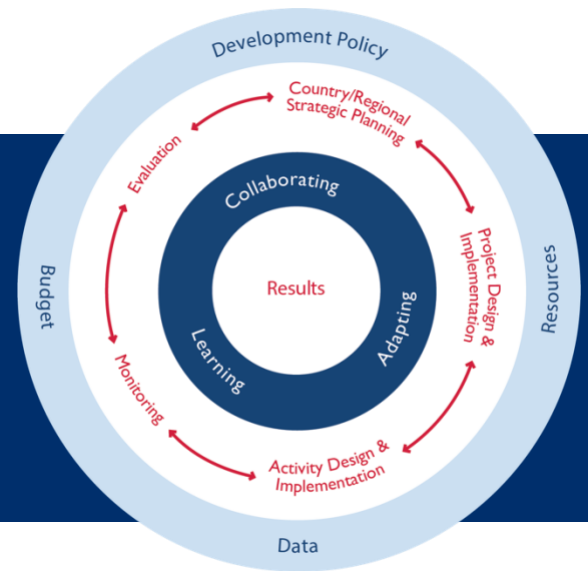


PROGRAM CYCLE

How-To Note: Prepare & Maintain a Performance Management Plan



This resource provides tips for conducting a project design process that results in a Performance Management Plan.

How-To Notes provide guidelines and practical advice to USAID staff and partners related to the Program Cycle. This note was produced by the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL).

Introduction

This How-To Note supplements [ADS 201.3.2.15](#). It provides an overview of the Performance Management Plan (PMP) and outlines practical steps for developing and maintaining a PMP. The primary audience includes Program Officers, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialists, Learning Advisors, technical officers, and Project Managers.

Background

A PMP is a Mission-wide tool for planning and managing the process of (1) monitoring strategic progress, program performance, programmatic assumptions, and operational context; (2) evaluating performance and impact; and (3) learning and adapting from evidence. Missions use the PMP to inform the allocation of resources to support monitoring, evaluation, and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) efforts, portfolio review processes, and Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) mid-course stocktaking.

Each Mission must prepare an initial Mission-wide PMP within three months of strategy approval. The Mission Director must approve the initial PMP, and then sections of it must be uploaded to ProgramNet, selecting "Performance Management Plan (PMP)" as the USAID Content Type, and selecting the Mission in the Regions & Countries box. Missions that do not have a CDCS, RDCS, or other strategic framework (henceforth strategy) are still required to have a PMP covering all projects or activities they fund.

It is not expected that the initial PMP will be comprehensive upon approval. A Mission should continually update the PMP components over the life of a strategy, including updating learning priorities or questions, adding newly planned evaluations, integrating new or adapted monitoring approaches and/or indicators, and any other new learning efforts.

While a Mission should update the PMP any time it is needed, it must be reviewed and updated at a minimum at least once each year following the annual strategic portfolio review.

Format and Content of the PMP

There is no standard format for a PMP. Missions should use a format that best fits their management and communication needs. A PMP is not required to be a single document, and its content may exist in different tracking systems or databases. There are, however, minimum content requirements for a PMP as described in [ADS 201.3.2.15](#). Missions may include additional content in the PMP to suit their performance management needs.

Templates for required elements are available in the [Monitoring Toolkit](#) or are in development. PMPs should provide clear and concise information that can easily be reviewed and updated to reflect actual mission priorities and plans

TABLE OF CONTENTS AND MODIFICATION LOG

The Table of Contents and Modification Log describes each part of the PMP and links to any information in different files or systems. It also provides a log of modifications over time. This document connects all of the content together for ease of access. It helps a mission track the living nature of the PMP, with changes and updates logged in real time.

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING PRIORITIES AND PLAN TO ADDRESS THEM WITH MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND CLA

Section Overview

Missions must identify learning priorities and describe how they plan to address them, including through monitoring, evaluation, CLA efforts, and/or other studies, research, or analyses. Rather than planning these efforts in isolation, the Mission should consider how monitoring, evaluation, CLA, and other learning efforts reinforce each other and together contribute to addressing the learning priorities and help build an evidence base for decision-making. The Mission may also include information for how they intend to use monitoring, evaluation, and CLA activities and approaches to build the capacity and commitment of local partners. This section should be concise and easy to review and update and can be presented in a variety of ways (e.g., as a narrative, a presentation, or a chart or other type of visualization). It can be organized by learning priority, by development objective, by type of effort (e.g., monitoring, evaluation, and CLA), or any other way that is relevant and useful for the Mission.

