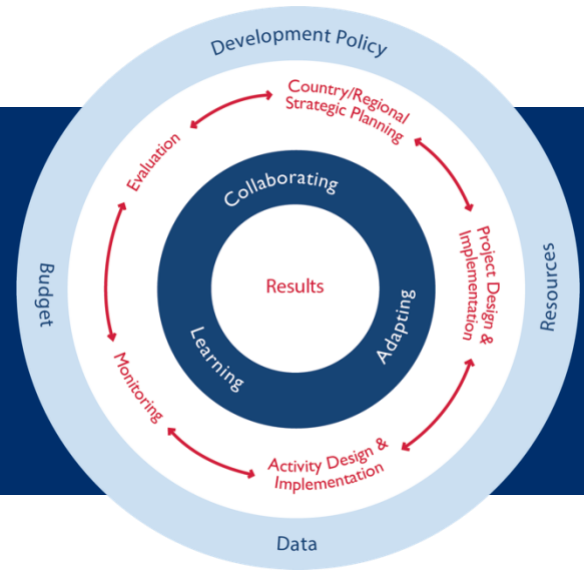


PROGRAM CYCLE

How-To Note: Planning and Conducting Site Visits



This resource describes practical steps and effective practices for planning and conducting a site visit.

Introduction

This How-To Note supplements USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) 201.3.4.10.B. It lists Agency requirements for programmatic site visits, identifies practical steps and effective practices for planning and conducting a site visit, and recommends follow-up actions once a site visit has taken place. This How-To Note is intended as a resource for Missions and Washington Operating Units (OUs). The primary audience is Contracting Officer's Representatives and Agreement Officer's Representatives (CORs/AORs). However, the guidance may also be relevant for any USAID staff member asked to conduct a site visit, such as an Activity Manager. This document may also serve as a helpful reference for other Mission or Washington OU staff, such as Project Managers, Program Office staff, Support Office staff, Monitoring and Evaluation points of contact (M&E POCs), and Learning Advisors.

Site Visits: The Basics

WHAT IS A USAID SITE VISIT?

Site visits are an essential and required component of a Mission's performance management. For the purposes of this guidance, programmatic site visits are conducted by CORs/AORs, or any other USAID staff member asked to conduct a site visit, visiting a USAID-funded activity site or an implementing partner's in-country office for the purposes of monitoring, oversight, and learning from activity implementation.

Examples of what is considered a site visit (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- Visiting a location (such as a school or clinic) implementing an activity supported by USAID and monitoring its performance, engaging its stakeholders, and assessing its context according to the Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan and the Mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP).
- Observing a training or other event funded within a USAID activity, and monitoring its implementation progress to learn from and manage activity performance.

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).

- Conducting a field portfolio review with the implementing partner and other stakeholders to draw from evidence and experience, to learn and share from activity implementation as to what works, what doesn't, and why, and to apply this learning to activity implementation or across activities and projects.
- Surveying a construction site to check contractor performance against scheduled/reported performance and to ensure construction and environmental requirements, such as the Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP), are met.
- Visiting an implementing partner's local office to review the system where activity data is collected and stored.

Examples of what is not considered a site visit (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- Routine COR/AOR meetings with the implementing partner.
- Visiting a site without a purpose in mind and without documenting findings in a site visit report.

WHY DO WE CONDUCT SITE VISITS?

Site visits are an essential and required component of a Mission's performance management function. Site visits are used to assess whether the activity is on track for achieving its goals, for data verification purposes, and for checking compliance against Agency requirements. Site visits enable Missions and Washington OUs to gather information to help assess *whether, how, and to what degree* an intervention is achieving its intended results and contributing to development aims. Site visits are also an opportunity to identify any unintended consequences of an activity, whether positive or negative, or explore systemic or contextual factors that might affect activity implementation.

Moreover, site visits play an important role in a Mission's efforts to generate and share new learning, enhance strategic collaboration and stakeholder and beneficiary engagement, and better understand implementation, assumptions, and theories of change to manage adaptively. Applying Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) principles and approaches when planning and conducting a site visit can help ensure the site visit is more collaborative among Mission staff, implementing partners, and other stakeholders.

