and actuals. Please also see Cindy Clapp-Wincek's 12/2013 blog post on this topic, which is still relevant: https://programnet.usaid.gov/blog-entry/some-words-advice-preparing-your-pprs-and-evaluation-targets

10. Can implementing partners evaluate their own projects?

Can implementing partners evaluate their own projects?
Evaluations undertaken to meet the "large project" or "pilot activity" requirements of the Evaluation Policy must be external (i.e., a third-party contractor or grantee managed directly by USAID). Therefore, implementing partners should not conduct evaluations of the projects that they manage that are determined to be required.

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Separate and apart from the required evaluations or other external non-required evaluations that a mission chooses to conduct, USAID technical officers are encouraged to include funding dedicated within a project budget, in a budget for a Request for Proposals (RFP), or in the final grant/contract agreement so that implementing partners may engage in evaluative work for institutional learning and management decision-making. Many implementers have significant monitoring and evaluation expertise in-house, and the value of evaluation within the implementation and management of a project is well recognized. In those cases where USAID funds support an evaluation conducted or commissioned by an implementing partner, the implementing partner must still meet the procedural standards of the Evaluation Policy and the findings from that internal evaluation must be shared in written form with the responsible technical officer within three months of the evaluation's conclusion.

11. Does the Evaluation Policy apply to all OUs?

Does the Evaluation Policy apply to all OUs?
The policy applies to all USAID OUs that implement program funded development projects. However, some aspects of the Evaluation Policy, such as which projects are required to be evaluated, only apply to USAID field mission/offices as described in ADS 203.3.1.3.

12. Are there communities of practice at USAID that focus on evaluation? How do I join?

Are there communities of practice at USAID that focus on evaluation? How do I join?
The Evaluation Interest Group (EIG) is the largest evaluation community of practice at USAID. There are approximately 900 individuals on the EIG listserv, and the group is open to anyone at USAID. EIG provides a broad forum to share evaluation experiences, best practices, and opportunities related to evaluation and learning. EIG meets in person on occasion to hear outside speakers (called the Evaluation Forum), share information and experiences about USAID evaluations, and to discuss cutting-edge methods and challenges in evaluation practice.

The EIG Point of Contact is Virginia Lamprecht (vlamprecht@usaid.gov), PPL/LER.

13. Do internal and external, non-required and required, impact and performance evaluations count toward my USAID Forward targets and actuals?

Do internal and external, non-required and required, impact and performance evaluations count toward my USAID Forward targets and actuals?
Yes. All evaluations count toward USAID Forward targets and actuals, as they should all adhere to the standards set out in the Evaluation Policy/ADS 203.

14. What is the relationship of the Evaluation Policy to other guidance and policies, especially ADS 203?

What is the relationship of the Evaluation Policy to other guidance and policies, especially ADS 203?
The Evaluation Policy was incorporated into ADS 203 in February 2012. In case of any discrepancy, ADS 203 is the more authoritative source of guidance.

The Evaluation Policy works in concert with other program cycle guidance covering Agency policies and strategies, Country Development Cooperation Strategies, project design, performance monitoring, and learning and adapting, as specified in ADS 201 and 203. If OUs identify guidance that seems to be in conflict, please bring this to the attention of PPL/LER (evaluation@usaid.gov) and we will provide clarification.

15. Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

Evaluation needs should be taken into consideration during project design. Ideally, it is during the project design stage that an OU would identify the need for, and begin planning for, an impact evaluation. Randomization to establish a treatment and control group should occur prior to the implementation of the project component (IM/activity or intervention within an activity) that will be evaluated.

For ongoing activities, when randomization to establish treatment and control groups may no longer be an option, it is possible to use quasi-experimental statistical methods to construct treatment and comparison groups. This includes methods such as regression discontinuity, difference in differences, matching, and analyzing instrumental variables. For most of these methods, it is necessary to have a baseline, or other existing data, for both the treatment and comparison groups.

For ongoing activities, OUs may want to consider whether a performance evaluation using mixed and robust qualitative and quantitative methods would be more appropriate than an impact evaluation.

16. Which evaluation components are required to be included in the CDCS?
Which evaluation components are required to be included in the CDCS?
Missions are required to include the following evaluation components in their CDCS:

• Identification of high priority evaluation questions for each DO that can address: (a) the development hypotheses and key assumptions underlying the DO; (b) estimating DO impact; (c) policy approach in a specific sector, and/or; (d) the efficiency of the USAID implementation approach (with attention to costs).

• At least one opportunity for impact evaluation of a project or project component within each DO (note: this is not required for an abbreviated CDCS).

It is not expected that every high priority evaluation question or impact evaluation opportunity identified in the CDCS will be evaluated. Rather, the CDCS process provides a chance for mission leadership and technical officers to consider evaluation questions, and performance and impact evaluation opportunities, which could be operationalized, if feasible, during project design and implementationstages.

17. What is a "pilot activity" (or "pilot" or "innovative" project)?
What is a "pilot activity" (or "pilot" or "innovative" project)?
A pilot activity is an activity/IM or an intervention within an IM involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through U.S. Government foreign assistance or other funding sources. (Note that the terminology "pilot activity" is generally more appropriate in the USAID context than "pilot project" since it is generally not feasible or advisable to do an impact evaluation at the project-level). DO teams should identify pilot activities during the project design stage. ADS 203 recommends that pilot activities, if feasible, undergo an external impact evaluation; if an impact evaluation is not feasible or optimal, missions may undertake a performance evaluation but should note in the final evaluation report the rationale for not conducting an impact evaluation.

18. What training in evaluation is available at USAID? Can you also recommend other non-USAID training resources?
What training in evaluation is available at USAID? Can you also recommend other non-USAID training resources?
PPL/LER offers two courses in evaluation: a one-week course titled Evaluation for Program Managers (EPM) and a two-week course titled Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists (EES). The EPM course covers basic evaluation designs and data collection methods, while the EES course, designed for those who will have significant evaluation responsibilities, goes into much more depth

about data collection tools and methods. In addition to the classroom courses, PPL is developing on-line modules and mini-courses on evaluation-related topics. A few short courses are available now to USAID staff on USAID University, including two that were developed by USAID and/or the State Department: 1) Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (although the language varies from how USAID uses some terms) and 2) Rapid Data Collection Methods.

