

MONITORING & EVALUATION FOR A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT

Introduction

This document provides additional help to [ADS 201](#) relating to Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plans for activities implemented through Government-to-Government (G2G) agreements.¹ The primary audience for this resource includes USAID Mission staff who are involved in partner government collaboration, including program officers, technical staff, and other Mission staff managing G2G assistance. Governments that partner with USAID and implementing partners supporting G2G activities may also find this guidance useful.

This document includes core concepts about developing a G2G Activity MEL Plan and practical ways to use the G2G Activity MEL Plan during implementation. It also provides guidance on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches to assess the effects of G2G assistance on local ownership, partner-country capacity, and sustainability of results.

Background

G2G assistance supports a partner government in implementing specific activities within a project, using the partner government's own processes and practices to achieve and sustain locally-owned development outcomes. G2G agreements create an equal partnership between USAID and the partner government. This requires a collaborative approach and joint decision-making to co-design and co-implement the activity. The G2G Activity MEL Plan specifies the methods both parties will use to jointly determine if the activity is on the right track and achieving expected results.

¹ADS 220 defines G2G assistance as “when USAID disburses funds directly to a partner government entity, including all instances in which USAID finances a partner government entity of a bilateral foreign assistance recipient country to implement a project or project activity, including non-project assistance, using the partner government's own financial management, procurement, or other systems.” While this document focuses on developing a MEL Plan for a G2G activity, many of the principles outlined in this document are relevant for other types of G2G agreements, such as a Development Objective Agreement (DOAG) or sector wide agreements between USAID and partner governments.

Support Local Ownership of Monitoring & Evaluation:

- Align USAID data, reporting, and learning priorities with the partner government.
- Pursue opportunities to use data generated by the partner government for activity monitoring and evaluation.
- Strengthen and maintain partner government practices to provide high-quality data.
- Support partner government and local actors to commit resources (financial, human, public, and/or private) for monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- Manage adaptively, using monitoring data for joint decision making with the partner government throughout implementation.

Building a strong foundation for this work requires collaboration between USAID and the partner government well before the G2G agreement is written. During CDCS development a Mission may explore the possibility of engaging with a government entity.² During project design, analyses are conducted to determine whether to move forward with a G2G agreement.³ When the Project Team plans to implement an activity through a G2G agreement, the Project Team should engage with the partner government early in the project design process to ensure alignment of priorities and objectives. This collaboration should continue during the development of the Project MEL Plan.

It is important that a G2G agreement define clear expectations about the activity's objectives, desired results, resources, and timeline. Effective collaboration requires a common vision about how the activity and its outputs can lead to higher-level results and a mutual understanding of programmatic and operational assumptions. Such active engagement by the partner government from the onset promotes local ownership of the development intervention and ultimately leads to a greater likelihood for long-term sustainability of the desired outcomes.

G2G Activity MEL Plan

USAID and the partner government are mutually accountable for achieving intended results of a G2G agreement. Both parties collaboratively manage implementation based on monitoring data, evaluation findings, and contextual factors, as defined in the G2G Activity MEL Plan.

DEVELOPING A G2G ACTIVITY MEL PLAN

Much of the information included in a G2G Activity MEL Plan is similar to a MEL Plan developed for a contract awarded activity, and details can be found in the [How-To Note: Activity MEL Plan](#). However, there are a few critical things to keep in mind when USAID and a partner government co-develop a G2G Activity MEL Plan.

Develop the G2G Activity MEL Plan collaboratively. It is critical that USAID and the partner government co-develop the G2G Activity MEL Plan and document the agreed upon methods of how they will monitor, evaluate, and learn from activity implementation. Plans should also address how monitoring data and evaluation findings will be used and what steps are required to publicly release

Clarify Expectations

A good G2G Activity MEL Plan clearly defines expectations about the performance management of the activity. Critical topics to clarify are:

- Expectations about periodic performance monitoring (What information will be collected, by whom, and how frequently?);
- Standards of data quality and the methods for assessing quality and integrity of data;
- Joint implementation reviews to assess progress toward achieving objectives;
- Approaches for troubleshooting problems and constraints;
- Expectations for the partner government's continued engagement and collaboration with USAID.

