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Educational Quality Improvement Program  
Classrooms • Schools • Communities

***EXCELL  
REVISED WORK PLAN  
2003-2005***



**Submitted by:**

**American Institutes for Research**

**With:**

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## **I. Executive Summary**

The *Excellence in Classroom Education at the Local Level (EXCELL)* project is designed to address priority needs for education in El Salvador and to improve student performance in 250 rural schools. It will be managed by a cooperative agreement with the Educational Quality Improvement Program Leader with Associates Award 1 (EQUIP1). Through this initiative, USAID/El Salvador will assist the Government of El Salvador Ministry of Education (MINED) to develop and improve its ability to implement effective educational policy; improve the effectiveness of school principals to manage schools and improve pedagogical practices; and enhance analytical capacity in educational research. The project team will collaborate with international experts from the American Institutes for Research and other EQUIP1 partners as well as experienced local organizations and individuals to achieve substantial changes in educational quality during the agreement period.

EXCELL proposes to create excellence in rural schools primarily by strengthening the practice of school principals. The expectation is that better prepared principals will be better able to mentor teachers, which will lead to increased educational quality in the classroom, particularly related to the ten areas of priority of MINED's *Escuela Diez* program. The project will assist rural school principals in understanding and implementing practices that are recognized to enhance student learning. EXCELL will

**1. Strengthen the Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management and modify and implement educational reforms.** Component 1 will strengthen MINED's ability to support school-level reforms, increase quality of education, and enhance student learning. Activities will strengthen the capacity of 160 MINED mid-level managers in strategic planning and management. To provide effective support for increased educational quality, EXCELL will support the development of a variety of skills: a) basic planning and management; b) practices to help translate MINED strategies into useful guides for school principals; and c) strategies to support the implementation of MINED reforms at the school level. In addition, the Ministry has requested strengthened capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities and research about strategies to improve school quality. The adoption of a participatory operating style allows the early application of such positive changes. This includes improvements in systems for data collection and analysis. EXCELL will support MINED in the amplification of such systems, which will enable Ministry officials and school principals to examine educational outcomes more systematically.

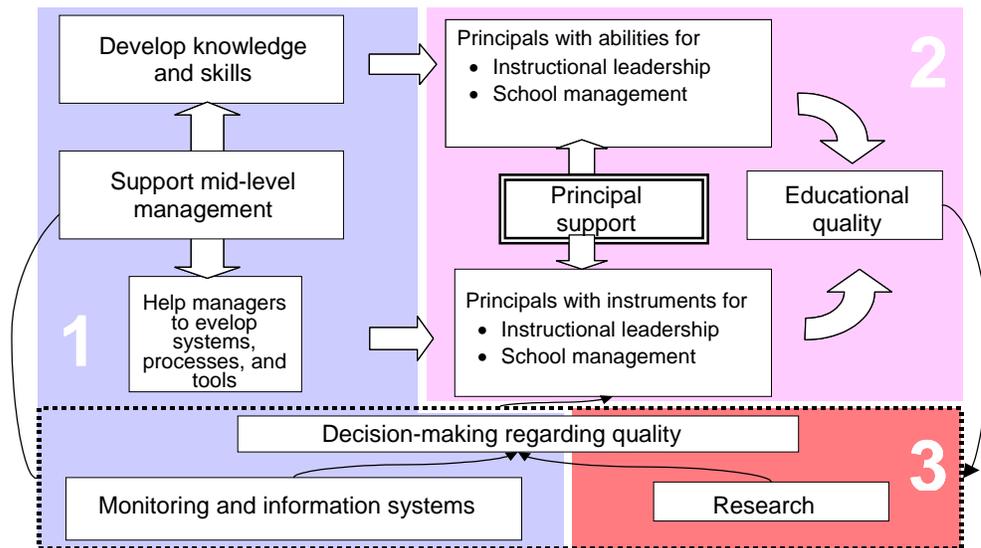
**2. Improve student achievement in at least 250 rural schools, K-6, through training and technical assistance to school principals.** The EXCELL approach for Component 2 will build the technical and leadership skills of principals so that they become more efficient managers as well as facilitators of change within the schools. The goals of EXCELL in this area suggest a training and technical assistance program that focuses on building principals' technical and leadership skills in four areas: a) promoting pedagogical innovation; b) instructional leadership for quality; c) evaluation; and d) school organization. Specific training areas will also be suggested by a) a baseline study; b) results of work funded by the Government of Spain and other cooperating agencies; c) goals of *Escuela Diez*; and d) skills needed to develop effective school improvement plans (also known as PEIs).

**3. Extend educational policy research.** Component 3 will extend the work of MINED and the educational research community in El Salvador over the past decade in generating data and

producing important research to inform educational improvement. It will focus on educational reform in rural areas. Activities will a) identify key areas of educational policy research that are of interest to USAID and MINED; b) generate public debate about selected research topics; c) commission studies to examine these topics; and d) identify, through public forums, successful experiences and lessons learned, as well as appropriate recommendations for reforms in educational policy and practice. Studies and forums will be designed to guide the development of USAID/El Salvador’s 2004-2009 strategic plan and MINED’s understanding of the most effective strategies for improving educational quality in rural schools.

**4. Develop effective monitoring and evaluation systems.** Monitoring and evaluation of EXCELL activities will be closely tied to the results framework as described in the performance-monitoring plan. The plan will describe how the project will monitor the quantity and quality of EXCELL products as well as the impact of EXCELL interventions at the ministerial, school, classroom, and student levels. Tracking changes in principal and teacher practices and the associations between these changes and progress in student learning are two of the most important among EXCELL’s monitoring and evaluation activities. EXCELL will develop instruments for tracking these relationships that will be used for this project and incorporated into MINED’s monitoring and evaluation systems.

**5. Organize around a clear conceptual approach.** The EQUIP1 partnership views improving principals’ skills in Component 2 as the cornerstone of the EXCELL project. As shown in the figure below, principal development activities include assistance to strengthen educational management and resource mobilization. Component 2 also develops instruments that the principals can use to enhance educational quality at the school and classroom levels. Component 1 supports principals by strengthening mid-level management at MINED. These activities provide mid-level managers with the knowledge and skills to improve organizational effectiveness as well as enhance principals’ leadership and management skills. Activities also enhance institutional systems, processes, and tools that support principals’ administrative roles as well as monitoring and information systems that enhance decision-making. Component 3 supports decision-making through targeted research and public debate. These activities, combined with system-level monitoring and information, will also become tools to assist mid-level managers and principals in improving the quality of educational policies and practices.



## **II. Technical Approach**

### **Component 1: Strengthen Ministry of Education’s Capacity to Improve Decentralized School Management, Modify and Implement Educational Reforms**

MINED has invested substantially in ongoing professional development, particularly for top-level managers. EXCELL will further strengthen the capacity of MINED by extending this professional development to mid-level managers. The purpose of Component 1 is to strengthen MINED’s ability to support school-level reforms, increase quality of education, and enhance student learning. Activities will strengthen the capacity of 160 MINED mid-level managers, in strategic planning and management.

The central premise of EXCELL is that quality education at the school level and student learning are substantially advanced when overall planning and management is effective and school principals themselves are skilled managers working in a supportive environment. MINED middle managers are crucial in this process. EXCELL will support MINED middle managers in the development of a variety of skills: a) basic planning and management; b) practices to help translate MINED educational policies and strategies into useful guidance for school principals and support implementation of MINED reforms at the school level; and c) practices for effective leadership.

In addition, the Ministry requires strengthened capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities and research about activities to improve school quality. This includes improvements in systems for data collection and analysis. EXCELL will support MINED in the development of such systems, which will enable Ministry officials and school principals to examine educational quality outcomes more systematically. These systems will also help determine the effects of EXCELL’s own principal-level interventions on improving classroom instruction and student learning.

To address these interests, the component has been divided into two sub-components:

- Sub-component 1.1: Strategic planning and management capacity development; and
- Sub-component 1.2: Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research.

#### ***Sub-component 1.1: Strategic planning and management capacity development***

Mid-level managers provide a key connection between the policy decision-making and operational levels in MINED. While school personnel are constantly in the local spotlight of efforts to improve education and top-level managers are very visible from a decision-making point of view, mid-level personnel provide the linkages between the two. These professionals need specific skills to enhance their roles as planners and managers, as liaisons among national, department and school levels, and as those who ensure that interventions are implemented effectively.

Through professional development support to mid-level managers in Departmental Directorates and National Directorates, using national and international technical assistance in key areas, EXCELL will assist MINED in enhancing both its administrative and educational support for schools.

As a result of this sub-component’s efforts, EXCELL will improve management capacities in MINED mid-level managers through targeted training and assistance. The basic elements of this training will be keyed to the ongoing program of capacity building for senior-level managers and will address issues that go beyond specific improvements in the classroom. This will begin with the

identification of the professional development needs of MINED middle managers working in different units. Training, assistance and systems development will all be focused to address these needs.

Training and technical assistance will be organized with a *professional development perspective* that will seek to develop knowledgeable, collaborative, and functional *teams* in addition to capable individuals. Participating managers will be invited to develop transformation plans that address key strategic issues, including

- Selecting topics that build capacity and can be sustained beyond the project’s duration;
- Exercising skills to translate MINED directives into locally pertinent and useful guidelines for school principals involved in preparing their school improvement plans;
- Improving capacity for the use of management information in decision-making concerning the quality of education;
- Improving teamwork and communication skills required for cross-unit coordination;
- Improving specific units’ capabilities in designing, coordinating and delivering training and assistance to school principals and in mobilizing external resources for this;
- Developing skills for the use of systems and tools implemented through the project; and
- Modifying mid-level managers’ attitudes towards change and service through exposure to and analysis of successful experiences in school-level education reform.

