



Integrating Learning Throughout the Performance Management Plan

Examples and Explanations

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Overview

The Performance Management Plan (PMP) Toolkit provides in-depth guidance on how to establish, maintain and implement a Mission-wide PMP. Since the value of a PMP lies in the use of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, the Toolkit includes tips and suggestions for using performance management data and for strengthening learning. This document is designed to complement the PMP Toolkit by providing examples that show how Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) has been integrated into Mission PMPs.

Examples included in this document are quoted directly from Mission PMPs. To protect potential procurement sensitivities, information linking these examples to specific Missions has been removed, but the content has not otherwise been editorialized or changed. This paper is organized by the four areas of the PMP where CLA is most typically referenced, including:

1. Introduction and Objectives sections
2. Learning Plan and references to the Learning Plan
3. PMP Task Schedule
4. Through linkages to other components of the PMP

For more information or assistance on applying a CLA perspective in performance management, contact the PPL/LER Learning Team at learning@usaid.gov.



CLA in the Introduction and Objective sections

From the beginning of the PMP, it is important to set the tone and establish expectations for the Mission's performance management approach. The Introduction and Objectives sections help explain the Mission's goals for performance management and can address the role that learning plays in the PMP.

Introduction: Example #1

USAID/Z's PMP incorporates all of the Mission's project and activity monitoring and evaluation plans and learning agendas. It will link lower level outputs and results to indicators in the Mission-wide Results Framework to help manage progress towards higher-level results and assess the validity of the results framework and development hypotheses underlying the Mission program. The aim of the project/activity monitoring and evaluation plans and the Mission-wide PMP is to help the Mission:

- Learn and adapt iteratively to achieve maximum results
- Learn over the longer term to increase understanding of the dynamics of development
- Generate lessons learned to apply to future project designs and update strategic planning as well as to share with implementing partners and other stakeholders to inform their efforts.

Introduction: Example #2

This PMP provides the empirical grounding and organizational structure to determine the Mission's progress towards achieving the ambitious goals in its CDCS. Building upon the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting principles laid out in the CDCS, the PMP outlines how these approaches are linked to the performance management practices and processes of USAID/Z and its partners. As per ADS 203, the PMP established performance management approaches, roles and responsibilities in three main areas:

- **Learning:** identify and address gaps in the evidence base through collaborative analysis of available information and when necessary, conducting special studies, assessments and surveys.
- **Evaluation:** plan, design and conduct program evaluations per Agency requirements as well as when necessary to inform programmatic decisions.
- **Monitoring:** maintain and increase routine data collection, analysis and review.



Introduction: Example #3

Performance Management throughout the Program Cycle:

In order for USAID/Z to provide strong, data-driven results to interested parties and comply with federal demands regarding performance management, it is vital to formalize an evaluation, monitoring and learning plan for the mission.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Analysis, Learning and Utilizations of Findings, are essential elements of any mission's performance management capability, and particularly important given the high visibility and size of USAD/Z's portfolio. Through a series of facilitated meetings with the technical offices, the mission has identified a list of performance indicators associated with each CDCS results statement as well as DO-level learning questions which will be used to track performance and to determine project and program effectiveness.

Performance management was invigorated with the development and management of the CDCS Results Framework, but also includes project-level performance management and compliance, and technical input for key mission processes (portfolio review, Performance Plan and Report, Operational Plan, Congressional briefings). Currently, USAID/Z's approach also involves continued development and management of a third-party monitoring and evaluation contract, currently held by COMPANY_X and development and management of SYSTEM_X, the Mission's information management system.

USAID/Z uses several basic performance management tools including, but not limited to, the Agency's template for a performance management plan, the monitoring systems of SYSTEM_X, independent evaluations, and Inspector General Audits. The CDCS Results Framework and accompanying PMP along with SYSTEM_X have the potential to be exceedingly successful performance management tools, as long as there is a strategy and the leadership to harness them. It is the role of the Program Office to guide the mission's use of these tools to improve program performance and impact through high quality, evidence-based decision making.



Introduction: Example #4

USAID/Z's CDCS incorporates a Collaborating, Learning and Adapting approach, which facilitates conditions for development success by:

- Enhancing collaboration among USG agencies, implementing partners, with other donors and Host Government counterparts
- Strengthening the evidence base on which decisions about development assistance are made and ensuring that experience and observations inform program decisions
- Facilitating necessary changes to the Mission's activities due to both changing conditions and/or new information about program effectiveness

Collaborative, adaptive and learning approaches are integrated in USAID/Z's project design documents and throughout the PMP. For example, the PMP discusses the Mission's collaborative approach to data analysis, intention to share the results and learnings from evaluations, research and assessments, and use of monitoring and evaluation data for adaptation and course correction. A learning plan is attached to this PMP as an annex.