PMPs and Activity MEL Plans

A **Performance Management Plan (PMP)** is developed by a Mission following CDCS approval to monitor, evaluate, and learn from the strategy.

An **Activity MEL Plan** is typically developed by an implementing partner following an award. It is approved by the AOR/COR and describes plans to monitor, evaluate, and learn from a USAID activity.

Each plan serves a distinct management purpose, but they are related and should be congruent, with some information appearing in more than one plan. For instance, a performance indicator may have relevance for, and appear in the PMP and one or more Activity MEL Plans.

Learning Priorities

The PMP should identify the Mission's initial set of learning priorities for CDCS implementation as of initial PMP approval and update learning priorities as needed as things change over time. Learning priorities are a short list of themes or topics critical to the Mission's strategic, programmatic, and operational decisions and implementation of its strategy. These may include validating its strategy's development hypotheses and

results framework, filling in evidence and knowledge gaps, and considering implications for achieving and understanding progress toward results. Learning priorities may be developed from scratch, drawn from CDCS learning questions, and/or consider questions (while not duplicating efforts) from relevant [Agency-wide or Sector-based Learning Agendas](#).

While there is no one right way to approach developing learning priorities, the process of identifying learning priorities will generally follow four broad steps: (1) gathering and reviewing inputs such as CDCS learning questions, assessments, completed evaluations, and/or through facilitated participatory processes with staff and stakeholders; (2) identifying learning themes across inputs and persistent knowledge gaps; (3) narrowing to the most critical 3-4 learning priorities for a given time period and resource envelope; and (4) sharing learning priorities with staff and partners and integrating them into Mission Program Cycle processes. As with the rest of the PMP, the learning priorities should be updated and revised over the life of the CDCS. Missions should review the learning priorities and update them as needed following the annual strategic portfolio review or the mid-course stocktaking. Missions can also update the learning priorities at any time as new learning needs emerge or evidence gaps are identified.

Monitoring

Monitoring efforts should address learning priorities, support adaptive management, and help Missions understand progress toward achieving results. The monitoring approach should describe how Missions will use monitoring information to address learning priorities; support any relevant evaluations and other analyses; monitor strategic program performance at the Intermediate Result (IR) level; and monitor aspects of the operational context, including any key risks, that could affect the achievement of program results. While performance and context indicators may be listed in a separate database or file, this document should discuss how indicator data and other monitoring information will be analyzed and used. Where applicable, this section should also describe any plans to align with local monitoring priorities, use local systems or data, and/or strengthen local partners capacity to monitor. This section also may include descriptions of other efforts besides indicator data that will be useful for monitoring expected results or changes in context, such as periodic narrative reports, qualitative assessments, partner meetings, and expert panel reports.

Learning Agenda or Learning Plan

A systematic plan for identifying and addressing critical learning priorities and knowledge gaps through answering priority questions relevant to the programs, policies, and regulations of an Agency or at the sub-agency level. Learning agendas should articulate critical questions, how to address them, and how to use the resulting evidence. More broadly, a learning agenda is a coordination tool for engaging stakeholders in evidence planning and building. In Missions, the learning priorities in the CDCS and PMP reflect learning agendas. USAID's Agency-wide Learning Agenda is equivalent to the Agency evidence-building plan required in Section JOI of the Evidence Act (Section 312(a) of Title 5 of the United States Code). (Chapter 201)

Learning Priorities

A list of key themes or topics critical to programmatic and operational decisions and implementation for the Agency; an Operating Unit; sector; strategy; project; activity; or a specific initiative. Learning priorities can include emerging patterns, cross-cutting themes, knowledge gaps in the existing evidence base, critical assumptions, identified (or emergent) risks, and points of connection with scenario planning or with context monitoring. Learning priorities come from various sources and inform learning agendas. (Chapter 201)

Learning Questions

Learning questions are specific, answerable, need-to-know questions that can be answered through monitoring, evaluation, research, or other analysis to address learning priorities incrementally. Several learning questions can cluster under a single learning priority and can contribute to a broader learning agenda or plan. (Chapter 201)

Evaluation

Evaluations require a planned and structured approach to address specific evaluation questions at a certain level of rigor for a particular purpose. Planning ahead for evaluation is critical, and a key reason for including this information in the Mission’s PMP. While the list of planned evaluations may be located in a separate file or database such as the Evaluation Registry, in this section of the PMP, Missions should include a narrative on their approach to the planning and implementation of evaluations over the life of the strategy, identify what types of evaluations are being planned, and how they are expected to fill gaps in knowledge or evidence. This includes initial Mission plans for collecting baseline data or other possible data collection needs, whether any impact evaluations and/or ex-post evaluations are planned, and how activities will be designed so they can be subject to impact or ex-post evaluations, as appropriate.

