

Program Start-Up

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3.1 Overview

The start-up period is one of the most critical phases of your program. While some managers feel compelled to begin implementing as soon as possible, the more attention you give to establishing a solid foundation (by establishing management policies and systems and developing specific implementation plans), the smoother your program implementation will be.

Skip Ahead

- ▶ Start-Up Timeline and Checklist
- ▶ Financial Systems
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- ▶ HR Policies
- ▶ M&E Start-Up
- ▶ Workplanning
- ▶ Communication Plan
- ▶ Demonstrating Impact

This chapter introduces the major tasks that you need to accomplish between finalizing your award and starting implementation of your program. The first part, “Getting Started” (3.2), offers tips for ensuring a successful start-up and includes a timeline and checklist (3.2.2). This section also introduces the USAID team (3.2.3) to help you understand their roles and responsibilities. Finally, this section looks at the practical matters of requesting and spending money (3.2.4) during the start-up phase.

“Management Policies and Systems” (3.3) discusses requirements for financial (3.3.1), procurement (3.3.2), and human resources (3.3.3) systems and policies.

The section on “Planning” (3.4) covers developing a workplan (3.4.1) and setting up your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, and the final section includes information on developing a branding and marking plan (3.5.3.1).

Objectives

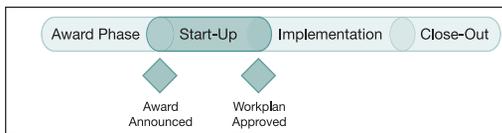
- Understand what you need to accomplish during the start-up phase.
- Learn the minimum requirements for key management systems.
- Walk through the initial workplanning process.

Key Terms and Acronyms

- **Accrual Accounting System**—An accounting method that records financial events based on economic activity rather than financial activity. Under accrual accounting, revenue is recorded when it is earned and realized, regardless of when actual payment is received.
- **AO**—Agreement Officer, the USAID official with the authority to enter into, administer, terminate, and/or close out assistance agreements and make determinations and findings on behalf of USAID.
- **AOTR**—Agreement Officer’s Technical Representative (formerly referred to as the Cognizant Technical Officer. Under a contract, this position is referred to as the Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative), the USAID official responsible for monitoring a grantee’s progress toward achieving the agreement’s purpose and for serving as technical liaison between the grantee and the Agreement Officer (AO). The AO will name and delegate authority for specific responsibilities to the AOTR named in a Cooperative Agreement.
- **Brand**—A visual representation of a product or service, such as a logo or graphic that is easily recognizable. It is a project’s “signature.”
- **Branding**—The process of developing an identity for a product or service using images and words to evoke positive emotional responses in beneficiaries, which are influenced by their interactions with the implementation of the brand (promotion, customer service, other customers, etc.).

- **Cash-Basis Accounting System**—A method of bookkeeping that records financial events based on cash flows and cash position. Income is recorded when cash is received, and expense is recognized when cash is paid out. In cash-basis accounting, revenues and expenses are also called cash receipts and cash payments. Cash-basis accounting does not recognize promises to pay or expectations to receive money or service in the future, such as payables, receivables, or pre-paid or accrued expenses. This system is simpler for individuals and organizations that do not have significant numbers of these transactions, or when the time lag between initiation of the transaction and the cash flow is very short.
- **Communication**—The process of transmitting ideas and information about the nature of an organization and the issues with which it deals; an ongoing, core activity that is key to sustaining an organization.
- **Cost Share**—The portion of project or program costs the USG does not cover. This may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions.
- **FM (or FMO)**—USAID’s Financial Management Office.
- **HR Policies**—A set of rules, values, or guiding principles that define how an organization addresses human resources-related matters. Human resources policies should reflect sound practice, be written down, be communicated across the organization, and be reviewed and modified periodically to reflect changing circumstances.
- **In-Kind Contribution**—Noncash resources contributed to a project, which may include volunteer services, equipment, or property. They may also count as any cost-share obligation.
- **Key Personnel**—Refers to project positions and to the individuals who fill the particular slots. Typically, positions identified in a Cooperative Agreement as Key Personnel are those leadership slots considered essential to successful implementation of the overall project.
- **M&E**—Monitoring and Evaluation, the process of collecting and analyzing data and information for the purpose of identifying and measuring a project’s impact.
- **Marketing**—The processes and activities that contribute to an organization’s public image that, when developed effectively—and reinforced by the good work of staff—help earn the trust and confidence of beneficiaries, local leaders, and donors.
- **Marking**—Applying graphic identities or logos to program materials or project signage to visibly acknowledge contributors; identifies organizations supporting the work.
- **Matching Funds**—A percentage or fixed amount of non-USG resources that USAID requires recipients to provide for a project to be eligible to receive funds.
- **Micro-Purchase Threshold**—The amount an organization sets under which a procurement process may be simplified. For example, if your micro-purchase threshold is \$1,000, you may be required to secure a minimum of three bids on items above that amount, but not on items equal to or below that amount.
- **NICRA**—Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, a rate negotiated individually between an organization and USAID to cover indirect cost. (For more information on indirect costs and NICRA, see USAID’s *Best Practices Guide for Indirect Costing* at <http://www.usaid.gov/business/regulations/BestPractices.pdf>.)
- **SF-1420**—Standard Form-1420, Contractor Employee Biographical Data Sheet, used during the hiring process to gather relevant information, including salary history.
- **Standard Budget Categories**—Standard categories the USG suggests all awardees use, including Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Consultants, Travel/Transportation, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual Services (subcontractors), Program Costs (sometimes replaced with “construction costs”), Other Expenses, and Indirect Costs.
- **Workplan**—A document that lays out a program’s planned activities, associated resources, and targets.

3.2 Getting Started



3.2.1 Five Tips for Managing a Successful Start-Up

1. *Communicate Progress to All Stakeholders*—The news of your award is likely to energize everyone, including project staff, subrecipients, beneficiaries, USAID, and the government officials and community members in your project implementation area. However, excitement can quickly turn into frustration if nothing seems to happen for weeks or even months. Be sure to keep everyone informed and involved during the start-up phase to maintain momentum and enthusiasm.
2. *Involve Staff, Subrecipients, and Communities in the Planning Process*—The easiest way to sustain enthusiasm is to involve staff, subrecipients, and community members in the workplanning process. Resist the temptation to write a workplan based solely on your understanding of the situation because you think that involving a broader group might be too time-consuming and would delay implementation. The extra time invested in the beginning can foster broad ownership of the process and the project.
3. *Learn What USAID Requires*—In effect, compliance begins before the start date of your award. Why? Because notification of an award signals the start of a series of events that may include a pre-award survey, negotiations, and finalizing your award. Learning what USAID requires and when will help you get off on the right foot.

4. *Begin Building Strong Relationships with your USAID Counterparts (both technical and contracting staff)*—You will meet new counterparts in the United States and/or Missions all working toward the same goal of getting your program ready for implementation. Establishing good relationships with all of these people will help build trust and confidence and make the whole process easier for everyone.

5. *Build Implementer-Friendly Processes and Systems*—Start-up involves establishing core management processes, including M&E and financial management systems. It may be tempting to impose automated, highly technical systems. However, before doing so, consider the impact: How much training will be necessary? Are costs involved? Will costs be excessive? Is there adequate infrastructure to support high-tech solutions? Do staff have the time and capacity to learn and maintain these systems? Does using these systems prohibit subrecipients from participating in the M&E process? Be sure to test new systems in the field to ensure they are practical, affordable, and sustainable.

3.2.2 Start-Up Timeline and Checklist

The start-up phase of a project begins when the award is executed and continues until your workplan is approved and you receive funding designated for implementation. There may be some overlap between this phase and some activities in the award phase, such as addressing pre-award conditions. Some activities begun in the start-up phase may continue through the initial implementation phase. Figure 3 provides a list of the key tasks to be completed during start-up.

Figure 3—Key Start-Up Tasks

Event/Task	Description	Timeline	Reference
Award finalized	Begin the start-up phase with delivery of the signed award to the partner.		Chapter 2
Outstanding pre-award tasks	Attend to any aspects of the award phase that are still pending (such as pre-award conditions).	Continues from award phase	Chapter 2
Request funding to cover start-up	Request funds from your funding agency to cover the costs for staff and systems development that are necessary to complete your start-up objectives. Note: <i>This funding may not be used to start implementation.</i>	As needed	Section 3.2.4
Workplan	Develop a detailed workplan for the first year of the project based on your Cooperative Agreement. USAID may provide a template. Do a workplan-budget comparison to ensure that planned activities are consistent with amounts budgeted.	Start after project planning	Section 3.4.1
Financial systems	Make sure your financial manager understands the financial reporting requirements of the award and has everything necessary to meet the minimum requirements. Open a new bank account exclusively dedicated to the project and acquire accounting software applications, if needed.	Must complete certain aspects before receiving funds	Section 3.3.1
Procurement policies and procedures	Establish an effective procurement process to ensure that all procurements made under your award meet USAID requirements and reflect good business practices.	Must complete prior to making purchases	Section 3.3.2 , chapter 4
HR policies	Develop any required HR policies in compliance with local labor laws and communicate them to your staff. Human resource policies, at a minimum, should include the following sections: equal opportunity and non-discrimination, drug-free workplace, disability, anti-human trafficking, HIV workplace policy.	Systems for tracking hours required immediately; other policies may be less time-sensitive	Section 3.3.3
M&E system	Develop indicator definitions, data-gathering processes, and tools. Communicate the importance of data quality to staff and train them to gather and record data properly.	Coordinate with development of workplan	Section 3.4.2
Baseline assessment	Conduct or review results from a program-specific baseline assessment and look for any major baseline data that may already be available.	Coordinate with development of M&E system	Section 3.4.2.1
Workplan review	Be responsive as USAID reviews your workplan. Adjust your program, if necessary, and notify your AOTR immediately if any of the changes affect your budget or targets.	Timing varies	Section 3.4.1.5
Marking/communications plan	Develop a marking/communication plan and review your USAID marking and branding plan.	Complete prior to implementation	Section 3.5.3.1
Workplan approved	Receive notification when your AOTR approves your workplan. (If you are operating on a reimbursement basis rather than an advance basis, you may begin implementing at this time.)		Section 3.4.1.5
Funding for implementation	1. If not already obligated, request funds to cover initial implementation costs. Be aware that USAID's process for obligating funds may sometimes take several weeks, so be sure to plan accordingly. 2. Receive funding from USAID. Organizations operating on an advance-funding basis may begin implementing once the first installment of implementation funds is received.	As long as one month to obligate additional funds, plus as long as two weeks to disburse funds	Chapter 4

3.2.3 Your Team and the USAID Team

During start-up, it is important to manage the expectations of the entire project team as well as beneficiary stakeholders by engaging them in planning and keeping them informed of the project’s status. This will get things done more quickly and will help staff cultivate trust, expertise and leadership skills, which will be critical for solving problems and achieving goals going forward.