### ***Sub-component 1.2: Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research***

The quality of educational decision-making depends on availability and use of information that is timely and accurate. In addition, available information is valuable only to the degree to which managers at different levels have the skills to use it. Traditionally, data for monitoring and evaluation has been seen as a one-way, upward flow of data for the exclusive use of management. Such an approach has a negative effect on data usage because agents directly involved in production and processing perceive few benefits from providing accurate and timely data and have little chance to use the information produced in their own decision-making.

To address these challenges, EXCELL will strengthen systems for the production, analysis, distribution, and use of information to improve educational quality. Using national and international technical assistance in key areas, the project will conduct training and procure hardware and software to a) develop efficient methods and tools for data collection; b) enhance the speed and accuracy of data processing; c) develop systems of information feedback and use; and d) help MINED’s National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation to deliver effective assistance to data users, particularly specialized mid-level management users in central normative units of MINED<sup>1</sup> and general users in the Departmental Directorates.

### **Sub-component 1.1: Strategic planning and management capacity development**

#### **Task 1.1.1—Define strategy for mid-level management professional development**

This task will serve to define a strategic framework for the project’s mid-level management development activities. Working together with local or international consultants as appropriate and

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, the term “normative units” is used to refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation, Educational Development and Educational Management Directorates of MINED.

MINED personnel at the upper and middle levels of management, EXCELL staff will specify the manner in which the project connects to other initiatives currently underway. Activities in this task will include

- Identifying mid-level management professional development needs; and
- Preparing a mid-level management training and technical assistance plan.

### ***Identifying mid-level management professional development needs***

In conjunction with MINED personnel and using pre-existing information and studies from the MINED the functional strengths and limitations of the different MINED mid-level managers will be assessed, ensuring that MINED personnel at senior and middle levels participate in the identification of training needs for mid-level managers. This activity will involve consultations with mid- and upper-level managers from National and Departmental Directorates. The development program will be matched with the content of the ongoing training for senior-level managers.

MINED defines professional development as a combination of training and assistance to its personnel. Both of these aspects depend on the availability of materials that, besides presenting basic information, are sensitive to the social, cultural, and institutional features of the context in which they are applied.

### ***Preparing a mid-level management professional development plan***

Capacity building for mid-level managers will include strategic planning, enhancement of managerial skills, and the coalescence of high-performance teams. Decision-making based on research information will be an important aspect of the training for mid-level managers from all divisions and offices of the MINED, including departmental directorates, administrative offices and national coordinators such as coordinators of basic education, secondary education, external cooperation, and planning. The design of the professional development plan seeks to go beyond a collection of training courses to ensure that participants recognize the skills they need to develop and organize their training to address self-defined professional development goals. This activity will also seek harmonization with the ongoing capacity-building program for senior managers and will take into account the results of the needs-assessment activities.

### **Task 1.1.2—Develop training materials for mid-level management professional development**

Reading material and other management tools will be developed and provided to contribute to professional development. Activities under this task include

- Prepare training materials on key topics related to reform; and
- Publish and disseminate the training materials.

### ***Prepare training modules, materials, and guides***

Training modules will be developed according to the findings from other studies, the needs assessment and the design framework. Training modules, materials, and guides will be prepared for mid-level managers in normative units and Departmental Directorates. Self-guided materials will be prepared for topics that require ongoing practice in the field so participants may complement information obtained in formal training sessions with easy-to-use supplements. Some subjects,

however, have already been identified as important, either by MINED, USAID or the work plan development team. These include

- Assessing organizational structures at the school level;
- Team-building and management; and
- Using data and monitoring and evaluation tools.

### ***Publish and disseminate training modules***

Dissemination of professional development materials will likely occur through a variety of channels, including but not limited to conventional printed documents, and electronically through MINED's website (both its internet and intranet) as well as CDs and diskettes.

### **Task 1.1.3—Training mid-level managers**

The training program to build the capacity of mid-level managers will incorporate all of the elements described under sub-component 1.1. Mid-level managers are often constrained in performing their managerial duties by a busy working environment with multiple conflicting demands, making it easy to lose sight of strategic priorities. Time-management and priority-setting therefore will be important dimensions of the training. Targeted training is expected to have a substantial impact on mid-level managers' effectiveness. Additionally, participating managers are expected to recognize and commit themselves to their professional development as an ongoing process for which they are actively responsible. This task will develop the skills identified in previous activities by

- Preparing terms of reference, identifying and contracting for targeted training on selected topics; and
- Organizing and delivering training on these topics.

### ***Prepare TORs and select providers to train mid-level managers***

To ensure the timely identification of training providers, terms of reference will be prepared to address the needs and purposes indicated in the professional development plan. Topics will likely cover issues such as strategic analysis, planning and management, school organizational assessment, effective communication, time management, team building and management, project management, and collecting and using monitoring and evaluation information. Training will be carried out by a combination of project staff and contracted national and international specialists.

### ***Organize and deliver training on selected topics***

Once providers have been selected and contracted, training sessions will be carried out through a variety of formats for different sets of mid-level managers. The program will be scheduled according to a collaborative process carried out at the start of the project. The process will take into consideration, for example, priority needs, schedules that interfere least with ongoing work, and possibilities for integrating training with ongoing work. Training sessions will vary in length and location but will be regular and ongoing with the goal of building a comprehensive body of knowledge and skills in middle managers. There will be a variety of training formats including occasional formal lectures, hands-on practice, participatory group works, projects, role-play, and problem-solving assignments. The training may include day-long information sessions, two- or

three-day workshops combining information and exercises, national and regional seminars, and practical training on the use of software packages. To ensure the link between these various activities, professional development and institutional needs, participants will be required to prepare a “change plan” which will identify changes they expect to achieve in their work unit through the skills developed, and commit to these changes. Monitoring will be based on these commitments. Although a variety of topics may be chosen for these change plans, participants will be encouraged to focus on plans that analyze and adapt existing information, monitoring, and management tools concerning quality of education or design new tools as needed to complement existing systems, as well as peer- and self-monitoring.

MINED and the project team will decide upon key areas in this sub-component where national and/or international technical assistance will be most useful.

### **Sub-component 1.2: Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research**

#### **Task 1.2.1—Identifying information needs**

Activities in this sub-component will serve to identify and analyze information needs, particularly those of MINED mid-level managers. This will begin with an examination of what information is presently being used, by whom, and for what purpose. Following that, information gaps will be identified, focusing on information that is not available that would help managers do their jobs better. Concomitantly, the activity will identify information sources that are available but not being used, or not being used effectively. The next step will be to compare the status of information availability and use in MINED with what is known from international research and educational management experience about the relationship between information use and effective management.

#### **Task 1.2.2— Strengthening the Evaluation Directorate’s data processing capacity**

MINED has requested support for the purchase of a high-speed optical scanner and statistical software to ensure the accuracy and speed of data processing and analysis. EXCELL will assist the Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation in procuring the identified hardware and software and will provide technical assistance for their installation and use. Activities under this task include

- Preparing specifications and terms of reference for the competitive purchase of hardware and software;
- Acquiring and installing hardware and software; and
- Training personnel in their use and maintenance.

#### ***Prepare specifications and TORs***

Terms of reference will be prepared for the competitive purchase of hardware and software. A point will be made to include in these terms of reference the installation, maintenance, and training associated with these acquisitions for the duration of the project. Acquire and install equipment and software

After receiving at least three competitive bids per item, EXCELL will purchase the following:

- A high-output scanner for the processing of survey forms;
- Additional licenses of SPSS, LISREL, HLM and AXUM or other statistical and/or qualitative data processing and analysis software packages, as identified in the information needs and uses assessment conducted under task 1.2.1;

Software and hardware will be installed per MINED specifications.

### ***Train personnel in the use of new hardware and software***

Staff in the Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation has substantial experience in the use of a high-output optical scanner and most of the computer software packages that have been requested. EXCELL will work with staff to expand their knowledge of this software and statistical analysis more broadly as a part of the collaborative research activities.

### **Task 1.2.3— Deepening knowledge about relations between management and quality in education**

As previously noted, project success depends on the postulate that improved management, particularly at the level of middle managers, is expected to have a positive effect on the quality of education. This will be systematically examined through a study focusing on one policy issue dealing with quality in education. The process for improving knowledge about management and quality education in the rural Salvadorian context will include the following:

- Identify study required, prepare TORs, and select researcher;
- Conduct study; and
- Prepare and disseminate the results of the study.

### ***Identify study required, prepare TORs and select provider***

The study to be conducted will be selected in consultation with MINED and USAID, considering

- The nature, challenges and results of the implementation of a special education in class and school management;
- An action research approach in implementing decentralization and reform in educational management; and
- Quality of pre-service teacher training.

### ***Conduct study***

One study will be conducted under this task and will be given approximately four months for completion. Specific mechanisms for monitoring performance will follow the criteria established under Intermediate Result 1.2, *Monitoring and evaluation systems and research applied for decision-making*, as described in the Monitoring and Evaluation section of this application.

### ***Prepare and disseminate results of the study***

Dissemination of results may occur through a variety of means, including printed publications in scholarly or popular formats as well as community discussions and radio programs.

MINED and the project team will decide on the key areas in this sub-component where national and/or international technical assistance will be most critical.

## **Component 2: Improve Student Achievement in 250 Rural Schools, K-6, through Training and Technical Assistance to School Principals**

The Ministry of Education of El Salvador has initiated an ambitious education reform effort aimed at improving the quality of schools and student performance in grades K-6. In recent years, substantial advances have been made in improving educational management, decentralization, and community participation. Although educational quality has also been a high priority, with quality-improvement programs focused through *Escuela Diez*, MINED would like to support further improvement of quality practices at the school and classroom levels that will be reflected in learners' performance. EXCELL will work to achieve these goals in 250 rural schools.

