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Implementation Guidance for the USAID Education Policy



Children participate in an early grade reading program in Bangladesh.
Credit: Kate Maloney/USAID

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction and Overview	2
A. Overview	2
B. Purpose	2
C. Timeline for Policy Implementation	5
D. Organizational Roles and Responsibilities	5
II. Key Considerations Throughout the Program Cycle	6
A. Country/Regional Strategic Planning	7
B. Project and Activity Design and Implementation	9
C. Monitoring, Evaluation and Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)	14
III. Budget Planning	17
A. Attributing Funding to Congressional Directives for Education	17
B. Operational Plans (OP)	20
IV. Performance, Planning, and Reporting	21
A. Performance Plans and Reports (PPR)	21
B. USAID Development Data	23
C. Sectoral Learning and Reporting	24
Annex I: Funding Attributions with Special Considerations	25

I. Introduction and Overview

A. Overview

The [USAID Education Policy](#) guides Agency-wide investments in education and is the primary source of direction for all education programming. The Education Policy outlines key principles and priority areas that are critical to supporting partner country education systems¹ to achieve equitable, sustainable, quality learning and education outcomes. It applies to all USAID education programming, regardless of the funding account, directive, or program area, and regardless of the managing Operating Unit, office, or team. The Education Policy reinforces the goals outlined in the [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education](#) (FY 2019-2023). This document provides guidance on implementing the Education Policy throughout the program cycle.

The guidance first took effect in November 2018 and was most recently updated in May 2023.

B. Purpose

This document is a reference for USAID Operating Units to guide implementation of the Education Policy. [USAID's Program Cycle Operational Policy](#) provides guidance on strategic and program planning, activity design and implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA). This document builds on those requirements and provides additional information on operational aspects of the Education Policy, including key considerations throughout the program cycle, Agency-level monitoring and reporting, budget and funding parameters, and other areas. This guidance and information will assist Missions in practically applying the principles outlined in the Education Policy:²

- Prioritize country-focus and ownership;
- Focus investments on measurably and sustainably improving outcomes;
- Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions;
- Work in partnership and leverage resources;
- Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data;
- Promote equity and inclusion.

¹USAID defines an education system as consisting of the people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities whose primary purpose is to improve, expand, and sustain learning and educational outcomes. Stakeholders include national and local governments, schools, teachers, instructors, unions, students, parents and caregivers, NGOs, faith-based and community organizations, universities, and the private sector, including firms that deliver education and training or ancillary services. In addition to Ministries of Education and Higher Education, other Ministries and branches of government—such as Ministries of Labor, Finance, Health, Youth, Agriculture, Water and Sanitation, Social Development, and Women or Gender—and their stakeholders have a valuable role in improving learning and educational outcomes.

² The principles laid out in the Education Policy should drive decision-making on education investments in support of the vision that partner country education systems must enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. Each principle should be intentionally considered when designing an activity or CDCS. Successful application of the principles will result in a program that is grounded in the local context, is informed by and explicitly references data and evidence, has considered partners, and addresses equity and inclusion.

The guidance sets expectations for results and progress reporting related to the priority areas in the Education Policy:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and in vulnerable situations, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in locally led development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

The guidance also articulates that the intent of Congress and USAID is for education-directed funds to be used for programs that assist countries to achieve measurable improvements in learning and educational outcomes. The guidance does not seek to overly restrict the use of directed funds based on categories or types of activities, but rather allows Missions, Bureaus, and Operating Units to use the most relevant evidence regarding effective interventions to measurably improve learning and educational outcomes. Such programs should prepare individuals with the skills necessary to be active, productive members of society and the workforce, and sustainably strengthen the capacity of organizations, institutions, and systems to provide education and training opportunities for individuals.³ Specifically, education-directed funds should seek to improve learning and educational outcomes as follows:

Basic Education Funds

Learning and educational outcomes at the pre-primary academic education level:

- Programs at the pre-primary level should take a holistic approach to measurably improve learning and educational in at least three of the following domains:
 - Language and emergent literacy;
 - Emergent numeracy and cognition;
 - Social-emotional learning;
 - Physical development.

Learning and educational outcomes at the primary academic education level:

- Programs at the primary level should measurably improve learning and educational outcomes in the following domains:
 - Grade-level (or equivalent) reading proficiency;

³ The Education Policy policy emphasizes understanding and working to improve systems to measurably and sustainably improve learning and educational outcomes. Programs that strengthen the capacity of local education systems should measure improvements in the performance of the system. The CBLD-9 indicator may be used to measure and report on improved performance at the organizational level. This does not replace other requirements, such as measuring and reporting learning or employment outcomes when applicable.

- Grade-level (or equivalent) math proficiency;
- Age-appropriate social-emotional skills.

Learning and educational outcomes at the secondary academic education level:

- Programs at the secondary level should measurably improve learning and educational outcomes in domains that are relevant to program success.⁴ Such domains could include, but are not limited to:
 - Age-appropriate social-emotional and soft skills;
 - Academic, technical, or vocational proficiency;
 - Pathways to post-secondary education or employment.

Learning and educational outcomes in youth workforce development programs:

- Programs that partner with youth who meet the local minimum age for admission to employment or work are expected to be designed to achieve measurable improvements in youth employment⁵ outcomes and soft-skills development.⁶
- Programs working with youth should report on soft-skills and at least one of the [youth skills indicators](#).
- In addition to measuring and reporting employment outcomes, Missions have the flexibility to target and measure learning outcomes relevant to program success due to the broad range of possible domains of learning that may need to be addressed in order to improve employment.

Higher Education Funds

Learning and educational outcomes in higher education programs

- Higher education programming should be designed to improve learning and educational outcomes primarily through improved performance of higher education institutions (HEIs), including by supporting interventions at the educator, institutional, and system levels.⁷
- Learning and educational outcomes in higher education can be achieved through a variety of approaches, such as institutional capacity strengthening, scholarships, research collaborations, and policy reform.⁸ Common, but not comprehensive, considerations for measurably improving learning and educational outcomes in higher education programming include:

⁴ Missions should thoughtfully consider addressing the foundational levels of education and the sequencing of skills development before embarking on new, expanded, or pilot activities in other areas.

⁵ Employment includes wage employment, own or self-employment, or employment in a family or household enterprise.

⁶ A range of soft skill assessments and measurement approaches exist, and EG.6-12, EG.6-16, EG.6-13, and ES.11-46 are examples of relevant indicators for youth workforce development programs. Please see the [USAID Guidance Note, Measuring Skills for Youth Workforce Development](#).

⁷ Higher education programming can work across different types of HEIs as defined by the USAID Education Policy, at different levels of study (associates, bachelors, masters, doctoral, post-doc), and across different fields of study (agriculture, engineering, health, media and journalism, law, etc.). There is not a singular, standardized approach to measure improved learning or educational outcomes in higher education programming, nor are specific domains identified. Higher education programs often do not work directly with learners themselves, but support interventions at the educator, institutional, and system levels.

⁸ Learning or achievement outcomes can be measured through different forms of assessments, including cognitive, soft skills, academic success, and performance assessment tools. Guidance on measuring learning outcomes in higher education using appropriate tools is available in the Measuring Higher Education Learning Outcomes Guidance Note.

- Scholarship programs that provide financial aid should measure access, retention, and completion. The [youth skills indicators](#) may be appropriate to measure improvement in learning and educational outcomes for non-financial aid interventions within scholarship programs, such as wrap-around support services to improve soft skills such as leadership, communications, teamwork, etc.
- Programs that aim to improve the capacity of non-student individuals associated with higher education (e.g. educator, faculty member, staff, or researcher) may reference the appropriate tools to measure the change at the individual level.⁹

C. Timeline for Policy Implementation

This guidance was established in November 2018, updated in July 2023, and will remain in effect as long as the Education Policy is active. This guidance will be periodically updated based on feedback, and USAID will publicly report on the results and progress under the Education Policy.