In terms of non-USAID training resources, below are some examples of external training resources on evaluation.

Online courses

- Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Open Courseware on Fundamentals of Program Evaluation, Concepts in Economic Evaluation, and Introduction to Methods for Health Services Research and Evaluation.
- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). Online course on randomized evaluation: Evaluating Social Programs: Executive Education at J-PAL

Classroom Courses

- World Bank Evaluation Training and Advisory Services, offered in multiple locations around the world.
- The Evaluators Institute at George Washington University in Washington, DC.
- International Program for Development Evaluation Training in Ottawa, Canada.
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19. Why does the PPR Evaluation Registry include a field for an estimated "evaluation budget"? Is it really important to fill that out?

Why does the PPR Evaluation Registry include a field for an estimated "evaluation budget"? Is it really important to fill that out?
Estimating the resources required to undertake an evaluation is essential to good planning and should be a key component of a Mission's Evaluation Plan (see the above link to a sample Mission-wide Evaluation Plan). But, since evaluation budget estimates likely will change due to any number of factors, some Missions have hesitated to include this information in the PPR's Evaluation Registry. Nevertheless, filling out this field is critical for several reasons. When aggregated across the Agency, the budget estimates help USAID get a sense of the totality of resources being devoted to evaluation; track trends over the fiscal years; and help us demonstrate to external stakeholders, such as the White House's Office of Management and Budget, the priority that USAID places on evaluation (albeit a monetary proxy!).

20. Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?
USAID encourages participation by national counterparts and country-level stakeholders in the development of an evaluation SOW. Stakeholders may encompass a wide array of people and institutions, including policy makers, program managers, implementing partners, other relevant USG agencies, host country organizations, and beneficiaries. OUs should share draft SOWs (in which the evaluation questions are initially defined) with local partners for their feedback. This early input is essential to maximize the use of the eventual evaluation findings. Transparency is very important in the design stage of the evaluation process. As the Evaluation Policy notes, "Except in unusual circumstances, the [evaluation] design will be shared with country-level stakeholders as well as with the implementing partners for comment before being finalized." At the end of the evaluation process, OUs should give funders, implementers, and evaluation team members the opportunity to attach a statement of differences to the final report regarding "any significant unresolved differences of opinion" about the evaluation. Thus, OUs need to share the

draft evaluation report with other project or evaluation funders and the implementing partners. Once reports are final, they must be shared with all partners and the public, barring rare exceptions related to protecting U.S. national interests.

21. What is a performance evaluation? What methods are appropriate for performance evaluations?

What is a performance evaluation? What methods are appropriate for performance evaluations? Performance evaluations focus on descriptive and normative questions: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual. The majority of evaluations at USAID are performance evaluations.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is optimal for performance evaluations. The goal is to use robust qualitative and quantitative methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked taking into consideration time, budget, and other practical considerations. Also see the Mixed Methods Technical Note on ProgramNet.

22. How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?

How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?
Per the standard mission order on Evaluation, findings from evaluations will be shared as widely as possible, with a commitment to full and active disclosure. Following the completion of the evaluation report, the Program Office must ensure that the final evaluation report is posted on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) no later than three months after completion. Exceptions to this requirement are granted in only very rare circumstances. See the FAQ on this topic for further information on seeking exceptions.

The highly preferred method to submit documents to the DEC is through the on-line submission process. To submit documents to the DEC:

1) Go to https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx
2) Click the "SUBMIT" tab in the upper-left-hand corner.
3) Log-in using the log-in screen. If you do not have a log-in and password, click the "Register" tab to create a log-in and password. You will be able to immediately submit documents after registering.
5) Once you have logged in, click "Submit Documents."
6) Read the brief list of guidelines.
7) Fill out the form with the information from the document, including Title, Publication Date and Language. If you have other information about the document, such as a contract number, please fill in the appropriate field on the form. This helps the DEC staff with the review and processing.
8) UPLOAD the document! (People frequently forget this step).
9) Don't forget to click SAVE when you are finished. (People also frequently forget this step). Once you've clicked SAVE, you will be taken to a newly-created record for your document which you will be able to send to yourself or others via e-mail, add tags and comments, share on Facebook and Twitter, etc. Note that if you are unable to submit a document via the online form, you can do so by email at docsubmit@usaid.gov or mail (for paper, CD-ROMs, or other materials in hard-copy). Note that documents submitted to the DEC through the online submission process are available immediately, while those sent to the DEC via e-mail or hard copy can take weeks or even months to be available through the DEC interface.
In addition to posting evaluation reports to the DEC, OUs should also consider other methods of dissemination, such as hosting briefings with local stakeholders, partners and other donors to

discuss evaluation findings; featuring evaluation findings on the OU's website, such as through an article or blog post; and holding press conferences and issuing press releases.

23. Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

To ensure that evaluations address the most relevant questions, OUs should share draft SOWs (in which the evaluation questions are initially defined) with local partners for their feedback. This early input is essential to maximize the use of the eventual evaluation findings, and to help identify local expertise for the conduct of the evaluation, if that is desired. OUs are also encouraged but not required to share *draft* reports with partners; the decision to do so depends on the nature of the relationship between the OU and the partner(s), and the OU's judgment about the receptivity of partners to the findings. Once reports are final, they must be shared with all partners and the public, barring *rare* exceptions related to protecting U.S. national interests.

24. How do I populate/update the PPR Evaluation Registry? Where do I start?

How do I populate/update the PPR Evaluation Registry? Where do I start?

The PPR Evaluation Registry should draw from a Mission's Evaluation Plan, which is a required part of the Mission-wide Performance Management Plan. Related resources are available on ProgramNet: https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/draft-multi-year-evaluation-plan-template

25. What is an evaluation plan?

What is an evaluation plan?

Program Offices must create a mission-wide evaluation plan, included in their mission Performance Management Plan (PMP), to identify and track evaluations across the mission and over the entire CDCS timeframe as described in ADS 203.3.3.1. Evaluation plans should include, at minimum, the DO/project/activity to be evaluated, evaluation type, possible evaluation questions, estimated budget, planned start date and estimated completion date. A recommended multi-year evaluation plan template is available on ProgramNet.