Agency Requirements for Site Visits

- I. For each activity, OUs must perform site visits to provide oversight over agreements/awards, inspect implementation progress and deliverables, verify monitoring data, and learn from implementation.
 - While each Mission and the activity's context should inform the number and frequency of site visits, in general, Missions should conduct site visits for each activity at least once every six months;
 - For poor-performing activities, such as agreements or awards with audit or evaluation findings that point to moderate or high risk for waste, fraud, or abuse, site visits should occur more frequently;

- In non-permissive environments, Missions may use remote methods to conduct site visits.”¹
2. A brief report must be written highlighting the findings from a site visit, and filed in the official award file using the Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking system (ASIST) within 30 days of a site visit.^{2 3 4}

Agency-wide Recommendations

1. The Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) recommends that the minimum number and frequency of site visits per activity in a Mission should be determined by the Mission Director or his/her designate and documented in the Mission Order that covers ADS 201 performance monitoring requirements. PPL also recommends that the Mission Order include how to document exceptions to site visits, types of information that should be documented in a site visit report, processes for site visit report submission and records management, and site visit report use and learning.
2. Expectations for conducting site visits should be found in the COR/AOR (or their designate) designation letter, which should reference the ADS 201 requirements and the relevant Mission Order guidance. The designation letter should be shared with the implementing partner.

Preparation for Conducting a Site Visit

Proper planning is a critical step for getting the most relevant and useful information from a site visit. Additionally, planning a site visit in advance creates a space to strengthen collaboration with and among partners and engage stakeholder communities. To help facilitate site visit preparation, this section includes recommendations that cover the most important elements of planning an effective visit. While determining the purpose of a site visit is a critical first step, planning a site visit is typically an iterative process and the elements listed below are not chronological steps to take, but important to factor into plans prior to conducting the site visit.

DETERMINE THE PURPOSE(S)

Effective site visits begin with well-defined goals and objectives, and should be determined based on the current status of activity implementation. To facilitate determining the purpose, refer to the award documents, activity work plan, MEL plans and the Mission’s PMP, and recent progress reports, which could help narrow the focus for the upcoming site visit. Being specific and intentional about identifying the purpose enables the site visit team to collect, review, and synthesize the most relevant information prior to the site visit, and helps give the team focus when at the activity implementation site.

A single site visit may address a number of purposes; however, not every site visit will be designed to monitor or review all aspects of activity implementation and performance, or take advantage of all opportunities for learning and stakeholder engagement. As it relates to reporting, it is acceptable to

¹ ADS 201.3.4.10.B.

² ADS 502.3.4.3 - Converting Paper Records to Electronic

³ ADS 302.3.8.7: USAID Direct Contracting

⁴ ADS 201.3.4.10.B.

report only on the aspects reviewed during the specific visit. Common purposes may include, but are not limited to:

- **Performance Monitoring:** Site visits with a focus on performance monitoring enable the COR/AOR to (1) observe whether the activity is being implemented in accordance with the work plan, (2) inspect deliverables, and (3) determine whether there are any implementation delays or challenges that might affect the activity progress. The COR/AOR should take this opportunity to ask the partner, stakeholders, and beneficiaries to reflect on performance and context and whether there are any observations or concerns beyond what the performance monitoring data capture that should be discussed.
- **Context Monitoring:**⁵ Site visits enable USAID to collect information about local conditions that may directly affect implementation and performance (such as non-USAID activities operating within the same sector as USAID activities), or external factors that may indirectly affect implementation and performance (such as economic, social, political, or environmental conditions), which can then be used to inform management actions about activity implementation, including when and how USAID needs to engage with other donors working in the same context. A site visit focused on context monitoring could include meeting with local stakeholders (e.g., non-governmental organizations [NGOs], local authorities, host government institutions, activity staff, or even non-beneficiaries) to inquire about upcoming community events or decisions that may affect activity progress. Also see “Stakeholder Engagement” under [“Additional Factors to Consider”](#) below.
- **Data Verification:** Site visits are an important component of USAID’s oversight and quality assurance processes during the life of the activity. During a site visit, the COR/AOR and, when applicable, the M&E POC and Learning Advisor, may verify activity monitoring indicator data collected and stored by the implementing partner. This may include reviewing primary data records for performance monitoring that are stored on-site, observing physical locations, and talking to beneficiaries. CORs/AORs may also choose to include a Data Quality Assessment (DQA) as a part of a site visit. A DQA is USAID’s process for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of indicator data according to five standards of data quality and determining the extent to which such data may be used to influence management decisions.⁶
- **Learning to Inform Design and Implementation:** A site visit for the purpose of learning can help strengthen a collaborative partnership with the implementing partner, and provide an opportunity for partners to share their lessons learned, best practices, successes, and concerns. When planning a site visit, consider what USAID and the implementing partner need to know about critical assumptions, changes in the operational context, and what has been learned as a result of implementation that was not previously known. Also, consider planning for what knowledge sharing events or practices, such as learning events or sharing the site visit report