Educational quality is the product of interlocking and coordinated factors working in harmony with each other. An enabling policy environment and good management of reform are essential. Curriculum that reflects the society's values and aspirations for learning, as well as the reality of the students' environment is also of central importance. Community support for education and parents' involvement in the lives of schools is another crucial factor. The skills and commitment of teachers are critical. Strong school leadership creates an environment in which all of these factors are working in support of each other at the community, school, and classroom levels. Current research and practice indicate that the role of school leadership in establishing efficient and transparent management, providing strong instructional leadership, and creating a positive school climate is crucial in developing a school environment in which quality teaching and learning can take place. The role of the principal and his or her effectiveness as a leader in these areas can be the linchpin of quality.

A present challenge in El Salvador is the relatively low quality of school leadership provided by principals who, on the whole, have insufficient preparation for their jobs and only minimal professional support to enable them to become good school leaders. Principals presently direct most of their attention to administrative tasks, although they may not have the skills to carry these out efficiently. Many principals also have the responsibility for instruction in one or more grades. Given this, principals have little time to dedicate to quality improvement in the school, supervising and supporting good practice, building a good school climate, strengthening the role of the community in the school, and ensuring that all students are given equal opportunities to learn, including girls and students with disabilities. These challenges are compounded by the limited capacity of Pedagogical Advisors to catalyze change in the schools in relation to pedagogical practices. Additionally, Pedagogical Advisors frequently cannot serve adequately the full geographic area for which they are responsible.

In addition, many rural schools in El Salvador are remote, and principals often lack frequent supervision and contact with educational colleagues. These facts, combined with the reality that schools serve broad development purposes, necessitate principal training activities that are holistic (including the need to address multi-age pupil populations), inclusive (open to children who are in various ways special), and broadminded in their approach to instruction. Training must also serve the practical needs of principals who are operating far from technical support, working to build community support structures, and working to enable teachers and community members engaged with them to

understand the important role of education in economic and social development. Incorporating these considerations into project planning will be essential for attaining meaningful and sustainable results.

## **Component 2 Strategy**

The EXCELL approach will build the technical and leadership skills of principals so that they become more efficient managers as well as change facilitators within the schools. Principals should play a key role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The project will work toward assuring that principals acquire the skills to change their practices and take on a pro-active leadership role with teachers and members of the community. Pedagogical Advisors will also be included in all professional development activities under Component 2. Given that Pedagogical Advisors serve as MINED's ongoing technical support for schools, the opportunity to expand Advisors' knowledge and skills will enhance the Ministry's capacity to sustain EXCELL-initiated professional development efforts after the project period.

The goal of EXCELL efforts in Component 2 is to develop a training program that builds on principals' technical and leadership skills in four basic areas: a) effective management; b) instructional leadership for quality; c) community involvement; and d) equity in educational opportunity. These four focus areas will form the basic structure of the program.

Specific training areas will also be suggested by a) results of work funded by the Government of Spain; b) principles of *Escuela Diez*; and c) the skills needed to develop effective school improvement plans. In addition, the results of the baseline study to be carried out under EXCELL will assist in refining specific training activities throughout the training period.

### ***Effective management***

In the area of management, EXCELL, working in collaboration with MINED directors, school principals, pedagogical advisors, and the MINED Directorate for Teacher Development personnel, will identify key areas of competency for school principals to be included in training provided by the project. A preliminary outline of these competencies will focus on planning processes such as understanding what planning is, knowing why it is important, understanding the difference between strategic and programmatic planning, and being proficient in practical applications. A key area of capacity building will concentrate on strengthening principals' ability to use school improvement plans to improve quality.

### ***Instructional leadership for quality***

In the area of instructional leadership, EXCELL, working in collaboration with MINED in San Salvador, departmental officers technical staff, and school principals, will identify key areas of competency for school principals that correspond to the *Escuela Diez* framework. Principals will acquire the basic skills to recognize and support good classroom practices, help teachers develop good classroom management skills, support curricular planning and evaluation activities, encourage gender positive teaching and a gender positive school environment, support the success of girls in school, females as teachers and females in leadership positions, and develop school-based systems of teacher responsibility, accountability and reward. EXCELL will use the framework of the *Escuela Diez* program as a basis for identifying specific practices that the school principal can change. The practices selected as targets of the project are those that have the highest likelihood of affecting student

performance, as identified from research and experience in other countries. The ten key areas of attention of *Escuela Diez* are:

1. Curriculum that responds to the needs, interests and potentialities of students and that is oriented to the local environment;
2. Appropriate pedagogic practices, oriented to academic excellence;
3. Environments that enable learning;
4. Directive Team with leadership skills;
5. Organizational model that encourages participation, that includes the community, and an institutional culture of collaboration among school actors, oriented to the attainment of high academic achievement;
6. Organizational model leading towards teaching and learning being the main focus of schooling activities;
7. Clear, reasonable, known and accepted norms for school relationships;
8. Formative evaluation systems for the performance of teachers and for follow-up of student performance;
9. A system of performance incentives for all members of the educational community; and
10. School management organized around school improvement plans.

Examples of principals' practices to be the focus of training activities and that correspond to the priorities of *Escuela Diez* are summarized in Annex I.

### ***Building community involvement***

The school effectiveness literature indicates that students perform best when there is strong school leadership, motivated and skilled teachers, a positive school climate, and when the community and parents are involved in the life of the school. Important aspects of community involvement are that a) children come to school healthy and prepared to learn; b) parents and the community provide financial and/or material support for the school's operation; c) there is frequent communication between school staff and parents; d) community members and parents assist with instruction; and e) the community has a role, with meaningful authority, in school governance. EXCELL training will reinforce ongoing activities based on projects such as EDUCO and provide school principals with an array of strategies, skills, and attitudes that will equip them to encourage community and parental involvement in their schools, particularly in areas related to quality and increasing student learning.

### ***Ensuring equity in educational opportunity***

Students are different in many ways that affect negatively their opportunities to participate in education, learn successfully, and live productive lives. Gender is a key factor that affects individuals' learning and life chances. Disability is another factor that affects individuals' learning and life chances. In their roles as manager of the school environment, responsible for oversight of and quality of instructional practice, principals play an important role in ensuring that the many who are girls and the few who are disabled are encouraged to achieve on the level of all other students. Training provided to principals through EXCELL will include gender and disability as both stand-alone topics in the training as well as themes that cut across all topics.

To summarize the EXCELL Component 2 strategies, training for principals under EXCELL will focus on building technical and leadership skills. The training will be guided by the vision and four program priority areas outlined above.

The structure and content of the program will also be based on a) MINED's program to upgrade primary principals through the diploma program funded by the Government of Spain; b) the principles of *Escuela Diez*; and c) principals' need to develop effective school improvement plans. In addition, the results of the baseline study to be carried out under EXCELL will assist in refining specific training activities throughout the training period.

The content of in-service training workshops, training materials, assessment programs, targeted technical assistance, information campaigns, and monitoring and evaluation will all be based on an agreed-upon and comprehensive program of technical and leadership skill-building. The program, both its structure and content, will be developed in collaboration with MINED to ensure that it responds to identified needs and creates ownership and sustainability.

Two hundred and fifty rural schools in six Departments will be selected according to a process agreed upon mutually between MINED and USAID.

### **Operational Strategies**

The technical vision outlined above will be translated into action through various EXCELL activities. The following operational strategies will structure a program to improve student performance by building principals' technical and leadership skills.

The overall training program will be managed by the Quality Management Coordinator. The program, structured around the four priority areas outlined in the previous section, will be carried out in collaboration with MINED through the following operational strategies:

Training for principals will take place in each of the six departments identified by MINED and USAID. All principals from the 250 schools in the six departments will participate in the program. There are approximately 40-45 schools in each department.

The core of the training program for principals consists of 25 full-day (200 hours) face-to-face EXCELL workshops or training activities over the months from April 2004 to March 2005. The 25 days of training activities consist of

**Level 1:** One-day monthly departmental workshops for all principals, pedagogical advisors and relevant departmental officers, will be facilitated by international specialists, project specialists, and national specialists covering the topics in the agreed-upon learning plan for the core principal training under EXCELL. The purpose of these workshops is to present and discuss new ideas and innovative approaches to school quality and principal leadership.

**Level 2:** One-day intensive monthly meetings of principal quality circles, combining training and technical assistance, will be facilitated by the Departmental Quality Facilitators and the Technical Assistants working together. This will enable each quality circle of approximately 15 principals to be divided into two groups for much of the day for more intensive discussion, processing, planning, and instruction. The purpose of these monthly quality circle meetings is to reflect on and process the

information from the monthly departmental workshops, plan for school-level follow up and discuss how the pedagogical innovation plan at the school level can be developed to encourage the implementation of new ideas at the classroom level. EXCELL will support three quality circles in each of the six Departments in which the project is working. Each quality circle will meet monthly, from May 2004 to June 2005.

An additional **level 3** will cover meetings between teachers in groups and principals at the school level to develop pedagogical innovation plans, plan classroom-level changes in pedagogy, and develop monitoring and evaluation activities. These activities will cover at least three additional days for all principals and, in some cases, up to three days per module as needed to strengthen their school-based work. One-day follow-up school supervision and support visits by the Departmental Quality Facilitators and Technical Assistants will take place formally once for each of the three modules, or three times a year. Supplementing these school visits, there will be a program of additional visits to selected schools that are outside of the regular schedule in order to give additional support where needed. The one-day follow up supervision and support visits to schools will consist of meetings with the principals and teachers to review and provide support for the next steps taken at the school level by principals and teachers as a result of the new information received at the department-level workshops and the pedagogical innovation plans drawn up by principals in the quality circles. A school-grants program will provide a small amount of funding to individual schools for the support of particularly innovative and successful pedagogical implementation plans.