Operating units are expected to apply the Education Policy on an ongoing basis as they develop or revise their strategies, design and implement new projects and activities, and plan for and report on their education portfolios. The Education Policy and this guidance can and should be used by Operating Units at any stage of the program cycle.

D. Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

Implementation of the Education Policy will require coordination and collaboration among USAID Operating Units (Missions, Regional Bureaus, Functional Bureaus, Independent Offices) and staff of all specializations (including technical, program, procurement, legal, budget) and hiring mechanisms. The roles and responsibilities for implementing the Education Policy are aligned with those described in [ADS 101 Agency Programs and Functions](#) and [ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy](#). Those descriptions are not repeated here, though there are specific roles in implementing the Education Policy that are outlined below:

- **All Missions and Operating Units with education programming**, regardless of the program area or account funding the programming, are responsible for effectively designing and implementing their portfolios, focusing on measurable results of education programming, and evaluating education projects and activities to meet country development goals in alignment with the Education Policy.¹⁰ They are also responsible for providing data through existing reporting processes to enable USAID to present a consolidated report to external stakeholders on USAID's overall education investments.

⁹ The ES 2-52 indicator may be used to measure and report on improvement at the individual level. The ES 2-55 Higher Education Reach Indicator may also be used to report on the number of learners that are reached by educators who have improved knowledge or skills.

¹⁰ This guidance frequently refers to the role of Missions in the Program Cycle, however the guidance contained herein is applicable to Missions, Regional Bureaus, functional Bureaus, and Independent Offices or Operating Units that manage education programming.

- The **Center for Education** is the principal Operating Unit responsible for implementation of the Education Policy, including providing technical assistance and support, issuance of sector-wide education policies and guidance, management of central mechanisms, monitoring implementation, supporting Mission-level and sector-wide learning and knowledge exchange, and reporting results on education programs worldwide.
- **Regional Bureau education advisors** are responsible for day-to-day country backstopping and support for their respective Missions in strategic planning, the design of projects and activities, monitoring, evaluation, and CLA. This includes engaging with PPL and Pillar Bureaus to ensure consistent application of the Program Cycle and to coordinate the provision of technical assistance. Regional Bureaus may also manage central mechanisms to support Program Cycle implementation.

II. Key Considerations Throughout the Program Cycle

Focus on Outcomes: The Education Policy recognizes that needs exist at all levels of education in each partner country and that overall need will almost always surpass the availability of USAID resources. In accordance with the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act ([PL 115-56](#)) and the Education Policy, Missions must ensure that limited resources are being programmed in strategic areas that are most likely to improve learning and education outcomes for all and support countries in their development through human capital formation.

Sequence Skills Development: The first questions that Missions should ask are: Based on the available data, analysis, and Mission resources, what are the root causes of low educational outcomes? What will be the most effective and sustainable intervention to address those root causes? If the education system is not producing strong learning outcomes in foundational skills in the early years, can USAID-funded interventions be expected to be sustained in later years? Equitable access to quality education that supports learners to gain foundational literacy, numeracy, and social emotional skills is essential for future progress and success in education and the workforce. For this reason, it is critical that Missions thoughtfully consider addressing the foundational levels of education and the sequencing of skills development *before* embarking on new, expanded, or pilot activities in other areas.

Adapt to Context: Missions, partner governments, and sector coordinating bodies might want to prioritize education interventions that are in addition to or beyond these areas depending on local needs and opportunities. In these instances, based on a combination of assessments, analyses, and policy directives that are linked to the CDCS and other priorities, Missions can program appropriately to meet the needs of the country context. Missions must also ensure that education projects and activities are equitable and inclusive from the outset, including by aligning all new programs with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).¹¹

The sections below outline the key considerations and expectations for implementing the Education Policy throughout the various phases of the USAID Program Cycle as defined and mandated in ADS 201.¹² This guidance does not repeat existing requirements in ADS 201, nor does it establish new

¹¹ Additional information on [USAID's commitment to incorporate the principles of UDL in all new education](#) programs may be found on pg. 17 of this guidance.

¹² See [ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy](#).

requirements. The principles and priorities outlined in the Education Policy inform this guidance and should drive decision-making throughout the program cycle.¹³

A. Country/Regional Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the process through which USAID determines the best approach in a given country or region based on individual country and/or regional priorities, U.S. development priorities, and USAID's comparative advantage and available foreign assistance resources, among other factors. The Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) defines a Mission's strategic approach to achieving results, and outlines why choices were made and how results in particular sectors contribute to the Mission's overarching goal and development objectives.

Preparation for the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (ADS 201.3.2.10)

Evidence and Analysis: ADS 201 requires that USAID country strategies be grounded in evidence and analysis. Missions should consider which analyses are needed to inform their strategic planning process, including any countrywide, sector-specific, sub-sector, or demographic analyses. Missions should draw evidence from third-party assessments and evaluations from government sources, civil society,¹⁴ the private sector, and other donors to complement Mission-led assessments and evaluations.¹⁵ This includes a donor landscape analysis to identify other donors active in the country and their program areas.

The following resources may be helpful in informing a selection of education priorities for CDCS:

- A country's **Education Sector Plan (ESP)** that articulates the government's longer-term vision and priorities with regard to education development and includes data on school enrollment, learning achievement, teacher management, infrastructure, budgets, and key policies. ESPs are frequently developed in coordination with donor agencies and serve as a framework for donor collaboration and coordination.
- **Thematic analyses** by the government, NGOs, and donor agencies on key topics such as equity and inclusion, dropout and repetition, out-of-school children and youth, and non-state education sector.
- The **Demographic and Health Surveys** implemented by USAID may provide a detailed snapshot of the country's population characteristics, including data on demographics, health, nutrition, education attainment, gender-related norms, and disability prevalence.
- The UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring Report include **cross-nationally comparable data on education**.

¹³ The depth of information and resources needed to comprehensively address and support high quality strategy development, project design, activity design, monitoring, and evaluation in education programming is beyond the scope of this program cycle guidance. In particular, project and activity design, monitoring, and evaluation require specific approaches and evidence related to the objectives and purpose of the project or activity. This guidance contains general information that applies regardless of the objectives of a country strategy, project, or activity.

¹⁴ See the [People's Action for Learning Network \(PAL Network\)](#) for information on home-level, citizen-led assessments of basic reading and numeracy competencies of children.

¹⁵ Missions should review and consider existing learning assessments and data before collecting new learning data. Strengthening local systems to collect and use data is a best practice.

Country and Local Ownership: It is useful to supplement secondary data sources with consultations with the partner government to receive updates about the government's strategic direction and priorities and to gauge the level of government commitment to specific areas of education development. Additionally, it is useful to consult with non-governmental actors as well as other donors active in the education sector. To align with [USAID's Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#), Missions may consider including local capacity strengthening of education system stakeholders, organizations, including youth-led and youth-serving organizations, or networks at an Intermediate Result (IR) or sub-IR level. The CDCS performance management plan, as required by ADS 201.3.2.15, may also include the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) plan indicators on share of funding to local organizations, as well as to new and nontraditional partners.

Initial Consultations and Parameters Setting (ADS 201.3.2.9(A))

Build on Progress: Programming should build on established foundations by the [USAID Education Strategy 2011-2018](#), the [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education for Fiscal Years 2019 - 2023](#), the [2018 USAID Education Policy](#), the [2022 USAID Youth in Development Policy](#), and the [2021 USAID Higher Education Program Framework](#) and carry forward the momentum needed to achieve significant impact at large-scale, particularly in the areas where the Agency has capacity and expertise.

Consultations: In the consultation phase, USAID Missions and Washington Operating Units should seek consensus on which priorities of the Education Policy are most critical for USAID and the country to jointly pursue. Knowledge and insights gained through prior implementation, analyses, and assessments should inform dialogue regarding the relevance of the four priority areas defined in the Education Policy to the country context. Local stakeholders, including marginalized populations, should also be intentionally included in dialogue to inform the programmatic approach.

