



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PREPARING PROGRESS REPORTS

“How to Work with USAID” Training Series



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn how reporting supports good activity management.
- Understand what should be included in a progress report.
- Learn about best practices for a strong reporting process.
- Discover how reporting is key to your relationship with USAID.



WHY PROGRESS REPORTING IS IMPORTANT

USAID requires partners to submit progress reports quarterly, semi-annually, or annually.

Effective reporting:

- Documents progress against annual work plans and budgets.
- Provides details on activity outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned.
- Helps you share your story through information used by USAID and partners for communications and marketing purposes.
- Supports USAID's documentation of the results of its funded programs, as well as learning and adapting related to the Agency's strategic planning efforts.

Confirm report deadlines and content with your AOR/COR.

REPORTING SHOWS PROGRESS

Regular reporting provides structure to information-sharing and allows you to periodically review progress in accordance with your approved work plan.

- Analyze your spending to ensure that it is aligned with your actions and outputs.
- Identify potential issues so you can adjust your plan.

Your progress report also documents the challenges and planned responses you have discussed with your AOR/COR.



REPORTING SHOWS PROGRESS

Progress reports document critical data and details in an organized format that can be shared with USAID and other stakeholders.

Use activity stories to provide both donors and the public with evidence of your impact.

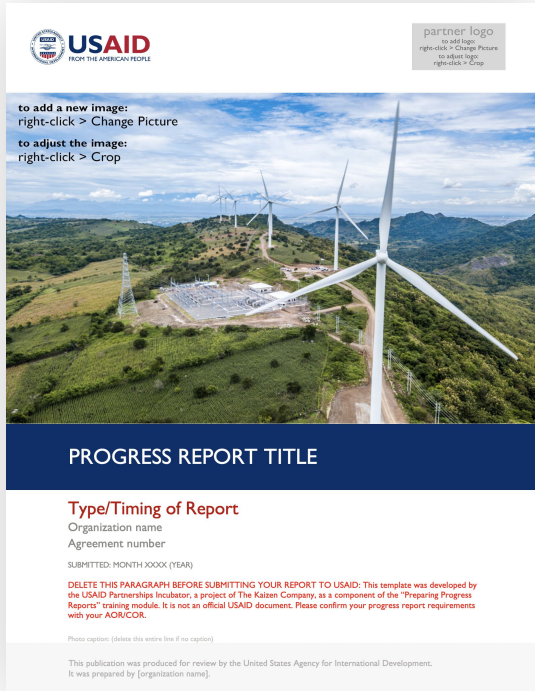
- Stories and photos can illustrate your successes.
- Your AOR/COR can help you identify opportunities to share stories.





PROGRESS REPORT REQUIREMENTS

TEMPLATES



The format of your progress report should be based on the requirements of your award and the guidance of your AOR/COR.

A sample report template to consider is available on the web page for this module.

- Download this Microsoft Word template for easy use.
- You may adapt this structure for your reporting needs.
- Examples of progress reports from USAID partners are provided at the end of this module.

KEY ELEMENTS OF PROGRESS REPORTS

USAID progress reports typically include:

- Activity overview.
- Progress on implementation.
- Management and administrative issues.
- Lessons learned.
- Information about how previous AOR/COR feedback was addressed.
- Planned activities for the next reporting period.
- Additional sections per your agreement/contract, MEL plan, or as discussed with your AOR/COR.
- Annexes.

Reporting requirements vary from award to award. In addition, your progress reports must be based on information agreed upon with your AOR/COR and any relevant requirements of the local government where your activity is implemented.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



An overview section provides a quick summary of the most important information about your activity.

It should include:

- An introduction and basic description of the activity.
- A summary of results to date.

PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION

This section provides an overview of progress since the last report. This section typically includes four parts:

- A brief **progress narrative**, which highlights key achievements and notes where the activity is generally on track or what is changing as a result of your work.
- **Implementation status**, which provides details on your activity's results.
- **Implementation challenges**, which summarizes how issues have affected your work plan and targets and where you need to adjust or improve.
- An **MEL plan update**, which outlines challenges and successes related to data collection and quality, efforts to document lessons learned, and anticipated revisions to indicators or the MEL plan.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

This section documents any management and administrative challenges that may affect the future performance of your activity.