During implementation, team members will be working with host-government officials at the local and national levels as well as the in-country USAID Mission and/or Washington, DC-based personnel (and, in some cases, both). During the life of your award, you will deal with three primary USAID offices: the agreement office, financial office, and technical office.

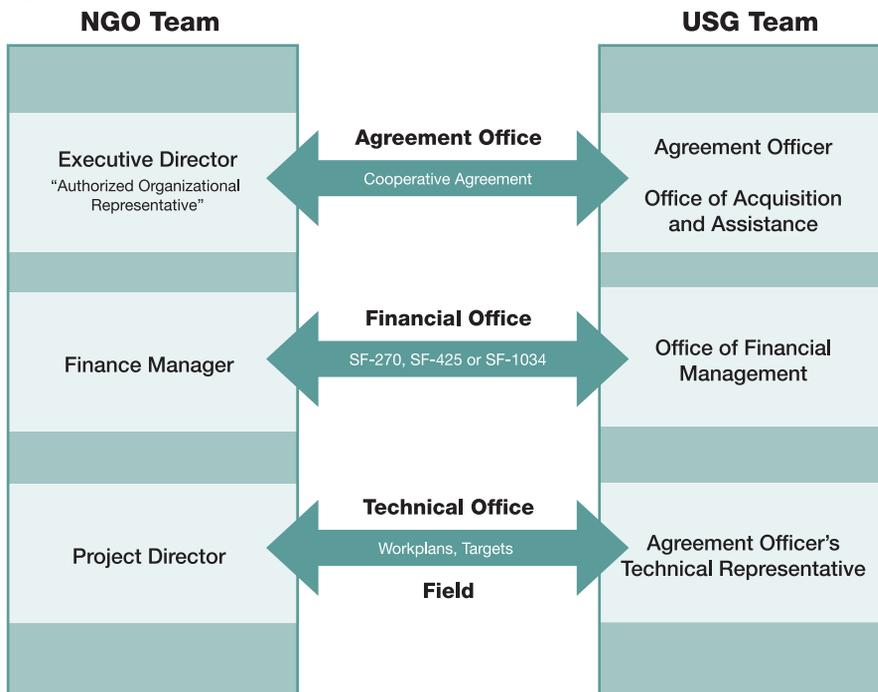
The USAID agreement office is where you applied for funding and negotiated and received your award. The agreement office manages issues related to compliance with the terms

of your agreement. The title of the key USAID individual with whom you will interact in this office is the Agreement Officer (AO). The AO is responsible for approval of formal actions (unless delegated) and award modifications. The AO counterpart in your organization will likely be the Executive Director or someone in a similar leadership role with the authority to enter into legal agreements on behalf of the organization.

At USAID, the finance office is the Cash Management and Payment Division (CMP), but is often simply referred to as “FM,” short for Office of Financial Management.

In most cases, the technical office will be your primary, day-to-day point of contact. The technical office deals with all of the programmatic aspects of your award. USAID agreements identify the Agreement Officer’s Technical Representative (AOTR) as the primary point of contact in the technical office (named in your Cooperative Agreement or subsequently by the AO). A letter of designation from the AO will articulate the responsibilities of the AOTR.

Figure 4—Counterpart Contacts on the NGO and USAID Teams



3.2.4 Requesting Funds during Program Start-Up

Start-up costs should be identified and accounted for in the budget submitted with your proposal. Once approved, you are free to move forward spending those funds for program start-up. Request funds by completing the Standard Form-270 (SF-270) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf270.pdf>). While advances are generally provided on a quarterly basis, you may be restricted to requesting funds for one month at a time. (For more on completing the SF-270 form and requesting and disbursing USAID funds, see [chapter 4](#).)

You must budget and spend your start-up funds carefully in case there are delays in getting your workplan approved. It is not unreasonable to expect the start-up phase to last three months or more.

The funding you receive during the start-up phase is part of your total award amount. You may use it to cover budgeted start-up costs only. If you spend more than you budgeted during this phase, it must be subtracted from

the funding available to implement your award and could hinder your ability to meet your targets. Also, any funds remaining from your start-up obligation will be available to spend during implementation.

Before USAID approves your workplan, it may ask you to make changes. Thus, it is important to wait for written approval before you begin to deliver services. Note that numerous activities contribute to your ability to deliver services that do not necessarily count as implementation—for example, training subrecipients on your M&E system, recruiting personnel, and planning for purchases. Be creative and use this time wisely to prepare your organization and any partners and subs for action once the workplan is approved.

Note: The limitation on implementation during the workplan review process applies only during approval of your initial workplan. Subsequent USAID workplan reviews will not effect implementation of ongoing activities, but approval will be required to expand activities.

Figure 5 lists examples of how you may and may not spend start-up funds.

Figure 5—Appropriate Uses of Start-Up Funds

YES—May Fund during Start-Up	NO—May NOT Fund during Start-Up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing pre-award survey findings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries, or a portion of salaries, for personnel contributing to start-up tasks, such as workplanning, setting up financial systems, or building the M&E system Advertising for project-specific positions, recruiting, and even making a job offer contingent on workplan approval Deposits for rent and utilities; be sure to accurately record as advances or accruals in your accounting system and not as expenses until they are actually incurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries of personnel who work only on implementation (for example, service delivery)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training staff and subrecipients named in your Cooperative Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training unapproved subrecipients or conducting trainings at the community level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchasing items necessary to complete your start-up tasks, such as office equipment and supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchasing items for implementation, such as test kits, or printing implementation-specific materials

3.3 Management Policies and Systems

Several management systems are required to implement your program successfully and to ensure compliance with the regulations governing your award.

This section outlines important factors and minimum requirements for each of these systems, including:

- Financial System Minimum Requirements (3.3.1)
- Procurement Policy Standards (3.3.2)
- Human Resources Policies (3.3.3)
- Monitoring and Evaluation (3.4.2)
- Baseline Assessments (3.4.2.1)

3.3.1 Financial System Minimum Requirements

The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) contains a set of minimum requirements that your financial system must meet in order for your organization to receive USAID funds. The requirements are designed to ensure that USAID funds are administered appropriately and used for their intended purpose, and that you document the use of the funds so that an auditor can review them (when appropriate).

Financial System Minimum Requirements Key Points

Applies to: All recipients of USG funds subject to annual audits

Required for: Financial reports, funding requests, and audits

Verified by: Annual Audit

Governed by: Code of Federal Regulations “Financial Systems Minimum Requirements”

(<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=b3c3841e5bbf2cb2e94dc6312c427ef2&rgn=div8&view=text&node=22:1.0.2.22.25.3.54.2&idno=22>)

How does this help my program?

The importance of sound financial management cannot be stressed enough. If evidence of financial mismanagement is found at your organization, it will tarnish your organization’s reputation and make it challenging for you to get funding in the future.

Pre-Award Survey of Your Financial System

If USAID conducted a pre-award survey (see chapter 2), the auditor checked whether your system met the minimum requirements. If your system fell short, you will have received a report on the deficiencies.

You must set up your financial systems and policies to comply with the financial requirements of your award. These requirements include ensuring that costs are properly categorized, tracked, and charged and that financial information is reported accurately.

The following section outlines some of the minimum requirements for financial management related to your award. This does not replace having a good accountant or financial manager on staff and does not cover all general NGO financial management needs.

Regulation Specifics

Good financial management requires:

- accounting software;
- written financial policies that are well understood by your staff; and
- trained professional staff.

The minimum requirements below refer to both software features and financial policies, and you must incorporate all of these into your staff training.

USAID requires that your financial system must:

- Relate financial data to performance data to develop unit cost data whenever practical.
- Maintain records that identify the source and application of funds for USAID-sponsored activities. These records must contain information pertaining to all USG awards, authorizations, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, outlays, income, and interest.
- Demonstrate effective control over and accountability for all funds, property, and other assets. Your system must adequately safeguard all assets and ensure that they are used solely for authorized purposes.
- Compare outlays with budget amounts (for each award, when applicable).
- Have written procedures for determining the reasonableness, allocability, and allowability of costs in accordance with the provisions of the applicable USAID cost principles

and the terms and conditions of the award (see [section 3.3.2](#) on Procurement Policy Standards below).

- Maintain accounting records, including cost accounting records, supported by source documentation.
- Keep your USAID funds in a separate, dedicated, interest-bearing account separate from other all other funds, even separate from other USAID funds. The only exceptions are if your organization (or one of your subrecipients) receives less than US\$120,000 per year or if the interest-bearing account requires a minimum balance that is too high to make it practical to use.
 - You must remit interest earned on the account in excess of US\$250 per year to USAID. (You may keep up to US\$250 to cover administrative costs.) If you are a subrecipient, you will remit the excess interest to the prime recipient who in turn will submit the interest to USAID.
 - Payment shall be deposited in US dollars (\$) to the USAID Account at the Federal Reserve Board New York (FRBNY) via wire transfer.
 - The following information is required on each wire transfer to ensure proper receipt, acceptance, and crediting of funds by the FRBNY:

A	Federal Reserve Bank New York (FRBNY) 33 Liberty Street New York, New York 10045 TREAS/NYC FUNDS TRANSFER DIVISION ABA # 0210-3000-4 (Also known as RI Receiver Financial Institution)
B	USAID ALC = 72000001 (Represents the USAID Account)
C	Type / Subtype Code— 10 U.S. Fedwire Participant Commercial Bank 15 Foreign Central Bank with FRB Account
D	USD Amount
E	Sender FI Financial Institution (Foreign Central Bank or U.S. Fedwire Participant)
F	Instructed Amount (USD or Foreign Currency) Exchange Rate (if applicable)
G	Beneficiary Information (Intermediary Institution)
H	Originator/FI: Identifier, Name, Address
I	Originator to Beneficiary Information (purpose)

- Accurately produce data necessary to complete the financial reporting requirements, including the SF-425. (For details on financial reporting requirements, see [chapter 5](#).)

- **Accrual versus Cash-Basis Reporting—** USAID allows either cash-basis or accrual accounting systems. If your organization maintains its records on a cash basis, you do not need to establish an accrual accounting system. Please note that cash accounting is not GAAP-compliant and is not recognized by the International Financial Reporting Standards. An accrual accounting system is highly recommended.

Accrual Accounting System

An accounting method that records financial events based on economic activity rather than financial activity. For example, under accrual accounting, revenue is recorded when it is earned and realized, regardless of when actual payment is received.