Results Framework Development (ADS 201.3.2.9(B))

Policy Alignment: In developing their country strategies, USAID Missions should work with partner country stakeholders to establish a common vision and understanding of the challenges, goals, and metrics for success. Missions must make clear that the primary purpose of USAID programming in the education sector is to achieve sustained improvements in learning and educational outcomes.¹⁶ The four priority areas defined in the Education Policy should serve as a starting point for this dialogue, and Missions should identify linkages between these priorities and national development strategies and education sector plans.¹⁷ The results of initial consultations and resource parameter considerations are critical to determine specific learning and educational outcomes that can be sustainably improved, and the types of activities that can be supported.

¹⁶ The [USAID Education Policy](#) states that The primary purpose of programming in education by the U.S. Agency International Development (USAID) is to achieve sustained, measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills development. Sustained improvements refers to the ability of the education system to produce desired learning and educational outcomes over time. See [USAID Local Systems](#).

¹⁷ See the "Key Documents" sections of the country pages at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/about-us/developing-countries>.

The country context and the overarching goal of the country strategy will affect how education-related objectives are reflected in the CDCS results framework. In some cases, an entire development objective may be focused on education. In others, education-related objectives may be intermediate results or sub-intermediate results in one or more broader, multi-sector development objectives. Regardless of the eventual construction of the framework, the specific learning and educational outcomes that the Mission will support should be clearly identified, and Missions should seek to integrate the principles of the Education Policy across the outcomes, intermediary outcomes, and outputs of the results framework. An explicit theory of change should link these outcomes to the overarching goal of the country strategy.

B. Project and Activity Design and Implementation

A project is an optional framework to ensure that activities are designed and managed in a coordinated way to advance identified result(s) set forth in a CDCS. The strategic planning process defines the approach, and the project design process outlines its execution.

Activity design refers to the process by which USAID determines how to advance the intended result(s) in a given country or region through a given type of implementing mechanism. An activity can be an implementing mechanism such as a contract, direct agreement with the partner country government, cooperative agreement, or grant. USAID often complements activities with actions undertaken directly by USAID staff, such as policy dialogue, stakeholder coordination, or capacity strengthening.

Project and Activity Design Planning (ADS 201.3.3.12 and ADS 201.3.4.4)

Engaging Local Stakeholders: ADS 201 states that Missions should develop a plan for engaging local actors as part of design. Engaging local actors in design advances the Education Policy's first principle of country ownership through joint planning. Engaging with local actors should include education stakeholders such as local, regional, and/or national government or ministry representatives, civil society organizations, disabled persons' organizations, youth-led and/or youth serving organizations; LGBTQI+ organizations, teachers' organizations, parents and caregivers, academia, private sector firms and associations, other donors, and, when possible, children and youth.¹⁸ A stakeholder analysis and mapping will help guide selection of local actors to engage. More locally led forms of engagement such as engaging local actors in partnership to make design decisions jointly, delegating decisions to local actors to lead design, or designing a project or activity in support of an existing local initiative are most effective in fostering country ownership.¹⁹

Sustainability: The Education Policy states that education programs and activities should support country education systems to achieve sustainable improvements in learning and educational outcomes.²⁰ Sustainability means that the local education system has the ability to produce these outcomes over time

¹⁸ See the [USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy](#) and [Measuring Shared Value: How to Unlock Value by Linking Social and Business Results](#).

¹⁹ See [Locally Led Development Spectrum and Checklist Tool](#), [Co-Creation Guide](#), and [Collective Action in Programming](#).

²⁰ Sustainability will vary across contexts. For example, in education in conflict or crisis-affected areas where the formal education system may not be accessible to all, strengthening non-state schools or community-based education may lay the foundation for an eventual shift toward local education systems and sustainable outcomes.

beyond the project or activity lifespan or USAID’s presence in the country.²¹ Key considerations to keep in mind for sustainability across the program cycle include:

- **Intentionality:** Project and activity design should define success at the system-level jointly with local actors and monitor for this from the start. Projects and activities are more likely to be effective in promoting sustainability and strengthening of the local system when indicators assessing the sustainability of an intervention model are included in the activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans.
- **Locally led:** When local actors across the education system, from the Ministry to schools, set their own development agendas, develop and implement solutions, and use their capacities, leadership, and resources to promote equitable change, projects and activities are more likely to be effective and sustained.²²
- **Apply a long-term lens:** USAID efforts are most successful when engagement continues over multiple years and projects and activities build on momentum towards improved outcomes.²³ A focus on short-term results may lead to premature judgments of failure or success.²⁴
- **Focus on sustaining outcomes not activities:** The needs and priorities of local contexts continually change. Interventions should be sustained when they prove cost-effective and contribute to meaningful improvements that are valued by the local actors. Strengthening local actors' capacities to implement, evaluate, and adapt projects and activities supports the resilience of the system to sustain outcomes.²⁵
- **Political will is equally important as technical validity:** Sustained reform depends on a shift in behaviors, whether that be district education administrators adopting a new supervision mindset or teachers employing inclusive education methods in the classroom. Understanding stakeholder behavior and building relationships are foundational to lasting change.

Utilizing Data and Evidence: ADS 201 requires a plan for conducting analyses. At this stage, Missions should seek to conduct more in-depth analyses, whether using the same data gathered during CDCS development or collecting and analyzing additional data. Analyses of the education system will provide information on opportunities for lasting change, leverage points, and challenges that should be taken into consideration. This might include information on delivery systems (i.e. how do teachers, books and materials, and resources reach classrooms), language abilities and use (i.e. which languages do teachers/instructors and students use and understand), teacher ability and training, class sizes, and the availability of knowledgeable mentors and or coaches either within or outside of the formal system. At this point of the program cycle, it is also important to review past evaluations and ensure that lessons learned are incorporated into the design, in order to build on previous investments and accomplishments.

²¹ USAID Local Systems Framework

²² See [Ten Years of Early Grade Reading Programming: A Retrospective](#) and [Evaluation of Sustained Outcomes in Basic Education](#)

²³ See [Ten Years of Early Grade Reading Programming: A Retrospective](#) and [Evaluation of Sustained Outcomes in Basic Education](#)

²⁴ [Power of Persistence: Education System Reform and Aid Effectiveness](#)

²⁵ [Power of Persistence: Education System Reform and Aid Effectiveness](#)

Assessments and Analyses to Fit the Context and Project Purpose²⁶

Learning assessments can provide a snapshot of learner levels of proficiency or demonstrate change in outcomes, over time, as a result of past activities. Available assessments for early and foundational learning include sub-national, national, or regional assessments of student abilities in reading, mathematics, and social-emotional skills, such as the [International Development and Early Learning Assessment \(IDELA\)](#), [Early Grade Reading Assessments \(EGRA\)](#); and the [Early Grade Mathematics Assessments \(EGMA\)](#).

In conflict and crisis-affected contexts, USAID's [Rapid Education and Risk Analysis \(RERA\) Toolkit](#) provides guidance on how to better understand the dynamic system of multiple contextual risks and assets that interact with the education system. When designing education projects or activities, USAID Missions should consider how education systems are affected by contextual risks such as violence, insecurity, natural hazards, and health pandemics, and how these risks influence each other. In stable settings, other types of system-level diagnostics could be utilized to inform the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) development.

For youth workforce development, a [labor market assessment](#) should be done at the outset of a project or activity and, ideally, at other intervals during implementation to update labor market information. The labor market assessment should analyze stakeholders within a workforce system in a target country and at subnational levels, including youth, government, families, education and training providers, and the private sector.

A labor market assessment may also be undertaken by Higher Education activities that aim to measurably improve employability and employment. Higher education activities that are focused on improving the performance of an HEI should be prepared to conduct both capacity assessments and assessments to measure improved performance.

System-level diagnostics or analyses, such as a [political economy analysis](#), can inform education system strengthening efforts. The [USAID Private Sector Engagement \(PSE\) Policy](#) and the [PSE Evidence and Learning Plan](#) outline guidance for integrating PSE into program design.²⁷

Project Design (ADS 201.3.3.13) and Activity Design (201.3.4)

Strategic Approach: Education project and activity designs should consider: 1) how activities will work together and complement one another in the context of the education system; and 2) how the project or activity will support the achievement of measurable, sustained improvements in learning and education outcomes. The degree to which activities work on direct service delivery at the classroom level or focus on institutional or system-level capacity development will differ. However, projects and

²⁶ Note that many of these tools are applicable throughout the program cycle.

