

# PROGRAM CYCLE

## ADS 201 Additional Help

# EVALUATION TRIGGERS

As noted in [ADS 201](#), evaluations should be considered by Missions in the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and by all Operating Units (OUs) in the early stages of **activity** design to ensure adequate planning and implementation. However, a decision to evaluate may be made at any point during strategy, project, **or** activity implementation. **This is** particularly **true** if new information arises indicating that an evaluation is appropriate for accountability or learning purposes. Such new information is referred to as an evaluation “trigger”.

While it is not possible to determine during strategy, project, or activity planning whether something unexpected will occur during implementation **necessitating** an evaluation, it *is* possible to consider during the planning stages what potential situations may serve as an evaluation trigger.

The following situations may serve as triggers for conducting a previously unplanned evaluation:

- A key management decision is required, but there is inadequate information to make it;
- Performance information indicates an unexpected result (positive or negative) that should be explained, such as unanticipated results affecting **any particular target group based on gender, age, location, ethnicity, etc.**;
- Beneficiary, partner, or other informed feedback suggests that there are implementation problems, unmet needs, or unintended consequences;
- **Emergence of unanticipated issues** of sustainability, cost-effectiveness, or relevance;
- The validity of the Results Framework hypotheses or critical assumptions is questioned, for example, due to unanticipated changes in the host country environment; or

*Program Cycle Additional Help documents provide non-mandatory guidance intended to clarify [ADS 201](#). Curated by the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL), these may include “how-to” guidelines, templates, and examples of best practice.*

- Portfolio Reviews have identified key questions that are best answered by an evaluation.

Regardless of whether the evaluation was planned, it should still follow the evaluation processes and procedures described in [ADS 201.3.6](#) to support quality and use.

201saf\_051923