

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

Project Design & Implementation.....	1
Logical Framework.....	14
Analysis & Assessment for PD.....	15
Project M&E Plan.....	16
IPR.....	22
G2G.....	22

Project Design & Implementation

1. How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?

How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?

The PMP is an internal Mission management tool used to assess progress towards the “results” detailed in the CDCS Results Framework and Project LogFrames. In contrast, the PPR serves mainly as a reporting tool on USAID performance to stakeholders outside of the Mission, helping the Agency comply with legislative or other requirements (e.g. GPRAMA and initiative reporting). F leads the PPR process, issuing guidance annually.

Since the PMP is designed to help the mission monitor the performance of its portfolio, it generally has many more indicators than end up being reported in the PPR. The PMP will include both a set of F standard indicators that are applicable to the mission’s portfolio as well as a larger number of custom indicators that provide more granularity on mission performance to facilitate decision-making and learning at the appropriate levels.

2. Do Washington Operating Units (OUs) have to follow the new guidance?

Do Washington Operating Units (OUs) have to follow the new guidance?

Yes, guidance on the application of ADS 201 to Washington Operating Units will be circulated for clearance shortly. Washington OU’s should refer to their Bureau Operating Procedure (or equivalent)for specific information on their OU’s project design procedure.

3. Who should be on the Project Design team?

Who should be on the Project Design team?

The design team should be a cross-Mission approach and not be limited to just the technical office (even in a single-sector project). The design team should include the Program Office, Technical Offices (beyond the sectors specific to the design), and representation from the Offices of the Controller, Contracting Officer, and RLA. The Mission gender advisor and environmental advisor should also be included and play a lead role in the required analyses.

4. Are Missions expected to do a PAD for one-off funding opportunities from Washington that are implemented through Missions (e.g. challenge grants like trafficking in persons, disability funds, some scholarships, etc.)

Are Missions expected to do a PAD for one-off funding opportunities from Washington that are implemented through Missions (e.g. challenge grants like trafficking in persons, disability funds, some scholarships, etc.)

No, there is no requirement to do a separate PAD for a one-off funding opportunity secured by a Mission that augments its approved annual budget. However, these one-off opportunities should be consistent with attaining the results in its CDCS, and not be outside its approved strategy. That being the case, Mission should be able to build these awards into existing PADs once funding has

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

been approved. Alternatively (and preferably), a Mission that foresees the possibility of securing various types of one-off funding that are typically offered annually, could decide how these funds, if obtained, could best contribute to achieving the results already being targeted in any given project design. In such cases, the PAD could include an envelope for those additional funds in case they become available, and a clear pre-thought plan on how the resources would contribute to other parts of the design (LF, M&E/Learning, Management Plan, etc.)

5. Why are inclusive growth diagnostics relevant for USAID?

Why are inclusive growth diagnostics relevant for USAID?

Inclusive growth diagnostics are well-suited for USAID's purposes because they are evidence-based and consistent with the Agency's emphasis on analytical rigor. More broadly, Agency leadership has embraced IGDs for three principal reasons. First, for Missions, IGDs provide an evidence-based foundation for Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs). IGDs rely on an analytical framework that links investments in most any programmatic area—whether governance, policy, economic institutions, agriculture, technology, or human resource development—to faster and more inclusive growth. In terms of the specific elements of the CDCS, IGDs serve as a key underpinning for the Results Framework (RF) and the development hypotheses that the RF embodies. Second, IGDs provide an empirical basis for engaging in policy dialogue with governments. Finally, IGDs build the Agency's capacity to undertake pioneering economic analytic work, strengthening the Agency's reputation and brand. If well executed, these analyses will enhance our stature in policy dialogue with governments and our ability to collaborate fruitfully with other donors, while at the same time enhancing the impacts from our development dollars.

For more information on Inclusive Growth Diagnostics click here: <https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/inclusive-growth-diagnostic-faq>

6. What is a “growth diagnostic”?

What is a “growth diagnostic”?

A “growth diagnostic” is an analytical technique proposed in a 2005 paper by three Harvard economists—Ricardo Hausmann, Dani Rodrik, and Andrés Velasco (collectively, “HRV”). Their purpose was to develop an evidence-based yet practical way to identify the most important constraint(s) preventing a country from achieving faster economic growth (i.e., increases in material welfare for the population).

Growth diagnostics involve an objective, cross-cutting review of potential constraints to growth, with analysis of available data to determine which constraints are most binding. HRV noted that developing countries typically face many constraints, each of which might be ameliorated through reform efforts. Addressing many such constraints simultaneously, however, is politically and administratively challenging. HRV thus sought to provide an approach that could help policymakers identify and focus on the two or three most important

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7. Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?

Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?

The project budget should include a line item for M&E. This helps ensure that adequate resources are allocated for M&E within eventual implementing mechanisms, or for project level evaluations and monitoring that are not part of individual mechanisms (for example, surveys or other primary data collection needed for the project purpose level indicators). At the mechanism or activity level,

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

missions should draft RFPs, RFAs and G2G or other mechanisms to include necessary M&E costs (as well as roles and responsibilities). This will ensure that M&E is an explicitly-funded part of every award. It is better if those costs can be captured under an M&E line item rather than allocated across individual staff salaries, though individual implementing mechanisms will vary in their ability to do this.

8. How does someone get feedback on a PAD?

How does someone get feedback on a PAD?

PPL will review selected PADs and highlight promising approaches for consideration by other OUs. PPL also may provide informal comments to OUs to assist in the drafting of subsequent PADs. If an OU is interested in receiving feedback on a PAD during the drafting stage, send a request to topdwg@usaid.gov.

9. 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.

