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BUREAU FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND LEARNING
Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (PPL/LER)

USAID Evaluation Policy

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Issue 1, March 25, 2011

Introduction:

Note: This is the first issue of Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about USAID's Evaluation Policy – additional FAQs will be issued on an ongoing and rolling basis. The main audience for this document is USAID staff. For purposes of transparency and information sharing, this document may be shared publically.

These “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) are intended to provide guidance to OUs in implementing the evaluation policy. They are intentionally *not* focused on providing too many specified rules and standard procedures. OUs and evaluation teams are encouraged to thoughtfully consider their unique circumstances to determine how best to meet the requirements in the Evaluation Policy. PPL/LER will be issuing additional FAQs on a rolling basis as we receive more questions and update answers.

The overall spirit of the USAID Evaluation Policy is one that encourages thoughtfulness and learning, and therefore this first year of implementation is seen as an opportunity to see what works and what may not work for USAID Operating Units (OUs) in implementing the policy. PPL/LER will work in partnership with bureaus, independent offices, and USAID missions to develop operational guidance on specific policy topics, create opportunities for professional networking and learning related to evaluation, and to provide a central point for collecting ideas and approaches for how best to evaluate in different contexts. We welcome continuous feedback from USAID staff and partners as to best practices and challenges in the policy's implementation. Feedback and questions can be channeled in several ways:

- Anyone is welcome to send questions or comments to evaluation@usaid.gov or to Elizabeth Roen at eroen@usaid.gov.
- For USAID and State Department Staff only: Join USAID's Evaluation Interest Group (EIG). The group meets about once a month to share information and host expert speakers on evaluation topics. Contact Virginia Lamprecht at vlamprecht@usaid.gov to ask to join the EIG mailing list.
- Contact the Evaluation Point of Contact (POC) for the USAID OU, Regional or Technical Bureau. *These are still to be officially designated. PPL/LER will be sending a request to OUs to designate Evaluation POCs and will post a contact list once Evaluation POCs are named.*

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Evaluation Networks

1. Are there communities of practice at USAID that focus on evaluation?

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There are several groups that focus on evaluation at USAID; the following groups are facilitated by PPL/LER. Send an email to the LER staff point of contact for more information.

- **The Evaluation Interest Group (EIG)**

Purpose: To provide a broad forum to share evaluation experiences, best practices, and opportunities related to evaluation and learning.

LER Point(s) of Contact: [Virginia Lamprecht](#)

(with support from Jonathan Shepard and Elizabeth Roen)

Membership: The Evaluation Interest Group is the largest of evaluation groups and is open to any USAID or State Department staff. Currently there are approximately 350 members.

Structure/Timeframe: The EIG meets in-person about once a month and on an ongoing basis to share information and with alternating sessions used as Evaluation Forums to host outside speakers on topics of interest, including cutting-edge methods and challenges in evaluation practice.

- **The Evaluation Policy Learning Group (EPLG)**

Purpose: A subset of the EIG, the EPLG will work on issues directly related to implementing the evaluation policy, including, but not limited to, (1) developing draft implementation guidance; and (2) providing regular feedback on what's working and what's not in policy implementation.

LER Point(s) of Contact: [Elizabeth Roen](#)

Membership: Open to any USAID staff member with supervisor's endorsement; field-based staff are particularly encouraged to participate.

Structure/Timeframe: The EPLG will meet as a whole on a quarterly basis to review products created by its members in small, time-limited task groups. After one year, PPL/LER will assess whether there is an ongoing need for the policy group.

- **Evaluation Points of Contact (EPOCs)**

Purpose: The evaluation policy requires that each OU name an evaluation point of contact to facilitate compliance of the evaluation policy within an OU, and to be a channel for official communication from PPL on policy implementation.

LER Point(s) of Contact: [Jonathan Shepard](#)

Membership: Assigned by leadership of an OU. The individual typically will be a senior program officer in that unit's program office. An alternate also should be named. *A formal request for OUs to designate an evaluation POC will be sent to Bureau DAAs and Independent Office Directors by PPL/LER very soon.*

Structure/Timeframe: Ongoing group. Meetings and other communication will be as needed.

Evaluation Planning

1. For the purposes of evaluation, what is a project?

For the purposes of the evaluation policy, a project is “a set of planned and then executed interventions identified through a design process, which are together intended to achieve a defined development result, generally by solving an associated problem or challenge. The term project does not refer only or primarily to an implementing mechanism, such as a contract or grant” (USAID Evaluation Policy, pg. 4).

