

Commonly Used USAID Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Terms

Derived from ADS Series 200*

Performance Monitoring Terms

| The Basics | |
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| Performance Monitoring | The ongoing and routine collection of performance indicator data to reveal whether desired results are being achieved and whether implementation is on track. Performance monitoring continues throughout the life of an activity, a project, and a Mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). |
| <u>Not</u> the same as Performance Monitoring (but related) | |
| 1. <i>Activity Oversight</i> | Day-to-day assessment of contractor and grantee performance by a COR/AOR or others through site visits, stakeholder meetings, and the verification of implementer inputs, outputs, and deliverables. |
| 2. <i>Evaluation</i> | The systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about current and future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment, which may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform project design, or an informal review of projects. |
| 3. <i>Learning</i> | A continuous process of analyzing a wide variety of information sources and knowledge (including evaluation findings, monitoring data, innovations and new learning that brings to light new, promising practices or calls into question received wisdom, and collected observations and tacit knowledge from those who have particularly deep or unique insight in a given area). |

| Plans | |
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| Performance Management Plan (PMP) | A tool to plan and manage the process of monitoring, evaluating, and analyzing progress toward achieving results identified in a CDCS and project LogFrame in order to inform decision-making, resource allocation, learning, and adapting projects and programs. PMPs are mission-wide documents and are distinct from Project M&E plans and Activity M&E plans. |
| Project M&E Plan | A tool to measure progress towards planned results and identify the cause of any delays or impediments during implementation. Missions must develop a Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M&E) plan during project design, and include it as an annex to their project appraisal document (PAD). The M&E Plan for the project provides a framework for monitoring and evaluation that pulls together performance information from all activities contributing to a project. Project M&E plans should not be referred to as PMPs, which are mission-wide documents. |
| Activity/IM M&E Plan | A plan for monitoring and evaluating USAID activities 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. Activity M&E plans submitted to USAID should include only those indicators that the Mission needs for activity management, rather than the entire set of all indicators an implementer uses for its management purposes. Activity M&E plans should not be referred to as PMPs, which are Mission-wide documents. |
| Relationship between PMP, Project M&E Plan, and Activity M&E Plan | The <i>project M&E plan</i> folds into the mission-wide <i>Performance Management Plan (PMP)</i> , which includes Goal and Development Objective (DO) level indicators from the CDCS Results Framework as well as the relevant indicators and evaluation questions from all <i>project M&E Plans</i> . Thus, project indicators (at the Purpose and Output levels from the LogFrame) and evaluation questions from the <i>project M&E Plan</i> must be included in the <i>PMP</i> as they are developed. Project teams should work with a Mission's program office to ensure that the mission-wide <i>PMP</i> is regularly updated from new <i>project M&E plans</i> . Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all <i>activity M&E plans</i> include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the <i>Project M&E plan</i> and the mission's <i>Performance Management Plan (PMP)</i> . |

*Note that some terms may be undergoing revisions or may not yet appear in the ADS.

| Performance Indicator Terms | |
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| Performance Indicator | Measures a particular characteristic or dimension of strategy, project, or activity level results based on a Mission's CDCS Results Framework or a project's logical framework (LogFrame) |
| Performance Baseline | The value of a performance indicator at the onset of implementation of USAID-supported strategies, projects or activities that contribute to the achievement of the relevant result. |
| Performance Target | The specific, planned level of result to be achieved within an explicit time frame with a given level of resources. |
| Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) | <p>A document for capturing all reference information about a performance indicator. At minimum, reference data for each indicator in a PIRS includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The definition of the indicator; • Its link to the Result Framework and LogFrame; • Unit of measure; • Whether and how the data must be disaggregated (by sex, age, or other category); • Data source; • Method of data collection, construction, and/or analysis • Reporting frequency; • Known data quality limitations, relative to the five standards of data quality; • Date of last DQA and DQA reviewer for all indicators that a Mission plans to report externally; • Responsible office and individual for collection and analysis; and • Any changes to the indicator reference data over time. |
| Performance Indicator Tracking Table (PITT) | A spreadsheet, database, or other IT solution to serve as a repository of indicator data and, preferably, enable analysis of performance indicator data collected for PMPs and project M&E plans. The data tables must be updated, at minimum, on an annual basis. |

| Strategy and Planning Terms | |
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| Results Framework | A graphical representation (typically supplemented by narrative) of the development hypothesis that includes the CDCS Goal, Development Objectives (DOs), Intermediate Results (IR), sub-IRs, and performance indicators. |
| Project | A project is a set of executed interventions, over an established timeline and budget intended to achieve a discrete development result (i.e. the project purpose) through resolving an associated problem. It is explicitly linked to the CDCS Results Framework. |
| Project Logical Framework | A rigorous methodological tool used for project design that focuses on the causal linkages between project inputs, outputs and desired outcome. |
| Activity | A component of a project that contributes to a project purpose. It typically refers to an award (such as a contract or cooperative agreement), or a component of a project such as policy dialogue that may be undertaken directly by Mission staff. |
| Result | A significant, intended, measurable change in a development condition affecting people, systems, or institutions. Results are outputs and outcomes, including Goals, Development Objectives, Intermediate Results, sub-Intermediate Results, Project Purpose and Project Outputs, as specified in a Mission's CDCS or project Logical Framework. |
| Input | A resource, such as technical assistance, commodities, training, or provision of USAID staff, that is used to create an Output. Appears at the lowest level of a project logical framework |
| Output | Outputs are what are produced as a direct result of inputs. They are the tangible, immediate, and intended products or consequences of an activity within USAID's control or influence. Outputs appear at the lowest level of a project logical framework. |
| Outcome | The conditions affecting people, systems, or institutions that indicate progress or lack of progress toward achievement of project/program goals. Outcomes are any results higher than an output to which a given project output contributes to but for which the project is not solely responsible. Outcomes may be intermediate or end outcomes, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, positive or negative, direct or indirect. |