10. What is the purpose of the concept paper? Is the Concept Paper now mandatory for everyone?

What is the purpose of the concept paper? Is the Concept Paper now mandatory for everyone? The concept paper is meant to be a brief document that provides a snapshot of the project purpose, intended to give Mission/Bureau leadership enough information to decide if the team should proceed or not proceed with developing a PAD. It should provide a clear snapshot of the problem the project intends to address and the roadmap to complete the PAD (including analytic requirements). All projects must have concept papers.

11. What the difference is between a PMP and an M&E Plan? How are both utilized?

What the difference is between a PMP and an M&E Plan? How are both utilized?

A Performance Management Plan (PMP) is a mission-wide document that serves as an internal management tool for USAID missions (see ADS 203.3.3). The PMP provides a systemized approach for tracking and reviewing progress made towards the achievement of the goals stated in the CDCS Results Framework while maintaining a standardized level of quality and verification controls. The creation and implementation of the PMP is managed out of the program office, but all technical units/Development Objective (DO) teams are both contributors and users of the PMP. While there is no standard format for PMPs, all PMPs should include the required components detailed in ADS 203.3.3. USAID missions should use a format that best fits their management and communication needs.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

The PMP is a living document and it is expected that it will be regularly updated with relevant indicators and evaluation questions from project M&E plans. Project M&E plans are developed by mission staff on a rolling basis during project design and set out the plan for monitoring and evaluating progress toward results specified in a Project LogFrame. Project indicators (at the Purpose and Output levels from the LogFrame) and evaluation questions from the project M&E plan must be included in the PMP. Project teams should work with the program office to ensure that the mission-wide PMP is regularly updated from new project M&E plans (see 203.3.3).

Activity M&E plans, in contrast, are developed by implementers post-award, before major activity implementation begins, and should align with the broader project M&E plan to which they contribute. Activity M&E plans contain the indicators that the implementer and COR/AOR need for activity management.

12. What is the Project Design Working Group?

What is the Project Design Working Group?

The Programnet Project Design Working Group (PDWG) was established to facilitate learning between USAID Missions as well as Washington Operating Units (pillar and regional bureaus) on project design issues. It is also a space where operating units are required to post approved Project Appraisal Documents (PADs) per ADS 201.3.15.6.

13. What do you do with implementing mechanisms that contribute to more than one Project/Project Purpose?

What do you do with implementing mechanisms that contribute to more than one Project/Project Purpose?

It should be possible to capture the project-specific results that one mechanism is contributing to several projects by including those results statements as appropriate in each project's LogFrame at the output, sub-purpose and/or purpose level (together with the associated performance indicator and target). Each LogFrame's inputs (and each project's budget) should estimate the level of funding proportional to the contribution of the specific mechanism to that project. The components of the mechanism that contribute to each discrete project should be described in the implementation plans of the appropriate projects.

14. How do I learn about the latest updates in the Project Design Working Group?

How do I learn about the latest updates in the Project Design Working Group?

Monthly summary updates are shared in the Project Design and Implementation space on Programnet. These updates include a summary of the latest PADs posted to the PDWG and promising approaches for consideration by other OUs. The latest update can be found [here](#).

15. If a Mission is considering a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement as one of the implementing mechanisms included in a PAD, how early does it need to begin the process and what all is involved?

If a Mission is considering a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement as one of the implementing mechanisms included in a PAD, how early does it need to begin the process and what all is involved?

The process for approving the use of a G2G agreement under a project is defined in: (a) ADS 220; (b) the FY 2012 Appropriation Legislation (Section 7031), and in the Agency's response to a recent audit of the Agency's implementation of ADS 220 by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Briefly, it is expected that Stage 1 of the Public Financial Management Risk Assessment Framework (PFMRAF) will be completed before or shortly after a Mission's CDCS. During project design, Stage 2 of the PFMRAF and the associated risk mitigation plan will be completed documenting how any fiduciary risk of using partner country government systems will be mitigated. In addition, the PAD will include adequate technical and institutional analyses to identify and

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

mitigate any programmatic risk of using G2G implementing mechanisms. The authorization will include language that the Mission Director specifically approves the use of partner government systems as implementing mechanisms under the project (with the Approval for the Use of Partner Government Systems (AUPGS) defined in ADS 220 attached to the PAD).

16. What about Mission Buy-Ins or OYB to Washington-managed Instruments to fund activities that will take place in that country?

What about Mission Buy-Ins or OYB to Washington-managed Instruments to fund activities that will take place in that country?

Yes, these implementing mechanisms should be planned as part of a project design/PAD process since they are basically pre-competed implementing mechanisms. They are no different from Mission-awarded contracts or cooperative agreements in terms of how they should be incorporated into a PAD.

17. Does the Logical Framework (Logframe) replace the Results Framework at the PAD level?

Does the Logical Framework (Logframe) replace the Results Framework at the PAD level?

No. The Results Framework depicts the logic of a CDCS - it is a strategic planning tool. Though it forms the basis for Project Design, it does not translate the strategy into detailed outputs and inputs and refined indicators at a more granular level. That is the role of the Logical Framework (Logframe).

18. 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.

19. When does the Project Authorization have to be amended?

When does the Project Authorization have to be amended? What about changes at the activity or implementing mechanism level?

- a. The PAD and Project Authorization need to be amended formally through an Action Memorandum approved by the Mission Director under the following circumstances: (a) The amount of USAID funding for the projects is increased or decreased by 10% of the initial project; (b) the defined end date of the project requires an extension of more than six months; or (c) the project purpose requires substantive modification (such as modifications in the Project Purpose, expected outputs and significant targets and benchmarks at the purpose level). The rationale for these changes will be documented by an amendment to the PAD. The Project Design and/or DO team lead should consult with the Program Office to obtain guidance on the analytical support and the documentation that will be required for the PAD amendment.