Project M&E plans should also include planning for evaluations at the project level, as described in ADS 203.3.4.4.

26. What procurement mechanisms are available for evaluations?

What procurement mechanisms are available for evaluations?

A list of the various agency-wide mechanisms by which USAID staff can procure evaluation services is available on ProgramNet here.

27. What types of evaluations should be included in the Mission's Evaluation Plan? And in the PPR Evaluation Registry?

What types of evaluations should be included in the Mission's Evaluation Plan? And in the PPR Evaluation Registry?

Missions should include all types of evaluations in the Mission Evaluation Plan and, correspondingly, in the PPR evaluation registry -- required and not-required; external and internal; performance and impact. Do not include assessments, reviews, studies, etc. that are not evaluations as defined by the ADS/Evaluation Policy.

28. What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

Performance monitoring and evaluation are mutually reinforcing, but distinct, practices (see ADS 203.1). Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to good performance management - the systematic process of collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; and using performance information and evaluations to influence decision-making and resource allocation. In many cases, good performance monitoring can allow for richer evaluations. From establishing baselines to systematically collecting and analyzing indicator data,

solid performance monitoring can save resources for more in-depth data collection and analysis during evaluation. Performance monitoring may trigger evaluations by pointing to the need to probe further to understand project performance during implementation.

29. How should M&E be budgeted for and tracked at the award/mechanism level? Should M&E be a distinct line item in the award budget?

How should M&E be budgeted for and tracked at the award/mechanism level? Should M&E be a distinct line item in the award budget?

Per ADS 203, during acquisition and assistance solicitation CORs/AORs must work with COs/AOs to ensure that solicitations include instructions to offerors/applicants to include costs of data collection, analysis, and reporting as a separate line item in their budgets to ensure that adequate resources are available. A dedicated line item for M&E should also be included in the award budget so that the mission can track how much funding is going toward M&E.

With regard to how M&E should be budgeted for at the award/mechanism level, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Some awards/mechanisms could require 10%, or maybe even more, to undertake monitoring and evaluation (e.g. impact evaluations of activities/IMs or interventions in remote geographic areas); others could require 1% or less of the total budget.

ADS 203 recommends that missions dedicate 5-10% of total program resources, including within individual awards, to monitoring and evaluation.

30. How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?

How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?

High-quality evaluation findings should inform USAID decisions. The Program Office should ensure that evaluations are timed so that evaluation findings are available when decisions need to be made, and that findings are integrated into decision-making and learning about priorities, resource allocations and project design. The standard mission order on Evaluation calls for the Program Office to lead relevant mission staff through the process of responding to evaluation findings, as described in ADS 203.3.1.9. This process will lead to the development of an action plan for addressing the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations the mission has accepted or any other actions it deems necessary as a result of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. During Portfolio Reviews, the status of action plans for evaluation findings and their use in respective decisions will be discussed and documented.

31. Which evaluation components are required to be included in the CDCS?

Which evaluation components are required to be included in the CDCS?

Missions are required to include the following evaluation components in their CDCS:

• Identification of high priority evaluation questions for each DO that can address: (a) the development hypotheses and key assumptions underlying the DO; (b) estimating DO impact; (c) policy approach in a specific sector, and/or; (d) the efficiency of the USAID implementation approach (with attention to costs).

• At least one opportunity for impact evaluation of a project or project component within each DO (note: this is not required for an abbreviated CDCS).

It is not expected that every high priority evaluation question or impact evaluation opportunity identified in the CDCS will be evaluated. Rather, the CDCS process provides a chance for mission leadership and technical officers to consider evaluation questions, and performance and impact evaluation opportunities, which could be operationalized, if feasible, during project design stages.

Per ADS 201.3.3.4, missions must incorporate USAID's Gender Equality/Female Empowerment Policy by asking relevant evaluation questions about whether reducing gaps between males and females contributes to project outcomes.

32. What is an impact evaluation? What methods are required for impact evaluations?

What is an impact evaluation? What methods are required for impact evaluations?

Impact evaluations measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention. Impact evaluations 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. By comparing the outcomes of beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group (or to various treatment groups with no control group), impact evaluations provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured.

Impact evaluations use experimental or quasi-experimental design methods to establish treatment and control groups for comparison from the beginning of program implementation. Experimental design will generate treatment and control groups by randomly allocating intervention among eligible participants or groups of participants. Quasi-experimental designs will, in contrast, generate a comparison group that resembles the treatment group, at least in observed characteristics, through a statistically significant matching method.

Note that, due to a variety of reasons, not every development project lends itself to an impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. PPL/LER is developing guidance on what factors to consider when determining whether to do an impact evaluation and how to write a statement of work for impact evaluations.

33. What is an evaluation registry?

What is an evaluation registry?

The Evaluation Registry is an annex to the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) which includes information on completed evaluations during the previous fiscal year and ongoing and planned evaluations for the current fiscal year, plus two out years. The annual PPR guidance from the Office of Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) indicates the specific information that is to be supplied about each evaluation.

34. Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Most, if not all, evaluations should be managed by the program office of an OU or bureau. Exceptions can be made as decided by the leadership of the OU. These exceptions should be documented with the rationale for the exception included in the evaluation statement of work.

35. Are ALL required evaluations external and ALL non-required evaluations internal?

Are ALL required evaluations external and ALL non-required evaluations internal?

No. If an evaluation is required per the ADS/Evaluation Policy (large projects, pilot/innovative interventions), then it must be external. However, Missions can choose to commission evaluations in cases in which the ADS/Evaluation Policy does not require an external evaluation. Such non-required evaluations can be external or internal. So, while we can be confident that all required evaluations are external, we cannot make the assumption that all non-required evaluations are internal.

36. How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?

How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?

The Evaluation POC (or designee) will lead the peer review of a SOW, which should include no less than two individuals in addition to the Evaluation POC (or the POC's designee). Peer reviewers may include individuals from the DO team and program offices as well as USAID/Washington regional and technical bureaus, PPL/LER, and local partners. If at all possible,

at least one peer reviewer should have evaluation methods expertise. The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the peer review process as a mechanism to improve quality, comply with policy, and ensure independence. Missions may customize how they conduct their peer review process. However, best practices are to: 1) include at least 3 persons on the peer review, no more than half of whom are from the technical office that oversees the project being evaluated; and 2) allow 10 days for review and comments.