While monitoring can answer what happened, evaluations rely on monitoring data and go beyond monitoring to explore why or why not, and what else positive or negative happened that may have been unplanned or unintended. Evaluation can leverage existing data or conduct new data collection to contribute to answering Mission learning priorities or learning questions. It can also identify any Agency-wide or sector learning agenda questions that will be addressed.

CLA

Integrating CLA into the PMP helps ensure that Mission programs are coordinated with others, grounded in evidence, and iteratively adapting to remain relevant throughout implementation. The PMP should describe how the Mission will use CLA approaches to support monitoring and evaluation for intentional learning and to enable effective implementation of the CDCS. This includes Mission-level plans to:

- **Collaborate** with stakeholders to share knowledge and reduce duplication of effort
- **Learn** systematically by drawing on evidence from monitoring, evaluation, and other sources
- **Adapt** by taking time to reflect on new learning and context shifts during implementation and making adjustments as necessary

Required PMP Content

Table of Contents and Modification Log

Identification of Learning Priorities and Plan to Address Them with Monitoring, Evaluation and CLA

Performance Indicator Information for Intermediate Results

List of Evaluations

Schedule of Performance Management Tasks and Associated Resources

The PMP may also address the [enabling conditions](#) – organizational culture, processes, and resources – needed to support CLA efforts. The [Learning Activities Grid](#) outlines a variety of approaches for addressing PMP learning priorities. Missions can also use the [CLA maturity tool](#) self-assessment to understand the Mission’s current CLA practices and identify practical next steps.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR INFORMATION FOR INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Program Offices are responsible for working with technical offices to ensure that indicators and monitoring data, as described in the PMP, are collected as planned and kept up to date, delivered to USAID, and of sufficient quality for the purposes of accountability, learning, and managing adaptively.

At a minimum, at the time of initial PMP approval, the Mission must have defined at least one preliminary performance indicator for each IR identified in the Results Framework. These required performance indicators should be measures of expected *outcomes* of USAID assistance rather than measures of USAID *outputs*.

In addition, if a Mission decides to design activities as components of an overarching project, then the PMP must include at least one performance indicator for any project purpose, as identified in an approved Project Design Document. All other performance indicators collected by a Mission, such as those included in Project and Activity MEL Plans, may be included, but are not required to be included in the PMP.

Beyond these minimum requirements, Missions have the discretion to decide whether or not to include additional performance indicators in a PMP. For instance, Missions may choose to include in their PMP:

- Performance indicator(s) or context indicators for monitoring a Development Objective;
- Additional performance indicators for monitoring each IR or sub-IRs;
- Some or all performance indicators for monitoring expected results in a project; and
- Performance indicators reported to the Performance Plan and Report (PPR), or other performance indicators the Mission frequently reports on, including Regional and USG Strategies.

In addition, operating units are encouraged to include gender-sensitive indicators that monitor specific gender-related goals articulated in the CDCS (see [ADS 205](#)) and key risk indicators identified during the CDCS planning process to monitor external factors and uncertainties.

While Missions may choose to track an extensive list of performance indicators in their PMP, the PPL Bureau recommends that Missions limit the total number of performance indicators to a number that is both useful and manageable. To this end, PPL recommends that Missions:

1. Limit the number of performance indicators monitoring a single IR to one (and no more than three).
2. Limit performance indicators selected for inclusion in the PMP to those most relevant for making management decisions at the *strategy* level. This would include, for instance, performance indicators that monitor significant outcomes that help to determine if a development hypothesis remains relevant and whether expected progress toward a Development Objective is on track. Indicators likely to be reviewed during a portfolio review or used for making decisions about adaptations or amendments to the strategy are good candidates for inclusion in the PMP.
3. Limit the inclusion of other performance indicators to those that are otherwise important to Mission management (e.g., indicators frequently used to respond to Washington requests).