⁵ During the desk review prior to a site visit, the site visit team should reference the Activity MEL Plan for a list of identified context indicators to track during implementation. For more information, please see [USAID’s How-To Note on the Activity MEL Plan](#).

⁶ For more information on DQAs, see [How to Conduct a Data Quality Assessment](#).

with other relevant offices, can take place following a site visit to help inform adaptations to current interventions, other project and activity designs, or other development efforts.

- **Monitor Compliance with Award Terms:** Site visits enable the Agency to track partner organization compliance with laws, regulations, and the provisions of grant agreements and contracts, and to maintain internal control to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with these requirements.⁷ Site visits provide an opportunity for the COR/AOR, in partnership with financial management office staff, to identify deficiencies and potential vulnerabilities in management and internal control systems, and to work collaboratively with implementing partners to address them.

The COR/AOR should note any performance problem pertaining to schedule, cost, quality and/or non-compliance. Additionally, the COR/AOR should bring any significant performance issues to the immediate attention of the Office of Acquisition and Assistance and the Contracting Officer/Agreement Officer (CO/AO) to discuss resolution and potential impact to the activity. Any appearance of fraud, waste, abuse, or violations of human trafficking must immediately be reported to the activity CO/AO and [the Office of Inspector General's hotline](#).

Below are examples of key compliance areas to assess during a site visit, which are also subject to audit by the Office of the Inspector General. (For a brief explanation of each area, please see [Annex I](#).)

- ✓ Environmental Compliance
 - ✓ Commodity Management
 - ✓ Branding and Marking
 - ✓ Health Funding-related Requirements
 - ✓ Gender Equality and Female Empowerment
 - ✓ Disability and Inclusion
 - ✓ Construction
 - ✓ Other Acquisition or Assistance Standard Provisions
 - ✓ Terms Specific to the USAID Mission or to the Award for the Activity
- **Follow-up on Previous Site Visit Recommendations:** There will be instances when it will be necessary to schedule a site visit to validate whether the implementing partner is following up on recommended actions arising from a previous site visit or other relevant performance monitoring activity. If this is the purpose of the site visit, it is best to communicate the goals/objectives with the implementing partner to ensure they have ample time to address previously identified issues and to gather the necessary information that might be discussed. Previous site visit recommendations could also be based on new learning from implementation and the changing context, or better understanding of the dynamics among the local actors and decisions to manage adaptively as a result.

⁷ For more information, see 2 CFR Part 200, Appendix XI, Compliance Supplement, pages 1-6.

Considerations When Activities Are Part of a Project

Site visits are a required task for CORs/AORs as part of their responsibilities in managing activities. When activities are part of a project, it is important for the CORs/AORs of these activities to work with Project Managers to consider how their activity contributes to overall project outcomes, and how activity performance is affected by or impacts other activities within the same project.