37. How will/should the "high level evaluation questions" in the CDCS be used?

How will/should the "high level evaluation questions" in the CDCS be used?
Per the Evaluation Policy and ADS 203 (see 203.3.1.3), evaluations are required for large projects and innovative/pilot activities. However, some high priority evaluation questions may be at a higher level of the CDCS Results Framework (e.g. at the Development Objective (DO) or Goal level) or pertain to cross-cutting issues within or across Intermediate Results (IRs) or DOs. While project-level evaluations can provide a better understanding of the implementation and performance of projects and how and why certain changes occurred, conducting high level evaluations, which generally address issues above the project level, can provide a better understanding of whether the critical assumptions in the DO appear to be correct as well as the factors contributing toward the achievement, or lack thereof, of a particular DO. ld be 5

38. What types of projects must be evaluated? How does an OU determine which projects to evaluate?

What types of projects must be evaluated? How does an OU determine which projects to evaluate?
Per ADS 203.3.1.3, evaluations are required for, at a minimum, each large project an OU implements as well as innovative or pilot activities. A large project is defined as one that "equals or exceeds in dollar value the average project size for each DO." A pilot activity is any activity/IM or intervention within an IM involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through USG foreign assistance or other funding sources. The policy recommends that pilot activities, if feasible, undergo an external impact evaluation; if an impact evaluation is not feasible or optimal, missions may undertake a performance evaluation but should note in the final evaluation report the rationale for not conducting an impact evaluation.

In addition to these requirements, projects/programs/activity/IMs that are not subject to the "large project" or "pilot activities requirement" may, of course, still be evaluated. This may include, for instance, DO level evaluations or evaluations based on the high-priority evaluation questions identified in the CDCS. In such a case, DO teams, the PO, or the front office may propose either external or internal evaluations to the PO for inclusion in the mission Evaluation Plan. Missions are encouraged to make strategic choices and prioritize evaluations based on management and learning purposes, and with the understanding that a majority of resources under USAID management will be subject to evaluation.

39. What is the process for utilizing PPL's Evaluation Services IDIQ?

What is the process for utilizing PPL's Evaluation Services IDIQ?
PPL/LER manages an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract for evaluation services that provides access to a variety of organizations and evaluation expertise. The purpose is to provide technical and advisory services for evaluation activities worldwide, at the mission/OU, bureau, and Agency-wide levels. This includes: designing and implementing performance and impact evaluations; development of evaluation training and guidance; evaluation technical assistance; strategic analysis that is clearly connected to evaluation planning; evaluation case studies; and meta-evaluations, cross-sector and multi-country evaluations and other evaluative studies in a range of development fields. The IDIQ also provides skills in evaluation research design (including experimental and quasi experimental design and qualitative methods); data collection, analysis, and synthesis; report writing; and planning for use and dissemination of evaluation findings. While work may focus on specific sectors and development fields, it may also cut across sectors and technical areas.

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The period of performance for the IDIQ is through September 29, 2014. With the high demand for evaluation services since the release of the Evaluation Policy, the current total ceiling of $125 million is being drawn down rapidly. As a result, SOWs are reviewed closely prior to approval.

To access the services of the IDIQ, OUs must prepare a statement of work (SOW) that can be used in the development of a Request for Task Order Proposal (RFTOP). This SOW should describe the purpose of the evaluation, background, objectives, desired activities, evaluation questions, deliverables and/or performance measures, as well as an estimated budget and time frame. The SOW must be approved by PPL/LER's COR for the IDIQ--currently Winston J. Allen--to ensure that the proposed activities are consistent with the IDIQ SOW, technically rigorous, and that the estimated budget is within the available contract ceiling. Once you have a draft Statement of Work (SOW) that you are pleased with, please send a copy of that draft SOW to Winston J. Allen (wallen@usaid.gov). Please allow approximately 10-15 days for PPL/LER to review the SOW and provide suggestions for revisions, as necessary.

Upon approval of the SOW, the OU is then responsible for finalizing the RFTOP with their respective contracting officer. The RFTOP is subsequently competed among the five IDIQ holders. Fair opportunity consideration is required in selecting which of the five IDIQ firms will undertake the proposed activity. The procurement and management of all task orders under the IDIQ must be managed by your OU and contracting officer, not PPL/LER.

PLEASE NOTE: Because the final task order must be competed among the five IDIQ holders, please allow ninety (90) days between the time your final SOW is approved by PPL/LER and the time that a task order contract is awarded.

40. For the purposes of meeting the requirement that "large projects" are to be evaluated, what constitutes a large project and how do you calculate the average project size?

For the purposes of meeting the requirement that "large projects" are to be evaluated, what constitutes a large project and how do you calculate the average project size?
As stated in ADS 203.3.1.3, a large project is one that "equals or exceeds in dollar value the mean (average) project size for each Development Objective for the USAID mission/office." Project is defined not as implementing mechanism, but according to the current ADS definition. All field Operating Units should calculate the average project size at the Development Objective level.

There is no required way of calculating "large projects." Field operating units should use available data, reasonable estimates, and defensible decisions in calculating what a large project is for their mission. PPL/LER recommends that the mission divide the total estimated program expenditures over the entire life of a Development Objective (i.e., over the CDCS time frame) by the number of projects under that DO (current and planned) to calculate the mean. Projects with a budget or estimated budget during the life of the DO that is above the mean are required to be evaluated.

In cases where there are factors that make it difficult to calculate mean project size—for example, when many projects are co-funded with other USG partners—OUs should consult with PPL/LER to determine an appropriate means of calculation.

41. What exactly defines an internal evaluation?

What exactly defines an internal evaluation?
When the evaluation team leader is not external (i.e. is not USAID staff and does not have a fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner).

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Planning for Evaluation

42. At what point in the program cycle should you plan for evaluation?

At what point in the program cycle should you plan for evaluation?