Cash-Basis Accounting System

A method of bookkeeping that records financial events based on cash flows and cash position. This system recognizes revenue when cash is received and expense when cash is paid. In cash-basis accounting, revenues and expenses are also called cash receipts and cash payments. Cash-basis accounting does not recognize promises to pay or expectations to receive money or service in the future, such as payables, receivables, and pre-paid or accrued expenses. This is simpler for individuals and organizations that do not have significant numbers of these transactions, or when the time lag between initiation of the transaction and the cash flow is very short.

In addition, USAID may require fidelity bond coverage if your organization lacks sufficient coverage to protect USAID's interest. (A fidelity bond is a form of protection that covers an organization for losses that it incurs as a result of fraudulent acts. It usually insures a business for losses caused by the dishonest acts of its employees.) If such a bond is required, be sure to obtain it from a company that meets USAID standards.

Procurement Policy Standards Key Points

Applies to: All USG-funded partners and subrecipients

Required for: Annual Audit

Verified by: Annual Audit

Governed by: A combination of U.S. law, USAID regulations, and the terms of your award

3.3.2 Procurement Policy Standards

USAID has procurement regulations that dictate what you can buy, from where, how you must purchase and ship items, what taxes are applicable, and what documentation is required. The specific regulations are discussed in [chapter 4](#), but this section discusses the procurement policies needed to govern your purchasing process.

How does this help my program?

Because you are a steward of USAID funds, one of your goals is to make sure your organization uses this money appropriately and effectively to deliver needed services to beneficiaries. The procurement regulations are meant to ensure that funds are not mismanaged or used to purchase dangerous or low-quality goods that could cause more harm than good. Establishing an appropriate procurement process helps protect your organization and your beneficiaries, promotes transparency and accountability, and helps ensure that funds are used efficiently to deliver needed services.

Regulation Basics

- **Standards of Conduct**—Develop written standards of conduct for the employees and officers in your organization who are involved in selecting goods, services, and consultants and overseeing procurement. The code of conduct is for all staff because staff are involved in procurement in one way or another, including:
 - **Conflict of Interest**—Employees should not be involved in selecting or overseeing procurement if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest. This includes situations where the employee, any member of the employee’s immediate family, or the employee’s partner has a financial or other interest in the firm selected for an award. This includes any organization that employs or is about to employ the employee, employee’s family member, or the employee’s partner.
 - **Gratuities**—Employees must not request or accept gratuities, gifts, favors, or anything of monetary value from subagreement contractors or subawardees. However, you may set standards for situations in which the financial interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value.
- **Disciplinary Actions**—The standards of conduct must outline the disciplinary actions to be applied to employees for violating these rules.
- **Free and Open Competition**—Encourage free and open competition to the maximum extent possible.
 - **Unfair Competitive Advantage**—Vendors who help you develop statements of work should be barred from bidding on that work.
 - **Clear Evaluation Criteria**—Solicitations should clarify the criteria your organization will use to evaluate bids.
- **General Procurement Procedures**—In your procurement policy:
 - Avoid purchasing unnecessary items.
 - Consider both lease and purchase alternatives, where appropriate.
 - Include in your solicitations such elements as:
 - description of technical requirements;
 - criteria to be used in evaluating bids;
 - minimum acceptable performance standards;
 - specific features of required items;
 - preference for products and services that use the metric system of measurement; and
 - preference for energy-efficient items and products that conserve natural resources.
- **U.S. Small, Minority-, and Women-Owned Businesses**—When working in the United States, U.S.-based recipients should give preferential treatment to U.S. small businesses, including [HUBZone](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone/aboutus/index.html) (<http://www.sba.gov/hubzone/aboutus/index.html>), veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, and minority- and women-owned firms. To achieve this, your policies should:
 - Consider whether a firm intends to subcontract with small, minority-, or women-owned businesses in your evaluation process.
 - Encourage contracting with consortiums of small, minority- or women-owned businesses when a contract is too large for any single firm to handle individually.
 - Use the services of various USG agencies and organizations, such as the Small Business Administration and the Department of Commerce’s Minority Business Development Agency, in your solicitation process.

- **Procurement Instruments**—Specify when to use various procurement instruments, such as fixed-price contracts, cost-reimbursable contracts, purchase orders, and incentive contracts. Your policies should prohibit the use of “cost-plus-a-percentage-of-cost” or “percentage-of-construction-cost” methods of contracting.
- **USAID Pre-Award Review**—If your organization does not have a procurement policy in place that meets the minimum standards listed above (for example, if your organization had pre-award survey findings to this effect), USAID may impose increased monitoring of your award procurements by, for example, requiring a review of various documents (for example, solicitation, cost estimates, etc.) for any procurements of US\$10,000 or more.

Micro-Purchase Threshold

The amount your organization sets, under which your procurement process may be simplified. For example, if your micro-purchase threshold is US\$1,000, you may have to have a minimum of three bids on items above that amount, but not on items equal to or below that amount. There is no USG requirement regarding what that amount should be.

- **Contractor Evaluation**—Clearly state that you will only enter into contracts with vendors that you believe can successfully complete the work required. Your policies should consider contractor integrity, record of past performance, financial and technical resources, or accessibility to other necessary resources. Your policies should also include a process for ensuring that suppliers are not listed on the Excluded Parties List (www.epls.gov), the UN Consolidated List (<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolist.shtml>), and the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Designated Nationals list (<http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sdn/>). (For more information on ineligible suppliers, see [4.3.2.4](#)).
- **Documentation Procedure**—Record price or cost analysis in connection with every procurement action. The cost analysis should include the allowability test (see [4.3.2.1](#)).
- **Records for Large Purchases**—At a minimum, keep records with the following information on all procurements that exceed your micro-purchase threshold:
 - the basis for selection;
 - justification for lack of competition when competitive bids were not obtained;
 - documentation on terrorism search; and
 - basis for award cost or price.
- **Contract Administration System**—You should also have a process for evaluating contractor performance that documents whether the contractor met the terms, conditions, and specifications of the contract.

It is important for you to adhere strictly to your organization’s procurement policy (that meets USAID requirements). Not adhering to your organization’s own procurement policy is a common audit finding. For example, if your organization requires a minimum of three bids for any purchase over \$1,000, it is essential to get the three or more quotes in writing or to document a valid reason why three quotes could not be obtained.

3.3.3 Human Resources Policies

There are a number of USAID regulations that touch on human resources (HR)-related issues. (See Standards of Conduct regarding conflict of interest, gratuities, and disciplinary actions in section [3.3.2](#) on Procurement Policy Standards.)

How Do HR Policies Help My Program?

People are your organization’s most valuable asset. Establishing a set of HR policies does not restrict your staff and volunteers—rather, it helps guide and protect them, so they may contribute to the best of their abilities.

Some HR policies are required by local law, U.S. law, or your funding agency, while others are practical or necessary for managing an effective organization. Regardless of the source, establishing clear, well-developed HR policies will not only enhance communication between managers and employees, clarify expectations, and ensure that all staff are treated equitably, but they can also protect your organization against grievances and lawsuits if they arise.

It is a good idea to review your HR policies with regard to meeting USAID requirements. This process will allow you to identify and resolve any gaps or conflicts. Your organization should compile an employee handbook to share with your staff.

Policy Essentials

- **Local Labor Laws and Regulations**— Organizations must comply with local labor laws where they employ staff. For example, there may be regulations preventing hiring discrimination or requiring certain benefits. It is also important for both organizations and employees to be clear from the beginning about the process for discipline/termination, the rights of the employee and employer, and grounds for discipline/termination.
- **Standards of Conduct**— Standards of conduct are established to address the behaviors and professional conduct that affect the employee's ability to perform his or her job and represent the organization. Those related to procurement (3.3.2) are described above, but you may want to broaden them to include reporting to work on time, performing assigned duties, and supporting a safe and healthy work environment and common workplace standards, such as prohibiting sexual harassment or discrimination.
- **Time Sheet Tracking**— Time sheets are required for your annual audit for all personnel who are paid with USAID funds, including contractors and part-time staff. In addition, it is helpful to have volunteers fill out simplified time sheets, so you can track their hours and count their contribution toward your cost-share contribution (if you have one).
- **Due Diligence in Hiring Decisions**— You are required to have a summary of a candidate's academic and work history (a curriculum vitae or CV) for every employee hired under your award to verify his or her employment and salary history. The Cooperative Agreement does not require use of the SF-1420—The "Contractor Employee Biographical Data Sheet" (form AID-1420-17, <http://www.usaid.gov/forms/AID1420-17.doc>), the standard form used to document the salary history of employees and contractors. However, the "1420" bio data form is often used during the hiring process because it is an easy way to capture the relevant information. Note that, although this form may not be required, USAID often asks for it to help justify salaries.

- **Faith-Based Organization Hiring Protections**— Under U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity laws, a faith-based organization (FBO) implementing a USAID program has the right to hire people who share the organization's faith to carry out its activities. If you choose to do this, make sure your HR policies are clear on this point.
- **Drug-Free Workplace Policy**— Your Cooperative Agreement requires you, and any of your organization's subgrantees, to issue a drug-free workplace statement. This policy statement must be signed by every staff member in your organization. A good way to address the signature requirement for this policy is to include it in two documents: first, in the HR manual and, second, as a separate one-page policy document that is signed by each employee and placed in personnel files.

According to USG Mandatory Standard Provisions, the Drug-Free Workplace Policy statement must include:

- a declaration that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited;
- specific actions your organization will take against employees who violate that prohibition; and
- conditions of employment under any award that state that an employee must:
 - abide by the terms of the statement, and
 - notify you in writing if he or she is convicted of violating of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five calendar days after the conviction.

In addition, your organization is required to establish an ongoing drug-free awareness program to inform employees about:

- the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace;
- your drug-free workplace policy;
- any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs; and
- the penalties you may enforce for drug-abuse violations in the workplace.

This policy statement and program must be in place no later than 30 days after the effective date of your award.

You are required to notify USAID immediately if an employee is convicted of a drug violation in the workplace. You must send such notification in writing within 10 calendar days after the conviction and identify the employee's position title and the number of each award on which the employee worked.

Within 30 days of an employee's conviction, you must either:

- take appropriate personnel action against the employee, up to and including termination (as appropriate with your organization's HR policies and applicable labor laws), or
- require the employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug-abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved by a national, state, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

In the event that local laws prevent you from following the mandates of the USG drug-free workplace policy in full, notify your AO or AOTR and seek his or her guidance.

- **HIV/AIDS Policy**—An HIV/AIDS policy defines an organization's stance on the employment of persons living with HIV or AIDS and the expected treatment of persons living with HIV or AIDS in the workplace. Although an HIV/AIDS policy is not required, it is considered best practice for any organization, particularly those working within the field of HIV/AIDS. An HIV/AIDS policy formalizes the organization's commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS and supporting staff living with HIV or AIDS, including benefits for care or treatment, adjustments in working assignments where possible, and job security. The development of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy can enable the organization to keep and benefit from talented staff.