²⁷ The [Private Sector Engagement Reference Guide](#) contains a variety of tools and information for all phases of the program cycle. More specific [PSE in Education](#) and [Education Finance](#) Resources are located on [Edu-Links.org](#).

activities as a whole must lead to measurable and sustainable improvements in learning and educational outcomes.

Universal Design for Learning: All USAID education programs should strive to be equitable and inclusive and integrate principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). To integrate the principles of UDL, programs should include multiple means of engagement for learners to be motivated to learn, have representation that is varied and inclusive of and accessible to all learners in the program, including learners with disabilities, learners of different identities and backgrounds, etc., and encourage multiple ways for learners to express what they have learned. These principles should be integrated across the continuum of education, including educator preparation and training, workforce training, curriculum development, design of the learning environment, material development, and instruction.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Where possible, Operating Units and Missions should consider collaborations across sectors in order to maximize learning outcomes, including by leveraging resources from other sectors and stakeholders when possible and appropriate. Evidence has shown that holistic support and wrap-around services can lead to greater learning and educational outcomes, especially for marginalized populations. Cross-sector collaboration requires new ways of thinking and a deliberate effort to implement and fund programs across sectors. Integrated programs have the potential to deliver results across multiple sectors, including education; democracy and governance; health; agriculture; nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; and economic growth.

Use of Evidence: The use of evidence is critically important in project and activity design and it is imperative that the project or activity be bound by a theory of change that articulates how it will support sustained improvements in learning and educational outcomes. The theory of change underpinning project and activity design should be based on the best evidence possible. At the same time, projects and activities should consider the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence supporting the theory of change. When evidence is less robust or based on data from another context, the focus should be on experimentation to build evidence around the theory of change, and programs should have the flexibility to adapt in response to this evidence. Testing effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions can provide data for scale up, as well as a foundation for sustainability by host governments, private actors, or other donors. When project or activity design is based on robust locally tested evidence, the focus can shift from experimentation to implementation of proven models and approaches to scale.

Planning for Measurement: Projects and activities are expected to be designed based on clear evidence of logical pathways explaining how USAID's support to country education systems will contribute to measurable and sustainable improvement in learning and educational outcomes. In addition, activity monitoring, evaluation and learning plans (AMELPS) must specify how key outcomes will be measured, whether an activity is expected to undergo an internal or external evaluation, and how learning will be used for ongoing collaboration and adaptation. Approaches to measuring learning and education outcomes can vary according to project design decisions. For example, when building evidence for a theory of change to strengthen local service delivery, it may be appropriate to use an impact evaluation to measure outcomes. When designing a project at national scale based on a proven theory of change, it may be appropriate to work with the national assessment system to generate data on learning outcomes.

Research: Embedding research into an activity design can help both inform implementation and generate evidence relevant to the broader sector. Evidence summaries and systematic reviews on [Education Links](#) serve as a starting point and should complement contextually specific evidence generated in-country and other relevant evidence. Projects or activities that work closely with national stakeholders such as government agencies, local research organizations, academia, the private sector, and local NGOs can support the development and implementation of shared research agendas with the potential to lead to locally grown innovations and strengthen local systems and capacity to test interventions and use data for decision-making.

Review and Conduct Supplement Analysis (ADS 201.3.4.5(1))

Key Considerations: The most effective assessments provide data on learning outcomes and skills acquisition,²⁸ learning environments, systems functions, and the degree to which marginalized and vulnerable groups benefit from instructional opportunities offered to their peers. These may include assessing and analyzing education policies, the political economy,²⁹ financing and resources, teacher attendance, incentives, and barriers to quality instruction and learning, student attendance, incentives, and barriers to access and learning, access to books and materials both in learning environments and in the community, the enabling environment for private and non-state schools and education providers, community support for education; and the national, school, and classroom-level assessment systems and utilization of results. Equity and inclusion assessments pinpoint specific aspects of marginalization and opportunities to address them in project and activity design.³⁰

System Diagnostic: Context assessments³¹ can help Missions identify gaps and barriers in the system that may be affecting learning and educational outcomes, and where USAID resources should be best targeted. In order to have an in-depth understanding of the capacity of the education system in the partner country, Missions should consider conducting a thorough diagnostic of the education systems³² and how learning and educational outcomes are affected by different factors.³³ A diagnostic study is a type of a technical analysis that is designed to help uncover the underlying root causes of the education development problem so rather than treating the symptoms, USAID programming can address the root

²⁸ See resources like the [Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment \(UNESCO, 2017\)](#) and the [Early Grade Reading Assessment \(EGRA\) Toolkit \(USAID, 2016\)](#).

²⁹ See [Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis \(USAID, 2018\)](#).

³⁰ The 2018 USAID Education Policy definition of marginalized and vulnerable groups children includes “girls, children affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, children with disabilities, children in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking.” Relevant analyses should be conducted.

³¹ A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201 ([201mba](#)) requires an assessment of the context/underlying development problem as the foundation of activity design. Mandatory context analyses include gender, environment and climate risk, where applicable.

³² See the [USAID Local Systems Framework](#), which describes USAID’s overarching approach to transforming innovations and reforms into sustained development. See the [5Rs Framework in the Program Cycle](#) for a technical note on a practical methodology for supporting sustainability and local ownership in projects and activities through ongoing attention to local actors and local systems. This framework is useful across all phases of the program cycle.

³³ See [Doing Reform Differently: Combining Rigor and Practicality in Implementation and Evaluation of System Reforms \(Crouch and DeStefano, 2017\)](#). See also the [Systems Approach for Better Education Results \(SABER\)](#), the Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines [Volume 1: Sector-Wide Analysis With An Emphasis on Primary and Secondary Education](#), [Volume 2: Sub-Sector Specific Analyses](#) (UNESCO, 2014), and [Applying Systems Thinking to Education: The RISE Systems Framework](#).

causes of the problem. This focus on uncovering root causes of the problem is the critical step in the early stages of design.

Accelerating measurable learning and educational outcomes is complex, and depends on improvements across the education system, from policy development and implementation and resources invested at the classroom level, to community support for education and provision of meaningful learning opportunities outside the classroom. To be most useful, diagnostic studies should include key stakeholders who may influence learning outcomes, and not be limited to the government education system.

Crisis Assessment: In crisis- and conflict-affected environments, it is critical to analyze the two-way interaction between the education system and the conflict or crisis to ensure any USAID investments avoid doing harm and are conflict-sensitive. Conflict assessments or a Rapid Education and Risk Analysis, including analysis of the risk of climate change to education systems and learning, can integrate topics and questions to help Missions better understand the dynamics and relationship between education and crisis or conflict—including how education inequalities and issues can act as drivers of conflict, and how education can build connections among people and promote peace.³⁴

Cross-Sectoral Assessment: Cross-sectoral assessments should also be considered at this stage. Youth assessments, for example, can be used to gain a better understanding of the knowledge, perceptions, and experiences regarding youth development needs by engaging youth and other key stakeholders.³⁵ Youth assessments benefit multiple sectors, including education, economic growth, democracy, governance, agriculture, and health. Gender analyses are mandated by ADS 201 and ADS 205 at the CDCS stage and should include information on learning and educational outcomes. Missions should also consider an analysis of higher education institutions and/or systems to identify opportunities to engage these institutions across programming in any sector. This analysis may identify local higher education institutions that can serve as implementing partners, research institutions, or beneficiaries.

C. Monitoring, Evaluation and Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)

Activity monitoring, evaluation, and CLA focuses on whether an activity is achieving programmatic results and generating learning to inform the adaptation of activities based on evidence. Education programming, barring some exceptions, must follow USAID's Program Cycle Operational Policy requirements for monitoring, evaluation and CLA, including that activities must have an approved Activity MEL Plan in place before major implementation actions begin. The following information is provided to help designers and managers of education programs to meet monitoring, evaluation and learning expectations.