² Following project and activity design, it may be relevant for the Mission to update the Mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP) to document any additional skills or staffing needed for monitoring, evaluation, or learning efforts related to the G2G assistance. For more information about PMPs generally, refer to the [How-To Note: Prepare and Maintain a Performance Management Plan](#).

³ The identification of a G2G activity within a project is part of the Project Implementation Plan and a result of a PFMRAF analysis, both Stage I and Stage II, conducted during the CDCS development and project design, respectively. These analyses also inform the Project and Activity MEL Plans, as they identify knowledge gaps and risks to monitor when working through the partner government.

data. USAID and the partner government may jointly identify monitoring indicators, agree on priority evaluations, and co-develop evaluation and learning questions. As is relevant and feasible, G2G Activity MEL Plans should align with government strategic development plans and their M&E strategies, protocols, and guidance. If one or more third parties will support monitoring, evaluation, or learning efforts, these parties should be included in the development of the G2G Activity MEL Plan.

Consider how to divide roles and responsibilities. USAID, the partner government, and possibly one or more third party, will carry out the M&E responsibilities described in the G2G Activity MEL plan. The assignment of these responsibilities will depend on a variety of factors, such as data collection methods, overall M&E capacity of the partner government, or other preferences related to the G2G Activity MEL Plan. For example, possibilities include:

- (1) The partner government has sufficient M&E capacity to carry out the G2G Activity MEL Plan, and both the partner government and USAID prefer this method.
- (2) The partner government and the Mission determine that USAID will provide M&E support through a third party contract to carry out the G2G Activity MEL Plan.
- (3) The partner government wants to strengthen their M&E capacity during implementation. USAID provides M&E support to build capacity and carry out the G2G Activity MEL Plan. As capacity improves, responsibility for carrying out the MEL Plan transitions to the partner government.

For details about possible roles and responsibilities that can be written into the G2G Activity MEL Plan, see [M&E Roles and Responsibilities for G2G Agreements](#).

Monitoring milestones are required, but not sufficient. Milestones noted in a G2G agreement, which are intended to trigger a payment, are not a substitute for a G2G Activity MEL Plan. Monitoring for oversight of *outputs* (e.g., milestones, such as workplan developed, technical assistance and training provided, and other immediate and tangible results) is important and a required task, but does not fulfill the requirement for performance monitoring of *outcomes* identified in the project and activity's logic models (e.g., new human resources practices adopted, service delivery improved, and other higher level objectives).

Monitoring and evaluation approaches must meet USAID standards. USAID and the partner government should discuss and document how they will ensure high quality monitoring and evaluation data. Each performance indicator included in the G2G Activity MEL Plan and used by USAID must have a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and must reasonably meet USAID data quality standards defined in ADS 201.3.5.8. USAID and the partner government should work together to develop the PIRS for indicators selected from pre-existing government-owned data as well as indicators developed for the specific intervention. For more information about a PIRS, see [Guidance and Template for a PIRS](#).

Consider risks and risk mitigation efforts. If risks are identified in the pre-agreement assessment process outlined in ADS 220.3.4.3, consider monitoring approaches to track these risks and any mitigation efforts. Monitoring data may inform adjustments of risk mitigation actions as implementation progresses.

Use existing government data information systems, if possible. If a partner government has an existing data information system it uses to store and manage monitoring data, USAID should encourage its

development and use for managing monitoring data, rather than encouraging the creation of new information systems specific to the G2G agreement.

Consider opportunities for a USAID and partner government joint evaluation. To better understand and address challenges to implementation, revisit and revise the theory of change, or to inform future plans consider conducting a joint evaluation. The G2G Activity MEL Plan documents if, when, and how USAID and the partner government will conduct an evaluation of the G2G activity. See ADS 201.3.5.15 for information about what should be included in an evaluation plan.

