

Integrated Project Planning Improves Project Success

OCIO GOALS FOR USAID

- Information on Demand
- Innovation and Process Efficiency
- Effective and Efficient IT Service
- Enhanced Workforce Management

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When implementing earned value management (EVM), *integrated project planning* is a best practice that increases the likelihood of project success. Integrated project planning objectively associates project scope with cost and schedule, often using the “bottom-up” estimating technique. In bottom-up estimating, each task is broken down into smaller components. Then, individual estimates are developed to determine what specifically is needed to meet the requirements of each of these smaller components of the work. The estimates for the smaller individual components are then aggregated to develop a larger estimate for the entire task as a whole. In doing this, the estimate for the task as a whole is typically far more accurate, as it allows for careful consideration of each of the smaller parts of the task and then combining these carefully considered estimates rather than merely making one large estimate which typically will not as thoroughly consider all of the individual components of a task.

Although integrated project planning might seem burdensome, it actually helps to reduce cost and schedule variances over the life of the project. During integrated project planning, project managers (PMs) ensure that the project has a clearly defined scope, a well-defined work breakdown structure, detailed cost estimates, and an integrated project schedule with measurable milestones. Using EVM, PMs can get accurate views of their project scope and its associated costs and durations – known as the performance measurement baseline (PMB) – and as the project progresses, track and report cost and schedule performance against the baseline. This allows PMs to analyze performance trends, objectively identify and communicate problem areas, and design and implement corrective actions, ensuring that OCIO IT projects are managed well and meet the expectations of our customers and end users.



Project planning helps PMs to manage project risk (source: IPkeys.com)

New Equipment Standards Address Bluetooth Technology



In 2010, OCIO managed the creation and publication of the “Information and Communications Technology Equipment Standards 2010-2013”. Updated on a quarterly basis, this document establishes USAID’s Agency standards for IT equipment. The standards that are set forth in it provide guidance to Operations and Maintenance staff as they select desktop computers, laptops, printers, and other parts of the IT infrastructure.

This year, a new section will be added for Bluetooth devices, which have historically been prohibited within USAID for security reasons. Bluetooth is a low-power, short-range radio technology that has become increasingly popular since it was unveiled in 1999. It is typically used in mobile phones/headsets and computer peripherals. Bluetooth’s enhanced immunity from interference and security features have made it more accepted than earlier wireless standards.

OCIO will be undertaking a series of studies and pilots to identify devices that can be safely used and managed within USAID. The current study is evaluating the use of Bluetooth headsets to be used with BlackBerry devices. Later this year, we will be considering wireless keyboards, mice, and other peripherals. As a reminder, these devices are currently NOT allowed on the Agency’s network without permission of the CISO. Results of these studies and revised equipment standards will be the subjects of upcoming newsletter articles. Questions about this pilot may be directed to Steve Polkinghorn at spolkinghorn@usaid.gov.

SharePoint provides:

- Easy web based editing
- Coordination of document editing including workflow
- Version control features
- Bulletin board style discussions
- Task and project tracking of your entire team
- Allows you to create any number of shared calendars
- Team specific wikis with flexible permissions and access control features
- Advanced integration with Microsoft Office
- Email notifications and alerts for any content on the site

CIO deploys SharePoint, an Intranet Collaboration Tool



In August 2009, OCIO deployed Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007 as the main tool for internet-based collaboration at USAID. Over the past year-and-a-half, use of MOSS has grown remarkably across USAID and it has become a mainstay for IT collaboration across the Agency.

Since the launch of SharePoint, 92 internet-based Team Sites have been deployed for Bureaus, Offices and Missions around the globe, as well as 10 SharePoint intranet websites. SharePoint is actively used at USAID to increase productivity through the rapid sharing of information; to enhance communication within and among staff around the world in virtual real time; and to increase collaboration between teams, projects, and other organizational levels across USAID. SharePoint Team Sites can be

deployed at no cost to the Bureau, Office or Mission (although complex custom websites might incur development costs). OCIO's Web Services Team is ready to respond to your organization's SharePoint needs. If you interested in learning more about USAID's SharePoint advantages, you can find additional resources, help documents, and a "sandbox site" (a safe environment that prevents a program from accessing or changing memory or disk space outside of a proscribed area so programs do not damage the system they run on) at <http://spsinternal.usaid.gov/teams/default.aspx>.