- a. **Monitoring** is the ongoing and systematic tracking of information relevant to USAID strategies, projects, and activities. The [USAID Monitoring Toolkit](#) is a foundational resource for Missions

³⁴ See the [USAID Conflict Assessment Framework \(USAID, 2012\)](#) and [Rapid Education and Risk Assessment Toolkit \(USAID\)](#).

³⁵ See [Youth Assessments 101 Brief](#) and [Youth Compass: A Strategic Guide to Strengthen Youth Activities \(USAID, 2017\)](#).

and partners, and includes the latest USAID guidance, tools, and templates for monitoring strategies, projects, and activities.

Reporting Data: Activity awards indicate expectations on reporting of key activity indicator monitoring data. Relevant Standard Foreign Assistance Indicators and information on education-related key issues gathered at the country strategy stage and project and activity levels must be provided as applicable through the operating unit’s Performance Plan and Report (PPR) and other regular reporting processes to support Agency policy-level decision-making, resource allocation, and communication with Congress and external stakeholders. Additional information regarding requirements of the PPR and other reporting processes is available in the Planning and Reporting section of this document.

Cost Data: To assess cost effectiveness of activities, it is essential that Missions ensure appropriate monitoring and documentation of education activity implementation and adaptation, intervention delivery (duration, intensity, etc.) at the program participant level, activity outcomes, and cost data. Missions should collect and make good use of information on the cost of interventions to ensure programs are able to be sustained by partner countries without USAID’s support. USAID’s Center for Education has produced [Cost Reporting and Cost Analysis guidance notes](#) for the education sector to help advance cost measurement and use of cost data in program planning, implementation, and sustainment³⁶. Monitoring should be designed to provide data on both how well activities are reaching different populations, including marginalized groups such as learners with disabilities, and the actual delivery of the intervention among distinct groups. This data is instrumental to periodically review the assumptions underlying theories of change and interpret evaluation findings.

Fidelity of Implementation: Monitoring is critical to knowing the fidelity of implementation. Routine context monitoring³⁷ and feedback loops are effective tools for informing management and adaptation. This is particularly relevant in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Where appropriate, monitoring should be embedded in partner country education systems, and local ownership should be promoted through joint planning, data collection, and the use of data at the field level. Strengthening the capacity of partner countries and education stakeholders to routinely gather, analyze, and use education data is an essential part of any education intervention. This should include the capacity of partner countries to collect data on learning and education outcomes and ensure the transparency and availability of those data and evaluations.

Data Collection for Global Commitments

Girls’ Education: In 2021, the United States supported two new global commitments on girls’ education as part of the [G7 Girls Education Declaration](#): 1) 40 million more girls in school by 2026 in low- and lower-middle-income countries; and 2) 20 million more girls reading by age ten or the end

³⁶ See [USAID Cost Measurement Initiative website](#) for more information. Tracking and reporting cost data may require investment in local capacity strengthening. When cost reporting is required, operational costs should be planned for.

³⁷ Context monitoring indicators is a useful tool for formalizing the indicators and the process of context monitoring. USAID’s Learning Lab has useful [resources](#) for context monitoring.

of primary school in low- and lower-middle-income countries by 2026. In 2022, USAID committed to an implementation plan for the USG National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, and USAID's plan is comprised of seven goals. The second goal, "Address the Gendered Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic," includes a target of reaching 15 million girls and young women with interventions to reduce barriers to quality formal and non-formal education by the end of FY2024." To track progress on girls' education commitments, education programs must collect and report beneficiary data that is disaggregated by sex, in accordance with ADS guidance.

Inclusive Education: At the 2022 Global Disability Summit, [USAID committed](#) to strengthen disability data and evidence for education programming, promote principles of Universal Design for Learning in all new education programs, and increase disability-inclusive initiatives at all levels of education, from pre-primary through higher education programming. To the extent practicable and appropriate, education programs should collect and report beneficiary data that is disaggregated by disability status.³⁸

Foundational Learning: At the 2022 Transforming Education Summit, the United States [endorsed](#) the international [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#). Learning data, including data from formative and summative assessments, should be collected, reported, and used at the local, national, and global levels to advance progress on foundational learning skills.

- b. **Evaluation** is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of strategies, projects, and activities to generate knowledge to improve effectiveness. Evaluations should be timed to inform decisions about current and future programming.³⁹ Rigorous evaluations of education programs and activities strengthen accountability, ensure transparency, and feed into evidence-based theories of change. The USAID Evaluation Toolkit is a resource for Missions and partners with the latest guidance, tools, and templates for evaluating USAID strategies, programs, projects, and activities.⁴⁰ Additional [evaluation quality assessment tools](#) can be used to ensure partners know how to implement best practices in the evaluation science.

To promote learning and improve implementation, evaluation teams should work closely with implementation teams and employ robust, context-informed methodologies. The context, key learning questions, timeframe, and available budget all play an important role in informing the type of evaluation conducted.⁴¹

³⁸ See the How-To Note: Collecting Data on Disability Prevalence in Education Programs

³⁹ See the [USAID Evaluation Policy](#).

⁴⁰ See [Evaluation Toolkit on USAID Learning Lab](#).

⁴¹ Common evaluation approaches include agile evaluation methodologies, such as rapid feedback mechanisms, routine evaluations, impact evaluations, mid-term reviews and performance evaluations, ex-post evaluations, and evaluations and analyses that go beyond the direct management or implementation of projects or activities and assess systemic uptake of actions. For more information, see [Evaluation of Sustained Outcomes in Basic Education Synthesis Report](#), [Ethics in Research and Evaluation in the Education Sector](#), [Education Systems Strengthening Research in sub-Saharan Africa](#), [RAPID Feedback MERL resources](#), [Nimble Evaluations](#), and [Impact Evaluations in Practice](#)

- c. **Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA):** Strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management link all components of the program cycle. CLA helps ensure that programming is coordinated, grounded in evidence and best practice, adjusted to remain relevant and effective throughout implementation, and informs future programming. The CLA Toolkit includes curated tools and resources. CLA tools can provide helpful ideas and guidance for how to meaningfully collaborate with local actors and program participants throughout an activity. CLA approaches include ways of identifying and integrating local priorities and knowledge into activity monitoring, evaluation and other activity processes.

III. Budget Planning

A. Attributing Funding to Congressional Directives for Education

Overview of Education Directives

There are two main legislative drivers for USAID’s education programming: (1) Section 105 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended by the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act ([PL 115-56](#)), which authorizes and provides a definition of basic education and a sense of Congressional priorities for education programming; and (2) the basic education and higher education directives in annual appropriations bills, the annual funding legislation that provides legal authority for agencies to spend funds. Annual appropriations often include directives on the amount of USAID funding to be spent on education, as well as specific directives on how and where to program education funds. Congressional committee reports and statements of managers provide further detail of Congressional intent regarding the use of education funds.⁴²

This section provides the parameters for implementing the basic education and higher education directives and offers guidance on permissible and non-permissible uses of education-directed funds. These parameters were determined in consultation with Congressional committees and staff responsible for drafting the directive provisions in appropriations legislation.⁴³ This guidance applies to the use of *all* funds attributed to education directives—regardless of account, program area, or the alignment or non-alignment of projects and activities with the overall objectives set forth in any current, active Agency-level USAID education policy.

Guiding Principle for Attribution of Funds Directed for Education

The intent of Congress and USAID is that education-directed funds must be used for programs that assist countries to achieve measurable improvements in learning and educational outcomes.

⁴² Appropriations bills and committee reports are available at www.congress.gov.

⁴³ Note that this guidance replaces and supersedes the [Clarification of the Basic Education Congressional Earmark](#) guidance note that was issued in 2009. It applies to all education-directed funds available to the Agency, regardless of the year in which they were appropriated.