2. How does an OU determine which projects to evaluate?

The policy requires, at a minimum, evaluation of large projects (at or above average dollar value for the OU) and all pilot projects of any size.

OUs are also encouraged to identify opportunities for evaluations at the program or sector level, particularly valuable in a period preceding the development of a new strategy. See pp. 9 and 10 in the USAID evaluation policy for more information.

The policy does not require evaluations for each USAID project, rather it requires that strategic choices be made for what should and should not be evaluated based on management and learning priorities and with the understanding that a majority of resources under USAID management will be subject to evaluation. OUs can decide to evaluate projects – in addition to large and pilot projects - for learning or management purposes.

3. What is a pilot project?

A pilot project is any development program intervention or set of interventions that demonstrate new approaches and that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope if the approach is proven successful. These could also be innovative interventions that involve untested hypotheses, in other words, a novel approach with little to no empirical evidence regarding effectiveness in any setting. See pg. 10 of the USAID evaluation policy for more information.

4. What is a large project?

Per the policy, for evaluation purposes, a large project is one that equals or exceeds in dollar value the mean (average) project size for the OU; this is intended to ensure that the majority of resources under management will be subject to evaluation. (In cases where there are factors that make it difficult to calculate mean project size—for example, when many projects are co-funded with other USG partners—OUs should consult with PPL/LER.) (pg. 9 in the USAID evaluation policy)

5. How do you calculate an average project size?

We recommend the following approach; if this approach does not make sense for a particular case or OU, or if you have any questions, please contact PPL/LER at evaluation@usaid.gov.

All OUs should calculate the average project size at the Development Objective level (also known as a Strategic Objective or Assistance Objective). To do this, divide the total program expenditures of the most recent full fiscal year budget available (currently FY2010) by that year's number of projects for each DO. Use the definition for project provided above and on pg. 4 of the evaluation policy. This approach should ensure that major projects in each DO undergo evaluation, even when a DO is a relatively small share of an OU's budget.

This average dollar amount per project at the DO level is the starting point for identifying the "large" projects that will require evaluation. However, additional analysis may be needed.

For example, because this analysis by one fiscal year may not be representative of project-size when accounting for the Life of Project budget, another test would be to analyze the average Life of Project funding for all new and ongoing projects and determine if some projects would fall out or be included when using that calculation instead.

Finally, because a one-year snapshot may not be representative of previous or future fiscal year budget levels, OUs may want to calculate the average project size for each DO for up to the previous five fiscal years to see how it varies year to year and then use a 5 year dollar value average as the benchmark.

6. What methods are required for evaluations?

Methods, whether qualitative or quantitative, should generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked, taking into consideration time, budget, and other practical considerations. Both qualitative and quantitative methods yield valuable findings, and a combination is often optimal. No single method will be privileged over others. See "Performance Evaluation" and "Impact Evaluation" for more information.

7. What is an evaluation registry? What is an evaluation inventory?

The policy requires that units provide information on-line in a fully searchable form about the initiation of evaluations and expected timing of release of findings (USAID Evaluation Policy, pg. 11). The policy also requires that, on a yearly basis, operating units prepare an inventory of evaluations to be undertaken during the following fiscal year, in addition to those completed in the previous fiscal year. In general, the evaluations will be identified through the preparation of Performance Management Plans and the information will be included in the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR). The Performance Plan and Report guidance will indicate the specific information to be supplied (USAID Evaluation Policy, pp. 5 - 6).

To meet these requirements, PPL/LER, in conjunction with the Office of Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) and USAID's Management Bureau, is in the process of developing a centralized evaluation registry and inventory system. This system will serve as an interlocutor between FACTS Info (where OUs submit information about evaluations) and the Development Experience Clearinghouse.

When completing annual Performance Plans and Reports (PPRs), OUs will be expected to give a comprehensive account of all evaluations being planned for the coming fiscal year, and all evaluations that were completed in the previous fiscal year. Therefore, OUs will want to collect the following information throughout the year about ongoing, completed, and planned evaluations so that it is easily available for reporting in the PPR: (1) evaluation title, (2) project title, (3) budget for the project and the evaluation, (4) evaluation start and completion dates, (5) project start and end dates, and (6) intended use of evaluation.