Ensure that your organization is in compliance with national and local labor laws regarding the employment of persons living with HIV/AIDS. In some cases, your organizational policy may exceed what is legally required, particularly in countries with no laws regarding the employment of persons living with HIV.

Creating an Employee Handbook

Once you have developed and reviewed your organization's HR policies, print and assemble them in an employee handbook to share with your staff. Ensure that staff sign a statement that they have received and reviewed it, and understand their obligation to adhere to your organizational policy. Also, include a personnel policy review in your orientation process.

3.4 Planning

The most important deliverable and implementation tool you are required to develop during the start-up phase is your workplan. A good workplan synthesizes all of the technical, organizational, and financial planning for your program. It takes the program description approved in the Cooperative Agreement and translates it into a specific one-year implementation plan that USAID must approve before you can start working.

This section begins by discussing workplanning, which covers what you want to achieve, and how and by when you intend to achieve it. Monitoring and evaluation is then introduced as an essential consideration. The chapter concludes with a discussion of another important deliverable required by USAID—the branding and marking plan ([3.5.2](#)).

3.4.1 The Workplan

Your workplan is a detailed narrative outlining exactly how you plan to implement the first year of your program. Although your award may have a period of performance of several years, you generally create and submit workplans annually to allow for year-to-year program adjustments. Workplans are based on the program description in your Cooperative Agreement. While the Program Description expresses what you plan to accomplish over the entire life of the award, your workplan provides the details and specifics.

The workplan is a key component of both your annual responsibility to USAID and your own internal project-management process. The workplan is a tool for you to communicate to USAID how you will execute your program. In addition, the workplan is an excellent tool for you to use internally to better plan and manage your activities.

3.4.1.1 Workplan Sections

Sometimes USAID may require you to use a specific format, but often you will be on your own to develop your workplan. Below are five major sections that workplans may include:

- I. [Executive Summary](#)
- II. [Implementation Plan](#)
 - a. [Workplan Logic Matrix](#)
- III. [Monitoring and Evaluation Plan](#)
- IV. [Budget](#)
- V. [Management and Staffing](#)

In addition, workplans often include [appendices](#) with supporting material and other information about your program.

I. Executive Summary

The executive summary, typically no more than two pages in length, provides a general description of your project and how it is to be implemented. It includes the total budget required for the year broken down by major activities and a summary table of targets you plan to reach during the year. If you are implementing a project in multiple countries, include a general overview and then a country-by-country overview. If you are in the middle of executing a multiple-year program, you may want to include a short summary of project progress to date as it relates to the current workplan. For example, you may explain how a slow start-up in the first year affected original plans and that your second-year workplan includes adjustments to stay on target. However, refrain from getting into a detailed discussion of progress; save that for your quarterly performance reports. Also, resist getting overly detailed about how you are adjusting each activity; include that detail in the activity descriptions in the implementation plan.

II. Implementation Plan

The implementation plan, the heart of your workplan, contains detailed descriptions of each activity. You can take different approaches to organizing this section, based on the number of countries and the structure of activities in your program.

Some partners start with headquarters-level activities—for example, development of training materials. Programs are then broken down into strategic objectives (SO), broad, long-term goals that link directly to the Program Description in your Cooperative Agreement. Your activity descriptions then fall under your strategic objectives as shown in Figure 6. Generally, your activities should align closely with your targets. Be sure to explain all targets that you have committed to achieve.

If you plan to report on a target, there must be an activity description explaining how it will be achieved (see section [3.4.1.2](#) on Activity Descriptions).

a. *Workplan Logic Matrix*

Your implementation plan may include a Workplan Logic Matrix; this matrix links activities, timelines, and targets. Generally, the Workplan Logic Matrix will be similar to the chart in Figure 7, laid out in the same order as your workplan (Strategic Objectives and Activities). For each activity, 3-month, 6-month, 9-month, and 12-month outputs are listed. The 12-month outputs will be cumulative. The Workplan Logic Matrix also shows your targets, subrecipients, and geographic location for each activity.

Figure 6—Workplan Implementation

Agreement	Year 1	Year 2
Program Descriptions Multi-Year Project		
Strategic Objective 1	Strategic Objective 1 Activity A Timeline/Targets...	Strategic Objective 1 Activity A Timeline/Targets...
Strategic Objective 2	Activity B Timeline/Targets...	Activity B Timeline/Targets...
Strategic Objective 3		
	Strategic Objective 2 Activity C Timeline/Targets...	Strategic Objective 2 Activity C Timeline/Targets...
		Strategic Objective 3 Activity D Timeline/Targets... Activity E Timeline/Targets... Activity F Timeline/Targets...

Figure 7—Sample Workplan Logic Matrix for a Women’s Micro-Enterprise Program at 3, 6, 9, and 12 Months

Activity	Outputs 3 Month	Outputs 6 Month	Outputs 9 Month	Outputs 12 Month	Target	Indicators	Sub- recipients	Location
Kenya								
Strategic Objective 1: Empower women through income-generating associations.								
Activity 1: Formation of Women’s Associations	Establish 3 associations of 10 women each	Add 3 associations (total 6) of 10 women each	Add 3 associations (total 9) of 10 women each	Add 3 associations (total 12) of 10 women each	Engage 120 women through community outreach to form 12 income- generating associations	# of women engaged	Nairobi Youth Alliance	Nairobi
Activity 2: Best Business Practices Leaders	Train 10 female community leaders	Train +10 female community leaders	Train +10 female community leaders	Train +10 female community leaders (total 40)	Train 40 women in effective business practices and vocational skills	# of women trained	Global Grassroots	Nairobi

III. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Monitoring and evaluation plans contain the following elements (see section 3.4.2):

- indicators broken down by locality/geographical area and activity;
- additional USAID in-country indicators broken down by locality and activity;
- additional indicators you plan to use to monitor your programs, broken down by geographical area and activity;
- detailed narrative that describes your M&E process; and
- precise definitions for measuring targets.

The narrative should include information on:

- how data are gathered;
- how they are entered into your M&E system;
- frequency with which data are gathered and entered;
- what controls or measures are in place to ensure accuracy and data quality;
- how you will use the data for program improvements; and
- overview of the training you give to staff involved in gathering data.

Finally, you should include precise definitions for all indicators. For example, when you count someone as “trained,” is there a test or are there a certain number of classes the individual must attend? Are there government standards and certifications to which you must adhere?

IV. Budget

The budget section includes a budget narrative and refers to an attached budget. The budget spreadsheet and the budget narrative should break down the budget into standard USAID budget categories.

The narrative should have a one- or two-paragraph overview on overall spending. Is the program on track from a spending perspective? If not, why? Do you plan to shift, slow down, or speed up spending?

In addition, if you foresee the need for rebudgeting, determine whether these changes will meet the 10% significant rebudgeting threshold requiring USAID approval. Explain

your reasons for rebudgeting, and how you will make up shortfalls in areas where you shift money out.

V. Management and Staffing

The management and staffing section includes an organization chart that shows the reporting structure and identifies personnel. In addition, a narrative may explain staffing strategies, such as volunteer recruitment and retention plans, training, and in-country or subrecipient management strategies.

For multiple-year agreements, workplans after the first year may focus on any recent or future changes to the project’s staffing structure and their impact on plans for the upcoming year. Keep in mind that your focus should always be on the impact on implementation for the upcoming year.

Appendices

The inclusion of appendices to your workplan varies widely from partner to partner and program to program. Examples of documents you may wish to attach in an appendix include:

- documents in other formats that are difficult to integrate into the main document (for example, a workplan budget created using Microsoft Office Excel);
- graphical documents, such as organizational charts;
- supplementary information that provides additional details on your program, such as curricula summaries or training agendas; and
- further information on subrecipients, including MOUs.

While appendices can be helpful, be wary of putting too much in an appendix. If you find your workplan doubling in length after including the appendices, consider whether they are really helpful to your AOTR.

An alternative is to attach a summary list of materials that your program uses with a table of contents or short synopsis of each item. This list may include data-gathering forms, training manuals, information pamphlets, handouts, etc. Include details about the language in which something is written, the number of pages, who developed the document, and when it was last revised. Your AOTR then may request a copy of a full document later if needed.

3.4.1.2 Activity Descriptions

Activity descriptions are a central part of your workplan, so it is a good practice to start writing your activity descriptions first, and then build the rest of the workplan around them.

The first step is to break down your planned work into “activities” and “objectives.”

Activities and Objectives

Workplans group activities under objectives. An objective is a high-level goal that your activities work together to achieve. It ties back to the program description in your Cooperative Agreement. The activities that work toward that goal will fall under that objective.

An activity is a series of tasks with one or two primary outputs. The output(s) should tie directly to your targets. If you have a number of different targets for an activity, try breaking them down. Are the tasks under an activity closely related, and do they all build toward the same goal? If not, consider reorganizing your activities.

If an activity does not fit easily under one objective, try to determine what the primary outcome is. For example, perhaps an event you are sponsoring promotes mediation, raises awareness about indigenous forms of dispute resolution, encourages active listening, and provides information on interpersonal reconciliation, but the primary goal is mediation. If you have other strategic objectives for local forms of dispute resolution, active listening, and interpersonal reconciliation, you can always mention how this activity links to those other strategic objectives in your activity description.

Writing Activity Descriptions

A good activity description will be able to convey the following:

- what you plan to do;
- how you plan to do it;
- how long it will take;
- who will be doing it;
- who you will be doing it to and/or with;
- where the activity will be undertaken (multiple locations or single location);
- how the activity links to other activities, either within this project or other partner projects (including referral networks);

- major costs associated with doing this work; and
- outputs and outcomes you expect and how you plan to measure these.

The primary purpose of activity descriptions is to lay out the technical details and timelines, which you should cover in depth. Other areas (staffing, budget, and M&E) do not need to be as comprehensive, since the reader will refer to those sections in your workplan. However, it is very helpful to discuss how a particular activity relates to those sections.

Within each activity description, refer to partners, materials, or curricula that you plan to work with or use. Put details about your subrecipients or the curricula you propose to use in an annex to avoid straying too far from discussing implementation.