Schedule data reviews to be responsive to adaptive management needs. The G2G Activity MEL Plan should document the agreed approach for learning from monitoring efforts and evaluation findings. Include opportunities for joint review and decision-making based on various sources of evidence.

USING A G2G ACTIVITY MEL PLAN

When USAID provides direct funding to a partner government, USAID staff step into a more active management role than what is demanded by other kinds of implementation mechanisms. Some critical issues to consider and discuss during implementation follow:

Conducting Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) and other methods to assure data quality. USAID and the partner government must periodically assess the quality of monitoring data during implementation and all performance indicators reported externally must undergo a DQA⁴. Assessing the quality of partner collected data has the potential of causing friction between USAID and the partner government. USAID and the partner government should discuss expectations and methods for mitigating or preventing possible issues that may arise during DQAs during the development of the G2G Activity MEL Plan, and again at the time of the quality assessments.

Reviewing performance monitoring data as determined by the pace of implementation and the pace of change. The frequency of data collection and review may change based on changes in performance or context. Further data collection, analyses, and possibly an evaluation may be conducted when needed.

Sharing monitoring data and evaluation findings with a wider range of local actors who have a stake in the development challenge being addressed. Refer to the section in the G2G Activity MEL Plan that outlined expectations and processes for sharing and disseminating data. Before data are shared publicly, USAID and the partner government should discuss any concerns about potentially sensitive data.

Updating the logic model or theory of change to reflect new information about context, assumptions, and causal relationships discovered through monitoring

Disseminating Evidence

USAID can help support local ownership through enhanced accountability, transparency, and inclusive learning by creating opportunities for partner governments, civil society, academia, private sector actors, and citizens to engage in constructive dialogue around development data generated through G2G programs.

⁴ To determine the methods that will be used to assess data quality, USAID and the partner government should together review the USAID recommended [DQA Checklist](#) and [How-To Note: Conduct a Data Quality Assessment \(DQA\)](#) as well as any methods the partner government may already have in place.

implementation or from findings documented in a mid-course evaluation. This might result in adapting implementation or negotiating modifications to the G2G agreement.

Monitoring and Evaluation Approaches for Topics of Particular Relevance to G2G Agreement

As with other forms of USAID assistance (such as contracts and grants), G2G agreements must be monitored to determine if expected results are achieved and may be evaluated for a more systematic and in-depth analysis of the intervention and its outcomes. For example, a development activity that is designed to improve early grade reading through training elementary teachers may be implemented through a G2G agreement or a USAID contract mechanism. In either case, the Activity MEL Plan might include monitoring the number of teachers trained in new teaching techniques and changes in the student test scores. An evaluation of this activity might examine the quality of the teacher training, whether the activity contributed to changes in test scores, how the activity adapted to challenges and opportunities, or any number of other questions about performance and impact.

G2G assistance does differ, though, from many other forms of USAID assistance. It relies on partner government processes and practices for implementation and it explicitly intends to foster sustainability through local ownership. In addition, G2G assistance often includes the complementary objective of building partner capacity to achieve locally owned and sustainable development outcomes.

Consequently, the content of a G2G Activity MEL Plan is likely to differ from Activity MEL Plans of more traditional contracts and grants. In addition to required plans for monitoring and evaluation of expected development results, G2G Activity MEL Plans may include provisions to ensure partner government follow-up on any risk mitigation measures established in the Approval for Use of Partner Government Systems (AUPGS), the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), and/or the Project Authorization. A more comprehensive G2G Activity MEL Plan should also include monitoring and evaluation efforts to assess the effects of G2G assistance on:

- (1) Local Ownership
- (2) Partner Country Capacity (when applicable)
- (3) Sustainability of Results

For example, if the education activity mentioned above was implemented through a G2G activity, the MEL Plan might include:

- Monitoring whether local institutions are participating in the development of the training for teachers and committing budgetary resources to augment USAID funds (local ownership).
- Periodically assessing capacity of local entities to implement the new teaching techniques and the training of the new techniques (partner country capacity).
- Evaluating whether improvements in reading scores persist and if teachers continue to use the new teaching techniques (sustainability of results).