Evaluation Terms

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| The Basics | |
| Evaluation | Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about current and future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment, which may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform project design, or an informal review of projects. |
| Not Evaluations 1. <i>Assessment (aka, "Sector Assessments")</i> 2. <i>Project/Program Review, or "informal review"</i> | Some USAID activities that often get confused with evaluation: 1. Assessment typically have a wider focus than USAID projects and programs and are generally more forward looking than evaluations. Although they may include information about USAID projects or programs, they are typically designed to examine country or sector context to inform project design. 2. "Reviews" refer to reports of an evaluative nature that focus on USAID projects and programs but that do not meet USAID evaluation policy requirements or have PPL approval for an exemption of these standards as "reviews", such as "program review" or "project review". |
| Important "Types" of Evaluations at USAID | |
| Impact Evaluation | <i>Impact evaluations</i> 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. Impact evaluations in which comparisons are made between beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured. |
| Performance Evaluation | <i>Performance evaluations</i> 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. |
| Required Evaluations | <p>Required evaluations are those that are required to be completed per the USAID ADS. They must be external and managed, in most cases, by Program office staff. Required evaluations include:</p> <p><u>Large Project Evaluations</u>: 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. Each USAID Mission/office is required to conduct at least one evaluation of each large project it implements.</p> <p>Large Project Evaluations must be <i>external evaluations</i> to meet this evaluation requirement.</p> <p><u>"Pilot Activity/Project Evaluations"</u>: Any activity within a project involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through US Government foreign assistance or other funding sources will undergo an impact evaluation. Any activity designated as a pilot or proof of concept will fall under this requirement.</p> <p>Pilot Activity/Project Evaluations must be <i>external impact evaluations</i> to meet this requirement, unless an impact evaluation is not possible then the innovative intervention must be an <i>external performance evaluation</i> to meet the innovative intervention evaluation requirement.</p> |
| Non-Required Evaluations | An evaluation whose completion does not fulfill either the "large project requirement" or the "pilot activity requirement" (ADS 203.3.1.3). Missions may conduct non-required evaluations for learning or management purposes, at any point in implementation of activities, projects, or programs. As evaluations, they still must meet all procedural, reporting, and quality standards stipulated in the ADS 203 and the evaluation policy. Non-required evaluations may be impact or performance, internal or external. |

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| External Evaluation | <p>External Evaluations are:</p> <p>(1) commissioned by USAID, rather than by the implementing partner; and</p> <p>(2) in which the team leader is an independent expert from outside the agency, who has no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner.</p> <p>External evaluations may include a USAID staff member, but the team leader must be from outside the agency. An evaluation with a team lead from USAID/W is not an external evaluation. An evaluation contracted through a sub-contract of the implementing partner is not an external evaluation.</p> |
| Internal Evaluation | <p>Evaluations that are either:</p> <p>(1) conducted or commissioned by an implementing partner concerning their own project (an implementer internal evaluation), or</p> <p>(2) commissioned by USAID in which the evaluation team leader is from inside the Agency, (a USAID internal evaluation).</p> |
| Mid-term Evaluation | “Mid-term evaluations” ¹ are evaluations that occur roughly half-way through a project. |
| Final Evaluation | “Final evaluations” ² are evaluations that occur toward the end of a project. |
| Evaluation Planning | |
| Mission-wide evaluation plan | A plan to identify and track evaluations across the Mission and over the entire CDCS timeframe. Evaluation plans should include (at minimum) the project/activity/program to be evaluated, evaluation type, possible evaluation questions, estimated budget, planned start date and estimated completion date. It is a required component of the mission PMP. |
| Project evaluation plan | The evaluation portion of a Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan developed during project design and included as an annex to the project appraisal document PAD. It should include a description of what type of evaluation, if any, is required for the project, a limited number of key evaluation questions, a timeline for implementing the evaluation, and an estimated budget that will be set aside from the project budget and used for the evaluation. |
| Activity evaluation plan | The evaluation portion of an Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan submitted by the implementer. It should include relevant information about planned external evaluations by USAID or internal evaluations to be conducted by the implementer. |
| Evaluation Registry | An annex to the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) to be submitted by all USAID Missions/Offices and Washington Operating Units. It is an inventory of evaluations conducted during the previous year and planned evaluations and estimated budgets for the coming fiscal year plus two out years. |

¹ “Mid-term evaluation” while a useful term, is not a policy-relevant term at USAID. USAID evaluation policy does not distinguish between mid-term and final evaluations and there are no requirements for one that are different from the other. Mid-term evaluations are also sometimes called “formative evaluations”, although the meaning is actually somewhat different. Just like the term “mid-term evaluation” the term “formative evaluation” does not have any real significance in terms of USAID policy.

² “Final evaluation” while a useful term, is not a policy-relevant term at USAID. USAID evaluation policy does not distinguish between mid-term and final evaluations and there are no requirements for one that are different from the other. Final evaluations are also sometimes called *summative* evaluations, although, again, the meaning is actually somewhat different. And again, just like the term “final evaluation”, the term “summative evaluation” does not have any real significance in terms of USAID policy. Also, just because an evaluation occurs at the end of a project does not make it an “impact” evaluation. Sometimes “Impact evaluation” gets conflated with “final evaluation”. “Final evaluations” are all about the timing of the evaluation. Impact evaluations are all about the methodology of the evaluation.