Examples of issues you should address include:



Staff changes.



Security concerns.



Procurement issues.



Challenges in managing sub-partners.

This section can also be used to document upcoming procurement actions that will require USAID approval, such as changes in key personnel, major purchases, or the selection of contractors.

Discuss any issues with your AOR/COR *before* you submit your report.

LESSONS LEARNED

This section details successes, failures, or challenges.

These takeaways may be used to:

- Confirm your assumptions about implementation.
- Review the effectiveness of your chosen approaches.
- Gather relevant data to help fill information gaps about the context in which you work.



ADDRESS FEEDBACK FROM PRIOR REPORT

USAID or other stakeholders might have provided feedback on a project report you have submitted in the past.

In this section, you should detail what your organization has done to address those comments and suggestions.



Consider these questions:

- What has your organization changed in response to the feedback?
- Were you able to address any suggestions?
- What—if any—additional measures are you taking?

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

Provide a preview of your plans for the next reporting period:

- Outline upcoming actions and events.
- Highlight activities that may require or benefit from USAID's involvement.





ADDITIONAL SECTIONS

You may also want to discuss the following:

- USAID initiatives or crosscutting issues.
- MEL plan changes.
- Operational adjustments in response to opportunities and risks.

ANNEXES

An annex is a supporting section in progress reports. Common annexes include:

- A performance management review with a detailed indicator tracking table showing progress against the targets in your approved MEL plan.
- A financial report summary that shows spending against the budget and spending planned for the next reporting period.
- Success stories that illustrate an activity's impact.





PROGRESS REPORT PROCESS

ESTABLISH BEST PRACTICES

Build a system to regularly:

- Assess progress.
- Make adjustments.
- Share information with stakeholders.
- Document successes and challenges.



REPORTING TIMELINE

USAID awards generally require reports quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Reporting timelines vary and may coincide with the U.S Government's fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) or be based on the start date of the award.

Once your reporting timeline is clear, plan to:



Gather data and other information.



Assess your activity's progress.



Draft, review, and submit the report on time and prepare to share it with stakeholders.

Some awards may require annual reports *in addition* to quarterly or semi-annual reports. When in doubt, consult your AOR/COR.

GATHER INFORMATION

You will reference information from several management support systems to assess your activity's progress.

- Gather quantitative and qualitative information from your **MEL system**:
 - **Quantitative** information is measured in the form of numbers, such as numbers of households reached.
 - **Qualitative** information includes insights on activity challenges and successes, such as staff feedback about activities and stakeholder interviews.
- Collect information on spending from your **financial management system** to determine if your spending is appropriate for the results achieved and your timeline.

Learn more about gathering information from
USAID's MEL and Financial Reports [training modules](#).

ASSESS PROGRESS

Conduct “pause and reflect” sessions with the activity team to review progress and discuss results.

In these sessions, you can acknowledge best practices and plan for performance improvements. Some reflection questions might include:



- What is working well?
- What challenges are we facing?
- What are the reasons for any shortfalls against planned targets?
- How can these issues be addressed?
- What lessons have we learned in this reporting period?
- What success stories could we highlight?



COLLABORATE, LEARN, AND ADAPT

CLA helps you improve performance by incorporating ways to:

- **Collaborate:** Which partnerships are essential to implementation?
- **Learn:** What drives success or causes failure?
- **Adapt:** What can you adjust to amplify activity results?

DRAFT, REVIEW, AND SUBMIT

- **Draft the report based on analysis of data, review of key documents, and insights from your “pause and reflect” exercises.**
 - Assign drafting of the report to team members with strong English-language writing skills.
 - Often the activity manager, country director, or a communications specialist is responsible for report preparation.
- **Circulate the draft for internal review.**
 - Senior activity staff and headquarters staff often review reports at this stage.
- **Send the final report to key stakeholders.**
 - Consider creating a summary version with key information translated into local languages.

