



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID PROGRAM CYCLE OVERVIEW

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USAID PROGRAM CYCLE OVERVIEW

The Program Cycle is USAID's particular framing and terminology to describe a common set of processes intended to achieve more effective development interventions and maximize impacts. Many development veterans will recognize the re-adoption of foundational tools to re-institutionalize the discipline of development.

The Program Cycle acknowledges that development is not static and is rarely linear, and therefore stresses the need to assess and reassess through regular monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Thus the different components of the Program Cycle mutually reinforce each other by having learning and adapting integrated throughout.

The Program Cycle encourages planning and project management innovations to increase the cost-effectiveness and lasting impact of development cooperation. In short, we are not going back to the future, but returning to core development practices.

Program Cycle Components:

Agency Policies and Strategies:

The Program Cycle is grounded in a series of U.S. Government and USAID policies and strategies that set the framework for programs, and that ultimately strive to maximize the results of U.S. assistance.

Country Development Cooperation Strategies:

The Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) is a 3-5 year strategic plan which defines the areas in which a USAID mission will work, what it will lead to, and the choices a mission makes in the strategy. These strategies are developed in collaboration with country partners, and based on analysis, evidence and resources.

Project Design and Implementation:

The Project Design and Implementation process operationalizes the strategy laid out in the CDCS. Building upon the analysis conducted for the CDCS, Missions establish priority projects. As part of the integrated strategic approach, each priority project consists of multiple activities that incorporate various technical areas and require adaptive management, ensuring that development objectives will be comprehensively met in spite of unanticipated challenges or changes. While a USAID Project Design team leads the Project Design process and oversees implementation, Implementing Partners play a key role in both implementation and reporting activity results and work closely with relevant members of USAID staff. Close coordination with other development actors, including local governments, research organizations, private sector groups, and community institutions, is critical to the success of project design and implementation as each actor brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to inform the process and ensure sustainable outcomes.

Performance Monitoring:

The Program Cycle considers monitoring and evaluation as mutually reinforcing, but distinct, tools. Performance monitoring allows Missions to track the progress of their activities, projects, and programs in achieving CDCS Development Objectives. Constantly changing circumstances in the complex development environments in which USAID works require Missions and their partners to monitor the context as well as the performance indicators in their plans.

Evaluation:

Effective feedback and communication of evaluation findings are integral parts of the Program Cycle, providing a basis for making adaptive mid-course corrections, improving policies, and informing decisions about current and future programming. At USAID, evaluation is defined as the systematic collection and analysis of information

about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects. USAID's Evaluation Policy establishes standards, and provides guidance for evaluation design, implementation, and use within USAID with a view to ultimately improving development results.

Learning and Adapting:

USAID staff and partners have always sought ways to better understand the development process, to share the successes and lessons of various initiatives, and to institute improvements. Integrated learning throughout the Program Cycle ensures that it is systematically planned and adequately resourced in order to maximize results. The new USAID strategies seek to make learning an iterative component of the way USAID approaches development practices.

Budget and Resources:

As an extension of the continuous learning and adaption, USAID reforms are anticipated to improve effective use of Budget and Resources. The reforms reflected throughout the Program Cycle are intended to return USAID to the core development practices—of which, performance-based budgeting is key.

For more information on the Program Cycle, please visit: <http://kdid.org/kdid-lab/library/program-cycle-overview>