The structure of the core principal training is captured in the following matrix:

	<b>Training activity</b>	<b>Purpose of activity</b>	<b>Frequency of activity</b>	<b>Total number</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	Department workshops	Introduce new ideas	Full day, monthly	12 workshops for each principal (one for each of the 12 core modules)	International, National, and Project Specialists Working with Pedagogical Advisors
<b>Level 2</b>	Principal Quality Circles workshops/ meetings	Reflect on/process the new ideas from the department-level workshops; plan school-level follow up; plan for principal's role in pedagogical innovation plans innovation	Full day, monthly	12 quality circle workshops for each principal	Department Facilitators, Technical Assistants Working with Pedagogical Advisors
<b>Level 3</b> (first part)	Schools: Principal/teacher group meetings	Develop pedagogical innovation plans in groups with teachers; implement innovative classroom approaches. Small grants to support innovative and successful ideas.	To be held weekly	Unspecified	Principal and teachers
<b>Level 3</b> (second part)	Schools: School support visits	Give support to teams of teachers and principals developing	Full day, one visit per module	3 official scheduled one-day visits	Department Facilitators, Technical Assistants

	Training activity	Purpose of activity	Frequency of activity	Total number	Responsible
		and implementing pedagogical innovation plans	Additional visits according to need		Working with Pedagogical Advisors
<b>Total</b>				25 full-day training events/principal (200 hours of training)	

The learning plan that has been developed cooperatively by EXCELL and MINED consists of three modules divided into four themes each that will be delivered in the 25 hours of face-to-face workshops and school supervision visits described above. This consists of 96 training hours for principals at the department-level workshops (of the 200 total hours which include quality circles and school support visits).

Supplementing this and providing support and expansion of the basic learning program for principals, there are 32 hours of work to be carried out by the principals at telecenters and 22 hours of distance education work to be carried out through modules on basic issues.

The elements of the program consist of the following task areas which are described in detail below:

- Design a comprehensive training program with MINED (in process);
- Adapt and create appropriate learning materials (in process);
- Carry out a communication and consensus-building program (completed at the national and regional levels);
- Identify and train six full-time Departmental Quality Facilitators (six hired and trained) and six part-time department-based technical assistants to carry out training in quality circles and follow-up supervision in schools;
- Design and implement baseline study (in process);
- Carry out training program through monthly departmental and principal quality circle workshops (in process);
- Provide focused international, project and local technical assistance; and
- Program monitoring.

**Task 2.1— Design a comprehensive training program with MINED (in process)**

EXCELL, in cooperation with MINED and participating Department Directorates, will design a comprehensive training program for school principals based on existing programs, resources and the survey of schools and principal needs to be carried out by the six Department Quality Facilitators, focusing on the priority areas of: a) effective management skills; b) instructional leadership for quality; c) building community involvement; and d) ensuring equity in educational opportunity. Major themes to be addressed will correspond to MINED guidelines and performance measures within the *Escuela Diez* program, the MINED diploma program for principals, and the needs of developing school improvement plans.

Competencies will be developed and clear goals set for the program, as well as a schedule for training activities (including the nature and frequency of activities) over the life of the project. Although Departments may wish to introduce some variation in response to local needs and scheduling possibilities, the generally agreed-upon framework will help to ensure consistency of program and approach across Departments, training service providers, and the approaches of the Departmental Quality Facilitators.

### **Task 2.2—Adapt or create appropriate learning materials (in process)**

EXCELL will develop a series of training modules for principals that promote practices identified by MINED and the EXCELL team as having meaningful impact on educational quality. Development of content will depend on the design outlined as a result of Task 2.1, design of the comprehensive training program. The scope of materials to be developed must be feasible within the current context of education in the rural areas and attainable within the project period including one full school year. Materials developed must also be sustainable in the long run through existing MINED support mechanisms. Each training program and module will be designed to enhance specific principal practices that MINED and the project design team have identified as having high impact on the quality of education received at the student level. Given the expectation that the materials be useful for El Salvador’s education system beyond the scope of the EXCELL project, we expect that all EXCELL partners, especially MINED and USAID, will have input into these material.

Task 2.2 will include the following activities:

- Review existing training materials;
- Adapt or create EXCELL-specific modules; and
- Review and evaluate materials.

#### ***Review existing training materials***

As in the case of Component 1.1, the development of training materials will seek to ensure coherence and synergy with existing materials in MINED.

#### ***Adapt or create EXCELL-specific modules***

Once a review of existing training materials has been conducted, pertinent material will be adapted for the project’s needs. New materials will also be developed as necessary and reviewed by the EXCELL Consultative Committee. Professional development modules will seek to develop effective management skills in principals, improve relationships with communities, and explain how principals can help teachers modify classroom practices to improve student learning. Principals will learn how to help teachers a) increase student participation in class; b) better organize physical space; c) motivate teachers in their jobs; d) create of opportunities for girls and children with special needs in class and in the school; and e) involve families and communities in specific activities linked to increasing student performance.

#### ***Review and evaluate materials***

Materials prepared will be reviewed and evaluated through application. Principals and teachers will be encouraged to give feedback on the materials, and materials will be revised accordingly.

**Task 2.3— Carry out a communication and consensus-building program** (completed at the national and regional levels)

Successful institutional change depends on the ways in which stakeholders understand and take ownership for the goals of the change process. EXCELL will seek to foster an understanding about school reform and positive sentiment for project goals through the deployment of a program to promote understanding and build consensus about the role of principals as school leaders. This consensus-building process will be designed to increase understanding and ownership of MINED personnel, school staff, and community members about the central role of school principals in enhancing educational quality. Activities in this task include the following:

- Designing and developing a promotion strategy with MINED; and
- Conducting regional conferences and other activities with stakeholders.

***Design and develop a promotion strategy in cooperation with MINED***

The project’s promotion and communication strategy will be developed with MINED approval. EXCELL will request a designated counterpart from MINED to work with the project to ensure its coherence with other MINED initiatives and with its own communication strategy. Elements of the strategy may include conferences with principals and teachers, visits to local authorities, and meetings with parents.

***Conduct regional conferences with stakeholders***

Once an agreement has been reached with the Ministry concerning the project’s communication strategy, conferences and meetings will be held with MINED as well as with department officers, principals, teachers and community members to develop understanding of the goals of the project and encourage participation of all stakeholders in reaching these goals.

**Task 2.4—Identify and train six full-time Departmental Quality Facilitators** (hired and trained) **and six part-time department-based Technical Assistants** (to be hired) **to carry out training in quality circles and follow-up supervision in schools;**

The implementation of Component 2 activities relies heavily on a small team of highly motivated and skilled Departmental Quality Facilitators who serve as trainers, mentors, and monitors of local service providers contracted to carry out training and technical assistance with school principals and directors. Departmental Quality Facilitators will ensure the transfer and translation of the project’s objectives and products to service providers to implement professional development and coordinate principal clusters. In addition, the Departmental Quality Facilitators will be assisted by part-time department-based Technical Assistants to assist in carrying out the training at the quality-circle level and giving support at the school level. The activities included in this task are

- Identify, select, and orient Departmental Quality Facilitators;
- Identify, select, and orient Departmental Technical Assistants; and
- Train in modules and other content as needed.

***Identify, select, and orient Departmental Quality Facilitators and Technical Assistants***

Departmental Quality Facilitators will be given an initial orientation by key project staff in order to understand the strategic priorities and the way in which Component 2 links to the rest of the project's interventions. General skills will be developed as needed and according to the Departmental Quality Facilitators' professional backgrounds. Departmental Technical Assistants will be perhaps retired teachers or education officers who are resident in the six departments and will offer support to the Department Quality Facilitators in conducting the three monthly quality circle meetings in each department as well as in the follow-up support visits to schools. The Technical Assistants will be selected and trained by project staff.

***Detailed training in modules and other contents as needed***

Once training materials and modules have been developed, Departmental Quality Facilitators will be trained in their content and applications. This will be done by project staff. The Training will be done by project staff.

**Task 2.5 Design and implement a baseline study** (presently in start-up phase)

A baseline study will be carried out on principals' roles, responsibilities, and needs. This information will be used primarily as baseline information to monitor changes in school environments and principal, teacher, and student outcomes as a consequence of EXCELL interventions.

The study will be carried out in cooperation with MINED, Department Directors, and principals. It will focus on how principals are presently managing schools and the problems they identify as obstacles to improvement, and identify what they should be doing to improve the quality of the school environment, teaching, and learning in their schools. The design of the study will build from the needs assessment funded by the Government of Spain so that unnecessary duplication is avoided; aspects of that study can be tested and clarified, and areas not covered can be included.

The study will actively engage principals in thinking about and describing the local contexts in which they work – the context in which EXCELL will be implemented. Including principals in the study as participant-researchers will help build interest and ownership in the project. The results of the baseline study will be used to encourage ongoing principal reflection which will then be assembled late in the 2004 academic year as well as March 2005 to monitor progress in achieving project goals.

***Design terms of reference***

EXCELL will develop terms of reference for the implementation of the baseline study. The expectation is that implementers will develop a strategy for:

- Selecting 35 EXCELL schools to participate in the study;
- Working with MINED's Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation to adapt and create instruments for data collection (e.g., principal and teacher interviews and surveys, reviews of existing school improvement plans and annual operating plans, classroom observations);

- Conducting the study in an effective and efficient manner; and
- Involving staff from the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate in data collection and analysis.

EXCELL will select an organization to conduct the study that presents a thoughtful and creative approach, demonstrates extensive experience, and offers a high value.