Activity Description Outline and Example

The following is an activity description outline:

- activity name
- type of program/program activity area
- geographic scope of activity;
- technical description of project; and
- current status of the activity (is it a new or continuing activity?).
 - If it is a new activity, what steps do you need to take to get started? How long will start-up take?
 - If it is continuing, are there any changes/expansions this year?
- Include any other specific steps that are necessary to reach this year’s targets, such as the need to identify locations, hire or recruit volunteers, develop materials, complete major procurements (vehicles), etc., as well as estimated timelines for completion.
- Major costs associated with the activity.
- Who will do the work—staff, volunteers, or subrecipients.
- Targets estimated for the activity.
- Indicators you will monitor to measure impact and quality.
- Linkages with other programs and any additional effects the program may have.

Figure 8—Sample Activity Description: Community Home-Based Care

Community Home-Based Care

The Community Home-Based Care activity is a home-based palliative care program set up and maintained by volunteers from the local community. This activity is aimed at 20 rural communities in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR) in Ethiopia.

This program uses the "Home-Based Care in Ethiopia" training materials developed by XYZ NGO and approved for use by the Ethiopian Government. The materials have been translated into the local language most widely spoken in SNNPR.

This activity will start up as soon as the workplan is approved. Our Training Manager, Almez Hailu, a registered nurse with five years of HBC experience, completed training in the curriculum in August. She will travel to SNNPR within one month to set up and conduct the first training of trainers. We have partnered with the SNNPR Regional Health Bureau to provide 10 trainers who are familiar with local language and Amharic. The training consists of a two-week course and two weeks of "hands-on" supervised home interventions. After the trainers have completed their training, they will be dispatched to the 20 villages in 5 groups of 2. They will spend approximately one month in each village. Over the course of the year, they will go to each village once.

Once in the villages, they will work with the local communities to identify individuals needing care and will establish home-based care committees, starting with the families of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). They will work with the committees to train volunteers and identify additional needs, such as nutrition, treatment, and testing. Since the trainers are from the regional health office, they will draw on local resources for referrals.

Once the 10 individuals are trained, we expect each of them to reach out and train at least 10 additional volunteers in each village, bringing the total trained to 210. Based on the current prevalence data, we estimate there are, on average, 25 PLWHA in each village. Our goal is to provide at least weekly visits to each of those PLWHA after we have identified them and trained the volunteers. That would mean we would reach an estimated 500 individuals with home-based palliative care.

The community care committees will learn basic recordkeeping and will receive simple forms to complete during each visit. Our M&E Field Staff will travel once a month to each village to gather the data and to take oral reports from the committees on the status of their programs. These staff members will also be able to resupply home-based care kits and answer any questions the volunteers may have. The Field Staff will stay in each village for one week and will visit multiple homes during their visits to ensure quality control.

We will also be working with the Regional Health Bureau office to monitor effects through referrals to other treatment, testing, and orphans and vulnerable children programs.

3.4.1.3 Workplan Budget

Your workplan budget should include six elements:

- summary budget spreadsheet;
- detailed budget spreadsheet;
- budget narrative;
- identification of international travel;
- identification of items that will require waivers or approvals; and
- cost-share/matching details.

The budget spreadsheets—both the summary and detail—should be in Microsoft Office Excel® format, and it is best to put them in one file with separate worksheet tabs. Ideally, the summary tab will total automatically from the detail.

Summary Budget Spreadsheet

The summary budget will show the totals for each of the USAID standard budget categories. The spreadsheet should also show the cost share or matching funds where appropriate. The standard budget categories are incorporated into the sample summary budget spreadsheet in Figure 9.

Figure 9—Sample Summary Budget

Summary Budget for My NGO		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	Cost Share (if applicable)	Total Project Costs
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	3 Years	3 Years
A.	Personnel	45,000	47,250	49,612	141,862	50,000	191,862
B.	Fringe Benefits	9,000	9,450	9,922	28,372	5,000	33,372
C.	Consultants	10,000	10,500	11,025	31,525		31,325
D.	Travel, Transportation	22,000	23,100	24,255	69,355		69,355
E.	Equipment	40,000	0	0	40,000	6,535	46,798
F.	Supplies	4,990	882	926	6,798		6,798
G.	Contractual Services (subcontracts)	135,000	141,750	148,837	425,587		425,587
H.	Program Costs	75,000	78,750	82,688	236,438	143,634	380,072
I.	Other Expenses (e.g., audit)	25,000	26,250	27,563	78,813		78,813
J.	Indirect Costs	0	0	0	0		0
TOTAL		365,990	337,932	354,828	1,058,750	205,169	1,263,919

Figure 10—Sample Detailed Budget

Year 1 Detailed Budget (Jan 1, 2010 to Dec 31, 2010)					
A.	Personnel	Position	Rate per Month	Number of Months LOE*	Year 1 Total
1.	Darlene Director	Project Director	\$1,000	12	\$12,000
2.	Frank Finance	Finance Manager	\$900	12	\$10,800
3.	Paul Program	Program Officer	\$800	12	\$9,600
4.	Patience Program Assistant	Program Assistant	\$650	12	\$7,800
5.	Robby Receptionist	Receptionist	\$400	6	\$2,400
6.	David Driver	Driver	\$400	6	\$2,400
SUBTOTAL					\$45,000

* LOE - Level of Effort

Detailed Budget Spreadsheet

The detailed budget breaks down the costs further, and each line item should include a unit cost as well.

Ideally, totals in the detailed budget spreadsheet will be calculated based on specific formulas,

which are linked directly back to the summary spreadsheet. This will help significantly if you need to rebudget.

Figure 10 is a sample of one section—A. Personnel—of the detailed budget spreadsheet for My NGO.

Budget Narrative

A budget narrative should reference both the summary and detailed budget spreadsheets. It should start by going through each of the standard budget categories and giving a short description of the primary costs that will be incurred. Certain budget categories require further explanation, as follows:

- **Personnel**—Identify Key Personnel and the percentage of their time dedicated to the project.
- **Fringe Benefits**—It is important to identify separately the fringe benefits that your staff are entitled so that USAID can understand how your HR policy relates to the budget. (Remember also that if it is your organization’s policy to pay a severance to your staff at the end of the contract, this should also be reflected in your budget and budget notes.) Remember to keep track of accruals in your accounting system if it is cash-based.
- **Contracts**—This may include the name of your subrecipients that you intend to use on the project. Include all projected costs of your subrecipients under this line item (and then their detailed budget and budget notes as appendices) as opposed to including their budgeted line items (such as salaries, fringe benefits, travel, etc.) with your organization’s own line items. For consultants, remember to include the rate justification (such as the daily rate based on their established and verified salary history or SF-1420 form) and the unit justification (such as the number of days, etc.).
- **Travel**—Identify international travel and provide justification for it.
- **Equipment**—Identify equipment that will require waivers or approvals, including vehicles, and provide a justification. Also, identify procedures you will follow in procurement (getting multiple bids, for example).
- **Other Direct Costs**—Identify other expenses directly attributable to the project that are not included in the line items presented above. These will vary from organization to organization and may include costs such as rent, utilities, supplies, expendable equipment, etc. Unit costs for these types of items may be based on the organization’s prior experience implementing projects of a similar scope and size.
- **Subawards**—Identify partners and include a short description of the activities you will implement with them or have them implement.

- **Indirect Costs**—Costs that are required to carry out a project, but are difficult to attribute to a specific project, such as utilities, rent, or administrative support staff. If a [NICRA](#) is established, include the rate and how it is calculated. Also, state whether the NICRA is the provisional or final rate. (For more information on indirect costs, see section [4.3.1.6](#). For more on establishing a NICRA, see section [2.5.2](#).)

The narrative should also discuss the status of the program’s overall spending. Is the program on track from a spending perspective? If not, what do you plan to shift, slow down, or speed up.

Identification of Items that Will Require Waivers or Approvals

Include a list of restricted commodities such as vehicles, pharmaceuticals, and other items that require [waivers and/or approvals](#).

Cost Share/Matching

Provide a brief narrative describing your organization’s contributions to the project that apply to your cost-share or matching obligation, if any.

Cost Share versus Matching Funds

The term “matching funds” is used when program recipients are required to provide a certain amount of non-USG funds to a project in order to be eligible to receive USG funds. Cost share refers to all other cases where non-USG contributions are committed to a program.

Carefully consider the amount of cost share or matching funds your organization will be able to contribute. Once cost share or matching funds are proposed and approved, either is legally binding, and your organization will be held to contributing that amount.

Clarifying which currency will be used for local expenditures is also important. When proposing a cost-share amount, pay close attention to whether it is in U.S. dollars or local currency.

3.4.1.4 What Makes a Good Workplan

The following are the three characteristics of a good workplan:

1. The workplan describes activities thoroughly and completely, so that someone who is unfamiliar with the project will be able to understand it.

2. The different sections of the workplan are connected. For example, if the activity description says that 50 people will be reached, then the M&E section will describe how it will determine whether 50 people have been reached, the budget section will account for the cost of reaching 50 people, and the staffing section will show how the organization will hire and train someone to reach those 50 people.
3. The proposed activities, time frame, and budget are realistic and achievable.

3.4.1.5 Workplan Review and Approval

Once you complete your draft workplan, submit it in accordance with the instructions in your Cooperative Agreement. Typically, this means submitting it electronically to your AOTR. Your AOTR will then coordinate a technical review with various USAID experts. You may be asked to make changes to your program, ranging from minor fixes to major program reorganization. Again, major changes are generally requested only if your proposed activities are inconsistent with USAID guidance or host-country plans. If these changes affect your targets or budget, be sure to alert your AOTR. Major changes that require rebudgeting or changes in scope or targets may require a modification to your agreement.

Generally, the review process for the first year will take longer and involve more revisions than will subsequent reviews.

Once you have made all requested changes, your AOTR will do a final review and issue a formal workplan approval. At this point, if you are planning to operate on a reimbursement basis, you can begin implementing. If you are operating on an advance-funding basis, then your AOTR will arrange for you to receive an additional obligation on which you can begin to draw. The obligation may take as long as one month, with an additional two weeks for funds to get to your bank account. Be sure to plan accordingly and manage the expectations of project stakeholders.

There is one important consideration to note: if your organization still has outstanding pre-award conditions that you have not met by the time you are ready to implement, USAID may not clear your organization to receive funding. (For more information about pre-award conditions, see [chapter 2](#).)

3.4.2 Starting Your Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System

Experience shows that it is good practice to consider M&E from the start. While many people have heard of evaluations that take place at the end of the project, you must conduct one at the beginning of the project to serve as a starting point or baseline against which to measure change. This means collecting data before the intervention starts.

Although often mentioned in the same breath, monitoring and evaluation are, in fact, two distinct activities, related but not identical. What they have in common is that they seek to learn from what you are doing and how you are doing it.

Monitoring involves tracking your project's progress, which means systematically gathering and analyzing information about what you are doing, whom you are reaching, and whether activities are being implemented according to plan. It provides the basis for evaluation. Evaluation is the comparison of actual project impact against agreed-on plans. It looks at what you set out to do, what you have accomplished, and how you accomplished it.

