



Program Cycle Implementation

Background

In 2010, USAID developed a series of reforms to strengthen the discipline of development as part of USAID Forward. Organized around a framework known as the Program Cycle, the reforms represent the way the Agency achieves development results in collaboration with our partners.

Program Cycle policies, procedures and best practices promote strategic planning, project design, and adaptive implementation based on evidence and analysis to increase the impact of USAID’s development programs. Recognizing that development is not static and is rarely linear, the Program Cycle stresses the need to assess and reassess through regular monitoring, evaluation, and learning.



Status of Program Cycle Implementation

The Agency has made significant strides in adopting Program Cycle reforms; tangible progress is being made toward realizing their impact.

Agency Policies and Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •USAID is taking a more coherent approach to defining priority development challenges, enabling missions to be more selective and focused in their planning, and leverage best practices in project design and implementation.
Country Development Cooperation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The majority of USAID Missions have completed, or are about to complete, a CDCS. Missions are thinking more strategically, prioritizing their programs, and focusing their resources.
Project Design and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Missions are integrating activities into coherent project designs to achieve higher level results defined in their CDCSs, requiring a greater focus on USAID manageable interest and sustainability.
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Missions are beginning to focus on monitoring higher level outcomes like the Project Purpose in a LogFrame. This requires more creativity and a willingness to expand the pool of data sources and collect baseline data before implementation begins.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Missions are using the findings of their evaluations to modify projects and activities to build on what works, reallocate funding to be more effective, and strengthen follow-on work.
Learning and Adapting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Missions are developing Collaborating, Learning & Adapting plans to coordinate partner efforts and collaborate across sectors, fill gaps in technical knowledge, assess new evidence, and implement course corrections for more effective programs.
Budget and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As a result of improved program planning, USAID is strengthening the alignment of planning and budgeting processes, utilizing CDCSs to directly inform annual budget formulation and execution.

Support for Program Cycle Implementation

The adoption of Program Cycle has provided missions unique opportunities for sharing lessons learned and best practices, as well as identifying challenges in implementing the reforms. Below is a list of resources available to all USAID staff to help build capacity and facilitate learning to support Program Cycle implementation.

Standardization Project: Standardized Mission Orders save missions time in adopting Program Cycle processes, shorten the learning curve for officers as they change posts, and set the stage for a mission-centric common information system. AIDtracker Plus is a Program Cycle compliant performance monitoring tool that facilitates the collection and use of high-quality monitoring information for evidence-based decision-making. Find resources, including templates, instructions, and FAQs, at programnet.usaid.gov/module/standardization.

Program Cycle How-To Notes and Tools: These practical resources provide guidelines and practical advice to USAID staff and partners related to Program Cycle implementation. Resources include How-To and Technical Notes; Discussion Notes, the Program Cycle Learning Guide; and the Performance Monitoring Toolkit. These resources are available on [ProgramNet](#) and [Learning Lab](#).

Trainings: Updated Program Cycle Core Curriculum, including Programming Foreign Assistance, Project Design and Management, Advanced Project Design, Evaluation for Program Managers, Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists, provide Agency staff with the latest approaches and tools to improve development programming. Visit inside.usaid.gov/HR/university for a schedule of trainings.

Workshops: Customized 2-3 day workshops are conducted in missions. Workshops are available for Project Design; Performance Monitoring; and Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting.

TDY/eTDYs: PPL staff are available for both in-person and virtual coaching and mentoring of mission staff, particularly DLIs, in directly undertaking Program Cycle reforms.

ProgramNet: ProgramNet (programnet.usaid.gov) is USAID's internal, interactive online community devoted to sharing knowledge and promoting learning on implementing the Program Cycle. It hosts practical tools, events, and examples of mission products from each phase of the Program Cycle including:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Library (i.e. templates, models, presentations)
- Webinars and virtual Office Hours
- Blogs posts from subject matter experts
- Discussion forums among USAID colleagues worldwide
- Working Groups (e.g. Project Design Working Group)

Learning Lab: Learning Lab (usaidlearninglab.org) is an online learning community where USAID and partners connect and collaborate. It provides a space to gather ideas, input, and resources to build best practices for joint implementation of the Program Cycle.

- Introductory Program Cycle Video for partners
- Working Groups for collaboration and learning
- Learning Network Resource Center
- Examples of learning and adapting in the USAID Context
- Program Cycle Learning Guide
- A growing Learning Library

Program Cycle Component Point of Contact: Have a question or need additional assistance? Below are points of contact for each component of the Program Cycle to help you get started.

Agency Policy and Strategies	• David Strine (PPL/P) - dstrine@usaid.gov
Country Development Cooperation Strategies	• Tony Pryor (PPL/SPP) - cpryor@usaid.gov
Project Design and Implementation	• Carissa Page (PPL/SPP) - cpage@usaid.gov
Monitoring	• Christine MacAulay (PPL/LER) - cmacaulay@usaid.gov
Evaluation	• Virginia Lamprecht (PPL/LER) - vlamprecht@usaid.gov
Learning and Adapting	• Stacey Young (PPL/LER) - learning@usaid.gov