**Progress reports must be accurate and transparent
and must demonstrate accountability.**

PREPARING ANNUAL REPORTS

Many awards require annual reports **in addition** to quarterly or semi-annual reports.

An annual report offers the opportunity to assess the activity at a deeper level.
It should:

- Build on information from quarterly or semi-annual reports submitted for that year.
- Offer insights from in-depth “pause and reflect” sessions.

A quarterly or semi-annual report is not usually required at the same time of your annual report.

**Check your award agreement and with your AOR/COR
to confirm what information should be included.**

CAPTURING AND SHARING EXPERIENCES

Sharing activity lessons—both successes and challenges—helps to ensure that development efforts continue to adapt and improve.

Capturing and sharing your best practices informs how USAID can work with partners to achieve cost-effective and stronger results.

The screenshot shows the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) website. At the top left is the USAID logo with the tagline "FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE". To the right is a navigation bar with "USAID LEADERSHIP" and "WORK WITH USAID". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with "WHO WE ARE", "WHAT WE DO", "WHERE WE WORK", "REPORTS AND DATA", "NEWS AND INFORMATION", and "CONTACT SIGN IN". The main heading is "DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE CLEARINGHOUSE". Below the heading are navigation links for "SEARCH", "SUBMIT", "SHARE", and "EVALUATIONS". A search bar is present with the text "Search the DEC" and "Advanced Search". The main content area features a large image of people working at computers with the text "Search a half-century of U.S. international aid records". Below this are three columns: "SEARCH" (Search a half-century of U.S. international aid records.), "SUBMIT" (Submit USAID project records, preserving knowledge for future use.), and "SHARE" (Share what you find by rating, tagging, blogging.). At the bottom, there are four featured sections: "DEC EXPRESS" (Subscribe to DEC Express), "PEER REVIEW" (Peer Reviewed Publications), "DEC EVALUATIONS" (USAID Evaluations), and "DEC PANDEMIC RESPONSE" (Pandemic Response). The footer contains "CONTACT US", "PLUG-INS", "FAQ", and "PRIVACY POLICY".

TIPS FOR STRONG PROGRESS REPORTS

Make your progress reports practical, useful, and interesting.



Keep it concise:

- Make it easy for your AOR/COR to review your report without spending a lot of time.
- Provide a general overview for stakeholders without going into too much detail.



Make it visual:

- Photos and design elements break up long blocks of text.
- Charts, graphs, and tables help to explain complex information.

A blue-tinted landscape photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, there is a rocky shoreline. A calm lake occupies the middle ground, reflecting the sky. The background features steep, rugged mountains under a sky with scattered clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

SUMMARY

RESOURCES

- [Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Toolkits](#)
- [Financial Reports module](#)
- [Learning Lab's Collaboration Mapping](#)

TEMPLATE FILES

- [Sample USAID Progress Report Template](#)

Questions? Ask your AOR/COR.

RESOURCES

[USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) (DEC) provides examples of progress reports and other documents submitted by various activities. You can use the search terms below to find more examples.

- **“Activity reports”**: “[Evidence to Action for Strengthened Reproductive Health for Women and Girls](#)” and “[Universal Diagnosis and Treatment to Improve Maternal and Child Health](#)”
- **“Program updates”**: “[Emergency Medical Assistance to Host and Displaced Populations in Northwest Nigeria](#)” and “[Saving Mothers Giving Life Program Update](#)”
- **“Progress documents”**: “[USAID/Macedonia Secondary Education Activity: Quarterly Program Report for the Period July-September 2005](#)” and “[Wajibika Project Quarterly Performance Report January-March 2011.](#)”



THANK YOU

This e-module was produced by the United States Agency for International Development. The presentation team comprises staff from USAID and the Partnerships Incubator. USAID is grateful to all the individuals who contributed their time and ideas toward the development of this e-module series.

Email feedback: IndustryLiaison@usaid.gov