For many Missions, the minimum set of performance indicators required for inclusion in a PMP may be sufficient.

To determine performance indicators, Missions can use or adapt existing ones or create new ones. Missions should consult with the partner country, implementing partners, and other stakeholders and review existing indicators tracked by USAID or by others. Existing indicators may include those developed for the CDCS Results Framework Indicator Annex; any current performance indicators from existing activities or projects that are aligned to the new CDCS; and indicators used or suggested by national counterparts, local partners, multilateral organizations, or other donors.

Once indicators are created or existing indicators are confirmed or revised, the indicators and any relevant information about them can be stored separately from the PMP. When available, Missions are required to use the Development Information Solution, USAID's enterprise-wide portfolio management

system, for this purpose. In the meantime, Missions can use existing databases or spreadsheets. The location of indicator data, reference information, and the most recent date they were updated should be noted in the Table of Contents and Modification Log.

Supplemental Information about Each Performance Indicator

Baseline data, or a plan for collecting baseline data, must be included for every performance indicator associated with the PMP. In addition, indicator reference information for each performance indicator must be included in a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) or database within three months of the start of data collection. However, performance indicator reference information need not be final at the time of approval of the initial PMP. A [Recommended PIRS Template and Guidance](#) is available in the [Monitoring Toolkit](#). While context indicators are not required, if a Mission is tracking context indicators, then they should document context indicator reference information. See [Context Indicator Reference Sheets \(CIRs\) template](#).

EVALUATION PLAN

The PMP must include an Evaluation Plan or an initial list of evaluations planned across the Mission and over the entire CDCS timeframe. PMP development is an appropriate time to consider and document plans for evaluations to meet at least the minimum ADS 201 evaluation requirements if known at the time of the initial PMP: (1) one evaluation per each IR; (2) one evaluation per activity with a ceiling at or above \$20 million (this can also meet requirement 1); and (3) any impact evaluation of an untested approach that is anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope (i.e., a pilot intervention). An evaluation can meet more than one requirement.

In addition to required evaluations, Missions should consider what other evaluations may be needed to address learning priorities or management needs. Evaluations plans should be updated as new evaluations are planned, typically when new activities (or projects) are approved. The Evaluation Plan information should be stored in the Evaluation Registry within FACTS INFO Next Gen and the PMP Table of Comments and Modification Log should confirm that the information in the Evaluation Registry has been updated for this purpose. Note that the Evaluation Registry can be updated at any time. The following information is collected in the Evaluation Registry for each planned evaluation, as it becomes available (see the [Evaluation Registry Guidance](#) for more information, including definitions of the following terms):

- The strategy, project, or activity to be evaluated;
- Evaluation purpose (accountability; inform future activity design or funding; coordination; inform implementation corrections; measure achievement of results; organizational learning; oversight; performance management; program management);
- Expected use of evaluation;
- Evaluation type (performance, impact);
- Evaluation timing (mid-term, final, ex-post);
- Possible evaluation questions;
- Whether it is an external or internal evaluation;
- Whether it fulfills an evaluation requirement or is a non-required evaluation;
- Budget of activity to be evaluated;
- Estimated evaluation budget;
- Primary sector of activity to be evaluated (peace and security; democracy, human rights, and governance; health; education and social services; economic development; environment;

- humanitarian assistance; program management);
- Planned start date of evaluation; and
- Estimated completion date of evaluation.

The Evaluation Plan may include additional information about each evaluation at the Mission’s discretion. A sample [Evaluation Plan and Schedule Template](#) is available in the [Evaluation Toolkit](#). Since activities and any necessary evaluations will typically be planned later, at initial approval of the PMP, the Evaluation Plan should include, at a minimum, any preliminary plans for any required evaluation that will be done to meet the one evaluation per IR requirement.