As long as the primary activity-related requirements for a site visit are met, the Mission might wish to consider ensuring the following illustrative actions are part of planning or conducting a site visit to support project-related needs:

- Ensure that the COR/AOR understands the role of the activity to be visited as it relates to other activities and the project as a whole.
- Discuss the site visit with other CORs/AORs and the Project Manager to ensure that the site visit does not adversely affect the implementation or oversight of other activities, and to surface questions at the project level that may be addressed with evidence and learning generated by the site visit.
- Consider joint site visits when activities are strongly connected (for instance, different components of the same value chain, location, or implementing partner). Joint site visits promote learning and sharing across activities and assist the Project Manager, COs/AOs and CORs/AORs to assess broader performance, as well as provide some economies of scale.

IDENTIFY THE SITE VISIT TEAM

Site visits provide an opportunity to engage and promote collaboration across the Mission. Depending on the purpose, and if appropriate for the visit and the type of activity being monitored, in addition to the COR/AOR, the site visit team configuration could include the CO/AO, the Mission's M&E POC, Learning Advisor, or Learning POC, the Financial Management Officer/Financial Analyst, the Project Manager, the Mission Environmental Officer, Gender Advisor, Development Outreach and Communication (DOC) Specialist, Mission leadership, and/or other staff from USAID or other United States Government (USG) agencies.

PLAN THE VISIT

After the site visit purpose(s) and team are formulated, a planning meeting can help clarify:

- Who else should participate (e.g., the implementing partner(s), beneficiaries, local institutions, external technical experts, etc.), and at what point during the process they should be involved.
- Whether the Mission has the required expertise and/or knowledge to fairly assess the activity's progress. If not, is short-term technical assistance available locally? Within USAID/Washington? Within the region?
- The appropriate site visit methodology (e.g., observations, interviews, document reviews, data quality assessments, roundtable discussions, informal discussions for relationship management, etc.).⁸

⁸ See Monitoring Toolkit Resource: [Data Collection Methods and Tools for Performance Monitoring](#).

Select the Site(s)

There are a number of factors to consider when selecting an activity site(s) to visit: staff availability, geographic location, weather and climate patterns, implementing partner and stakeholder availability, and security, to name a few. Additionally, there may be instances when it will be necessary to show up at a site unannounced. Be sure to coordinate with the CO/AO for any unannounced site visits being planned. While unannounced site visits can be useful, it is best practice to work with the implementing partner to choose the most appropriate site for the site visit team to accomplish the stated objective and purpose. For example, if the objective is to check on the overall progress of activity implementation, the site visit team might choose a couple of different sites to capture the breadth of activity performance. If the objective is to talk with local educators about an education activity, the timing should be driven by teacher availability. Geographic location and weather might also dictate where/when a site visit will take place. If it is an activity focused on boosting crop production, poor weather conditions may inform the site selection.

Schedule the Site Visit

Site visits should be scheduled when useful opportunities arise that align with the overall purpose, such as when a training is being provided. To minimize the risk of activity disruption and to identify opportunities for joint travel, Missions may also choose to maintain a centralized site visit schedule. This will also help prevent sites from overexposure, either in general or during specific timeframes. (Consult with the appropriate officials in the Mission as it relates to appropriate resources [i.e., implementing partner-provided transportation] for the site visit.)

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING AND SCHEDULING A SITE VISIT

Security: The safety and security of the site visit team is paramount. Each Embassy has a regularly updated travel policy based on security concerns that everyone falling under Chief of Mission authority must follow. Be sure to comply with security protocols and consult the travel policy before scheduling a site visit. If travel concerns remain an issue, consult with the Regional Security Officer (RSO).

Non-Permissive Environments (NPE): A NPE refers to an environment or context (at the national and/or sub-national level) characterized by uncertainty, instability, inaccessibility and/or insecurity, and in which USAID's ability to safely and effectively operate is constrained. Per ADS 201.3.4.10, "In non-permissive environments, Missions may use remote methods to conduct site visits." In NPEs where site visits cannot be performed safely and responsibly by USAID staff, the COR/AOR should select other data verification methods, such as third-party or remote monitoring.⁹ Please see the "Remote Site Visits" section below for additional information on conducting site visits remotely.