### ***Conduct a baseline study***

Similar interviews, surveys, reviews, and observations will be conducted later in the project to track changes in principal and teacher practices (see Task 1.2.5 and Monitoring and Evaluation). Instruments will also be incorporated into MINED’s system of tools for monitoring the quality of education (see Task 1.2.2).

### **Task 2.6— Carry out training program through monthly departmental workshops, principal quality circle workshops, and school follow up (in process)**

The training activities for principals will be initiated through the monthly department-level workshops to be led and facilitated by international, local, and project staff, covering the 12 modules outlined in the agreed-upon learning plan for EXCELL principal training. These workshops will be followed by monthly meetings of principal quality circles that will be organized on the basis of three quality circles (schools in closest proximity to each) in each of the six departments. The content of the principal quality circles will be based on the material presented each month in the department-level workshop. Each principal quality circle will have about 15 members. This training, in turn, will be supplemented by support visits to individual schools to be carried out by the department quality facilitators and technical assistants once per module (three times a year) supplemented by additional visits as needed to specific schools. Additional planned and unplanned will be discussed with the MINED based on actual school progress and technical assistance needs to ensure maximum impact with resources available.

Pedagogical Advisors will participate in the principal quality circles as much as possible, as this will improve the sustainability of the project’s technical assistance interventions and ensure that they further clarify their understanding of quality of education in rural schools. The focus of the principal quality circles will be primarily: (i) reflection, discussion and processing of the theme introduced at the monthly department-wide workshop, (ii) plans for school-level follow-up of activities in each of the 12 topic areas through the pedagogical improvement plan (PIP) to be developed in each school, and (iii) development of evaluation approaches to determine the success of the principals and teachers in improving school quality in the 12 areas.

This task will include the following:

- Establishing and sustaining principal quality circles;
- Designing plans for the operation of principal quality circles; and
- Conducting principal quality circles activities.

### ***Establish and sustain principal quality circles***

Principal quality circles will be organized geographically. They will be established and maintained throughout the project's lifetime, and every attempt will be made to sustain these groups beyond the life of the project and encourage them as an established feature of the educational structure. It is anticipated that support for quality circles and the sustainability of these structures will increase over the course of the project because of principal demand. The hope is that EXCELL will demonstrate the value of incorporating quality-enhancing work at the school- and quality-circle level into Departmental education plans.

### ***Conduct principal quality circle meetings and school follow up***

Much of the principal training to be delivered through the project will be implemented through the monthly departmental workshops followed by the monthly workshops of the principal quality circles. Quality circle meetings will be based on processing the topics covered in the monthly department-level meetings including reflection on and discussion of the topics and the development of pedagogical innovation plans for following up in each of the 12 topics at the school level. It is important that principals have time to process information from training sessions and work through individual technical/management and leadership activities in their home schools but also to share experiences and lessons learned in implementing new ideas. Regular meetings will be held between principals and teachers at the school level to follow up on the new ideas from the department and quality-circle level workshops and school-based pedagogical innovation plans will be developed by groups at the school level. Support will be provided for the implementation and evaluation of these plans through visits from the Department Quality Facilitators and the Technical Assistants.

### **Task 2.7— Provide focused international, project and local technical assistance**

EXCELL will provide international, project and local technical assistance to lead and facilitate the training for principals, particularly the training to take place at the department level. Topics identified particularly for international technical input are (i) innovative pedagogical approaches, (ii) instructional leadership, (iii) the use of information for decision making, and (iv) education for students with special needs. International technical specialists, as well as project and local specialists, will participate directly in the workshops at the department level. In the case of particularly critical input, EXCELL will plan to use videoconferencing facilities to connect the monthly training workshops.

### **Task 2.8 – Program monitoring**

A key challenge to the success of the EXCELL program in increasing the quality of school leadership, the quality of teaching, and thus the success of student learning, is to follow up and measure improvement in performance among students. Monitoring systems tend to produce complex tools and complex data that those at the department and school levels see as a burden rather than as a help. The project will seek to develop tools that are easy to use by principals, teachers, children and parents to gauge progress in the performance in the key subjects and to test and validate these within the educational community (principals, teachers, parents).

### **Component 3: Educational Policy Research**

The Ministry of Education and the educational research community in El Salvador have been prolific over the past decade in generating data and producing important studies to inform educational improvement on a national level. The purpose of Component 3 is to extend this work to focus more specifically on educational reform in rural areas. Specifically, Component 3 will

- Identify key areas of educational policy research that are of interest to USAID and MINED;
- Generate public debate about selected research topics;
- Commission studies to examine these topics; and
- Identify, through public forums, successful experiences and best practices in education policy and practice, lessons learned, and appropriate recommendations for reforms in educational policy and practice.

Studies and forums will be designed to guide the development of USAID/El Salvador's 2004-2009 strategic plan and MINED's understanding of the most effective strategies for improving educational quality in rural schools. Research activities will be designed to inform the operationalization of national-level policy decisions as well as local-level educational reforms.

Study results and policy forums from Component 3 research activities may take a variety of forms and may be disseminated in many ways. Study results, for example, may be displayed as a paper report, personal testimonials from action research, professional development materials, a video production, or a series of radio interviews. The medium for disseminating results will be based on the nature of the research activities, intended audiences, and potential opportunities for maximizing visibility and impact. Similarly, forums may take place in a variety of venues, including conference centers in San Salvador and EXCELL communities and schools.

Topics for three research activities will be specified and implemented, although a wider research agenda will be identified and promoted. These topics will be based on the results of an education policy forum and developed through research methods workshops.

EXCELL will also host one research forum during the first year of the project. The first will be a roundtable discussion with educational stakeholders from government, the private sector, the donor community, NGOs, and local communities about factors to consider when examining the effects of educational interventions on poverty reduction. Additional workshops will reflect on and discuss factors that have helped principals improve student learning. In each case, lessons will be used to guide policy research studies.

Following is a description of the activities and actions that EXCELL will use to select, commission, and complete Component 3 research activities.

#### **Task 3.1— Conduct Quality in Education, Equity and Development Study**

To address USAID strategic needs a first study has already been identified. This will address the issues involved in relating and explaining how inequities in education and development affect and are evinced by differences in quality in education. Key policy issues and decisions to address this will be further identified.

### **Task 3.2— Identify and select research topics**

Facilitation of educational policy research will include the following activities:

- Working with USAID/El Salvador and MINED to identify and select topics for study;
- Hosting policy forum;
- Hosting research workshops;
- Monitoring actions that result from policy and research activities.

#### ***Identify and select educational policy research topics***

The project will consult with USAID/El Salvador and MINED to identify and select key research needs and specify at least two studies (besides that identified under task 3.1) that will be conducted during the project period. Topic selection will be based on a set of pre-determined criteria, such as

- Relevance to the improvement of educational quality at the community, classroom, and school levels, particularly for rural schools and as related to student-level outcomes;
- Ability of studies to enhance the work of EXCELL Components 1 and 2;
- Ability to include EXCELL principals as active participants and action-researchers and inform issues that are of directly relevant for improving educational quality in EXCELL schools; and
- Strengthen school autonomy.

#### ***Host policy forums***

One policy forum is planned for the first year of the project. The decision to host other policy forums will be made in collaboration with USAID and MINED. Forums themselves will be organized to publicize the importance of the research topic to a national audience, attain a broad consensus about implications of findings for reforms in educational policy and practice, develop an action plan for implementing recommendations, and assign specific responsibilities for action to participating stakeholder groups.

Hosting a policy forum will be particularly important for the study on education and rural poverty because findings from this study will be used to inform the development of USAID/El Salvador's 2004-2009 strategic plan. A policy forum on this issue will engage civil society in El Salvador in thinking about long-term educational priorities for rural education, increase active participation in the design of the strategy, and, in the end, increase the sense of local ownership once the strategic plan is implemented. All follow-up activities will take into account organizations' interests and expertise and will focus on specific opportunities to affect the national policy debate on educational reform or school-level reform of educational practices.

#### ***Host research workshops***

Research forums will provide an opportunity for a deeper discussion of areas of research emphasis and research strategies. Forums will also provide an opportunity to reflect on past research and the relevance of this information for the new research agenda. Information from background research and recommendations from USAID and MINED will be used to identify the best participants and

venues for these forums. EXCELL will also determine appropriate publicity for the event and will work to invite media representatives as appropriate.

### **Task 3.3— Conduct educational policy research**

Facilitation of educational policy research will include the following activities:

- Conducting background research;
- Hosting research forums;
- Commissioning studies;
- Monitoring the progress of study activities;
- Overseeing the production of study findings; and
- Monitoring actions that result from policy forums.

#### ***Conduct background research***

After a research topic is selected, an internal review of the existing literature and knowledge base will be conducted about the issue. This information will then be used to define the terms of reference for the study and, as necessary, help in planning the agenda for research forums. Background information can help inform decisions about forum participants and issues to be discussed. The first research activity, educational interventions and the reduction of rural poverty, will include an extensive literature review on relevant El Salvadoran studies related to improving educational quality at the classroom and school levels.

#### ***Commission studies***

Information from background research and research forums will be used to develop the terms of reference for research studies. Terms will include requirements for

- Research questions to be answered;
- Proposed methods of data collection and analysis;
- Level of effort;
- Study timelines and deadlines; and
- Product(s) to be delivered.

An appropriate organization will then be selected to complete the activity either through a sole source or competitive process. All research activities will be contracted to Salvadorian organizations.

#### ***Monitor studies***

EXCELL will establish appropriate monitoring procedures after a study is commissioned. To the extent possible, project staff will also engage MINED's Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation in the review of Component 3 studies. This communication will be important not only for ensuring high quality for research studies but also for keeping the Ministry involved in the policy research process and increasing the Directorate's capacity to monitor similar studies in the future.