While monitoring and evaluating local ownership, partner country capacity, and sustainability of results may be useful for all USAID activities, it is particularly relevant for G2G assistance. The rest of this section provides further information on monitoring and evaluation approaches to assess the effects of G2G assistance on local ownership, partner-country capacity, and sustainability.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Local ownership is defined in ADS 201.6 as “the commitment and ability of local actors – including the governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens, and others – to prioritize, resource, and implement development, so that development outcomes have a greater potential to be sustained and generate lasting change without USAID assistance.”

To monitor and evaluate the process of fostering local ownership of a development activity implemented through a G2G agreement, USAID Missions should examine the *prioritization*, *resourcing*, and *implementation* of the G2G activity by local actors. Considerations for monitoring and evaluating these three aspects of local ownership follow below.

1. Prioritization: Does the G2G activity align with local priorities, including those of government, civil society, beneficiaries, and the private sector? Do these stakeholders value the results the activity is expected to obtain? Examples of relevant M&E efforts include:
 - Periodically convening government partners and others to elicit perceptions of how these stakeholders value the activity.
 - Periodically reviewing documentary evidence, such as strategic plans and government budget narratives, that would indicate if the G2G activity and its expected outcomes are priorities of the partner government.
 - Monitoring the extent and quality of involvement by government leadership and staff, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders in planning, implementation, monitoring, and review of the G2G activity. Compare stakeholder involvement in the G2G activity relative to other development priorities of these stakeholders.
2. Resourcing: Are local actors mobilizing local funding and non-assistance resources for the G2G activity? Examples of relevant M&E efforts include:
 - Periodically reviewing whether and how partner financial and non-assistance resource commitments change over time.
 - Monitoring the percent of government budget allocated to or executed within the relevant sector.
 - Evaluating the extent to which private or other non-governmental resources are leveraged.
3. Implementation: Are local actors increasing their involvement in implementation over time? Examples of relevant M&E efforts include:
 - Monitoring the extent of involvement in implementation of the G2G activity by local stakeholders. Compare involvement of these stakeholder to USAID or other donor involvement and changes over time.
 - Monitoring and evaluating the extent to which existing partner country systems and processes are being used or adapted to implement, manage, and monitor the G2G activity.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PARTNER CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Partner country capacity to design, implement, and monitor development programs is essential to the success of G2G assistance. Consequently, G2G agreements often include dedicated partner capacity development efforts, such as training, mentoring, and technical assistance, when improved partner capacity is needed to achieve development results.

There are a variety of ways to monitor and evaluate capacity development that can be documented in the G2G Activity MEL Plan, including:

1. Monitor and evaluate the immediate results of capacity development efforts by examining if partner staff who received training, mentoring, and technical assistance valued this assistance, increased their knowledge in the relevant skill areas, and changed their behaviors over time consistent with the expectations of the capacity development efforts.
2. Periodically conduct organizational capacity assessments of the relevant partner institutions. Conduct an initial assessment prior to the start of the activity followed by additional assessments following the implementation of capacity development efforts. Such assessments examine management practices, human resources, financial management, administration and other aspects of organizational capacity compared to commonly accepted standards and best practices. In some cases, composite indicators of organizational capacity may be used to track changes in partner capacity more frequently.
3. Monitor and evaluate the performance of the local partner in implementing the G2G activity. If partner capacity is improved through capacity development efforts, then the improvements should manifest in better performance in implementing the G2G activity. Monitoring and evaluation efforts may examine if local partners are improving their implementation performance relative to pre-determined standards of implementation quality, whether implementation efficiency is improving, and whether the local partners are appropriately adapting to programmatic challenges.
4. Monitor and evaluate the expected development outcomes. Measures of development outcomes are important, albeit indirect, measures of partner capacity. Improvements or declines in the expected development outcomes of the G2G activity can provide some indication if partner capacity has improved. However, since a variety of factors in addition to the capabilities of the partner organization may affect development outcomes, such as the activity's design and external economic and social conditions, development outcomes should only be reviewed as a measure of partner capacity with these other factors in mind.