Going Virtual: Helping missions do more with limited resources

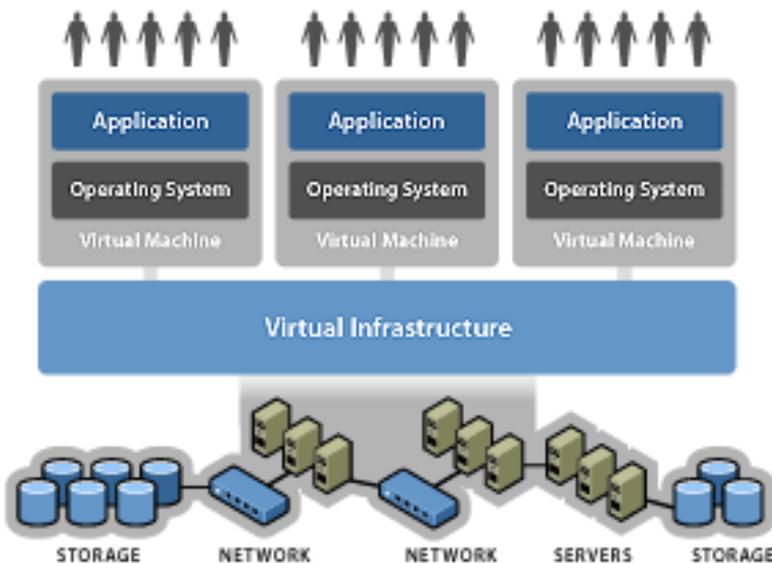
In the IT world, terms like "cloud" and "virtualization" are being used with increasing frequency, and for good reason. Virtualization offers many benefits to enterprise IT environments of all sizes, including increased network flexibility and fluidity, savings in power consumption, reduced server room space, and reduced costs even as we increase IT services and capabilities. (For an explanation of virtualization, please see the January 2011 version of this newsletter.)

USAID Missions around the globe are adopting virtualization for several reasons. It is no secret that USAID operates in some of the world's most underdeveloped regions, where resources such as power, space, and general network access aren't always available. The Mission in Baghdad, which often faces resource shortages, is currently undergoing the initial stages of consolidation through virtualization. OCIO is also replicating virtualized architecture at a new Disaster Recovery (DR) site at the US Embassy in Iraq. According to Bruce Brown, USAID Information Systems Manager in Baghdad, "The synergy between virtualization and a

Storage Area Network allows us to reduce the size of our server infrastructure from three racks to one rack, which provides a significant reduction in power and heating requirements. However, the most important aspect is the way it improves our disaster recovery capability."

USAID will extend the benefits of virtualization to other Missions. In late February, OCIO's Sukhvinder Singh traveled with a member of the BIE Technical Team to perform an assessment of the Antananarivo, Madagascar Mission's IT infrastructure, with an eye toward migrating the Mission's physical server to a virtual server in the near future.

In addition, the Amman, Jordan Mission has requested that OCIO survey that site for a similar project. OCIO will likely survey the Amman Mission at about the same time that Baghdad's solution goes live, currently scheduled for the middle of April 2011.



