



INL Best Practices Project Management

Quick Reference

Have all perspectives “in the room”

A project design benefits from broad participation of technical, political, country, and stakeholder perspectives for the conceptual stage of the design process to ensure that:

- The problem definition is comprehensive and includes perspectives from all stakeholders
- Important project feasibility issues are discussed and potential roadblocks and risks identified
- Additional feasibility analysis to validate or revise the project Results Framework is minimized.

What is project design?

A project takes shape when INL identifies an opportunity to dedicate US government funds to help partner nations establish a capable and accountable criminal justice sector. Good project design supports the foreign policy interests of the US and the international community at large while it focuses on a specific goal.

Project design is a collaborative process for determining how INL will apply its knowledge and resources to help the partner government solve problems and improve lives.

The process of designing a project seeks to answer the following questions:

- What does this project aim to accomplish?
- Why is INL undertaking this project, and how does it support USG and INL national security and foreign policy objectives?
- How does this project relate to other USG and donor assistance in criminal justice and related fields?
- How will the project measure progress in reaching its objectives?

What does good project design look like?

Good project design:

- Is accessible (easy to understand, explain, use, and apply)
- Is comprehensive (includes all critical steps of project design), yet flexible
- Integrates host country goals, assets, needs, and culture
- Takes into account INL workload implications in Washington and in the field
- Reflects INL's current program levels and available human capital
- Addresses INL Bureau goals and INL country program objectives.

STEP BY STEP

Problem Analysis

The three stages of problem analysis are:

1. Review relevant policies and strategies, country context, and existing assessments and analyses
2. Brainstorm to define the main problem the project aims to solve
3. Conduct a problem tree analysis to illustrate cause-and-effect relationships among elements of the problem.

1. Identify and analyze the problem

Effective project design begins with an analysis of the problem and draws upon desk studies, assessments, and interagency and counterpart consultations. Project design tools such as a problem tree and objective tree analysis help the project design team understand the nature of a problem and identify a set of actions that may generate positive and long-term changes.

This analysis organizes information into a diagram that depicts problems and possible solutions. A “starter problem” that broadly captures the need for the program is the “trunk” of the tree. The circumstances, structural conditions, or local beliefs/behaviors that influence, catalyze, or cause the problem are the “roots.”

The consequences of the starter problem are its “branches.” Like the roots, they become more specific as they travel from the starter problem in the trunk. Identify which effects are most relevant to INL’s goals, the host country’s priorities, and within INL’s manageable interests. When both roots and branches are fully developed, the final product of the exercise becomes the rough draft of the Results Framework.

2. Formulate a Results Framework

The Results Framework is a structured sequence of boxes connected by lines that illustrates the relationships between project goals and activities. Convert the major problem into a positive results statement, the project goal. The project goal should describe briefly, in an action statement, the solution to the major problem identified in the analysis. It should be feasible and ambitious. Below the goal, formulate intermediate results and results statements that identify a precise, measurable change. Ex: Case management capacity of all first instance courts increased. (Formulation of the Results Framework is detailed in the INL Results Framework Quick Reference Guide.)

3. Take account of lessons learned/best practices

Review past and current experience to better define the problem, clarify project objectives, help formulate the development hypothesis and Results Framework, clarify choices of implementation mechanism, and suggest performance indicators or key evaluation questions. Ex: If INL is starting a new border security project in Rwanda, look at the experience of similar projects in similar settings and integrate lessons learned into the design of the Rwanda project.

4. Analyze project feasibility

Conduct an in-depth exploration of whether a project is feasible with the help of INL experts in INL/CAP, INL/C (Crime Programs) and other departments. Feasibility analysis areas include: technical and political feasibility, stakeholder analysis, institutional and sustainability analysis, and others (conflict, social, and economic).

5. Develop implementation plan and choose implementation mechanisms

The implementation plan describes the principal components and activities over the life of project, generally three to five years. First choose the appropriate implementing mechanisms for the project, such as contract, cooperative agreement, or grant. (See full Project Design Guide.) Then, in coordination with stakeholders from the partner nation, develop an implementation plan with a narrative description of project components and a project schedule. The plan must be consistent with and reflect the Results Framework.

6. Define a budget and financial management plan

Prepare a comprehensive budget estimate in spreadsheet format that covers all costs, including project activities, monitoring and evaluation costs, and non-federal audits, if required. Federal policies and regulations related to source, origin, and nationality of goods and services under the project may affect cost estimates. A detailed financial management plan will present financial management roles and responsibilities.

7. Develop a Performance Management Plan

Each project has a Performance Measurement Plan (PMP) that includes a performance monitoring process using performance indicators and targets and an evaluation plan that lays out plans for mid-project and end-of-project evaluations. The PMP measures performance in achieving the project goal and its subordinate objectives/results laid out in the project Results Framework. (See the Guide to Developing a Performance Measurement Plan.)

Develop the PMP early in the project design process in a participatory process involving all members of the project design team and other relevant stakeholders. A participatory and transparent process is important because it improves project management and accountability and strengthens bilateral and multilateral partnerships and local ownership.

INL Programs

The size of INL country/ regional programs varies from:

1. Over \$100 million annually (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, West Bank/ Gaza, Colombia);
2. \$10 to \$100 million (Peru, Liberia, Sudan, Indonesia, and other countries);
3. \$1 to \$10 million (Ukraine, Tajikistan, Nepal, Ecuador, Nigeria, and other countries); and
4. Less than \$1 million (Togo, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Argentina, and other countries).

8. Carry out project review, approve project, and execute project authorization

Review and authorization of a project document is the final step in project design. Hold a project review meeting chaired by a director or other senior officer and request input from all members of the design team and other relevant parties. The team leader prepares an issues paper and agenda, facilitates the project review meeting, and documents the decisions of the project review meeting.

Following the project review, the appropriate senior INL official signs a Project Authorization, after clearance by State's Legal Advisor Office. The authorization should state any prior or concurrent actions expected of the partner government in relation to the project, especially conditions precedent to obligation of funds by the USG. Execution of a Letter of Agreement (LOA) or Amended Letter of Agreement (ALOA) amounts to approval of the overall country program.

Choice of Implementing Mechanisms

The project design team should choose the appropriate implementing mechanisms for the project components. Note that the choice depends on time pressures, how much control INL desires, whether INL believes that outside partners can find the technical expertise required for the project, and other factors.

The range of implementing mechanisms include:

- Interagency Agreements (IAAs) with USG agencies like Department of Justice, Labor, DHS, and others
- Contracts, of which a number of possibilities exist: MOBIS (Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services) contracts for consulting, training, and project management; IDIQs, such as the CIVPOL Base Contract; small business set-asides; and contracts awarded under full and open competition
- Cooperative Agreements and Grants
- Grants to Public International Organizations (PIOs)
- Fixed Amount Reimbursement (FAR) and other implementing mechanisms used by USG agencies
- Embassy-managed projects, common in Central and Latin America and the Caribbean under the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA)
- Personal Services Contracts (PSCs) with expatriate or locally-hired individuals
- Grants to local organizations, either NGOs, private sector, or other civil society organizations
- Implementation through host country Public Financial Management (PFM) Systems, such as local contracting or financial management/payment systems.