### ***Produce study findings***

Investigators will be responsible for producing study findings in the format established in the terms of reference. This may be in the form of bound report, a loose set of manuals, a video, or an interactive, multi-media CD-ROM. Requirements for formatting, number of copies, delivery, and dissemination will be specified in the terms of reference. EXCELL will then work with USAID and MINED to develop a strategy for disseminating study results.

### ***Monitor actions from policy forums***

All policy forums will be organized before the eighteenth month of the project to monitor resulting actions. The expectation is that participants in policy forums will work to change national-level policies and classroom- and school-level practices as appropriate based on research findings. EXCELL will monitor actions through direct contact with organizational representatives, stories from news media, and concrete evidence of change in policies and practice.

## **III. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Performance monitoring is a critical activity in project management. Monitoring can provide formative information to guide project planning and summative information to evaluate a project's success in achieving intermediate results and strategic objectives. EXCELL will produce quarterly reports that indicate progress to date, difficulties encountered, and plans for overcoming those difficulties. In addition, the project's monitoring systems will identify promising practices so that potentially replicable activities can be documented.

To ensure that EXCELL will deliver high quality products on time and within budget, certain activities routinely are conducted throughout the course of the project. These include 1) frequent status review meetings to identify potential technical, cost, and scheduling problems; 2) monthly expense reports to track variances from planned expenditures; 3) review of all project products prior to submission for adherence to quality standards; and 4) proactive communication to enhance the successful completion of these cooperative efforts.

### **General monitoring activities**

EXCELL monitoring will be conducted through the following activities:

- Design and implementation of a performance-monitoring plan;
- Design and implementation of monitoring tools;
- Monitoring and formative feedback sessions;
- Reporting; and
- Final project assessment.

### ***Design and implement a performance-monitoring plan***

A performance monitoring plan on which the project team, USAID/El Salvador, and MINED can agree is a crucial tool for the project's success. The clear operational definition of feasible, direct,

unambiguous, and useful indicators will provide information that can be used for the project's management and to report progress to USAID.

### ***Design and implementation of monitoring tools***

Once key indicators of success have been defined in the performance-monitoring plan, EXCELL will create requisite data collection instruments. We expect that data will come from regular information flows as well as specifically designed data-collection activities. Monitoring tools will be designed to be as unobtrusive as possible for project personnel and beneficiaries.

### ***Monitoring and formative feedback sessions***

Monthly monitoring and feedback sessions will be held to review performance-monitoring data, identify progress and problems, and discuss steps to improve project procedures. Discussions about performance monitoring in monthly meetings will be used to adjust the project's work plan on a quarterly basis.

### ***Reporting***

Technical and financial project progress reports will be sent by AIR to USAID/El Salvador on a quarterly basis. This document will be based on monthly progress reports. These reports will be used as the basis for discussion in monthly monitoring and feedback sessions. A final report will be presented at the end of the project.

### ***Final project assessment***

A more extensive final project assessment of EXCELL activities will be conducted towards the end of the project. The purpose of the activity will be to reflect on challenges faced in making the project operational, but especially to identify lessons learnt from developing a model for the implementation of quality in education in rural schools. The review will include facilitated meetings with all EXCELL staff as well as an EXCELL Consultative Committee. Recommendations from the review will be included in the EXCELL final report.

### **Performance monitoring**

The evaluation of EXCELL activities will be closely tied to the results framework as described in the performance-monitoring plan and the baseline design. The plan will describe how the project will monitor the quantity and quality of EXCELL products as well as the impact of EXCELL interventions at the ministerial, school, classroom, and student levels. First, the plan will describe strategies for producing EXCELL products as described in the original scope of work. The production of EXCELL products will subsequently be monitored by project staff and reported to USAID/El Salvador in quarterly technical reports.

Second, the plan will describe how EXCELL will conduct evaluation activities over the agreement period to measure the impact of project activities on changes among MINED officials, school principals, and teachers as well as associations between changes and academic performance at the student level.

The following Performance Monitoring Framework was prepared by project staff under the project’s original assumptions. The framework describes indicators, units of measurement, data sources, methods and approaches for data collection, and a schedule for data collection for each intermediate result. The performance-monitoring plan itself includes targets and benchmarks for success at each stage of project implementation. The overall plan will be revised upon the approval of the project’s new work plan and budget.

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit of Measure</b>	<b>Disaggregated</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
IR 1	<b>Strengthen the Ministry of Education’s capacity to improve decentralized school management and modify and implement educational reforms</b>			
1a	Degree of improvement in the MINED’s capacity for the implementation and evaluation of selected education reform policies	Number of aspects of the process of implementation and evaluation of education reform policies selected that are developed <sup>1</sup>	By policy	Quarterly
1.1	Strategic planning and management capacity development			
1.1a	Increased application of competencies for strategic planning and management (for the implementation of education reform policies) by managers included in the project	Mode of the number of competencies to be developed <sup>1</sup> that are applied by the managers	By MINED unit By geographical area (region and department) By training and/or technical assistance provider	Quarterly
1.1b	Improvement in the professional competencies profile of managers included in the project	% of managers that complete at least 85% of their own professional development profile according to the project’s desired output profile <sup>2</sup>	By MINED unit By geographical area (region and department) By training and/or technical assistance provider	Quarterly
1.2	Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research			
1.2a	Increase in the availability of timely, pertinent, unified and reliable information on education quality by the DNME	% of a sample of documents from the DNME that fulfills criteria of timeliness, pertinence, unity and trustworthiness on education quality	N/A	Quarterly
1.2b	Enhanced capacities in the DNME for the adequate handling (analysis, diffusion and advice to decision makers) of MINED quantitative and qualitative information	Difference in the total number of selected capacities <sup>1</sup> applied by the DNME one year as compared with those applied in the immediately previous period	By aspect of handling (analysis, diffusion, advice)	Quarterly
1.2c	Increase in the use <sup>2</sup> of DNME information about quality in education by managers in decision-making (operational, programmatic and strategic)	Difference in the total number of MINED managers using information as a percentage of managers referring use in the immediately previous period	By MINED unit By geographical area (region and department) By MINED level	Quarterly
IR 2	<b>Improve learning conditions for student achievement in at least 250 rural schools, K-6, through training and technical assistance to school principals</b>			
2a	Increase in number of children with better practices for effective learning in the classroom <sup>1</sup>	% of a sample of children who exercise effective practices out of sample of 1st to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade children in the 250 schools	By sex By cycle in basic education By department	Quarterly
2b	Teachers apply improved pedagogical practices in the classroom, especially in language and mathematics <sup>2</sup>	% of a sample of teachers applying improved pedagogical practices/ sample of teachers in the 250 schools	By sex By cycle in basic education By teacher specialty	Quarterly
2c	Increase in principals applying pedagogical leadership skills <sup>3</sup>	% of a sample of principals applying pedagogical leadership skills / sample of principals in the 250 schools	By sex By type of school direction	Quarterly
2d	Increase in the number of children with improvements in selected skills in language and mathematics	% of a sample of children between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grade showing improvement in selected language and mathematics skills / sample of children between 1st and 6th grade in the 250 schools	By sex By age By cycle By subject	Three times: April 2004, October 2004, May 2005
2e	Increase in number of principals applying shared leadership <sup>4</sup> practices focused on pedagogical practices	% of a sample of principals applying shared leadership / sample of principals in the 250 schools	By department By total number of children By type of school direction	Quarterly
IR 3	<b>Extend educational policy research</b>			
3a	Activities that promote project results (research and systematization of experiences)	Number of activities in which project results are presented and discussed	By topic By research versus systematization	Quarterly
3b	Degree of progress in the development of a work document on education policies that incorporates results from the project’s research	Number of phases of the document’s production process that have been completed <sup>2</sup>	N/A	Quarterly
3c	Degree of institutionalization (representativeness, persistence, influence, financing) of a national space for the discussion of public policies in education	Number of institutionalization criteria satisfied <sup>3</sup>	N/A	Quarterly

Data for measuring project performance will be collected from a variety of sources, including documentation from project staff, reviews of plans, surveys, observations, and assessments. EXCELL staff will work closely with MINED’s Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate when developing plans for data collection and analysis. This collaboration will ensure that MINED is

integrally involved in project planning and that Monitoring and Evaluation staff have a strong technical understanding of the project's monitoring and evaluation process. This will be important for ensuring the continuation of data collection and analysis efforts after the project's completion.

Monitoring changes in principal and teacher practices, as direct and indirect project results, and the associations between these changes and changes in student learning, is one of the most important among EXCELL's monitoring and evaluation activities. It will involve the collection and analysis of data at multiple levels. First, instruments to examine effective changes in principal behavior and instructional practices will be developed as part of Task 1.2. This will draw substantially on criteria for effective schools established by MINED's *Escuela Diez* program as well as the research literature on school reform. These instruments will then be used for a variety of EXCELL research and monitoring activities, including the following:

- Overall performance monitoring of IR 2.1, *Student achievement improved in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals*;
- The Task 1.2.5 study related to *Deepening knowledge about relations between management and quality in education*; and
- Baseline data collection for Task 2.2, *Conduct needs analysis*, to determine principal training needs.

Data collection will take place with a statistically reliable sample of EXCELL schools and will be conducted by the provider contracted to conduct the baseline study.

Preliminary analysis indicates that the sample should include at least 35 EXCELL schools, selected at random, to detect moderate changes in principal and teacher behavior over time.<sup>2</sup> To this will be added another 35 schools as controls to track through control studies. EXCELL will track changes for one principal and one third-grade teacher per school and at three points in time: 1) prior to EXCELL professional development activities; 2) at the end of the 2004 school year; and 3) in March of 2005.