Your M&E system gathers information on dozens of data points throughout your program so you can track progress and analyze the effectiveness of each activity.

M&E System Setup Key Points

Applies to: All recipients

Required for: Performance Reporting

Verified by: Data Quality Assessments

Governed by: Your Cooperative Agreement and USAID regulations

How Does This Help My Program?

Setting up an M&E system is more than just building a spreadsheet or database. You must also understand your overall objectives and figure out how to track activities and progress to make sure you are achieving goals.

By carefully designing an M&E system that is user-friendly and responsive to the challenges of operating in the field, you will have a powerful tool at your disposal to track the progress and impact of your program as well as data to guide its refinement.

3.4.2.1 Setting Up an M&E System

The following section outlines several important considerations to keep in mind as you set up your M&E system. Numerous free M&E resources are available on the Internet, a number of which are listed in the reference section, for further reading. In addition, a special section on baseline assessments (see the box on [Baseline Assessments](#)) can help you start gathering baseline data.

1. Plan Your M&E Timeline.

What key deliverables does your M&E system contribute to, and when are they due? For example:

- When are M&E-related reports due (see [chapter 5](#) on reporting requirements)?
 - host-government reporting requirements;
 - USAID performance reporting requirements; and
 - final report.
- How else will you be using the data for internal program management?
 - to feed into annual budgeting and work planning;
 - mid-term evaluation;
 - final evaluation;
 - other regular program monitoring; and
 - as a tool for decisionmaking.

Long-term programmatic goals and objectives should be based on performance and feedback from the field, including feedback from intended beneficiaries. Over and above USAID reporting requirements (in line with strategic plans), M&E plans should include indicators to track progress toward long-term sustainability. Map these items on a timeline to that ensure your system is prepared to deliver the data you need on time.

2. Use Your Program's Objectives to Define Indicators.

A program may have required indicators that will define a portion of the data you collect. The host government may also require programs to report against country-specific indicators.

In addition, you will want to select some of your own indicators, which you will use to measure the impact of your program activities. You should align these program-specific indicators with your objectives, and they should help measure your success at meeting them.

Baseline Assessments

A baseline assessment gives a snapshot of the community or targeted beneficiary group prior to the start of a project. It may include data on communities, households, and/or individuals, depending on the specific goals of the project.

These data may be used prior to implementation to refine the project design. The assessment is repeated during the project to track progress and help make adjustments, and at the end of the project to measure the overall impact of the project. The baseline assessment is a critical component of your M&E system.

Data from in-country sources may contribute to your baseline. In addition, other NGOs/CSOs operating in the same country where you are working may have data they are willing to share.

However, these are a supplement to your survey of the communities where you intend to work. This aspect of the assessment should focus specifically on collecting data relevant to your project.

You can contract baseline assessments to an independent evaluator, especially if your M&E staff is not in place from the start. Be sure to save all documentation of your baseline assessment, including all tools and forms, for evaluators to use later to conduct mid-term and final evaluations.

3. Choose Appropriate Data Collection Methods.

A strong M&E plan will provide a sense of the number of beneficiaries receiving project support as well as what changes this support brings about in their lives. Different data-collection methods gather information that answers both of these questions, and it is important to make careful decisions about the types of data collection methods to use to tell the story of your project results.

Data collection methods should match the indicators developed for the program, be appropriate to the context, and be easy to use.

Consider systems that allow for community-level participation and ensure that all analysis is shared with the implementers in the field, so everyone can learn from the data.

4. *Design a Paper Process First.*

When staff visit beneficiaries, what data will they need to capture? How will they collect these data? How will they record the data? How will you consolidate and analyze the data for reporting?

Design your process step by step with paper-based forms first. Later, you may choose to automate or computerize certain components.

5. *Take an Implementation-Friendly Approach.*

What challenges does your program face in the field? Is travel to sites in rural areas expensive and time-consuming? Is there electricity or solar-energy-powered equipment? Do you have good Internet access? What sort of literacy rates can you expect from volunteers or field staff, including computer literacy?

If you take into account the realities faced by your partners in the field, you can use simple techniques to make your system more field-friendly. For example, use pictures and icons rather than words if there is limited literacy; have paper forms that match computer forms to help data entry; and set up a paper-based, backup system in case a computer is unavailable for a time.

6. *Streamline and Automate Processes Where Appropriate.*

Once you have an overview of your system, you will want to streamline and automate processes where appropriate. For some projects, USAID may have an automated system or Web interface you must use to capture and/or submit data; others have spreadsheet templates. Ensure that your system is compatible and you can input data directly into these systems if such an option is available.

7. *Design Training and/or Reference Materials for Data Collection.*

Once your system is designed, create training and reference materials for the staff. Understand the particular challenges

field staff may face and provide guidance to help them. One particularly helpful item is a list of clear definitions of your indicators and guidance on exactly what and how to count. Then, train and provide mentorship of subrecipients that are gathering information to feed into your M&E system.

8. *Test Your System.*

A practice run of your system, from beginning to end, can spot data-capturing issues and technical problems, so they can be addressed before actual implementation.

9. *“Push Down” Analysis Opportunities and Incorporate Feedback.*

Too often, M&E systems feed data up the reporting chain, from communities to program offices where analysis and learning takes place, but they do not push it back down to the community level. Communities and implementing subrecipients benefit greatly from receiving feedback and from learning how to use the data to perform their own program analysis. These systems do not need to include complicated data tools. A small community group can use something as simple as a flip chart with activities and beneficiaries to see which clients are receiving what services each month.

3.4.2.2 Linking Program Targets with Impact Indicators

Another important consideration is determining how you will demonstrate impact—showing significant, sustainable changes in a target population or community after an intervention is completed. Impact differs from measuring outputs, for example, counting the number of people trained, the number reached with certain interventions, etc.

Impact (<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/resource.php?id=189>) also differs from looking at outcomes, which are the short- to medium-term observable behavioral, institutional, and societal effects of the intervention's outputs. Impact indicators are about real change over time. They attempt to measure whether your work is having an effect on the quality of life of your program's beneficiaries.

Before launching your intervention, establish the baseline by gathering data on each of your indicators. By providing a before-and-after picture for each indicator, you can demonstrate impact.

Impact indicators relate to your objectives. For example, if you are running an HIV/AIDS voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) program, why are you trying to get people tested for the disease? The answer outlines the objectives you want your VCT program to achieve:

- Those who are HIV-positive will seek treatment.
- Those who are HIV-positive will take steps to prevent the spread of HIV.
- Those who are HIV-negative will begin or continue to use prevention measures to protect themselves and remain negative.
- By helping people to know their status and how to remain healthy and productive, the program will help fight stigma and discrimination.

You can use these objectives to track impact indicators—for example, follow up with individuals who discovered they are HIV-positive and received counseling to learn how many:

- sought treatment,
- used condoms,
- retained their jobs, or
- reported suffering discrimination.

Linking impact indicators to the program targets helps you to monitor the amount of work your program is doing and the quality of your interventions. It can also help you improve your interventions and, thus, the lives of beneficiaries.

3.5 Communication

Communication is a key component of any program. Not only does it help build relationships with donors, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders, but it also alerts people to the great work you do and is critical to meeting the needs of your donors. Over the long term,

an effective communication strategy can mean strengthening support among local leaders and beneficiaries, developing partnerships, and receiving additional donor funding.

While the different activities involved in communication cut across many phases of your award and continue throughout your program, it is best to begin planning them during start-up. The earlier you prepare and start implementing your communication plan, the more people you are likely to reach and the more people your program will benefit.

Often when we think of “communication,” we think of advertising products for sale or sending out a press release, but it is much more than that. Anytime you are trying to transmit messages to a group of people outside the organization, it can be considered communication. This includes:

- informing potential beneficiaries about the services you offer;
- appealing to potential volunteers to contribute time to your program;
- sharing your success stories with the NGO community and potential partners; and
- informing the public about your work, including crediting your donors.

The following section discusses several key concepts, including communication planning (3.5.1), branding (3.5.2), marking requirements (3.5.3), demonstrating impact (3.5.4), and communication ethics (3.5.5). Each of these topics is a component of your communication strategy and can contribute to your organization’s ability to sustain its activities.

How does this help my program?

Communication includes a variety of channels, methods, and strategies, ranging from putting up signs and applying logos to hosting events and building a Web site. Together, these add up to your organization’s public image which, when developed effectively (and reinforced by the good work of your staff), will help you earn the trust and confidence of beneficiaries, local leaders, and donors.

3.5.1 Developing a Communication Plan

To communicate effectively, it helps to plan what you want from your communication, and what you need to do to get it. Such a plan provides direction on how to shape your image, create demand for your services and build relationships with key target audiences.

Developing a written communication plan takes effort. However, once in place, a written plan will make everything easier, help set priorities, relieve you of last-minute stress, and bring order and focus to activities that can otherwise be hit or miss.

The process of developing a communication plan is similar to that used to develop a workplan or a strategic plan ([chapter 8](#)). Like them, a communication plan includes:

1. strategic objectives;
2. activities or tactics to achieve these objectives;
3. how these objectives and activities are supported; and
4. expected outcomes (“targets”) against which you can measure the success of each activity.

A communication plan may also include policies particular to communication, including ethical guidelines ([3.5.5](#)), discussed later in this chapter.

Five Steps to Improved Communication

1. Create a Communication Planning Team.

To get buy-in and improve the chances that the plan will not gather dust, involve the people who will be responsible for implementing the plan. If the organization has a communication manager, he or she should lead the process. If not, choose someone on staff with the relevant expertise to guide a team through the process.

2. Define a scope of work and allot time to the process.

Be clear about the roles each participant will play. Allow for three to five days—in one go or spread over time—the first time you do it.

It is important to separate the work you *can* do from what you must do. Set goals that focus on what must be done and make sure these goals are achievable.

3. Conduct a communication audit.

Take stock of what you are doing and saying now to your various audiences, including beneficiaries, donors, other NGOs, and potential volunteers. To get started, collect any news stories as well as samples of all existing materials such as letterhead, fliers, brochures, and so on. Also, take a look at what is being communicated in the external environment about your sector/issue and by any competition.

As with any planning process, it also means answering some basic questions:

- Why do we want to communicate with groups outside of our organization (goals)?
- What do we hope to achieve (outcomes)?
- To whom do we want to communicate it (audience)?
- What do we want to communicate (message)?
 - the services we offer;
 - why they need these services (that is, how they will benefit from them); and
 - who is making this work possible (that is, giving credit to the donor and or host government).
- Who will communicate the message (messengers)?
- How do we want to communicate it (channels)?
 - What language(s) do they speak?
 - Where and how can you communicate with them—in other words, what is the best way to “get in front of them” with our message?
 - What cultural considerations should we be aware of?