Evaluations should be timed so that their findings can inform decisions such as exercising option years, designing a follow on project, creating a country or sector strategic plan, or making a policy decision. This means starting the process to solicit an evaluation should begin at least 12 – 18 months in advance of a decision point to allow for sufficient time to: (1) draft a strong SOW that is shared with partners for input and vetted in-house prior to finalizing; (2) issue the solicitation and give partners several weeks to prepare and respond; (3) review proposals and select a finalist; (4) award the contract; and (5) for the evaluation team to conduct the evaluation using high-quality methods to generate evidence and draft a subsequent report with recommendations based on findings.

43. What is a "pilot activity" (or "pilot" or "innovative" project)?

What is a "pilot activity" (or "pilot" or "innovative" project)?

A pilot activity is an activity/IM or an intervention within an IM involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through U.S. Government foreign assistance or other funding sources. (Note that the terminology "pilot activity" is generally more appropriate in the USAID context than "pilot project" since it is generally not feasible or advisable to do an impact evaluation at the project-level). DO teams should identify pilot activities during the project design stage. ADS 203 recommends that pilot activities, if feasible, undergo an external impact evaluation; if an impact evaluation is not feasible or optimal, missions may undertake a performance evaluation but should note in the final evaluation report the rationale for not conducting an impact evaluation.

44. What is an evaluation plan?

What is an evaluation plan?

Program Offices must create a mission-wide evaluation plan, included in their mission Performance Management Plan (PMP), to identify and track evaluations across the mission and over the entire CDCS timeframe as described in ADS 203.3.3.1. Evaluation plans should include, at minimum, the DO/project/activity to be evaluated, evaluation type, possible evaluation questions, estimated budget, planned start date and estimated completion date. A recommended multi-year evaluation plan template is available on ProgramNet.

Project M&E plans should also include planning for evaluations at the project level, as described in ADS 203.3.4.4.

45. Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

Evaluation needs should be taken into consideration during project design. Ideally, it is during the project design stage that an OU would identify the need for, and begin planning for, an impact evaluation. Randomization to establish a treatment and control group should occur prior to the implementation of the project component (IM/activity or intervention within an activity) that will be evaluated.

For ongoing activities, when randomization to establish treatment and control groups may no longer be an option, it is possible to use quasi-experimental statistical methods to construct treatment and comparison groups. This includes methods such as regression discontinuity, difference in differences, matching, and analyzing instrumental variables. For most of these methods, it is necessary to have a baseline, or other existing data, for both the treatment and comparison groups.

For ongoing activities, OUs may want to consider whether a performance evaluation using mixed and robust qualitative and quantitative methods would be more appropriate than an impact evaluation.

46. Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

USAID encourages participation by national counterparts and country-level stakeholders in the development of an evaluation SOW. Stakeholders may encompass a wide array of people and institutions, including policy makers, program managers, implementing partners, other relevant USG agencies, host country organizations, and beneficiaries. OUs should share draft SOWs (in which the evaluation questions are initially defined) with local partners for their feedback. This early input is essential to maximize the use of the eventual evaluation findings. Transparency is very important in the design stage of the evaluation process. As the Evaluation Policy notes, "Except in unusual circumstances, the [evaluation] design will be shared with country-level stakeholders as well as with the implementing partners for comment before being finalized." At the end of the evaluation process, OUs should give funders, implementers, and evaluation team members the opportunity to attach a statement of differences to the final report regarding "any significant unresolved differences of opinion" about the evaluation. Thus, OUs need to share the draft evaluation report with other project or evaluation funders and the implementing partners. Once reports are final, they must be shared with all partners and the public, barring rare exceptions related to protecting U.S. national interests.

47. How should M&E be budgeted for and tracked at the award/mechanism level? Should M&E be a distinct line item in the award budget?

How should M&E be budgeted for and tracked at the award/mechanism level? Should M&E be a distinct line item in the award budget?

Per ADS 203, during acquisition and assistance solicitation CORs/AORs must work with COs/AOs to ensure that solicitations include instructions to offerors/applicants to include costs of data collection, analysis, and reporting as a separate line item in their budgets to ensure that adequate resources are available. A dedicated line item for M&E should also be included in the award budget so that the mission can track how much funding is going toward M&E.

With regard to how M&E should be budgeted for at the award/mechanism level, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Some awards/mechanisms could require 10%, or maybe even more, to undertake monitoring and evaluation (e.g. impact evaluations of activities/IMs or interventions in remote geographic areas); others could require 1% or less of the total budget.

ADS 203 recommends that missions dedicate 5-10% of total program resources, including within individual awards, to monitoring and evaluation.

48. What procurement mechanisms are available for evaluations?

What procurement mechanisms are available for evaluations?

A list of the various agency-wide mechanisms by which USAID staff can procure evaluation services is available on ProgramNet here.

49. What types of projects must be evaluated? How does an OU determine which projects to evaluate?

What types of projects must be evaluated? How does an OU determine which projects to evaluate?

Per ADS 203.3.1.3, evaluations are required for, at a minimum, each large project an OU implements as well as innovative or pilot activities. A large project is defined as one that "equals or exceeds in dollar value the average project size for each DO." A pilot activity is any activity/IM or intervention within an IM involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through USG foreign assistance or other funding sources. The policy recommends that pilot activities, if feasible, undergo an external impact evaluation; if an impact evaluation is not feasible or optimal, missions may undertake a performance evaluation but should note in the final evaluation report the rationale for not conducting an impact evaluation.

In addition to these requirements, projects/programs/activity/IMs that are not subject to the "large project" or "pilot activities requirement" may, of course, still be evaluated. This may include, for instance, DO level evaluations or evaluations based on the high-priority evaluation questions identified in the CDCS. In such a case, DO teams, the PO, or the front office may propose either external or internal evaluations to the PO for inclusion in the mission Evaluation Plan. Missions are encouraged to make strategic choices and prioritize evaluations based on management and learning purposes, and with the understanding that a majority of resources under USAID management will be subject to evaluation.

50. Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?
Most, if not all, evaluations should be managed by the program office of an OU or bureau. Exceptions can be made as decided by the leadership of the OU. These exceptions should be documented with the rationale for the exception included in the evaluation statement of work.