More details will be provided in the next few months. Questions about the registry/inventory should be addressed to Jonathan Shepard at jshepard@usaid.gov.

8. What is an evaluation plan?

Since a registry and inventory only track what evaluations have been completed in the previous fiscal year or are planned one fiscal year in advance, Program Offices may find they need to create an evaluation plan with a longer time horizon (e.g., 5 years) to facilitate tracking and managing of evaluations across an OU, although this is not a requirement of the policy. A plan identifies projects that will be evaluated over a period of years, the approximate budget for those evaluations, and a timeline for completing each step required to design, award and conduct the evaluation so that findings can be generated in a timely manner to feed into decisions. An illustrative example follows. OUs should customize plans for their own needs.

Project	Project start/end date	Evaluation Type and projected use	Eval. Budget	Design and SOW start date	Final SOW/ Solicitation by:	Award by:	Conduct Evaluation	Report by:
Increased use of modern family planning methods	January 2011/ December 2013 with two option years	Performance; to decide whether to exercise option years or re-compete	275,000	June 2012	October 2012	February 2013	April – May 2013	June 2013

9. Is baseline data collection required for all projects that will be evaluated?

Per the policy (pg. 8), when a project that will be subject to evaluation is initiated, baseline data, including variables that correspond to key outcomes and impacts, will be collected using high-quality methods and analyzed to establish a reference point. In addition, significant attention is required to ensure that baseline data are collected early in the project lifespan, before any significant implementation has occurred.

Baseline and end line data collection is particularly important for conducting impact evaluations, but it is also important for performance evaluations.

If an evaluation is being considered for a relatively new or ongoing project that does not have baseline data, there may be ways to reconstruct a baseline. Contact an evaluation specialist in your regional or technical bureau, or in PPL/LER at evaluation@usaid.gov if you have a question related to reconstructing baseline data for a specific project.

Evaluation Reports

1. What is required in an evaluation report?

Per the appendix to the Evaluation Policy, Evaluation Reports must meet the following criteria:

- The evaluation report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not and why.
- Evaluation reports shall address all evaluation questions included in the scope of work.
- The evaluation report should include the scope of work as an annex. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the technical officer.
- Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides will be included in an Annex in the final report.
- Evaluation findings will assess outcomes and impact on males and females.
- Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay or the compilation of people's opinions. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- Recommendations need to be supported by a specific set of findings.
- Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.

Evaluation Roles and Responsibilities

1. USAID Roles and Responsibilities

	OUs (Missions, other units that fund programs)	Technical and Regional Bureaus	PPL/LER
Staff	Identify an evaluation point of contact		Develop/update capabilities statements for evaluation specialists and senior evaluation specialists
Agency Evaluation Agenda	Participate in Agency-wide process of developing an evaluation agenda		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead preparation of an Agency-wide evaluation agenda • Prepare annual report for the Administrator highlighting recent key evaluation practices and findings
Training & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in training of key staff • Actively encourage staff to participate in an evaluation community of practice 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training curricula and evaluation tools • Identify opportunities for external training on specialized topics • Organize and lead the Evaluation Interest Group
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a budget estimate for evaluations • Allocate program funds for external evaluations (set aside from program funds managed by implementing partners). Goal: three percent of OU's total program budget. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage central evaluation funds if available
Evaluation Scopes of Work and Evaluation Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through in-house peer review, ensure SOWs for external evaluations adhere to standards in the Evaluation Policy • Conduct in-house peer technical reviews to assess quality of evaluation draft reports and provide comments to evaluation team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For SOWs originating from Missions, organize, on Mission Program Office request, reviews of evaluation scopes of work and draft evaluation reports • For SOWs and reports originating from HQ OUs, Bureau Program Offices organize in-house peer review of drafts for quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review SOWs for task orders under the Evaluation IQC to ensure they meet IQC scope. SOWs for the Evaluation IQC should come to PPL/LER only after OU peer review is complete and adjustments are made if necessary to ensure SOW meets policy quality standards. • Time and staff availability permitting, review SOWs for evaluations of priority programs. This could include systematic involvement in advising on evaluation design for Presidential Initiatives and evaluations in high priority country programs as well as ad hoc requests.
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance, tools, and contractual mechanisms to access evaluation technical support 		