Introduction: Example #5

The PMP provides the empirical basis and organizational structure for assessing the Mission's progress towards its CDCS goals and objectives. But, as a living document, the PMP also provides a framework for future activity design and implementation. To remain current, the PMP will be regularly updated to reflect environmental changes, adaptive learning and strategic decisions in conjunction with semi-annual portfolio reviews, quarterly financial reviews, implementation reviews, new project designs and other decision-making events. DO teams will also conduct periodic reviews of project and activity level M&E Plans to ensure that they remain aligned with the CDCS and Mission-wide PMP, recommending revisions to these documents, if appropriate. Specific performance indicators and targets will also likely need adjustment as new projects are designed, technical issues emerge, and performance is analyzed.



Referencing the Learning Plan

If the mission has chosen to create a learning plan it should both be included as an annex to the PMP and described in an overview section within the PMP. Some missions include a brief outline of the associated roles and responsibilities of staff members in this descriptive section. Three examples of these descriptive sections are below. A template for a CLA Plan for the PMP annex is available in the [PMP Toolkit](#).

Learning Plan Description: Example #1

USAID staff and partners have always sought ways to better understand and improve our work. By embedding collaborating, learning, and adapting throughout the Program Cycle, USAID/Z can ensure that its programs are coordinated with others', grounded in a strong base of evidence, and iteratively adapted in order to remain relevant throughout implementation. In this way, a learning and adapting emphasis helps to maximize results. The mission's Learning Agenda reinforces and enhances the mission's overall goals for performance management. The tasks outlined in this Agenda, once integrated into Mission processes, will help us learn rapidly and enable us to make iterative course corrections.

The Learning Agenda is housed in and managed by the performance management unit in the program office, but technical teams must have strong roles in defining and implementing them, to ensure that development objectives remain paramount, and activities are prioritized to address critical issues associated with the effectiveness of the mission's program. The plan also outlines an expectation of strong participation on the part of implementing partners and other stakeholders.

Learning Plan Description: Example #2

Each technical team is responsible for developing and regularly updating a learning agenda to address DO-level high priority learning questions necessary to test their theory of change or fill gaps in existing knowledge. Learning agendas were developed with engagement of the full technical team, coordinated by the Program Office and approved by the technical office director. These learning agendas include the estimated timeline and approach for addressing each of the learning questions. Completed learning agendas for each of the technical teams are included in the annexes of this PMP and will be updated as needed. Each technical team will participate in ongoing activities such as stakeholder analysis and collaboration mapping, led by the Program Office, to continue to expand and update their learning agenda.



Learning Plan Description: Example #3

Development assistance is not yet a science and it is impossible to fully know in advance what will work and what will not in a particular country setting. However, results are likely to be better to the extent that we are able to collect good performance information, analyze it rigorously, share it widely, and apply the lessons learned in decision-making. USAID/Z is fully committed to working collaboratively with our development partners to share knowledge and experience, test promising new approaches, build on what works and eliminate what does not. To accomplish this aim, USAID/Z will:

- Engage partners and other stakeholders in periodic, candid discussions of USAID's program to validate strategy and implementation and to jointly identify problems, opportunities and improvements on the pathway forward
- Transparently disseminate monitoring and evaluation findings
- Strengthen the evidence basis on which decisions about development assistance are made and ensure that experience and observations inform program choices
- Work continuously to identify critical knowledge gaps under each DO and develop plans to fill them through evaluations, assessments, research and analysis
- Design rigorous evaluations to test key hypotheses
- Identify opportunities to pilot innovative approaches
- Map USAID's development activities and those of key stakeholders (other USG agencies, implementing partners, local government, other donors, civil society) and establishing a central information repository using GIS to overlay key data sets in geographic space.
- Conduct externally oriented portfolio reviews at least once a year that include a range of stakeholders and where each DO team and its partners will describe their progress in achieving development objectives and intermediate results, assess to what extent outcomes and impacts are attributable to USAID's interventions, discuss relevant evaluation findings, identify lessons learned, and propose changes reflecting monitoring and evaluation findings.
- Implement an ambitious program of learning, both within USAID and with key collaborators and partners, organized both by technical area and in relation to particular development objectives and projects
- Tailor outreach events to publicize progress, share lessons learned, and/or discuss problems with selected audiences
- Create and institutionalize a Mission culture conducive to learning, in which incentives are aligned with learning objectives, where appropriate training is available, and where people are rewarded for working together to analyze problems and seek solutions
- Encourage Mission staff and partners to marshal data, conduct empirical research and publish or otherwise disseminate findings