A sample of a more comprehensive set of questions follows in [Figure 11](#).

Figure 11 – Communication Audit Template

GOAL(S)	<p>Why do we want to communicate with groups outside of our organization (goals)? What do we hope to achieve (outcomes)? What are our priorities?</p>														
AUDIENCE(S)	<p>Who are our target audiences—be specific? (Choose from a list.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Beneficiaries <input type="checkbox"/> Donors <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Media <input type="checkbox"/> General public <input type="checkbox"/> Legislators/other Government entities _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other stakeholders (describe _____) <p>What is the profile of each?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What language(s) do they speak? _____ • What cultural considerations should we be aware of? 														
IMPLEMENTATION	<p>Tactics</p> <p>Which of the following methods (tactics) have we used to promote the organization and its core messages in the past 12 months? Do we have examples?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Brochures</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Fliers</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Events</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Posters</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Local newspaper advertising</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Billboards</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Local radio advertising</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Press releases</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Business cards</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Web site</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> E-mail</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Presentations</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</td> </tr> </table> <p>What are the best methods (tactics) to reach our target audience(s)—in other words, what is the best way to “get in front of them” with our message? (Match audiences with effective tactics above.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Beneficiaries <input type="checkbox"/> Donors <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Media <input type="checkbox"/> General public <input type="checkbox"/> Legislators/other Government entities <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders (describe _____) <p>What do we want to communicate to each audience (message)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the services we offer; • why they need these services (that is, how they will benefit from them); and • who is making this work possible (that is, giving credit to the donor and or host government). 	<input type="checkbox"/> Brochures	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/> Fliers	<input type="checkbox"/> Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Posters	<input type="checkbox"/> Local newspaper advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> Billboards	<input type="checkbox"/> Local radio advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> Press releases	<input type="checkbox"/> Business cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Web site	<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentations	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Brochures	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter														
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<input type="checkbox"/> Posters	<input type="checkbox"/> Local newspaper advertising														
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<input type="checkbox"/> Web site	<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail														
<input type="checkbox"/> Presentations	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____														

Figure 11—Communication Audit Template *(continued)*

IMPLEMENTATION <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Who will communicate the message (messengers)?</p> <p>How do we want to communicate it (methods/tactics)?</p> <p>What resources do we have available now for implementation?</p> <p>How are those resources being allocated?</p> <p>What resources do we lack? Time, materials, money?</p> <p>What works?</p> <p>What does not work?</p> <p>Are there skills/abilities we believe would help us do our job better?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, what are they? • How can we get them? <p>Review</p> <p>Who must review and sign off on any external communication product/material?</p>
MONITORING & EVALUATION	<p>How do we monitor success (for example, survey and clip newspapers)?</p> <p>What have been our most effective communication tactics?</p> <p>How do we measure the impact of our efforts?</p> <p>What are the biggest obstacles in effectively reaching the target audience(s) with our messages?</p> <p>Name one thing that the organization could do to improve communication immediately.</p>
GENERAL	<p>What is the biggest communication challenge the organization faced in the last 12 months?</p> <p>What do we think are the greatest challenges for the organization over the next year?</p>

4. Develop communication action plan and timeline.

The answers to the audit questions become the basis of your action plan. Try to design “SMART” communication activities—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound ([chapter 8](#)). Do not forget to include as part of your communications plan budget considerations and sufficient staff to implement the intended activities.

5. Implement the plan.

Based on what you’ve learned, you are ready to develop materials and disseminate your message(s). Be sure to monitor and evaluate your efforts. Revisit your plan every few months and adjust your approach as needed.

If getting started is overwhelming, take on a few simple tasks first. The momentum from a small amount of progress can help energize the organization to take on bigger challenges.

3.5.2 Branding

Branding is the process of using images and words, such as logos and slogans, to identify a product or service. The goal of branding is to establish a recognizable identity, which helps you gain the trust of your beneficiaries and helps them associate certain ideas and values with your brand. Developing a brand identity for your organization and your programs is the foundation of NGO marketing.

Traditionally, we think of brands and branding as something exclusive to the realm of commercial producers. But, increasingly, NGOs are realizing that adapting branding techniques to their programs can have enormous benefits, such as:

- **Making a Brand Promise**—Logos and slogans can help tell beneficiaries what they can expect from your program’s services, such as quality, confidentiality, and compassionate care.

- **Establishing a Brand Identity**—Through consistent branding, beneficiaries who become familiar with and develop trust in one aspect of your program can easily identify your other service outlets and will seek out your services in the future. You can take this a step further by branding a network of services.
- **Building Brand Value**—As recognition of your brand grows and you gain the trust of local leaders, donors, and beneficiaries, you increase the value of your brand. A valued brand leads to improved program sustainability and helps meet the donor's own branding objectives. For example, if you hand over a project with a strong brand value to a local implementer, it can build on your outreach to beneficiaries and donors, giving them a head start on renewing funding.

You can apply branding principles to your organization's name (Level 1) as well as to individual programs (Level 2), much like a manufacturer does with separate brands for different product lines and, as Figure 12 illustrates, the Nature Conservancy has for its program components. Since most organizations have already developed brands for their organizational identity, the following section focuses primarily on program-level (Level 2) branding.

3.5.2.1 How Do I Develop a Level 2 Brand for My Program?

The first step is to ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are the primary beneficiaries of our program? What language, cultural, and other concerns might they have in relation to seeking our services?
- What is the primary objective of our program?
- How do we want beneficiaries to feel about our program? What values and ideas do we want them to associate with our services?

A. Who are your beneficiaries?

When listing your beneficiary groups, note any special cultural, language, or literacy considerations. Larger programs implementing in multiple areas should list all of the different subgroups they may be targeting, such as women, children, high-risk groups, groups in different areas, or groups with different religious, education, traditions, or socioeconomic backgrounds.

Figure 12—Analysis of a Brand Hierarchy

	Level	Brand Name	Brand Promise	Tag Line
1	Parent or Master Brand: Organization Name	The Nature Conservancy	The leader in protecting ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people around the world.	Protecting Nature. Preserving Life™
2	Child or Sub-brand: Program/Project/Service	Nature Rocks™	Partner initiative that gives busy parents and caregivers the tools, instructions, and tips (http://www.naturerocks.org/getting-started.aspx) for quick, easy, inexpensive (or free) activities, so they can enjoy quality family time in nature.	Let's Go Explore™
3	Consumer Brand: Stands-alone components	2009 Summer Nature Planning Guide	A specific tool to help parents and caregivers.	Fun for the whole family

Note any special concerns your beneficiaries might have about seeking your services, such as maintaining confidentiality or avoiding stigma and discrimination. For example, a potential beneficiary might not want to walk openly into an office that has a sign that reads, “HIV/AIDS Services for High-Risk Individuals.”

B. What are your program objectives?

Next, summarize your program’s mission in one sentence by trying to capture its primary objective. For example:

The ____ project seeks to improve the lives of people in the XYZ region by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve access to clean water.

C. How do you want your beneficiaries to view your program?

Look at your program from the point of view of your beneficiaries. How do you want them to feel about your program? Examples may be “safe, trustworthy, confidential, helpful, culturally responsive, makes me feel better,” etc.

- Avoid excessively long names. Your program name should be something people can remember easily.
- Do an Internet search of your proposed name to see whether another program already uses it. If you do find a program with the same name, consider changing yours.
- Do not include “foundation” in your name unless you plan to distribute funds to other organizations. The term “foundation” implies the availability of funds, so donors may not believe you need funds.
- Avoid potentially offensive or alienating names (cultural, religious, and social considerations depending on the locality where you intend to work).

Program Logo

Creating a logo for your program is often the most intimidating aspect of branding, especially for those who are not artists or do not consider themselves particularly creative.

Your logo may derive from your program name or popular local images that you may be able to adapt. Is there a particular local flower, tree, or animal that symbolizes what you are trying to represent?

Have fun. If you cannot come up with anything, consider a simple logo using the name of your program in a nice font. If a logo idea comes to you later, you can always add it.

Taglines, Additional Images, Etc.

You may want to express more than just a program name and logo, especially for new programs that people may not know much about. Consider putting an additional phrase, slogan, or images alongside your logo.

For example, a program offering health, education, and psychosocial support services may want to put a tagline (short phrase next to its program name such as, “Healthy, Smart, and Happy Children.”

Also consider the branding requirements of your donor, which often wants to have its logo displayed alongside your program name.

3.5.2.2 What Are the Elements of My Program’s Brand?

Your answers to the questions above form the foundation of building your brand. The next step is to consider the key elements of your brand’s image, and synthesize the program objective and the feelings you want your beneficiaries to have about your program, all the while keeping in mind the language, culture, and other important considerations of your beneficiaries.

Program Name

Naming your program is the first step in developing your brand. It can be a simple name or an acronym. It may be in English or the native language where you are implementing. Some program naming tips:

Be careful not to add too many words and images. Your brand should be as clear and concise as possible.

Next Steps

Test your brand, especially if you are using a language and culture different from your native tongue. Share your logo and program name with native speakers and ask for their feedback. You never know what cultural symbols may be taboo or what language nuances may lead to misinterpretation. Once you develop the basic branding for your program, you will want to integrate your brand into your public communication and apply the logo to your program deliverables.

3.5.3 Marking and Donor Requirements

While developing your brand, do not forget to take into consideration the branding requirements and objectives of your donors and partner organizations. Applying logos to program deliverables, called “marking,” identifies your program and acknowledges who funds, supports, and implements it. Proper marking strengthens relationships between implementing partners and credits donors for making the program possible.

Not only is marking a good idea, but USAID agreements include specific marking requirements.

3.5.3.1 Creating a Marking Plan

The best way to ensure that you are meeting USAID’s requirements is to create a marking plan specifying what will be marked, and when, where, and how you will mark program deliverables, sites, and events.

USAID requires that you submit a branding strategy and marking plan to your AO that describes how you will implement the marking requirements in your program. The AO must review and approve your plan before executing your award.

A good marking plan describes the following:

- What you will mark—all sites, documents, events and commodities you procure or produce as a part of the Cooperative Agreement (for example, banners at events, stickers on equipment, etc.).
- How you will mark—the type of marking (feature USAID and grantee logo on banner; insert jpeg of logos on notebook cover template).
- When you will mark—in the event that you might not mark an item permanently right away (for example, a project site that is being constructed), describe any temporary marking and plans for final marking.
- Where you will mark—describe the size and placement of the USAID logo and any accompanying logos.