EXCELL will also collect student achievement data from a sample of third graders to examine how changes in principal and teacher behavior may be associated with changes in academic performance. Eight students will be selected at random per school from each of the classes of third-grade teachers who are participating in the overall study and will be tested at the beginning and end of the 2004 school year. EXCELL staff will analyze changes in student achievement over time and attempt to see whether changes can be linked to changes in specific teacher practices. A sample size of 280 students will make it possible to detect relatively small associations (i.e., effect size of 0.15 standard deviations) between individual classroom practices and changes in student achievement.

Eight students will also be selected from each of 35 comparable non-EXCELL schools to determine whether changes in student achievement are measurably higher in schools where principal professional development is taking place. Schools will be selected through a process of "paired matching," using a national school database to compare key school-level demographics (e.g., school size, location, and number of teachers). The total sample size of 560 students in EXCELL and non-EXCELL students will make it possible to detect relatively small differences in student achievement

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<sup>2</sup> More specifically, a sample of 30 schools/classrooms would give an 80 percent probability of detecting an effect at the 0.05 confidence level if the real effect of the intervention is "moderate" in size (i.e., 0.47 standard deviations of change in the behavioral variables being measured). The recommendation of 35 schools is to allow the possibility of school attrition over the project period.

(i.e., an effect size of 0.22 standard deviations) between the two populations. The sample size also allows for a small amount of student attrition from the sample without drastically affecting the likelihood of observing statistically significant differences.

Students will participate in three assessments at the beginning of the academic year as well as the same three assessments at the end of the academic year. First, MINED officials will administer El Salvador’s standard language and mathematics assessments. Second, Quality Facilitators will administer student critical thinking assessments. Critical thinking assessment items will be adapted from existing instruments, translated into Spanish, and tested on a small scale to ensure their cultural appropriateness. After being fielded, assessments will be scored and analyzed in cooperation with MINED staff. Again, this collaboration will increase the capacity of MINED Monitoring and Evaluation staff to conduct similar analyses in the future.

Although the aforementioned data collection and analysis process is straightforward, we caution against the premature use of these analyses for judging project effects. Even under the best circumstances, it takes time for effective interventions with school principals to be translated into classroom practices, and from classroom practices into measurable differences in student outcomes. Educational evaluators often find statistically significant changes in first-year project outcomes because of increased attention to principals, teachers, and students irrespective of the quality of the actual intervention (often cited as a “Hawthorne Effect”). These findings should not be interpreted as evidence of project success. Similarly, a lack of statistically significant findings related to first-year project activities should not be interpreted as failure.

Instead of using first-year analytical findings for evaluative purposes, they should be treated as baseline data for tracking the effects of project interventions over a longer period. To the extent that staff from MINED’s Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate can be involved in the planning and implementation of these activities, they can ultimately take responsibility for performance-monitoring activities after the project ends and observe more meaningful changes in student performance over time as a consequence of project activities. They will also be able to use the instrumentation and analytical strategies to monitor other school- and classroom-based interventions in the future.

#### **IV. Key Personnel**

EQUIP1 proposes as key personnel under this Agreement the following positions: the Chief of Party; the Quality Management Coordinator; the Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Specialist; and the Training and Materials Development Specialist. Following is a list of responsibilities, qualifications, and candidates for these position.

##### ***Chief of Party***

Primary responsibilities:

- Overall management of EXCELL activities within the country, including personnel and financial;
- Technical vision and establishment of project culture of collaboration and coordination;
- Mentoring and coaching for project staff in their areas of technical oversight;
- Liaison for EXCELL with USAID/El Salvador and the Ministry of Education;
- In-country liaison with EXCELL partner organizations;

- Key liaison with national organizations involved in implementation of EXCELL activities;
- Oversight of all activities under each of the project's three components;
- Integration of the three components of EXCELL, including the definition of technical strategies, the work plan, and schedule of activities; and
- Quarterly and final technical reports on EXCELL activities, for submission to EQUIP1, in compliance with USAID requirements, and any other technical reporting as required by the cooperative agreement.

Recommended qualifications:

- Advanced degree in education policy and planning, educational administration, organizational management, or a related area;
- Experience managing a medium/large country reform project;
- Minimum of ten years working in international education reform;
- Technical knowledge in all major areas of project activity:
- Management training;
- Professional development in instructional practices;
- School improvement and the mechanics of teaching and learning;
- Educational research;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Good communication skills, the ability to listen, the ability to lead in a participatory manner;
- Ability to work well with groups of MINED and USAID officers, teachers and principals;
- In-depth knowledge of El Salvador's education system; and
- Fluent in both Spanish and English.

EQUIP1 proposes Dr. Felix Alvarado as the candidate for Chief of Party (resume included in Annex I). Dr. Alvarado is a specialist in project design, project management, and program evaluation, with a strong focus on institutional and organizational change. His experience in managing programs and in providing training for management prepares him exceptionally well for the job of Chief of Party. Dr. Alvarado combines management vision with a meticulous and thorough approach to the day-to-day functions of management. Managing for results is one of his strong focal points as is ensuring that the project overall adheres strictly to its basic design. Encouraging teams to work well together is one of Dr. Alvarado's key skills. As a team leader, he is energetic, serious, and highly professional, thus providing an excellent model to the team. He works well with people in a participatory manner but is ready to exert authority when necessary. Dr. Alvarado's ability to work well with host country nationals and institutions, USAID missions, and project head offices has been demonstrated in a number of work settings in the region. Dr. Alvarado values open and transparent management and communication with all stakeholders, which will be a hallmark of his leadership approach.

The role of the Chief of Party in EXCELL requires technical knowledge of all project areas including planning and management, monitoring and evaluation, research, and school leadership. Dr. Alvarado's main areas of specialization relate to Components 1 and 3, the planning, monitoring and evaluation, and research areas. Component 2, however, is the key technical area of the project and concerns capacity-building of school principals to provide effective management combined with instructional leadership to school-based teams of principals, teachers and communities working together to improve the quality of learning.

Dr. Alvarado has an excellent grasp of the basic ideas of curriculum and instruction central to EXCELL such as active learning, student-centered approaches, and school-community linkages, which will enable him to give excellent overall guidance in this area. In addition, Dr. Alvarado is well experienced in the issues of educational management and will give strong direct technical leadership in management at the school level. Team building within institutions is also one of his specialties and this will be a valuable asset in building principal-school-community teams. To achieve the best results in Component 2, he will work closely together with the Quality Management Coordinator who is an experienced professional in the area of change in classroom practice.

### ***Quality Management Coordinator***

Primary responsibilities:

- Coordinate the participatory development of a detailed field-based work plan including department-level monthly workshops, principal quality circle monthly workshops, monitor the school-level activities of principals with their teachers, and ensure that the school support visits by Department Quality Facilitators and Technical Assistants proceed as planned and are of good quality;
- Technical management of all field activities in the departments, in the principal quality circles, and in the selected schools;
- Overall management of Department Quality Facilitators and Technical Assistants—through the organization of principal quality circles;
- Liaison with MINED, particularly mid-management officials working on quality issues; and
- Liaison with MINED officials in Departments and Districts within which selected schools and clusters are located; and
- Ensure that school-level pedagogical innovation plans are being carried out that will lead to better quality teaching and learning and higher achievement on the part of students.

Recommended qualifications:

- Advanced degree in educational management, adult learning, education reform, or a related field;
- Technical knowledge and experience in professional development related to instructional practices, school improvement, and the mechanics of teaching and learning;
- Good communication skills, the ability to listen and to work in a participatory manner with groups of MINED officers, teachers and principals; and
- Minimum of five years experience managing field-based education initiatives.
- In-depth knowledge of El Salvador's education system, particularly the conditions of rural schools; and
- Fluent in Spanish.

EQUIP1 proposes Lic. Mario Nóchez as the Quality Management Coordinator (resume included in Annex I). Mr. Nóchez is a professional educator with more than twenty years of experience in education in El Salvador. He has produced more than 15 published contributions to books, journals, and training manuals. Mr. Nóchez began his work in education in 1979 as an educational psychologist where he worked with teachers, students, and parents. He expanded his work from 1988 to 1994 to include teacher training and the improvement of educational quality. In 1994, he became the director of a basic education improvement program funded by UNICEF, UNDP, and UNICEF. This program had an annual budget of approximately \$1 million, and Mr. Nóchez was

responsible for the work of more than 100 staff members, including managers, field personnel, and administrative employees.

Mr. Nóchez has designed monitoring and evaluation systems for quality improvement. He has worked on curricular design and improvements at many levels. This work has ranged from curricular design for adult education programs to improving teacher formation at the university level.

As a private consultant, Mr. Nóchez has conducted studies on effective forms of learning and teaching, methodologies to improve quality education, and educational policy in El Salvador. He has also developed model pre-schools for low-income families. Mr. Nochez is a longstanding educational professional with both technical and administrative experience. He has proven abilities in a wide range of settings in the educational sector of El Salvador.

***Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Specialist*** will have the following responsibilities:

- Develop terms of reference for all research activities, and provide technical backstopping and follow-through to research contracts;
- Develop monitoring and evaluation training materials for school principals;
- Develop training materials for mid-level MINED managers on use of monitoring and evaluation tools and reports; and
- Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation system for the overall project, in coordination with the Chief of Party, specifically including the monitoring and evaluation tools and systems for Component 2 implementation.

Recommended qualifications:

- Advanced degree in educational administration, policy and planning, evaluation, or statistics, or a related area;
- Extensive experience conducting educational research, including teacher and principal professional development, teaching and learning processes, and other school reform activities;
- Experience planning and conducting large-scale, field-based research activities using a variety of data collection and analysis methods;
- Familiarity with common statistical software packages and conducting multi-level analyses;
- Familiarity with USAID monitoring and evaluation procedures, including the development and implementation of performance monitoring plans;
- Experience teaching research, monitoring, and evaluation methods to other professionals;
- In-depth knowledge of El Salvador's education system; and
- Fluent in Spanish.

