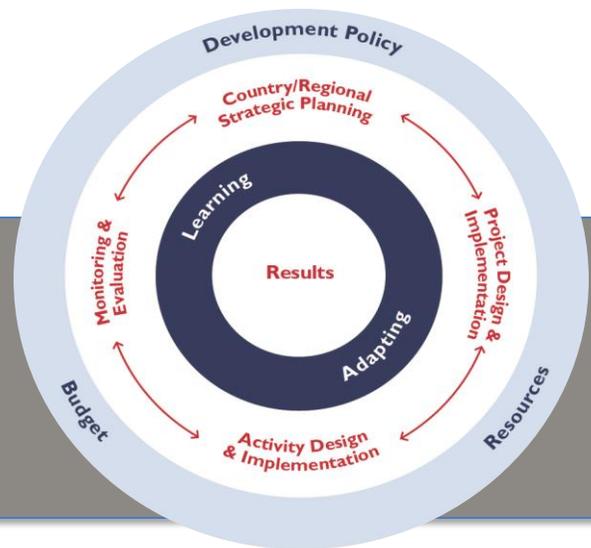


PROGRAM CYCLE

ADS 201: Revisions to Program Cycle

Quick Guide



The Program Cycle is USAID’s operational model for planning, implementing and assessing development programming in a given country or region. The Program Cycle framework links together the fundamental components of the Agency’s programming, and ensures that they are informed by continuous learning and adapting and aligned with budget and resources:

- Country/Regional Strategic Planning
- Project Design & Implementation
- Activity Design & Implementation
- Monitoring & Evaluation

REVISIONS TO PROGRAM CYCLE POLICY

The Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) first introduced the Program Cycle in 2011 to improve the Agency’s ability to make decisions based on evidence to achieve more effective and sustainable results. PPL issued a revised policy in September 2016 in response to lessons learned and advances in the discipline of development. These revisions mark a major milestone in PPL’s ongoing efforts to elevate USAID into the world’s premier development Agency.

The Program Cycle is codified in USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 201. ADS 201 replaces the former ADS 200-203, thereby consolidating policy on planning, achieving, assessing and learning into one streamline chapter. It also introduces a new section on activity design and implementation to address a gap in the previous policy. The new policy applies to all USAID Missions and clarifies those requirements that apply to Washington Operating Units (OUs).

KEY POLICY CHANGES

A MORE PRINCIPLES-BASED APPROACH

The new policy moves from a focus on mandatory requirements to a principles-based approach, in order to better link processes to outcomes. Principles include:

- Making decisions based on evidence and analysis.
- Managing adaptively based on continuous learning.
- Promoting sustainable results through local ownership.
- Using a range of approaches to solve complex development problems.



The Program Cycle, codified in the Automated Directive Systems (ADS) 201 chapter, is USAID’s operational model for development programming to achieve more effective and sustainable results. This is published by the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning.

SMARTER, MORE CUSTOMIZABLE PROCESSES

The policy gives Missions more flexibility to adapt to realities in the field by streamlining key processes, and clarifying which procedures are mandatory and which are good practice. The new policy:

- Allows Missions to tailor their Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) to meet their unique circumstances, including those of non-permissive environments.
- Replaces the project Concept Paper with a less onerous design plan, reduces the length of the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), and streamlines triggers for PAD amendments.
- Reduces the number of indicators required for CDCSs and projects, and shifts accountability to Intermediate Results to take a more realistic approach to accountability for results.
- Enables a more targeted and iterative approach to analysis for timely, relevant information.

MORE STRATEGIC USE OF EVIDENCE

The new policy enhances the use of knowledge from monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) to inform future plans and adaptations to ongoing implementation. The new policy:

- Simplifies the process for updating CDCSs and PADs to reflect changes in context and lessons learned.
- Requires learning plans for strategies, projects, and activities in order to ensure a more intentional approach to learning and adapting.
- Facilitates monitoring for learning and performance improvement as much as for accountability and reporting.
- Requires that Missions and Washington OUs develop a plan for disseminating and using evaluation findings.

IMPROVED COHERENCE

The new policy integrates related Agency priorities and facilitates more effective collaboration between Washington and the field. The new policy:

- Creates a structured and time-bound process for the development and approval of the CDCS to better reconcile country and Washington priorities and minimize delays.
- Requires that Washington OUs, as well as Regional Missions, obtain Mission concurrence before implementing activities in the field.
- Incorporates Agency priorities, such as Local Solutions and Global Climate Change, into the Program Cycle.

RESOURCES

The ADS is supplemented by capacity building resources, including training, technical assistance, tools, examples, and other materials.

- READ ADS 201 at www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201.
- VISIT ProgramNet at <http://programnet.usaid.gov/> for capacity building resources.
- EMAIL ProgramCycle@usaid.gov for additional questions.