Figure 13—Sample Brand Identity



3.5.3.2 Marking Program Deliverables

You should mark program deliverables to identify and give credit to both USAID and implementers. However, you will not mark all deliverables the same way. High-profile deliverables, such as a clinic, may be marked with the logos of all implementing partners and donors. Conversely, you may only need to mark smaller commodities procured for the program, such as computers or office equipment, with the USAID identity.

Your marking plan should specify the approach for different deliverables and, at a minimum, should cover all donor requirements. The following are examples of program deliverables that should be marked with USAID's logo:

- project sites;
- electronic and printed documents, such as informational and promotional materials, audiovisual presentations, public service announcements, Web sites, etc.;
- events, such as training courses, workshops, press conferences; and
- commodities, including equipment, supplies, and other materials.

Marking Exceptions

There are some situations when applying logos does not make sense. You may not want to apply logos when their use would:

- impair the functionality of an item;
- incur substantial costs or be impractical;
- offend local cultural and social norms or be considered inappropriate;
- cause increased security risk for volunteers, staff or beneficiaries; or
- result in increased stigma and discrimination for the recipients.

Include any anticipated exceptions in your marking plan. If an unforeseen circumstance arises, you must request a waiver from your AO.

3.5.3.3 Subrecipient Requirements

Marking requirements also apply to subrecipients. It is a good practice (and in many cases it is required) to include language in your subawards requiring that the donor's logo (and perhaps your logo as well) be included on program deliverables.

3.5.3.4 Special Requirements

The AO may require a pre-production review of USAID-funded public communications and program materials for compliance with the approved marking plan. Contact your AOTR before printing to ask whether USAID would like to review the final product.

Any public communication funded by USAID, where the content has not been approved by USAID, must contain the following disclaimer:

This study/report/audio/visual/other information/media product [specify] is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of [insert your organization's name] and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

You also must give your AOTR copies of all program and communication materials produced under the award.

Figure 14—Sample Implementation of Branding and Marking



Web page for www.ngoconnect.net

Banner

- A. Tagline for product—"Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global NGO Community"
- B. Product name and logo (Level 3)—NGOConnect.Net
- C. Program brand and logo (Level 2)—Capable Partners Program

Footer:

- D. Donor disclaimer
- E. Prime and sub logos/brands (Level 1)—AED, MSI
- F. Donor brand/logo—USAID.

3.5.4 Demonstrating Impact

While developing your marketing and communications strategies, be sure you retain the focus of your organization—to have a positive impact on the lives of beneficiaries in the communities you serve. This is your story, and this is the story that donors want to support.

Demonstrating impact is very powerful when done objectively by using statistics from your project's M&E system. For example, rather than saying, "Our programs enable more girls to attend school," you should use the data

comparing your baseline assessment and your most recent project data to show what percentage of girls attended school prior to your intervention versus what percentage attends now.

Impact also goes beyond just measuring the number of people reached. There are numerous ways to highlight the results of your program. For example, beyond looking at the percentage of girls attending school, you can explore the impact schooling has had on the girls' lives as a whole. Are the girls healthier? Do they make better decisions in social situations? Has access to education increased their self-esteem? By developing posters, brochures, or a Web site, and using select photos, statistics, and stories from the community, you can communicate your impact and show how your program positively affects community members. Ultimately, a marketing strategy that focuses on beneficiaries helps drive your communication activities.

3.5.4.1 Telling Your Story

Telling your story should be an important part of your organization's communication and marketing plan. Why? Because stories and photographs are a powerful way to educate donors, prospective partners, and the public about your programs and demonstrate their positive impact on your community. In the process, telling your story lets you give credit to donors and reach a wider audience of potential supporters. Consider developing and disseminating at least one or two success stories about each program you implement.

There are many different types of success stories. The most common highlight the impact of a program by communicating how it has made a difference in people's lives. However, success stories may also highlight a specific event or discuss an innovative tool or approach a program has implemented. Success stories may expand on information provided in your performance reports, repackaged for a wider audience.

The key to a good success story is the ability to turn data that provide evidence of your program's results into an engaging personal story that everyday readers will care about and understand. For example, Kenya's Wema Centre illustrates its approach to rescuing street children through the story of the transformation of a teenage boy (<http://www.ngoconnect.net/wema>). The story puts a human face on the statistical evidence of the program's impact.

Find it online

For inspiration, sample the ways other NGOs have shared their success stories at these Web sites:

- ▶ NGOConnect.Net
<http://www.ngoconnect.net/success>
- ▶ One Shared World
<http://onesharedworld.org/success/index.html>
- ▶ PEPFAR Stories of Hope
<http://www.pepfar.gov/press/c19597.htm>
- ▶ USAID Telling Our Story
<http://www.usaid.gov/stories/about.html>

Finding a Good Story

A success story summarizes the work you do by telling a specific story of how that effort has improved the lives of the beneficiaries you serve. Stories often surface throughout implementation, and it is a good practice to jot them down as they arise and keep a file you can come back to later to write them up.

Some ideas for developing a good story include:

- Ask your staff and subrecipients to suggest beneficiaries of your program whom you might include in a success story.
- Document an innovative approach your program uses that allowed you to reach new people or address a need that was previously unmet.
- Discuss an event that allowed you to reach out to new people.
- Build on pieces of good news about your program that are passed around your office and that energized staff.
- Elaborate on a story you often tell colleagues or donors that grabs their attention.

Writing the Story

While there is no precise formula for writing a success story, the following are some common strategies and tools you may want to consider to make your story interesting:

- *Use quotations and photos:* using the words and pictures of the people in your story can make it much more personal and engaging to the reader. Note, however, that while people are usually very happy to tell their stories, it is important to respect the privacy of the

individuals in your story. Tell them exactly how you intend to use the story and request their written permission by having them sign a release form authorizing you to use their names and photos. This makes sure they know how you intend to use the story, such as posting it on the Internet, or sharing it with media, donors, or others (See 3.5.5).

- *Talk about the before, after, and future:* A great way to demonstrate impact is to explain the problem your program hoped to address by giving a glimpse of what life was like before your program came along. Your story then shows how you addressed that challenge, by describing what happened after your program was in place. You may also want to talk about the future—plans to expand or sustain your program.
- *Do not forget the data:* Though these stories often focus on an individual or group of people for the “human face” of the work, do not leave out the bigger picture that your data show. Consider using a graph or a chart to make your data more engaging for the reader.
- *Give credit:* Be sure to give credit to those who have supported your program. Identify key staff, partners, and donors. This can be done in the narrative or by putting the logos of donors and other organizations involved on a printed or electronic presentation of the story.
- *Provide contact information:* Success stories are often short—one or two pages (200 to 500 words) at the most. Therefore, there is probably a lot of information you do not have space to include in your story. Providing contact information allows others who are interested in your story to follow up with you for more details.

Coordinating with Donors

As you begin to develop your success story, contact USAID. Your AOTR may want to help you promote the story by posting it on USAID’s Web site or including it in presentations or publications. Some donors want to review the document before it is distributed, and they may have other requirements for publicly documenting the programs they fund. This process gives donors a chance to be involved in the story. After all, just as you are proud of your program’s success, they, too, are happy to be supporting your good work.

Promoting Your Story

Once the story is written, share it with a number of different audiences to communicate your successes as widely as possible. Start by sharing the story with your donors, then share it with your partners, your beneficiaries, and the general public.

Consider the following strategies for sharing your story:

- Post the story on a Web site—yours, your partner's, and donor's.
- Create a news release and share the story with local media.
- Print copies and post it at program implementation sites (if appropriate).
- Provide copies to local government officials and your AOTR.
- Submit your story to NGO conferences and forums, where you might be asked to share more details about your program with other implementers.
- Share the story with your partners and staff. This is a great way of soliciting more stories from your team.

3.5.5 Communication and Ethics

Most of the time, people are happy to let you photograph or audiotape or videotape them and are eager to tell their story so you can share it with others. However, there are significant ethical considerations, and it is important for you to respect the rights and privacy of all subjects you wish to photograph or audiotape or videotape, especially patients in clinical settings, children, and those incapable of making their own decisions.

To guide your approach to photographing people, consult the USAID-funded INFO project for a list of ethical issues and sample templates for requesting permission (<http://www.photoshare.org/phototips/developethics.php>). Consider incorporating these and other ethical practices when developing standards of conduct for staff. These considerations are not intended to prevent people from taking photos, but rather to help increase respect for individuals' right to privacy.

3.6 Summary and References

Though everyone wants to begin implementing, you should not rush the start-up phase of your project. This is a critical time to prepare your staff and partners through planning and setting up the systems necessary to run an effective program.

This chapter has reviewed the tasks you need to accomplish during the start-up phase, and has discussed the minimum USAID requirements for key management systems, such as your accounting and M&E systems. This chapter has also outlined the program-planning process, including the development of your initial workplan.

USAID wants to make sure the programs it supports have the systems, policies, personnel, and plans in place prior to implementation that will lead to high-quality, effective services for the beneficiaries. Taking your time with these start-up activities will only improve your ability to deliver the best possible program to your community.

The foundation you build during the start-up phase will help you as you enter the next phase of your program: implementation. The next chapter discusses the keys to running an effective and compliant program.

References

Human Resources

- Key Tools and Resources for a Human Resource Management (HRM) System
http://www.ngoconnect.net/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=17776&folderId=38677&name=DLFE-5176.pdf

Marketing and Communication

- Resource: Photoshare
<http://www.photoshare.org>
- Development Photography Ethics
<http://www.photoshare.org/phototips/developethics.php>
- Strategic Communications Audits
This brief helps nonprofit organizations to better understand and assess their communication capacities.
<http://www.mediaevaluationproject.org/WorkingPaper1.pdf>

Monitoring & Evaluation

- [The Evaluation Wiki](#)
Founded in 2006 by the nonprofit organization [Evaluation Resource Institute](#) (ERI), the mission of Evaluation Wiki is to make freely available a compendium of up-to-date information and resources to everyone involved or interested in the science and practice of evaluation.
http://www.evaluationwiki.org/index.php/Main_Page

- M&E Fundamentals

This mini-course covers the basics of program monitoring and evaluation in the context of population, health, and nutrition programs. It also defines common terms and discusses why M&E is essential for program management.
http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/training/mentor/me_fundamentals

- M&E News

This news services focuses on developments in monitoring and evaluation methods.
<http://mande.co.uk/>

- MEASURE Evaluation's M&E Capacity-Building Guides
<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/tools/monitoring-evaluation-systems/capacity-building-guides>

- Performance Monitoring and Evaluation USAID online course

The course includes modules ranging from the M&E framework to conducting evaluations, developing scopes of work, assuring data quality, and review and dissemination of evaluation results.
<http://communities.usaidallnet.gov/fa/node/1901>