CLA in the PMP Task Schedule

Including CLA activities in the PMP task schedule helps ensure that resources are available for these activities and that staff is assigned to complete them. The CLA activities that a Mission may write into a task schedule include: regular review and updating of mission-wide and DO-team/technical team learning agendas; partner meetings; big picture reflections; stakeholder consultations; and collaboration mapping. One example of a PMP task schedule is included here, with arrows indicating the learning-related tasks.

Task	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
PMP Updates and Revisions					Annual							
Portfolio Reviews	Annual--required						Annual--learning focused					
Indicator Reference Sheets	Ongoing--developed as indicators are established for new programs/projects											
Mission Monitoring and Evaluation Plan - Updates and Revisions	Bi-Annual						Bi-Annual					
Learning Agenda-- Updates and Revisions	Bi-Annual						Bi-Annual					
Data Calls			Quarterly			Quarterly			Quarterly			Quarterly
Data Quality Assessments (DQA)		Every 3 years--staggered							Every 3 years--staggered			
Activity Performance Analysis (APA)	Ongoing--As needed--including stakeholder analysis, collaboration mapping, etc.											
Communication Plan/Agenda					Annual							
Operational Plan (OP)								Annual				
Performance Plan & Report (PPR)			Annual									



CLA Linkages

Where appropriate and applicable, other section of the PMP should include discussion of CLA and its linkages with performance management. Below are several examples showing how some missions have chosen to do this.

Linkages: Example #1

Monitoring and evaluation will make significant contributions to the Mission's efforts to continually assess and address knowledge gaps—however, these efforts must be reinforced with a learning approach to maximize their effectiveness.

1. **Reexamine Causal Logic:** As a result of the aforementioned required data analysis, project teams should schedule and plan for a reexamination of their causal logic as reflected in logframes. Ideally, these sessions should include representatives from each of the implementing partners.
2. **Respond to identified Context changes:** Implementation does not take place in a static universe—there are constantly context changes, new information, and new ideas. Analysis of context indicators (see section on indicator selection) often reveals the effect context changes have on Projects. The information gained from this analysis should be used as an opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to improve the Project. Identification of context changes and any necessary course corrections should occur during preparation for Portfolio Review.
3. **Internal Knowledge Sharing of Findings:** Internally within the Mission, staff must collaborate and share what we know and learn across sector-based teams. Overlaying data from one activity with another within the same project may reveal lessons applicable for both. Patterns observed in analyzing the performance of one Project's set of activities may have useful lessons that can be applied to a Project in an entirely different sector—for example, best practices for targeting women's engagement might be applicable beyond one Project and this information should be shared and applied across the Mission. These opportunities for cross-pollination of lessons-learned should be shared at the regular meetings of the M&E working group.
4. **External Knowledge Sharing of Findings:** Resources should not be thought of only in terms of Project dollars. Project planning involves both funded activities and efforts to influence the activities of other development actors. To maximize the value of collaboration, consider how to use USAID's influence strategically to achieve the desired results. Findings from data analysis should be shared both formally and informally with other development actors, donors, research institutions and local organizations, etc.

If the above activities result in necessary changes, please refer to the relevant M.O. for guidance on approval process for these adjustments.



Linkages: Example #2

At the mission PMP-level, the procedures outlined below will improve and enhance the quality and reliability of information collected during implementing process and intends to support USAID/Z and local partners in the process of decision making and learning.

Linkages: Example #3

Each activity manager should regularly review their portfolio to assess how, and how well, different targets are being achieved by the different IPs. Consultations with the IPs on revising targets can accompany feedback on annual reports to provide more guidance for the next year's work plans and M&E plans. Such target reviews can be conducted separately with individual IPs, jointly with all the IPs reporting to an activity manager, or in a wider setting covering all the IPs under a particular project, sub-IR, IR or even a DO.

Linkages: Example #4

To ensure that data analysis and learning occur, it is important to plan for it effectively. Per ADS 203.3.2.2, data analysis and learning should be planned, participatory, and transparent.



Another example of demonstrating the integrated nature of C, L, and A throughout the program cycle and its relation to M&E tasks is shown in the following graphic that one mission included in their PMP to describe the roles of their Program Office’s team responsible for the performance management efforts:

