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ADS Assessment Process

An Additional Help for ADS Chapter 501

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ADS Assessment Framework

To provide the evidence base for decisions related to continuous improvement or the policy's necessity, M/MPBP applies evaluation principles and methods to examine the content, implementation, and/or impact of an operational policy. As defined in OMB Circular A-11, evidence is the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid. Evidence can be quantitative or qualitative and may come from a variety of sources, including performance measurement, evaluations, statistical series, retrospective reviews, data analytics, and other research.

In the case of operational policy assessment, the evidence can consist of data generated from relevant USAID systems, such as procurement data for an acquisition and assistance policy, or data from an After Action Report or management assessment, as a basis for justification for the policy change. The evidence basis should be used to inform the policy, in conjunction with relevant external directives and Agency priorities.

There are three types of ADS assessments: content, implementation, and impact. The M/MPBP Policy Analyst and ADS Point of Contact (POC) must work together to apply evaluation principles and methods to examine the content, implementation, and/or impact of an operational policy that is new or undergoing significant revision.

A. ADS Content Assessment

The ADS content assessment provides the evidence base for decisions related to continuous improvement or the policy's necessity, including new rules and regulations that may affect ADS policies. Prior to or during policy design or revision, the M/MPBP Policy Analyst works with the ADS POC to ensure the policy goal is clearly articulated and that the underlying logic for why it will produce the intended change is clear. Content assessment supports policy cohesion, and the M/MPBP Policy Analyst liaises, as appropriate, with other B/IOs to ensure policy changes are consistently represented throughout the ADS.

ADS POCs and the M/MPBP Policy Analyst should jointly ask the following key content assessment questions in development of the new or significantly revised policy:

- Does the policy warrant being a stand-alone chapter? Is the content already included in other chapters of the ADS? Will the chapter impact or contradict existing policy in the ADS?
- Does the ADS Chapter clearly state the purpose, goals, or objectives of the policy?
- Describe the evidence-based components of the policy.

- Does the ADS Chapter describe how the desired change is expected to happen (*i.e.*, are the requirements for implementation comprehensive and clearly stated)?
- Who are the major stakeholders of the policy and are they clearly identified in the roles and responsibilities section?
- What is the mechanism to monitor implementation of the policy?
- Does the policy provide indicators to assess policy implementation?
- If a new policy will result in significant changes to current business practice, does the B/IO have a strategy in-place to socialize and communicate the new policy?
- What are the resource implications (*i.e.*, budget, staff, organizational changes)?
- Is the chapter in plain English and has it been streamlined?
- Are there outstanding audit recommendations that should be integrated in the policy?

B. Implementation Assessments

Implementation assessments on select ADS chapters may occur approximately six months after policy issuance. The assessments evaluate if the policy was implemented as intended and help to understand implementation barriers and facilitators. They can also compare how different units execute policy, help to improve the implementation process, and inform future policy development. Sample questions for an implementation assessment include:

- Did the policy clearly identify the critical implementation steps?
- Was the policy implemented according to the policy requirements?
- What inputs and resources were required to implement the policy? Were all of these inputs and resources available?
- What key activities were completed during policy implementation?
- Did the activities result in the anticipated outputs?
- Was the policy implemented consistently across Operating Units?
- Were there any unintended consequences?

- What external factors influenced the implementation?
- What is the general level of staff awareness?
- How have staff attitudes or behaviors related to the issues addressed by the policy changed?
- When applicable, are targets and benchmarks for relevant indicators being met?
- Have trainings, tools, and resources been developed to assist the implementation?
- How have OU-specific processes changed as a result of the policy?
- Which factors have been the strongest enablers of policy implementation?
- Which factors have posed the biggest challenges?

Design for implementation assessments can take the form of case studies or After Action Reviews (AARs). Recent AARs include the [Senior Obligation Alignment Review \(SOAR\)](#) and [Enterprise Risk Management](#). The goal is to assess the implementation process and not “proving” the policy is good/bad or right/wrong.

C. Impact Assessments

Impact assessments on select ADS chapters may be conducted one-year after policy implementation. They assess if the policy achieved intended outcomes and impact as well as short- and long-term outcomes. Impact assessments determine whether changes in outcomes can be attributed to the policy and may identify the relative cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness of a policy. Sample questions for an implementation assessment include:

- Was there a change in the outcomes and impacts of interest?
- Did the policy contribute to a change in the outcomes and impacts of interest?
- Were there any unintended consequences of the policy?
- Did contextual factors influence the level of impact?
- What was the economic impact of the policy (cost-effectiveness or cost benefit)?

Impact assessments can include experimental or non-experimental design, mixed methods, cross-sectional design or case studies. Findings can identify barriers and facilitators to implementation, training and technical assistance needs, communications needs, internal support for policy implementation, and insight into future evaluations.

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