51. How do we make sure that activity M&E plans are in line with the Project M&E plan?

How do we make sure that activity M&E plans are in line with the Project M&E plan?
Per ADS 203, at the activity/implementing mechanism level, implementers are expected to submit an activity M&E plan to USAID CORs/AORs within the first 90 days of an award and before major activity implementation actions begin. Consistent with revisions in ADS 300.3.4, all solicitations should include already-defined indicators that flow from a project's M&E Plan as outlined in the PAD. Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all activity M&E plans include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the project M&E plan and the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP) and Performance Plan and Report (PPR). This is best done during the project design stage. Activity M&E plans submitted to USAID should include only those indicators that the mission needs for project and activity management, rather than the entire set of all indicators an implementer uses for its internal management purposes.

For some missions that currently have projects and activities that do not fit directly within the CDCS, or have initiatives that fall outside of their project Log Frames, there may be a transition period until indicators fully align with mission strategy. During this transition period, missions should continue collecting data for the indicators needed to manage or report on these activities. During the annual work-planning process with implementers, missions should consider which indicators may no longer be needed to save resources and time and use the opportunity to trim unnecessary indicators from the implementer's collection and reporting burden.

52. How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?

How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?
The Evaluation POC (or designee) will lead the peer review of a SOW, which should include no less than two individuals in addition to the Evaluation POC (or the POC's designee). Peer reviewers may include individuals from the DO team and program offices as well as USAID/Washington regional and technical bureaus, PPL/LER, and local partners. If at all possible, at least one peer reviewer should have evaluation methods expertise. The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the peer review process as a mechanism to improve quality, comply with policy, and ensure independence. Missions may customize how they conduct their peer review process. However, best practices are to: 1) include at least 3 persons on the peer review, no more than half of whom are from the technical office that oversees the project being evaluated; and 2) allow 10 days for review and comments.

53. For the purposes of meeting the requirement that "large projects" are to be evaluated, what constitutes a large project and how do you calculate the average project size?

For the purposes of meeting the requirement that "large projects" are to be evaluated, what constitutes a large project and how do you calculate the average project size?

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In cases where there are factors that make it difficult to calculate mean project size—for example, when many projects are co-funded with other USG partners—OUs should consult with PPL/LER to determine an appropriate means of calculation.

54. What is the process for utilizing PPL's Evaluation Services IDIQ?

What is the process for utilizing PPL's Evaluation Services IDIQ?

PPL/LER manages an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract for evaluation services that provides access to a variety of organizations and evaluation expertise. The purpose is to provide technical and advisory services for evaluation activities worldwide, at the mission/OU, bureau, and Agency-wide levels. This includes: designing and implementing performance and impact evaluations; development of evaluation training and guidance; evaluation technical assistance; strategic analysis that is clearly connected to evaluation planning; evaluation case studies; and meta-evaluations, cross-sector and multi-country evaluations and other evaluative studies in a range of development fields. The IDIQ also provides skills in evaluation research design (including experimental and quasi experimental design and qualitative methods); data collection, analysis, and synthesis; report writing; and planning for use and dissemination of evaluation findings. While work may focus on specific sectors and development fields, it may also cut across sectors and technical areas.

The period of performance for the IDIQ is through September 29, 2014. With the high demand for evaluation services since the release of the Evaluation Policy, the current total ceiling of $125 million is being drawn down rapidly. As a result, SOWs are reviewed closely prior to approval.

To access the services of the IDIQ, OUs must prepare a statement of work (SOW) that can be used in the development of a Request for Task Order Proposal (RFTOP). This SOW should describe the purpose of the evaluation, background, objectives, desired activities, evaluation questions, deliverables and/or performance measures, as well as an estimated budget and time frame. The SOW must be approved by PPL/LER's COR for the IDIQ--currently Winston J. Allen--to ensure that the proposed activities are consistent with the IDIQ SOW, technically rigorous, and that the estimated budget is within the available contract ceiling. Once you have a draft Statement of Work (SOW) that you are pleased with, please send a copy of that draft SOW to Winston J. Allen (wallen@usaid.gov). Please allow approximately 10-15 days for PPL/LER to review the SOW and provide suggestions for revisions, as necessary.

Upon approval of the SOW, the OU is then responsible for finalizing the RFTOP with their respective contracting officer. The RFTOP is subsequently competed among the five IDIQ holders. Fair opportunity consideration is required in selecting which of the five IDIQ firms will undertake the proposed activity. The procurement and management of all task orders under the IDIQ must be managed by your OU and contracting officer, not PPL/LER.

PLEASE NOTE: Because the final task order must be competed among the five IDIQ holders, please allow ninety (90) days between the time your final SOW is approved by PPL/LER and the time that a task order contract is awarded.

55. Can implementing partners evaluate their own projects?

Can implementing partners evaluate their own projects?
Evaluations undertaken to meet the "large project" or "pilot activity" requirements of the Evaluation Policy must be external (i.e., a third-party contractor or grantee managed directly by USAID). Therefore, implementing partners should not conduct evaluations of the projects that they manage that are determined to be required.

Separate and apart from the required evaluations or other external non-required evaluations that a mission chooses to conduct, USAID technical officers are encouraged to include funding dedicated within a project budget, in a budget for a Request for Proposals (RFP), or in the final grant/contract agreement so that implementing partners may engage in evaluative work for institutional learning and management decision-making. Many implementers have significant monitoring and evaluation expertise in-house, and the value of evaluation within the implementation and management of a project is well recognized. In those cases where USAID funds support an evaluation conducted or commissioned by an implementing partner, the implementing partner must still meet the procedural standards of the Evaluation Policy and the findings from that internal evaluation must be shared in written form with the responsible technical officer within three months of the evaluation's conclusion.

56. Who can participate in evaluation teams?

Who can participate in evaluation teams?
For required evaluations (i.e. those of large projects or pilot activities), the evaluation team leader should always be an independent expert from outside of USAID and with no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. The outside expert may come from another U.S. Government Agency not involved in project implementation, or be engaged through a contractual mechanism. To the extent possible, evaluation specialists with appropriate expertise from partner countries, but not involved in project implementation, will lead and/or be included in evaluation teams.

In cases where OU management determines that appropriate expertise exists within the Agency, and that engaging USAID staff in an evaluation will facilitate institutional learning, the evaluation team may be predominantly composed of USAID staff, though the evaluation team lead must still be external to USAID. In these cases, in addition to potentially using staff from that OU, OUs are encouraged to invite staff from other countries to participate, especially Foreign Service Nationals who have significant technical expertise, and new Foreign Service Officers who have joined under the Development Leadership Initiative. PPL/LER will keep a roster of USAID staff who have completed the Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists course and who are looking for practicum opportunities to share with OUs looking for potential evaluation team members.

57. What are parallel contracts for impact evaluation?

What are parallel contracts for impact evaluation?
A parallel contractual or grant agreement is established to hire an external evaluation team before or at the inception of an activity/IM that will undergo an impact evaluation. That contractual or grant agreement will include sufficient resources for baseline and end line data collection and data analysis. It should provide guidance and advice to the implementers on the use of experimental methods during activity implementation so that the impact evaluation can be undertaken.

58. Is there any guidance on how the 5-10% of total program resources allocated for M&E should be calculated? Should 3% percent of program funds be allocated to evaluation?

Is there any guidance on how the 5-10% of total program resources allocated for M&E should be calculated? Should 3% percent of program funds be allocated to evaluation?

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ADS 203 recommends that missions dedicate 5-10% of total program resources (across the entire Operating Unit) for monitoring and evaluation. This does not mean that every project be evaluated, or that three percent of every project's budget be set aside for evaluation. The actual costs of monitoring and evaluation may vary depending on operating environment and the specific types evaluations the mission plans to undertake. This 5-10% goal was established to ensure missions dedicate adequate resources to support effective performance monitoring and evaluation.

There is not explicit guidance on how resources allocated for mission-wide M&E should be calculated. Field operating units should use available data, reasonable estimates, and defensible decisions in their calculations. Given that M&E may occur through a number of different mechanisms, it is generally not recommended for missions to centralize their M&E budget. Mission-wide M&E can include individual awards as well as activities a mission is doing outside of awards, such as a mission-wide monitoring and/or evaluation support mechanisms.

Designing an Evaluation

59. Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation? Evaluation needs should be taken into consideration during project design. Ideally, it is during the project design stage that an OU would identify the need for, and begin planning for, an impact evaluation. Randomization to establish a treatment and control group should occur prior to the implementation of the project component (IM/activity or intervention within an activity) that will be evaluated.

For ongoing activities, when randomization to establish treatment and control groups may no longer be an option, it is possible to use quasi-experimental statistical methods to construct treatment and comparison groups. This includes methods such as regression discontinuity, difference in differences, matching, and analyzing instrumental variables. For most of these methods, it is necessary to have a baseline, or other existing data, for both the treatment and comparison groups.

For ongoing activities, OUs may want to consider whether a performance evaluation using mixed and robust qualitative and quantitative methods would be more appropriate than an impact evaluation.

60. Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?
USAID encourages participation by national counterparts and country-level stakeholders in the development of an evaluation SOW. Stakeholders may encompass a wide array of people and institutions, including policy makers, program managers, implementing partners, other relevant USG agencies, host country organizations, and beneficiaries. OUs should share draft SOWs (in which the evaluation questions are initially defined) with local partners for their feedback. This early input is essential to maximize the use of the eventual evaluation findings. Transparency is very important in the design stage of the evaluation process. As the Evaluation Policy notes, "Except in unusual circumstances, the [evaluation] design will be shared with country-level stakeholders as well as with the implementing partners for comment before being finalized." At the end of the evaluation process, OUs should give funders, implementers, and evaluation team members the opportunity to attach a statement of differences to the final report regarding "any significant unresolved differences of opinion" about the evaluation. Thus, OUs need to share the

draft evaluation report with other project or evaluation funders and the implementing partners. Once reports are final, they must be shared with all partners and the public, barring rare exceptions related to protecting U.S. national interests.

61. What is a performance evaluation? What methods are appropriate for performance evaluations?

What is a performance evaluation? What methods are appropriate for performance evaluations? Performance evaluations focus on descriptive and normative questions: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual. The majority of evaluations at USAID are performance evaluations.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is optimal for performance evaluations. The goal is to use robust qualitative and quantitative methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked taking into consideration time, budget, and other practical considerations. Also see the Mixed Methods Technical Note on ProgramNet.

62. What is an impact evaluation? What methods are required for impact evaluations?

What is an impact evaluation? What methods are required for impact evaluations? Impact evaluations measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention. Impact evaluations 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. By comparing the outcomes of beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group (or to various treatment groups with no control group), impact evaluations provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured.

Impact evaluations use experimental or quasi-experimental design methods to establish treatment and control groups for comparison from the beginning of program implementation. Experimental design will generate treatment and control groups by randomly allocating intervention among eligible participants or groups of participants. Quasi-experimental designs will, in contrast, generate a comparison group that resembles the treatment group, at least in observed characteristics, through a statistically significant matching method.

Note that, due to a variety of reasons, not every development project lends itself to an impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. PPL/LER is developing guidance on what factors to consider when determining whether to do an impact evaluation and how to write a statement of work for impact evaluations.

63. How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?

How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs? The Evaluation POC (or designee) will lead the peer review of a SOW, which should include no less than two individuals in addition to the Evaluation POC (or the POC's designee). Peer reviewers may include individuals from the DO team and program offices as well as USAID/Washington regional and technical bureaus, PPL/LER, and local partners. If at all possible, at least one peer reviewer should have evaluation methods expertise. The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the peer review process as a mechanism to improve quality, comply with policy, and ensure independence. Missions may customize how they conduct their peer review process. However, best practices are to: 1) include at least 3 persons on the peer review, no more than half of whom are from the technical office that oversees the project being evaluated; and 2) allow 10 days for review and comments.

64. What additional resources exist to help a mission design an impact evaluation?

What additional resources exist to help a mission design an impact evaluation?