support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a Mission Order on evaluation describing context-specific approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct technical support by bureau staff with sectoral or regional expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond on a priority basis with technical input for evaluation design and implementation
Reporting & Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include evaluation reporting and plans in the PPR annex on evaluation • Warehouse evaluation data • Submit evaluation final reports within 3 months of completion to the DEC • Make available all relevant info. for technical audits of evaluation practices • Integrate evaluation findings into decision making about strategies, program priorities, and project design 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clearance on exceptions to policy requirements except in cases where policy or other guidance states that OU management can make the exception as long as decision is documented • Undertake or commission technical audits of OU policy compliance • Undertake or require occasional performance and/or impact evaluations, thematic or meta-evaluations, and post-implementation evaluations
External communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with local stakeholders on evaluation design • Create evaluation dissemination plans • Disseminate evaluation findings widely through press, stakeholder meetings, other means • Submit evaluation reports to the Development Evaluation Clearinghouse 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as main POC on evaluation w/ DOS interagency partners, OMB, OECD/DAC Evaluation Network, and the Int'l Initiative for Impact Evaluation • Participate w/ F in the conduct of whole of gov't evaluations

Evaluation Requirements

1. Does the evaluation policy apply to all OUs?

The policy applies to all USAID OUs that implement program funded development projects.

2. Does the policy apply to all USAID managed resources?

At the most general level, the policy applies to all development program resources under USAID management and expects that the majority of these resources will be subject to evaluation following the standards laid out in the policy. In some cases a customized approach to evaluation will need to be worked out due to the role and authorities of other U.S. agencies in managing specific accounts. For example, PPL/LER is working with relevant counterparts at USAID and the Department of State to define how the policy applies to PEPFAR-funded programs managed by USAID. More guidance will be provided as it becomes available.

3. What types of projects must be evaluated? Do all projects need to be evaluated?

The policy establishes a minimum requirement. Evaluations are required for:

- **Large projects:** A set of interventions which are together intended to achieve a defined development result and that equals or exceeds in dollar value the average project size for an OU.
- **Pilot or Innovative Development Interventions:** Any activity demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope.

In addition to meeting this minimum, OUs can evaluate other projects beyond what the policy requires. Note that the policy does not require evaluations for each USAID project, rather it encourages that strategic choices be made for what should and should not be evaluated based on management and learning priorities and with the understanding that a majority of resources under USAID management will be subject to evaluation.

4. What evaluation actions are required of OUs

- Set aside program funding for external evaluation – approximately three percent of an OU’s total program budget on average.
- Determine during the project design phase whether a project will be evaluated because it meets that unit’s benchmark for at or above average dollar size, it is a pilot project of any size, or it is a project or program that the OU decides to evaluate even if it is not required.
- Determine evaluation questions during project design for all new projects, and refine when drafting evaluation Statements of Work (SOW).
- Decide on evaluation type (impact, performance or both).
- Determine the best methods for answering the evaluation questions.
- Determine data requirements and plan for baseline data collection.
- If an impact evaluation, define a control group using experimental (randomization) or quasi-experimental methods.
- If an impact evaluation, design and compete a parallel contract to the project contract; If performance evaluation, decide best time for conducting the evaluation, synched with future decisions, and plan for that procurement in advance.
- Designate an evaluation point of contact who will ensure policy compliance at the OU (*PPL/LER will be sending a request to regional and technical bureaus requesting evaluation POC designation*).
- Establish an in-house review process for draft evaluation statements of work and draft evaluation reports, led by the program office, and to include USAID regional or technical bureaus, implementing partner, host country, and/or other donor review as appropriate.
- Program offices to manage evaluation contracts unless OU makes (and documents) an exception based on unusual circumstances.
- Evaluation teams must have a team lead who is external to USAID and the implementing partner whose project is being evaluated.
- Submit final evaluation reports to USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse within three months of concluding an evaluation.
- Share evaluation findings widely with stakeholders, partners and the public.

- Build and leverage local evaluation expertise and host country systems during data collection, evaluation design, on evaluation teams, during evaluations, and in interpreting and disseminating evaluation findings.

5. At what point in the project cycle is an evaluation required?

Evaluations should be timed so that their findings can inform decisions such as exercising option years, designing a follow on program, creating a country or sector strategic plan, or making a policy decision. This means starting the process to solicit an evaluation at least 12 – 18 months in advance of a decision point to allow for sufficient time: (1) to draft a SOW that is shared with partners for input and vetted in-house prior to finalizing, (2) to issue the solicitation and give partners several weeks to prepare and respond, (3) to review proposals and select a finalist, (4) to award the contract, and (5) for the evaluation team to conduct the evaluation using high-quality methods to generate evidence and draft a subsequent report with recommendations based on findings.

6. Does the policy apply to ongoing projects?

The policy applies to ongoing large or pilot projects in which there is sufficient flexibility, as determined by OU leadership, to adjust contracts or agreements with minimal disruption to meet policy requirements, especially the requirement for an external evaluation that is not conducted or subcontracted by the implementing partner. PPL/LER will work on additional guidance and examples to help guide OUs.

7. What is the relationship of the Evaluation policy to other guidance and policies, especially ADS 203?

ADS 203 remains in force, but the Evaluation Policy takes precedence wherever there is a difference in guidance with ADS 203. The ADS 200 series will be updated in the coming months.

The policy works in concert with existing and pending Agency policies, strategies and operational guidance, including those regarding project design, Country Development Cooperation Strategies, performance monitoring, knowledge management and research management. If OUs identify guidance that seems to be in conflict, please bring this to the attention of PPL/LER (evaluation@usaid.gov) and we will work together with our PPL and other colleagues to provide clarification.

8. Will the Annual Performance Plan and Report continue to have an annex on evaluations? Will the guidance provided by F be updated to reflect the policy?

Yes, the PPR will continue to ask for information on evaluations conducted in the previous fiscal year. Guidance will be updated to reflect the Evaluation policy.

Evaluation Statements of Work (SOWs)

1. What is required for an Evaluation SOW?

One of the most critical factors in the SOW is to ensure that the relationship between the number of evaluation questions, the estimated level of effort to implement the appropriate evaluation methodology and the budget for the evaluation is clear, balanced and realistic.

Elements of a good SOW include:

- Description of the activity, program, or process to be evaluated
- Brief background on the development hypothesis and its implementation
- The purpose and use of the evaluation
- A limited set of relevant evaluation questions
- Identification and specification of the evaluation method(s)
- Identification of existing data and performance information sources
- Description of the deliverables(s), schedule or timeline, and logistics
- Details on the skills required for the evaluation team
- Requirements for reporting and dissemination of the findings.

A document on [Preparing an Evaluation Statement of Work](#) is available on the USAID website along with other [evaluation resources](#).

PPL/LER has also developed a checklist for what to include in an Evaluation SOW to guide drafting and peer review of SOWs during the evaluation planning stage. This will be available on the USAID website at http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/evaluation_resources.html.

2. Who should write the SOW?

This is up to the OU. For example, the initial draft can be written by USAID staff closest to the program, such as the COTR or AOTR.

3. How should OUs organize in-house peer reviews of SOWs?

In-house peer reviews are required within an OU for evaluations managed by that OU, and missions can also request input from Regional and Technical Bureaus. The purpose of in-house peer reviews is to ensure that SOWs are of good quality and in compliance with the policy, which in turn should improve the quality of evaluations. They should be organized by the OU Program Office and done in a timely manner so that procurement of evaluations is not delayed. OUs can scale the review process depending on the scope and priority of the evaluation or project being evaluated – for example, conducting virtual reviews via email for some evaluation SOWs and more in-depth and in-person reviews for others. LER will provide a checklist for SOWs to guide reviews – this resource and others will be available at: http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/evaluation_resources.html.

4. Are OUs required to share draft SOWs with local stakeholders, implementing partners, and/or other donors?

To ensure that evaluations address the most relevant questions, OUs should share draft SOWs (in which the evaluation questions are initially defined) with local partners for their feedback. This early input is essential to maximize the use of the eventual evaluation findings, and to help identify local expertise for the conduct of the evaluation, if that is desired. OUs are also encouraged but not required to share *draft* reports with partners; the decision to do so depends on the nature of the relationship between the OU and the partner(s), and the OU's judgment about the receptivity of partners to the findings. Once reports are final, they must be shared with all partners and the public, barring *rare* exceptions related to protecting U.S. national interests.

Evaluation Tools

1. Will PPL/LER provide tools such as samples for evaluation statements of work and reports?

PPL/LER is compiling a set of checklists (for evaluation statements of work, reviewing reports of evaluation, etc.), tips, templates, and examples that will be useful to USAID staff. These will include sample Mission orders, evaluation SOWs, and evaluation reports. Some materials are already available, while other resources are still being developed and published online.

A link to all resources is available at:

http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/evaluation_resources.html

2. What IQCs are available for evaluations?

Several bureaus hold IQCs that could be appropriate for evaluation, including the Bureaus for Management, Food Security, Global Health, DCHA, and EGAT. The information below focuses on those available through PPL/LER.

PPL/LER manages an Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) for evaluation services that provides access to a variety of organizations and evaluation expertise. The purpose is to provide technical and advisory services for evaluation activities worldwide, at the mission (OU), bureau, and Agency-wide levels. This includes designing and implementing both quantitative and qualitative evaluation studies and assessments, developing evaluation training and guidance, and providing evaluation technical assistance for USAID development programs. The ordering period for these contracts is through September 29, 2014 with a total current shared ceiling of \$125,000,000.

Services under the IQC can include strategic analysis that is clearly connected to evaluation planning, evaluation case studies, impact evaluations, meta-evaluations, cross-sector and multi-country evaluations and other evaluative studies in a range of development fields. The IQC also provides skills in evaluation research design (including quantitative impact evaluation methods,

experimental and quasi experimental design, and qualitative methods); data collection, analysis, and synthesis; report writing, and planning for use and dissemination of evaluation findings. While work may focus on specific sectors and development fields, it may also cut across sector and technical areas.

To access these contracts OUs must prepare a statement of work (SOW) for a task order that describes the purpose, background, objectives, desired activities, deliverables and/or performance measures, as well as an estimated budget and time frame. The SOW must be approved by PPL/LER's Contracting Officer's Technical Officer Representative (COTR), currently Gerald Britan, to ensure that the proposed activities are consistent with the IQC SOW and that the estimated budget is within the available contract ceiling. The task order is then competed locally by the Contracting Officer for the relevant mission or office. Fair opportunity consideration is required in selecting which of the five IQC firms will undertake the proposed activity.

Evaluation Training

1. What classroom training is available at USAID in evaluation?

PPL/LER is offering two courses in evaluation: a one-week course titled *Evaluation for Program Managers* (EPM) and a two-week course titled *Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists* (EES). The EPM course covers basic evaluations designs and data collection methods, while the EES course, designed for those who will have significant evaluation responsibilities, goes into much more depth about data collection tools and methods.

2. Is there online training in evaluation available at USAID?

In addition to the classroom courses, we anticipate developing or making available on-line courses in evaluation. A few short courses are available now to USAID staff on [USAID University](#), including 1) Performance Monitoring and Evaluation and 2) Rapid Data Collection Methods.

3. Can you recommend other non-USAID training resources?

Here is an initial list of external training resources on evaluation to explore. PPL/LER will be adding to this list as we learn of other opportunities.

Online

Johns Hopkins School of Public Health OPEN COURSEWARE:

- [Fundamentals of Program Evaluation](#)
- [Concepts in Economic Evaluation](#)
- [Introduction to Methods for Health Services Research and Evaluation](#)

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)

- Online course on randomized evaluation: [Evaluating Social Programs: Executive Education at J-PAL](#)

Classroom Courses

- [World Bank Evaluation Training and Advisory Services](#) offered in multiple locations around the world.
- [The Evaluators Institute at George Washington University](#) in Washington, DC.
- [International Program for Development Evaluation Training](#) in Ottawa, Canada.

Financial Resources for Evaluation

1. Will there be additional budget resources available for evaluation?

Depending on budget appropriations, limited central funds may be available for certain types of evaluations of priority programs.

USAID already expends significant resources on project evaluation. This policy aims to ensure that these funds are spent in a way that results in higher quality evaluations that produce credible, relevant findings.

2. Should three (3) percent of program funds be allocated to evaluation?

OUs should aim to allocate approximately three percent, on average, of their total program funds to support evaluations. This is a goal that USAID will reach over time, and represents a significant level of program resources. This does not require that every project be evaluated, or that three percent of every project's budget should go towards evaluation, but that an OU's total program expenditure for evaluations in a given fiscal year should equal about three percent of that OU's entire program budget for that fiscal year.