Funds directed for education must not be used for programs that do not have the improvement of learning and educational outcomes as a specific, measured objective.⁴⁴ The justification for use of education-directed funds rests solely on the expected impact of the activity on learning and educational outcomes. The impact of an education program on other goals is not relevant in justifying the use of education-directed funds.

Activities that support improved learning and education outcomes can take a variety of forms: improving educator training; purchasing and distributing teaching and learning materials; policy dialogue and reform support; conducting learning assessments; constructing or rehabilitating education facilities; integrating technologies into systems or classrooms; supporting capacity strengthening in ministries, higher education institutions, and other partner country organizations; and many more. This guidance does not seek to overly restrict the use of directed funds based on categories or types of activities, but rather allows Missions to use the most relevant evidence regarding effective interventions to measurably improve learning and educational outcomes.

Tracking Congressional Directives for Education in the Budget

Directives for basic education are mainly tracked through direct allocations to ES.1 Basic Education in the Standard Program Structure and Definitions (SPSD), all subcategories of which are attributed to the basic education directive. Directives for higher education are mainly tracked through direct allocations to ES.2 Higher Education in the SPSP, all subcategories of which are attributed to the higher education directive.

There are multiple other program areas (e.g. DR.4 Civil Society; EG.3 Agriculture; EG.6 Workforce Development; or ES.5 Social Assistance) that may directly fund or complement education-related activities. These activities can be attributed to the basic education or higher education directives when they meet the definitions for ES.1 Basic Education and ES.2 Higher Education Program Areas of the SPSP.⁴⁵

Basic Education Directive Definition

Funding attributed to the basic education directive must align with the categories of activities and definitions provided in the Standard Program Structure and Definitions (SPSD) and in the READ Act.

- Program Area ES.1: Basic Education
 - Program Element ES.1.1: Pre-Primary Education
 - Program Element ES.1.2: Primary Education
 - Program Element ES.1.3: Lower Secondary Education
 - Program Element ES.1.4: Learning for Out-of-School Youth

⁴⁴ The justification for use of education directed funds rests on the expected educational impact of the activity. The impact of an activity on other goals — health, economic growth, agriculture, democracy and governance, etc. — is not relevant to justifying the use of directed education funds. These intersections should be considered in the development of integrated programming, but they cannot justify the use of education directed funds for an activity that is expected to have no impact on educational outcomes.

⁴⁵ Again, note that other sectoral directives (e.g. democracy, water) and sector-specific accounts (e.g. Global Health Programs) have their own sets of parameters and guidance that should be followed.

- Program Element ES.1.5: Literacy and Numeracy for Youth and Adults
- Program Element ES.1.6: Upper Secondary Education
- Program Element ES.1.7: Education Systems
- Program Element ES.1.8: Host Country Strategic Information Capacity

In addition to the SPSD areas above, the activity areas listed below—which come directly from the READ Act—may be attributed to the basic education directive.

Definition of Basic Education from the READ Act:

BASIC EDUCATION. The term “basic education” includes:

- Measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development that prepare an individual to be an active, productive member of society and the workforce;
- Workforce development, vocational training, and digital literacy informed by real market needs and opportunities and that results in measurable improvements in employment;
- Programs and activities designed to demonstrably improve:
 - a. Early childhood, pre-primary education, primary education, and secondary education, which can be delivered in formal or non-formal education settings;
 - b. Learning for out-of-school youth and adults;
- Capacity building for teachers, administrators, counselors, and youth workers that results in measurable improvements in student literacy, numeracy, or employment.

Basic Education funds allocated to improve girls’ education outcomes in a context that self-identifies as “Conflict-affected” or “Crisis-affected” may be attributed to the Congressional subdirective on education for girls in areas of conflict.

Higher Education Directive Definition

Funding attributed to the higher education directive must align with the categories of activities and definitions provided in the SPSD.

- Program Area ES.2 Higher Education
 - Program Element ES.2.1: Engaging Higher Education Institutions in Research and Development
 - Program Element ES.2.2: Access to Tertiary Education and Professional Development to Strengthen Higher Education
 - Program Element ES.2.3: Host Country Strategic Information Capacity
 - Program Element ES.2.4: Engaging Tertiary Institutions in Workforce Development
 - Program Element ES.2.5: Systemic Reform of Tertiary Institutions
 - Program Element ES.2.6: Access to Higher Education Opportunities

Funds attributed to the Higher Education sub-directive for “new and ongoing partnerships for human and institutional capacity building between higher education institutions in the United States and developing countries” must focus on or include a major component supporting institutional capacity development of a host country higher education institution and involve a partnership with at least one U.S. higher education institution and at least one host country higher education institution.

B. Operational Plans (OP)

The purpose of the Operational Plan (OP) is to provide a comprehensive picture of how an operating unit will use its foreign assistance funding to achieve foreign assistance goals and to establish how the proposed funding plan and programming supports Operating Units, Agency, and U.S. Government policy priorities.

Implementing Mechanisms (IM)

Implementing mechanism narratives should contain sufficient detail on the activity to easily understand the link between the activity and learning and educational outcomes. While not every individual activity in a portfolio is expected to reach learners/students as direct beneficiaries (some will do this more so than others), every activity must be grounded in a theory of change that articulates the connection between the activity and expected improvements in learning and educational outcomes. The portfolio as a whole should clearly demonstrate a strong connection to these outcomes, and the IM narratives should reflect this.

Program Area Narratives

Operating Units should specify how their education portfolios integrate the principles in the Education Policy and relate to its priorities (regardless of the program area or account used to fund programs). This information should be explicit in the Program Area Narratives for:

- ES.1 Basic Education
- ES.2 Higher Education

In addition to the education-focused narratives, there are a number of Key Issue Narratives that are particularly useful in examining specific topics or areas of emphasis in all program areas, including education:

- Engagement of Higher Education Institutions
- Gender Equality/Women’s Empowerment
- Inclusive Development: Participation of People with Disabilities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Inclusion (LGBTQI+)
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Science, Technology, and Innovation
- Sustainability and Local Ownership
- Youth Development

For these key issues, programs and results should feed into the broader narrative, highlighting the education programs related to the key issue topic. This allows for more information to be conveyed on education programming through these key issue lenses than through the education-focused narratives alone.

IV. Performance, Planning, and Reporting

A. Performance Plans and Reports (PPR)

The Performance Plan and Report (PPR) is an annual data call for performance information to all operating units in USAID and the Department of State that implement foreign assistance programs.

Program Area Narratives

Operating Units should capture relevant results and progress in the Program Area Narratives for:

- ES.1 Basic Education
- ES.2 Higher Education

In addition to the education-focused narratives, there are a number of Key Issue Narratives that are useful for examining specific topics or areas of emphasis in all program areas, including education:

- Engagement of Higher Education Institutions
- Gender Equality/Women's Empowerment
- Inclusive Development: Participation of People with Disabilities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Inclusion (LGBTQI+)
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Science, Technology, and Innovation
- Sustainability and Local Ownership
- Youth Development

For these key issues, education programs and results should feed into the broader narrative, highlighting the education sector results related to the key issue topic. This allows for more information to be conveyed on education programs through these key issue lenses than through the education-focused narratives alone.

Indicators

Operating Units are required to set targets and report on results annually through PPRs. To the extent possible, the use of standard indicators is encouraged. Standard indicators can and should include outcome indicators and output indicators, such as number of beneficiaries reached. In addition to the standard indicators, the Center for Education has developed a list of supplemental indicators that add new areas of measurement to complete the picture of USAID education sector reporting. These

indicators would be reported in the PPR as custom indicators. Activity managers are also encouraged to develop and report on other customized indicators to track progress as needed.

Operating Units are required to set targets and measure results on learning and educational outcomes associated with their programming. They then must share their data on learning and educational outcomes with USAID/Washington through the PPR process. Missions with relevant programming must set targets and report on results for all applicable standard indicators in annual PPRs. Operating Units should collect and report on standard indicators and their disaggregates, including by sex, if programming produces data that contributes to the measurement of a standard indicator. Customized indicators, particularly those related to learning outcomes, should also be reported in the PPR. Complete reporting of both types of indicators is essential to ensure that data from the PPR captures the full scale of USAID programmatic results and achievements. This is important for Agency-level monitoring, as well as to inform public and Congressional reporting. It also reduces the need for ad hoc data calls.