Substantial changes can be made at the activity level without affecting the overall project funding levels and project duration. For purposes of accountability and visibility, it is important that such changes be approved and documented in the PAD files as well. Therefore, in the following cases, a lower-level amendment would be required: (a) the total amount of USAID funding for an activity/IM is increased or decreased by 10% from initial Total Estimated Cost; (b) activity/IM end date requires an extension of more than six months; (c) a new activity/IM is added to the Project Implementation Plan (other than G2G), or (d) other modifications that the Program Office or Technical Officer consider appropriate for a documented change to the PAD.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

Missions should also consider a formal amendment to the PAD and Authorization if a G2G implementing mechanism is added to a project after its initial authorization. Frequently additional sections will have to be added to the analytic section on technical and institutional analyses of the government entity that will be implementing the agreement(s), the Approval for the Use of Partner Government Systems (AUPGS) annexed to the PAD (per ADS 220), and additional technical assistance may need to be added to the budget and implementation plan either for risk mitigation or for capacity-building, or both.

20. Which indicators from project M&E plans feed into the PMP and which ones do not?

Which indicators from project M&E plans feed into the PMP and which ones do not? Every performance indicator at the output level and above should be included in the PMP. This includes every indicator from the CDCS results framework above the project level as well as every indicator within project M&E plans at the output level (i.e. inputs and indicators for LogFrame assumptions do not translate over into the PMP). Depending on where the linkages are between your project M&E plan and the CDCS results framework, some of the output level and above indicators will directly link to DO, IR, and/or Sub-IR results from the CDCS results framework.

21. Who is a member of the Project Design Working Group?

Who is a member of the Project Design Working Group? Membership to the PDWG will be limited to two points of contact (POC) in each USAID Mission and Bureau/Washington Operating Units (a primary and alternate POC). The primary POC is the supervisory program officer in each USAID Mission/Bureau and the alternate POC should be a US Direct Hire, Foreign Service National or Personal Services Contractor. These individuals will be responsible for protecting and sharing relevant project design information and examples with others in the Mission/Bureau on a need to know basis. All members will be subject to the following rules regarding the use of the PDWG.

22. Given the new requirement for sustainability analysis, is there a threshold to determine if sustainability has been achieved? How do we know if a project is sustainable?

Given the new requirement for sustainability analysis, is there a threshold to determine if sustainability has been achieved? How do we know if a project is sustainable? The purpose of the sustainability analysis is to have the Mission determine the extent to which project results will be sustained after USAID funding ends, and to develop a plan to monitor progress towards the sustainability of these outcomes during project implementation.

23. Are there any tips for indicator selection so as to make sure indicators reflect the right level (e.g. input, output, outcome, etc.)?

Are there any tips for indicator selection so as to make sure indicators reflect the right level (e.g. input, output, outcome, etc.)? USAID staff should consult ADS 203.3.6 through 203.3.8, and ADS 203.3.11.1 for guidance regarding indicators. In addition, many tips can be found throughout the [Performance Management Plan Toolkit](#), and in particular, Module 2.2: Select and Refine Performance Indicators.

24. Where do I find examples of different elements of a PAD?

Where do I find examples of different elements of a PAD? Promising and innovative approaches for consideration by other OUs identified during PPL reviews of selected PADs will be posted to all ProgramNet users upon agreement with the OU POCs. The latest examples can be found on the blog section of the [Project Design Home Page](#).

25. What is the difference between the role of an Activity Manager/COR/AOR and a Project Manager?

What is the difference between the role of an Activity Manager/COR/AOR and a Project Manager? The responsibility of an AOR/COR for supporting the CO/AO for a specific award as defined in their designation letter is unchanged vis-à-vis that award. What changes is the clearer relationship of

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

the award to contributing to the broader purpose and to the end of project status (EOPS) of the indicators and targets for that purpose. While there may be no formal supervisory role exercised by the project manager over the AOR/COR, there is the need for the AOR/COR to understand and operate within the bigger picture of the project and take responsibility for how/whether the activity he/she manages is contributing to the achievement of that project purpose. The Project Manager is ultimately responsible for overall coordination and oversight of the achievement of the project's results.

26. Our Mission just adopted a new Project Design Mission Order. What should we do now?

Our Mission just adopted a new Project Design Mission Order. What should we do now? Unfortunately, you will need to set aside the mission order you have just completed and it will be superseded by the new standardized mission order. The good news is that all of the thinking that was done to write that mission order can be leveraged to do any necessary customizations in order to adopt the standardized mission order. In addition, all of the consulting and socialization that you did to write the new mission order will make it very easy to adopt the standardized mission order.

Note that the standardized mission orders are not “templates” or model mission orders. They are mandatory mission orders that may receive “light” customization (per the customization rules in the Instructions document) and must be adopted in each USAID mission by December 10, 2013.

27. 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.

28. Why is membership limited to the Project Design Working Group?

Why is membership limited to the Project Design Working Group?

Membership to the PDWG is limited to two points of contact due to the sensitive nature of information in the Project Appraisal Documents (PADs). PADs often contain procurement sensitive information and should be marked appropriately. This limited membership ensures precautions are in place to ensure procurement sensitive information is protected and handled appropriately.

29. The guidance says that a project purpose is usually comparable with an IR. When would it not be? Why would I do something else?

The guidance says that a project purpose is usually comparable with an IR. When would it not be? Why would I do something else?

If the DO is relatively confined, or does not have significant funds associated with it, it may be more efficient to define a project purpose at the DO level.

30. What are the responsibilities and functions of a Project Manager and how does it fit into our staff structure?

Regarding the Monitoring and Evaluation Mission Orders, there are several references to a “Project Manager”. At first, we thought it was synonymous with COR/AOR but this doesn't seem to be the case. What are the responsibilities and functions of this new role and how does it fit into our staff structure? Is it mandatory to designate a Project Manager for each DO? If not, do we have to include this role in the Mission Orders?