Impact Evaluations

1. What is an impact evaluation?

Impact evaluations measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention; impact evaluations are based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change. Impact evaluations in which comparisons are made between beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group to provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured. USAID Evaluation Policy, pg. 4

Impact evaluations use experimental or quasi-experimental design methods to establish treatment and control groups for comparison from the beginning of program implementation. Experimental design will generate treatment and control groups by randomly allocating intervention among eligible participants. Quasi-experimental designs will generate a control group that resembles the treatment group, at least in observed characteristics, through a statistically significant matching method.

Not every development project lends itself to an impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs due to a variety of reasons. PPL/LER will develop guidance based on existing resources on what factors to consider when determining whether to do an impact evaluation and how to write a statement of work for impact evaluations.

Useful resources on impact evaluation are available online, including:

- [World Bank](#)
 - [Impact Evaluation in Practice](#), Authors: Authors: Gertler, Paul J.; Martinez, Sebastian; Premand, Patrick; Rawlings, Laura B.; Vermeersch, Christel M. J. December 2010
- [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation \(3ie\)](#)
 - [3ie Impact evaluation Glossary](#)
 - [3ie PowerPoint "What is impact evaluation, when and how should we use it, and how to go about it?"](#)
 - [3ie PowerPoint "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental designs"](#)
- [Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab \(J-PAL\)](#)
 - [Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit](#), E. Duflo, M. Kremer and R. Glennerster
 - [Randomized Evaluations of Educational Programs in Developing Countries: Some Lessons](#), M. Kremer

2. What are parallel contracts?

A parallel contractual or grant agreement is established to hire an external evaluation team at the inception of a project that will undergo impact evaluation. That contractual or grant agreement will include sufficient resources for baseline and end line data collection and also to advise on using experimental methods for project implementation so that an impact evaluation can be undertaken.

3. What methods are appropriate for impact evaluations?

Impact Evaluations require experimental methods that generate the strongest evidence, usually random assignment strategies. Alternative, quasi-experimental, methods should be used when random assignment is infeasible.

4. Are impact evaluations possible if they are not considered early in project implementation?

All new projects should consider evaluation needs, including for impact evaluations when appropriate, during the project design stage. For ongoing projects, when randomization to establish a treatment and comparison group prior to implementing the intervention may no longer be an option, it is possible to use quasi-experimental statistical methods to construct treatment and comparison groups, including methods such as regression discontinuity, difference in differences, using panel data, and analyzing instrumental variables.

For ongoing projects, OUs may want to consider whether a performance evaluation using mixed and robust qualitative and quantitative methods could be more appropriate than an impact evaluation.

Independence/Reducing Bias

1. Can implementing partners evaluate their own projects?

External Evaluations: Performance and Impact Evaluations undertaken to meet the requirements of the Evaluation Policy will be external (i.e., a third-party contractor or grantee managed directly by USAID) and therefore implementing partners should not conduct the external evaluation of the projects that they manage. Typically, program funds for external evaluations should be set aside and used by the OU to contract with an external evaluation team.

Implementing Partner Internal or Self-Evaluations: Separate and apart from the external evaluations that meet the policy requirements, USAID technical officers are encouraged to include funding dedicated within a project budget in a Request for Proposals (RFP) or in the final grant/contract agreement so that implementing partners may engage in evaluative work for institutional learning and management decision-making. Many implementers have significant monitoring and evaluation expertise in-house and the value of evaluation within the implementation and management of a project is well recognized. In those cases where USAID funds support an evaluation conducted or commissioned by an Implementing Partner, the findings from that internal evaluation must be shared in written form with the responsible technical officer within three months of the evaluation's conclusion.

2. What is an external evaluation?

An external evaluation is one that is commissioned by USAID, rather than by the implementing partner, and in which the team leader is an independent expert from outside of the Agency, who has no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. All evaluations commissioned to meet the Evaluation Policy requirements should be conducted by an external evaluation team

3. Who can participate in evaluation teams?

The team leader should always be an independent expert from outside of USAID and with no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner. The outside expert may come from another U.S. Government Agency not involved in project implementation, or be engaged through a contractual mechanism.

To the extent possible, evaluation specialists with appropriate expertise from partner countries, but not involved in project implementation, will lead and/or be included in evaluation teams.