Stakeholder Engagement and Relationship Management: When planning a site visit, consider ways to collaborate effectively with, and to support learning from and among local actors to gather general feedback on their experience with USAID-funded activities, and to inform analysis about the local context

⁹ For more information about remote monitoring and monitoring USAID's activities in non-permissive environments, please reference the Agency's Fact Sheet, Discussion Note on Third Party Monitoring in Non-Permissive Environments, and the [Guide for Adopting Remote Monitoring Approaches During COVID-19](#).

and development challenges, strategic planning, and/or project and activity design. In cases where Mission staff are in transition and a COR/AOR needs to hand a relationship off to an important point of contact in the field, a site visit is a good opportunity for a personal handoff.

Taking Part in a Special Event or High-level Visit:¹⁰ Taking part in special events, like a ribbon cutting or a high-level visit is not only a time- and cost-saving measure, but it also creates a space to include Mission staff and stakeholders who otherwise would not have been able to participate. Attending the event does not meet the standard of a site visit unless the COR/AOR is able to take stock of the activity implementation for performance monitoring, oversight, and/or learning purposes. Additionally, special events can often create distorting factors that could result in an inaccurate reflection of the overall activity performance. Be purposeful in seeking out a site(s) that will be representative of the activity's day-to-day implementation.

DEVELOP A SITE VISIT AGENDA

To set expectations for the site visit, develop a schedule that identifies day-of activities. Doing so will make the visit more focused and productive both for the site visit team and the implementing partner, and will help ensure the right information is captured or exchanged. Be sure to estimate the amount of time it will take to get to/from the site location, and time for lunch and other needed breaks. Additionally, build in time to listen, observe, process, and debrief with the implementing partner during the site visit. Finally, be sure to maintain some flexibility in the schedule; site visits, even well-planned ones, are by their very nature fluid and the schedule may change once at the activity site. The site visit schedule should be flexible enough to allow for unexpected delays, and/or opportunities for impromptu meetings.

PRE-SITE VISIT PREPARATION

This section will provide a list of recommended actions that will be essential for preparing the team for a productive site visit.

Recommended Actions:

1. **Read** background documentation about the activity and site. Prior to a site visit, the COR/AOR should carefully review relevant documentation, including the activity work plan, award documentation, and environmental documents (e.g., the EMMP), and, when relevant, Activity MEL plans, the Mission's PMP, Performance Plans and Reports, branding and marking plan, progress reports submitted by the implementing partner, previous site visit reports, and other relevant information.
2. **Seek information** from various sources, including other Mission staff, on the local culture, language, and customs before departing for a site (e.g., appropriate dress, how to greet/interact, whether a language interpreter will be needed). Social customs often vary from one region to the next, and awareness of these differences can facilitate the success of a site visit in ways that can enhance relationships, learning, and collaboration.
3. **Download and print** (or have available on a tablet) a copy of the Mission's Site Visit Report template, if available, or a list of questions relevant to the purpose of the site visit. Review the

¹⁰ For more information, please reference [ADS Chapter 555, Congressional Delegations](#).

template or questions prior to the site visit to understand in advance what information and data will need to be collected for each of the required sections.

4. **Reach out** to Mission staff (e.g., technical experts, CO/AO, Program Office, Mission Environmental Officer, or other support offices) who may be able to contribute expertise needed for a successful site visit. Additionally, if available, set up a time to speak with NGOs, local government officials, and beneficiaries, as they may be able to provide valuable information about the activity's progress or context.
5. **Finalize** any key logistical information, including making sure that the proper travel approvals and budget have been secured through the Mission's RSO and Executive Officer.
6. **Set up** a time to review the site visit objectives, schedule, and key logistical information with the implementing partner and the site visit team. Also, be sure to review the anticipated knowledge sharing approaches that will take place post-site visit.

DURING A SITE VISIT

Regular, well-planned and well-executed site visits can facilitate communication with partners, provide an opportunity for partners to share their lessons learned, best practices, successes, and concerns, and mitigate tensions. Below is a list of possible actions to take while performing a site visit.