New Satellite Technology enhances communication across USAID Missions

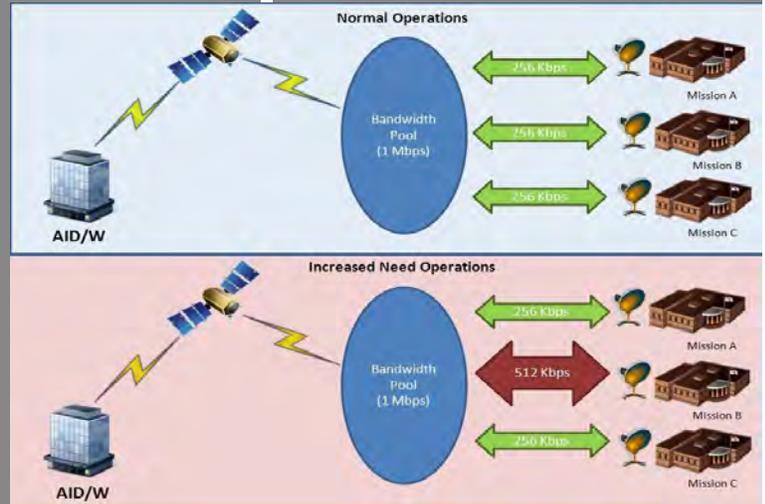
The USAID Satellite Upgrade Project is currently replacing the aging USAID satellite network. The project, which began in May 2010 and is expected to last for a year, will implement the new network at 46 overseas Missions.

The new satellite network is based on the iDirect satellite platform. The iDirect solution uses network access sharing technology called Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA). This technology differs from the current USAID satellite technology, which uses Single Channel Per Carrier (SCPC) and locks each Mission into a specific bandwidth rate. The new technology allows Missions to be grouped in bandwidth pools and to share a collective bandwidth aggregate. Each Mission will still have a specified “normal operations” bandwidth rate dedicated to it; however, in times of need, Missions can obtain extra bandwidth from the pool “on the fly”, as shown in the diagram.

This new technology has already proven beneficial during Egypt’s recent strife. As the Egyptian government shut down Internet Service Providers (ISPs), OCIO’s Network Operations increased the bandwidth available to the Cairo mission so that its normal voice and data telecommunications activities could be maintained.

For a schedule of deployment of this new technology across the Missions, please visit

https://aus2k3prderms01.us.usaid.gov/eRoom/BIE/P32II/0_76f6
or contact Steve Riggs (sriggs@usaid.gov) or Brian Gertz (bgertz@usaid.gov).



Bandwidth On Demand Model

Use of ASIST expands throughout USAID

The use of the Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System (ASIST) grew in 2010 and is expected to continue in 2011. ASIST is the Agency-approved back-office document management system that meets various document storage and business process automation needs. To date, 55 missions have procured and implemented ASIST and are using the system to address correspondence tracking, voucher imaging, and other business management activities. More missions such as USAID/Mongolia, USAID/Rabat and USAID/Khartoum are planning to implement ASIST in 2011.

We continue to add functionalities that further improve efficiency in business operations. For example, we successfully added electronic signature functionalities last year. Using ASIST, M/CFO began electronic voucher processing in AID/W on September 23, 2010. This new process allows Contracting Officers Technical Representatives (COTRs) in AID/W to approve all vouchers using electronic signatures. COTRs no longer have to be in the office to process vouchers. It also provides a “green” solution by allowing all vouchers to be stored electronically. Several other ASIST projects are underway, such as:

- Electronic Voucher Approval in the Missions.** This project will develop and recommend a standard process for electronic voucher approval and document management process in the Missions.
- Acquisition & Assistance Document Management Prototype.** The prototype will test the automated process of downloading documents from GLAAS and storing them in ASIST based on OAA filing standards. If this project is successful, A&A staff will only be required to scan the signed cover page and contract files will be readily accessible by voucher examiners.
- Single Audit Database.** USAID is required to obtain appropriate and timely audits of its contractors, grantees, and Enterprise Funds, and the CFO, OAA, and Missions need to define and implement a vendor audit tracking and management solution. This project will meet the needs of all stakeholders by providing a single tracking and document management solution.
- Disaster Recovery.** We are setting up a corporate application server disaster recovery infrastructure which will ensure that all missions with ASIST can access the system and data during a disaster or other highly disruptive event.

We are excited and looking forward to working with you on these new projects as they will further improve efficiency in business operations. For more information on these projects, please contact Project Manager Martha Brady (mbrady@usaid.gov, 703-666-1356).