The evaluation team members can also be external to both USAID and the implementing partner. However, in cases where OU management determines that appropriate expertise exists within the Agency, and that engaging USAID staff in an evaluation will facilitate institutional

learning, the evaluation team may be predominantly composed of USAID staff – other than the team leader who must always be external. In these cases, in addition to potentially using staff from that OU, USAID OUs are encouraged to invite staff from other countries to participate, especially Foreign Service Nationals who have significant technical expertise, and new Foreign Service Officers who have joined under the Development Leadership Initiative. PPL/LER will keep a roster of USAID staff who have completed the Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists course and who are looking for practicum opportunities to share with OUs looking for potential evaluation team members.

4. Do all evaluations have to be managed by the Program Office?

Most, if not all, evaluations should be managed by the program office of an OU or bureau. Exceptions can be made in unusual circumstances as decided by the leadership of the OU. These exceptions should be documented with the rationale for the exception included in the evaluation statement of work.

Monitoring

1. Why isn't this policy a "Monitoring and Evaluation" policy?

In recent years, evaluation practice at USAID has suffered from a lack of clear expectations for when, how, and why to evaluate. Built on our agency's rich tradition of evaluation, this policy sets out an ambitious recommitment to learn as we "do," updating our standards and practices to address contemporary needs. In an increasingly complex operating environment, the discipline of development demands a strong practice and use of evaluation as a crucial tool to inform our global development efforts, and to enable us to make hard choices based on the best available evidence.

Monitoring and evaluation are connected but distinct disciplines. OUs should continue to follow Agency standards and best practice for monitoring per current ADS guidance (203.3, 201.3.8.6, and 202.3.6) and to link monitoring and evaluation efforts through their Performance Management Plans.

2. What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

This policy works in concert with existing and pending Agency policies, strategies and operational guidance, including those regarding project design, evaluation-related competencies of staff, performance management and monitoring, knowledge management, and research management.

Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to good program performance management - the systematic process of monitoring the achievements of program activities; collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; using performance information and evaluations to influence decision-making and resource allocation; and

communicating results to advance organizational learning and communicate results to stakeholders.

Additional information and resources on performance monitoring can be found at: http://inside.usaid.gov/M/MPBP/performance/prog_resources.html. Specific questions that are not answered in the ADS can be addressed to pmanagement@usaid.gov.

Performance Evaluations

1. What is a performance evaluation?

Performance evaluations focus on descriptive and normative questions: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual (USAID Evaluation Policy, pg. 4). The majority of evaluations at USAID are, and will continue to be, performance evaluations.

2. What methods are appropriate for performance evaluations?

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is optimal. The goal is to use robust qualitative and quantitative methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked, taking into consideration time, budget, and other practical considerations.

Transparency

1. How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?

When sharing reports, the *minimum* requirement is to have the evaluation team or USAID staff submit them to the [USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) (DEC), managed by the CIO's Knowledge Management team, for posting on their public website.

OUs should also consider other methods of dissemination, such as holding press conferences and issuing press releases, hosting briefings with local stakeholders, partners and other donors to discuss evaluation findings, and featuring evaluation findings on that OU's website.

To submit evaluation reports the USAID's DEC:

Submit electronic files online: <http://dec.usaid.gov/index.cfm?p=docSubmit.home>

By email: docsubmit@usaid.gov

By mail (for paper, CD-ROMs, or other materials in hard-copy):

USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse
M/CIO/KM
RRB M.01
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington DC 20523

Phone inquiries: (202) 712-0579

2. Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?

The presumption is for open and public dissemination of evaluation reports and evaluation findings. Exceptions will be rare and will need to meet certain criteria related to protecting U.S. national interests or due to not having the full rights to share proprietary materials. In the rare case that a report is considered sensitive but unclassified (SBU), the DEC has the capability of storing SBU materials as well, making documents accessible only to U.S. government staff.

PPL/LER will develop criteria for rare exceptions. In the meantime, send an email to evaluation@usaid.gov if you have a question about exempting a specific evaluation report.

Using Evaluation Findings

1. How should evaluation findings be used for decision-making?

High-quality evaluation findings should inform USAID decisions. For example, the Program Office of an OU should ensure that evaluations are timed so that evaluation findings are available when decisions need to be made, and that findings are integrated into decision-making about strategies, program priorities, resource allocations and project design for that OU. At headquarters, USAID decision-makers should be using high-quality evaluation findings to inform strategic, program, policy, and budget planning for the Agency.