Recommended Actions:

1. **Brief** the implementing partner on the goals, objectives, and expectations for the visit, and give them an opportunity to share their impressions of the activity's progress and/or identify challenges. Be sure to ask open-ended questions that could lead to greater insight into the activity's performance.
2. **Focus on the purpose and goals** of the site visit while also keeping an eye out for the unexpected or unintended results (positive or negative) of the activity. A lot of the value in conducting a site visit may come from being exposed to or being made aware of an activity's unintended consequences or unexpected challenges.
3. **Meet with and solicit feedback** from beneficiaries and other stakeholders, including local NGO and government officials, about their observations and interactions with the activity. Engaging stakeholder communities facilitates collaborative relationship building and helps broaden the Mission's understanding of the activity's context and development efforts.
4. **Collaborate** with implementing partner(s) and other stakeholders to generate new learning about what is working, what is not working, and why.
5. **Consider what is known** about critical assumptions, changes in the operational context, and what has been learned as a result of implementation that was not previously known, and develop a method to elicit that information from stakeholder communities in the terms that are most relevant to their perspectives.
6. **Document what was observed and learned**, and which stakeholders were engaged. Be sure to capture observations either by using the Mission's site visit template or a notepad. Note any learning that should be shared, adaptations that should be undertaken, and/or implementation delays or issues that might be worth discussing with the implementing partner or that might merit reaching out to the CO/AO or the Mission's Resident Legal Officer.
7. **Seek out and capture stories that demonstrate the activity's success.** Take photos for possible use for both the Mission and USAID publications when it is culturally accepted, appropriate,

and with the subject's informed consent. Note that in some countries there are child protection laws that require parents to authorize photographs of children. In these cases, a parent, teacher, or principal should sign a consent form on the child's behalf. There will also be instances where pictures of vulnerable people may put them at risk of further discrimination or harm, or instances when subjects do not want to be photographed. *Exercise judgment and ask permission.* For questions related to Agency guidelines, cultural attitudes towards photography, and informed consent from people being photographed, consult with the Mission DOC Specialist.

8. **Schedule an exit-briefing** with the implementing partner to discuss findings, provide feedback, and identify follow-up actions, including sharing learning with others who can use it, and following through on necessary adaptations. An exit-briefing is an opportunity to collaboratively share observations, synthesize learning, solve problems or challenges, and agree on potential adaptations with the partner. Also, the site visit team may want to ask if the implementing partner would like to add anything beyond what was already discussed.

After a Site Visit

Once the site visit team has returned to the Mission, the process of drafting the site visit report and reviewing and sharing information collected and new learning generated from the visit begins. Below is a list of possible actions once a site visit has taken place.

Recommended Actions:

1. **Draft and Upload the Site Visit Report to ASIST:**¹¹ As stated in the "Agency Requirements" section of this How-To Note, a summary report must be uploaded and stored in ASIST within 30 days following the completion of a site visit. The format of the report may vary from one Mission to the next, but should contain a brief explanation of any positive or negative findings, and required follow-up actions, as well as supporting documentation.¹² If for any reason a site visit cannot be performed, this should be noted and added to the COR/AOR file on ASIST as well. To promote learning across technical offices, Missions might also consider how best to manage their knowledge and other observations from site visits. For instance, some Missions have created a central repository (i.e., a shared folder managed by the Program Office or within each Technical Office) to store site visit reports for ease of access and use.
2. **Summarize and Share Findings and Lessons Learned:** To promote collaboration across the Mission, key findings and lessons learned should be shared with the site visit team, project team members (if applicable), technical and support offices, the Mission's Environmental and/or Gender Officers, and if possible, stakeholders external to the Mission. Furthermore, USAID can connect various implementers, ensuring that best practices and lessons learned are shared and applied across activities and projects.
3. **Track Follow-up Actions and Recommendations:** In collaboration with the implementing partner, the site visit team should identify opportunities and agree upon priority actions to help

¹¹ For more information about ASIST, please visit M/OAA's Internal ASIST Pages. (NOTE: This is for internal usage only.)