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

PPL/SPP is responsible for writing the ADS 201 and 202 chapters. We are planning to include a new definition of Project Manager in the revised ADS 202, which will be completed within the next six months. In the meantime, you will notice that all references to Project Manager are currently in italicized text, meaning it is considered 'best practice' but you can choose *not* to use it (see instructions document regarding customization for more details). Project Manager is defined as follows (from the Strategy Mission Order):

Project Manager:

- *Provides programmatic and budget requirements to DO Team Lead for their project*
- *Provides project management leadership and oversight for CORs, AORs, and Activity Managers, as well as technical staff*
- *Oversees tracking of project budget, and is responsible for ensuring quality of monitoring data and project level and activity level evaluations*
- *Promotes coordination across implementing mechanisms within projects and between projects*
- *Represents projects on DO Team*

So, you could think of the Project Manager as a Sub-team Leader type, where they have COR/AORs who report to them, but they report to the DO Team Lead. They are responsible for achievement of the PADs project purpose (usually IR) the way a DO Team Lead is responsible for achievement of the DO.

Bottom line: it is not mandatory, you could change this, but you would need to put some existing supervisory role in its place (like do team leader or a sub- team leader) in order for the text to make sense.

31. Why do we have a new approach to project design?

Why do we have a new approach to project design?

Project design is a critical part of the Agency's reform agenda and is intended to bring the rigor of design leadership back inside the Agency. By focusing at the project level, we are better able to connect interventions and track how they add up to contribute to more than a sum of disparate activities. The design process also allows us to be more selective about what we will fund, reduce management redundancies, strengthen the process for making evidence-based decisions, and facilitates more rigorous evaluations.

32. What is the difference between a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and performance indicator tracking table? Are both considered part of the PMP?

What is the difference between a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and performance indicator tracking table? Are both considered part of the PMP?

Both PIRSs and performance indicator tracking tables are considered part of a PMP. A PIRS stores reference information about a performance indicator, while the performance indicator tracking table stores indicator data, including baselines, targets, and actual values as well as justifications for individual targets. Note that neither needs to be part of a physical PMP document. Rather, both may be stored in an electronic database format. Indicator data should be stored, at minimum, in an electronic spreadsheet, but preferably in a database to facilitate data analysis and use. The PIRS should not be used as a substitute for an indicator tracking table.

33. How do I join the Project Design Working Group?

How do I join the Project Design Working Group?

Membership to the PDWG is limited to two POC's. Individuals interested in joining the group on behalf of their Mission or operating unit should contact the two listed POC's on the [PDWG members list](#).

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

34. 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.

35. How does an “inclusive growth diagnostic” differ from a normal “growth diagnostic”?

How does an “inclusive growth diagnostic” differ from a normal “growth diagnostic”?

The development record shows overwhelmingly that economic growth is almost always inclusive or broad-based; on average across countries, growth benefits the poor proportionally as much as non-poor households. However, some countries have experienced growth that has been narrowly based, benefiting the few rather than the many. Inclusive growth diagnostics (IGDs) expand the scope of growth diagnostics to identify constraints to growth that is not only rapid but also inclusive (see Question 7 below for a definition of “inclusive”). By asking the question “How does growth in a particular country affect poverty?” it helps practitioners to better understand the transmission mechanisms through which growth affects different population groups, and therefore enables policy makers to shift the pattern of growth to make it more inclusive, if they so choose. There is no single widely-accepted diagnostic technique for IGDs; USAID has been piloting and refining several approaches.

For more information about Inclusive Growth diagnostics click here: <https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/inclusive-growth-diagnostic-faq>

36. What is the difference between the Results Framework and the Logical Framework? Is there a relationship between the two?

What is the difference between the Results Framework and the Logical Framework? Is there a relationship between the two?

The Results Framework (RF) depicts the development hypothesis of a CDCS - it is a strategic planning tool. The LogFrame (LF) describes how the strategy is operationalized at the project level by showing the detailed inputs and outputs needed to attain a stated project purpose, including performance indicators at each level of result (output, purpose and goal). The project LF allows the Mission to define exactly what resources and set of actions are needed to achieve and measure the results and the causal linkage linking each level of result. The LF is directly linked to the RF, generally by defining the Project Purpose usually at the IR level or other result level in the RF (such as DO or Sub-IR). and it complements the RF by carrying a development hypothesis through from the DO to the supporting project purpose.

37. How do we account for our existing portfolio in the CDCS?

As we move through the CDCS process, how should our Mission think about its existing portfolio of activities, implementing mechanisms, and procurement instruments and how the Mission is structured to implement them?

This is a great question with a complex answer. For a nuanced analysis of possible approaches, please see the [Discussion Note](#) on the ProgramNet Portfolio Alignment page. USAID staff may

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

also wish to view the [Webinar on portfolio alignment](#) where field Missions (Indonesia and Nepal) discuss their experience. See also ADS 201.3.13)

38. What is the difference between a cost estimate, a financial plan, and a budget?

I understand that one of the mandatory annexes to the PAD is the "Cost Estimate and Financial Plan" and that this annex should not be confused with a "budget." What is the difference between a cost estimate, a financial plan, and a budget?

A "cost estimate" is an approximation of the probable cost of the total project computed on the basis of all activities outlined in the PAD. A "financial plan" is built using this project cost estimate along with the project schedule. The financial plan provides a view of how much the project is estimated to cost both from a life-of-project and a periodic perspective (usually annually). On the other hand a "budget" is a description of how the Mission's allocated resources will be applied to the project's activities. The challenge of the project team is to ensure that the budget (i.e. resources the Mission expects to receive through its OYB and budget projections in later years) is sufficient to fund the project given the required resources estimated through the project cost estimate. If it is not, it is incumbent on the project team to either reduce the objectives or scope of the overall project, or alternatively, to seek additional resources by reallocating funds within the Mission's approved budget.

39. Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Implementing partners have the primary responsibility for activity-level monitoring. In some cases, implementing partners may collect monitoring data for their own internal activity management and implementation purposes beyond that which is needed or required by USAID. That said, due to the time and cost of data collection, it is important that indicators be selected strategically. 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. 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, the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP), and the mission's Performance Plan and Report (PPR). A litmus test for which indicators implementing partners should report to USAID is those which are relevant for management or mission reporting and decisions.

In the past, implementers have expressed concern that they are engaged in extraneous data collection. It is important for the USAID mission to be able to identify and communicate data expectations and needs early in a project or activity. To the extent that implementing partners have a clearer understanding of USAID's data needs, they are more likely to focus their monitoring efforts on what is most important for the mission.

40. Which indicators and targets should be reflected in the project LogFrame and project M&E plan? Should inputs be included?

Which indicators and targets should be reflected in the project LogFrame and project M&E plan? Should inputs be included?

In order to complete the LogFrame for the PAD, missions will have to include indicators and data sources for the output level and above within their project LogFrame. In terms of targets, defining the End of Project status (essentially the purpose level indicators + targets) is a useful part of the project design exercise. However, we do not recommend including targets from lower levels of the LogFrame in the Logframe itself. These targets should instead be included in the project M&E plan and transferred into whatever system the mission uses to manage its indicator data (e.g.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

AidTracker, excel spreadsheets or others). Additionally, indicators for inputs should be included in activity-level M&E plans and do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP.

Inputs are generally included in activity-level M&E plans. While inputs are important to manage at the activity level, indicators for them do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP. Inputs typically include things like trainings provided, commodities purchased, infrastructure built, etc. As it is self-evident whether inputs have or have not occurred, inputs do not require performance indicators. A mission might want to consider inputs as a means to estimate the time and costs associated with implementing a project, but there should not be input-related performance indicators in the project LogFrame, project M&E plan, or mission PMP.

41. How do I know which PADs have been posted to the Project Design Working Group?

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A summary matrix of all PADs posted to the PDWG is maintained by the PDWG owner and can be found [here](#). Included in the matrix are the titles, summary descriptions, keywords, and countries for each PAD posted in the PDWG. USAID staff interested in a particular PAD should contact the corresponding two listed POC's on the PDWG members list for more information.

42. What do you do with implementing mechanisms that cut across I.R.s, where should they be captured in Project Design?

What do you do with implementing mechanisms that cut across I.R.s, where should they be captured in Project Design?

The implementing mechanisms contribution to each IR/project should be articulated in the log frame at the input, output and purpose levels of each project logframe. (cross-cutting IRs)

43. 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.

44. What is Gender?

What is the difference between women's empowerment and female empowerment?

A. *Gender* is the socially defined set of roles, rights, responsibilities, entitlements, and obligations of females and males in societies. The social definitions of what it means to be female or male vary among cultures and change over time.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

Female empowerment is the process of increasing the capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decisionmaking in households, communities, and societies. This policy deliberately uses the term female empowerment, as opposed to women's empowerment, to capture girls and adolescents as well as adult women. Some USAID offices and position descriptions use the term women's empowerment but their activities also include girls and adolescent females.

45. Are missions required to submit their PMPs or project M&E plans to Washington for approval?

Are missions required to submit their PMPs or project M&E plans to Washington for approval? No, there is no formal Washington approval process for PMPs or project M&E plans. There are some indicators in a PMP that a mission reports to Washington in the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) or in initiative reporting; however, it is rare that a mission would report all of the indicators in its PMP to Washington. The PMP is and should remain a management tool for missions.

Missions are encouraged to post PMPs (or portions thereof) on ProgramNet to share their experience with others as well as to troubleshoot or garner ideas for new approaches. As missions design new projects, they are asked to post their Project Appraisal Documents (PADs), which include their project M&E plans, to ProgramNet, via the project design working group. However, this is not for PAD approval, but for better sharing to support mission staff as they become more adept at project design.

46. 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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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.

47. How do you apply the PD process to an IR that already has most of its implementing mechanisms already in place?

How do you apply the PD process to an IR that already has most of its implementing mechanisms already in place?

As a Mission moves from approved CDCS to a project design process, developing a new PAD associated with an IR that has most of its mechanisms in place would have lower priority. However, at some point, integrating these existing mechanisms into a project design (PAD) with its unified analyses, logical framework, monitoring and evaluation plan, etc. will enhance the Mission's portfolio management process by focusing attention and coordination at the high-level project purpose rather than the results of unassociated implementing mechanisms. Also as new resources/mechanisms are needed to achieve the project purpose, a PAD will be required.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

48. What if I want to see an example of a PAD that addresses my sector/area?

What if I want to see an example of a PAD that addresses my sector/area?

If you are interested in a particular PAD, contact the corresponding two listed POC's on the PDWG members list for more information.

49. What do you do if an IR has only one activity/implementing mechanism, does it require a full PAD/PD process?

What do you do if an IR has only one activity/implementing mechanism, does it require a full PAD/PD process?

In general, an IR should not include only one activity or implementing mechanism. An IR should include all Mission activities that fall under the IR including non-budgeted activities. However, if an IR only has one activity/implementing mechanism then it does still require a PAD/PD.

50. Can Missions integrate stakeholders during the conceptual and analytical stages? What about OCI (organizational conflict of interest)?

Can Missions integrate stakeholders during the conceptual and analytical stages? What about OCI (organizational conflict of interest)?

The conceptual stage of project design is the ideal time to actively engage stakeholders and others to help define the development problem and gathering existing information, perspectives, studies, evaluations, etc. Since this is an information-gathering phase, there should be no issue of OCI. For example, the public version of the Mission's CDCS is an excellent document to distribute widely as a basis for consultation. Problem analysis also can be a very effective way of further defining and refining the main problem to be addressed by the project and all its associated sub-problems, potential causes and sub-causes.