SCHEDULE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSOCIATED RESOURCES

The Schedule of Performance Management Tasks and Responsibilities and Associated Resources lists the monitoring, evaluation, CLA, and other tasks the Mission anticipates conducting over the life of the CDCS to build evidence and support learning and adapting. It identifies the timeframe and office or individual responsible and expected human or financial resources needed for the listed task. Once the other sections of the PMP have been developed, the Mission should review them for tasks that should be scheduled, assign a POC, estimate needed resources to complete the task, and identify the timeline for task completion. This section can be created specifically for the PMP, or the Mission can update other project management schedules or calendars with this information and provide a link to that in the Table of Contents and Modification Log. The schedule may be a simple matrix or calendar outlining the responsible office or officer and timing of and resources for each task, or it may go into more detail. Typical tasks in the schedule include:

- Updating and revising the PMP;
- Collecting and analyzing data;
- Conducting Data Quality Assessments (DQAs);
- Designing and conducting evaluations as planned, needed, and/or required; and
- Periodic and intentional opportunities for reflection to inform adaptation, including portfolio reviews and mid-course stocktaking of the CDCS.

The schedule of tasks and responsibilities should be consistent with ADS 201 and the Mission’s approved Mission Orders. [Recommended Staff Roles and Responsibilities for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning](#) are described in the [Monitoring Toolkit](#).

When estimating the level of resources required for the performance management tasks, Missions may consider the following questions:

- How much will it cost to procure planned external evaluations, studies, and assessments and what human resources will be needed to manage them?
- Will the Mission procure a Mission-wide or technical office MEL support contract?
- What resources will be used to ensure collaboration among partners and other stakeholders?
- Will new staff need to be hired (such as M&E Specialists or Learning Advisors) to support tasks identified in the PMP?
- What resources are needed to collect, manage, analyze, and use the context and performance indicators at the highest levels of the CDCS Results Framework?
- Will the Mission procure services for DQAs or will DQAs be conducted by Mission staff?
- What staff resources should be dedicated to preparing, conducting, and documenting the annual

strategic portfolio review?

Will the Mission expend resources or staff time to build staff skills and experience in monitoring, evaluation, and learning?

OTHER OPTIONAL PMP SECTIONS

Missions may choose to include other sections in the PMP, as needed, such as plans for developing the monitoring and evaluation capacity of local organizations or individuals. If a Mission has or intends to contract a monitoring, evaluation, and learning support platform, they may wish to include a section describing how the support contract will work with Mission staff to implement the PMP.

Developing the PMP

This section describes recommended steps to develop an initial PMP following CDCS approval.

I. ASSEMBLE A PMP TEAM, DEVELOP A WORKPLAN, AND LAUNCH THE PROCESS

Following CDCS approval, the Program Office, led by the M&E Point of Contact (POC), typically shepherds the PMP development process with significant contributions from Development Objective Teams, Project Managers, and/or technical offices. PPL recommends that each Development Objective Team designate a POC to be part of a PMP core team to include a Program Office POC that develops a PMP outline and workplan and supports the PMP development process. The work plan may include major PMP tasks to be completed, a tentative list of responsible individuals (e.g., drafters, reviewers, etc.), and timelines for completing key tasks. A kick-off session, led by the Mission Director or core team helps introduce the vision for the PMP to Mission staff; sets a shared goal of completing the PMP; and clarifies tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines.

2. HOLD WORKING SESSIONS

Missions can decide how best to coordinate working sessions, whether with one cross-mission working group, parallel work within Development Objective Teams, or other combinations. In any case, the following steps are recommended:

2a. Revisit the Results Framework and CDCS MEL Section

Make sure the development hypothesis and key results from the CDCS are clearly understood by all. Review the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Section in the CDCS to understand priorities, learning questions, approaches, and the knowledge gaps identified during CDCS development. Also reference the CDCS Phase 2 Results Framework Matrix to review MEL-relevant details developed during the CDCS process including: illustrative indicators, illustrative sub-IRs, DO-specific learning questions, and strategic partners.

2b. Identify Learning Priorities

Identify the Mission's initial learning priorities for the life of the CDCS. Learning priorities are a short list of themes or topics critical to CDCS programmatic and operational decisions and implementation.

2c. Describe how Mission efforts to monitor, evaluate and apply CLA will address the learning priorities

Use learning priorities once they are identified to inform Program Cycle processes, including choices around monitoring, evaluation, and CLA activities, and document the intended approach of the Mission

to address the PMP learning priorities. In addition, consider and document how monitoring, evaluation, and CLA activities will be mutually reinforcing and build on each other.

2d. Review and Select Performance Indicators

At the time of initial PMP approval, ensure each IR defined in the CDCS has one performance indicator and that baseline data or a plan for collecting baseline data is included. Performance Indicator Reference information does not have to be complete until within three months of collecting indicator data (and preferably before data are collected).