¹² While there is no required format for site visit reports, Missions are encouraged to develop and use a site visit template.

ensure implementation remains on track. Following a site visit where the activity is not achieving expected results, determine whether there is a problem with implementation or an opportunity for learning and adapting to evolving contexts. Implementation problems can be worked through with the implementing partner to develop concrete, time-delineated follow-up actions and recommendations which will help ensure that proper steps are being taken to get the activity back on track. These recommendations and adaptations, along with the underlying thinking, should be documented and included in the final site visit report to support learning and continuity.

Remote Site Visits

In-person site visits are generally preferred, when feasible, due to challenges inherent to remote site visits, such as technological limitations, potential data quality issues, and limited ability to see what is happening on the ground in real time. However, despite limiting factors, remote site visits can be an effective and safe approach to augment in-person monitoring efforts.

Remote site visits are guided by the Agency's site visit requirements and recommendations.

CONDUCTING A REMOTE SITE VISIT

Preparing for and conducting a remote site visit require additional considerations.

- Consider the logistical and technological requirements and limitations for remote site visits, such as access issues, security concerns, or technological constraints.
- Document how these factors affect what information you can collect and with whom you can meet.
- Assess technological infrastructure and connectivity. Consider the internet capabilities of implementing partners and stakeholders, and available hardware. USAID staff may use webinar or video conferencing software to conduct remote site visits in real time to monitor or learn from implementing partners' activity implementation, to learn from beneficiaries, to review partner M&E systems remotely, or other purposes. Pre-recorded sessions may take the place of live video streams when internet bandwidth is low.
- Other approaches in addition to live video conferences may include:
 - Data collection via text message, phone surveys, email or web surveys
 - Photo verification technology
 - Pre-recorded videos of implementation, beneficiary interviews, or other activities of interest, ensuring that there is informed consent of participants prior to recording.
 - Sharing of implementing partner dashboards, monitoring data, or other easily shareable data sources via web or email
 - GPS tracking of goods or service provision, with informed consent.
 - Satellite imagery or remote sensing of changes in the physical environment (such as comparing forestation in satellite images over time) ¹³
- Prepare an agenda that includes considerations for a remote site visit such as logistical details and technological needs (equipment required, internet or hotspot capabilities, staffing needs, selecting

¹³ <https://geocenterusaid.org/remotesensing/>

appropriate sites, timing, etc.). Flexibility during remote site visits is important, as technological and contextual factors may impact implementation and plans may need to be altered.

- Choose appropriate methods and create tools for collecting data and recording notes. Protocols for data collection should parallel those for in-person site visits (e.g., informed consent, Do No Harm principles), but certain questions or methods may not be appropriate or feasible in a remote context.
- Develop clear processes for storing, managing, and analyzing remote site visit data. USAID’s guide to using data responsibly¹⁴ describes the balance between data use, privacy and security, and transparency and accountability. This is especially critical for remote site visits, since additional technology or data collection methods are used that may differ from in-person site visits.
- Verify information received. It is especially important to verify the quality of data collected during remote site visits. This may include seeking out secondary data sources to triangulate information received.
- After Action Reviews or Pause and Reflect session(s) are recommended with implementing partners for learning, and to improve processes for future remote site visits.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy](#)

[ADS Chapter 204: Environmental Procedures](#)

[ADS Chapter 205: Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID’s Program Cycle](#)

[ADS Chapter 302: USAID Direct Contracting](#)

[ADS Chapter 303: Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)

[Mandatory Reference for ADS 303: USAID Implementation of Construction Activities](#)

[ADS Chapter 350: Grants to Foreign Governments](#)

[How-To Note: Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan](#)

[How-To Note: How to Conduct a Data Quality Assessment](#)

[Incorporating CLA into Activity Management](#)

[Performance Monitoring Mission Order Template \(USAID Staff Only\)](#)

[USAID’s Monitoring Toolkit](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.usaid.gov/responsibledata>