OCI issues are more possible as the Mission moves into the analytic phase, including the issue of a firm doing analytic or other work associated with the PAD that may give it an unfair competitive advantage in procurements resulting from the project authorization. Even if that analytical work is eventually made available to all competitors, the fact that the authors had access to the information earlier than others gives them time to pre-position their bid unfairly. The design team should be careful to include the RLA and Contracting Office whenever questions about OCI issue arise.

51. What is the function and timing of the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)?

What is the function and timing of the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)?

A PIRS includes all the relevant reference information about a performance indicator. It helps ensure that USAID staff and implementing partners are on the same page regarding what an indicator means, how it is collected, and who is responsible for it. It also helps ensure consistent indicator data collection and use, and documents decisions about the indicator by current staff for future staff. The [recommended PIRS template](#) is located on ProgramNet.

The mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP) should contain Performance Indicator Reference Sheets for all performance indicators. PIRS should be completed as soon as you are certain of what an indicator will be (i.e. definition, data source, etc). During PMP development, some PIRS will be completed right after CDCS approval as Goal and DO level indicators are determined; others will be completed as projects are designed and indicators are further developed and refined. Consequently, PIRSs should be completed on a rolling basis as indicators become finalized.

PIRS can also be used as a starting point when conducting DQAs, which are required for any indicators being reported to Washington. Once the DQA is conducted, the PIRS should be updated with the necessary information from the [DQA checklist](#).

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

52. 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.

53. How is the Project Design Working Group space on Programnet different than the Project Design and Implementation space on Programnet?

How is the Project Design Working Group space on Programnet different than the Project Design and Implementation space on Programnet?

The PDWG space on Programnet is a membership limited space for posting PADs and discussing procurement sensitive information in PADs to encourage exchange and learning between operating units. The Project Design Implementation space on Programnet is a space for tools, resources, broader examples, and exchanges on general project design and implementation issues between operating units. This space is not restricted and open for all Programnet users.

54. What assessments/analyses are required in the CDCS?

What assessments/analyses are required in the CDCS?

Only environment (FAA 118/119) and gender are *required* at the strategy level. However, in preparing the CDCS, Missions should develop an analytic agenda to identify and fill knowledge gaps. This might include sector-specific analyses, broader political economy analysis, or sustainability analysis, for example. For a list of possible assessments/analyses, see ADS 201.3.4.1 or visit [the ProgramNet Analysis & Assessment page](#).

Logical Framework

55. How do we account for our existing portfolio in the CDCS?

As we move through the CDCS process, how should our Mission think about its existing portfolio of activities, implementing mechanisms, and procurement instruments and how the Mission is structured to implement them?

This is a great question with a complex answer. For a nuanced analysis of possible approaches, please see the [Discussion Note](#) on the ProgramNet Portfolio Alignment page. USAID staff may also wish to view the [Webinar on portfolio alignment](#) where field Missions (Indonesia and Nepal) discuss their experience. See also ADS 201.3.13)

56. What is the difference between the Results Framework and the Logical Framework? Is there a relationship between the two?

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ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

The Results Framework (RF) depicts the development hypothesis of a CDCS - it is a strategic planning tool. The LogFrame (LF) describes how the strategy is operationalized at the project level by showing the detailed inputs and outputs needed to attain a stated project purpose, including performance indicators at each level of result (output, purpose and goal). The project LF allows the Mission to define exactly what resources and set of actions are needed to achieve and measure the results and the causal linkage linking each level of result. The LF is directly linked to the RF, generally by defining the Project Purpose usually at the IR level or other result level in the RF (such as DO or Sub-IR). and it complements the RF by carrying a development hypothesis through from the DO to the supporting project purpose.

57. What do you do with implementing mechanisms that cut across I.R.s, where should they be captured in Project Design?

What do you do with implementing mechanisms that cut across I.R.s, where should they be captured in Project Design?

The implementing mechanisms contribution to each IR/project should be articulated in the log frame at the input, output and purpose levels of each project logframe. (cross-cutting IRs)

Analysis & Assessment for PD

58. How does an “inclusive growth diagnostic” differ from a normal “growth diagnostic”?

How does an “inclusive growth diagnostic” differ from a normal “growth diagnostic”?

The development record shows overwhelmingly that economic growth is almost always inclusive or broad-based; on average across countries, growth benefits the poor proportionally as much as non-poor households. However, some countries have experienced growth that has been narrowly based, benefiting the few rather than the many. Inclusive growth diagnostics (IGDs) expand the scope of growth diagnostics to identify constraints to growth that is not only rapid but also inclusive (see Question 7 below for a definition of “inclusive”). By asking the question “How does growth in a particular country affect poverty?” it helps practitioners to better understand the transmission mechanisms through which growth affects different population groups, and therefore enables policy makers to shift the pattern of growth to make it more inclusive, if they so choose. There is no single widely-accepted diagnostic technique for IGDs; USAID has been piloting and refining several approaches.

For more information about Inclusive Growth diagnostics click

here: <https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/inclusive-growth-diagnostic-faq>

59. What is Gender?

What is the difference between women's empowerment and female empowerment?

A. *Gender* is the socially defined set of roles, rights, responsibilities, entitlements, and obligations of females and males in societies. The social definitions of what it means to be female or male vary among cultures

and change over time.

Female empowerment is the process of increasing the capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decisionmaking in households, communities, and societies. This policy deliberately uses the term female empowerment, as opposed to women's empowerment, to capture girls and adolescents as well as adult women. Some USAID offices and position descriptions use the term women's empowerment but their activities also include girls and adolescent females.

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Only environment (FAA 118/119) and gender are *required* at the strategy level. However, in preparing the CDCS, Missions should develop an analytic agenda to identify and fill knowledge gaps. This might include sector-specific analyses, broader political economy analysis, or

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

sustainability analysis, for example. For a list of possible assessments/analyses, see ADS 201.3.4.1 or visit [the ProgramNet Analysis & Assessment page](#).