Missions should ensure all contracts and awards with education programming include applicable standard indicators. During implementation, Missions should work with implementing partners to ensure activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans contain all applicable standard indicators, including education programming funded through other sources of funding. When utilizing a CLA approach, particularly in fluid contexts, targets or indicators should be revised as appropriate.

In the Standard Foreign Assistance Master Indicator List (MIL), there are a range of education-related standard indicators (under ES.1 Basic Education, ES.2 Higher Education, EG.6 Workforce Development, and other program areas) that are relevant to the priority areas in the Education Policy. USAID's Education Reporting Guidance and Indicator Reference Sheets can be found on [Education Links](#).

Note that some of the education-related standard indicators are subsets of other indicators. In these cases, Missions are expected to report on both indicators, rather than picking one to report on. For example, if a Mission reports on ES.1-1 "Percent of learners targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 2," they should, in addition, report on ES.1-3 "Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance," regardless of whether or not the number of beneficiaries reported for each are identical. If a Mission reports on ES 2-1 "Number of host country higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance" then the Mission should, in addition, report on CBLD-9 "Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance," regardless of whether or not the number of organizations reported for each are identical.

Programs of any funding source *can* and *should* contribute to standard indicators. All education-related programs and results, regardless of whether they are funded through the basic education or higher education program areas and directives, should be considered when reporting.

Measuring Learning Outcomes

To address the Congressional expectation of improvement of learning and educational outcomes as a specific, measured objective, all Operating Units with education portfolios must measure and report on learning and educational outcomes.

At present, USAID has standard indicators in place to support measurement and reporting on primary grades reading outcomes (ES.1-1, ES.1-2, ES.1-47, ES.1-48, ES.1-54), teaching and learning material distribution (ES.1-55), safety (ES.1-51), participation in distance learning (ES.1-58), improved access to education (ES.1-56), workforce skills development (EG.6-13), workforce employment and earnings outcomes (EG.6-11, EG.6-12), youth (Youth-1, Youth-6) policy reform (ES.1-59), and higher education outcomes (ES.2-1, ES.2-2, ES.2-52, ES.2-53, ES.2-54, ES.2-55). The Center for Education also has a number of supplemental indicators measuring outcomes related to pre-primary education, math, and social and emotional skills. USAID/Washington will develop the resources and standard indicators necessary for measuring and reporting additional allowable learning and educational outcomes.

Within the constraints discussed in this guidance and in line with the priority areas in the Education Policy, Missions have the flexibility to identify the outcomes their programs will target. When reporting on standard or supplemental indicators, Missions are required to follow the methodology described in the performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS). For custom indicators, Missions have the flexibility to identify methodologies for measuring learning outcomes that are valid and appropriate to the country context and development objectives. Missions should consider methodologies that reinforce country capacity to sustainably measure learning outcomes consistent with global measurement standards, as well as methodologies that USAID has strong experience and capacity to support. For reading and math in the primary grades, Missions should work with host countries to align their standards, benchmarks, and assessments to the Global Proficiency Framework, consulting with USAID/Washington on the alignment methodology and materials.⁴⁶

B. USAID Development Data

Data, and the information derived from data, are assets for USAID, its partners, the academic and scientific communities, and the public at large. The value of data used in strategic planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of USAID's programs is enhanced when data is made available throughout the Agency and to other interested stakeholders, in accordance with proper protection and redaction allowable by law.

For USAID education programming, the expectation is that all assessments and sampling, assumptions, designs and protocols; data collection instruments; training manuals; reports; quantitative and qualitative code books; and raw data sets, that are properly cleaned to remove personally identifiable information (PII), will be submitted to the Development Data Library (DDL) in accordance with guidelines articulated in ADS 579 and recommended practices for the sector.⁴⁷ The presumption is that data will be made public as allowable by law. It is the responsibility of Missions to communicate this U.S. Government policy with country partners.

⁴⁶ See the [Global Proficiency Framework: Reading and Mathematics](#) for more information

⁴⁷ The requirement to submit data to the Development Data Library replaces an earlier requirement to submit data to the Secondary Analysis and Results Tracking (SART) data system.

C. Sectoral Learning and Reporting

USAID/Washington will reinforce and build upon Mission-driven monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting through efforts such as systematic analyses, reporting on learning and educational outcomes associated with programming, continuous assessment of the quality and findings of educational intervention evaluations, aggregate and targeted analyses of activity cost information, and the pursuit of sectoral learning agendas. These efforts will improve the body of education sector data and evidence, pioneering innovative approaches to our work.

USAID will report on the results and progress made related to the priorities of the Education Policy, focused on learning and educational outcomes:

- Children, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that's safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities

The report will be based on data and narrative information extracted from the PPRs and OPs of all Operating Units on program implementation, budget allocations, and performance results for all education programming across the Agency. Information from evaluation reports and analyses of other data sources will be used in the development of public reports. USAID will use third party, national-level education indicators to better track and understand overall country progress in the path to self-reliance in education.

Annex I: Funding Attributions with Special Considerations

The following types of activities are not intended to serve as an exhaustive or exclusive list of activities that can be supported with education funds, rather the activities specifically addressed in Annex I are included because they are the subject of frequently asked questions from Missions or specific direction from Congress.

i. Youth Workforce Development Programs

Youth workforce development includes a range of interventions to assist individuals in acquiring knowledge and developing skills and behaviors to find jobs, establish viable self-employment ventures, and/or stay employed and productive in a changing economy, including through creation of policies, programs, and systems that respond to labor market demands in the formal and informal sectors. USAID defines youth as individuals between the ages of 10 and 29; it also recognizes that those under age 18 are universally considered children and subject to numerous national and international norms and legal protections.⁴⁸ Based on international research on stages of youth development, USAID defines the different stages of youth as follows:

- Early adolescence (10–14)⁴⁹
- Adolescence (15–19)
- Emerging adulthood (20–24)
- Transition to adulthood (25–29)

Operating Units are required to use these age band disaggregations across all relevant indicators.

Youth workforce development programs may be funded from a range of accounts and program areas, not all of which are attributable to education directives. When using funds attributed to education directives, Operating Units must adhere to the following guidance:

- Funds may be attributed to the basic education directive if they support youth workforce development activities to improve skills—particularly literacy, numeracy, and soft skills, vocational or technical skills, and work readiness skills—for youth at or below the secondary school level and for out-of-school youth with less than a secondary school level, or equivalent, educational attainment. This includes capacity development support to institutions and organizations that provide these services.
- Funds may be attributed to the higher education directive if they support youth workforce development activities to improve skills—particularly technical skills, industry-specific skills, and social-emotional and soft skills—for youth and adults at or above the post-secondary school and tertiary levels or their equivalents. This includes capacity strengthening support to institutions and organizations that provide these services.

⁴⁸ See USAID Youth in Development Policy: 2022 Update

⁴⁹ USAID does not recommend youth workforce development programming for early adolescents (10-14). Youth workforce development indicators begin at age 15.

Additionally, the table below provides a rough guide to selecting the most appropriate directive attribution—between basic education and higher education—based on the education level for intended programming and the educational attainment of the target population(s). For example, funding for youth workforce development activities targeting populations who have attained upper secondary education (i.e. graduated secondary school or equivalent) would be more appropriately attributed to the higher education directive, not the basic education directive.

Table 1.