ANNEX I: Monitor Compliance with Award Terms

- ✓ **Environmental Compliance:**¹⁵ All USAID activities are required to meet established environmental regulations, and to monitor and mitigate any potential negative effects on the environment. The COR/AOR, in consultation with the Mission Environmental Officer, must allocate adequate resources from the activity's budget for effective mitigation and monitoring to ensure compliance with [22 CFR 216](#) throughout the life of an activity, and conduct the appropriate number of site visits and ensure adequate follow up. For activities that have environmental mitigation measures, the COR/AOR should verify that these are being carried out correctly.
- ✓ **Commodity Management:**¹⁶ Site visits are opportunities to spot check USAID-purchased commodities or equipment used for USAID activities. Take time to review expenditure data to verify whether the resources made available by USAID in the form of commodities are being utilized for their intended purpose and are properly marked per the terms of the agreement/contract.
- ✓ **Branding and Marking:**¹⁷ Proper branding and marking helps ensure assistance programs are more visible and better known in the countries where USAID works. During site visits, review the approved branding and marking plan in the final award, whether acquisition, assistance, or government-to-government (G2G), to ensure that all items are appropriately branded or marked consistent with USAID policy guidelines. (NOTE: The Agency has different branding policies and marking requirements for [Acquisition Awards](#) and for [Assistance Awards](#)). For questions or clarifications about branding and marking, please consult the Mission DOC Specialist.
- ✓ **Health Funding-related Requirements:** USAID is committed to improving global health and confronting global health challenges through improving the quality, availability, and use of essential health services. Site visits enable USAID to assess both the effectiveness of USAID's global health programs and the implementing partner's compliance with statutory and policy requirements.¹⁸
- ✓ **Gender Equality and Female Empowerment:**¹⁹ Gender equality and female empowerment are core development objectives, fundamental for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. Site visits enable USAID to assess to what extent gender is being effectively taken into account in activity implementation, in accordance with the terms of the award, and how to work with implementing partners to ensure compliance with Agency requirements.
- ✓ **Disability and Inclusion:**²⁰ The goal of inclusive development at USAID is to ensure that all people benefit from and have access to development assistance. Conducting periodic site visits to activities that work with marginalized groups enables the Agency to validate that Missions' planned and programmed disability inclusion efforts are working as anticipated.

¹⁵ For more information about USAID's environment considerations, please reference [ADS Chapter 204: Environment Procedures](#) and [22 CFR 216: Agency Environmental Procedures](#).

¹⁶ For more information, please reference USAID ADS 312, [Eligibility of Commodities](#).

¹⁷ For more information, please reference [ADS Chapter 320: Branding and Marking](#).

¹⁸ For more information, visit USAID's [Global Health Legislative and Policy Requirements](#) page.

¹⁹ For more information, reference ADS 205.3.7: [Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle](#).

²⁰ For more information, please find the [Disability Inclusive Development](#) on USAID Pages (this link is only available internally).

- ✓ **Construction:**²¹ Construction activities, guided by the professional experience of Agency engineers, are key to building locally appropriate, sustainable infrastructure that supports USAID's development goals, including economic growth and access to quality education and healthcare. The COR/AOR should monitor the performance of construction risk management and mitigation measures throughout activity implementation, including and especially during site visits. While Missions/Washington OUs have third-party engineering firms oversee actual construction, site visits during key milestones (e.g., ground breaking, opening ceremonies, or other events) can be valuable opportunities to assess activity progress, validate milestone completion, and check on construction safety, overall environmental conditions, and general quality of the construction.²²
- ✓ **Other Acquisition or Assistance Standard Provisions:** Site visits can also be an opportunity to ensure compliance with relevant terms from USAID's for contracts or USAID's [standard provisions](#) for NGOs holding grants or cooperative agreements.
- ✓ **Terms Specific to the USAID Mission or to the Award for the Activity:** Some countries have additional provisions or clauses common to all their awards and some awards may have specific requirements.

²¹ For more information, please reference [USAID Implementation of Construction Activities](#).

²² For more information about construction activity management, please see the [Construction page on ProgramNet](#) (this link is only available for USAID staff only) and [USAID Implementation of Construction Activities](#).