- World Bank. Impact Evaluation in Practice. Gertler, Paul J.; Martinez, Sebastian; Premand, Patrick; Rawlings, Laura B.; Vermeersch, Christel M. J. December 2010.
- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)
  - 3ie Impact evaluation Glossary
  - 3ie PowerPoint "What is impact evaluation, when and how should we use it, and how to go about it?"
  - 3ie PowerPoint "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental designs"
- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
- Innovations for Poverty Action
- Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit. NBER Technical Working Paper No. 333. E. Duflo, M. Kremer and R. Glennerster.
- Randomized Evaluations of Educational Programs in Developing Countries: Some Lessons. M. Kremer. *The American Economic Review.* 2003.

Managing the Evaluation Process

65. Who can participate in evaluation teams?

Who can participate in evaluation teams?

For required evaluations (i.e. those of large projects or pilot activities), the evaluation team leader should always be an independent expert from outside of USAID and with no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. The outside expert may come from another U.S. Government Agency not involved in project implementation, or be engaged through a contractual mechanism. To the extent possible, evaluation specialists with appropriate expertise from partner countries, but not involved in project implementation, will lead and/or be included in evaluation teams.

 In cases where OU management determines that appropriate expertise exists within the Agency, and that engaging USAID staff in an evaluation will facilitate institutional learning, the evaluation team may be predominantly composed of USAID staff, though the evaluation team lead must still be external to USAID. In these cases, in addition to potentially using staff from that OU, OUs are encouraged to invite staff from other countries to participate, especially Foreign Service Nationals who have significant technical expertise, and new Foreign Service Officers who have joined under the Development Leadership Initiative. PPL/LER will keep a roster of USAID staff who have completed the Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists course and who are looking for practicum opportunities to share with OUs looking for potential evaluation team members.

66. Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Most, if not all, evaluations should be managed by the program office of an OU or bureau. Exceptions can be made as decided by the leadership of the OU. These exceptions should be documented with the rationale for the exception included in the evaluation statement of work.

Utilizing Evaluations

67. Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?

Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?

The Evaluation Policy requires that all evaluation reports be submitted publicly to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) (dec.usaid.gov) within three months of their completion. There

are very rare exceptions to this publicly-available requirement which are granted after a formal request is submitted to and approved by the Director of PPL's Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (PPL/LER). Without this approval, all evaluation reports must be submitted to the DEC and available for the public to view. If there are sensitive issues, Operating Units should have both a public version of the report and an SBU version of the report. In some situations, PPL/LER recommends that approval be sought for an SBU version only for a specific, limited time frame to allow time for sensitivities to decrease.

Exceptions to the public disclosure requirement are expected to be rare, must be requested and justified in writing, and should be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Disclosure would impair foreign assistance objectives.
2. Disclosure would involve releasing otherwise proprietary information owned by third parties.
3. Information disclosed could put individual safety at risk or release private personal information. The few exceptions to public disclosure approved thus far have been on the basis of the safety and security of our partners. Even if an exception is granted by PPL/LER, the evaluation should be posted on the DEC as SBU so that it is at least available to USAID staff. Any mission seeking an exception should submit an action memo to PPL/LER from the mission director requesting the exception. An action memo template and further details about the criteria and process for seeking an exception can be found on ProgramNet here.

> 68. How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?

How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?
Per the standard mission order on Evaluation, findings from evaluations will be shared as widely as possible, with a commitment to full and active disclosure. Following the completion of the evaluation report, the Program Office must ensure that the final evaluation report is posted on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) no later than three months after completion. Exceptions to this requirement are granted in only very rare circumstances. See the FAQ on this topic for further information on seeking exceptions.

The highly preferred method to submit documents to the DEC is through the on-line submission process. To submit documents to the DEC:

1) Go to https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx
2) Click the "SUBMIT" tab in the upper-left-hand corner.
3) Log-in using the log-in screen. If you do not have a log-in and password, click the "Register" tab to create a log-in and password. You will be able to immediately submit documents after registering.
5) Once you have logged in, click "Submit Documents."
6) Read the brief list of guidelines.
7) Fill out the form with the information from the document, including Title, Publication Date and Language. If you have other information about the document, such as a contract number, please fill in the appropriate field on the form. This helps the DEC staff with the review and processing.
8) UPLOAD the document! (People frequently forget this step).
9) Don't forget to click SAVE when you are finished. (People also frequently forget this step). Once you've clicked SAVE, you will be taken to a newly-created record for your document which you will be able to send to yourself or others via e-mail, add tags and comments, share on Facebook and Twitter, etc. Note that if you are unable to submit a document via the online form, you can do so by email at docsubmit@usaid.gov or mail (for paper, CD-ROMs, or other materials in hard-copy). Note that documents submitted to the DEC through the online submission process are available immediately, while those sent to the DEC via e-mail or hard copy can take weeks or even months to be available through the DEC interface.
In addition to posting evaluation reports to the DEC, OUs should also consider other methods of dissemination, such as hosting briefings with local stakeholders, partners and other donors to

discuss evaluation findings; featuring evaluation findings on the OU's website, such as through an article or blog post; and holding press conferences and issuing press releases.

69. What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

Performance monitoring and evaluation are mutually reinforcing, but distinct, practices (see ADS 203.1). Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to good performance management - the systematic process of collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; and using performance information and evaluations to influence decision-making and resource allocation. In many cases, good performance monitoring can allow for richer evaluations. From establishing baselines to systematically collecting and analyzing indicator data, solid performance monitoring can save resources for more in-depth data collection and analysis during evaluation. Performance monitoring may trigger evaluations by pointing to the need to probe further to understand project performance during implementation.

70. What is an evaluation registry?

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The Evaluation Registry is an annex to the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) which includes information on completed evaluations during the previous fiscal year and ongoing and planned evaluations for the current fiscal year, plus two out years. The annual PPR guidance from the Office of Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) indicates the specific information that is to be supplied about each evaluation.

71. How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?

How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?

High-quality evaluation findings should inform USAID decisions. The Program Office should ensure that evaluations are timed so that evaluation findings are available when decisions need to be made, and that findings are integrated into decision-making and learning about priorities, resource allocations and project design. The standard mission order on Evaluation calls for the Program Office to lead relevant mission staff through the process of responding to evaluation findings, as described in ADS 203.3.1.9. This process will lead to the development of an action plan for addressing the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations the mission has accepted or any other actions it deems necessary as a result of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. During Portfolio Reviews, the status of action plans for evaluation findings and their use in respective decisions will be discussed and documented.