***Training and Materials Development Specialist*** will have the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the design of training activities and materials, as required for the development of school directors and MINED mid-management officials, in coordination with the other EXCELL staff;
- Coordinate the development, testing and evaluation of all learning materials, as well as the development of terms of reference for specific contracts for development of learning materials; and
- Coordinate the evaluation of training activities and learning materials.

Recommended qualifications:

- Advanced degree in educational administration, assessment, teaching, teacher education, curriculum and instruction, or a related area;
- Experience in the development of professional development materials for educators and educational administrators as well as educational assessments and evaluations;
- Technical knowledge of professional development related to instructional practices, school improvement, and the mechanics of teaching and learning;
- In-depth knowledge of El Salvador's education system; and
- Fluent in Spanish.

***Other Personnel***

In addition to the identified key personnel, EQUIP1 proposes the following professional personnel for the implementation of EXCELL:

- Six Department Quality Facilitators;
- Six Department Technical Assistants (part time);
- One Chief Accountant;
- One Finance and One Technical Assistant;
- Two Administrative Staff
- Two Drivers

The Chief of Party has established a process for staff recruitment and hiring for EXCELL.

***Six Department Quality Facilitators*** will be responsible for the principal quality-circle level, and school-level implementation of Component 2. Each will have the following responsibilities:

- Guide, oversee, and evaluate EXCELL project activities taking place within the departments;
- Work with the rest of the Quality Management Coordinator to develop work plans, carry out project trainings and technical assistance, and monitor and report on project progress, budget expenditures and burn rate, and use of equipment;
- Train Department Technical Assistants in the purposes and approaches of the EXCELL program as well as in the content of the EXCELL modules;
- Facilitate training workshops at the principal quality circle level with the participation of Department Technical Assistants;
- Monitor and provide feedback on the progress of the principal quality circles and the development of the pedagogical innovation plans;
- Coordinate activities with MINED personnel at the local level (principals, Pedagogical Advisors, Zone Coordinators and Technical Liaisons) and communicate on project activities on a regular formal and informal basis;
- Monitor and evaluate project activities and progress at the principal quality circle and the school levels to ensure the project meets targets and results; and
- Compile and submit project narrative and financial reports on the training activities at the department, quality circle and school levels.

Recommended qualifications:

- University degree in educational administration, assessment, teaching, teacher education, curriculum and instruction, or a related area;
- Professional experience in program administration, including monitoring and evaluation, in projects related to classroom instruction and learning;
- Good communication skills and the ability to listen to others;
- Experience leading workshops and training activities;
- Ability to work with department officers, principals and teachers in a participatory manner;
- In-depth knowledge of El Salvador's education system; and
- Fluent in Spanish.

**Six Department Technical Assistants (part time)** will work closely with the six Department Quality Facilitators in the implementation of the program in the field. Their responsibilities will be the following:

- Participate in all principal training activities at the department level, the principal quality circle level and at the school level and assist with planning, logistics, materials preparation, and facilitation at these three levels;
- Share responsibility with the Department Quality Facilitators for facilitation of the monthly principal quality circle workshops in order to intensify the impact of the training at this level;
- Good communication skills, the ability to listen and to work in a participatory manner with groups of teachers and principals; and
- Undertake school support visits in remote rural schools, work with groups of teachers and principals at the school level to review the progress of developing and implementing pedagogical innovation plans, and report on progress to the Department Quality Facilitators.

Recommended qualifications:

- A qualification in teaching or in a related area of education;
- Substantial teaching experience or experience as a principal or departmental education officer;
- High level of familiarity with the conditions of rural schools and the challenges of teachers and principals working in such schools;
- Good communication skills, the ability to listen and to work in a participatory manner with groups of teachers and principals; and
- The ability and willingness to spend periods of time in remote rural schools.

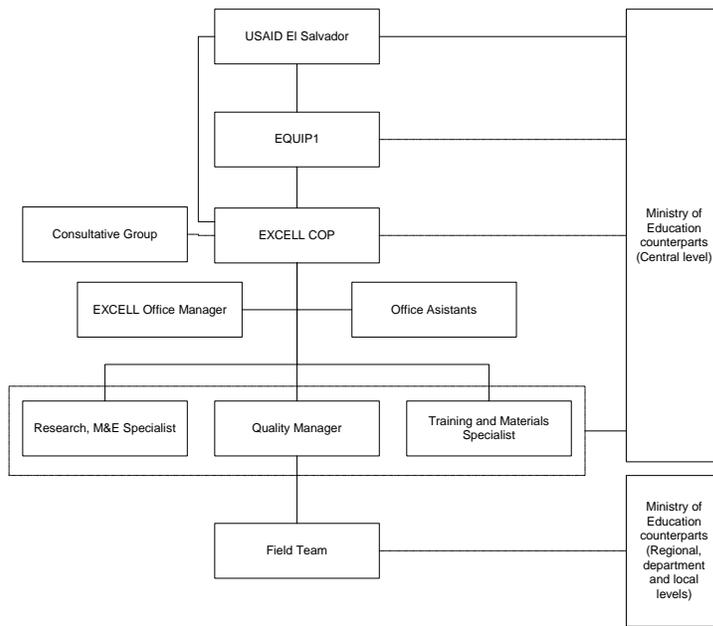
***International Consultants***

EXCELL will draw on the expertise of international consultants as necessary to accomplish project objectives. We have planned for eighteen trips and 300 days of consultant time in El Salvador over the two-year agreement period. International partners have substantial expertise to support all components of the project and expect to support a variety of project needs, including technical assistance about instructional leadership, educational management, the inclusion of girls and students with disabilities, study design, analysis using qualitative and quantitative methods, and monitoring and evaluation.

In all cases, technical assistance will be determined as a programmatic or management need and will be agreed upon by the Chief of Party and EQUIP1 Project Director. Qualifications and scopes of work will be determined based on individual cases.

## V. Management Plan

EXCELL is to be an EQUIP1 activity and, as such, will not be identified with any one organization. The participating EQUIP1 partners and staff members contracted by each will be responsible for implementing a strategy and work plan that is cohesive and integrated. The following organizational chart illustrates the EQUIP1 management plan for EXCELL.



As the lead organization for EQUIP1, the American Institutes for Research has the managerial oversight and ultimate responsibility for EXCELL. In this role, it is AIR’s responsibility to ensure the technical and financial integrity of the project. AIR is the legal representative for the cooperative agreement and will therefore have ultimate oversight for project planning and budgets. AIR will also be the liaison for formal communication between USAID and project staff. At the same time, the Chief of Party is EQUIP1’s representative in El Salvador. The Chief of Party will have technical leadership in the project and will direct project operations, have general discretion over project expenditures and scheduling, and serve as the day-to-day liaison with USAID/El Salvador. The Chief of Party will also be responsible for managing all non-contractual issues that can be resolved at the country level.

AIR is joined in this partnership by AED and the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation (JPKF). Save and Care will participate in the project for the first ten months of the project. AIR will facilitate an integrated working relationship among partners and create the conditions to ensure collaboration among partners, the MINED, USAID/El Salvador and other local partners, and ensure such collaboration through ongoing monitoring.

AIR will process and submit all required reporting documentation, both technical and financial. AIR and U.S. counterparts will also be actively involved in supporting in-country EXCELL management and in providing technical assistance in the implementation of EXCELL activities. Each implementing organization has identified home-office support that will be responsible for technical and operational backstopping and will travel to El Salvador over the course of the project to provide



- EQUIP1 team meeting of all implementing partners;
- Chief of Party internationally recruited, hired and available to begin work on or about 30 days from signing of Associate Award agreement;
- In-country administrative and support staff hired;
- Project office furnished and made operational;
- In-country recruitment and hiring of the Training and Materials Development Specialist, and the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist within 30 days of the Chief of Party being in the country;
- Departmental Quality Facilitators identified, recruited, and hired within 45 days of the start of the Quality Management Coordinator; and
- Identification of individual Consultative Group members and establishment of a Group meeting schedule.

## **VI. Cost Proposal**

The comprehensive budget for EXCELL is included in this application and incorporates budgets from each of the EQUIP1 implementing organizations. In response to identified percentages of the total budget for each of the EXCELL components, general guidelines to adhere to a 22 percent, 70 percent, and 8 percent split for components 1, 2, and 3, respectively, have been established.

### ***Cost Share Strategy***

The EQUIP1 EXCELL partnership has developed a cost share strategy that will be ongoing throughout the life of the agreement. The goal of the strategy is to establish ownership and identify sustainable partnerships to support El Salvador’s education development initiatives. Acknowledging that “USAID policy is that the principle of cost-sharing...should be flexible and case-specific,” EQUIP1 will continue to seek viable cost-share options throughout the life of the project. The cost share goal is 15 percent of the total expended budget.

Proposed activities to support cost share goals are as follows:

- Matching cost of newspaper and television coverage of project innovations (e.g. equity campaigns, spots to highlight characteristics of effective management of quality in rural schools);
- Shared transportation costs (vehicle usage) with local organizations;
- Usage rights of tool kits and training materials for capacity strengthening activities;
- Service time that community members and parents dedicate to the project;
- In-kind contributions of staff and consulting time;
- Principal time attending workshops and transportation costs for principals; and
- Book donations for school-level resource libraries.

Progress toward cost share goals will be reported quarterly along with required financial reporting documents. Initial cost share contributions are indicated in the budget documents.

## VII. EXCELL Implementation Plan