61. What is a “growth diagnostic”?

What is a “growth diagnostic”?

A “growth diagnostic” is an analytical technique proposed in a 2005 paper by three Harvard economists—Ricardo Hausmann, Dani Rodrik, and Andrés Velasco (collectively, “HRV”). Their purpose was to develop an evidence-based yet practical way to identify the most important constraint(s) preventing a country from achieving faster economic growth (i.e., increases in material welfare for the population).

Growth diagnostics involve an objective, cross-cutting review of potential constraints to growth, with analysis of available data to determine which constraints are most binding. HRV noted that developing countries typically face many constraints, each of which might be ameliorated through reform efforts. Addressing many such constraints simultaneously, however, is politically and administratively challenging. HRV thus sought to provide an approach that could help policymakers identify and focus on the two or three most important

For more information on Inclusive Growth Diagnostics go to - <https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/inclusive-growth-diagnostic-faq>

62. Why are inclusive growth diagnostics relevant for USAID?

Why are inclusive growth diagnostics relevant for USAID?

Inclusive growth diagnostics are well-suited for USAID’s purposes because they are evidence-based and consistent with the Agency’s emphasis on analytical rigor.

More broadly, Agency leadership has embraced IGDs for three principal reasons. First, for Missions, IGDs provide an evidence-based foundation for Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs). IGDs rely on an analytical framework that links investments in most any programmatic area—whether governance, policy, economic institutions, agriculture, technology, or human resource development—to faster and more inclusive growth. In terms of the specific elements of the CDCS, IGDs serve as a key underpinning for the Results Framework (RF) and the development hypotheses that the RF embodies. Second, IGDs provide an empirical basis for engaging in policy dialogue with governments. Finally, IGDs build the Agency’s capacity to undertake pioneering economic analytic work, strengthening the Agency’s reputation and brand. If well executed, these analyses will enhance our stature in policy dialogue with governments and our ability to collaborate fruitfully with other donors, while at the same time enhancing the impacts from our development dollars.

For more information on Inclusive Growth Diagnostics click here: <https://programnet.usaid.gov/library/inclusive-growth-diagnostic-faq>

63. Given the new requirement for sustainability analysis, is there a threshold to determine if sustainability has been achieved? How do we know if a project is sustainable?

Given the new requirement for sustainability analysis, is there a threshold to determine if sustainability has been achieved? How do we know if a project is sustainable?

The purpose of the sustainability analysis is to have the Mission determine the extent to which project results will be sustained after USAID funding ends, and to develop a plan to monitor progress towards the sustainability of these outcomes during project implementation.

Project M&E Plan

64. What the difference is between a PMP and an M&E Plan? How are both utilized?

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ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

A Performance Management Plan (PMP) is a mission-wide document that serves as an internal management tool for USAID missions (see ADS 203.3.3). The PMP provides a systemized approach for tracking and reviewing progress made towards the achievement of the goals stated in the CDCS Results Framework while maintaining a standardized level of quality and verification controls. The creation and implementation of the PMP is managed out of the program office, but all technical units/Development Objective (DO) teams are both contributors and users of the PMP. While there is no standard format for PMPs, all PMPs should include the required components detailed in ADS 203.3.3. USAID missions should use a format that best fits their management and communication needs.

The PMP is a living document and it is expected that it will be regularly updated with relevant indicators and evaluation questions from project M&E plans. Project M&E plans are developed by mission staff on a rolling basis during project design and set out the plan for monitoring and evaluating progress toward results specified in a Project LogFrame. Project indicators (at the Purpose and Output levels from the LogFrame) and evaluation questions from the project M&E plan must be included in the PMP. Project teams should work with the program office to ensure that the mission-wide PMP is regularly updated from new project M&E plans (see 203.3.3).

Activity M&E plans, in contrast, are developed by implementers post-award, before major activity implementation begins, and should align with the broader project M&E plan to which they contribute. Activity M&E plans contain the indicators that the implementer and COR/AOR need for activity management.

65. 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.

66. Which indicators from project M&E plans feed into the PMP and which ones do not?

Which indicators from project M&E plans feed into the PMP and which ones do not?

Every performance indicator at the output level and above should be included in the PMP. This includes every indicator from the CDCS results framework above the project level as well as every indicator within project M&E plans at the output level (i.e. inputs and indicators for LogFrame assumptions do not translate over into the PMP). Depending on where the linkages are between your project M&E plan and the CDCS results framework, some of the output level and above indicators will directly link to DO, IR, and/or Sub-IR results from the CDCS results framework.

67. Are there any tips for indicator selection so as to make sure indicators reflect the right level (e.g. input, output, outcome, etc.)?

Are there any tips for indicator selection so as to make sure indicators reflect the right level (e.g. input, output, outcome, etc.)?

USAID staff should consult ADS 203.3.6 through 203.3.8, and ADS 203.3.11.1 for guidance regarding indicators. In addition, many tips can be found throughout the [Performance Management Plan Toolkit](#), and in particular, Module 2.2: Select and Refine Performance Indicators.

68. What is an evaluation plan?

What is an evaluation plan?

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

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.

69. What is the difference between a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and performance indicator tracking table? Are both considered part of the PMP?

What is the difference between a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and performance indicator tracking table? Are both considered part of the PMP?

Both PIRSs and performance indicator tracking tables are considered part of a PMP. A PIRS stores reference information about a performance indicator, while the performance indicator tracking table stores indicator data, including baselines, targets, and actual values as well as justifications for individual targets. Note that neither needs to be part of a physical PMP document. Rather, both may be stored in an electronic database format. Indicator data should be stored, at minimum, in an electronic spreadsheet, but preferably in a database to facilitate data analysis and use. The PIRS should not be used as a substitute for an indicator tracking table.

70. 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.

71. Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Implementing partners have the primary responsibility for activity-level monitoring. In some cases, implementing partners may collect monitoring data for their own internal activity management and implementation purposes beyond that which is needed or required by USAID. That said, due to the time and cost of data collection, it is important that indicators be selected strategically. 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. 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, the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP), and

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

the mission's Performance Plan and Report (PPR). A litmus test for which indicators implementing partners should report to USAID is those which are relevant for management or mission reporting and decisions.

In the past, implementers have expressed concern that they are engaged in extraneous data collection. It is important for the USAID mission to be able to identify and communicate data expectations and needs early in a project or activity. To the extent that implementing partners have a clearer understanding of USAID's data needs, they are more likely to focus their monitoring efforts on what is most important for the mission.

72. Which indicators and targets should be reflected in the project LogFrame and project M&E plan? Should inputs be included?

Which indicators and targets should be reflected in the project LogFrame and project M&E plan? Should inputs be included?

In order to complete the LogFrame for the PAD, missions will have to include indicators and data sources for the output level and above within their project LogFrame. In terms of targets, defining the End of Project status (essentially the purpose level indicators + targets) is a useful part of the project design exercise. However, we do not recommend including targets from lower levels of the LogFrame in the Logframe itself. These targets should instead be included in the project M&E plan and transferred into whatever system the mission uses to manage its indicator data (e.g. AidTracker, excel spreadsheets or others). Additionally, indicators for inputs should be included in activity-level M&E plans and do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP.

Inputs are generally included in activity-level M&E plans. While inputs are important to manage at the activity level, indicators for them do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP. Inputs typically include things like trainings provided, commodities purchased, infrastructure built, etc. As it is self-evident whether inputs have or have not occurred, inputs do not require performance indicators. A mission might want to consider inputs as a means to estimate the time and costs associated with implementing a project, but there should not be input-related performance indicators in the project LogFrame, project M&E plan, or mission PMP.

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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.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

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Missions are encouraged to post PMPs (or portions thereof) on ProgramNet to share their experience with others as well as to troubleshoot or garner ideas for new approaches. As missions design new projects, they are asked to post their Project Appraisal Documents (PADs), which include their project M&E plans, to ProgramNet, via the project design working group. However, this is not for PAD approval, but for better sharing to support mission staff as they become more adept at project design.

75. 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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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.

76. How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?

How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?

The PMP is an internal Mission management tool used to assess progress towards the "results" detailed in the CDCS Results Framework and Project LogFrames. In contrast, the PPR serves mainly as a reporting tool on USAID performance to stakeholders outside of the Mission, helping the Agency comply with legislative or other requirements (e.g. GPRAMA and initiative reporting). F leads the PPR process, issuing guidance annually.

Since the PMP is designed to help the mission monitor the performance of its portfolio, it generally has many more indicators than end up being reported in the PPR. The PMP will include both a set of F standard indicators that are applicable to the mission's portfolio as well as a larger number of custom indicators that provide more granularity on mission performance to facilitate decision-making and learning at the appropriate levels.

77. What is the function and timing of the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)?

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ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

A PIRS includes all the relevant reference information about a performance indicator. It helps ensure that USAID staff and implementing partners are on the same page regarding what an indicator means, how it is collected, and who is responsible for it. It also helps ensure consistent indicator data collection and use, and documents decisions about the indicator by current staff for future staff. The [recommended PIRS template](#) is located on ProgramNet.

The mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP) should contain Performance Indicator Reference Sheets for all performance indicators. PIRS should be completed as soon as you are certain of what an indicator will be (i.e. definition, data source, etc). During PMP development, some PIRS will be completed right after CDCS approval as Goal and DO level indicators are determined; others will be completed as projects are designed and indicators are further developed and refined. Consequently, PIRSs should be completed on a rolling basis as indicators become finalized.

PIRS can also be used as a starting point when conducting DQAs, which are required for any indicators being reported to Washington. Once the DQA is conducted, the PIRS should be updated with the necessary information from the [DQA checklist](#).

78. 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.

79. Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?

Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?

The project budget should include a line item for M&E. This helps ensure that adequate resources are allocated for M&E within eventual implementing mechanisms, or for project level evaluations and monitoring that are not part of individual mechanisms (for example, surveys or other primary data collection needed for the project purpose level indicators). At the mechanism or activity level, missions should draft RFPs, RFAs and G2G or other mechanisms to include necessary M&E costs (as well as roles and responsibilities). This will ensure that M&E is an explicitly-funded part of every award. It is better if those costs can be captured under an M&E line item rather than allocated across individual staff salaries, though individual implementing mechanisms will vary in their ability to do this.

ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

80. 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.

IPR

81. If a Mission is considering a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement as one of the implementing mechanisms included in a PAD, how early does it need to begin the process and what all is involved?

If a Mission is considering a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement as one of the implementing mechanisms included in a PAD, how early does it need to begin the process and what all is involved?

The process for approving the use of a G2G agreement under a project is defined in: (a) ADS 220; (b) the FY 2012 Appropriation Legislation (Section 7031), and in the Agency’s response to a recent audit of the Agency’s implementation of ADS 220 by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Briefly, it is expected that Stage 1 of the Public Financial Management Risk Assessment Framework (PFMRAF) will be completed before or shortly after a Mission’s CDCS. During project design, Stage 2 of the PFMRAF and the associated risk mitigation plan will be completed documenting how any fiduciary risk of using partner country government systems will be mitigated. In addition, the PAD will include adequate technical and institutional analyses to identify and mitigate any programmatic risk of using G2G implementing mechanisms. The authorization will include language that the Mission Director specifically approves the use of partner government systems as implementing mechanisms under the project (with the Approval for the Use of Partner Government Systems (AUPGS) defined in ADS 220 attached to the PAD).

G2G

82. If a Mission is considering a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement as one of the implementing mechanisms included in a PAD, how early does it need to begin the process and what all is involved?

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ProgramNet FAQs – January 2014

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