

TIPS FOR WRITING SECTION I OF THE IEE

PREPARE

The first step in writing Section I is listing all planned or potential activities, noting which activities the IEE must cover and which Categorical Exclusions (CEs) the IEE must justify. You must fully understand and describe each component of the activities in your project.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE IEE

This section introduces the activities and answers the following questions:

- What does the IEE cover?
- Is it an amendment or supplemental? If so, why?
- What other IEEs cover the sector or Strategic Objective, if any?

1.2 PROJECT/ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Provide a brief overview of what your project/activity entails.

Explain why the activity is desired and appropriate, providing relevant context. Were alternatives considered and rejected? If so, why?

1.3 PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Describe components and sub-activities in enough detail to determine if they are eligible for a CE or if direct or indirect impacts are reasonably foreseeable.

The IEE is a critical element of USAID's mandatory environmental review and compliance processes under Title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 216 (22 CFR 216) "Reg 216." Activity Managers, AORs/CORs, and their teams are responsible for developing an IEE following an initial screening of activities per Reg 216 criteria.

This fact sheet outlines best practices in writing the Project/Activity Description (Section 1.0) and Baseline Environmental Information (Section 2.0).

SECTION 1.0: PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Section 1.0 includes the purpose of the IEE and a detailed description of your project/activity, including any sub-activities or related actions. This is the document's foundation and provides the context for the baseline, impacts/risks, climate risk management screening, and conditions/mitigations. Your project/activity description should **clearly articulate**:

- **Scope:** What are the details of the project/activity? (Describe the type of project/activity and methodology, as well as all components – if construction, what are you building? What are you installing? What infrastructure is needed? Describe each activity component.)
 - Break the project into manageable and well-defined **activities and sub-activities**
 - List any procured commodities
 - Describe target users/customers
- **Scale:** What is the size? (i.e., footprint/height of the new building, acreage needed for solar panels, etc.)
 - Identify any potential plans for scaling up/expansion
- **Quantity:** How many? (Number of: training workshops, boreholes, solar panels, demonstration plots, etc.)
- **Location:** Where will the project/activity take place? Which countries/districts/regions?
 - If specific locations are unknown, include **siting criteria** that will be used
- **Unique Issues:** Clearly identify any **unique elements** of the project/activity (e.g., if it involves indigenous peoples, parks/protected areas, construction, and/or pesticides).
- **Connected Actions:** Clearly identify any **closely related activities** (even if not funded by USAID) – these would not occur absent the AID-funded activity and must be analyzed).

REMEMBER

- If the document is an IEE amendment, explain why the amendment is needed (e.g., *extend period of performance, addition/change in activities or funding amount, etc.*).
- If applicable, explain the history of this document (*Is it a supplemental IEE to Programmatic IEE? Is this document superseding an expiring previous IEE?*).
- Explain if the document is a buy-in to a central mechanism.



Credit: Axel Drainville



Credit: 2016 CIAT/Neil Palmer



SECTION 2.0: BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

Section 2.0 should be **tailored to your project or activity** and include three parts:

1) **Description of the project location, the physical and social environment, and affected resources.** This section could include an examination of: land use; geology; topography; soil; climate; groundwater resources; surface water resources; terrestrial communities; aquatic communities; environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands or protected species); agricultural cropping patterns and practices; infrastructure and transport services; air quality; demography (including population trends/projections); cultural resources; and social and economic characteristics of target communities. *The examination should address current conditions and potential future trends.*

2) **Partner country and other international environmental and social standards, laws, policies, and regulations applicable to your project.** Be comprehensive and include those relevant to the host country as well as international standards. ***This need not be an exhaustive list***; if existing regulations pertain to air quality but your project/activity will not affect air quality, you do not need to include them.

3) **Information on local government institutions' (country, ministry, municipality, etc.)** capacity for environmental analysis and oversight and their subsequent role. For example, does the country follow a specific environmental impact assessment process? Does the country have robust environmental enforcement mechanisms?

The country and environmental information you provide should be specific to the activity being proposed and address all the resources potentially impacted by the activity. More information is not necessarily better, so be concise!

WHY IS THE BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION IMPORTANT?

The baseline is used to assess whether significant adverse impacts are likely where the assessment is measured against the baseline situation. In particular, information in this section is used to build the rest of the IEE, including analysis of potential risk (Section 3.0), environmental determinations (Section 4.0), and environmental conditions and mitigation measures (Section 5.0). An accurate baseline conditions assessment also frames your climate risk management screening.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE A BETTER BASELINE

Provide all known information about the area in which the project/activity is taking place. Make every effort to answer the following questions:

- What is the site location(s)? Can you provide coordinates?
- What is the current land use and tenure?
- How is the soil and air quality? Are there any seismic risks?
- What are the nearby water sources, if any?
- What are the climate conditions like? Is the area prone to flooding or drought?
- Is there any existing vegetation? Will it be removed?
- What threatened and endangered species could trigger a positive determination per 22 CFR 216 or the parks and protected areas that could trigger the Parks and Protected Areas Social Safeguards requirements?
- What are the populations that comprise the surrounding communities?

If you have any relevant supporting studies, attach them to the IEE and summarize the information in the IEE.

THINK LIKE THE BEO

The Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO) provides concurrence for the IEE.

The BEO has likely never been to your project/activity site, so explain the project/activity ***in detail***.

The BEO needs enough information about your (sub-) activities to determine the potential direct or indirect impacts, assess whether mitigation measures are appropriate, and make a Threshold Determination.

Reach out to your BEO ***as early as possible*** when designing your project and preparing your IEE.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Use the USAID IEE [template](#)
- Begin by listing out your activities/sub-activities to organize your thoughts
- Make your descriptions as **specific as possible**, prioritizing information relevant to environmental and social impacts
- Identify related/connected actions
- State your assumptions or unknowns
- Provide siting criteria
- Use clear, straightforward language (avoid jargon or highly technical terms)
- Use photos, graphics, and maps
- Provide design plans if available
- Do not merely copy and paste from other documents

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IEE PREPARATION

Please contact Agency Environmental Coordinator, Teresa Bernhard: tbernhard@usaid.gov

RESOURCES

[USAID Sector Environmental Guidelines](#)

[22 CFR 216: USAID's Environmental Impact Assessment Process](#)