Resources and tools for assessing and Monitoring Capacity Development Efforts can be found in the [Monitoring Toolkit](#).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

Sustainability is defined in ADS 201.6 as “the ability of a local system to produce desired outcomes over time. Programs contribute to sustainability when they strengthen the system’s ability to produce valued

results and to be both resilient and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances.”⁵ Increasing local ownership and building partner capacity help ensure sustainability. A local system is more likely to continue producing valued results after donor involvement ends when local actors prioritize and resource development activities and when local actors have the appropriate capabilities to implement the development activities.

So, efforts to monitor and evaluate local ownership and partner capacity – as discussed in the previous sections – may also serve as indirect ways to monitor and evaluate the likelihood that results will be sustained. However, a more robust effort to monitor and evaluate the likelihood that results will be sustained would involve assessing changes in the “local system” over time.

In deciding what to monitor and evaluate for sustainability of results, USAID staff should ask:

1. What needs to change or be maintained in how the local partners operate in order for these activities and their outputs to be sustained?
2. What parts of the activity are critical for sustaining the expected development outcome(s)?
3. Which roles, relationships, and rules in the local system are critical to producing and sustaining the development outcome?

Examples of what to monitor and evaluate to assess the likelihood that the G2G activity and its outcomes are sustainable include:

1. Perceptions and behaviors of actors in the local system

- Monitor changes in awareness of the G2G activity among actors in the local system. In particular, conduct surveys or interviews to determine if local stakeholders who are not direct partners or beneficiaries are aware of the G2G activity and value its outcomes.
- Examine evidence of behavioral changes among partners and other stakeholders. Behavior is often difficult to change, so once it has been changed, the likelihood of sustaining the activity and its outcomes increases.

2. Rules in the local system

- Monitor changes in the policy environment. For example, monitor the adoption, revision, and enforcement of partner government policies and strategies (relevant to the G2G activity) that are difficult to change or are expected to remain in effect over the medium or long term.
- Monitor and evaluate whether new practices introduced through the G2G activity are being mainstreamed into partner government processes, are being adopted across government units, or are gaining acceptance as the new norm.

3. Resource allocation in the local system

⁵ The term “local system” is defined here as: the interconnected set of actors – governments, civil society the private sector, universities, individual citizens and others – that jointly produces a particular development outcome (from [Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development](#)). This is not to be confused with management, financial, technical, monitoring, or information systems. Further information on understanding local systems is provided in the [Technical Note: The 5Rs Framework in the Program Cycle](#).

- Monitor financial and non-financial resource commitments. Are partners and other stakeholders committing resources for the medium or longer term to sustain the development outcomes?

4. Relationships in the local system

- Monitor or evaluate changes in the relationships critical to producing and sustaining a result or outcome within a local system. For instance, are more stakeholders participating in the G2G activity and supporting its outcomes? Social network analysis (a method for mapping and measuring relationships in a network) or periodic stakeholder consultations may be of particular value in evaluating such changes.

Finally, the best way to assess sustainability is to actually measure development outcomes after the G2G activity has ended. Plan as early as possible for how USAID and its partner may continue monitoring and evaluation efforts after the G2G activity has ended. Consider tracking the same performance indicators of activity outcomes that were used during implementation after the activity has ended. If partner government data is used for monitoring outcomes, the USAID resources needed for such post-activity tracking will be minimal.

USAID and its partners should also consider planning for an ex-post evaluation that examines if development outcomes – both planned and unplanned – were actually sustained for some period of time after the end of the activity. Such evaluations can help build the evidence base for G2G activities by examining which aspects of the local system were critical to sustainability and why sustainability did or did not occur.