

MS 325 Evaluation Policy

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Responsible Office: Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP)

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1.0 Authorities

The Peace Corps Act, Sec. 2507e.a.; Agency Evidence-Building Plan, 5 U.S.C. 312(a), 312(b); Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016 and guidelines for its implementation contained in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum, M-18-04; OMB Circular A-11, “Preparing, Submitting, and Executing the Budget (2021).”

2.0 Purpose

The Peace Corps is committed to using high-quality evidence for the purpose of improving agency performance and informing agency decision making.

This Manual Section describes Peace Corps policies for formal evaluations conducted to assess the design and implementation of agency programs, evaluate their performance, and improve their effectiveness. This Manual Section incorporates the legal requirements for conducting evaluations and coordination of the agency’s monitoring and evaluation processes.

3.0 Scope

This policy governs formal, agency-level evaluations conducted, for the most part by the Office of Strategic Information Research and Planning (OSIRP), in accordance with the requirements of

the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016. It does not apply to evaluations conducted by the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Other evaluations conducted at the agency should implement the below evaluation standards whenever possible and as resources permit.

4.0 Definitions

- (a) **Evaluation:** An evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of a program, including projects conducted under such program, as a basis for making judgments and evaluations regarding the program, improving program effectiveness, and informing decisions about current and future programming.
- (b) **Agency Evaluation Plan:** The Agency Evaluation Plan is the annual plan that describes agency evaluation activities that the Peace Corps intends to conduct in any fiscal year.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Director of the Peace Corps

The Director or their designee shall approve the Agency Evaluation Plan.

5.2 Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP)

OSIRP is responsible for, in conjunction and consultation with relevant stakeholder offices, creating and maintaining the annual Agency Evaluation Plan, coordinating the implementation of the Agency Evaluation Plan, and conducting agency-level evaluations related to the strategy, effectiveness, productivity, and efficiency of agency programs and business processes. OSIRP identifies and develops evaluation guidelines, strategies, and best practices and advises on and supports evaluation activities for the agency, as appropriate.

6.0 Policy

6.1 Evaluation Activities

Whenever possible, evaluations should be integrated into the design of new initiatives or conducted periodically for ongoing programs or projects. Evaluations should also include mechanisms for applying any findings and recommendations to other proposed and existing projects and programs. There are three phases of any evaluation:

- (1) **Planning:** The planning stage of an evaluation involves selection of evaluation staff, engaging stakeholders, developing evaluation questions and design, identifying resources and constraints, and creating a strategy and timeline for managing and implementing the evaluation.
- (2) **Implementation:** During implementation of an evaluation, principal activities include collecting and analyzing data needed to answer the evaluation questions based on the established evaluation design.

- (3) **Reporting:** Reporting on an evaluation is the dissemination of results to appropriate audiences, including summarizing findings, formulating recommendations for action, and incorporating the perspectives and needs of intended users.

6.2 Evaluation Practices – Evaluation Design and Methods

To strengthen evaluation efforts, evaluation staff should take into account time and resource constraints, and use evaluation methods that are the most rigorous, feasible, and appropriate to address the questions presented and that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence. These may include:

- (a) Use of a logic model to explain how program or project activities are designed to lead to expected objectives and outcomes;
- (b) Identifying baseline data to serve as a reference point for measuring the outcomes and impact of program or project activities;
- (c) Evaluation of a pilot on a small, controlled scale to assess the activity’s impact, benefits, weaknesses, and costs, before a decision is made on whether to expand an activity on a larger scale; and
- (d) Documentation of the planned evaluation design and methods in sufficient detail, including how and why they were selected.

6.3 Stakeholder Engagement

During the conduct of an evaluation, staff should identify and involve appropriate stakeholders, both internal and external, to help ensure the evaluation activities are both relevant and useful. Arrangements may include undertaking collaborative partnerships and coordinating efforts with the academic community, implementing partners, and national and international institutions.

6.4 Ethics in Evaluations

All evaluation staff should ensure that appropriate ethical standards of professional evaluation organizations for monitoring and evaluation efforts are employed, including ensuring the integrity and independence of evaluations, permitting and encouraging the exercise of professional judgment, and providing for quality control assurance in the monitoring and evaluation process. Evaluators should safeguard the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants and other individuals and entities affected by an evaluation.

6.5 Dissemination

OSIRP will maintain a publicly available clearinghouse for the collection, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge and lessons learned from agency-level evaluations. Agency-level evaluation reports will be shared on the agency’s clearinghouse website, except for reports exempted under clearly specified agency policies. Staff conducting agency-level evaluations should ensure that key audiences are aware of and broadly understand the evaluation’s activities, purpose, progress, and findings.

7.0 Effective Date

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.