2e. Evaluation Plan – Identify Proposed Evaluations

Identify the evaluations for inclusion in the Evaluation Plan. At the time of initial PMP approval, these should include, at a minimum, evaluations planned to meet the one evaluation per IR requirement. Revisit the list of performance indicators in case any will be relevant for planned evaluation questions or evaluation planning reveals new monitoring data needs.

2f. Schedule of Performance Management Tasks and Associated Resources

Review updated sections of the PMP for tasks that should be scheduled, assign a POC, estimate needed resources to complete the task, and identify the timeline for task completion. This section can be created specifically for the PMP, or the Mission can update other project management schedules or calendars with this information and provide a link to that in the Table of Contents and Modification Log.

3. MISSION DIRECTOR APPROVAL

The Mission Director reviews, comments on, and ultimately approves the initial Mission-wide PMP within three months of CDCS approval. The initial PMP should have the following minimum information:

- The Table of Contents and Modification Log with links to other sections of the PMP or description of where the information is located;
- The Learning Priorities and Plan to Address Them through Monitoring, Evaluation, and CLA (this can be a narrative, a chart or spreadsheet, a graphic, or other format);
- Confirmation that each IR has a performance indicator and a link in the Table of Contents to the location of indicator information;
- Confirmation that the Evaluation Registry has been updated with initial plans for any known evaluations (or a link to the location of this information if it is not in the Evaluation Registry); and
- The Schedule of Performance Management Tasks and Associated Resources (or a link to the location of this information if it is stored within an existing Mission management plan).

Updating, Sharing, and Using the PMP

Initial approval of the PMP is just the beginning. A PMP is only valuable for informing Mission decision-making if it is updated, shared, and actively used.

UPDATE

Although the initial PMP is approved three months after the CDCS, it is not expected that the PMP will be comprehensive upon approval. The PMP is updated and changed over the life of a CDCS as new

projects and activities are designed; strategies, projects, and activities are modified during implementation; or performance management efforts require adaptation to better serve Mission needs.

Missions must keep the PMP up to date to reflect:

- Changes in the CDCS;
- Identification of new learning priorities and needs and efforts to address those needs;
- Updates following each annual strategic portfolio review;
- Project purpose performance indicator upon the approval of any new projects or modifications to existing projects when those result in changes to the project purpose;
- Other project related changes such as new evaluations or CLA activities;
- Addition of new monitoring indicators or revision of existing indicators; or
- Identification of new evaluations to be conducted.

At a minimum, the Mission should review and update the PMP at least once per year as part of the Mission's portfolio review process as described in the PMP Schedule of Tasks and Responsibilities. Mission Director approval is not required on the iterative updates made to the PMP following initial approval.

SHARE

It is critical for Missions to share relevant parts of the PMP and associated information with external entities contributing to USAID's performance management processes. For instance, PIRs should be shared with implementing partners reporting on indicators in the PMP. Other stakeholders, such as joint funders or country partners, may also value understanding USAID performance management efforts as described in the PMP. Prior to sharing the PMP, procurement sensitive information should be removed, such as plans for evaluations that will be contracted.

Upon initial PMP approval, Missions must upload the Table of Contents and Modification Log and the Learning Priorities and Plan to Address Them with Monitoring, Evaluation, and CLA to ProgramNet, selecting "Performance Management Plan (PMP)" as the USAID Content Type, and selecting the Mission in the Regions & Countries box. Once the PMP is uploaded, Missions should inform their Regional M&E POCs and the PPL Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research by sending an email to MandE@usaid.gov.

USE

As a *plan*, the PMP should document a Mission's expected efforts to monitor, evaluate, and learn from the implementation of the CDCS. In particular, the PMP should be used to:

- Set expectations about monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts over the life of the CDCS;
- Ensure that monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts are adequate to facilitate strategic learning, adaptively manage risks or seize opportunities, and implement the strategy; and
- Highlight monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts that require coordination across teams so that these efforts are efficient and mutually reinforcing.

Ultimately, Missions should use the monitoring data, evaluation reports, and learning that result from the planned efforts described in the PMP. See the [Monitoring Toolkit](#), [Evaluation Toolkit](#), and [CLA Toolkit](#) for further information on using monitoring data, evaluations, and learning activities.