Education Programming Level ⁵⁰	Basic Education	Higher Education
Less than primary education (ISCED Level 0)	✓	
Primary education (ISCED Level 1)	✓	
Lower secondary education (ISCED Level 2)	✓	
Upper secondary education (ISCED Level 3)	✓	
Post-secondary non-higher education (ISCED Level 4)		✓
Higher education (ISCED Levels 5-8)		✓

Operating Units should use this guidance and their best judgment to determine whether education-directed funds are appropriate to use for workforce development programming, and if so, which directive is most appropriate.

ii. School Feeding Programs

The United Nations World Food Programme’s [The State of School Feeding Worldwide 2013](#) report defines school feeding as “the provision of food to schoolchildren.” School feeding programs “can be classified into two main groups based on their modalities:

1) in-school feeding, where children are fed in school; and 2) take-home rations, where families are given food if their children attend school. In-school feeding can, in turn, be divided into two common categories: 1) programmes that provide meals; and 2) programmes that provide high-energy biscuits or snacks.”

Funds may be attributed to the basic education directive only if they support activities that provide pre-primary, primary, or secondary school feeding/meals where the activities a) are combined with other interventions directly focused on measurably improving learning and other educational outcomes, b)

⁵⁰ See [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\) 2011](#) for more information on education levels.

include measurement of educational outcomes, and c) are clearly identified in the regular notification procedures of the Congressional Committees on Appropriations.⁵¹ School feeding programming should be coordinated with U.S. Department of Agriculture programming and USAID Food For Peace programming, as appropriate.

It is critical to identify the theory of change that explains how a school feeding program contributes to educational and learning outcomes in a specific country context and whether complementary funding can be leveraged to support school feeding. Evidence suggests that when malnutrition and food insecurity are low and school attendance is high, school feeding programs will have little or no impact on educational outcomes; conversely, in settings where malnutrition and food insecurity is high and school attendance is low, school feeding programs can positively affect attendance and learning outcomes.⁵² Within a single country, different regions may have different levels of need.

iii. Teacher Education and Professional Development

Funding for initial teacher education and professional development for teachers working in pre-primary through secondary levels should usually be attributed to the basic education directive. For initial teacher education and preparation taking place in post-secondary or higher education institutions, funding attributions may be made to the basic education directive, the higher education directive, or both. If funding is to be attributed to the higher education directive, then the activities must strengthen the capacity of these higher education institutions.

iv. Construction and Infrastructure

Depending on the local context and need, funds for construction, infrastructure, and rehabilitation of education facilities may be attributed to the basic education or higher education directive, but generally use of education funds for construction or infrastructure-related investments is not recommended.⁵³ Construction may not be the most cost effective use of USAID funds to improve learning and educational outcomes, and construction-related activities can lead to delays in obligation and disbursement of funds. There are also sustainability considerations regarding adequate ongoing provision of educators and learning materials once schools have been constructed or rehabilitated.

Education funds can be used to fund construction or rehabilitation of education facilities where there are strong justifications, such as creating or rehabilitating safe learning spaces for crisis-affected populations and learners with disabilities, and no other funds are available for these purposes. Any construction and infrastructure investments should be sustainable, supported by a theory of change that underpins the activity, combined with activities that aim to measurably improve learning and educational outcomes, and must comply with standards set in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).⁵⁴

⁵¹ USAID-funded school feeding activities should refrain from use or procurement of lead cookware.

⁵² While there is evidence that school feeding programs in general consistently result in positive outcomes for energy intake, micronutrient status, school enrollment, and attendance, there is less conclusive evidence regarding the effects of school feeding on growth, cognition, and academic achievement. A systematic review ([Snilstveit, et. al, 2015](#)) found school-feeding programs to be promising for improving enrollment as well as learning. See also a summary from the Center for Global Development on recent research on this topic ([Sandefur, 2017](#)).

⁵³ See [ADS 201maw Management of Construction Risk - A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201](#) and [ADS 303maw USAID Implementation of Construction Activities: A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapters 303](#) for additional guidance.

⁵⁴ See [ADS 201maw Management of Construction Risk](#)

v. Early Childhood Education

Funds may be attributed to the basic education directive if they seek to measurably improve learning and educational outcomes at the pre-primary education level. Pre-primary education is defined as any group-based, organized instruction serving children, generally between the ages of 3 and 6, prior to their entry into primary school. A program may be school-based, center-based, or community-based, and include between one and three years of instruction. Schedules, models, and settings may vary across contexts, but the defining characteristic of pre-primary is a focus on early learning and learning skills development.

Measurable learning outcomes for pre-primary aged children fall under the following domains:

- Language and emergent literacy
- Emergent numeracy and cognition
- Social-emotional learning
- Physical development

Missions should seek out opportunities to build pre-primary into existing primary level basic education activities and layer early childhood development activities that may be funded by multiple sectors, including coupling education with health, nutrition, food security, WASH, child protection, social protection, stabilization, etc.

vi. Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Education investments that include climate action should adhere to the principles of the Education Policy and align with its priorities. The primary purpose of programming in education by USAID is to achieve sustained, measurable improvements in learning and educational outcomes and skills development.

Education sub-sectors may integrate climate action into programming as appropriate for the target population, context, and in alignment with the Education Policy, as illustrated below.

- Basic education programming integrates climate themes and information in the delivery of literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills instruction.
- Youth workforce development programming uses a positive youth development approach to strengthen youth's soft skills and agency to lead climate action. Youth programming can also build green skills that are aligned with local markets and advance transitions to green economies.
- Higher education programming supports higher education systems and institutions to educate and train the workforce, conduct climate-relevant research, and engage communities in the development of innovative solutions to address climate challenges.
- Education programming, across the education continuum, strengthens the resilience of education systems to climate-related shocks and stressors, ensuring continuity of learning.

vii. Cash Transfers, Schools Fees, and Teacher Salary Supplements⁵⁵

Basic education funds may be used for programs that include cash transfers or pay for school fees. While such programs have been effective at improving educational outcomes in the short term, activities should be designed to achieve sustainable learning and education outcomes and should meet a context-based need, such as supporting a conflict-affected population that is experiencing high rates of school dropout. The cost effectiveness of the activity should be considered as establishing a cash transfer program can have a high administrative cost.

Salary supplements are payments made that augment a Host Government (HG) employee's base salary or premiums, overtime, extra payments, incentive payment and allowances for which the HG employee would qualify under HG rules or practice for the performance of their regular duties or work performed during regular office hours. Per diem, invitational travel, honoraria and payment for work carried out outside of normal working hours are not considered to be salary supplements. In accordance with 48 [CFR 731.205-71](#), salary supplements for a HG employee are eligible for USAID financing only when authorized “in accordance with USAID policy established in the cable State I 19780 dated April 15, 1988 in ADS Chapter 302.”

viii. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Under Strategic Objective 2 of the [2022-2027 Global Water Strategy](#),⁵⁶ USAID will seek to partner with local government and public and private sector service providers to expand access to safe, affordable, reliable, and climate-resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene services and products across entire cities, districts, or counties, including in institutional settings like schools and healthcare facilities. Investing in safe, inclusive, and accessible infrastructure can reduce school-related gender-based violence and increase equitable access to education.⁵⁷

Establishing cross-sector partnerships and leveraging additional resources are encouraged for WASH-related activities, especially for activities that involve construction or infrastructure improvements in places of learning. Basic education funds may be used for WASH activities in places of learning if the activity is expected to contribute to measurable improvement in learning and educational outcomes and the bulk of basic education funds are used for learning activities.

⁵⁵ Programs that use fiscal year 2021 or prior year funding and benefit non-state schools are subject to regular Congressional Notification requirements. A non-state school for the purpose of the notification requirement is a school that is funded, controlled, and managed by a non-governmental organization (e.g. a faith-based organization, a foreign or international non-government organization, a trade union or business enterprise) as a substitute for state-supported basic education. Congressional notification is required prior to obligation or sub-obligation of funding that supports a non-state school, which is attended in place of a state school, as well as funding that supports technical assistance or other assistance designed to support a non-state school, which is attended in place of a state school.

⁵⁶ Strategic Objective 2 of the [2022-2027 Global Water Strategy](#) states that the U.S. government will increase equitable access to safe, sustainable, and climate-resilient drinking water and sanitation services and adoption of key hygiene behaviors.

⁵⁷ See: [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally](#)